NO LAUGHING MATTER:

XENOPHOBIA AND ANTI-RADICALISM IN EARLY AMERICAN POLITICAL CARTOONS

by

BIANCA RENEE BISSON

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While political cartoons have a reputation for upholding the tenants of democracy and freedom, the editorial images of the late 19th century and early 20th century show quite the contrary. In fact, they promote elements of early American life such as racism, misogyny and anti-radicalism, and make negative statements about the aspects of society that did not conform to conservative White Anglo-Saxon Protestantism.

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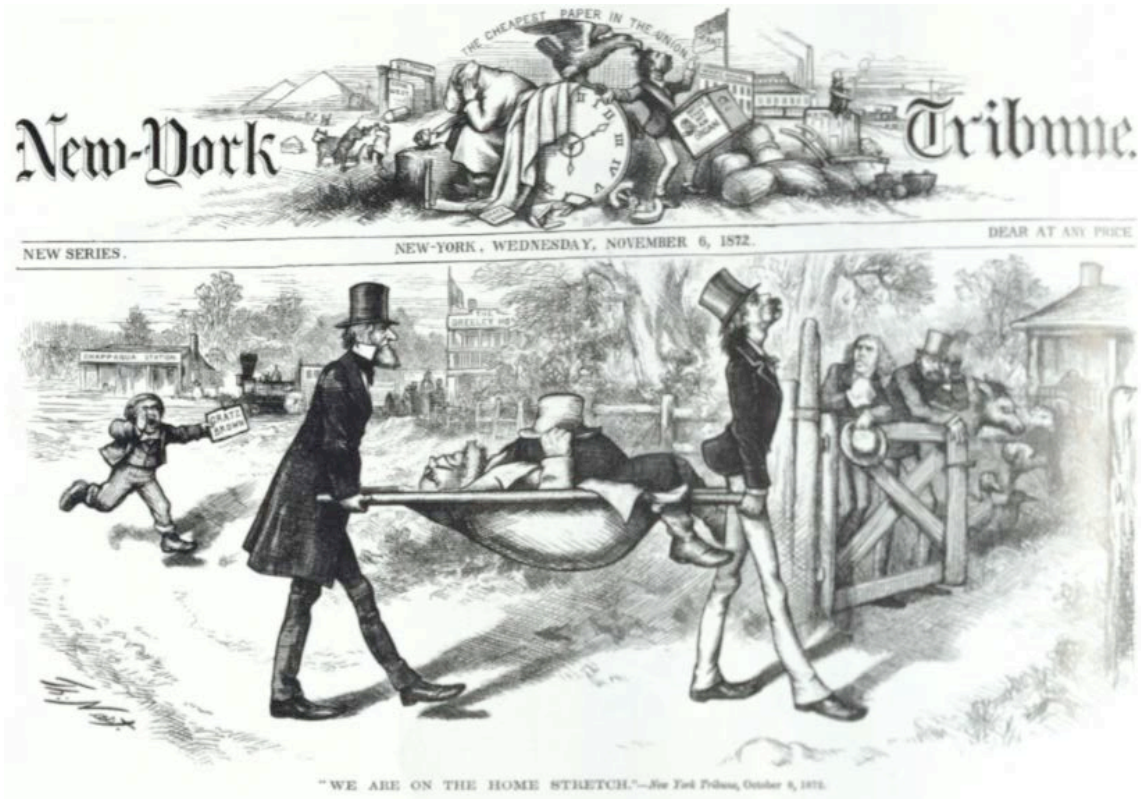
Introduction: The Birth of the "Art of Ill Will"

There exists a misconception that democracy and cartooning are intrinsically correlated. This likely came about because freedom of speech, a necessary tenant of a democratic state, protects the press. Also, cartoons are seen as an accessible and non-elitist form of media since all audiences, regardless of education or class, supposedly can interpret a solitary image. A close study of political cartoons from the Gilded Age, the so-called "Golden Age" of American editorial images and beyond shows an abuse of free speech. In many of these images, one sees how hate speech can thrive in a democratic state such as the United States. Additionally, political cartooning is not even a particularly successful medium, given the elitist cultural references that were used. In fact, the cartoons of the Gilded Age "vividly represent the prejudices of the white, Protestant, middle-class majority, and of regional and partisan factions within that majority" (Edwards 11).

Those who study political cartoons as a form of media continually tout its democratic purity; James Squire, Chicago Tribune editor, once said that cartoonists "represent the most incisive and effective form of commentary known to man", and Scott Long, cartoonist for Minneapolis Tribune said that cartoons made complete the "outspoken, courageous, and independent editorial pages [that are] essential to the survival of democracy" (Dewey 67). While there is some ground to the statements of these scholars of the political cartoon, I aim to show that there is a heavier side to this medium.

Few are the American political cartoons of the past that do not evoke even a smidgen of tragedy or anger. Even the images that are supposed to be funny are likely

to either intentionally or accidentally offend a vast number of people. MacNelly, a Pulitzer Prize winning artist has famously been quoted as insisting, “Many cartoonists would be hired assassins if they couldn’t draw” (Fischer 164). This may be truer than MacNelly intended, seeing as destructively racist images in the mainstream press must have had real negative residual effects. As an example of how political cartoonists honored no limits, one can look at Thomas Nast’s 1872 image of Horace Greeley, who was alive at the time, being carried away dead on a stretcher. Greeley, a Presidential hopeful, was at the time dealing with his wife’s recent death, as well as his own poor health. The inappropriateness of this image speaks for itself.



Thomas Nast, “We Are On the Home Stretch,” *The Granger Collection*, New York, 1872.

One may ponder if Nast's depiction of the emotionally and physically ailing Greeley as deceased is going a step too far in his job as an editorialist. However, in a nation whose very identity rests on its democratic nature, this question is moot. As much as the political cartoon needs democracy to exist, so does democracy require that freedom of press exist. Cartoon scholar Charles Press explains,

> "Democratic governments not only tolerate criticism, but they institutionalize it in such practices as the election, the press conference, the TV talk show, or the editorial page with its cartoons. An assumption of democracy is that government cannot remain democratic without permitting the existence of such critics, independent of the government itself" (Press 57).

On this same note, by allowing freedom of speech to exist, the United States government also therefore institutionalizes it to a degree, therefore maintaining a certain amount of control over it. So, while a democratic government wants its people to feel like they have the freedom to express themselves as they please, and encourages criticism within its system, it is cautious about criticism of the structure as a whole. This is much like an artist offering up their latest work for critique; While they welcome input and complaints about their piece of art, they usually would not welcome a critique that proposes they change the entire medium or structure of their work. Historians Stephen Hess and Sandy Northrop call the political cartoon "the embodiment of the American form of government" (Dewey 67).

Exactly how big an impact cartoons make on a society is debated. Some see them as mere entertainment, while others attribute them with the power of guiding public opinion. Both are valid and perhaps can explain the two different intentions that editorial artists may have: to entertain or to steer their audience to a certain belief. The real purpose of these cartoons, however, at least from a historical perspective, may be to

simply project the popular opinion of the time. A New Yorker in 1890 who sees an anti-Native American image in their newspaper can properly deduce that many of their peers harbor negative feelings towards that group of people.

Since the founding of the United States, cartoonists have been "busy creating an embryonic public opinion that will redistribute a society's political, social, and economic benefits for the greater benefit of the masses" (Press 56). This "embryonic public opinion" shows what people in United States felt negative about, rather than what they felt positive about. Given the criticizing nature of political cartoons, by looking back on the images throughout history, one learns more about what gave many Americans a bad taste in their mouth than what put a smile on it. One could turn this around, for example deducing that a scathingly anti-Catholic cartoon shows how at least some people of the time liked non-Catholic people, instead of merely saying that some people disliked Catholic people.

Either way, a certain person or group of people is portrayed in a negative way. The positive caricature is certainly a rare breed of political cartoon. David Low's book *Ye Madde Designer* talks about the caricature of a person or group in political cartoons. He writes,

> "If you look into either side of a spoon you get a distortion of your face. This is what such meaningless caricature…achieves—distortion just for the sake of showing the artist's cleverness. But real caricature, he argues, distorts in order to hammer home what the artist regards as the essential truth about an individual. At one point, Low says, the caricature may in fact look more like the person he or she really is than he or she does" (Press 63).

Part One: Background

History

American cartoonist Jules Feiffer once said, “Outside of basic intelligence, there is nothing more important to a good political cartoonist than ill will”. This philosophy rings true for a vast majority of the body of political cartoon art, starting from the medium’s very beginnings.

Though it is likely humans have been creating opinionated images since they first figured out they could draw, the first known political cartoons are attributed to an early 1300’s B.C. artist who depicted Egyptian King Akhenaton (Press 33). Akhenaton, most popularly known for being King Tutankhamen’s father, apparently had a strange physiognomy, which made him an easy target for caricature. Fast-forwarding three thousand years to 1747, the American colonies produced their first political cartoon in the form of Benjamin Franklin’s “Plain Truth”. This unenthusiastic image shows a colonist struggling to get his cart out of mud, looking up to Hercules, who is in the sky, for help. It is accompanied with the caption “He that won’t help himself will have help from no body”. Franklin produced with this image in light of negligence on the part of the British rulers. He aimed to persuade his fellow colonists that they must act in their own defense against threats such as attacks from Native Americans, because the British will not come to their aid.

One of the first political cartoons widely circulated in the United States was published in 1754. Also by Benjamin Franklin, “Join or Die” displayed a snake divided into sections representing the different northern colonies of the time. The drawing is

generally misconceived to show how the regions must unite in order to stand up to the British. True, the picture was eventually reused to help urge people to do just this, but the initial purpose was different. Franklin's intent was similar to the intent of "Plain Truth", to point to the importance of unifying in order to overcome impending attacks from Iroquois in the region (Dewey 2). Interestingly, the man who engraved this cartoon, therefore allowing it to be reproduced, was Paul Revere. Years later, Revere engraved an inflammatory depiction of the Boston Massacre, and another image of five solemn coffins, representing the men who died as a result of the incident. The image of the historic "shot heard 'round the world" is clearly editorialized. A number of aggressive-looking British soldiers fire on a completely passive crowd of colonists, not even armed with pebbles. The message is simple: the British are evil and the colonists are innocent. This image may be the first to convey such a seriously blatant political statement.

Paul Revere, "The Bloody Massacre Perpetrated in King Street, Boston," 1770.

Before the 1820's cartooning to make political statements remained a rare enough art, due to the difficulty of reproducing work by way of wood or copper cuts (Dewey 4). What really gave the political cartoon life was the invention of lithography, which made the printing of images far easier for magazines and publishing companies. Lithography was invented in Germany by Aloys Senefelder in 1796, and understandably took some time to make its way to popular use in the United States (Press 44). When it did, it indeed did make news printing far more accommodating to publishing pictures, therefore forever changing the way political cartoons would be

produced and consumed as a popular form of media. The invention of the lithograph liberated the political cartoon from the confines of the wood or copper engraving, and from the world of minimal to mass production. From 1819, when it is likely the first instance of using lithography in the press occurred, onward, editorial cartooning inched closer and closer to becoming an integral part of newspapers and magazines and a relatively accessible form of political and social critique.

American historian Isabel Johnson references the "Era of Good Feeling" that came after the War of 1812. She points out that during this time, the United States saw a notable lag in the production of cartoons. This is because there was a dive in political conflict. Johnson insists, "Controversy is the cartoonist's staff of life; he starves in times of 'brotherly love'" (Johnson 35). Without vast conflict, cartoonists remain uninspired. Charles Press supports this view. According to Press, there were only two notable cartoons produced in the colonies before 1830. These were Ben Franklin's "Join or Die" and the also famous "Gerry-mander", by Elkanah Tisdale. Press considers the cartoons released during the period of time between the 1830s and the 1880s to lack political zest or originality (Press 235-236). They were too wordy, full of exhausting puns, lacking originality, and perhaps most importantly, not aggressive enough in their critique (Press 236-237). The best example of lackluster nature of the images this time period are those produced by the publisher Currier and Ives. In Currier and Ives cartoons, imagery is largely absent, probably to make space for long-winded speech bubbles that are quite hard, and sometimes impossible, to read.

Currier and Ives, "The National Game. Three Outs and One Run. Abraham Winning the Ball," 1860.

Controversial events, such as Lincoln's presidency and the Civil War contributed to the cartoon's progression;

> "A combination of technical, market, political, and cultural factors enabled political cartooning to reach its peak of craft and influence during the post-Civil War decades. In these years, engraving and printing techniques grew inexpensive enough that magazines could afford routinely to run elaborate engravings, with no real competition yet from photography" (Culbertson 277).

During this time, editorial artists had the choice to either become more daring, or to accept relative anonymity. One cartoonist who arrived in America in 1850, Frank Bellew "fell short of starting a renaissance in political cartoons, despite his artistic skills, because he had nothing in particular that he felt very excited about...Bellew's work continues to display the same artistic originality without saying very much politically" (Press 243). One cartoonist who rose to the challenge is Thomas Nast, an

Austrian immigrant and former-Catholic who produced some of the most offensive images in the United States' political cartoon history, and paved the way for many others to follow suit.

Press writes, "from the beginning Nast showed an inclination to use cartoon comment in the aid of a great moral crusade. He was preachy" (Press 246). However, Nast's style changed drastically from the Civil War to the 1870s. His pictures changed from allegorical and passively tragic to representative of real figures and highly aggressive. One can note this transition by comparing his early image "Christmas Eve", which shows a family sadly broken apart by war, to the aforementioned portrayal of Horace Greeley, a cartoon Nast produced in the later part of his career.

Thomas Nast, "Christmas Eve," *Harper's Weekly*, 1863.

For Thomas Nast, this change in style was pivotal to the notoriety of his career. By the end of his professional life, two different United States Presidents have given

Thomas Nast credit for their successes; Ulysses Grant once said, the "two things elected me were the sword of Sheridan and the pencil of Thomas Nast", and Abraham Lincoln called the cartoonist his greatest recruiting sergeant (Fischer 26). His drawings are also attributed to ending the career of William Tweed, a corrupt New York City politician.

Another artist who stood out during this time was Walt McDougall. He became the first cartoonist to be employed regularly by a daily newspaper. He created an image that was simple enough to endure thousands of prints without falling apart, while still being interesting enough to catch readers' attention. McDougall initially sold his cartoon to the *Extra* in 1884 and then to Pulitzer's the *World* later that year. When Pulitzer realized how having a regular cartoonist on his editorial staff could increase his newspaper's audience, he offered a steady job to McDougall (Press 264). Simple drawings could produce more prints, technologically speaking, and this is a big part of the reason why Pulitzer gave McDougall the first paid daily newspaper position (Press 47).

When daily newspapers became a more widespread form of media, cartoonists were faced with stricter deadlines. No longer could they produce images on their own timeline. Now, artists had to simplify their pieces and speed up their creative processes. The new deadline rush of daily newspapers hurt some cartoonists who could not make this adaptation. Press talks about Fred Opper, "An interesting study…whose drawings became more and more simplistic as the years went on, presumably on the assumption that fancy art work detracted from, rather than added to, the impact of the idea" (Press 265). While cartoonists like Opper adjusted successfully, decreasing artistic complication and increasing the political message, not everyone could keep up with the

changing style demands. By the turn of the century, an increased competition in the field made it so “cartoonists more and more needed a little political sophistication” in order to stand out (Press 267).

Accessibility

Some insist there is a certain accessibility to cartooning that does not exist as much either in the field of art as a whole or in politics. In “The Art of Ill Will” Donald Dewey talks about “the trauma of missing out on the academy” in terms of the layman’s nature of political cartoons. He implies of cartoonists of the past that “their self-teaching was an indispensable component of their style” (Dewey 8). He goes even further on this point by proposing that the lack of prestige associated with cartooning lies at its very core; “the experience that makes a cartoonist a better draftsman as he matures also usually coincides with a dulling of his political passions, making him less potent as a graphic commentator overall” (Dewey 8). The importance of a political cartoon is not necessarily found in the creator’s artistic prowess but in their wit and ability to convey an attention-catching idea. Fischer notes a ”simple political illiteracy among cartoonists…Many of them had come from Europe as adults and never fully mastered the idiom and culture of American politics; Frederick Graetz of Puck never even learned the language. Even American-born artists drifted into the trade because they could draw, not because they were driven by a keen political curiosity” (Fischer 46).

This conception that political cartoons are a unique form of conveying information in that they are accessible to all people, regardless of literacy and education, is fairly inaccurate, however. On the contrary, an even brief glance at the early American cartoons shows how large a role text played in the images. As Dewey

points out in his book, and as one can see in the Currier and Ives image, “Rare was the caricature that didn’t come with a name tag, brand stamp, or ballooned remark; rarer still the cartoon panel that didn’t look like an exercise in comparative calligraphy” (Dewey 21). Not only was great amount of text a part of many early political cartoons, the images often made references to literary sources such as Dante or Shakespeare, a jump that less educated people would perhaps not make sense of. As political cartooning became more widespread, however, using large amounts of text became less common.

The belief that the works of renowned cartoonists such as Thomas Nast reached out directly to lower class people is not valid. One could actually argue that the consumers of newspapers, and therefore political cartoons, were likely to have been at least slightly educated and better off. This is because they not only had to have money to spare to purchase publications, but also the time to spare to consume them. William Tweed, the wealthy and potentially corrupt target of Nast’s aggressive graphic editorials, allegedly said, “I don’t care so much what the papers write about me. My constituents can’t read. But, damn it, they can see pictures” (Dewey 22). Dewey points out, “If Tweed worried about his street sweepers, longshoremen, and delivery boys seeing Nast’s hideous caricatures of him and his cronies in the periodical, it wasn’t because that rank and file subscribed to it in great numbers or couldn’t wait to dip into a tight family budget to buy a copy to see how he had been ridiculed” (Dewey 23).

As time progressed the way cartoonists made references to popular culture changed. In the beginning of America’s history with political cartoons the artists made frequent allusions to literary metaphors such as Shakespeare, Aesop, or Dante’s Inferno.

Perhaps a change to referring to less elite cultural images was a result of reaching out to a less-educated audience. Indeed as Dewey writes, “Previously commonplace metaphors from mythological, classical, and Shakespearian sources gradually ceded the field to references from the sports world, the circus, minstrelsy, and other mass entertainment and pastimes” (Dewey 41).

Part Two: Early Symbols

The first popular image used to portray the United States was a "Pocahontas type Indian girl, used by the British (Press 209). This is interesting in light of the way American political cartoonists would later portray Native Americans in an extremely negative light. Other former symbols used to represent the United States include, "the figure of a bucking horse, a beaver, a codfish, a deer, and a pine tree" (Press 209). Though animals continued to be used to represent certain people or political parties throughout United States history, the main symbols used to portray the country as a whole are, of course, Uncle Sam and Lady Liberty.

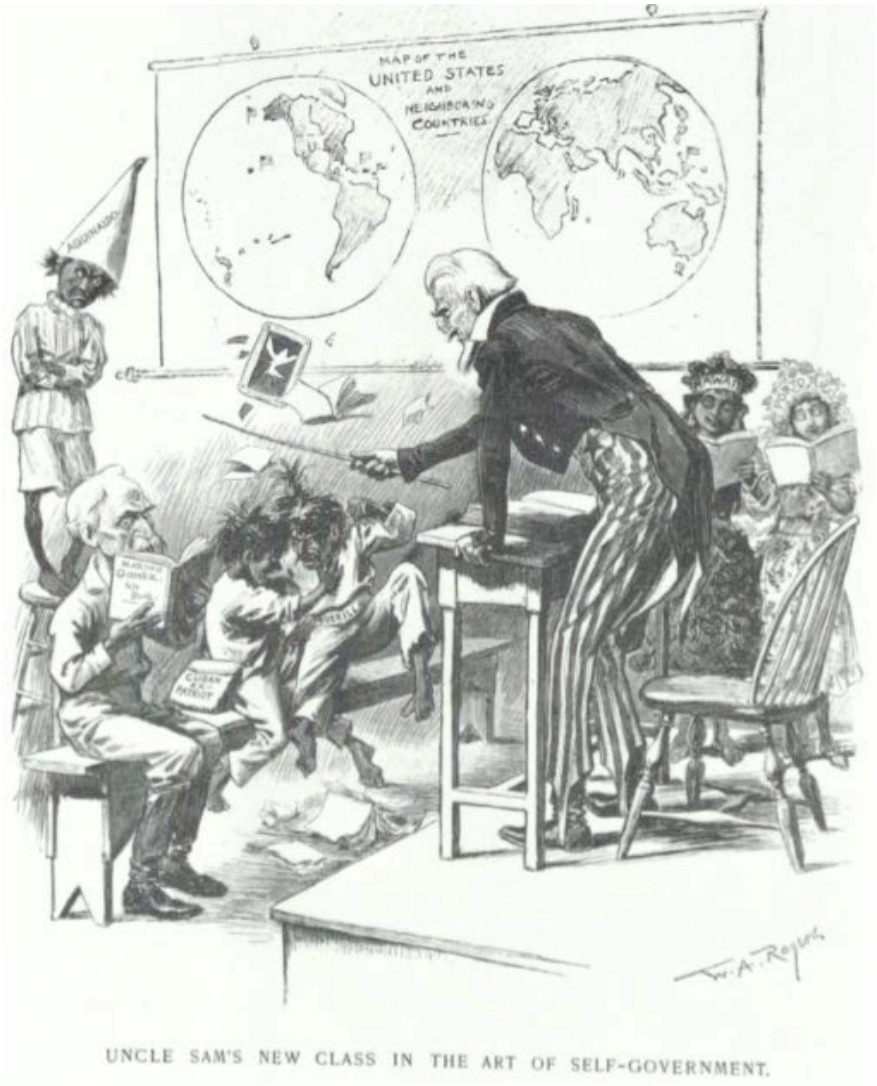
Evolution of Uncle Sam

The first symbol of the colonies was one perpetuated by the British. Yankee Doodle was "a snide image of the colonists as coarse rubes" (Dewey 13). A British army surgeon supposedly created the trope of Yankee Doodle during the French and Indian War, and intended it to be offensive to those who he considered foolhardy colonists.

The symbol of Uncle Sam was derived from an earlier motif, called Brother Jonathan, who represented the common American man. Uncle Sam's most popular image, the "I want you!" cartoon shows his role as a rallying figure for the United States military. Similarly, Brother Jonathan has been depicted as such. In a political cartoon drawn by Edward Clay in 1846, Jonathan is shown threatening the general of Mexico, accusing him of trying to steal Jonathan's "new boot", or what would be the state of Texas (Dewey 15). Jonathan perpetuated a rough and ready image of United

States men, which was perhaps exactly what they themselves wanted to see. Besides being portrayed as tough and confident enough to kick General Santa Anna out of Texas, Jonathan is also in another cartoon, forcibly yet whimsically pouring alcohol down the throat of John Bull, who was a common symbol for Britain. Eventually the more dignified Uncle Sam replaced Brother Jonathan. Where Uncle Sam represented a more institutional figure, Brother Jonathan "was always the People as opposed to the Government, going out of his way to hoodwink the latter" (Dewey 15). John Q. Public, another character who preceded Uncle Sam, shared characteristics with Brother Jonathan, as he represented the common man, versus the Untied States government (Press 222). True, Sam was dignified in contrast to the John's. This concept is amusing in light of a popular rumor that the appearance of Uncle Sam was borrowed from a circus clown named Dan Rice, who donned the same facial hair and outfit as the most prominent American symbol would (Dewey 15).

Uncle Sam, "in this early period...is continuously associated in cartoons with such practical matters as money, taxes, banks, tax collectors, and custom houses. He smacks of both government and dollars right from the start" (Press 219). He is also shown in largely ethnocentric settings; For example, in one blatantly paternalistic cartoon, Uncle Sam is shown as a teacher, struggling to control a classroom full of squirming and misbehaving children, who are represented as various different nationalities. The Philippines' Aguinaldo is standing on a stool in the corner wearing a dunce cap, while Cubans fight each other in the front row desks. In the corner two girls representing Hawaii and Puerto Rico sit obediently reading (Dewey 44).



W.A. Rogers, "Uncle Sam's New Class," *The Granger Collection*, New York, 1900.

In another particularly imperialistic image that was produced by William Walker in response to the United States' invasion of the Philippines, Uncle Sam is seen wrestling a tiny angry caricature of Filipino leader Emilio Aguinaldo. Aguinaldo is portrayed as crazed, with a sash labeling him as an "insurgent". The caption beneath says "A Bigger Job Than He Thought For" and Uncle Sam is saying "Behave, You Fool! Durn Me, If I Ain't Most Sorry I Undertook to Rescue You" (Dewey 43). The image of Aguinaldo child-sized, with his mouth open in a shout, a knife raised above

his head, while pulling at Uncle Sam's beard says much about the attitude towards Filipinos at the time. This attitude can be summed up as uncivilized and ungrateful of the United States' intervention.

William Carson, "A Bigger Job Than He Thought For," *The Granger Collection*, New York.

A cartoon titled "The Cuban Melodrama" portrays Uncle Sam as a valiant hero, saving a beautiful damsel-in-distress labeled "Cuba" from a sinister looking villain, who is Spain. Once again, Uncle Sam, or the American government, is shown as the good-intentioned savior.

C. Jay Taylor, "Cuban Melodrama." *The Granger Collection*, New York, 1896.

"To some critics...the Uncle Sam symbol verges too far on the chauvinistic patriotic". Reasonably enough, one scholar of cartoons Nevins, for example, insists that Uncle Sam "gives off the air of jingoistic Manifest Destiny" (Press 230). One can easily see that Nevins did not pull this argument out of thin air.

Lady Liberty

The image of the lady Colombia preceded that of Liberty. Colombia represented the softer, more innocent side of the United States as a whole, and began appearing in early political cartoons soon after the establishment of the nation. Usually wearing gowns that accentuated her womanhood, Colombia as a motif supports common ideas

about the moral nature of the country at the time. Her ultra-feminine appearance was likely intended to cater to male Americans. Also, as could be expected, her features are strikingly white. Her image persists well into the twentieth century. This should come across as odd, seeing as Colombia was used as a symbol to represent the country, namely the people living in it, United States was home to both women and a multitude of different ethnicities. Dewey points out this contradiction effectively;

> "The graphically portrayed Colombia became increasingly obtrusive in its elusive combination of the ethereal and the sensual while the United States was persuading itself it was the land of the common man (underline *man*). She came across as especially awkward, and for more reasons than racism, when Nast and other cartoonists drew her alongside such ethnic stereotypes as Chinese coolies and Italian organ grinders" (Dewey 13).

Colombia, eventually portrayed in the form of Lady Liberty, was used in political cartoons to represent the purity of American values that may be at stake in the face of a certain threat, be it a big business or an enemy in war. Colombia and Liberty contrasted greatly with their male counterpart, Uncle Sam who, as already discussed, represented the United States government in an official manner.

"A Woman Always Feels Better In A New Hat" is an image by L.D. Warren that "explored the outer limits of both Cold War ideology and male chauvinism by drawing a lovely Miss Liberty with hand mirror beaming her approval of a new spiked crown festooned with Safeguard missiles" (Fischer 160). The Statue of Liberty is shown shedding tears in some images in a display of feminine emotion. One in particular was produced by Ray Osrin in response to the Ayatollah Khoumeini hostages being released, and shows Liberty crying tears of relief (Fischer 163).

Liberty can be viewed as “a secular equivalent to the Blessed Virgin in Roman Catholic cultures” (Fischer 165).

> “Just as impossible to envision Mary taking cartoon pitfalls or engaging in bawdy or bathroom activities, or even giving vent to human emotions other than maternal love and grief and Christian piety and compassion, American cartoonists drawing for mass audiences have found it difficult to defy personal and societal restraints and take truly indecent liberties with this First Lady of American national symbolism” (Fischer 165).

Though in the United States press, Liberty would not be portrayed in an impure manner, as on could guess, other nations have had no qualms portraying Liberty in compromising or indecent situations.

Women in general were portrayed in cartoons in the same manner as Liberty, that is, infrequently and only in context that underlined their fragile moral purity. Support for the Nineteenth Amendment was patchy at best among the political cartoonists of the day. This may have been in part due to the obvious lack of female editorial cartoonists, or just the lack of an entertainment factor of the issue. For the most part, the only prominent female cartoonists in the first half of the twentieth century were those who produced work pertaining to the women’s suffrage movement. A sad image, titled “Hugging A Delusion” shows a woman in a rocking chair, with her eyes closed and cradling a large roll of paper labeled “The Ballot” in her arms like a sick child.

Laura Foster, "Hugging a Delusion," *The Granger Collection*, New York, 1915.

Following the passage of the amendment in 1920, Dewey writes, "the bittersweet consequence was that editors had all the excuse they needed not to hire more women as cartoonists since *their* issue had been resolved" (Dewey 50).

The way Colombia and Liberty were portrayed in political cartoons says much about portrayals of other woman. For the most part, women remained absent from prominent roles in editorial images, both as subjects and artists. This can be explained by the isolation of women from mainstream political for the most part, as well as the field of political cartooning. It was not even until 1972 that the first woman secured a job as a staff cartoonist for a significant newspaper (Dewey 50). The times that women were used as characters in graphics, they usually served as empty shells to represent political bodies, always in a condescending way; "The typical *Puck* drawing was one

that placed a group of politicians in a ridiculous and, if possible, an embarrassing pose. The piece de resistance was dressing men up in women's clothing" (Press 256).

Joseph Keppler, "The Contest of Beauty," *Puck*. 1884.

Part Three: The Destructive Satirical

W.A. Coupe, a cartoon historian, defined three main categories of editorial images: the descriptive, the laughing satirical, and destructive satirical (Press 75). While the first two categories are somewhat self-explanatory and un-inflammatory, destructive satirical "projects hatred and loathing...the message says unmistakably 'These creatures that I criticize are not human; they should not be allowed to exist'" (Press 75-76). It is this type that one may find American cartoons to be the most characteristic of, for the most part in the form of xenophobia. Surely, calling the rampantly racist cartoons of the late twentieth century "destructive satire" is accurate.

Themes of racism run rampant through political cartoons of both early and recent times. Early artists had a penchant for showing non-WASPs in a negative light. An explanation used to describe why exactly such racist cartoons appeared so regularly, though they did not necessarily have a propagandistic goal, is that publications often needed filler pieces to plug into empty space at the last minute. Furthermore, "filler pieces based on familiar foibles and character flaws of those alien elements in the population are often ignored by many scholars because they seemed to serve little outward political purpose" (Fischer 71) However, one could interpret this excuse of needing "filler pieces" as half-hearted, for they would not have been published if a publication's audience did not find them amusing and worth spending their money and time to consume. These "destructive" images show how many consumers of newspapers were compliant and supportive of certain xenophobic ideals. Historian Roger Fischer stresses that these images simply did not have any cultural or historical

context. This is a careless argument, seeing as newspapers would not intentionally carelessly offend their readership, wholly out of concern for losing profits.

Fischer writes further, “such cartoons were apparently valued by editors primarily for the empty white spaced they would fill, without the slightest regard to overall editorial or political purpose,” and because of the spontaneous nature of the use of filler art, there were often cases of cartoons contradicting editorial text on the same page (Fischer 71).

> “Puck, for example, features many brilliant color cartoons championing the Jews and lampooning the absurdity of their exclusion from places of public accommodation...Yet not uncommonly, the same issues contained scurrilous filler cartoons making mock of Shylockian grotesqueries of shekel over soul. Judge, typically Republican in its solicitous regard for black GOP voters in the South and ever willing to wave the bloody shirt over racial atrocities it could link to the Democrats, consistently ran the most outrageously white supremacist filler art of any periodical of the time” (Fischer 71).

Perhaps this merely shows the contrasting views of Americans, between those who viewed vivid minstrel-esque racism in cartoons as outdated, and those who viewed it as entertaining.

One point of many of these cartoons, whether intentional or not, was to show how immigrants or non-white people went against the “American character”. Plainly, they show the various ways these groups simply could not fit in with European Protestant culture, in particular, work ethic. In his book, Fischer talks about “Puritan or Yankee work ethic”, and how much of the racist cartoons can be viewed in light of the contrast in how certain groups go about labor. In a country whose proudest boast is probably that anyone can succeed so long as they put in the labor, the virtue of a good work ethic has been coveted since day one;

> "The sanctity of honest toil, with concomitant material and spiritual rewards in this world and the next, was rooted deep in European Protestant culture before the first colonials slogged ashore at Jamestown and Plymouth, and no article of faith served better the challenge of a sprawling subcontinent awaiting a rendezvous with ax and plow".

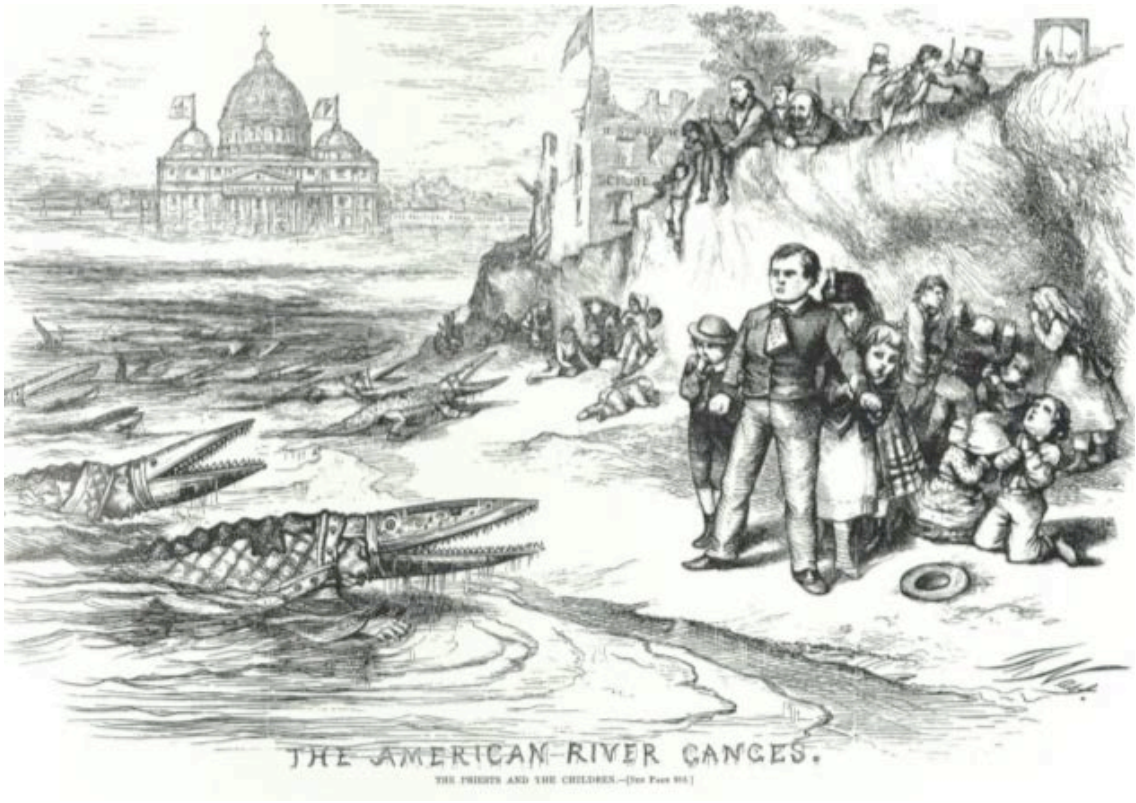
There even exists the proposition that a key reason that Abraham Lincoln managed to gain the support of many northern whites prior to the Civil War was "less because slavery exploited blacks than because it encouraged idleness and extravagance in their owners" (Fischer 81).

Besides pointing out certain groups as against American work ethic, the so-called filler cartoons were just plain mean. It does not appear that there were any consequences, at least around the turn of the twentieth century for portraying someone as sub-human based on their ethnic or religious identity, and subsequently, cartoonists let loose with their religious and ethnic persecution. There were no limits to the offense; "Exaggerated drawings of an individual's deformities were hailed as the height of humor. The more malignantly cruel, the funnier the drawing was deemed to be" (Johnson 21).

Catholics and Mormons

Though Thomas Nast produced many scathing images that evoked racist undertones (or overtones), one of the most aggressive is titled, "The American River Ganges". Published in 1871 and meant to address the issue of privatizing New York schools, the cartoon is bitingly anti-Catholic. "The American River Ganges" shows a hoard of crocodiles emerging out of a river to attack a teacher, who is holding a bible and protecting a group of terrified children. A closer look reveals that the predatory

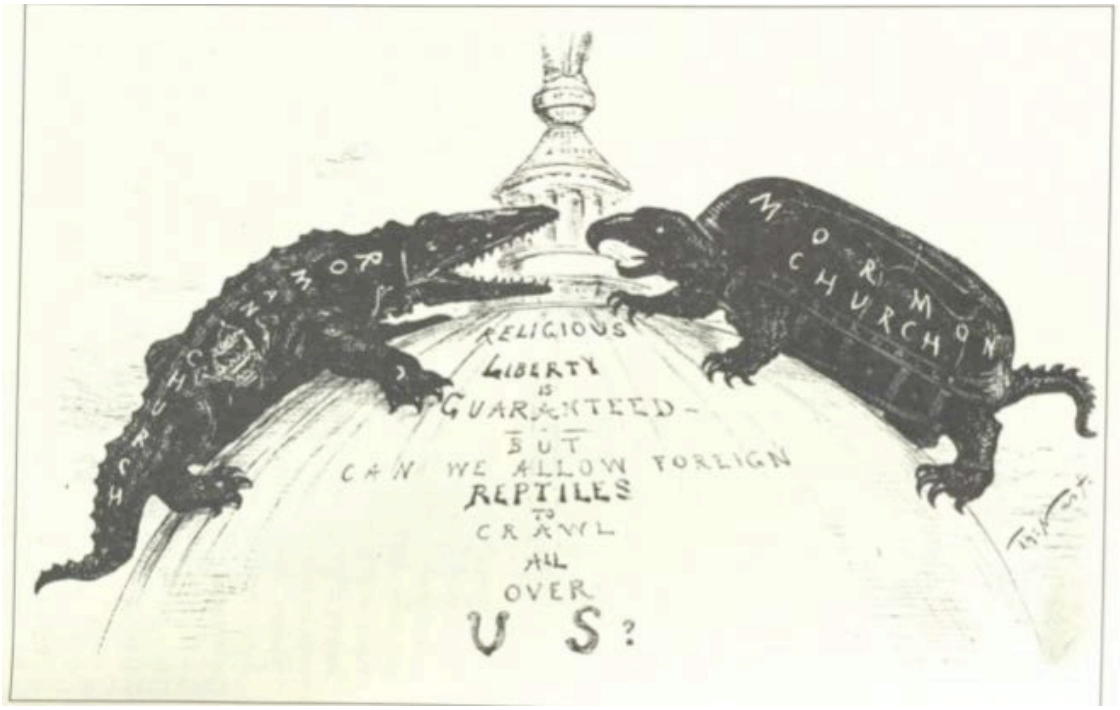
reptiles are actually Catholic bishops, crawling through the river's shores with their pointy hats shaped as crocodile's jowls (Dewey 29).



Thomas Nast, "The American River Ganges," *The Granger Collection*, New York, 1871.

Charles Press writes that Nast "spoke for the small-town Protestant who, through the capitalist ethic of hard work and sobriety, was transforming America into the New Jerusalem" (Press 246). Nast seemed to be "convinced that America's destiny would be achieved through liberal and secular Protestantism" (Press 247).

Another case of religious antagonism can be seen in how Keppler dealt with Mormonism. In one cartoon he shows Mormon reptiles crawling over the Capitol building with a caption, inquiring if "we can allow foreign reptiles to crawl all over US?" (Dewey 30). Of course Mormonism is not actually a foreign religion, seeing as it was founded in the United States.



Thomas Nast, "Foreign Reptiles," *Harper's Weekly*, 1870.

A cartoon produced immediately following Mormon leader Brigham Young's death shows a giant bed filled with Young's dozen "wives" crying into handkerchiefs. Though the image has no caption, the aim of its creator is clear, that this religion is a ridiculous joke.

Joseph Keppler, "In Memoriam Brigham Young," *Puck*. 1877.

Irish Immigrants

Irish Americans also were cast in a negative light by many political cartoonists of the past. "The Sooner the Better", a graphic drawn by Frederick Opper, shows an Irishman asking for donations to go towards helping Ireland. The person he asks responds, "Help Ireland, is it? Begorra, the best way to help Ireland wud be for you an' the likes of ye to *die* for Ireland" (Dewey 32). As in this image, much of the editorial harassment was directed more specifically toward Catholic Irish and took place during the fight for home rule from Britain.

Though the filler cartoons that negatively portrayed the Irish were less benign than those caricaturing blacks, they still introduced interesting sentiments of the time, particularly about views on labor (Fischer 76). Many of the anti-Irish art victimized employers and made laborers out to be predatory; "In these cartoons the major menace

was the tyranny exerted by Irish janitors and housemaids against hapless employers" (Fischer 76). "A common theme in these cartoons was that of the tyrannical servant Maggie or Bridget bullying her poor mistress into performing the household drudgery. But the emphasis here was on the maid's Celtic belligerence, not laziness" (Fischer 88).

The imaged titled "Ready for Business", produced in 1884, shows an Irish man portrayed with monkey-like facial features as he stands for sale on a slave trader's block (Edwards 12). This "orang-outang Celt, all jaw, no brain" was an image whose creation has been attributed to Thomas Nast. In celebration of St. Patrick's Day in 1867, Nast portrayed "ape faces Irish thugs brutally clubbing New York's finest". Other artists perpetuated this image. Almost twenty years later, John Appel rang in the same holiday by portraying St. Patrick as a drunk, disheveled and monkey-faced Catholic priest (Keane 850-851). Edwards notes in his paper on American political cartoons that although "today no one considers the Irish Americans a separate race… To many nineteenth-century Americans the Irish appeared to have distinctive physical features". Some may believe that this tendency to degrade certain ethnicities by exaggerating and morphing their features to appear ape-like stemmed from Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. However, cartoon artists began portraying their subjects as monkey-like long before Darwin made his findings public. In fact, one of the reasons why people were reluctant to accept the proposition that they descended from apes was because of the time-tested tendency to associate lower status ethnicities as monkey-like (Edwards 12).

Artist Unknown, "Ready for Business: To Go To The Highest Bidder," *Puck*, 23 July 1884.

However, as time passed a phenomenon that American history cartoonist calls "the whitening" of Irish American immigrants arose. He argues, "seeking Irish working class votes, Democrats helped define the new immigrants as a white ethnic group rather than a race" (Edwards 11). Sure enough, twenty years following Opper's portrayal of St. Patrick as a blubbering drunkard, in 1904 the Irish saint appeared on his namesake holiday as a "whimsical leprechaun, a friendly, pixie-like creature" (Keane 851).

Black Americans

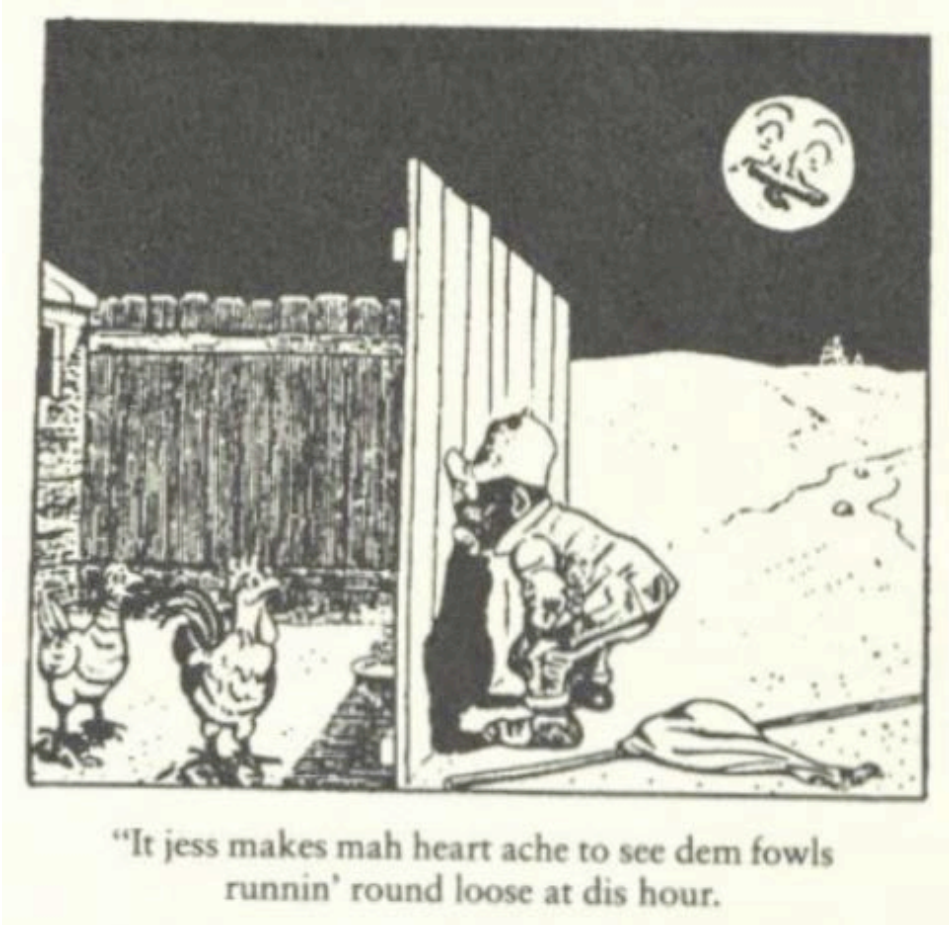
Blacks in particular bore the brunt of much of the negative racial stereotypes that appeared in political cartoons. The images clearly accuse American blacks of being dim-witted and dirty. Many of the graphics portray blacks as being obsessed with stealing watermelons and chickens, as well as getting out of work.

One cartoon titled “Between Two Loves” shows a black man in ragged clothes holding two giant watermelons and staring at a chicken on the ground, confused about how he should go about stealing it what with both his arms full (Dewey 31). The caption shows the subject as asking “Kin any one tell a po culled man what to do in a case like dis?” The image not only implies that black men have a tendency to steal, but that they are not smart enough to deal with such an overwhelming situation as the one presented. The author is saying that a problem as simple as choosing whether to steal a chicken or two watermelons is just about as complicated a conundrum that a black person can fathom to undertake.

Syd B. Griffin, "Between Two Loves," *Judge*, September 30, 1893.

In another cartoon that addresses the matter of chicken-stealing, a caricaturized man is shown peering through a crack in a fence at a pair of chickens, saying aloud to himself, "It jess makes mah heart ache to see dem fowls runnin' loose at dis hour". In the night sky above his head, the white-faced moon is looking down and smirking. The image continues for three more panels, which end in him devising a way to catapult a chicken over to his side of the fence. The trope in political cartoons of the past that black people could often be found going around robbing from better-off people,

probably whites, is maligned for a greater reason than the obvious. It implies that blacks do not have any chickens or watermelons of their own, and are therefore driven to steal. Also, one would maybe inquire why blacks were not portrayed stealing more valuable objects than plants and animals. The artists of these images would perhaps answer that blacks did not have the intelligence or prowess to undertake any larger operation than robbing from a garden.



F.M. Howarth, "Where There's a Will," *Puck*, March 20, 1895.

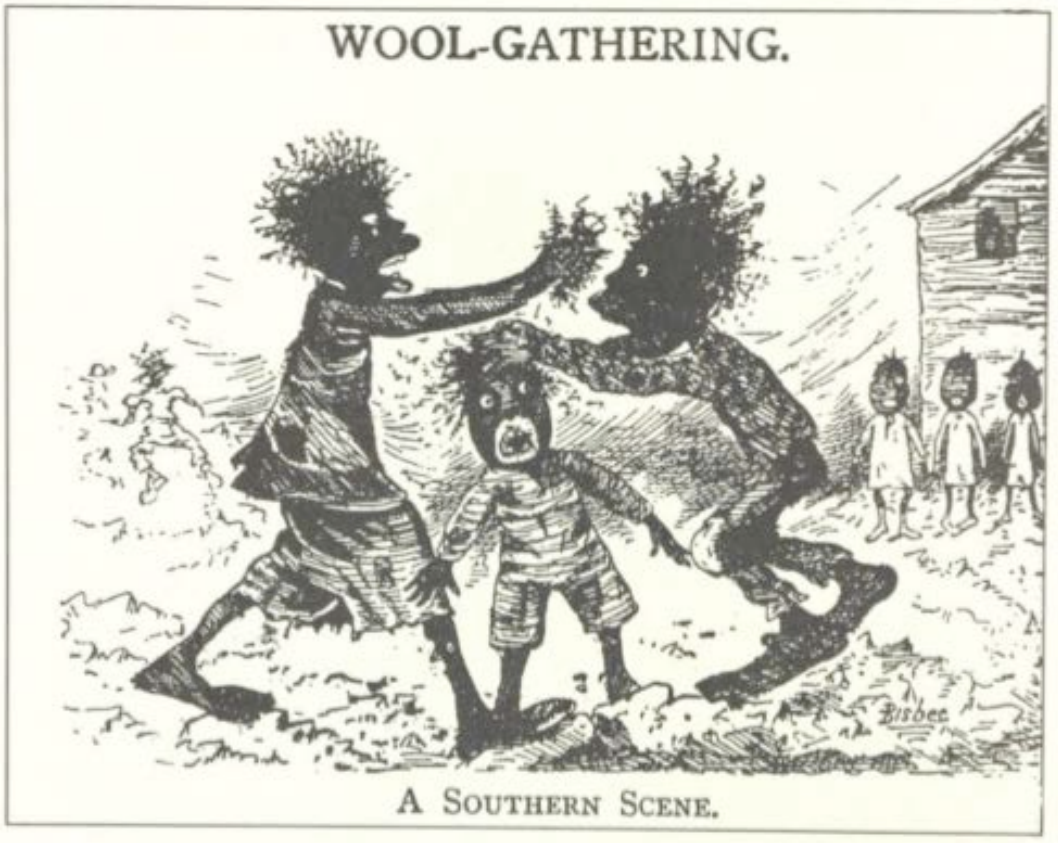
In cartoons of the late nineteenth century, blacks are repeatedly shown as being a "blight antithesis" to American work ethic (Fischer 82). In 1881 Puck published a cartoons showing a black footman who has tied a duster to a horse's flicking tail, as an

effort to cut down on his own labor. The caption shows the man as saying, “If dem flies wan’s ter be ser mighty busy, dey jes’ might help yer coon do hes wu’k!” (Fischer 83).

Artist Unknown, “One-Horse Power,” *Puck*, July 18, 1888.

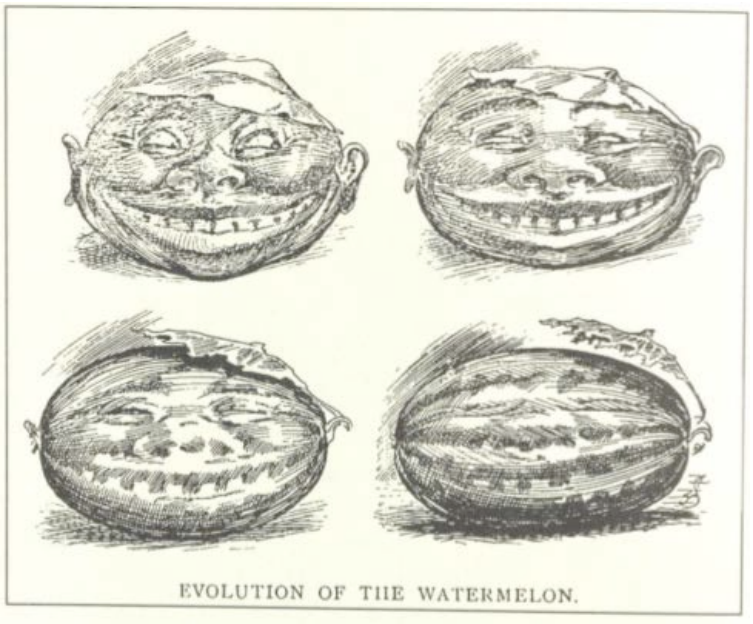
One cartoon published in 1880 portrays three blacks eagerly pulling the hair out of each other’s heads, adorned with the title “Wool-Gathering: a Southern Scene” (Fischer 74). This is another example of a cartoonist’s attempt to show their subjects as being lazy or unable to undertake laborious tasks, seeing as all the image’s characters need to do in order to collect wool is to reach for their friend’s head. Perhaps the worst element of this cartoon is that it also makes the statement that black people in the South

do not have human hair, but instead grow wool, as farm animals do. Also, the artists show the three subjects of the image, two adults and one child, as completely apathetic to the fact that they are hurting one another.



E.S. Bisbee, "Wool Gathering," *Puck*, April 28, 1880.

Yet another dehumanizing image, called "Evolution of the Watermelon", shows just that: a black man's fact in four stages as his features slowly morph into that of a melon.



Artist Unknown, "Evolution of the Watermelon," *Judge*, September 17, 1892.

Images of caricatured blacks obsessing over watermelons, chickens, petty theft, and generally being lazy are harmful in many ways, but they do not carry the worst message of all. Fischer writes of "situational satire that sank as low as cartoons of alligators gobbling up little black children with legends such as 'Nigger Savings Bank' and 'A Splendid Opening for a Southern Youth'" (Fischer 72). Portrayals of parents intentionally letting their children die are truly denigrating and not even the least bit funny. Take the cartoon titled "Mississippi Martyrs", drawn by E.S. Brisbee in 1882, which shows a woman taking refuge on the room of her dilapidated shack during a flood. She is yelling down to a rescuer who is attempting to help save her drowning children, that he should leave them and save her pig instead. "It's plenty of thim I have! Save me pig, for it's the only wan" (Fischer 100).

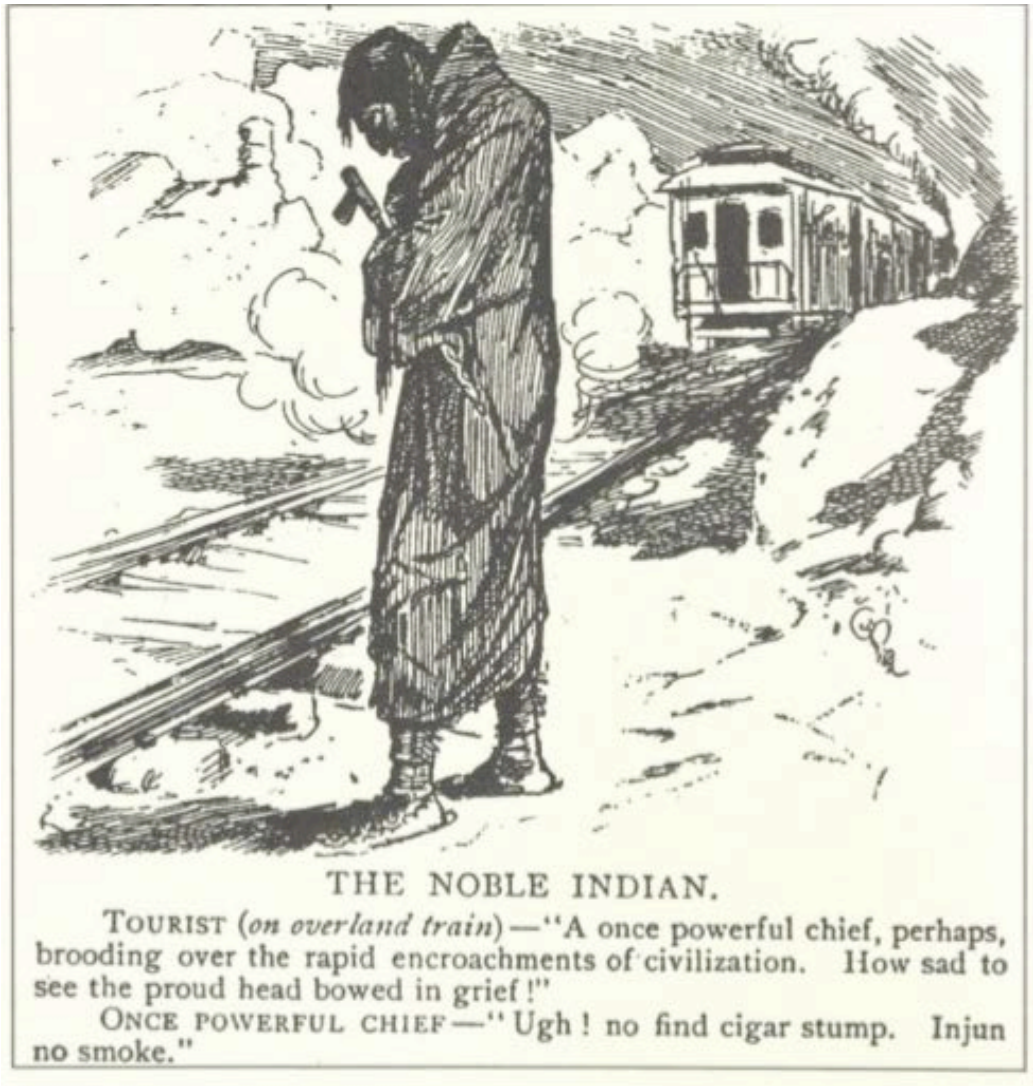
A key differentiation between these cartoons and the images aimed at the Irish is that the anti-black pieces implied that its subjects should be "regarded as outside the pale, a different racial culture not to be melted down in the common pot" (Press 257).

Native Americans

Some of the most scathingly racist pieces in the history of political cartooning were pointed at Native Americans, and the Indian Question. Some cartoons showed potential solutions to the so-called "Indian Question". One of these images proposed the answer as "giving them free opium and liquor or establishing home-rule reservations for the Irish right next to standing villages", a proposition that neither makes sense, nor is humorous (Dewey 32). Another image portrayed that another good solution would be to send the Native Americans to Mexico on dilapidated navy ships, with the idea that the boats would sink on along the way. In some cases, Native Americans were not cast as themselves in cartoons, but rather as empty forms in which to portray non-Indian political antagonists. "The Debut of the Younger Sisters" is an image from 1889 drawn by C. Jay Taylor that portrayed the new states as beautiful "Indian maidens" and the older states as "white debutantes" (Fischer 104).

Unlike other subjects of destructive political cartoons, Native Americans were rarely, if ever, portrayed by cartoonists in a minstrel-esque or "penny opera" manner (Fischer 103). In other words, artists portrayed them as extremely detached from real life, in such a way that they came across as made-up people, who did not even have enough humanizing qualities to be caricatured as entertaining. Additionally, as they are portrayed in cartoons, the only time a non-Native American would spot a Native American would be from the window of a fast moving train or on a battle ground.

In some cases, images show train-riding whites as they comment on a Native American their locomotive is passing by. In these cartoons, the whites usually make an assumption about the lonesome figure outside the window, by attributing the person "noble" qualities. The cartoons audience, however, sees that the Indian is actually doing something wasteful or foolhardy. The cartoon titled "The Noble Indian" shows a Native American in a draping robe holding an ornamental pipe with his head bent, looking depressed. A tourist on the train in the distance is saying, "A once powerful chief, perhaps, brooding over the rapid encroachments of civilization. How sad to see the proud head lowered in grief!" Meanwhile, the "Once Powerful Chief" is saying to himself, "Ugh, no find cigar stump. Injun no smoke". The man was not bowing his head in sadness; he was scanning the ground for tobacco in the form of cigar stubs that train riders may have discarded.



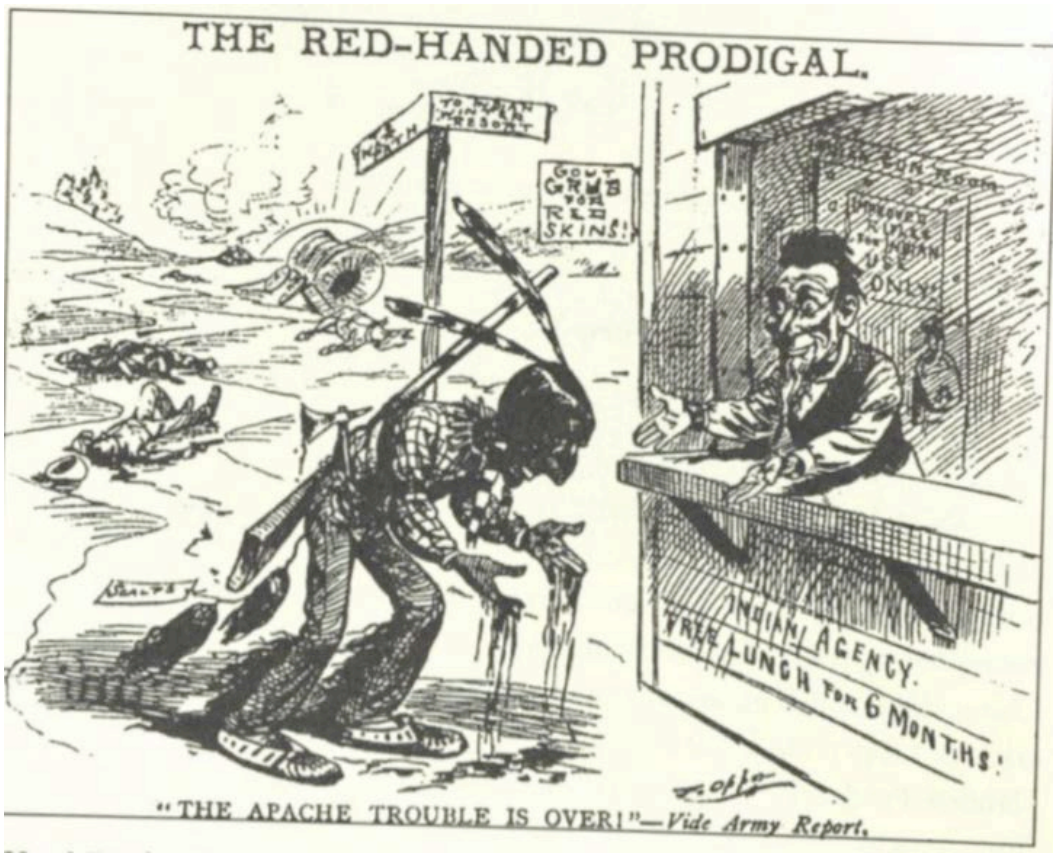
Artist Unknown, "The Noble Indian," *Judge*, July 18, 1889.

Another cartoon along similar lines show a fancily clad mother and daughter riding in a train car through Yellowstone National Park. The mother points outside the window and comments to her daughter that the Native American man outside poised in hunting position must be about to slay some giant, noble beast. The next frame shows the man dancing around, holding a small frog, no great beast at all, in the air and rejoicing at his catch. These images of whites riding by Native Americans, says a lot about the attitude of the artist, and probably much of the public, toward their place in

the United States' future. Those on the train are more modern, more in touch with technology, and they move in a forward motion of progress, while the Native American will be left in the dust, seeing as they cannot keep up to speed.

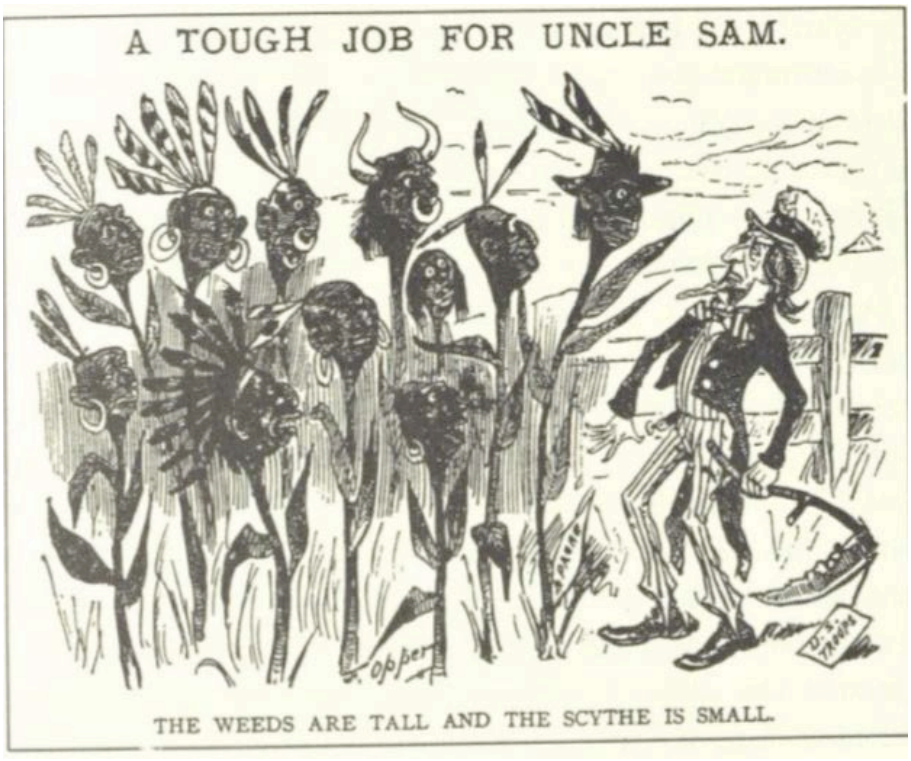
When not shown as silent beings, only to be seen in their natural habitat through the window of a passing train, cartoonists painted Native Americans as dangerous, even murderous, or as a lazy figure of the past. Fischer describes this concept best; "Attitudes hardened and Americans began embracing either or both of two competing images: those of the Native American as either a bloodthirsty barbarian or a filthy reservation degenerate. Rarely was it acknowledged that any vestige of reality in either stereotype might be a direct result of a governmental policy of encroachment on tribal grounds, and agency reservations that fostered idleness and degeneracy" (Fischer 104).

A Frederick Opper piece printed in 1881 called "The Red Handed Prodigal" shows an Apache man approaching an "Indian Agency Free Lunch" counter, which is operated by a white man whose arms are outstretched in a welcoming gesture. From the Apache man's hands drip blood and in his path lay the dead bodies of pioneers. The cartoon intends to highlight the absurdity of provided aid, or "Free Lunch", to a group that is committing mass murder on innocent whites (Fischer 110).



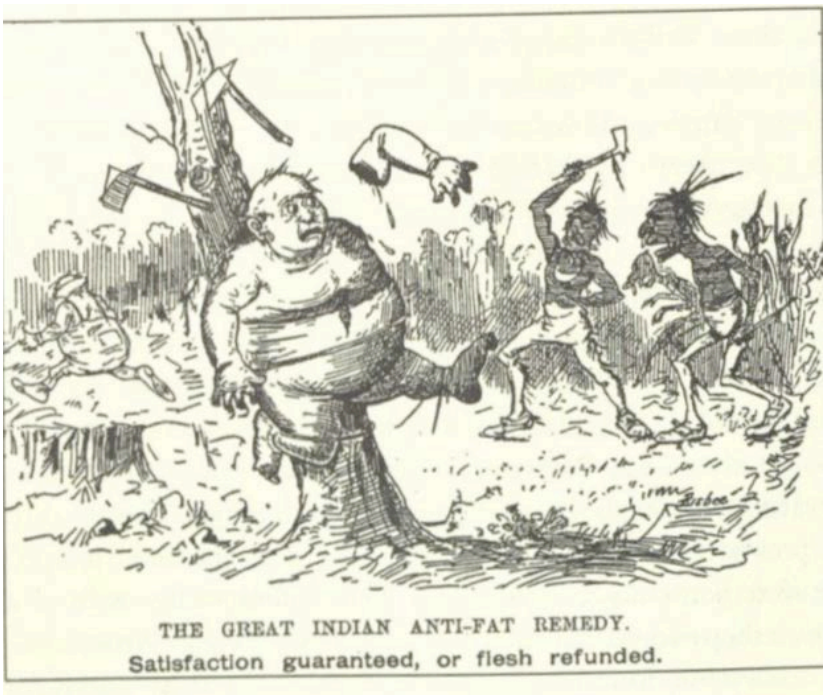
Frederick Burr Opper, "The Red-Handed Prodigal," *Puck*, October 19, 1881.

Two years later, "A Tough Job for Uncle Sam," another anti-Native American Opper cartoon, was produced." (Fischer 110). This one shows a group of Native American warriors, labeled by a leaf as Apache, as tall weeds. The image of Uncle Sam stands by, dwarfed by the weeds and contemplating how he will go about cutting them down. From his small scythe hangs a tag saying "U.S. Troops", and the sub caption states "The Weeds Are Tall and the Scythe Is Small". While this image somewhat portrays Native Americans as a formidable force, putting them in the shape of weeds points out how the artist feels that, like plants having no use but to be a nuisance, the Apache will be eliminated.



Frederick Burr Opper, "A Tough Job For Uncle Sam," *Puck*, April 11, 1883.

One particularly off-color anti-Indian cartoon published in Judge, whose purpose seems especially aimless, was titled "The Great Indian Anti-Fat Remedy" and shows Native Americans chopping off the arm of a fat white man. The caption says, "Satisfaction guaranteed, or flesh refunded" (Fischer 110).

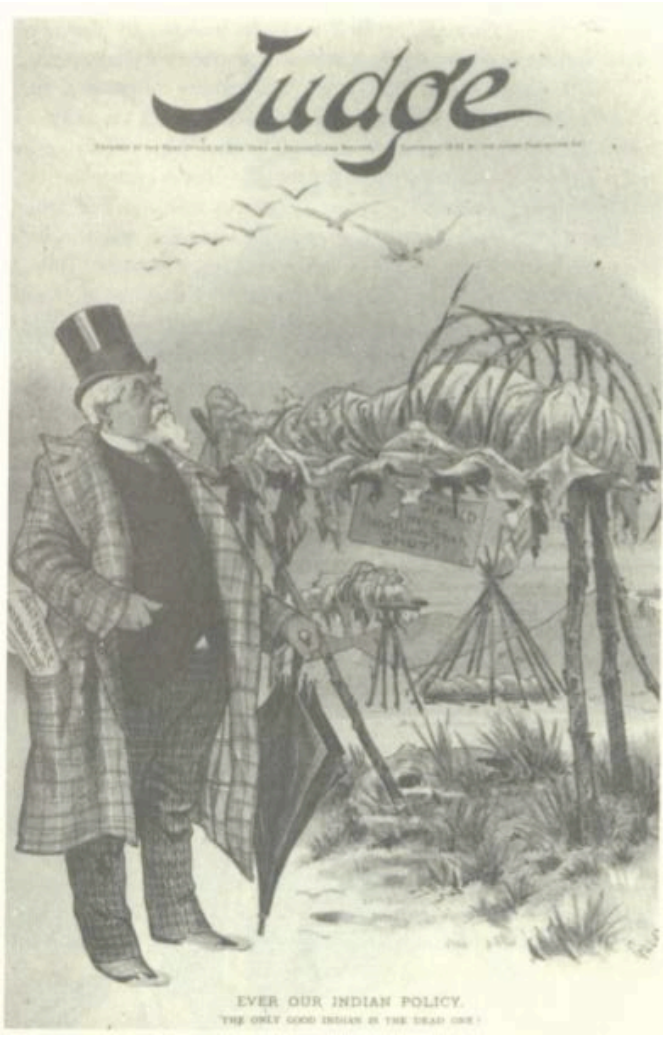


E.S. Bisbee, "The Great Indian Anti-Fat Remedy," *Judge*, December 6, 1884.

For some reason, cartoonists also had the tendency to display Native Americans as unwilling bathe. "The Servant-Girl Problem", already an insensitive portrayal, was published just one week after the Wounded Knee deaths, shows a girl titled, "A Sioux squaw—Willing to Do Anything but Wash" (Fischer 111). Another showed a character named "Man-Afraid-of-the-Soap" (Fischer 111).

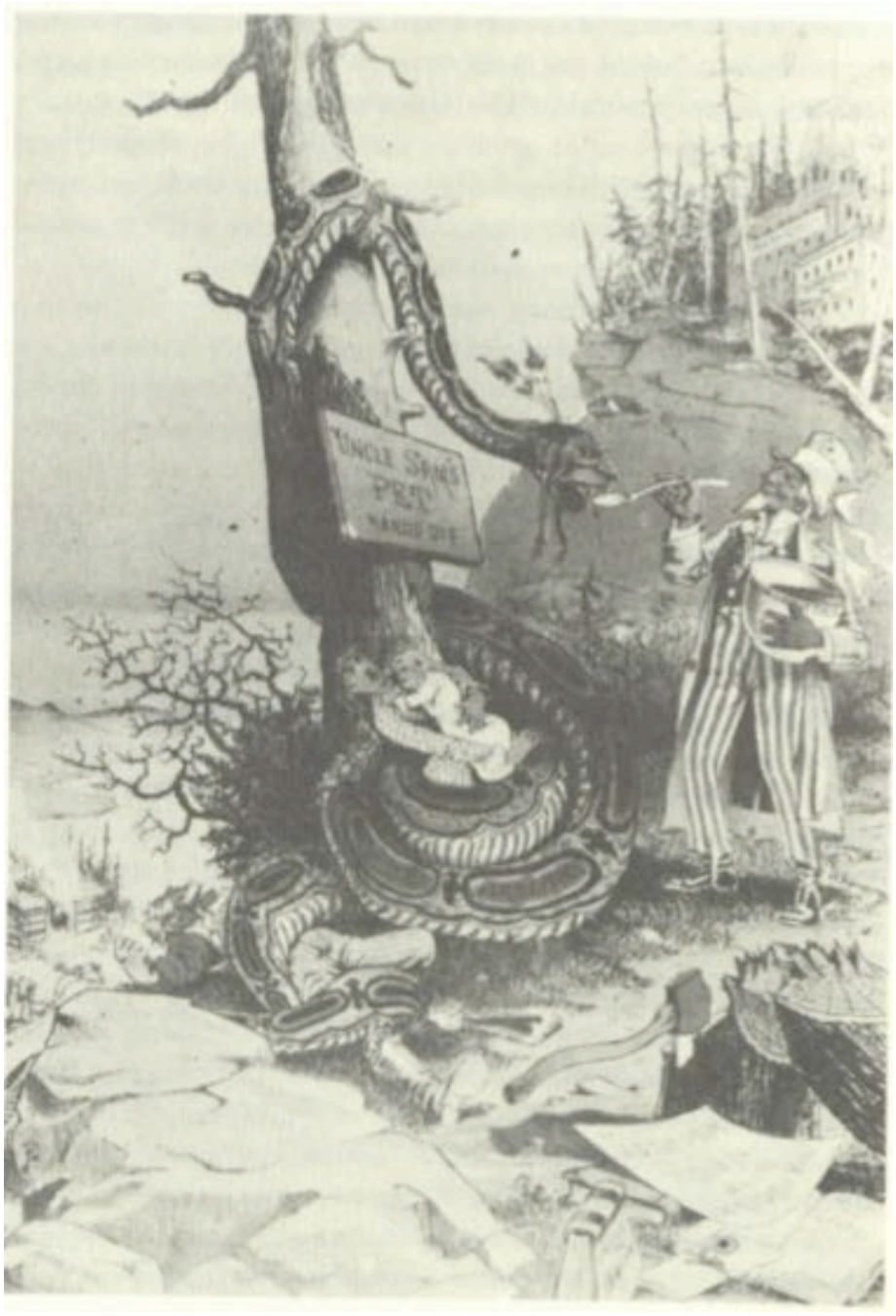
One Judge cartoon, drawn by Bernhard Gillam in response to the events at Wounded Knee, is titled "Ever Our Indian Policy" and shows the Secretary of the Interior of the United States standing with his chin up among multiple Indians' funeral pyres. On one of the bodies hangs the sign, "Starved into Rebellion, then Shot!" (Fischer 119). A subtitle on the image says plainly, "The Only Good Indian is the Dead One!" The image is meant to turn attention towards the fact that the United States' policy towards the Indian Question is unsound. The timing, and the stark imagery,

complete with carrion vultures swooping towards the bodies, is unsettling and perhaps not an appropriate response to the Wounded Knee massacre.



Bernhard Gillam, "Ever Our Indian Policy," *Judge*, January 3, 1891.

Native Americans are portrayed as "Uncle Sam's Pet" in the following cartoon; they are represented by a giant snake who holds a terrified white woman and a baby in its coils, while Uncle Sam is nervously spoon-feeding the serpent's Indian head.



Grant Hamilton, "The Nation's Ward," *Judge*, June 20, 1885.

"Puck's solution to the Indian Question" portrays "a Salvation Army detachment of the harridans and geezers of the '3rd Regiment Salvation Shooters'" being sufficiently strong to beat the South Dakota Sioux in battle (Fischer 118). This was an

untimely and inappropriate jest at the fact that two days prior to this image's release the important Sioux leader, Sitting Bull, was accidentally killed by police.

Though immediately following the deaths at Wounded Knee the editorial press shrank back from teasing Native Americans, in too little time the harsh depictions started back up again. Three weeks later, Eugene Zimmerman drew "Several Ways of Solving the Indian Question". Among the methods he proposed in his cartoon were "free opium and liquor from Uncle Sam, college football" and "intertribal warfare" (Fischer 120).

The 1885 piece "Uncle Sam's Extermination Policy: The Indian Problem Solved—Buddensiek the Boss Builder of the Plains" refers to a New York construction company known for building low-income tenement structures of unreliable structure. Hamilton's drawing implies that should all go well with this plan, the buildings will collapse, killing the Indians. It shows "Uncle Sam and Buddensiek examining plans for jerry-built tenements for the Ute, Apache, Sioux, and Cheyenne, in the hope that similar disasters would put an end to the Indian problem" (Fischer 118).

As in the case of anti-black cartoons, the worst portrayals of Native Americans are those that show a parent metaphorically throwing her child under the bus. An image called "At Cheyenne" shows a white woman reaching out of the opening of the train she is on, offering a piece of food to a poverty stricken Native American woman with a baby on her back. She responds by denying the morsel of food and instead asking for tobacco. The mother forgoes food, and therefore a better chance of survival, all for the opportunity to smoke.

Of images of people carelessly sacrificing their children or their livelihood, the ones portraying Native Americans were the most biting: They not only imply a certain moral weakness, but that for Native Americans, the only possible outcome in the future is extinction.

> "Blacks and the Irish were usually cartooned with platoons of children, and little doubt was left that black ingenuity in henhouse and melon patch, and Irish genius in monopolizing urban political patronage, would provide for their progeny…A bleak contrast is provided by filler cartoons of Indians spearing hop-toads or spurning food for tobacco" (Fischer 116).

D.D. Smith, "At Cheyenne," *Judge*,1888.

Famous painter of Native Americans during the Gilded Age, George Catlin, once said, "the Indian and the buffalo… have taken up their last abode, where their race will expire and their bones will bleach together" (Fischer 116).

Part 4: Anti-Radicalism

"Everyone is a little subversive but thee and me, and sometimes I think even thee…" Uncle Sam says to Liberty on a park bench in Fiztpatrick's Sedition Act era cartoon (Dewey 59).

Daniel Fitzpatrick, "Everybody is a little subversive…" *The Granger Collection*, New York, 1947.

Though American political cartoons may have a surface reputation of being inherently radical or subversive, this is not necessarily true, especially not of images produced by mainstream sources. In fact, much of the criticism done by caricaturists is directed at subjects within the overall governmental and economic system in the United

States, but not the system as a whole. Dewey points out, “to caricature, satirize, and otherwise question the system rather than either of its separate components implies not a liberal or conservative point but a radical one” (Dewey 70). He means to say that while much of the cartoons of the past and the present include often biting critiques of the government or power figures, they rarely stray from the confines of mainstream ideals. This can be seen in a favorite topic of graphic editorialists, the two-party system. One side is seen ridiculing the other, instead of both of them questioning the overall system that is causing them to butt heads in the first place. This was also the case in the way cartoonists attacked the trust system: “But while they agreed in criticism, some attacked all trusts and the whole trust system while others personalized and separated good and bad trusts, a subtle way of saying that the system itself was sound” (Press 300). As in this subsequent image, drawn by Thomas Nast, that portrays communism as Death beckoning a worried American family, cartoonists criticized radicalism just as much, if not more, than they criticized government sanctioned institutions. Nast also used Death at one point or another to portray unionism, anarchism, and other modes of “underclass radicalism” (Fischer 203).

Thomas Nast, "The Emancipation of Labor…" *The Granger Collecion*, New York, 1874.

One prominent cartoonist of the early 20th century was socialist Robert Minor. His style was innovative and reflected his more radical political beliefs; "Eschewing the usual pen and ink, he opted for an unsubtle grease crayon on textured paper, insisting that his subjects (primarily workers and women) weren't delicate so his instruments shouldn't have been either" (Dewey 45). The same can be said about Art Young's images; "Many of Young's black-and-white anti-capitalist cartoons...looked as if Young

had been scared at age ten by a medieval woodcut" (Press 74). Art Young, "A kind hearted soldier with a machine gun," was one of the radical cartoonists who drew for *the Masses*. When one time he produced an anti-immigrant cartoon for *Life*, he felt so much guilt that he returned the paycheck he received for his work (Dewey 48). Though each artist worked for some time for the mainstream press, as could be expected their ideology got in the way and both ended up drawing for the communist publication *the Masses*, a paper that came under fire during the surge of radical paranoia that arose in the early twentieth century.

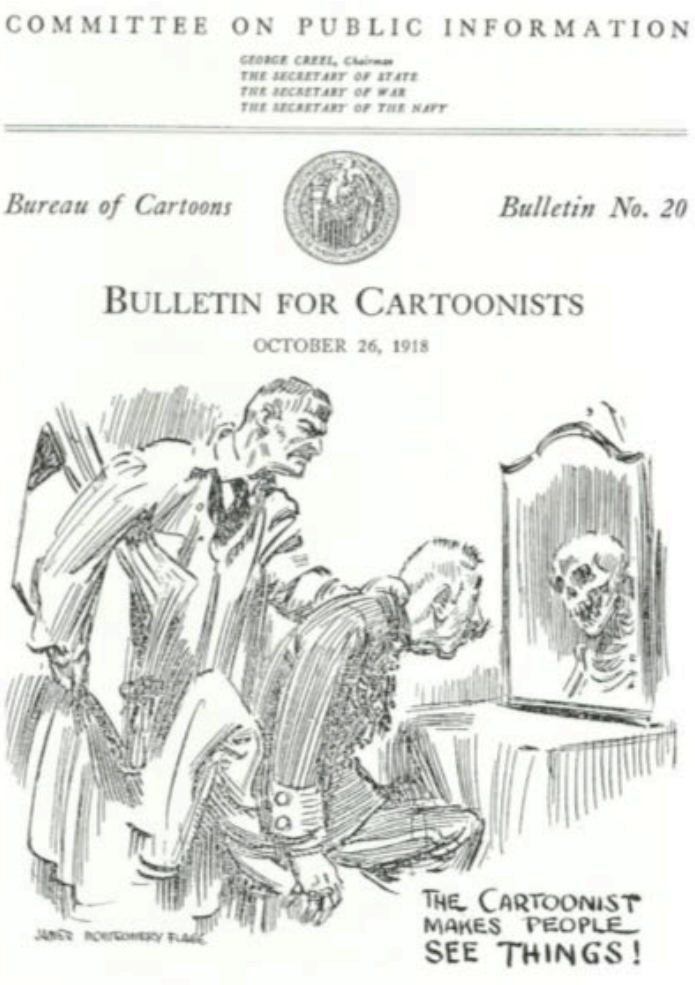
Though there are some exceptions, for the most part cartoons promoting serious radical thought could only be found in smaller publications. *The Masses*, established in 1911 in New York City, was one of these publications. The paper, directed at a "both Socialist and non-Socialist" audience, printed many cartoons criticizing the War and primarily encouraging the cause of labor rights. One captivating image printed in *the Masses* in 1916, produced by Robert Minor, shows "A Perfect Soldier", who is a gargantuan, muscled man, with no head (Dewey 48).

Robert Minor, "Army Medical Examiner," *The Masses*, 1915.

Threats to Free Speech

Following the establishment of the Espionage Act in 1917, a Bureau of Cartoons was also introduced (Dewey 45). Aimed at regulating the propaganda circulating in the United States, the Bureau of Cartoons encouraged artists to promote democracy, American pride, and support for the War. This often included portraying the United State's enemies as racist caricatures, usually representing Germans. The cover of one 1918 Bureau of Cartoons bulletin shows a cartoonist holding the collar of a German officer, forcing him to look at the reflection in a mirror, which is a bare skeleton. The

caption says “The Cartoonist Makes People See Things!” and is clearly an effort at bestowing propaganda power to the editorial artists of the time (Dewey 46). By showing them this power, the United States government may also have been ensuring that the cartoonists produce work that helps the War cause, versus hurting it.



James Montgomery Flagg, “The Cartoonist Makes People See Things!” *The Granger Collection*, New York. 1918.

Eventually government officials decided that the material *the Masses* published was not conducive to patriotism. The Postmaster General of the time, Albert Burleson, claimed that the Masses, and many other radical newspapers, should not be distributed

because they hindered army recruitment (Dewey 48). The editors of *the Masses* claimed that Burleson's action of stopping mailing distribution violated their rights. A short legal battle over this matter led to *the Masses* to go out of business in very little time. Next, the Postmaster General indicted many people involved with the radical publication on charges of obstruction. Though these men escaped without a conviction, another *Masses* editor was persecuted, and sentenced to twenty-five years of hard labor in a detention center. This man, Maurice Becker, had pleaded for conscientious objector status and having not secured this, was charged for desertion from the army. Other cartoonists of the time were also persecuted, mainly based on their anti-war views. According to Dewey, "German-American cartoonists were frequent targets of police action on the theory that their avowed pacifism was a front for espionage" (Dewey 49).

There have been some cases of individual politicians trying to combat the effects of personal political cartoon teasing. Feeling victimized by being used in graphic editorials, some tried to crack down on cartoonists through legislation. Of course these efforts ultimately were unsuccessful, as they dripped with first amendment violations. 1897 saw an attempt by politician Thomas Platt to introduce a bill "that would have made cartoonists and their employers more vulnerable to libel" (Dewey 37). A response to that move was an image by Davenport titled "No Honest Man Need Fear Cartoons". Six years later, a Pennsylvania governor tried to crack down on newspapers that printed mocking editorial images of him as a parrot incapable of speaking for himself. In these efforts, his party "introduced a bill that made it a crime to publish any cartoon 'portraying describing or representing any person...in the form or likeness of a beast, bird, fish, insect, or other unhuman animal" (Dewey 37). Davenport's response to this

was to say that the bill should have "included more than the animal kingdom alone, for we have an ample field in the vegetable, if not even the mineral field… What chances of caricature lie in the tomato, the string bean, the cucumber, the onion, and the leek cannot be guessed" (Dewey 37).

In the legal suit that Pennypacker brought against cartoonists, the Governor purportedly said the following unintentionally comical statement:

> "An ugly dwarf, representing the commonwealth, stands on a crude stool; the stool is subordinate to and placed alongside of a huge printing press with wheels as large as those of an ox team, and all are so arranged as to give the idea that when the press starts the stool and the occupant will be thrown to the ground. Put into words, the cartoon asserts to the world that the press is above the law, and greater in strength than the government. In England a century ago, the offender would have been drawn and quartered and his head stuck on a pole without the gates" (Press 293).

William Tweed, the target of the most renowned political cartoon attack in United States history, tried to stop Thomas Nast, his perpetrator, with an anti-cartoon bill. Similarly, Boss Platt tried to stop bullying Hearst artists in 1897, and similar efforts by other sensitive politicians were made in California in 1899, Indiana in 1913, and Alabama in 1915 (Press 188-189).

Tammany boss Charles Murphy threatened to sue W.G. Rogers, who was continually drawing him in prison stripes. Presidential hopeful James Blaine, in the 1880's, threatened to prosecute Puck for "obscenity" because of cartoons that showed him as "the tattooed man", whose skin was covered with tattoos of his lies and misdeeds (Press 189). Even though Gillam produced this anti-Blaine image, his ideology did not match up with his professional products; He voted for Blaine in the coming election (Culbertson 286).

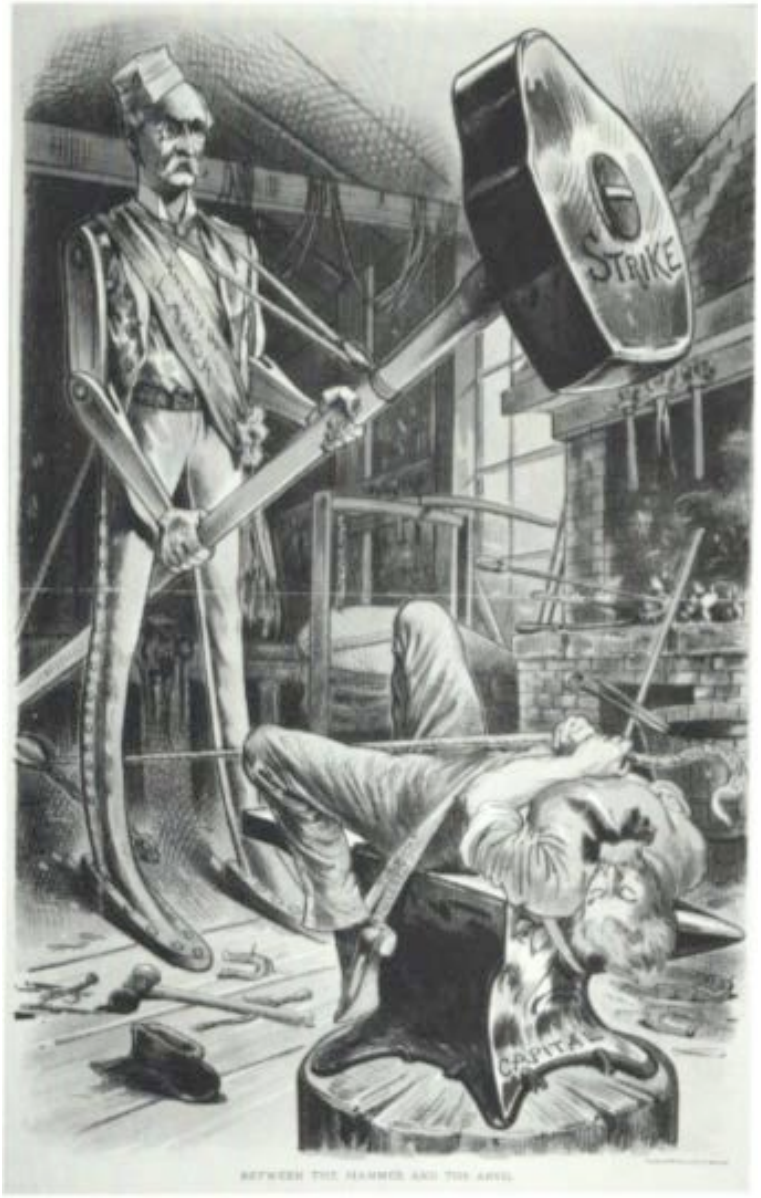
Bernhard Gillam, “Pryne Before the Chicago Tribunal,” The Granger Collection. New York, 1884.

The Associated Press charged *the Masses* with libel for an image that Art Young produced that showed the A.P. as a house of prostitution. When the Associated Press eventually dropped the charges, “Young triumphantly noted the occasion with a cartoon of an overly fat matron labeled A.P., who was told from on high, ‘Madam, you dropped something.’ An innocent scroll labeled ‘Masses Libel Suit’ was behind her” (Press 189). There were even more attempts at suppressing cartoonists during World War I. When various *Masses* editorialists were brought to trial for crimes of sedition and impeding with the draft, Art Young dozed off in the courtroom, perhaps to show his noncompliance (Press 190). On the bright side, ”Legislative attempts to muzzle cartoonists...were almost universally welcomed by cartoonists for the crusades it permitted them to mount against such foolhardy lawgivers” (Press 188).

Art Young, "The Newspaper—House of Prostitution," *The Masses*, December 1912.

Anti-Union

Though many cartoonists of the late 19th century and early 20th century produced images slamming monopolists and trusts, they seemed in many cases to neglect the other side of this situation, labor unions. The consequence of the massive trusts was seen in widespread labor union strikes. Given the sparseness of images representing views of unions in any way whatsoever, Dewey proposes, "cartoonists either ran out of ink or, as in Keppler's case, accused workers of being a more immediate problem for having instigated clashes with police or factory goons" (Dewey 38).



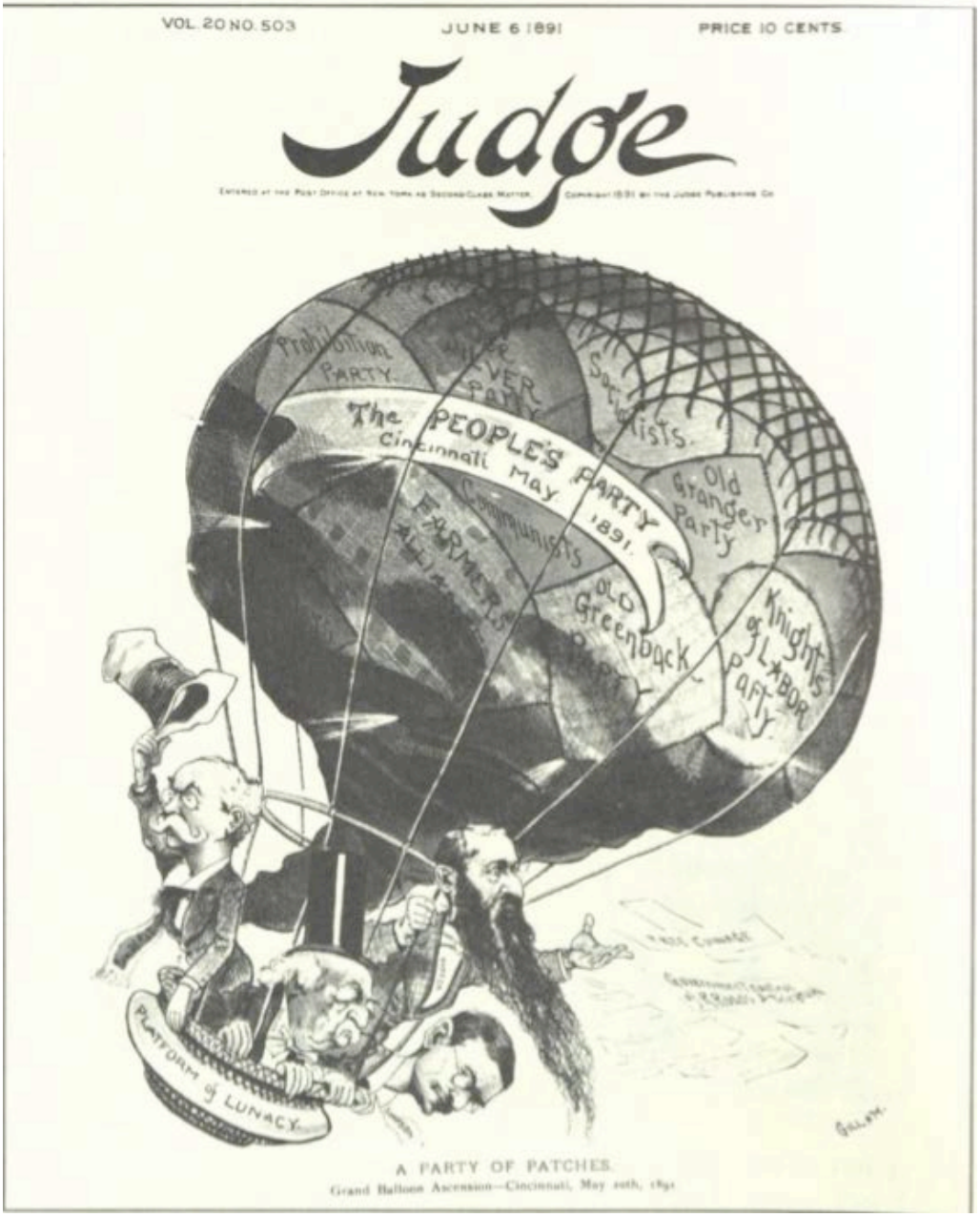
Joseph Keppler, "The Gospel of he Knights of Labor," *The Granger Collection,* New York, 1890.

Anti-Populist

One of the best examples of the perpetuation of anti-radicalism in political cartoons can be found in the treatment of Kansas populist William Alfred Peffer, a Senator who was unfairly and irrationally targeted by editorial artists the 1890's. It seems that cartoonists sought out a target at which to shoot their ridicule of populism.

They chose Peffer most likely because of his somewhat offbeat physiognomy. When populism gained political momentum in some western states, such as Kansas, mainstream editorials stepped up their game to oppose it, using Peffer as a tool; ”Populism became the bogeyman of New York color cartoon art, and Peffer of Kansas its bewhiskered visual image” (Fischer 47).

“A Party of Patches”, an 1891 image created by Bernhard Gillman that shows Peffer riding a “Platform of Lunacy”, along with other radical politicians. The platform is precariously held aloft by a patchy hot air balloon that seems to be on the verge of breaking apart (Fischer 52).



Bernhard Gillam, "A Party of Patches," *Judge*, June 6, 1891.

Peffer was continually portrayed in political cartoons as a dirty and sneaky Rasputin-type figure. Additionally, and for reasons unclear, Peffer was portrayed as extremely dim-witted. In one image created by Frederick Opper in 1891 called "Spring Nonsense", Peffer is shown seated and vigorously studying a book called the "Rules of

Debate". Next to him, there is a poem that says, "There is an old chap, quite a brisk cuss, Whose opinions are somewhat promiskous; In the Senate he'll sit, And he'll need all his wit, Or the wind there will blow through his whiskers" (Fischer 48). In another cartoon, one that fuses the artist's distaste both for black people and fact accuracy, Peffer is shown alongside potential Presidential candidates. They are all drawn in blackface, gazing longingly at a watermelon adorned with the label "U.S. Presidency 1892" (Fischer 52). Whether or not Bernhard Gillam, the artist knew that Peffer had made no indication that he would run for President that year, is unknown. What is known, however, is that the often bullied populist had no intention whatsoever of pursuing the presidency. The title of another image showing a fusion of targeting Peffer and racism, "Last Ghost Dance of the Free Silver Tribe-- Just Before Being Sent to the Salt River Reservation", speaks much about the ignorance, or carelessness of the artist (Fischer 61).

Yet another image that sensationalized Peffer's image as a fool in politics shows the man with the length of his beard greatly exaggerated. Beneath him is rhyme that begins with the lines, "From bleeding Kansas's wind-swept plains, Where whiskers take the place of brains" (Fischer 59). "Peffer's Populistic Boom", by F.M. Hutchkins in 1894, portrays Peffer as a farmer, desperately trying to salvage a deflating balloon, labeled "Populism" (Fischer 60).

F. Hutchins, "Peffer's Populistic Boon," *Puck*, October 10, 1894.

Contrary to the way cartoonists displayed Peffer in their drawings, the Kansan was actually intelligent and mild-mannered, not a dumb fanatic in the slightest. "Writing in 1891 of the new Kansas Populist members of Congress, the Washington Post declared that 'no set of men ever merited less the ridicule heaped upon them'."

(Fischer 64). “In 1893, a Washington Evening Star reporter, expecting to interview a ‘political dime museum freak,’ found instead ‘a gentleman of a mild and benevolent countenance, of engaging manners, and of a gentle and persuasive voice’.” (Fischer 64). Peffer’s unrealistic image was “one that sustained itself to serve the needs of discrediting the agrarian insurgency through graphic satire” and was based on “sheer fantasy” (Fischer 65, 63).

Part Five: Implications

The implications of xenophobic political cartoons are unclear, though there are those who would argue that producing comical yet unethical portrayals of minorities is better than inflicting actual violence. These images "evolved into caricatures to make audiences laugh not lynch", writes Robert Fischer in *Them Damned Pictures* (Fischer 102). "Those Americans who laid down their dimes for *Harper's*, *Puck, Judge*, or an evening of comic opera expected to be entertained, not indoctrinated" (Fischer 102). Fischer is wrong here, there were probably innumerable consequences, one being helping to establish a bedrock foundation of racism, paternalism, and a fear of radical politics that persists in American society today.

Recent Times

In 2006, the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten printed cartoons negatively depicting the Muslim Prophet Muhammad. The subsequent reaction shows that political cartoons still have a powerful role in media; "An attack on the Danish embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan, in June 2008, strongly associated with the cartoon crisis, killed six people" (Keane 845). One year later, anger at the images had no worn off because Danish embassy workers in Algeria and Afghanistan had to be evacuated due to threats relating to the past year's cartoons. When Swedish cartoonist Lars Vilks depicted the Prophet Muhammad as a dog, a $100,000 reward was offered for his untimely death (Keane 146).

In response to the publication of these offensive cartoons, thousands of people were involved in protests, some of which turned violent. In efforts to stymie such

reactions, and to prevent cartoonists from producing work that provokes violence, in 2006 the United Nations organized the seminar "Cartooning for Peace: The Responsibility of Political Cartoonists" (Keane 874).

The world of political cartooning in the United States has, for the most part, managed to reconcile freedom of speech with anti-hate speech. While "the cartoon prospers in an atmosphere of political freedom," so do the harmful images and caricatures that accompanied the medium from its outset (Johnson 21). Ruth Thibodeau thinks of negative racial images: "While clearly such depictions no longer appear in the New Yorker, there is a continuing absence of minority representation in cartoons" (Keane 851).

Charles Press asks, "Is anybody still looking at political cartoons?" (Press 49). The answer is, of course. This is especially certain given the recent attention the field was given by the United Nations. Former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said cartoons "have a special role in forming public opinion—because an image generally has a stronger, more direct impact on the brain than a sentence does" and "few things can hurt you more directly than a caricature of yourself, of a group you belong to, or—perhaps worst—of a person you deeply respect" (Keane 874).

Conclusion

Regardless of the aimless purposes of these racist filler cartoons, they still must have made impacts on the society of the time, or at least sent a strong message to the ethnicities they caricaturized.

> "The point is simple. However benign the intentions or reception of such ethnic caricature, it surely helped to create and reinforce over the course of a generation an indelible impression that the droll darky, the besotted, belligerent Celt, and the aggressively acquisitive Jew were— by dint of congenital shortcomings of intellect, culture, or character—forever barred from membership in the American family" (Fischer 81).

Frank Beard, "Colombia's Unwelcome Guests," *The Granger Collection*, New York, 1885.

Radical cartoonist Art Young once said, "To have a life as a caricaturist of the kind whose pictures 'never hurt' is my idea of futility" (Dewey 52). However, there must be some limit to the hurt caused: When cartooning becomes hate speech, when it

incites violence. Cartoons are supposed to be funny. Quite contrarily, the vast majority of political cartoons are intensely tragic. To those who would insist that their foundations are based in humor, one should point out the vast number of over-the-line pieces produced in the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, because at the end of the day, the pictures can speak for themselves.

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