

**Volume 2**

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**Coxey's Army - I**

**Lead: In the mid-1890s the United States experienced its greatest economic depression to that time. To relieve the suffering Jacob Sechler Coxey organized an army.**

**Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: Panic on Wall Street in 1893 led to the closing of hundreds of banks and widespread bankruptcies. Hundreds of thousands of workers were unemployed, nearly two hundred thousand in New York City alone. Many of those who were employed**

**worked for corporations upon whom there was little constraint on the way in which they treated their workers. "Wage Slavery" was a term coined to describe the lot of those employed in dead end, torturous jobs, which paid very little and placed them at the mercy of corporations relentlessly pursuing ever mounting profits during a time of worsening social conditions.**

**In the face of this crisis Jacob Coxey the owner of a prosperous sandstone quarry in Massillon, Ohio decided to do something to help. Coxey had for some time been active in the work of the Bi-metallic League which was urging the government to circulate additional silver money so that businesses would have more money to**

**expand and hire more workers. He was also concerned for the future. He said, "What I am after, is to try to put this country in a condition so that no man who wants to work shall be obliged to remain idle. I have a family myself and I don't want to see my sons ever starve for want of work."**

**In Chicago at a meeting of the League in 1893 Coxey met Carl Browne, a labor activist with a keen sense of self-promotion. Browne was pushing the idea of a march on Washington to protest the government's continued inaction in the face of the economic downturn. Coxey invited Browne back to Massillon and together they put together a proposal to the Federal government to increase**

**silver in circulation and appropriate \$500 million for public works projects to soak up the unemployed workers. Browne got his congressman and Senator to introduce these measures in Congress and secured the endorsement of the American Federation of Labor. Nothing happened. Not for long. Next time: Coxey's Army marches on Washington.**

**At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.**

### **Resources**

**McMurray, Donald L. *Coxey's Army: A Study of the Industrial Army Movement of 1894*. Seattle, WA: Uni. of Washington Press, 1958.**

**Schwantes, Carlos A. *Coxey's Army: An American Odyssey*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1985.**