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ANESTHESIOLOGY REFLECTIONS FROM THE WOOD LIBRARY-MUSEUM

Bitter Gold Analgesia: Grover Cleveland's Remedy



In the post-Civil War era, the Republican Party—that of Lincoln, Grant, and the Union—and the Democratic Party—that of the bygone Confederacy—had remained divided by geography. Economic unrest in the late nineteenth century, however, weakened old political ties. Farmers and industrial workers began to despise Wall Street and the “money trust.” Free silver, as opposed to the gold standard, became the Populist mantra and cut across party lines. Passed under Republican leadership, the Sherman Silver Purchase Act (1890) committed the federal government to purchasing surplus mined silver for minting. In 1892, the Democrats’ selection of a pro-silver running mate (Adlai Stevenson) eased the re-election of gold-devoted Grover Cleveland to a non-consecutive second presidential term. Facing the Panic of 1893, Cleveland panicked and repealed the Sherman Silver Purchase Act. In this cover cartoon (left) of a January 1896 issue of *Judge*, a satirical pro-Republican weekly, an unsightly “Doctor Cleveland” offers “A Bitter Pill,” as opposed to Sherman’s Ready Relief Protection Tonic (lower right), to an appalled Uncle Sam. The pill, his fourth Treasury “Bond Issue” (higher right), aimed to restore the nation’s depleted gold reserves by increasing federal debt—an unpopular move by which Cleveland hoped to rebuild long-term security. (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists’ Wood Library-Museum of Anesthesiology.)

Jane S. Moon, M.D., University of California, Los Angeles, California, and George S. Bause, M.D., M.P.H., Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio.