

# Wright Patman: The Last Populist

*Text on Screen with Film Title Enlarged, and second sentence smaller: Wright Patman: The Last Populist. From 1928 to 1975 Wright Patman served the Texas First District (Northeast Texas) in the House of Representatives.*

## Scene 1: Opening Narration

(showing a series of individual pictures to go along with the following text like a story book.)

Narrator: In 1875 what became known as the Populist movement began in north Texas. The populists were farmers who saw their way of life being destroyed by low cotton prices, a lack of cheap credit, and unscrupulous big businesses. In the 1880s and 1890s, Texans like Charles Macune, and Cyclone Davis advocated

John

Patman: Yes, and if you can fake being happy, you can have a girlfriend like Pauline Weaver. Now you are my audience. You cannot keep talking.

Pauline: (sarcastically saluting) Yes, Sir, Mr. Valedictorian! I'm listening.

Patman: My fellow classmates, envy and scorn are the two heads of the same coin, and decadence and poverty are two symptoms of the same disease. We have a mission to change this – to make and give opportunities. We now plunge forward, suspicious of failure and confident of success. For we know that failure is not fate – but folly! Failure is not a lack of power but a lack of aim!

(Patman pauses, letting the dramatic climax settle into the "audience")

Pauline: (clapping her hands softly) Very good, Mr. Valedictorian.

Patman: Energy is lost... (He pauses, camera gazes at Pauline's admiring face) ... in diffusion.

Scene 4: Outdoor swing, with Pauline, Mr. Weaver (her father), and a barefoot WP

(He leaves just as WP arrives. WP looks from the door Mr. Weaver just disappeared behind, to Pauline, who looks very down)



Emma: (euphoric) My son is a lawyer, I knew the day would come! See here? I brought a flower for your desk!

WP (impatiently): Thank you, Mother, but what I really need now is a customer.

(WP looks deeply thoughtful)

Emma: (approaching the subject tentatively) You know, my son, folks in Linden would probably feel a lot more comfortable hiring you if you were in more of a...

WP: I have simply come to see your beautiful face on such a fair day. There is no other reason.

Merle: (blushing, but shrugging his words off as if they meant nothing to her)  
With such a reply, you must think you are very charming.

WP: (noticeably flustered) On the contrary, I'm sure that charm is very far from me... But I am not without confidence, for tho

WP: But the answer is simple.

(Merle then turns around and embraces WP, and he catches her)

WP: Is that a yes?

Scene 9: Wright, Merle, and Emma at a Restaurant



WP: Mr. Speaker, our committee is proposing a resolution today that proscribes the Texas Ku Klux Klan as an impertinence and instructs their national leader, William Joseph Simmons, to stay out of the great state of Texas.

Opponent: So we have a leader who tries to bring back some fundamental decency into our nation and you want to treat him like an anarchist?

WP: Mr. Williams, the Klan is an un-American plague, whose sores of hatred and discord are breaking out in every town in Texas. The Klan divides the poor and flogs innocent people without trial. They are making their own law, rather than looking to our government to make the laws.

### Scene 11: At the Patman Household.

*Text on Screen: Linden, Texas 1921*

Merle: And another, thing. Connor knows when you are not home. He wakes up all hours of the night, and I am the one who –

(A knock on the door cuts her off)

Merle (Very suspiciously and forlornly): Who could that be?

WP: (answers the door)

(Two men with Ku Klux Klan regalia appear)

(Merle screams and WP steps in front of her)

First Klan man (motioning with his hands): Don't be upset, Mrs. Patman. We are not here to hurt you.

Patman: (outraged) Then why are you here? Have you no respect for the family at all?

Second Klan man: Listen Patman (pushes him by the shoulder). We are here to warn you: Stop making your tirades against the Klan.

Patman: I will do that the moment you stop whipping innocent people.

First Klan man: If you want to join the drunks and adulterers who oppose our great order, you will soon lose your seat and your practice. (looking down his nose) You have no idea how popular we are in Texas.

Patman: If I lose my seat and my practice, then so be it. I will not stop opposing

Henchman: In a city like Texarkana with only four Italians I tnm0 gftt

help. The Mayor and Chief of Police want to run down some of the threats we

WP (interrupting): Is it?

Gunslinger (continuing where he left off): But since you're here, there is something I have been curious about. I wonder why there is more crime in Texarkana

Merle: He has already told me that he's prepared to spend our \$3,000 nest egg on the campaign so that he can battle for the people's rights... I only wish he would battle a little more for our own rights.

Emma: (blushing with a hint of poverty) I wish I could help dear.

Merle: Don't even think that way. Wright is just glad that he was able to buy the house and its land for you when he did.

Emma: Oh, Wright is such an ambitious man. I still cannot believe that the Cass County land he received in payment for his legal help had oil (pauses. Merle is starting to ignore her) (musically) One thing does concern me, Merle. Are you going ahead and joining the First Baptist Church?

Merle: Yes we are. We are both getting baptized.



Davis: That depends... Do you support McNary Haugen?

WP: With all my heart.

Davis: Why?

WP: I will do whatever it takes to make our cotton and cottonseed fetch better prices.

Davis: What about money?

WP: I deplore high interest rates.

Davis: Well, you're certainly singing on key... (Suspiciously) I'll have to have a better look at the big picture, but until I learn more, here (handing WP a cigar) You're my man. You're the first person in this race that has come for my consideration.

#### Scene 19: Second Narrator Part, and return to picture-book style

Wright Patman waged one of the toughest campaigns of his life in 1928. His opponent had been Eugene Black, a former supporter of Patman's career, who had also attended Cumberland Law School. Patman charged that Black had the support of the conservative presidential candidate, Herbert Hoover, and opposed the McNary Haugen bill that could bring prosperity to the farms of Northeast Texas. In a major upset, Patman, sticking to the economic issues affecting tenant farmers and small business owners, won the election.

#### Scene 20: Lavish Meal at the Mellon's

*Text on Screen: Washington D.C. 1929*

Sycophant: I propose a toast – to prohibition! (Snickers)

Andrew Mellon: Oh, come now. It's no sin to drink alcohol, especially when you have my foresight.

Sycophant: Foresight?



Suzy: Yes, try 10,000 bottles of good wine and another 10,000 bottles of Guinness Ale purchased ahead of time. This should last Andrew and I as long as any silly prohibition lasts. (Giggles, and looks at Mellon) ... you think of everything.

Sycophant: But Mr. Mellon, how did you get all that English ale?

Andrew Mellon: My former father-in-law owned the Guinness Brewery.

Suzy: Andrew could arrange for just about anything. Isn't it true, Dear, that after John D. Rockefeller and Henry Ford, you are the third wealthiest man in America?

Mellon (melancholy): That's what they say.

**Suzy** (feigning interest to liven Mellon's mood): So tell us then: What do you really think about Herbert Hoover's



Patman

will come down. People will work harder, live a more moral life. Values will be adjusted, and enterprising people will pick up from less competent people.

Patman: The simple words of a now popular jingle tell all Americans what has happened to our country:

Mellon has pulled the whistle  
Hoover has rung the bell  
Wall Street has given the signal  
And the country has gone to hell.

Scene 22: Washington DC. Party:

*Text on Screen: Washington D.C. Party, 1932.*

Sycophant: (laughing uncontrollably) You were a member of the fishing club

Mellon: (smiles) But President Hoover has assured me that Patman's finest days are past.

Sycophant: Oh, look. Here is our dear Mr. Patman now.

(They make their way toward the door, where WP and Merle are being greeted)

Host: Come in Mr. and Mrs. Patman. It is so nice to have you in Washington, Mrs. Patman. Here, you know Andrew Mellon, don't you? And this is –

Suzy: So nice to meet you Mrs. Patman, and all this time I thought your husband was the most eligible bachelor in town!

Merle: (scowls)

Mellon: (trying to pour on the charm) Mr. Patman, what a wonderful opportunity to become acquainted.

Patman: I'm not sure how happy I am to meet the man who's Gulf Oil Company is using illicit government contacts to circumvent Texas oil by drilling in South America.

Mellon: You know, as I've always told Suzy here (he hugs her), you have quite an imagination.





ambassador to England, Andrew Mellon became a target for investigation during the Presidency of Franklin Roosevelt. The former Secretary of the Treasury was accused of tax evasion and lived under a cloud of investigation until his death in 1937.

Months after Mellon died, despite Wright Patman's accusations that the former Treasury Secretary had committed high crimes and misdemeanors, and despite the hatred of the new president, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Andrew Mellon was declared innocent of all charges relating to income tax fraud and the misuse of power.

### Scene 26: President Franklin Roosevelt, and his Advisors

*Text on Screen: White House, Washington D.C. 1938.*

Harry Hopkins: With its oil money and expanding population, Texas is going to become more and more important to the Democratic Party.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt: Yes, and if we don't watch more closely what is happening there, we are going to lose the state in 1940, just as Al Smith did to Hoover.

Harold Ickes: Mr. President, we still have strong supporters there.

Franklin Roosevelt: True, but our dear Vice President, Cactus Jack Garner, certainly is not one of them. Imagine having the temerity to oppose us on our plan to expand the Supreme Court.

Hopkins: Holding his nose and giving a thumbs-down during the Senate vote was intolerable

# accuse: Mr. F



Franklin Roosevelt: Yes, but he's folksy, ambitious, and will do anything I ask him (smiles broadly).

Eleanor Roosevelt: Would you boys like some lemonade?

Franklin Roosevelt: (resignedly, seeing that Eleanor wants to crash their intimate circle) No Eleanor, but your input (with a note of sarcasm for the benefit of his friends) would be as refreshing as any drink.

Eleanor: Stop lying Franklin. I don't know why you boys have to talk about politics all the time. There are many more important issues.

Harry Hopkins: (facially apologizing to Eleanor) Well, just let us nail down Texas so that we can move on. Sam Rayburn and Lyndon Johnson are each going to be helpful in their separate ways, but I am sorry to say that the populist from Northeast Texas, Wright Patman, is going to have to be fended off with a twelve-foot pole.

Harold Ickes: Make it a 100-foot pole. The guy is nuts. His tax on chain stores would eliminate every retail store trying to do out-of-state business in the nation. He's still pushing for the payout to veterans, 3 billion dollars we don't have. He's been the force behind some really crank legislation.

Eleanor: Like what (wanting particulars)?

Ickes: Well, take for example the Patman bank bill that will pour currency into the country

(The two walk down the path that Cyclone, who is now bent over with a cane, is walking down)

*Text on Screen: Sulphur Springs, Texas 1938.*

Seymour Harris

money to the poor is the issue, the leaders are ignoring the obvious. They go off, talking about employment and old age security. They are trying to appease the cities and big interest groups rather than help our folks in the towns and villages.

Davis: (points to a branch, which he pulls down to cover his mouth in order to make a point). The political pimps of Wall Street would like to hush the voice of

WP: In that case, I was going to say that I have always believed that those Easterners in the New Deal never really knew what the poor farmers and businessmen of America needed. They go about their own ways completely oblivious to that need.

Lady Bird: That is the way of the world, isn't it? Everyone going about their own way – no one stopping to notice others struggling along the same path beside them. But it impresses me that you, Wright, have stood face-to

LBJ: (blatantly interrupting) There is not a man I feel closer to in all the world. My Father recalled working with you against the Klan when you were in Austin, and he said there was no one in the world more on the side of people than you.

WP: But on the money question –

LBJ: We need a party that can feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and give homes to the homeless. We need a party that can make America the greatest society the world has ever seen. As this happens, y

WP: John, you have to throw your influence behind Lyndon. We both know in ten years Kennedy never passed a single bill. Lyndon was behind everything. You know this. ... Yeah. ... Thanks John. (Hangs up)

WP (Dials phone): Hi Jack... Yes, a contribution to Lyndon would be very good right now. Do you know how close we are? ... I knew you'd come through for an old friend. I will talk to you another time then. ... Yeah ... Bye.

### Scene 31: Wright reading a letter

*Text on Screen Office of Wright Patman, Washington D.C. 1962*

(WP goes through a whole stack of papers to find a letter from Lady Bird)

(Lady Bird's voiceover is heard as WP reads. Camera focuses on WP and his reactions)

Lady Bird: Dear Wright, we could hardly believe the outcome of the Democratic process in 1960. Robert Kennedy still loathes my husband, but somehow the Democratic candidate, John, seems to realize that Lyndon can make the difference in the South. Sam Rayburn opposed him becoming Vice President, but the position gives us national experience with the press and the American people. Thank you again for helping my husband come so close to securing the nomination two years ago. I know how much you did to find support for him. However, things are no longer going so well. Th1 0 0 1 404.38 386.11 Tm0 g0 G[can )4(m)3(a

*Text on Screen: Vice Presidential Bathroom of Lyndon B. Johnson, October 23, 1963.*

(LBJ grins as he hears of Kennedy's death being reiterated)

Scene 33: Narrator

As president and a masterful politician, Lyndon Baines Johnson pushed through Congress a flurry of reforms. The legislation of Johnson's Great Society included food stamps, affirmative action, Civil Rights, aid to education, Medicare, and Medicaid. With his long tenure in the House, Wright Patman was a help to the president in passing these bills. He worked tirelessly to support the president. At the end of Johnson's term, Patman wrote the President and said, (voicing in Patman's voice) "I believe that you have done more for the education, and welfare of Americans than all the previous presidents combined. Lyndon Johnson wrote back to Patman, saying that it had been an honor to receive such support from him. For, Patman, according to Johnson, had been, "





LBJ (speaking rapidly, disabling conversation): "Hi, John. Look. On the Patman trouble with the fed, try to ignore him ... Oh, he told you that, did he? (Obviously cutting off the caller in mid-sentence) Well there is no way I am even going to bring up the name of Seymour Harris! Yeah. ... I know, I know. Do you know what the opinions of the business leaders are? Yeah, they say he would be a disaster! ... Well good. Believe me John, I am all for you. Okay. (Hangs up)

LBJ (to secretary): Get me the speaker of the House. ... Carl, I apologize like hell for putting you through the meat grinder on the Patman deal. But look, I want you to find a way to shut Patman down and you will have my full support in doing so. ... Yeah, I know Carl, we will definitely meet difficulty with some of his people in Northeast Texas, but I can tell you that we are going to lose the war if we enter this battle. ... And listen, to show how sincere I am, I am going to get you the funds to fix that dam project at Broken Bow. ... Yes, believe me, I don't want Patman to know I am talking to you about this.

### Scene 37: Courts Pauline

*Text on Screen: Texarkana, Texas 1968*

Pauline: Come in, Mr. Congressman. Please, have a seat.

WP



(Nixon and cameramen get back in car)

Nixon Aide: This is an act of genius. Just wait until the average American sees how you are being treated on the nightly news!

Scene 39: Nixon White House. February 1971. He chooses Connolly

Gerald Ford: One of our major obstacles in Congress is Wright Patman. He is becoming ever more powerful and ever more disruptive as Chair of Banking and Currency. The appointment of former Texas Governor, John Connolly – an old opponent of Patman’s – will aid the legislative process considerably. Especially so with Texans.

Nixon: He won’t change Patman, but he’ll have a good impact.

Nixon Aide: I would love to see Wright Patman’s face when we make Connolly’s appointment.

Ford: Of course, if he can’t maul the Treasury Secretary, as he did with Mellon years ago, you know he’ll go after the new Federal Reserve Chairman, Arthur Burns.

Nixon Aide: Patman is impossible.

Scene 40: WP and Pauline in a car backseat

Patman: Of all the friends you could have had in Washington DC., why – why is it Helen Burns, the wife of the Federal Reserve Chairman?

Pauline: Helen is delightful, Wright. *She* doesn’t obsess about money (full of innuendo, as if her husband does).

Patman: The Fed is vicious, Pauline, and Helen’s husband is vicious. (Looks out the window) They are Nixon appointees – the same man who appointed our high interest Secretary of the Treasury, John Connolly, to deal with me. And now, Nixon has even managed to get the wife of his Federal Reserve Chairman to get at *me* through *my* wife.

Pauline

Nixon: With Regard to the Watergate Break-in, I have ordered the entire staff of the Executive Department and all of my top advisors to cooperate with investigations that are occurring on the federal level. I can assure you tonight that if any of the officers of this administration fail to help this investigation, or are found guilty with regard to the break-in, they will be permanently dismissed from their posts. Let me repeat, I am ordering all the members of the executive department to cooperate fully with this investigation.

Scene 43: 7 September 1982. Banking and Currency Committee Meeting.

Patman (bangs gavel): Let the Meeting of the Congressional Banking and Currency Committee begin. First order of business, we are pleased today to have Federal Reserve Chairman, Arthur Burns, to field some questions about the 89 thousand dollars that was found on the persons of the Watergate burglars. Mr. Burns, We know that the Watergate burglars had tens of thousands of dollars in their possession at the time of the break-in. Can the origins of this money be traced?

Arthur Burns: 0 612 79lwBT/F2g3xET@.00000912 0 612 792 reW\*hBT/F2 14.04 Tf1 0 0 1



Nixon: Yes, but he's persistent to the point of frustration. He won't leave the money issues of the Watergate break-in alone.

Haldeman: We have been looking into ways of throwing him off, but now that I think of it, after 50 years in Congress there must have been some irregularities in fund raising. We could use that against him.

Nixon: (dismissive, shaking his head) No. Patman lives and breathes money. His books are probably balanced down to the last postage stamp. For 50 years he has





#### Scene 46: Nixon Press Conference

Nixon: The staff of the House Banking and Currency Committee has again been used by its chairman, Wright Patman, to rescue the sinking campaign of George McGovern.

*Patman on Face the Nation. 15 October 1972.*

George Herman: This is George Herman, with *Face the Nation*. Congressman Patman, why is this Watergate case so important to the American people?

WP: Because we cannot allow wiretapping, burglary, espionage, and sabotage to become ingrained as an accepted way of politics.

#### Scene 47: Narrator with Pictures:

Wright Patman had predicted that Nixon would lose the 1972 election because of Watergate. Instead, Wright Patman's investigation ground to a halt and Richard Nixon won by a landslide. Nevertheless, the Patman Banking and Currency Committee pioneered a line of inquiry that would lead to the President's resignation two years later. Newspapers like the *Washington Post* and Sam Ervin's Watergate Committee followed the money trail that connected Nixon's White House with political espionage and the obstruction of Justice.

#### Scene 48: Nixon resigns

(segment taken from:

Goldie: So your husband was destroyed by the very process he began with the Watergate investigations?

Pauline: Yes, and the new Democrats that came to Washington as a result of the incident, who he calls the Watergate Babies, saw my husband's chairmanship on the Banking and Currency Committee as arbitrary.

Goldie: So what did they do

Goldie: Money, money, money. Before I tie the knot with Seymour, maybe you can tell me why you two (looking at Patman and Harris) talk about money so much.

Patman: Money, dear, is the seed of democracy and opportunity. When the people have money, they are empowered and enabled.

Goldie: Well, I don't see the problem. We are a fairly rich country as it is, so why the obsession?

Patman: The lust for money is the root of all evil. The wealthy in our country have that lust, and that lust

