

THE MEANING OF REFORM: 1908 AND 2008

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To a political historian, there is no reason to assume one can learn anything useful by comparing two elections a century apart. Everything is different: the context, the issues, and, of course, the candidates. Any similarities are usually just coincidental. Compare 1828 to 1928, for example. Andrew Jackson's victory in 1828 was possible only because, for the first time, most white men had the right to vote and exercised that right. And his party, the Democrats, were the first truly mass political party. The 1828 election was thus a pivotal moment in U.S. history and, even, in the history of the world. What about 1928? Herbert Hoover's landslide win that year was mostly a sign that American voters wanted more of the same – to continue the pro-business policies of the Republican Party and to keep a Catholic, Democrat Al Smith, out of the White House. Or compare the election of 1880 to that of 1980. Both times a conservative Republican was the victor: James A. Garfield and Ronald Wilson Reagan. But to compare Garfield, an intelligent man but a mediocre politician, to Reagan is like comparing a Triple Crown winner to a horse who stumbles in first at a country fair. They belong to the same species, but the skill of the competitor and the size of the purse make all the difference. So although we all have affection for centennials, we should be wary of imputing significance to elections that took place 100 years apart.

Once in a while, however, the perspective of a century can yield insights into how the nation has changed – and also how much has stayed the same, in our politics if not our technology. We continue to wrestle with certain big issues that are difficult to resolve and the struggle is often most apparent during a presidential contest. That was the case both in 1908 and in 2008’s long and furious campaign.¹ Of course, the nation has changed in major ways over the past century. In 1908, the population was less than a third what it is now. More people lived in rural than in urban areas. The main form of daily transportation was still a horse, a mule, or one’s own two feet. And, the only way to move commerce long distances was the train. In 1908, near Detroit, workers employed by Henry Ford were beginning to produce a new machine that would change all that: the Model T became the first automobile cheap enough for a farmer or middle-class urbanite to afford. The economy was far smaller in 1908 than now. Then, the country’s Gross Domestic Product was \$30 billion; today’s GDP is \$14 trillion. Annual government spending then was less than \$3 billion; it is \$5 trillion now. The average wage then was about \$2 a day and prices were perhaps 1/12th what they are now.

There were political differences as well. The suffrage was more restricted in 1908 than it is now: women had the right to vote in only three states; African-Americans had the legal right to vote everywhere—but white legislatures and voters in various Southern states were disenfranchising black people through various legal subterfuges. One of the more blatant of those subterfuges was, of course, Oklahoma’s own “grandfather clause” to the state constitution, passed in 1910.

One thing has remained the same between 1908 and now. In 1908, immigration was booming—though mostly from Europe rather than Asia or Latin America. The US was a multicultural society in 1908, as it is now. However, most native-born Americans then were not willing to accept that fact.

Despite all these differences, the central issue of the 1908 campaign was eerily similar to that of 2008. It was the economy, stupid. In each case, before the election, a long bull market had been followed by a stock market panic. By the early 1900s, trust companies were booming; their assets had grown by almost 250% since the late 1890s. During the same period, the assets of the biggest national banks almost doubled.

Then a stock market panic occurred, which focused everyone's attention on the power of large corporations to affect the lives of all Americans—whether for good or ill.

The Panic of 1907 cut stock prices by half—but it was essentially over before the campaign began, thanks to the intervention of J.P. Morgan who famously ordered various bankers and industrialists to his luxurious library on Madison Avenue and locked them in until they agreed to loan money to banks that were at risk of failing. Still, the economy didn't recover until the spring of 1908—and fear that it could happen again rippled through the rhetoric of that year's campaign.

So the key question of the 1908 campaign was: how should Americans reform the economy to regulate the operations of big businesses and the privileges of the rich and to help ordinary working Americans? In other words—how to balance the benefits of an untrammled or “free” market with the public's strong desire to be treated fairly and equally as workers and consumers? This is really the basic question in any capitalist economy—how can private wealth and investment produce democratic results? So it's not surprising that, a century later, we still haven't come anything close to an agreement about how to accomplish this. What it means to *reform* the economy remains a matter of fierce debate.

There are some intriguing similarities between the major candidates in 1908 and 2008 as well. In both years, the Democrat was the challenger to the incumbent party: William Jennings Bryan then, Barack Obama in 2008. In both cases, he was a man in his late 40s, who came out of the left-wing of his party, and was an exceptionally stirring orator who had little experience in national office. In fact, Obama has been in the U.S. Senate for little less than 4 years—the exact same time Bryan served in the House of Representatives. Both men were even nominated at a convention held in Denver. Bryan ran on a platform, which he had helped to write, that thundered against “private monopoly,” “the sins” of Wall Street “speculators,” and “the partnership which has existed between corporations of the country and the Republican party.” The parallel with Obama is obvious.

In both years, the Republican candidate was a man with a long record of government service. In 1908 it was William Howard Taft. In 2008 it was John McCain. Although he had never run for office before, Taft had been a state judge in Ohio, a federal judge, solicitor general,

the Governor-General of the Philippines (then an American colony), and had served as Secretary of War since 1904. Like John McCain, he was trying to succeed a two-term president of their own party. But there the comparison breaks down: Taft was the hand-picked candidate of Theodore Roosevelt, who would have easily won re-election if he'd chosen to run. In 2008, McCain tried mightily to separate himself from the incumbent president of his party. But most important, both Taft and Bryan portrayed themselves as candidates who would regulate big business and help the ordinary American worker and small businessperson. The difference was how they proposed to do it.

Taft followed the lead of his mentor, Teddy Roosevelt. Roosevelt was an essentially conservative man, but he feared that unregulated capitalism was a danger to the maintenance of a capitalist democracy. In 1906, TR said, "I do not like the social conditions at present. The dull, purblind folly of the very rich men; their greed and arrogance... and the corruption in business and politics have tended to produce a very unhealthy condition of excitement in the popular mind, which shows itself in socialistic propaganda" (Coletta, 2052).

TR always reminds me of my favorite fictional conservative, a young Sicilian aristocrat named Tancredi in the novel, The Leopard, by Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa. Tancredi is learning to adapt to the modern world instead of trying to shut it out, as his fellow aristocrats long to do. He tells the old guard, "If we want things to stay the same, things will have to change."

Taft in 1908 tried to be faithful to this world view. He wanted to strengthen the Sherman Anti-Trust Act to eliminate loopholes that made it difficult to stop monopolies from being formed. To address the anxieties of people with money in the banks, he proposed a system of postal savings banks, where the funds would be protected by the government. He also spoke vaguely of improving conditions for railroad workers, a key constituency at the time. But as a state and federal judge, Taft had ruled that most strikes and all boycotts were criminal conspiracies. During a national railroad strike in 1894, he fumed, "They have killed only six of the mob as yet. This is hardly enough to make an impression." In 1908, he continued to oppose any increase in the power of organized labor.

In general, Taft followed the policy of Roosevelt towards corporate power: big businesses that behaved themselves, that acted responsibly,

would continue to be the engine of prosperity, a prosperity that would extend to the middle and lower classes. The real danger came from radicals who wanted to destroy business – and to redistribute wealth.

Some sections of the GOP platform of 1908 sound remarkably like speeches that John McCain and Sarah Palin gave in the final weeks of the 2008 campaign: “The trend of [the Democratic Party] is toward socialism, while the Republican Party stands for a wise and regulated individualism. Socialism would destroy wealth, Republicanism would prevent its abuse. Socialism would give to each an equal right to take; Republicanism would give to each an equal right to warn... Ultimately [the Democratic Party] would have the nation own the people, while Republicanism would have the people own the nation”(2110).

However, there is one difference. In 1908, Americans actually had a Socialist party to vote for. The Socialists ran the former union leader Eugene V. Debs for president. Debs denounced both the Republicans and Democrats as being “capitalist” parties that had nothing to offer to working-class Americans. Debs won only 3% of the national vote in 1908. But he scored one of his best totals — almost 9% — in a fast-growing state full of tenant farmers and workers who were outraged at the gap between their earnings and the wealth of big land-owners and employers. That state, of course, was Oklahoma – home to one of the strongest Socialist parties anywhere in the U.S.

What was Bryan’s solution to the economic problems of the nation? Interestingly, Bryan was the first Democratic presidential candidate to espouse a principle that nearly every nominee from his party has echoed since then—from Wilson, to FDR, to Johnson, to Clinton, to Obama. Bryan stated this principle succinctly the first time he ran for president in 1896 when he was just 36 years old: “There are two ideas of government,” he declared. “There are those who believe that if you just legislate to make the well-to-do prosperous, that their prosperity will leak through on those below. The Democratic idea has been that if you legislate to make the masses prosperous their prosperity will find its way up and through every class that rests upon it.” A week before this year’s election, Barack Obama echoed that view when he told voters in Ohio, “you can turn the page on policies that have put the greed and irresponsibility of Wall Street before the hard work and sacrifice of folks on Main Street.”

To that idea of bottom-up economics, Bryan added support for strong regulation of the trusts and, perhaps, breaking them up completely. He spoke of big corporations in the most derogatory of terms. Using an agrarian metaphor, he said, "One of the most important duties of government is to put rings in the noses of hogs." He also favored a progressive income tax to replace the tariffs on imported goods that were the main source of federal revenue at the time. But he assumed that the level of income would be set so high that only the richest five percent of Americans would actually pay any federal tax.

In sharp contrast to Taft, Bryan had long been a supporter of labor unions in his home state of Nebraska and throughout the nation. In 1908, for the first time, the main labor organization in the US, the American Federation of Labor, endorsed and worked to elect a major-party candidate for president. Samuel Gompers, president of the AFL, even passed on the language of each platform plank that mentioned labor. And the Democratic nominee for vice-president, an Indiana politician named John Kern, was on the ticket largely because he had a strong pro-labor record.

Bryan's type of economic reform had always scared conservatives in both major parties. They saw him, as they now see Obama, as an exceedingly dangerous man. Here's what the New York Times, then a conservative paper, wrote about Bryan in 1908: "Let Bryan nominate himself upon a platform of hostility to the courts, hostility to property interests, class legislation for labor, the income tax, popular election of senators, the initiative and referendum...and all the other doctrines of Bryanite radicalism..."(2075).

So the terms of the contest were set. Neither Taft nor Bryan had any difficulty winning their party's nomination. There were few primaries back then, and both men lined up enough delegates at state party meetings before their national conventions. For most rank-and-file Republicans, the fact that TR wanted Taft to succeed him was enough, including conservatives who thought he might be less given to denunciations of the rich. And Bryan was the only Democrat with a reputation as a far-reaching reformer. He had built up a large following since 1896: "To be suspected of disloyalty to Bryan in those days," a journalist later recalled, "was almost like buying a ticket to private life."²

I wish I could say that the 1908 campaign was as exciting as the 2008 one was. But Republicans were the majority party and Taft would

have had to have made some colossal mistakes to lose. Still, it had its moments—some of which point to Bryan’s difficulty at pressing his idea of reform against that of a popular president. Bryan had focused each of his two previous campaigns on an issue of great emotional salience: inflating the money supply through the coinage of silver in 1896 and opposing the new American empire in 1900. But, in 1908, despite their rhetorical differences, the two parties often seemed to be quibbling over small distinctions of policy.

One example was the thorny issue of whether to make public the names of campaign contributors and the totals of their donations. Bryan demanded the publication of all campaign donations over \$100 *before* Election Day; Taft preferred to issue such a report *after* the voters had spoken. But only Taft favored a full account of how both parties had *spent* their cash. A year before, Congress, at TR’s urging, had deflated some of the public’s concern by banning direct contributions by corporations. Of course, individual businessmen could keep donating as much as they liked.

Bryan did advocate one proposal that most Republicans despised: a requirement that national banks insure the funds of their depositors. The year before, Bryan had helped write the constitution for the state of Oklahoma that included a tax on each bank for this purpose. During the campaign, Bryan defended the idea: “There are only 20,000 banks,” he said, “while there are 15,000,000 depositors, and I do not hesitate to declare that in a conflict between the two, the depositors have a prior claim to consideration.” But outside of Oklahoma, this was a new idea, and it was unlikely to persuade most bank customers, who were Republicans, to abandon their party allegiance.³

“Shall the People Rule?” asked the Democrats’ campaign slogan. The abstract, plaintive nature of the question suggested Bryan’s great weakness. No one in America could rival his outrage, grounded in Scripture, against the corrupting influence of big business on public life. “I am willing to go down on my knees and ask my heavenly father: ‘Give us this day our daily bread,’” he told a large crowd in Roanoke, Virginia, “...I am not willing to make millions of my countrymen get down on their knees and say to some trust magnate: ‘Give us this day our daily bread,’ and have him reply: ‘I will, if you vote the ticket I want you to vote.’”⁴ Bryan charged that “predators” in expensive suits were bankrolling the GOP because they knew Republicans would never

sabotage their vital interests. Democrats pressed this attack through populist imagery. They distributed a cartoon showing a lean Bryan shoveling hay for exercise; while the corpulent Taft awkwardly swung a golf club as part of a twosome with John D. Rockefeller, the symbol of corporate wealth and power.⁵ Yet it was not enough to tell voters a gripping story about “the people” vs. the plutocrats.

Bryan had no grand solution to corporate misconduct that was distinct from that espoused by TR and Taft. Each man would intervene, with the help of Congress and the courts, to force big business to heed the public’s desire for a marketplace governed by rules of fairness and equity. None would attempt to destroy the oligopolies on which increasing numbers of Americans depended for goods, services, and jobs. Audiences cheered when Bryan vowed to humble the trusts and restore an economy where the little man could thrive. But neither he nor his allies had more than the vaguest idea of how to bring that about.

Bryan tried to assure anxious voters that he was not the radical figure that Taft made him out to be. “The Democratic Party seeks not revolution but reformation,” Bryan explained, “and I need hardly remind the student of history that cures are mildest when applied at once; that remedies increase in severity as their application is postponed.”⁶ But his opponents didn’t buy it. William Van Cleave, president of the National Association of Manufacturers – founded in 1903 to combat militant unions – told his members, “regardless of party,” that it was their duty “to bury Bryan and Bryanism under such an avalanche of votes” that neither man nor movement could rise again. Taft called the deposit guarantee “wrong in principle and impossible in practice” because it would give bankers an excuse to foist their problems on the government. The influential journalist William Allen White charged that Bryan’s party “is a Democracy advocating Federal control of everything that is out of joint.” It had “all the childish courage of the mob.” Who could trust a man like that to grasp the complexities of governing a modern, industrial nation?⁷

The Democrats did manage to put together an impressive campaign apparatus. By Labor Day, over five thousand Bryan-Kern clubs were busy handing out literature and registering voters. A finance committee, headed by a tobacco manufacturer, also collected a lot of small donations. By Election Day, the Democrats had attracted some 75,000 contributors, five times more than the GOP. But most wealthy Americans still viewed

Bryan as their enemy. He was able to raise only a third as much cash as did Taft.⁸

Both candidates also exploited a novel and inexpensive way to reach the public. During the 2008 campaign, it was the Internet. In 1908, it was recorded speeches. The technology invented by Thomas Edison two decades before was still quite primitive. Bryan and Taft had to speak loudly and slowly into the massive horn of a phonograph, which transferred the sounds onto a thick slab of vinyl or a wax cylinder six inches high. Recordings could last no more than four minutes and static marred the results.⁹

No sales totals exist, so it's impossible to tell how the recordings affected the campaign, if they did at all. One phonograph company issued large print ads announcing, "Mr. William Jennings Bryan Wants to Talk to You Personally." The slogan suggested a momentous change in the conduct of political campaigns. For the first time, potential voters did not have to attend a candidate's speech in person. They could experience something of the same experience just by sitting in their parlor. There's a direct line from those scratchy wax cylinders to YouTube clips.

As in 2008, the Democratic candidate had a more enthusiastic following than did his rival. Bryan's crowds were huge and they seemed to prize the man as much as his message. "A stamping, shouting, laughing multitude that seemed frantic with joy" greeted him in Poseyville, Indiana. In Brooklyn, New York, a boisterous ovation lasting ten minutes almost prevented him from speaking at all. At night, crowds surrounded his railroad car, demanding that he get out of bed and speak to them.¹⁰

Bryan also received a small mountain of fan mail, as he had since 1896. Almost none of it survives, but reports totaled it at two thousand letters and telegrams a day. Many admirers dwelled on Bryan's stalwart character and crusading Christian faith. "Your magnificent stand on all occasions for the advancement of God's Kingdom," wrote a YMCA official from New York, "has won a very warm place in the hearts of Christian men, regardless of political affiliations."¹¹

Such mass affection may have made a difference if Bryan were running against an opponent with an unattractive personality. Two years before, Taft had told his wife, "Politics, when I am in it, makes me sick." Indeed, Bryan lampooned his opponent's reticence to speak up on any issue TR hadn't tutored him about. Taft would have preferred to

issue written statements about his record and leave the oratory to others.

In the late summer, GOP leaders fretted that Bryan may have been pulling ahead in swing states in the Midwest and in New York. Roosevelt urged his protégé to offer voters not an “etching” of his views but a “poster” with “streaks of blue, yellow, and red to catch the eye.” So, in mid-September, the large man with a winning laugh and a pleasing voice starting stumping from Indiana to the Rockies. Taft read most of his speeches verbatim and said nothing worth remembering. Still, he kept a broad smile on his face and assured everyone he would continue the reforms Roosevelt had started. It would be almost like re-electing the president after all.¹²

Bryan’s only real chance for victory lay in mobilizing a new coalition of the discontented from the working-class precincts of Eastern and Midwestern cities. Aside from his own campaign rhetoric, that task fell primarily to union labor. In 1908, most AFL political operatives received paychecks from the Democratic Party and passed out over five million pieces of literature prepared by Bryan’s campaign.

But organized labor proved to be a vulnerable ally. Outside the South, a large number of skilled unionists were Republicans, and many bridled at their leaders’ unprecedented attempt to influence their political choice. “When were you told to tell me how to vote?”, one West Virginia wage-earner wrote across a pro-Bryan leaflet. “I’ll vote to suit meself. Hurrah for TAFT!”

The GOP quickly seized on such resentments. Sounding a theme their party would exploit for decades to come, Roosevelt and Taft accused Gompers of ordering his members to vote against their will, of acting despotically in the name of protecting democratic rights.

While the Democrats were attempting to leap into the political future with labor, they were rejecting a possible alliance across the color line. Theodore Roosevelt had angered African-Americans in 1906 when he ordered dishonorable discharges for an entire battalion of black soldiers after a handful of them may have “shot up” the border town of Brownsville, Texas. Taft fully backed the president’s decision. “The greatest hope that the Negro has,” Taft smugly advised, “is the friendship and the sympathy of the white man with whom he lives” in the South.

For W.E.B. DuBois, it was time to make a change. His Niagara movement vowed to gain equal rights at the polls, in the economy, in every sphere of society. They raised the vision of a future alliance with

“the white laboring classes,” perhaps within the Socialist Party. Niagara activists knew most blacks still able to vote would stand by the party of Lincoln, even if it seemed to be deserting them. But why not punish such “false friends” by aiding its opponents? DuBois declared, “If between the two parties who stand on identically the same platform you can prefer the party who perpetuated Brownsville, well and good! But I shall vote for Bryan.”¹³

The Democratic nominee had not always spurned black support. But now he was anxious not to give his base – the white South – any reason to doubt his commitment to white supremacy. Bryan’s anxiety to guard his racist reputation seemed pragmatic at the time. The eleven states of the former Confederacy accounted for 120 electoral votes, almost half the total needed for victory. Add Border States like Kentucky, Missouri, and Oklahoma (voting for the first time), and a Democrat would need only a few big industrial states to push him over the top. But accepting the backing of a group of black Americans who wanted their equal rights would have angered and splintered his white base. By 1908, the disenfranchisement crusade had triumphed nearly everywhere in the South. Nowhere in Dixie did black voters pose a potential threat to the power of the white majority. Even if Bryan had begun to rethink his racial views, there was nothing to be gained from accepting the endorsement of W.E.B. DuBois and a great deal to lose.¹⁴ It would take another forty years for Democrats to see the error of their ways, politically and morally.

Despite multiple handicaps, Bryan thought he had a good chance to win. Not since the early 1890s had Democrats been so united and they were running on an anti-corporate platform that seemed in synch with the reformist mood of the nation. Bryan spent most of his time stumping in New York and the industrial Midwest, and the size and passion of the crowds always buoyed his confidence.

Then in mid-September, William Randolph Hearst tried to hijack the race. The publisher released private correspondence from 1905 disclosing that mighty Standard Oil had traded cash for favors from several leading politicians. One of these politicians was Charles Haskell – the governor of Oklahoma and treasurer of the Democratic National Committee. The documents grabbed the headlines, but they also tarred prominent Republicans, and Haskell quickly resigned from his post in the party. “The tide seems to be running in our favor still, and I do not

know how they are going to stop it,” Bryan wrote to his campaign manager in mid-October. “With a large slush fund on election day, they can, of course, do something, but...it looks to me like our chances are good.”¹⁵

It was the worst prediction of his long career. Taft’s victory on November 3 was a decisive one. The first-time candidate who loathed the political fray beat his more seasoned opponent by over 1.2 million votes, about half TR’s margin in 1904.

The Republicans swept every state in the Northeast and along the Great Lakes. They even carried most of the major cities – and every one in the Northeast and Midwest. Of the most fiercely contested prizes, Bryan came close only in his running mate’s home state of Indiana. Outside the Old South, the Democrat managed to capture only Kentucky, Nevada, Colorado, Oklahoma, and his own Nebraska – and only 43% of the vote. “We have beaten them to a frazzle,” gloated Teddy Roosevelt.¹⁶

Bryan had campaigned diligently on his issues, believing voters would view him not as a cautious former judge, but as the authentic spokesman for anti-trust feeling in all classes and the welfare of working Americans. But in 1908, Republicans had a better grasp of what moved and alarmed the Northern electorate at a time of general prosperity. They were led by a brilliant president with an insurgent, mildly pro-labor reputation, and this muddied policy distinctions between the parties.

Republican campaigners also persuaded voters not to trust Bryan. After all, the Democrat had once advocated inflation, had opposed an Asian war the U.S. was winning, and seemed, by allying with the AFL, to have taken one side in a class conflict most Americans were not fighting. “Get After Bryan; Forget Platforms,” read a newspaper headline about GOP strategy.¹⁷ They made the election about Bryan, and they won.

Republicans followed much the same strategy in 2008, but the result was rather different. Why? Unlike Taft, McCain moved away from his reputation as a reformer and allied himself with the right-wing of his party. And, of course, his party was in far worse shape than Taft’s a century ago. In the differences between the two elections, one stands out: William Howard Taft was the heir apparent to Theodore Roosevelt. John McCain, despite his oft-expressed admiration for TR, was running to succeed George W. Bush.

But there's a larger difference between 1908 and 2008 that might give us pause. Even as we slid into recession in 2008, Americans were certainly better off in many ways than we were in 1908. To be poor in 1908 was to work 12 hours a day at a job with no workmen's comp, union protection, health plan, or retirement security. And that's if one could find work at all. Most Americans in 2008 considered themselves to be middle-class, and few worked at dangerous jobs or wondered where their next meal was coming from. But the status of the nation itself in 2008 and beyond may not be so rosy. In 1908, for all its troubles and discontents, the US was a nation on the rise: the Panama Canal was under construction with a huge workforce from all over the world, US was on the verge of becoming the leading manufacturing nation, and it was a technological leader in many fields – from automobiles, to photography, to electrical utilities, to oil refining, to steel. Within the decade, the US would turn the tide in World War I and take over from Great Britain as the leading investor in other nation's economies. But in 2008 we were a nation on the decline. Our financial system was in ruins and our manufacturing base had been shrinking for several decades. The gap between the rich and everyone else was as wide as it had been since about a century ago. And the 2008 election turned on the question of who gained and who lost in the economy.

A historical perspective can't guide us to a better future. And contrary to the popular cliché, history does not repeat itself, except, perhaps in metaphor. But if the current crisis in our economy has taught us anything, I think it has reminded us that some of our ancestors had a nice way of phrasing certain eternal political truths. One of the main duties of government is to put rings in the noses of hogs.

NOTES

¹ Some of the material for this address is drawn from the author's biography of William Jennings Bryan, *A Godly Hero: the Life of William Jennings Bryan*, Anchor Books, 2007. Used with permission.

² Arthur Wallace Dunn, quoted in Sarasohn, *Ibid.*, 38. On Taggart's role, see Ralph M. Goldman, *The National Party Chairmen and Committees: Factionalism at the Top* (Armonk, NY, 1990), 215 and Taggart bio tk.

³ *History of American Presidential Elections, 1789-1968*, Vol 5, ed. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. (New York, 1985), 2091-2101; Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, *A Brief History of Deposit Insurance in the United States*

(Washington, DC, 1998), 16-23; Bryan, "Guaranteed Deposits," Speeches of William Jennings Bryan, Vol. 2 (NY, 1909), 159.

⁴ Quoted in Atlanta Journal, 9/16/06, 1.

⁵ The cartoon, evidently from a Democratic campaign book, was copied for me by Harry Rubenstein of the National Museum of American History.

⁶ "Shall the People Rule?," August 12, 1908, Speeches, Vol. 2, 103, 117.

⁷ Quotes from Henry F. Pringle, The Life and Times of William Howard Taft, Vol. 1 (New York, 1939), 363 (Van Cleave); Coletta, "Election of 1908," 2085 (Taft); William Allen White, "Twelve Years of Mr. Bryan," Collier's, Oct. 17, 1908, 12-13.

⁸ The Campaign Textbook of the Democratic Party of the United States (Chicago, 1908); Isaac F. Marcossou, "Marse Henry": A Biography of Henry Watterson (New York, 1951), 177-79; Washington Evening Star, Sept. 9, 1908, 9; Louise Overacker, Money in Elections (New York, 1974 [1932]), 73, 136.

⁹ On the technology and commerce of early phonographs, see Andre Millard, America on Record: A History of Recorded Sound (Cambridge, Eng., 1995), 37-64.

¹⁰ Quote from Indianapolis News, Sept. 10, 1908, 1, 3. The News was a Democratic paper, which made its failure to report the content of Bryan's speech particularly suggestive. On nocturnal fans, see Washington Evening Star, 9/10/1908, 12. The most complete account of the campaign tours is Edgar A. Hornig, "The Indefatigable Mr. Bryan in 1908," NH 37 (Sept. 1956), 183-99. He recounts the Brooklyn story on p. 193.

¹¹ Remarkably, this is one of only *four* letters written during the ten months before Election Day that survives in BPLC. On the volume of mail, see New York Times, 9/6/1908, Sect. 5, 5. For post-election mail, see below.

¹² Quotes from Donald F. Anderson, William Howard Taft: A Conservative's Conception of the Presidency (Ithaca, 1973), 27 (Taft); Pringle, Life and Times, Vol. 1, 359 (Roosevelt). For Bryan's imitation of Taft, see Lawrence Glen Buckley, "William Jennings Bryan in American Memory," PhD dissertation, University of Hawaii, 1998, 66-7.

¹³ Quotes from "Third Annual Meeting of the Niagara Movement, Aug. 26-29, 1907," in Pamphlets and Leaflets of W.E.B. DuBois, ed. Herbert Aptheker (White Plains, NY, 1986), 76; David Levering Lewis, W.E.B. DuBois: Biography of a Race, 1868-1919 (NY, 1993). On the political furor and its consequences, see Emma Lou Thornbrough, "The Brownsville Episode and the Negro Vote," Mississippi Valley Historical Review 44 (Dec. 1957), 469-93.

¹⁴ On the chronology of disenfranchisement, see J. Morgan Kousser, The Shaping of Southern Politics: Suffrage Restriction and the Establishment of the One-Party South, 1880-1910 (New Haven, 1974), 239; Alexander Keyssar, The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States (New York, 2000), 111-116.

¹⁵ WJB to Daniels, 10/19/1908, Daniels Papers, Box 69. On the Archbold letters, see Nasaw, The Chief, 221-3; Sarasohn, Party of Reform, 50-51.

¹⁶ TR quoted in Coletta, "Election of 1908," 2087. Third parties did poorly and had only a marginal impact on the result. Thomas Hisgen, of the Independence League, drew 82,600 votes, and Tom Watson only 28,400, most of it in his home state of Georgia. Eugene Debs drew 420,000 for the Socialists, less than three percent of the total. In Indiana, his vote was larger than the plurality for Taft, but the Prohibitionist candidate did better there. Congressional Quarterly, Presidential Elections Since 1789, Fourth Edition (Washington, 1987), 113, 135.

¹⁷ Indianapolis News, 9/1/1908, 1. It's not clear how greatly Roosevelt feared a Bryan victory. His aide, Archie Butt, quoted TR's belief that Bryan was "a wonderful man and would make a strong, able President." But the editor of Butt's letters had gained a more negative impression after corresponding with Roosevelt during the 1908 campaign. The Letters of Archie Butt, 91, 46-7.

