

seeking to colonize or create sovereign states on the asteroids themselves. “Much like fishing trawlers going to sea,” he suggests, “the fishermen have the right to keep the fish that they catch, but have no ownership rights to the sea itself.”²² By this logic, Planetary Resources could legally possess the \$100 trillion worth of materials in 241 Germania—as long as they are able to harvest it first.



Reflecting on the election of 1896, it’s striking how the conditions and characters mirror the 2016 presidential contest. A disruptive shift in labor practices, coupled with an economic crisis and sustained recession, resulted in the meteoric rise of a far-left candidate whose platform focused on the interests of the working class—William Jennings Bryan in 1896 and Bernie Sanders in 2016. These economic populists were ultimately defeated by candidates aligned with corporate interests.

Libertarians and extreme-right Republicans are already arguing for a

return to the Gold Standard. What had been a fringe belief has now become a serious part of mainstream conversation. Ron Paul, with equal parts sincerity and absurdity, refers to the Federal Reserve as “money elves...who feel like playing God with the economy.”²³ Robert Mercer, a hedge-fund tycoon and financial backer of the alt-right—he funded Breitbart News in its early days and later contributed millions to Trump’s campaign—also supports a commodity-based economic system. His daughter Rebekah was granted a seat on Trump’s transition team, and she has brazenly promoted a return to the gold standard during his tenure thus far.²⁴

Those who advocate for gold’s return follow a perfect-on-paper platform that eschews logic. The Gold Standard takes something as incredibly abstract and attempts to render it concrete, in order to help demystify what is a necessarily nebulous arrangement. As American capitalism reaches further into outer space, will those in power learn from these past economic mistakes? Or will the desire to reduce complex relations