

NOTE CARDS FOR DEMOCRACY IN PRINT

1

From: *OUR STORY* by Bill Moyers

p. 362 This is the oldest story in America: the struggle to determine whether “we, the people” is a spiritual idea embedded in a political reality – one nation, indivisible – or merely a charade masquerading as piety and manipulated by the powerful and privileged to sustain their own way of life at the expense of others.

p. 362-363 Furious words from rural men and women who were traditionally conservative and whose memories of taming the frontier were fresh and personal. But in their fury they invoked an American tradition as powerful as frontier individualism – the war on inequality and especially on the role that government played in promoting and preserving inequality by favoring the rich. The Populist knew it was the government that granted millions of acres of public land to the railroad builders. It was the government that granted the manufacturers of farm machinery a monopoly of the domestic market by a protective tariff that was no longer necessary to shelter “infant industries.” It was the government that contracted the national currency and sparked of a deflationary cycle that crushed debtors and fattened the wallets of creditors. And those who made the great fortunes used them to buy the legislative and judicial favors that kept them on top. So the Populists recognized one great principle. The job of preserving equality of opportunity and democracy demanded the end of any unholy

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2

alliance between government and wealth. It was, to quote the platform again, “from the same womb of governmental injustice” that tramps and millionaires were bred.