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## The Defenders. The Populist Attempt to Uphold Protectionism in the United States, ca. 1880-1930

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The project examines the populist agitation for protectionist tariff policies in the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Since the 1880s, a spectrum of interest groups and industrial organizations, mostly backed by wealthy industrialists, formed. These organizations were dedicated to defending the existing protectionist system of high import tariffs which Republican governments had established since the Civil War against free trade criticism and moderate reform attempts. To this end, political campaigns were routinely conducted, pamphlets and leaflets were distributed by the millions, speakers were trained, and a far-reaching set of protectionist press outlets was established. The American Protective Tariff League in New York, the Home Market Club in Boston, the Industrial League and the American Iron and Steel Association in Philadelphia were among the most important organizations. The project analyses how the establishment of these populist protectionist organizations, the strong influence they wielded within the Republican-protectionist coalition, and their established infrastructure of political communication contributed to an entrenchment of ultra-protectionist positions within American political discourse. Ultimately, this protectionist entrenchment was a major factor in perpetuating the United States' protectionist tariff policy far into the twentieth century and defending it against the increasingly urgent calls for tariff reform.