

Title: Evolution of the Democratic Party from the Gilded Age
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The American Democratic Party is the world's oldest political party. It goes without saying that since its inception in the 1820s, the party has gone through major ideological shifts. This research paper focuses on the Democratic Party's evolution from the late 1800s to the New Deal era. In about four decades, the Democratic Party went shifted from economic conservatism (under the nickname Bourbon Democrats) to economic liberalism. At the beginning of the Gilded Age, the Democrats were known for being proponents of laissez-faire economics. Democratic politicians refused to provide even a bit of financial aid to farmers in need. President Cleveland famously sent out state militias to quell labor strikes and refused to even consider the idea of a federal jobs program. By the 1940s, the Democratic Party expanded the role of government enormously and created the modern welfare and regulatory state in America. During the Roosevelt administration, the Democratic Party implemented the union laws and jobs programs that they had refused to consider in the 1880s. What was the impetus for this enormous ideological shift? This research essay documents the fiscally conservative Bourbon Democrats of the 1870s and 1880s, the ideological shift that occurred with the nomination of William Jennings Bryan in 1896, the progressive era under Woodrow Wilson, and the Roosevelt administration and the implementation of New Deal policies.

Works Cited

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