

Unknown Photographer. (1894). *Coxey at the Capitol. The Commonweal Army leaving Brightwood Camp*. Library of Congress. <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3b42632>



THE COMMONWEAL ARMY LEAVING BRIGHTWOOD CAMP.

The people in this photo are members of Coxey's Army, so-named for its organizer: wealthy Ohio businessman, Jacob Coxey... They are not a "real" army of soldiers—although they did wake each morning with a reveille, wash, and receive daily rations—but rather, they are ordinary, private citizens who are marching-in-protest to the nation's Capitol<sup>1</sup>... Notice the date, 1894, which places this photo during the Panic of 1893, the worst economic depression up to that point in American history<sup>2</sup>... Coxey led a march to Washington D.C. to demand "help, or else we and our loved ones will perish"<sup>3</sup>... the help they demanded was for the federal government to create public works and infrastructure-building jobs (constructing bridges, dams; paving roads; etc.) to help the poor and the homeless survive the depression. Notice the different backgrounds and life-experiences of those marching; notice, too, the various transportation modes... the only action President Cleveland and the Republican Congress (economic conservatives) took was to disperse the "Army" and arrest Coxey for trespassing; they refused to answer Coxey's Army's "petition...with boots on"<sup>4</sup>.

#### CITATIONS

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2. Schwantes, C.A. (1985). *Coxey's Army: An American Odyssey*. University of Idaho Press: ID.
3. Coxey, J. (May 9, 1894). Congressional Record, 53<sup>rd</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> session 4512 in *The Populist Spirit*, ed. George Tindall: Harper and Row, 1966, p. 160-163.
4. Brinkley, A. (2008) *American History: A Survey* (13<sup>th</sup> edition). McGraw-Hill: NY.