**(9:21) Bryan’s “Cross of Gold” Speech: Mesmerizing the Masses**

Source: https://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5354/

**Background:** William Jennings Bryan delivered this speech at the 1896 Democratic Party National Convention. Delegates were debating whether to endorse the coinage of silver as an alternative the gold standard. This would have increased the amount of money in circulation and aided farmers burdened by debt. The next day the convention chose Bryan as the Party’s nominee for President.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. What issue is being debated at the Democratic party National Convention?

2. What position does William Jennings Bryan take in this debate?

3. Who does Bryan claim to represent?

4. In your opinion, why is Bryan referring to when he says, “You shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold”?

A. “I come to speak to you in defense of a cause as holy as the cause of liberty — the cause of humanity . . . Never before in the history of American politics has a great issue been fought out as this issue has been by the voters themselves . . . We do not come as aggressors. Our war is not a war of conquest. We are fighting in the defense of our homes, our families, and posterity. We have petitioned, and our petitions have been scorned. We have entreated, and our entreaties have been disregarded. We have begged, and they have mocked when our calamity came. We beg no longer; we entreat no more; we petition no more. We defy them!”

B. “The principles upon which rest Democracy are as everlasting as the hills; but that they must be applied to new conditions as they arise. Conditions have arisen and we are attempting to meet those conditions . . . You come to us and tell us that the great cities are in favor of the gold standard. I tell you that the great cities rest upon these broad and fertile prairies. Burn down your cities and leave our farms, and your cities will spring up again as if by magic. But destroy our farms and the grass will grow in the streets of every city in the country.”

C. “If they dare to come out in the open field and defend the gold standard as a good thing, we shall fight them to the uttermost, having behind us the producing masses of the nation and the world. Having behind us the commercial interests and the laboring interests and all the toiling masses, we shall answer their demands for a gold standard by saying to them, you shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns. You shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold.”