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Alexander P. McKenzie (1850–1922)

Richard M. Valelly

Swarthmore College, rvalell1@swarthmore.edu

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Truman's "Fair Deal." As President *pro tempore* of the Senate during most of Truman's administration, he was one of the most powerful members of Congress. Advancing age took its toll, however, and the 83-year-old McKellar finally lost his Senate seat to the much younger Albert Gore in the Democratic primary election of 1952.

See also: Edward Crump, Robert A. Taft, Harry S Truman

Jeffrey G. Mauck

Alexander P. McKenzie (1850–1922)

Boss of the turn-of-the-century Republicans of North Dakota. To Alexander P. McKenzie's supporters, "McKenzieism" (i.e., his apparent ability for 12 years, between 1894 and 1906, to rig the election of governors, state legislators, U.S. Representatives, and U.S. Senators) meant making North Dakota politically safe for rapid infrastructural investment by the Great Northern Railway and the Northern Pacific Railroad and thus for economic growth. Restless farmers needed to be controlled politically by a "boss," else enormous and risky investments would be wasted. Without "McKenzieism" these same farmers could have been condemned to poverty.

To its opponents, "McKenzieism" meant the construction of an exploitative and corrupt political economy. McKenzie's "ring" monopolized such basic organizational resources as the print media, free railroad passes, and money. That McKenzie never sought public office contributed to the reputation of "McKenzieism" as being ruled by a reclusive kingpin. He astutely used bribery and vote fraud to disorganize the legislative and electoral efforts of more radical North Dakotans to regulate corporate power for more than ten years. As a former jail keeper and sheriff, he knew enough about criminals to organize and deploy gangs occasionally. Finally, "McKenzieism" meant crooked land and financial deals in North Dakota and elsewhere, including a spectacular effort by McKenzie at an Alaskan fraud scheme that has been immortalized in a novel and in the 1942 John Wayne movie *The Spoilers*.

The transparency of McKenzie's manipulative politics in a sparsely populated, homogeneous state probably helped to set the stage for the subsequent agrarian protest of the Nonpartisan League (1915–1922). By then, however, McKenzie had long since retired from politics; indeed his retirement probably facilitated the League's rise.

See also: Bosses, Railroads

Richard M. Vaelely

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William McKinley (1843–1901)

Twenty-fifth President of the United States. William McKinley twice defeated William Jennings Bryan in presidential campaigns, becoming the first two-term President since Ulysses S. Grant. McKinley was a Civil War officer, an attorney, a six-term U.S. Congressman, and a governor of the pivotal state of Ohio before becoming the 1896 Republican nominee for President. During the explosive election of 1896, McKinley was a safe, traditional, solidly midwestern contrast to the fire-breathing "radical" Bryan.

In 1896 Americans feared apocalypse. Intraparty conflict, agrarian tumult, sectional tensions, and a sustained depression precipitated the despair. Myriad political disagreements were reduced to the Battle of the Standards (disputes over whether American currency should continue to be anchored in gold or expanded and cheapened by being redeemable in silver as well). Having built his career on the protective tariff, McKinley initially avoided the issue. As Speaker of the House Thomas B. Reed snorted, "McKinley isn't a silver-bug, McKinley isn't a gold-bug, McKinley is a straddle-bug." Shrewdly, albeit belatedly and halfheartedly, McKinley embraced the gold standard.

Under the expert direction of McKinley's Ohio political alter ego, Mark Hanna, the Republicans mounted a systematic, inspirational, and very expensive 1896 campaign—no party would again spend so much money until 1920. For his part, McKinley remained on his front porch in Canton, Ohio, greeting over 750,000 visitors from 30 states. This front-porch campaign was vigorous by any standards except by contrast to the grueling 18,000-mile rear-platform marathon that Bryan mounted. McKinley's victory in November was thorough enough to signal the emergence of a new, powerful, and modern Republican Party. Still, he got only 52 percent of the popular vote.

As President, McKinley led America into an era of prosperity and imperial expansion. His reelection campaign of 1900 hailed the "full dinner pail" that all Americans were enjoying