ANNA ROCHESTER

The Populist Movement in the United States

The rise, growth, and decline of the People's Party - a social and economic interpretation

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A POPULIST CAMPAIGN SONG IN KANSAS IN 1890

I was once a tool of oppression,
And as green as a sucker could be
And monopolies banded together
To beat a poor hayseed like me.

The railroads and old party bosses
Together did sweetly agree;
And they thought there would be little trouble
In working a hayseed like me.

But now I've roused up a little
And their greed and corruption I see,
And the ticket we vote next November
Will be made up of hayseeds like me.

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FOREWORD

Our American principles of democracy were threshed out in the days when most of the people were farmers. Some were richer than others, and large landowners had undue power over their tenants. The cancer of Negro slavery was weakening the vitals of democracy and to this day Jim-Crow restrictions remain as a running sore in our nation's body.

But until mid-nineteenth century, independent producers—farmers and artisans—together with wage workers who had a reasonable chance of becoming small employers themselves, played a leading role in the northern states. In the South they outnumbered the slave owners.

It was the farmers and artisans who won the victory in our war for national independence. Later, in 1791, under Thomas Jefferson's leadership they carried through the Bill of Rights amendments to the Constitution. The new political democracy of those revolutionary years was deeply rooted in the economic independence of the masses.

Our political democracy is still a living treasure in the United States. It has been weakened by the forces of large-scale capitalist industry, as these have undermined the way of life which created and nourished our democracy. It has been marred and restricted by cross-currents of race hatred and religious prejudice. It is now viciously threatened by the Nazi-Japanese fascists and their Fifth Column friends in this country.

Even as we fight for victory over the Axis, we shall be stronger if we remember the internal struggles through which our own democracy has been defended and new creative forces have developed among the people.

Populism, which in this country arose after the Civil War and culminated in the national People's Party of 1892, expressed primarily the struggle of farmers and other small producers to protect themselves against the rising power of monopoly and finance capital. It overlapped the earlier stages of the labor union movement and gave political support to the workers' struggles.

Now the People's Party has long since disappeared, but populism has left a deep impress upon our national life. Some of the measures for which it worked have been realized. But the battle for genuine democracy continues in a more highly developed form. On the economic field, the labor movement has achieved recognition and power with its mass organizations of wage workers. On the political field, the fight against monopoly and the rule of finance capital goes forward with the new perspective of a socialist future.

It is, of course, a truism that the present grows out of the past. This is peculiarly true of the present stage in our long struggle for democracy. This little book attempts briefly to describe the rise of the Populist movement; to show the forces from which it developed; and to indicate why populism failed to achieve the economic and political freedom which the masses of people desire.

1. FARMING AFTER THE CIVIL WAR

The Civil War years had marked a new stage in our economic life. President Lincoln was well aware of the way business interests had utilized the war emergency to grow rich by fair means and foul. He wrote to a friend in Chicago:

"I see in the near future a crisis approaching that unnerves me and causes me to tremble for the safety of my country. As a result of the war, corporations have been enthroned and an era of corruption in high places will follow. The money power of the country will endeavor to prolong its reign by working upon the prejudices of the people until all wealth is aggregated in a few hands and the Republic is destroyed. I feel at this moment more anxiety for my country than ever before, even in the midst of war. God grant that my suspicions may prove groundless."[1]

Lincoln's premonitions about the corruption of the post-Civil War period were fulfilled. The "gilded age" which flourished between the financial crisis of 1873 and the still deeper crisis of 1893 marked the rise of great fortunes. Then Rockefeller was building his oil trust and Morgan was consolidating the power of Wall Street. Carnegie was laying the foundations of the steel trust. Railroad promoters like Jay Gould, Leland Stanford, James J. Hill, and others were manipulating legislatures and piling up wealth. Cornelius Vanderbilt reached the peak of his power and six years after his death his son could boast of having increased his father's fortune by another ninety million dollars.[2] The flaunting extravagance of the new industrial rulers and their Wall Street brothers covered depths of mass poverty and suffering. Both the crowded tenements and the scattered farms were cruelly exploited in this onward march of American capitalism.

By 1890 non-farm production had outstripped agriculture, and wage workers greatly outnumbered the heads of farm families. As more and more of the mechanics and artisans had lost their independence in the rapid rise of industry, the expanding class of industrial wage workers had set up new unions to fight the new hazards which made more terrible the old burden of long hours and small earnings. But they did not immediately leave behind the feelings of the small producer.

The Knights of Labor, organized in 1869 and growing up with the industrial expansion of the 1870's and the earlier 1880's, included teachers and doctors and small businessmen along with wage workers. Most of them looked beyond capitalism to co-operative production. By 1881, other unions were developing toward the American Federation of Labor. These unions were more class-conscious than the Knights in accepting the fact that the industrial working class had its own special struggles, distinct from the problems of the small employer. They concentrated on the fight for decent conditions on the job.

A Socialist political movement based on the working class had been developing slowly since before the Civil War. By 1877 it had taken shape in the Socialist Labor Party. And many of the leading figures in the labor unions were influenced by socialist thinking.

Labor struggles were definitely a part of the social and political ferment of the Populist period. And the unrestrained violence with which historic strikes were broken by the corporations not only stiffened the class feeling of the workers but aroused much sympathy for the working class in the "reformer" circles of the time. The railroads' bitter resistance in 1877, when the workers on some roads struck for higher wages, was a factor in the large Greenback vote of 1878. The Homestead battle on July 6, 1892, when armed thugs attacked striking steel workers, helped to swell the People's Party vote four months later. And Cleveland's breaking of the Pullman strike in 1894 turned thousands away from the Democratic candidates and toward the Populists in the state and congressional elections of that year. Some union leaders participated

in the organizing of the People's Party and in the independent political movements which preceded it. But the working class was not the guiding force in the Populist movement.

The struggle which culminated in the People's Party was primarily a defensive movement of farmers and other small business interests against the relentless advance of finance capital. Even in 1890, two Americans out of three (instead of two out of five today) lived in villages or open country. Much of the new manufacturing was in small plants in little country towns which were trading centers for the surrounding farms. And here the farmers still felt kinship with the whole community, for many of the local businessmen and wage workers were only one step removed from farming themselves. Farmers and these small factory owners had a common interest in trying to regain the political power which had been seized by political machines subject to control by big industry and finance.

These small producers were harassed and even threatened with ruin by the power of banks and trusts and their political henchmen. They were joined in the political struggle by reformers of all kinds who were horrified by the corruption and brutality of big business and its control of government. Knights of Labor, labor unions, woman suffragists, Prohibitionists, ministers, journalists, professional men, all had a hand in the Populist movement. But it was most deeply rooted among the farmers of the West and the South. Here its mass base had been developed as the farmers organized in their vain attempt to solve the economic problems with which they were confronted after the Civil War. These problems were not identical in the new West and the old South, but farmers West and South had recognized their common enemy and the need for common struggle long before the People's Party entered the national campaign of 1892.

WESTERN PIONEERING

Pioneer life had never been a paradise. Problems of land title and debt had always been interwoven with problems of subsistence

and shelter. Then farmers who had fought valiantly against the slave states returned from the Civil War to face new capitalist forces which increasingly hindered their own free enterprise. These new forces preyed upon the farmer in relation to land and transportation. They took possession of his markets and his need for credit. They fixed the import tariffs and developed monopolies which held up prices for much that the farmer needed to buy.

On land, for example, farmers had welcomed the Homestead Act of 1862 as a long-desired charter giving freedom to settle on public land and obtain title to 160 acres with only a nominal payment for registering the claim and the title. But cutting across the new homestead policy, the government continued to subsidize various big-business projects with grants of land that would then be offered for sale. Railroad companies were given, before 1890, four times as much acreage as had been taken up by genuine homestead settlers. These grants were most lavish in the new country west of the Mississippi and greatly reduced the amount of free western land within easy reach of railroad transportation.

As more Indian lands were taken over in the West, under treaty, much of the new acreage was sold to large investors. Also government Land Office agents were shockingly negligent in permitting fraudulent homestead claims to be taken up by squatters who had no intention of farming. Some were holding title for resale. Others were gathering up acreage for large absentee speculators.

Corruption in the General Land Office was admitted by a reform Land Commissioner in 1885:

"The widespread belief of the people of this country that the land department has been very largely conducted to the advantage of speculation and monopoly, private and corporate, rather than in the public interest, I have found supported by developments in every branch of the service."[3]

Western railroad lands were sold to settlers on terms that seemed easy enough to farmers used to the much higher land prices of the East. And the railroads spent enormous sums in boosting settle-

ment of the regions they were entering. They even drew thousands of European peasants with rosy pictures of abundant crops and high returns. Railroad promoters had everything to gain from the rising land prices and increased traffic that would result from rapid settlement of the West.

Settlers responded to the lure. The less than half a million who had been in Kansas and Nebraska in 1870 grew to nearly a million and a half by 1880 and two million and a half by 1890.

Of course, many of the settlers helped to promote the boom created by the railroads. Some farmers who had started by mortgaging their land, to build and to buy equipment, saw land prices rising and plunged further into debt. Speculators planned innumerable little towns. They dickered for branch railroad lines, mortgaging their local revenue for years to come so as to borrow eastern capital and subsidize the railroad. By the 1880's the floating of western bond issues and the loaning of money on mortgage to western farmers had become a specialized and (temporarily) highly profitable business in the East.

For the western farmers themselves, this meant higher taxes and huge interest payments. Interest rates were high, running up sometimes to 15 per cent on real estate mortgages, and from 10 per cent to 18 per cent on chattel mortgages (on livestock or other movable property). Foreclosures were prompt and ruthless. Delinquent taxes involved high penalties, and if taxes remained unpaid the farmer lost his property entirely.

Land prices soared to unheard of heights. Borrowed capital expanded far beyond the capacity of the settlers' productive forces. Sooner or later the boom was bound to collapse.

Record wheat crops in 1882 and 1884, coinciding with a slump in exports, brought a sharp decline in the price of grain. The following year (1885) gave wheat farmers a record low in money return per acre harvested. Meantime the financial panic of 1884 had slowed up industrial production. This depression held down the

market for western farm products and was, in turn, made worse by defaults on western loans. Western land prices collapsed and 1887 marked a definite end of the western boom.

For many of the western farmers the later 1880's were increasingly disastrous. "From 1887 to 1897 there were only two years in which the central and western areas [of Kansas, Nebraska, and Dakota territory] had enough rainfall to insure a full crop, and for five seasons out of the ten they had practically no crops at all."[4] "Settlers who had taken up claims in Cheyenne county, Nebraska, in 1886, harvested no crop until 1893."[5] Even the wild prairie grasses dried up and the ranges were stripped of cattle, sold by the cattle kings to meet their debts.

But, unluckily for the western farmers, when crops were short in Kansas and Nebraska they were still large in the grain states east of the Mississippi, so that prices did not rise high enough to make up to the western farmer for the smallness of his crop.

Thousands of small eastern investors lost in the collapse of the western boom, but this crisis hit the western farmers harder than anyone else. Tens of thousands lost their farms entirely. From Kansas many returned in their horse-drawn wagons, decorated with such placards as "Going back east to the wife's folks," or "In God we trusted, in Kansas we busted!" Some were so completely "busted" that they had to stay where they were for they could not even remove the horse and wagon, held by chattel mortgage.

But while some turned back eastward and others remained in the West to farm as tenants or to seek work for wages, thousands more continued to struggle along on heavily mortgaged land. Kansas, Nebraska, and Dakota Territory were most seriously affected. Here some counties showed in the 1890 census that 90 per cent of their farm land was mortgaged. Five years later, Kansas had fifteen counties in which from 75 per cent to 90 per cent of the land was owned by loan companies.

When the Populist revolt began, these western states—and the most debt-ridden counties within these states—played the most active, the most aggressive role.

FARMERS VERSUS MONOPOLY

Farmers' grievances against the railroads spread far beyond the boundaries of the western boom. For as the railway mileage increased, the farmers became more and more dependent upon railroad transportation.

In the older regions of the Middle West, farmers had long been producing for the market. And when settlers poured westward beyond the Mississippi they went with an eye to large cash crops and livestock herds. As railroads came in, the farmers who had hauled their grain more than a hundred and fifty miles to a city market or a river port had to abandon such slow movement. They could not compete with farmers whose grain was transported by railway in a few hours over distances which had consumed days and weeks of the farmers' time.

So even while the railroads marked tremendous progress, knitting together producers and markets in the East and the West, the railroad capitalists seized the opportunity to grow rich at the farmers' expense. Railroad traffic was subject to no regulation until after the farmers had organized to protect themselves. The companies charged all that the traffic would bear. Quite openly they favored large shippers and long hauls while they squeezed unmercifully the smaller farmers and the shorter hauls.

Farmers felt this pressure when they received their building materials, reapers, and other manufactured goods brought by the railroads from industrial centers. And they felt it again when they paid for shipping their grain. As farmers became more dependent on the railroad, the distance was widening between farm and flour mill. Farmers lost all control of the marketing process, as commission merchants and speculative traders took possession of the grain. Handling and trading and storage provided the basis for a new form of monopoly. And, in fact, traders, elevator owners, millers, and railroad directors played together in tight little groups, with interlocking financial interests and a common desire to make the highest possible profits from the farmers and the consuming public.

Farmers, as separate, free, individual producers for the market, resented most deeply the impassable barriers erected by these new monopoly groups between themselves and the ultimate consumers of their products.

Prices received for their wheat had been declining ever since the end of the Civil War. Farm debts were increasing and land prices were rising, but the price of wheat had moved definitely downward from the peak of $2.06 a bushel which it had reached in 1866. A chart of the average wheat prices year by year shows peaks also in 1871 and 1881 and 1888, but each peak is lower than the one before, and the valleys between the peaks sink deeper and deeper.

Variations in wheat prices were much sharper than variations in the prices that farmers had to pay. And from one five-year period to the next prices were turning more and more against the farmers. This was especially noteworthy after 1879, the year that the Civil War greenback dollars were made redeemable at their face value in gold.

When grain prices broke after the peak of 1881, these new monopoly forces, and their friends the bankers, had become the most obvious, the most personal element in a very complex situation. Already much American wheat was sold in Europe. The volume of exports (and the European price) varied with the ups and downs of total world supply and of market demand in the importing countries. Here at home, in the recurring years of industrial crisis and depression, tens and hundreds of thousands of workers were unemployed and hungry. This mass unemployment cut into the American market for meat and for grains.

Even in a world of free competition, the farmers would have suffered from every decline in exports and every year of industrial unemployment. And the fact that the current cost of producing grain had been cut by technical advance was entirely obscured by the rising price of land and the heavy debts incurred by the farmers to provide their new equipment. Unquestionably the western farm crisis of the 1880's was made immeasurably more severe by the

farmers' dependence upon outside capital and by the uncontrolled development of monopoly forces.

Farmers were convinced that the monopolists and the bankers were deliberately robbing them. Hostility to Wall Street and trusts, which continues to this day among rank-and-file farmers, grows not only out of current experience but is deeply rooted in the soil of their nineteenth century hardships.

THE POST-WAR SOUTH

After the Civil War and the defeat of the Reconstruction struggle for the political and economic equality of Negroes, the southern white population discovered that while defending their racial "superiority" most of them had tumbled into a serious economic crisis.

Plantation owners, impoverished by war and the loss of their slaves, tried to rebuild their fortunes on the basis of sharecropper labor. Many white small farmers, who had been busy chiefly with subsistence farming, were able to buy a few additional acres, for large landowners were sorely in need of cash and the price of land had fallen very low. The number of small commercial farmers was greatly increased. Beside the old aristocracy there grew up, also, new groups of large landowners, as village merchants and former overseers acquired more and more acreage.

Like the farmers in the North, the southern white farmers began to chafe under their bondage to the railroads. They developed a deep grievance against monopoly. Furthermore, a new class of southern industrialists was growing up, whose interests drew them closer to northern bankers than to their southern rural neighbors. Tobacco growers in Virginia and North Carolina found their market in the grip of the expanding tobacco trust. Southern textile mills were increasing, but throughout the nineteenth century most of the cotton went to New England or across the ocean. Greedy middlemen and speculators were lined up between cotton growers and processors.

Infinitely worse was the plight of the four million Negro freedmen who were given almost none of the land on which they had

toiled in slavery. To this day, the Negroes are denied economic and political equality. But during the conflicts of the Reconstruction period and the years that followed, their people were subject in the South to a constant, furious hostility. Even "good" Negroes who made no claim to independence were treated with a friendly contempt which veiled a basic hatred.

Their extreme poverty and exploitation were interwoven with the general farm problems of the South, and yet, when the southern white farmers began to organize for redress of their grievances, the Negroes who might have been their most powerful allies were set apart in a subordinate Jim-Crow body. As they advanced to political action, the white farmers needed the Negro vote and were compelled to take up questions of education and fair treatment for the Negroes.

Responsible Negro leadership was most seriously developed among the Populists in Texas. But only in South Carolina, under the leadership of Ben Tillman, did the Populists disregard the problems of the Negroes and exclude them from all participation in the movement.

Credit was a serious and universal problem. The old mortgage system had collapsed in the South with the price of land. Southern cotton merchants who had been the chief go-between for planters and northern bankers were ruined in the war. When the war was ended, even the large landowners had no cash resources and no source of business credit. So, aristocrat, white small farmer, and destitute Negro tenant alike became dependent upon advances from the village merchants who supplied them. And since these "loans" consisted chiefly of goods, with a minimum of cash, this credit was hopelessly entangled with questions of prices paid for the goods handed out to the farmer on credit.

The whole system was essentially usury. Interest rates ranged upward from 30 per cent. But the borrower had difficulty in knowing how much of the debt was a reasonable principal and how much was overcharging and interest. For the prices written up against him were two and three times as high as the prices he might have

paid in cash. One southern historian says, for example, that the farmer in debt to a merchant "paid nine dollars per barrel for flour which was worth three dollars, and 35 cents per yard for flannel which cost a cash buyer 12½ cents."[6] If there were no cash customers in the village, the farmer had no way of knowing how much the merchant was overcharging him. Then, to add insult to injury, the merchant exacted a commission for selling the farmer's cotton.

One state legislature after another protected the merchant-lender with special laws giving him a lien on the debtor's crops. As long as any debt remained, the farmer could not break away from the merchant to seek cheaper supplies or a better outlet for his cotton. If the cash crop failed, the old debt was carried forward with unpaid interest added to the principal. By the time the next crop was harvested the farmer had piled a new debt on top of the old. It has even been said that "One crop failure was often sufficient to involve the farmer in a debt slavery from which death alone released him."[7]

This type of credit also played a large part in fastening the one-crop system on southern agriculture. For the merchant, in order to "protect" his loan, would insist that the farmer must devote the largest possible acreage to his cash crop. This increased the amount of fertilizer to be purchased (at high prices) from the creditor. It discouraged the planting of food crops for the farmer's family and home-grown feed for his livestock, since the merchant wanted to make the farmer dependent upon buying all supplies of food and feed at the store.

As time went on many of the large landowners had freed themselves from this bondage to the local merchant, but most of the smaller farmers became ever more hopelessly entangled in debt.

In the 1870's and 1880's this type of credit was the chief form of oppression under which the smaller southern farmers suffered. Try as he might the working cotton farmer could not get ahead. In the South Atlantic states, the soil was impoverished and required more and more fertilizer, while cotton prices slipped downward with an irregular but deadly persistence.

Georgia cotton, for example, dropped from the peak of a dollar a pound in 1866 to 18 cents in 1871. Five years later the average price (all cotton states combined) was below 10 cents a pound. Another drop followed the financial panic of 1884. In the nineties, the panic of 1893 combined with a new high in total cotton acreage and a very large yield per acre to cut the price in half between 1892 and 1894. One writer sums it up thus in his story of populism in Georgia:

"About eighteen cents in the local markets when the new era of home rule began in December, 1871, it [cotton] averaged, on the first of that month each year, about 12 cents during the seventies, nine during the eighties, and seven during the nineties. . . . A debt equivalent to ten bales of cotton in 1871 would have required 18 bales to cover it five years later. . . . Farmers came to feel that they were trying to fill a cask that was open at both ends."[8]

2. THE STRUGGLE BEGINS

Back of the People's Party which made such a dramatic entrance on the national stage in the campaign of 1892, there lay some twenty years of organization and political activity among farmers. It was a period of eager and fluid organizational experiment. Under shifting forms, increasing numbers of farmers were seeking to defend their way of life against the gigantic new forces of industry and banking. Their efforts in those years were essentially a part—and an important part—of the Populist movement.

White farmers in the South were restless over declining prices, crop liens, and high railroad rates, but they were slower than those in the West in giving active expression to their feelings. Throughout the sixties and early seventies the burning question of Negro-white relations held the center of the political stage.

In the North, however, Illinois farmers had stepped out politically almost immediately after the Civil War. There farmers' clubs had obtained in 1869 the first state law attempting to regulate railroad rates. The following year, when a new state constitution was under discussion in Illinois, a Producers' Convention (of farmers) was largely responsible for its including the basic principle that the legislature had the right and the duty to regulate railroads.

From local political clubs the farmers naturally pressed toward statewide organization. They created in 1873 the Illinois State Farmers' Association which developed the following year into the Independent Reform Party.

This Illinois State Farmers' Association drafted a *Farmers' Declaration of Independence* which was read at many July 4 celebrations in 1873.

"When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for a class of the people, suffering from long continued systems of oppression and abuse, to rouse themselves from an apathetic indifference to their own interests, which has become habitual . . . a decent respect for the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes that impel them to a course so necessary to their own protection."

Then follows a statement of "self-evident truths" and a catalogue of the sins committed by the railroads, together with a denunciation of railroads and congresses for not having redressed these evils. The document concludes:

"We, therefore, the producers of the state in our several counties assembled . . . do solemnly declare that we will use all lawful and peaceable means to free ourselves from the tyranny of monopoly, and that we will never cease our efforts for reform until every department of our government gives token that the reign of licentious extravagance is over, and something of the purity, honesty, and frugality with which our fathers inaugurated it, has taken its place.

"That to this end we hereby declare ourselves absolutely free and independent of all past political connections, and that we will give our suffrage only to such men for office, as we have good reason to believe

will use their best endeavors to the promotion of these ends; and for the support of this declaration, with a firm reliance on divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor."

These organized farmers tried to work within the two major parties, and they did obtain in many places a promise from a candidate or even a plank in a party platform. But railroad and monopoly interests were strongly entrenched, and in one state after another the farmers felt compelled to attempt independent political organization.

GRANGER MOVEMENT AND THE RAILROADS

Struggle against monopoly power in general, and for state control of railroad rates in particular, was the chief driving force in the farmers' new political organizations. The movement, arising first in Illinois, swept through what we today would call the Middle West—from Indiana to Kansas and Nebraska. It drew in Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota to the north and Missouri to the south. Leaping over the western territories the fire blazed up in California and Oregon. The eleven state parties of that period were variously named—Anti-Monopoly, Independent, Reform. All but two of them were working primarily for regulation of railroads. More than half of them demanded lower import tariffs, usually "tariff for revenue only." And every one was concerned with some aspect of economy in government and the fight against a pestilence of bribery and corruption.

They won, for a brief period, either a majority or a decisive balance of power in several state legislatures. In 1874, Kansas sent a "Reform" senator to Washington and Illinois elected three "Independent" Congressmen plus one "Independent Republican." In California, the legislature of 1874 elected senators (one Republican, one Democrat) pledged to oppose the railroad interests.

These parties crystallized feelings which extended far beyond the numbers who actively participated in them. So, for example,

the Patrons of Husbandry, or the National Grange, had been started in 1867 as a *non*-political secret organization to promote neighborliness and mutual education in farming methods. The Order had spread in all sections of the country until in 1874 it claimed 1,500,000 members in some 20,000 local Granges, and state organizations were functioning in 32 of the 37 states of the Union. Discussions in these local Granges naturally took in all questions of common interest and included problems of prices and railroad charges.

Obviously the railroads could not be controlled without political action, and the railroad discussions in the local Granges certainly stimulated the farmers' political life. Granges, as such, did not formally appear in the campaigns nor sponsor those who lobbied for the farmers' interests. But meetings of Grangers held "outside the gate" laid plans for political organization, and thousands of Grangers took part, as individuals, in the political campaigns. Their importance was so generally recognized that the drive for railroad regulation in the 1870's has been commonly known as the Granger movement.

In Alabama, for example, farmers' representatives in the legislature of 1876-77 put up such a stiff fight for control of freight rates that the session has come down in history as the "Granger Legislature."

Results were slow and discouraging, for the railroads used every means in their power to combat the popular movement for control. Those were years when in legislative halls, and even in the courts, political "principles" were bought and paid for with little subtlety of technique.

When new regulations were established, the companies found ways of making them extremely troublesome, and even obnoxious, to shippers and travelers. If the company defied the law, the shipper in most states had no redress short of entering suit against the railroad. This he hesitated to attempt, for he feared that "misfortunes might befall him: his grain might be delivered to the wrong elevators or left to stand and spoil in damp freight cars; there might be no cars available for grain just when his shipment was ready; and machin-

ery destined for him might be delayed at a time when lack of it would mean the loss of his crops."[9]

Most of the early railroad laws have disappeared from the statute books. Some were repealed as the movement slackened after its outburst of activity in the early 1870's. Some were reduced to ineffectiveness by court decisions. All lacked adequate machinery for enforcement.

But during the years between the high point of the Granger movement and the appearance of the People's Party, other farm movements carried on the struggle, and regulation of railroads reached a new stage of development. The U. S. Supreme Court in the case of *Munn vs. Illinois* upheld in 1876 the right of the state to fix maximum charges in any business "clothed with a public interest." The company's plea that limiting of charges amounted to deprivation of property without due process of law was rejected by the court. Railroads then objected that no state had the right to control interstate commerce. And only after another decade of struggle by the farmers was federal responsibility for railroad regulation established by the Interstate Commerce Act of 1887. Congress created then an Interstate Commerce Commission as an administrative and enforcement agency, but the battle continued between the railroads and the people. The problem of regulating the railroads in the interest of the farmers and other shippers was by no means solved. This was still a live issue among the farmers when the People's Party was organized.

OTHER ISSUES

In this early movement railroad regulation was the most widespread demand, but revision of the tariff was a close second. On this point, there was some difference of opinion among farmers. They all resented deeply the fact that American reapers were sold at lower prices in Europe than in the United States. And they agreed that tariffs on farm machinery and other manufactured goods raised the prices of industrial products and increased indus-

trial profits at the expense of the American farmer. But they were not all so ready to stand for free trade as a general principle.

Northern and western farmers who felt the competition of imported wool and Canadian livestock favored a tariff on such agricultural products. Some even balked at the moderate planks favoring tariffs for revenue only. Also there were farmers who insisted that any tariff campaign would divert interest from the question of railroad rates. They even implied that the tariff issue had been injected by men friendly to the railroads in order to weaken the railroad campaign by putting the blame for the high rates upon the tariff.

Most of these state parties also proposed some kind of taxation reform. Farmers were talking of need for a federal income tax. The California party demanded taxation of uncultivated land held for speculation at equal rate with cultivated land. (Henry George's first pamphlet on the single tax had been published in San Francisco in 1871.) Ohio and Wisconsin demanded taxation of railroad property. "The most general proposition on this subject, however, was that of taxing mortgages and relieving the mortgaged property from a proportionate amount of the burden."[10]

3. THE GREENBACK PERIOD

Money reform was also under discussion, but only in Illinois and Indiana (and possibly in Kansas) did these parties of the earlier 1870's merge into the National Independent (Greenback) Party of 1876.

When the money reformers in the Indiana and Illinois parties called a special convention on the currency question (at Indianapolis in 1874), they were bringing forward a subject which had been agi-

tating labor reformers and liberals as well as farmers ever since the Civil War. For bound up with questions of currency and banking was the underlying political issue: Who was to carry the burden of the war debt? Who was ultimately to meet the cost of the war?

During the Civil War, the federal government had issued paper money, "greenbacks," unrelated to any metal reserve. It had borrowed from the newly created national banks by selling them tax-free government bonds, and it allowed each national bank to make loans in the form of legal-tender banknotes up to 90 per cent of the face value of the government bonds which it held. The government also had borrowed by selling short-term interest-bearing treasury notes which passed from hand to hand, almost like money, as a medium for larger payments.

Early in the war, gold had been withdrawn from circulation. And as the war continued, this fact, together with the tremendous increase in the government debt, had created uncertainty as to the actual value represented by the expanding volume of paper (government notes, national bank notes, state bank notes) which had become the only means of payment. Some small silver coins remained in circulation, but these were legal tender only for amounts of five dollars or less. (Later, in 1879, this limit was raised to ten dollars.)

Prices had moved steadily upward during the Civil War. This reflected, in part, uncertainty as to the security of the paper money; in part, the sharp reduction of consumers' goods due to the long strain of the war effort. Workers suffered since wages lagged far behind prices. By 1865, wages had risen less than 50 per cent above the pre-war level while prices had more than doubled. But small producers in the North, along with the owners of industrial concerns and banks, had made money from the war inflation. Northern farmers, encouraged by the rising prices and short-handed because so many men had been drained off for the army, increased their investment in farm equipment and in land, and came out of the war with a heavier burden of debt.

When the war was over, problems of government finance and the stabilizing of the dollar were in the forefront of political discussion. Basically the conflict raged as an issue between opposing classes. On the one side were farmers and other small producers who had run into debt on the basis of the higher war prices. On the other side were bankers and other bond owners who had loaned their capital to the government and to the small producers. Debtors would lose heavily if the paper dollars were squeezed out of circulation and prices were brought to a lower level by a return to the gold standard. Creditors would lose if they were repaid in a paper dollar worth less than half of the dollar they had loaned.

From another angle also the interests of bankers and most industrialists were tied up with restoration of the gold standard. They saw limitless possibilities of profit in the rapid expansion of American industry with the aid of foreign capital. To gain the confidence of foreign investors in the industrial future of the United States, there must be not only a stable currency within this country but a dependable medium of international payments. This required a stream of American exports along with supplies of gold for settlement of balances due from one country to another.

Our exports in those years came chiefly from the farms. And American cotton, wheat, cattle, and tobacco would hold their own against the threatening competition of products from Egypt and India, Turkey, Russia, and South America only if American prices were brought down from the inflation heights of 1865.

Gold prices (instead of paper prices) and a free movement of gold were basic demands of the powerful minority who lived by financial manipulations and the promoting of industrial expansion.

In opposing the financial policies demanded by bankers and big business, the farmers and organized workers were attempting to defend themselves against exploitation by those who were amassing great amounts of capital. And until the end of the nineteenth century the currency fight continued, in one form or another, as an essential element in the conflict between petty capitalist small producers and the more highly integrated forces of finance capital.

One special grievance of the small producers, after the Civil War, concerned the operations of the privately owned national banks set up under an act of 1863, primarily as a channel for the sale of government war bonds. With these tax-free bonds in their vaults, the new national banks were authorized to issue legal-tender banknotes which found their way into circulation when the banks advanced interest-bearing loans to their customers.

To the small producer who was in debt and saw the value of his debt (in terms of wheat, or corn, or cotton) rising rapidly as prices slid downward from their wartime peak, this whole procedure looked like what today would be called a racket. Here, on the one side, were the bankers drawing double interest on their capital, while every dollar the bankers received in payment of a debt was worth more than the same dollar had been worth when it was loaned.

"Gradually emphasis was laid upon the fact that the bondholder had bought the bonds at specially favorable rates; that they received an exceptional rate of interest; that as interest was payable in gold commanding a premium which in itself yielded a large profit, they were a favored class; that their property was not actively employed in the production of wealth; and in short that they constituted that national banking interest which came to be generally regarded as a privileged institution."[11]

On the other side were the farmers, deeply in debt and compelled to produce and sell more and more wheat, or cotton, or corn in order to meet their payments of interest and principal. Prices of manufactured goods were also declining somewhat, but never so sharply as the prices the farmer received. And since the farmer bought little in current cash trade, his debts previously incurred, inflexible and relentless, were the major item in his year's payments. For the farmer, burdened with debt, even a proportionate decline in prices he might pay could not begin to offset the decline in prices received for his products. So a slogan that spread among the farmers was: "The same money for the bondholder as for the plowholder."

To the Greenback reformers, the root of the problem seemed to be a shortage of currency, with complications due to the bankers' control of an important section of the total money supply. There were several different shades of thought among them, but Greenbackers were agreed in wanting the government to increase the money in circulation and to keep prices steadier by balancing the total supply of money with the volume of goods in circulation. They were also agreed in opposing the private financial interests and maintained that the issuing of money should be strictly a government concern and not a source of profit to the capitalists.

Actually, after the Civil War, the conflicting pressures upon the government brought various shifts and compromises. Some contraction of currency under an act of 1866 was checked by an act of 1868. Then President Grant in his first inaugural address (March 4, 1869) pledged the national honor to pay every dollar of the federal debt in gold, unless it was otherwise agreed in the contract.

Meantime, the Treasury had become involved in the buying and selling of gold and managed this in such a way that private speculators were reaping a harvest, until government support of the gold price was suddenly withdrawn on "Black Friday," September 23, 1869, and many speculators were ruined. But the Treasury had greatly increased its gold reserves, even while meeting in gold the interest payments on war bonds. In 1870 and 1871 Civil War 6 per cent bonds were exchanged for longer term bonds with a lower rate of interest.

In the panic of 1873, paper money was slightly increased, but a further increase voted by Congress in 1874 was vetoed by President Grant, and the following January, 1875, the Resumption Act prepared for full restoration of the gold basis with a promise to redeem greenback notes in gold on and after January 1, 1879.

Feeling on currency questions was intensified by the commercial crisis which broke upon the country in September, 1873, and the long depression which followed. In those days the cycle of expansion, prosperity, crisis, depression, and gradual recovery had not been generally recognized as part of our capitalist economy. It was

easy to imagine that the Act of February 12, 1873, formally demonetizing the silver dollar (which had been out of circulation for more than twenty years) had somehow upset the financial balance of the country. And the five years of hard times which followed the September panic of 1873 gave a strong impetus to proposals for reform of the currency. First it was a demand for "greenbacks" and while the greenback question was in process of settlement, there developed the fight for free coinage of silver which became an important part of the later Populist struggles.

TOWARD A NATIONAL PARTY

Workers, and not farmers, had taken the first step toward broadly organized action in support of Greenback ideas. The National Labor Union, set up in Baltimore in 1866, under the leadership of William H. Sylvis, was the first genuine federation of unions in the United States. It had started its brief career when the eight-hour day was the primary issue in labor struggles. But from the beginning, the N.L.U. was concerned also with such political matters as access to the public lands, settlement of the national debt, and the unfairness of the national banking system. Its conventions and the National Labor Congresses of 1870 and 1871 looked to co-operation and money reform as the solution of workers' problems and welcomed farmers as fellow victims of the financial system.

In a platform adopted at Cincinnati in 1870, the National Labor Congress declared that wage workers were "suffering from a system of monetary laws" enacted during the war, which were now "to be perpetuated in the interests of bondholders and bankers as a means to subvert the government of our fathers, and establish on its ruins an empire in which all political power shall be centralized to restrain and oppress the rights of labor, and subordinate its votaries to the merciless demands of aggregated capital." They also denounced the newly developing monopolies and the menacing increase of special privilege.

Year by year, throughout its brief existence, the National Labor Union, with its offshoots the National Labor Congresses and the

National Labor Reform Party of 1872, stood for what came to be known as greenbackism.

Less political in intention were the new attempts at a national labor organization which began with the Industrial Congress at Cleveland in July, 1873. The call for this Congress pledged "that the organization, when consummated, shall not, so far as in our power to prevent, ever deteriorate into a political party." In spite of this pledge, a financial plank endorsing paper money and the greenback system was inserted in the platform.

Although this movement had started among wage workers, six local farm societies had been represented at the second convention of the National Labor Union (Chicago, 1867). The following year, when the Democratic Party proposed that government bonds should be redeemed not in gold but in greenbacks, this was recognized as a bid for the farm vote.

The extent of popular feeling on the subject is indicated by the fact that in February, 1868, a presidential campaign year, Congress with its Republican majority called a halt on the retirement of the Civil War greenbacks and authorized the Secretary of the Treasury to reissue, at his discretion, the $44,000,000 worth of greenbacks which had already been retired.

Farmers' first attempt to organize a nationwide Greenback Party grew out of the Indianapolis convention of 1874. According to Solon J. Buck, the outstanding student of farm movements in the period after the Civil War:

"It was not until the panic of 1873 had intensified the agricultural depression and the Granger movement had failed to relieve the situation that the farmers of the West took hold of greenbackism and made it a major political issue."[12]

This Indianapolis convention of 1874, originating with the farm parties of Indiana and Illinois, brought together representatives from seven states and led the way to a new nationwide movement in which organized workers were increasingly represented. Labor men on the National Executive Committee set up by the convention included three leading figures of the time, Robert Schilling of

Milwaukee, president of the Coopers' Union; R. F. Trevellick of Detroit, who had been president of the National Labor Union after the death of Sylvis; and A. C. Cameron, editor of the *Workingman's Advocate,* who had represented American labor at the Basle Congress (1869) of the International Workingmen's Association founded in 1864 by Karl Marx.

The platform committee proposed "a new political organization of the people, by the people, and for the people, to restrain the aggressions of combined capital upon the rights and interests of the masses, to reduce taxation, correct abuses, and to purify all departments of the Government." It put forward the money question as the most important issue and offered the so-called "American System of Finance" which had been proposed by the National Labor Union and the National Labor Congress of 1870. This was to provide a form of paper money redeemable only with bonds bearing a low rate of interest, and these bonds were in turn to be convertible into paper money greenbacks at the option of the holder. Instead of gold, the strength and credit of the government and the volume of national production were to be the sole support of the currency.

The new national party which grew out of this Indianapolis meeting was formally launched at Cleveland in March, 1875, as the Independent Party. But it was commonly known as the Greenback Party, and it was on a platform demanding repeal of the gold resumption act of 1875 that it entered the presidential campaign of 1876. A few of the former N.L.U. leaders participated, and the candidate for President was Peter Cooper of New York, a wealthy man deeply interested in labor questions, who founded and endowed Cooper Union as a center for workers' education. In drafting the platform, however, the viewpoint of farmers and other small producers carried the day. Along with four demands on currency and finance, it had a section on small business:

"It is the paramount duty of the Government, in all its legislation, to keep in view the full development of all legitimate business, agricultural, mining, manufacturing and commercial."

Separately, also, a resolution was adopted opposing subsidies to railroad corporations. No special labor demands were included.

In the end, the 82,000 votes cast for the Greenback candidate came chiefly from rural districts in the Middle West.

When the railroad strikes of 1877 were violently suppressed, and the workers found themselves face to face with federal troops sent in to break their movement for better wages and shorter hours, a fresh wave of working-class political organization swept through the chief industrial states. Mostly, they entered local and state elections in new parties distinct from the recently established Independent (Greenback) Party. But in the course of the campaign the Greenbackers and the workers' parties came together at least in Ohio, Pennsylvania and New York.

In February, 1878, a joint "Greenback-Labor" convention at Toledo, with delegates from some twenty states, adopted a common platform which included both currency and labor demands: legal limits to the working day, reservation of public lands for actual settlers, suppression of Chinese immigration,* abolition of contract prison labor, and the setting up of government bureaus (federal and state) to provide statistics on labor and industry. The familiar Greenback principles were summarized during the campaign in a famous sentence by Solon Chase, chairman of the party

* Ever since the 1860's workers had had good cause to resent the way in which employers were luring foreign-born workers to this country with the deliberate purpose of cutting down the American standard of wages. The more enlightened labor leaders, like Cameron, co-worker of Sylvis, had stood for free and unlimited voluntary immigration while opposing importation of workers under contract. As immigration under contract was gradually brought under control, the more conservative unions continued their demand for general restriction of all immigration. With recurring unemployment and a constant effort by employers to increase their profits by cutting wages, workers thought that they could defend themselves only if the competition for jobs was limited. This position was natural so long as there was little or no understanding of the possibilities—under socialism—of full employment and abundance for all.

On the Pacific Coast, the general fear of immigrant competition was heightened by race prejudice against the Asiatic peoples. And to this day, foreign-born Asiatics are excluded from the possibility of attaining citizenship.

convention in the state of Maine: "Inflate the currency, and you raise the price of my steers and at the same time pay the public debt."[13]

In this 1878 campaign for state and congressional candidates, the Greenback movement reached its peak. The party obtained about a million votes, or roughly one-ninth of the total, and sent fifteen men to Congress. Six were from the East, six from the Middle West, and three from the South.

Before the presidential campaign of 1880, the Greenback-Labor Party had begun to lose ground. Resumption of gold payments, with redemption in gold of outstanding greenbacks, had been accomplished in 1879 without any sharp decline in prices. Grain and cotton crops had actually brought larger returns than in several preceding years. In 1880, prices and total returns were still relatively high. So, for the time, many "Greenback" farmers lost interest in the currency question.

Also, the million Greenback voters of 1878 had included considerable numbers of old-party supporters—farmers, wage workers and liberals—who had been drawn by the crisis to vote for Greenback candidates and then slipped back to their old allegiance. This was made easy for them as the old-story politicians had begun to sense the importance of turning out fine phrases to conceal their devotion to the interests of big business.

So the Greenback presidential candidate in 1880 polled less than one-third of the million votes given to the party in 1878. The candidate, General James B. Weaver of Iowa, was a lawyer, an outstanding figure, who had won nationwide respect as leader of the small Greenback minority in Congress. Weaver represented the more moderate wing in the Greenback Party which believed in a policy of fusion to elect a progressive candidate. But he was a warm defender of the the people's rights and an eloquent speaker. We see this in his first congressional speech (1879):

"Sir, gentlemen talk about revolution. . . . I say to this House that if by the continuation of sectional strife and the withholding of substantial relief you force the people to much longer 'eat the bread of idleness,'

it will not be long before they will thirst for the 'wine of violence.' There is where the danger of revolution is to be looked for. . . . It comes from the uneasy masses who are out of employment today, and out of food and destitute of raiment. . . ."

Many of the moderates in the Greenback Party, who stressed primarily the importance of the individual candidate, had withdrawn. The Greenback campaign of 1880 was managed by men who saw the importance of continuous organization and mass political education as the necessary basis for any effective independent action. They trusted Weaver's integrity, but they were beginning to think more in terms of class conflict and class organization. Along with reformers and labor men, the Greenback movement drew in the demagogues Mark ("Brick") Pomeroy, a personally ambitious "radical" editor, and Dennis Kearney who was leading a Workingmen's Party in California, based largely on hostility to Chinese immigration. Shortly before election, the Greenback Labor Party was endorsed also by the leaders of the Socialist Labor Party, the chief Socialist organization in the United States at that time.

These men probably—the Socialists, certainly—recognized that the currency issue was not the root of the people's difficulties. But it expressed the thinking of great numbers of persons who were definitely in revolt against the increasing domination of American life by the financial and industrial powers. And the Greenback program in 1880 included for the first time planks calling for woman suffrage, a graduated federal income tax, and congressional regulation of interstate commerce.

ANTI-BOURBON MOVEMENTS IN THE SOUTH

In the South, as we have noted, the Greenbackers were strong enough to elect three Congressmen in 1878: George W. Jones of Texas, Daniel Lindsay Russell of North Carolina, and William M. Lowe of Alabama. And in the Weaver campaign, two years later, more than 62,400 voters in ten Southern states broke away from old-party allegiance to support the Greenback candidate for President. In one sense, Texas led the country, casting 11 per cent of its votes

for Weaver, while even the leading Greenback states in the North (Missouri, Michigan and Iowa) gave him only 10 per cent of their votes.*

Independently of this movement which originated in the North, southern states had shown stirrings of revolt against the Democratic machine.

For a while after the Civil War, the battle of white Southerners to hold the Negroes in subjection had obscured all other conflicts within the South. When the federal Reconstruction forces withdrew, the Negroes retained the right to vote, but in practice they were excluded from active participation in political life. Negro voters were regarded by most of the whites as a reserve to be manipulated on election day—purchased, intimidated or flattered according to the need of the moment and the resources of the local machine. Those southern white Republicans who respected the Negroes and honestly wished to see them exercise their independent rights as American citizens were definitely in a minority. The Democratic machine ruled the South. And, as a party, the northern Republicans, after the Hayes campaign of 1876, ceased to concern themselves with protection of Negro rights.

But among the southern whites and within the Democratic Party new class alignments were developing. Most of the old Bourbons, as the slave-owning aristocrats were called, were financially ruined by the Civil War. Their political influence survived for a time after its economic foundations had been blasted and destroyed. Beside them a new kind of southern Bourbon was growing up, as men from various backgrounds stepped forward in the industrial development of the South. Old planters and new capitalists had their differences, but with few individual exceptions both groups believed that the apparatus of government should be controlled by a top minority of the population. Within the Democratic Party the

* Southern Greenback votes came chiefly from Texas, Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, and Arkansas. None were reported from Virginia or Florida.

different elements in the Bourbon machine put up a common front against issues raised by the poorer whites.

For the southern poor farmers—and these greatly outnumbered the wage workers—the chief political grievances were three: They carried far more than their share of taxation. They resented railroad control of the legislature and maintained that legislatures should control the railroads. And they knew that even the white poor farmers were deprived of their full voice in the law-making bodies.

This last problem had a special southern twist tied in with fear of the Negro vote, and in a somewhat different form it still persists in the poll-tax states. The plantation counties where Negroes were most numerous were given seats in the legislature according to their total population, white and colored, but these representatives were almost without exception spokesmen for the Bourbon whites. Their majority over the hill counties was based on a Negro population, but it was utilized to uphold the interests of a minority among the whites.

As revolt developed among the up-country farmers, their first reaction was a demand that Negroes should be excluded from the apportionment of seats in the legislature. But the more progressive poor whites recognized that the Negroes themselves should be represented. Most of the anti-Bourboners, and (later) the People's Party in the South, came to the defense of a free ballot and fair Negro representation. Only in South Carolina, under the leadership of the up-country "one-eyed plowboy," Benjamin R. Tillman (who ultimately became the political boss of the state), the Populists never abandoned the "lily-white" view in the fight against the Bourbon machine.

One of the first revolts against the Bourbon interests flared up in Virginia in the 1870's over the excessive taxation required to meet charges on the state debt. Virginia had issued bonds before the Civil War to cover various public improvement projects and to provide state aid for railroad construction. But an up-country third of Virginia's population had opposed secession and created the separate

state of West Virginia. They recognized no responsibility for the debt. Also much property had been destroyed during the war, in which Virginia was an important battleground. Bondholders, of course, demanded full payment. But others argued that the debt should be scaled down to about one-third of its total.

Conflict over the handling of the debt occupied the center of the political stage in Virginia in the 1870's and finally led to an independent political party of "Readjusters" which controlled the legislature from 1879 to 1883 and achieved a reduction of the debt. In the course of the Readjusters' fight, they took up other issues also. While they were in power a poll tax which was limiting popular suffrage was repealed. (Later on, a poll tax was restored in Virginia as a weapon of the Bourbons against the Populist opposition.) Also the state undertook regulation of railroad rates, and supervision of commercial fertilizers and of the warehousing and sampling of tobacco.

The Readjusters regarded the Negroes as inferior allies but they did encourage Negro suffrage and worked with the Republicans. In relation to the national Greenback movement, the Readjusters were divided. But in a real sense they represented a people's revolt against the demands of the wealthy and were a part of the Populist movement. In the later alignments, however, for and against the People's Party, the old Readjusters and their opponents, the Funders, were again found on both sides of the new political fence.

Meantime, one of the up-country districts in Georgia had produced an outstanding figure who fought for twenty years against privilege and reaction and became a leader in the People's Party. Dr. William H. Felton campaigned vigorously as an Independent Democrat and was elected to Congress in 1874 and for two successive terms thereafter. The neighboring up-country district sent another Independent Democrat (Emory Speer) to Congress in 1878 and again in 1880. When Georgia adopted a new state constitution in 1877, insurgent elements were strong enough to insert a provision requiring the legislature to regulate railroad rates. And Robert A. Toombs, one of the best of the old-time Bourbons, defended this

against those who feared to disturb the privileges of property: "Better shake the pillars of property than the pillars of liberty!"[14] Of course, liberty for the Negro was not part of Toombs' concern. After Dr. Felton's defeat in 1880, the "Independents" supported as governor one of the old-time Democrats who was nominated also by the "regulars." This marked the end of the Independent movement.

Issues raised by Dr. Felton and his associates were essentially the same as those with which later the People's Party was concerned. Dr. Felton's wife and coworker* gives in her autobiography the platform on which they campaigned in 1882, and its eleven planks include action against monopolies; against the system of leasing state convicts as a "foul blot upon our civilization and humanity"; against sectional prejudices and "recognizing the unity of our common federal government and equality of all men before the laws." It demanded state support for free, universal "common English education." It favored bimetallism, and full payment of all honest debts—national and state—as rapidly as surplus revenues would permit.

In Alabama also an up-country district had sent to Congress, in 1878, W. M. Lowe of Huntsville as an Independent supporting the Greenback movement. And in 1880 those with Greenback sympathies set up a small People's Anti-Bourbon Party which not only supported Weaver for President but drafted a good Populist platform on Alabama state matters. This defended the "sacred right of suffrage" with "a fair election and an honest count." It denounced convict labor, favoritism toward railroads, banks, "and other monied corporations," and the inefficient common school system. It demanded that all property bear equally the burdens of taxation.

* Rebecca Latimer Felton continued her political activity after her husband's death. When the Populist Senator, Thomas E. Watson, died in 1922, Mrs. Felton—then 87 years old—was appointed to occupy his seat in the Senate until a successor to Tom Watson could be elected. She was the first woman either elected or appointed to sit in the Senate of the United States.

Many Alabama Republicans supported the Anti-Bourboners, but after 1880 the party was weakened by sharp division between the progressive elements and those who thought the whites should stand together against Negro-Republican domination.

BROADER ANTI-MONOPOLY MOVEMENT

In 1884 a new national Anti-Monopoly Party was set up by men from seventeen states.* No southern state was represented at the Chicago convention which adopted a platform and nominated Benjamin F. Butler for President. This party paralleled in a way the dwindling Greenback Party. But it gave much more definite emphasis to the regulation of interstate commerce and the "giant monopolies" controlling "transportation, money and the transmission of intelligence." It demanded, along with a federal income tax and other planks of the Greenback Party in 1880, direct election of United States Senators and a tariff in the interest of the people. Labor demands—for an eight-hour day, the prohibition of contract labor, and arbitration of labor disputes—went along with demand for "encouragement of agriculture."† And the party appealed "to the American farmer to co-operate with us in our endeavors to advance the National interests of the country, and the overthrow of monopoly in every shape when and wherever found." Later in the same campaign the small Greenback Party also nominated Butler.

This candidate was a wealthy Massachusetts lawyer who had been first a Democrat and then a Republican. According to his own

* Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Missouri, Michigan, Nebraska, Wisconsin, California, Kansas, Minnesota, Oregon, New York, Massachusetts, Maryland, Vermont, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey.

† Knights of Labor and others tried to compel the employers to discuss grievances and bring them before a board of arbitration whose decisions might be accepted or rejected. This effort by organized labor to obtain a hearing was quite distinct from the employers' later efforts—always opposed by organized labor—to require arbitration of labor disputes and to make all strikes illegal.

statement "he had belonged to the Democratic Party until it attempted to destroy the Union, and was with the Republican Party till it deserted its founders, the laboring men. The capitalists now hold the Republican Party bound hand and foot. Hayes has violated every pledge and betrayed the Negroes of the South. The effort of Grant's administration to strengthen public credit was a swindle."[15] Haynes, the standard authority on third-party movements, considers that Butler was "able but unscrupulous" and always "believed himself the friend of the workingman." In 1874, Butler had been called by the *Chicago Daily Tribune* the Mephistopheles of American politics, but after Butler's death, nineteen years later, President Judson of the University of Chicago said that Butler "cannot be dismissed as a mere demagogue. . . . Before we can judge of his real weight and meaning in our political development we must know more of the issue of that radical movement to which he gave coherence and a considerable impetus."[16]

The Butler vote was strongest in the Northeast, and it was larger than the Weaver vote of 1880 also in Colorado, Michigan, and Minnesota. But these states did not begin to offset the loss of votes in many other regions. In seven states, including Iowa, Nebraska, Missouri, and four southern states* no Butler votes were reported. And in Illinois, West Virginia, and six southern states† Butler received less than half as many votes as had been given to Weaver four years earlier. Taking the country as a whole, Weaver had received 308,578 or 3.3 per cent of the total popular vote in 1880. Butler, four years later, had 175,370 or 1.7 per cent of the total popular vote.

Roughly it might be said that in 1884 the Anti-Monopoly Party represented labor's approach to political and economic problems while the Greenbackers were mainly farmers. In one sense they were both forerunners of the People's Party. Weaver, the Greenback candidate of 1880, was the Populist candidate of 1892. But

* Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina.

† Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Texas.

while many of the issues taken up by the Populists had been developed in these movements, the living roots of the People's Party were growing in other organizations which had been set up by farmers for political purposes but which remained until the late 1880's aloof from any third-party activity.

4. FARMERS' ALLIANCES

Parallel with these third-party movements and entirely apart from them, new farm organizations, different in several ways from the older Patrons of Husbandry (National Grange), were cropping up in many different sections of the country. The Grange had been started by a small national committee of idealists to lead in developing education and sociability among farmers. Farmers' Alliances and other orders coming to the front in the 1880's were more deeply rooted in local groups.

These local groups were set up spontaneously by the farmers themselves to deal with specific issues, most of which involved definite political action. They did not look to creating a new political party, for these farmers had come to the conclusion that they would advance faster by sticking to the most immediate grievances. Any broader political platform would raise issues on which they might not agree. Although arising in the Greenback period, many Alliances deliberately avoided, at first, the currency issue. By political action the Alliances meant endorsement of old-party candidates pledged to support the farmers against the railroads and speculators and absentee landowners. Only gradually in the course of the 1880's did they return to the idea of genuinely independent political organization through a third-party apparatus.

As these organizations grew until they included more than half the farmers in the entire country, there was great rivalry among the states over priority in organization. Kansas squatters had had

from about 1874 a Settlers' Protective Association, through which they defended their land titles against claims by the railroad companies. Three years later, a group (mostly Grangers) in New York state created a Farmers' Alliance as a "political mouthpiece" for seeking redress of grievances against the railroads, reform of taxation, and legalization of Granger insurance companies.

Kansans claimed that the New York organization had been copied from the Kansas squatters. New Yorkers maintained that they were actually the first Alliance in the North.

Meantime, Texas settlers had been bearing the brunt of local conflicts with the cattle men. These resented the settlers' invasion of the public lands which had served as a free range for private cattle. So the crop farmers of Lampasas county organized an Alliance in 1874 or 1875 for mutual protection against horse thieves and for defense of their new barbed wire boundary lines.

Neither Texas, New York nor Kansas, however, but Kansas' neighbor state, Nebraska, developed in January, 1880, the first statewide Farmers' Alliance.

The *Western Rural,* published in Chicago, was vigorously pushing the Alliance idea. Milton George, the editor, organized in 1880 a local Alliance in Cook county, Illinois, and invited affiliation of other local Alliance groups. George was especially aroused over the railroad situation and saw the necessity for mass political organization to offset the power of the railroads in Congress and in state legislatures. So he called a Farmers' Transportation Convention which brought hundreds of farmers together at Chicago, in October, 1880. These delegates from all sorts of organizations adopted not only resolutions on railroad problems but a constitution providing for local, state, and national Alliances. They looked primarily to local and state organizations with loose federation on a national scale.

Shortly afterwards several state Alliances were organized, including Texas, New York, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa and Kansas. By 1882 a National Farmers' Alliance (based on these northern state organizations) could claim some 2,000 local groups with a total membership of 100,000 farmers.

DIFFERENCES NORTH AND SOUTH

The Texans held aloof from this northern movement. Their general purposes were the same. They had certain political goals in common. But the Texas Alliance was including a demand for paper money which the National Farmers' Alliance (commonly known as the Northern Alliance) was not then prepared to adopt. Also important were certain differences in approach.

The Texas organization had been rescued from disruption by one C. W. Macune and under his leadership the local groups were more definitely guided by the state—and later the national—committees than in the Northern Alliance. This point of difference might well have been adjusted, but on two other issues agreement was more difficult.

Negro farmers were excluded from membership in the Texas Alliance and were organized, under white leadership, in a parallel Colored Farmers' National Alliance and Co-operative Union. The Northern Alliance stood firmly for racial equality within a single organization.

The Texas Alliance was a secret society, combining its political work with various business enterprises. The Northern Alliance was primarily political and maintained that open organization was essential.

Meantime the Texas Alliance expanded in southern states, where other independent organizations had been developing also. Forgotten now, as history has moved beyond them, these spontaneous farm movements in the South, shortly merged under Texas leadership in the "Southern Alliance," were very important in their day. They expressed a genuine mass economic conflict within the Solid South of the white race. And yet, one and all, the southern organizations were weakened by racial pride and some fear of political action by the Negro people.

Most important of the organizations merging in the Southern Alliance was the Agricultural Wheel, originating in Arkansas in 1882 in the struggle against crop liens and claiming five years later half a million members in eight states (including Wisconsin, Ala-

bama and Texas). Older, but much smaller, was the Farmers' Union of Louisiana. The Farmers' Alliance of Texas changed its name three times: in 1887, as it absorbed the Louisiana organization; in 1889, as the merger with the Agricultural Wheel was completed; and later in the same year during unsuccessful negotiations with the Northern Alliance.* But throughout its career it was commonly known as the Southern Alliance.

As the Southern Alliance moved toward the Atlantic Coast, it found the soil of farm revolt prepared by the various Anti-Bourbon political groups. The Greenback Party was dead. And the southeastern states were quite untouched by the movements which were preparing to bring a new third party into the national field in 1888. But within each state in the South, leaders of the Anti-Bourbon movement were working independently, each in his own way. In Georgia, the young Tom Watson had just completed a term in the legislature where he spoke vigorously for the up-country farmers. In South Carolina, "Pitchfork Ben" Tillman was well along toward capturing the Democratic machine. In North Carolina, Colonel Leonidas L. Polk was voicing the farmers' problems in his new weekly paper, *The Progressive Farmer,* and was planning to organize a North Carolina Farmers' Association. Alliance organizers found instant response and membership grew rapidly.

Last of all, the Southern Alliance entered Virginia, a state with a distinguished history in agricultural organization. Both Washington and Jefferson had been Virginia landowners, actively directing their estates and experimenting toward the building up of agricultural science. John Taylor, first president of the Virginia Agricultural Society, had said in 1818: "Agriculture without political knowledge cannot expect justice or retain liberty."[17] It was a president of this society, Colonel Robert Beverley, who had organized in 1875 the Farmers' National Congress. This body of well-to-do

* The Farmers' Alliance of Texas became, in 1887, National Farmers' Alliance and Co-operative Union; in September, 1889, Farmers' and Laborers' Union of America; in December, 1889, Farmers' Alliance and Industrial Union.

farmers, one from every congressional district in the country, met yearly to discuss the non-political problems of American agriculture.

Politics had crept into the Farmers' National Congress with papers on controversial subjects read by Henry C. Wallace* and another Iowa delegate at the St. Paul session in 1886. At its Montgomery, Ala., convention in 1889, when an active member of the Farmers' Alliance was president, the Farmers' National Congress took a political stand, in opposition "to all combinations of capital, in trusts or otherwise, to arbitrarily control the markets of the country to the detriment of our productive industries." It demanded that "all farm products shall be as fully protected as the most favored of the manufacturing industries. . . . If protection to this extent be denied, we call upon the farmers of the U. S. to assert their power, at the ballot-box and otherwise, to right the wrong and injustice of discrimination against them." They also favored "commercial treaties which will discriminate in favor of those nations which accept silver as legal-tender money as well as gold, and against those which have demonetized silver."

But three years later, when the People's Party was in the midst of its one great independent presidential campaign, the Farmers' National Congress reasserted its non-partisan, non-political character.

More political than the Farmers' National Congress was the Virginia Farmers' Assembly, created in 1885 as a clearing house for grievances and an organization to propose farm legislation. Most of the assembly members went over into the more militant Alliance and the earlier assembly was disbanded.

Not until 1889 did the Southern Alliance and the Northern Alliance arrive at definite proposals for union. And when the two orders agreed each to hold a convention at St. Louis in December of that year, the Southern Alliance outnumbered the Northern Alliance by almost three to one.

* Later, Secretary of Agriculture under Harding and Coolidge and father of our Vice-President, Henry A. Wallace.

They did not reach an agreement, but shortly afterwards three of the northern state Alliances (Kansas and the Dakotas) withdrew and joined forces with the larger organization in the South. After St. Louis, also, the Southern Alliance began sending organizers into northern and western states, but the time was near when the third-party movement—which had made a fresh start in a few states—would supersede in importance the less decisively political Alliance organizations.

ROLE OF THE ALLIANCES

The usefulness of the Alliances was by no means ended. They had knit together for political discussion more than two million farmers in all sections of the country. They published several hundred Alliance papers (nearly 900 in 1892) which were to play an important part in the Populist campaigns. These included a number of well-known journals established before 1890 and having a wide circulation. The following were perhaps the most important: *The Western Rural* (Chicago) and its editor Milton George led in the up-building of the Northern Alliance. Jay Burrows spoke through his own paper, *Farmers' Alliance* (Lincoln, Neb.), and led the opposition to secret organization and Jim-Crow membership rules. *The Non-Conformist,* edited by the Vincent Brothers (at Winfield, Kans., and later at Indianapolis), was given nationwide fame by a bomb frame-up against its editors during the Union Labor Party campaign of 1888.

Colonel Leonidas L. Polk, editor of the *Progressive Farmer* (Raleigh, N. C.), was an outstanding figure in the South. Polk had opposed secession, although he had fought in the Confederate Army when the Civil War actually began, and later he participated in the Reconstruction convention in North Carolina. Elected president of the Southern Alliance in 1889 he worked vigorously against sectionalism in the farmers' movement and did not shrink from co-operation with North Carolina Republicans against the Democratic Party of the ruling whites. He was one of the first southern leaders to recognize that a third party might be necessary. It was a serious

blow to the nationwide movement, when Polk died suddenly in the spring of 1892.

The Southern Alliance had an official organ, the *National Economist* (Washington, D. C.), founded by C. W. Macune who had helped to organize the Texas Alliance. In the 1892 campaign, Macune was charged with disloyalty to the movement and was compelled to withdraw. But Macune had made an important contribution by developing and popularizing the so-called "subtreasury plan" originally suggested by Harry Skinner of North Carolina.

According to the "subtreasury plan," the government would build federal warehouses for the storage of non-perishable farm products in every farming county producing annually for sale at least half a million dollars worth of such products. Farmers would be free to offer their products for grading and storage, and against these as security any farmer would receive a loan, in the form of United States legal-tender paper money, equal to 80 per cent of the local current value of his products brought for storage. Interest on the loans would be payable at 1 per cent per annum and, in addition, the borrower would pay a small charge for handling and insurance.

In 1891, when the Farmers' Alliances and other groups were preparing for independent political organization, the subtreasury plan was extended—at the insistence of northern farmers—to include federal loans against real estate. And crop loans were to bring the government a flat 2 per cent interest without additional charges for storage and insurance. In this amended form the subtreasury plan became an important plank in the 1892 platform of the National People's Party.

5. PRELUDE TO THE PEOPLE'S PARTY

The decade of the 1880's, when the Alliances reached their peak of importance, was a period of intellectual and social ferment. As a novelist put it, in writing of those years: "Thoughts and theories sprouted like weeds after a May shower."[18] It was a decade that read Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward,* the classic of American utopian socialism, and Henry George's *Progress and Poverty,* the inspiration of those who would reform capitalism through the single tax. It was the decade of the first "muckraking"—when Henry Demarest Lloyd began his monumental exposure of Standard Oil.

Class struggles between wage workers and corporations flared up in several sections of the country as the movement for an eight-hour day gathered momentum. Thousands of strikers made the acquaintance of hired thugs as the Pinkerton men won the undying hatred of the working class. In 1886, eight militant labor leaders in Chicago were convicted on murder charges, after a bomb explosion at the Haymarket meeting of strikers from the McCormick Harvester works. The following year, four of them were hanged while labor leaders and liberals tried in vain to convince the governor that the police and courts had connived at a glaring frame-up. (One of the prisoners had died in his cell.) The other three were pardoned, six years later, by the liberal governor, John P. Altgeld.[19]

Political thinking had taken on a new warmth and drive as factories closed, prices dropped and debts mounted in the nationwide depression which followed the panic of 1884. Wage workers were the first to move at this time toward independent political action. Independent state parties, variously named and chiefly made up of trade unionists, Knights of Labor, and Greenbackers entered the

1886 elections in thirteen northern states.* In at least five of these states (Wisconsin, New York, New Jersey, Missouri and Ohio), the Socialists participated in the movement. Union labor tickets were nominated for local elections in some fifty-nine places. These included at least three large cities (New York, Chicago and Milwaukee), where independent labor candidates put up a stiff fight against the old parties.

The Single-Taxer, Henry George, was the labor candidate in New York City (1886) on a platform which included not only the single tax but government ownership of railways and telegraphs; abolition of property qualifications for trial jurors, and of the class basis for drafting grand juries; freedom from police interference with peaceable meetings; enforcement of laws for safety and sanitary inspection of buildings; abolition of contract labor on public work; and equal pay for equal work without distinction of sex. George received more votes than Theodore Roosevelt (a future president) and, in spite of Tammany manipulation, was only 12,500 votes behind the Democratic winner.

A storm of opposition was brewing also among the farmers both West and South. The issues they raised were not new. But more and more farmers now saw the struggle as a basic conflict between themselves as small producers and the power of big business. This same year, 1886, some labor leaders and farmers discussed the possibilities of broader joint political action.

NATIONAL UNION LABOR PARTY

At Cincinnati on Washington's Birthday, 1887, farmers and workers both had a hand in organizing the National Union Labor Party, which entered a few state contests of that year. The following May, a Union Labor Party convention for nominating a presidential candidate brought 274 delegates from twenty-five states. Old third-party enthusiasts were there, along with large groups from the farm

* Colorado, Connecticut, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Wisconsin.

organizations and a minority of wage workers from trade unions and the Knights of Labor. But Terence V. Powderly of the Knights refused official support. And Samuel Gompers of the new American Federation of Labor stayed out, doubtless because, as he stated the following year, he would not work with employing farmers.

So the National Union Labor Party, in spite of its name, was chiefly a farmers' party. The Minnesota branches, in fact, functioned under the name of Farm and Labor Party. The national ticket was headed by a former president of the Northern Alliance, Alson J. Streeter of Illinois, and a Southern Alliance man, Charles E. Cunningham of Arkansas. Their platform opposed importation of contract labor and Chinese immigration.* They denounced land monopoly, and they demanded government ownership of means of transportation and communication. Like the Greenbackers, they demanded a graduated income tax and equal suffrage for men and women. And they repeated the Anti-Monopolists' demand for direct election of United States Senators. "The paramount issues to be solved in the interests of humanity are the abolition of usury, monopoly and trusts, and we denounce the Democratic and Republican parties for creating and perpetuating these monstrous evils."

Although the currency question was not included, the Union Labor Party drew support from many old Greenbackers. And currency problems came again to the fore as the two Alliances prepared for broader and more definite political work.

State Union Labor parties were set up also (1888) in nine northern states (Ohio and Indiana; Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota; Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, and Colorado), and in three southern states (Texas, Arkansas, and Alabama). In Texas, Streeter received nearly 30,000 votes, although the Democratic Party had also come out for regulation of railways and curbing of trusts. In Arkansas, the Union Labor ticket was endorsed by the Republican Party and received over 10,000 votes. In Alabama, no votes for Streeter were recorded.

* See footnote on page 31.

Kansas took the lead among all the states, giving nearly one-fourth of the 147,000 total that Streeter received. No state east of Illinois had as many as 5,000 votes for Union Labor Party candidates. Industrial workers gave them no mass support, and the Socialist Labor Party remained aloof.

ALLIANCE INCREASINGLY POLITICAL

Among the farmers, political revolt was far more widespread than these third-party figures indicate. Both of the Alliances, and other smaller organizations (especially the Farmers' Mutual Benefit Association formed in Illinois in 1883 and the Michigan Patrons of Industry) were actively preaching and debating political measures to check the power of capitalist forces pressing down upon the farmers.

In the South, Alliance members were held back from independent political organization by those who feared the Negro vote. The white farmers of Texas and Arkansas (where the Negroes were only about one-fourth or less of the total population) stepped out for third-party work sooner than any states of the older South where the Negro vote was larger. But even here in the Southwest, the farmers' political effort went chiefly into the Democratic primaries and the drafting of farmers' planks in the Democratic platforms.

National issues on which the West and the South were agreed were also more definite than the political forms under which they found expression. In December, 1889, when both the Alliances met at St. Louis in their last futile effort at union, they adopted, separately, political statements which showed very similar basic demands and clearly foreshadowed the 1892 platform of the National People's Party.

This unity of purpose underlay the platforms on which Southern Alliance members entered the primary contests within the Democratic Party, and the manifestos of the new state parties which blossomed forth under Alliance leadership in the Middle West in the elections of 1890. These were variously named: People's Party (in Kansas and Indiana); Independent Party (in South Dakota);

Industrial Party (in Michigan); People's Independent Party (in Nebraska); Independent Fusion (in Colorado). In Oregon, the Grange, the Prohibitionists and the Greenbackers combined in a Union Party. The Union Labor Party still functioned and had a ticket in the field in Missouri. In Minnesota, the Alliance itself held a political convention which adopted a platform and made independent nominations. In North Dakota, the Alliance and the Prohibitionists agreed on a fusion ticket which included four independent candidates along with Democrats and Republicans. Third-party forces were active also in Iowa and Illinois, but took no immediate action in 1890 since no general state elections were held there in that year.

In most of these states, the Alliance worked with other farm organizations, and with Knights of Labor or trade unions or both.

ELECTIONS OF 1890

These new western parties elected enough of their candidates to provide a considerable minority in the state legislatures. They controlled both houses in Nebraska. In Kansas, the majority in the lower house was large enough to control a joint session of the legislature. Two Alliance Senators were sent to Washington: William A. Peffer from Kansas and James H. Kyle from South Dakota. Nebraska had no election of a Senator in 1890. Eight Congressmen elected from Kansas, Nebraska and Minnesota represented the new parties.

Beyond these definite achievements outside of both old parties there was a much more widespread revolt in the Middle West against the Republican Party as the tool of Wall Street. "Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Kansas and Nebraska elected [in 1890] forty-four Democrats and Independents, and fifteen Republicans, in place of forty-four Republicans and eighteen Democrats in 1888."[20]

In the South, the Alliance claimed even greater success at the polls. But there it was operating almost entirely within the Democratic Party and often endorsing other candidates if Alliance men

failed at the primaries. So it is difficult to measure the real political strength of the Alliance in the South in the 1890 elections. But certain facts are clear.

South Carolina elected Ben Tillman governor and the state legislators sent his lieutenant, John L. M. Irby, to the United States Senate. Georgia elected Alliance men to all state offices and sent Tom Watson to Congress along with five others pledged to work for the farmers' demands. Both these states and several others (Alabama, North Carolina, Florida, Tennessee, and Mississippi) had either a decisive group or even a large majority of Alliance candidates in their state legislatures. Texas and Tennessee elected governors supported by the Alliance. Kentucky and Virginia had no state elections in 1890, but they sent to Congress nine men endorsed by the Alliance.[21] In the border state of Missouri, where the Union Labor Party was still functioning, the farmers' demands were supported by a large majority in the legislature and by all fourteen of the new Congressmen.

In all, the 332 Congressmen elected in 1890 included "nearly 50 Congressmen who have Alliance leanings."[22] The very fact that without a nationwide political party and the stimulus of a presidential election, the farmers seemed to have captured almost one-sixth of the seats in the House of Representatives and had three (or possibly four) spokesmen in the Senate was profoundly disturbing to big business. Here was evidence of a new and serious coalition of agrarian interests of the West and the South against domination by industry and finance. Labor was scarcely represented but these "crazy" farmers were taking up labor demands also. Wall Street was distinctly worried.

A FEW OF THE LEADERS

The seething political activity reflected in the elections of 1890 was truly a mass movement, widespread and spontaneous. It was the immediate prelude to the People's Party which entered the national arena in the 1892 campaign. Every state in the cotton South and in the newer western farming regions had produced organizers

and spokesmen who are now lost to sight in the records of the past. Many have achieved the pallid immortality of a paragraph in local history or in a dictionary of biography. Only a few have found a place in our common memory as living personalities.

Women played a great part in the Populist movement. And this was natural, for in farming it is peculiarly true that the wife has a working partnership with her husband. She lives in the midst of his business and shares directly in all his difficulties and his achievements. Furthermore, the Farmers' Alliance and the People's Party developed with the fervor of a moral crusade. Those who might try to tell a Populist wife that woman's place is in the home would bring instant reply that the protection of home and children was in the forefront of Populist thinking.

One outstanding woman writer was Mrs. Sarah E. V. Emery, of Michigan, a campaigner from the Greenback days until her death in 1895. Mrs. Emery—"placid, lovable, loving mother of all the other women in this great reform"[23]—wrote in 1887 *Seven Financial Conspiracies,* a pamphlet which was sold by the hundreds of thousands in every campaign from 1888 to 1896.

Best known of the woman speakers was Mrs. Mary Elizabeth Lease, of Wichita, Kansas, who said, "What you farmers need to do is to raise less corn and more *hell!*" Mrs. Lease was Irish born and became one of the early women lawyers of this country, admitted to the Bar in 1885. A friend and associate tells of her fierce denunciation of the oppressors and betrayers of the people.

"Misrepresented and vilified by hostile press, the people but loved her the more for the enemies she made. . . . Her chiefest distinguishing gift is her powerful voice; deep and resonant, its effect is startling and controlling. . . . She hurls sentences as Jove hurled thunderbolts. . . . She is tall and stately in bearing, well meriting the title bestowed upon her at St. Louis by General Weaver, when he introduced her to a wildly welcoming audience as 'Our Queen Mary.' "[24]

Quite different from Mrs. Lease was another Kansas woman, Mrs. Annie L. Diggs, very short and more smoothly vigorous in

speech. She came to Populism from the prohibition movement. As a Kansas writer put it:

"Mrs. Lease, of course, was the leader with Mrs. Annie L. Diggs a close second. Mrs. Diggs did not make so much noise, but the work which she did was just as able and effective."[25]

Truly, in the Populist Movement, as Josh Billings said, "Wimmin is everywhere." Texas contributed Mrs. Betty Gay, who after her husband's death, in 1880, had managed a farm and brought up her children along with much writing and some speaking on woman suffrage, prohibition, and Alliance politics. In Minnesota there was Mrs. Eva McDonald-Valesh whom Mrs. Diggs called "the jauntiest, sauciest, prettiest little woman" in the Alliance movement. Others from Texas, Illinois, California, Colorado, Georgia, were working as speakers, writers, editors, and organizers.

Women played an important part, but populism was not in any sense a woman's movement. Outstanding among the leaders were such men as "Sockless Jerry" Simpson and Senator Peffer of Kansas, Senator Allen of Nebraska, Ignatius Donnelly of Minnesota, and Tom Watson of Georgia.

Jeremiah Simpson was born outside the United States (on Prince Edward Island). He had been a sailor on the Great Lakes before he settled on a Kansas farm. He had enlisted in the Union Army because "hand-cuffs and auction blocks for fellows who work don't heave to alongside of justice."[26] Simpson was adored by the farmers. In the 1890 campaign he was reminding them that they had sold their last year's corn crop at 13 to 14 cents a bushel, while grain gamblers in Chicago had been able to pass it on at 45 cents a bushel. He talked of land, as an enthusiastic Single-Taxer. But most of all, he talked about the railroads. Kansas was in the grip of the Santa Fe system, and Simpson was a crusader for government ownership of enough railroad lines to break the monopoly power of the railroad companies. Simpson was sent to Congress three times. He won his nickname as "Sockless Jerry" during his first congressional campaign in 1890 when he accused his Republican opponent of

wearing silk stockings, and a young reporter wrote that probably the rustic Simpson wore no socks at all.

Perhaps the ablest of all the public figures among the Populists was the Kansas lawyer, William A. Peffer, whose six years in the United States Senate (March, 1891, to March, 1897), were the peak years of Populist political activity. Peffer more than held his own in public debate on the technicalities of corporation rights and abuses. Able and alert, too astute to be deceived by high-sounding phrases, fearless and frank in argument without overstepping the bounds of senatorial courtesy, Senator Peffer set a high standard for spokesmen of minority parties.

Another Populist from the West, universally respected by friend and foe, was Judge William V. Allen of Nebraska. As a boy under ten years of age in a family of ardent abolitionists, he had actively aided runaway slaves passing through Pennsylvania. Elected to the Senate in 1892, he seems to have been less active than Senator Peffer in proposing bills and entering debate. But his tall, commanding presence and his reputation for absolute integrity greatly strengthened the Populist delegation in Washington.

At People's Party conventions a leading figure was Ignatius Donnelly of Minnesota. Clever and lively, his many interests included intense devotion to the cause of Francis Bacon as author of the Shakespeare plays. As early as 1873, Donnelly had written a pamphlet entitled *Facts for Grangers,* which set forth the farmers' case against the railroads. His social novel, *Caesar's Column,* did much to increase the political ferment of 1890. And even in the thick of Populist politics during the next two years, Donnelly was writing another novel with a purpose, *The Golden Bottle.* Not only a writer and orator—called perhaps the greatest speaker in the movement—Donnelly was an expert tactician who thoroughly enjoyed the search for common ground on which all Populist factions could unite. He drafted the historic preamble to the St. Louis platform, adopted on Washington's Birthday, 1892, by the convention which organized the national People's Party. Until his death, Donnelly remained within the Populist movement. And even after most of the Popu-

lists had moved either to the Right, with the Democratic Party, or to the Left with the Socialists, Donnelly was carrying on a stubborn fight for the remnant of the People's Party.

Tom Watson was a southern Congressman, elected in 1890, who had broken with the Democratic Party machine and worked with the "Alliance Wedge" in Congress. This fiery, red-headed little country lawyer had been doing battle in Georgia against the rising clique of industrial capitalists. He had led the farmers' successful resistance to the high monopoly prices charged by the jute trust for bagging. Watson had won praise from his opponents on the *Atlanta Constitution* who wrote that "Tom is a whole team and dog under the wagon besides."[27]

Tom Watson's keen wit and sharp tongue had brought him a sizable income as defense lawyer in criminal cases and he became one of the largest landowners in Georgia. But he never forgot his own personal struggles as a poor country boy. Even in his later years when he had made peace with the enemies of his youth, Watson still remembered the poor farmers' problems and retained a small core of farm support. In 1890 and for several years thereafter he was so completely absorbed in the farmers' cause that he closed his law office and gave all his time and his talents to the political fight, as speaker, editor, and organizer.

Watson's first professional fee had come from a Negro client, and in the eighties and nineties he supported the political rights of Negroes. He demanded free and universal education of Negroes and opposed the hideous convict lease system of which Negroes were the chief victims. When the People's Party was organized in Georgia (in 1891), Watson insisted that Negroes must be represented on its committees. On the relation between white farmer and Negro farmer, Watson wrote at that time:

"Now the People's Party says to these two men, 'You are kept apart that you may be separately fleeced of your earnings. You are made to hate each other because upon that hatred is rested the keystone of the arch of financial despotism which enslaves you both. You are deceived

and blinded that you may not see how this race antagonism perpetuates a monetary system which beggars both.' "[28]

The Georgia campaign in 1892 under Watson's leadership even brought the rare "spectacle of white farmers riding all night to save a Negro" Populist from lynching.[29]

Tom Watson was keenly aware also of the unfairness and brutality with which the rising labor movement was treated by the corporations and their political henchmen. Farmers and wage workers were exploited by the same interests in business and in government. Wage workers and working farmers were all "working class" to him. In a speaking tour through Georgia in 1891, Watson said:

"Our statute books are filled with legislation in behalf of capital at the expense of labor. . . . If we must have class legislation, as we have always had it and always will have it, what class is more entitled to it than the largest class—the working class?"[30]

In Congress, Watson was the most conspicuous of the Populists. A newspaper man found in him "those picturesque elements that appeal to the newspaper mind. . . . He illuminates his career with the brilliance of imagination."[31]

Intensely emotional, Watson was swayed by personal likes and dislikes. He was always ready to pour out the bitterest invective against his enemies, but he resented any slightest criticism from his friends. He avoided conventions, where his pride might be wounded, and never forgave the Populist Party leaders for the way they fumbled his role in the 1896 campaign.

Even in these earlier years, his fellow members of the little Populist caucus were realizing that Tom was "difficult," but they certainly never dreamed that fourteen years later he would—still under the Populist banner—demand that Negroes be excluded from political life; that in 1910 he would not only return to the Democratic fold but work with the Georgia party machine of bankers and industrialists, while he threw his energies into poisonous hatred of Negroes, Catholics, and Jews.

Another turbulent figure among southern Populists was Benjamin R. Tillman, of South Carolina. Tillman's political career began as a member of the Sweetwater Saber Club which attacked on July 5, 1874, the home of Captain Ned Tennant. The episode has come down in history as the Ned Tennant Rising, although Captain Tennant had done nothing more provocative than to organize two companies of Negro militia for support of the Reconstruction government. This was only the first of several anti-Negro episodes in which Ben Tillman was involved until the Republican and Reconstruction forces were decisively crushed.

The ardor with which Tillman had fought against political equality for Negroes was then turned to the other struggle to establish political equality for the poor up-country whites. He took a leading part in developing technical education for farmers, and by 1890 had won the governorship on the basis of his defense of farmers' interests. But Tillman never left the Democratic Party and he refused to support Weaver, the People's Party presidential candidate in 1892. As a result South Carolina cast fewer votes for Weaver than any other southern state. Two years later, Tillman was elected, as a Democrat, to the United States Senate for the first of several terms which ended only with his death in 1918. Tillman has to his credit the development of Clemson Agricultural and Mechanical College as a state institution (for white students), and also the questionable distinction of drafting the clause in the South Carolina constitution of 1895 setting up qualifications for voters (including the poll tax) explicitly intended to exclude Negroes from the polls.

6. SOUTHERN POPULISTS AND THE NEGROES

As realistic politicians, the southern Populists knew that they had only two possible alternatives in their fight against the ruling Bourbons. They must choose between trying to win the Negro vote or working to eliminate it entirely. The Tillman group in South Carolina sought the latter method. They were completely reactionary on the Negro question and stood with the Bourbons in disregarding the principles of the Fifteenth Amendment. Elsewhere the Populists sought to win Negro votes, either through fusion with the Republican minority or through the raising of issues with a broad appeal to the Negro farmers.

It was no accident that in the South the third-party movement was strongest in those states where it sought not only Negro votes but active Negro support. Tom Watson of Georgia in the 1892 campaign seemed to grasp the fact that much more than a vote was at stake. He spoke of common interests and a common enemy. He battled for mutual understanding among whites and Negroes and for joint political organization.

The Alabama People's Party platform in 1892 declared:

"We favor the protection of the colored race in their legal rights and should afford them encouragement and aid in the attainment of a higher civilization and citizenship, so that through the means of kindness, fair treatment, and just regard for them, a better understanding and more satisfactory condition may exist between the races."

In Texas, two Negro leaders were on the state committee. United rallies of white and Negro voters were addressed by Negro speakers.

Even where they were not prepared to go so far, the white Pop-

ulists appealed to voters to assert their rights against Bourbon domination and (as in Louisiana) "not to let the scarecrow of Negro domination longer drive them to the Democratic wigwam."[32] North Carolina Populists demanded "a secret ballot law, with a provision in said law that will secure to voters who cannot read an opportunity to vote."

After the Reconstruction period, Negro voters had been subjected to the most contemptuous treatment by the ruling Democratic Party. All manner of devices had been developed for excluding the Negro vote without openly defying the terms of the Fifteenth Amendment. As the conflict of interest developed between the southern Bourbon leaders and the poorer farmers, these restrictions bore down also on many of the rural whites. "The process of disfranchising the Negro by statutory devices began to meet with opposition in white circles as time went on. Depending, in the letter, on tax and literary prerequisites, it aroused the fears of the less literate and poorer rural white counties."[33]

While the People's Party recognized from several angles the importance of protecting the Negro vote, as a decisive factor in the struggle against the Bourbon Democrats, there is no clear indication that the Populists were prepared to make political equality for the Negro people a major issue. White Populists in the South seem to have had little understanding of racial discrimination as essentially a crime against the democratic principles which they professed.

In spite of this, however, the early 1890's appear to have been a period of marked political activity among the Negroes and of common effort by Negro and white against exploitation, second in our history only to the decade of Reconstruction.*

* James S. Allen, in his *Reconstruction: The Battle for Democracy*, has shown convincingly the distortions in the conventional story of the Reconstruction period which conceal the essence of this great historic upheaval and the achievements of a people suddenly released from slavery. References to the Reconstruction period in available writings on the Populists commonly reflect the old bias, and it seems likely that historians have not yet told us the whole story of populism and the Negroes.

7. NATIONAL PEOPLE'S PARTY

That a third party should be organized on a nationwide basis for the presidential campaign of 1892 seemed obvious to the leaders of the independent state parties which had achieved some success in the elections of 1890. Most of the Southerners were still reluctant to abandon their fight within the Democratic Party, but the issue was thrust upon them by third-party enthusiasts from Kansas when the Southern Alliance met in convention at Ocala, Florida, in December, 1890.

Officially, the question was compromised at Ocala, by postponing decision until February, 1892. But a platform was adopted which made more definite most of the political demands drafted in 1889 at St. Louis. These Ocala statements on currency, land, taxation and tariff, direct election of Senators, and government control (or, if necessary, government ownership) of railways and telegraph reappeared later with revisions in the national People's Party platform. Other issues had been added, however, by 1892, as the farmers' third-party movement had been joined by other groups of people.

That the farmers could not obtain their demands on a national scale—whether within the old parties or through a new party—without some organized support from non-farm groups was recognized at the Ocala convention. And shortly afterward C. W. Macune, editor of the official Southern Alliance paper, *The National Economist,* invited a few representatives of the Southern Alliance and its Negro affiliate, along with the Knights of Labor, the Farmers' Mutual Benefit Association of Illinois, and the Citizens' Alliance (of small rural business men in daily contact with farmers) to meet with him

in Washington. They organized in January, 1891, a new "Confederation of Industrial Organizations" as a broader base for political work and as preparation for any third-party movement which might develop from the St. Louis and Ocala platforms.

Meanwhile, without waiting for further official action by the Southern Alliance, a minority of Southern Alliance members, under leadership from Kansas and Indiana, issued a call for a political convention to meet on Washington's Birthday, 1891, at Cincinnati. They invited all farmers' organizations, all independent state parties, organizations of former soldiers, both Union and Confederate, the Citizens' Alliance, the Knights of Labor, "and all others who agreed to the St. Louis demands" of 1889.

Shortly after this call was issued, the Northern Alliance was holding its annual meeting at Omaha. This adopted a short platform, similar to many points in the Ocala demands of the Southern Alliance. And fully united in desire for a national third party, the Northern Alliance proposed to initiate a nationwide petition as ground work for political organization. It rejected, at first, as hasty and ill-prepared, the Kansas plan for a third-party convention at Cincinnati. But when this was postponed from Washington's Birthday to the middle of May, the Northern Alliance agreed to participate and, after the Cincinnati convention, the Northern Alliance abandoned its plan for a petition.

Actually, the Cincinnati convention took the first definite steps in organizing the national People's Party. The fourteen hundred delegates assembled there on May 19, 1891, represented "some thirty-three states and territories" according to John D. Hicks in *The Populist Revolt,* but Kansas, Ohio, Illinois, and Nebraska together had two-thirds of the total. Since the delegates were divided between those who wanted to launch a third party immediately and those who were prepared only to state that such a party should be launched for the 1892 campaign, Ignatius Donnelly's ability as a political tactician was put to the test. As chairman of the resolutions com-

mittee, he worked out a skillful compromise which Hicks summarizes thus:

"The resolutions announced the immediate formation of the People's party with a national executive committee to consist of a chairman, elected by the convention in general session, and three members from each state represented, elected by the delegations of the respective states. This committee was directed to attend the proposed St. Louis conference [of Macune's Confederation of Industrial Organizations, Feb. 22, 1892] and 'if possible unite with that and all other reform organizations there assembled. If no satisfactory arrangement can be effected this committee shall call a national convention not later than June 1, 1892, to name a presidential ticket.' A third party was thus assured. If the St. Louis conference did not agree to it, the national executive committee emanating from the Cincinnati convention was authorized to go ahead."[34]

FINDING A COMMON PROGRAM

But this Cincinnati convention represented much more than a tactical victory and a tribute to Donnelly's skill. Here at last leaders in the Northern Alliance and a significant minority of the Southern Alliance met with other reformers to adopt a common political platform and take the first definite steps toward united political action.

Here for the first time the delegates of the Northern Alliance accepted the Southern Alliance's subtreasury plan for government crop loans.

Only the Northern Alliance (in its St. Louis platform of 1889) had, previously, included any explicit reference to "the just demands of labor." But the Cincinnati convention adopted two labor resolutions. One urged that the eight-hour legal work day in government employment should be extended to all workers employed by corporations. Another condemned the directors of the World's Columbian Exposition for refusing to pay minimum wage rates asked for by Chicago unions.

On other points such as unlimited coinage of silver, abolition of privately owned national banks, tax reform, direct election of

President, Vice-President, and Senators, and government control or even ownership of railroads and telegraph, there had long been substantial agreement between the two Alliances.

New for both sections of the Alliance were the Cincinnati demand for postal savings banks and the resolution "That the question of universal suffrage be recommended to the favorable consideration of the various states and territories." Prohibition was voted down as a secondary issue, likely to divide the movement.

That other groups besides the farmers were playing an important part in the Cincinnati convention is clear from the fact that the new party named as secretary of its executive committee, Robert Schilling, president of the Coopers' Union and member of the Knights of Labor, who had been active in the Industrial Congress of the 1870's and in the Greenback Party. W. R. Lamb, leader in the Texas State Federation of Labor, was a member of the committee.

Since the national leaders of the Southern Alliance and most of its southern membership had refused to participate in the Cincinnati meeting, the tribute paid to this convention by the official organ of the Southern Alliance is especially interesting. Macune wrote that:

". . . the course pursued by the meeting has been so wise and conservative that instead of conflicting [with the meeting proposed for February, 1892] it is destined to prove an actual benefit and supply the link that will unite the farmers with all other occupations in the great approaching conflict. . . . The people came to this meeting, solid thinking men, not politicians, and never perhaps in the history of this country has so large a gathering been pervaded by such unity of sentiment. There was absolutely not a dissenting voice as to the provisions of the platform. The only discussion seemed to be as to the time of organizing a party. . . . Every line [of the platform] breathes the spirit of 'equal rights to all and special privileges to none.' . . . It is a basis for a campaign of education and not a cloak for a campaign of prejudice and agitation of sectional hatred such as the professional politicians desire."[35]

Southern leaders were still not convinced that the time was fully ripe for a third party. They agreed, however, that if they did not obtain more definite satisfaction from the Democratic Party, they should break away from it for independent action. Shortly after Cincinnati, the *Southern Alliance Farmer* stated that "a day of reckoning is at hand" for the Democratic leaders who had "seized upon the animosities engendered by our civil war to keep themselves in authority."

"Even in the South there is a deep undercurrent of indignation setting in, and unless the Democratic party gives unmistakable signs of its friendship and sympathy for the laboring classes, you are going to see a rebellion that will carry nearly every Southern State into a new party."[36]

President Polk of the Southern Alliance put it this way, in his *Progressive Farmer*: "The new party has adopted the Alliance demands into its platform. Does anyone suppose intelligent Alliancemen will vote against a party that adopts those demands, and in favor of a party that not only fails to adopt, but resists those demands?"[37]

An intensive campaign of political education followed the Cincinnati convention. Throughout the warm weather there were all sorts of out-door gatherings with plenty of Populist speakers at hand. Populists from the West toured the South and President Polk from North Carolina made three speeches in Kansas. Every effort was made to draw in the various reform and labor groups and to show the masses how Wall Street dominated both Democratic and Republican machines.

A MASS PARTY IS BORN

Nine months later, when the great convention met at St. Louis on February 22, 1892, delegates were present from more than twenty organizations. They included not only all the farm organizations and the Citizens' Alliances, but the Knights of Labor, the United Mine Workers of Ohio, and scattering delegates from several other

labor union bodies. The Ancient Order of Anti-Monopolists, the National Reform Press Association, and the Women's Christian Temperance Union were also represented. Most of the delegates, including Colonel Polk and a majority of the Southerners, had come for the purpose of organizing a third party. A troublesome opposition was led by Leonidas F. Livingston, a conservative Alliance politician from Georgia, who threatened to bolt publicly and disrupt the convention if a third party were proposed. But Livingston was outmaneuvered as well as completely outnumbered by the third-party forces.

It was a lively gathering. Lots of good speakers and spontaneous mass singing entertained the delegates and the audience, which filled and overflowed the large Music Hall, while the very broad committee on platform was carrying on its work under Donnelly's guidance. The platform was finally presented together with an eloquent preamble which set forth, almost incidentally, the necessity for independent political organization. Livingston moved that the *platform* be adopted. His motion was carried unanimously. Instantly another motion was offered to adopt the *preamble* also. This motion also was carried by a large majority. Then some minor resolutions were followed by a motion to adjourn *sine die.*

But most of the delegates remained where they were. C. W. Macune called them to order as a mass meeting of "individual and independent citizens who love their country." General Weaver of Iowa, who had been the Greenback candidate in 1880, was elected chairman, and a new committee was set up to confer with the executive committee of the already organized People's Party, which was ready at St. Louis, awaiting such a call.

Omaha and July 4 were fixed upon as place and date for nominating presidential and vice-presidential candidates. Meanwhile the preamble and platform just adopted by the St. Louis convention were to serve as the basis of a campaign which would reach into every state and every county and would bring to the nominating convention delegates elected by the people: eight from each congressional district and eight at large from each state. Only those

who accepted the St. Louis preamble and platform would be eligible. It was eagerly noted that on this basis there would be 1776 delegates at the Omaha convention.

When the nominating convention met, many districts had failed to act, but over thirteen hundred accredited delegates were present. Several railroads had recognized the seriousness of the movement by refusing the People's Party delegates the cut-rate tickets commonly granted for political conventions.

Omaha, like St. Louis five months earlier, was a spontaneously enthusiastic, singing convention. The delegates had a deep sense of their patriotic responsibility, and they felt that they had behind them great masses of people alive with a crusading spirit. They had come to do battle against greed and injustice and corruption. They recognized the kinship of all who toil, and they knew that "colossal fortunes" could be accumulated only by grinding down the faces of the poor or by seizing upon monopoly privileges which demand tribute from the masses.

All these things were eloquently stated in the platform and resolutions adopted by the Omaha convention of July 4, 1892. And when the delegates nominated the Union general, James Baird Weaver of Iowa, for President and the Confederate general, James G. Field of Virginia, for Vice-President, they wept and applauded this symbol of a reunited people. For reunion of the Blue and the Gray was no empty form to a generation which had known the suffering and bitterness of the Civil War.

Weaver had not only been the Greenback presidential candidate in 1880, but had served three terms in Congress as a Greenback-Democrat. Neither striking nor eccentric, General Weaver was an able speaker and extremely clever at disposing of hecklers. Mrs. Diggs wrote of him:

"The cannibalism of politics has snapped and bitten at him in vain. Serene while others are in tumult; clear while others are confused; secure in his orbit while others are erratic; certain while others are in doubt,—these characteristics make him a man of value second to none in a great epoch like the present."[38]

THE OMAHA PLATFORM

The preamble to the Omaha platform has a curiously modern ring. It distrusts the commercial press: "The newspapers are largely subsidized or muzzled." It tells of "the land concentrating in the hands of the capitalists." It seeks "to restore the government of the Republic to the hands of the 'plain people,' with whose class it originated. . . . We declare that this republic can only endure as a free government while built upon the love of the whole people for each other and for the nation; that it cannot be pinned together by bayonets."

The Populists saw the peril of dictatorship by big capital. They said:

> "We ask all men to first help us to determine whether we are to have a republic to administer before we differ as to the conditions upon which it is to be administered; believing that the forces of reform this day organized will never cease to move forward until every wrong is remedied, and equal rights and equal privileges securely established for all the men and women of this country."

Looking back with the perspective of the stormy half century that has passed since the great Populist campaigns of 1892 and 1894, it is easy to say that their demands were inadequate for the problems with which they wrestled. It is easy to criticize their tactics. Nonetheless is it fruitful for us to note what they wanted, what they accomplished, and why the old problems have not yet been solved.

At the Omaha convention actual demands were divided into two groups: those incorporated in the platform on which the election campaign was to be made, and those stated in resolutions offered as expressing the sense of the convention.

The platform itself dealt only with money, transportation, and land.

In the money section, the Populists were concerned with a flexible and adequate supply of currency, to be achieved by the subtreasury plan of federal crop loans and through free coinage of silver. To obtain release from their dependence upon privately owned banks,

they demanded postal savings banks and government control of all currency. This section included also demands for a graduated income tax and for economy in government expenditures.

The transportation section made flat and unqualified demand for government ownership and operation of railroads, telegraph, and telephone.

On land, the Populists sought restoration of small private ownership. Land "should not be monopolized for speculative purposes, and alien ownership of land should be prohibited. All land now held by railroads and other corporations in excess of their actual needs, and all lands now owned by aliens, should be reclaimed by the government and held for actual settlers only."

Tied in with their demand for government operation of banks and railroads and telegraph was the Populists' effort to recapture for the people the control of government itself. But only the resolutions and not the platform stated the means by which this was to be accomplished: free, secret ballot, and a fair count; limiting President and Vice-President to a single term of office; direct election of Senators; and popular control of legislation through the initiative and referendum.

The convention opposed any subsidy or national aid to any private corporation for any purpose, and proposed that revenue derived from income tax be applied to reduce the taxation of "domestic industries."

Several labor demands were set forth in the resolutions:

"We cordially sympathize with the efforts of organized workingmen to shorten the hours of labor."

The eight-hour law for government work should be rigidly enforced.

"The maintenance of a large standing army of mercenaries, known as the Pinkerton system" is "a menace to our liberties" and must be abolished.

Free and unrestricted immigration was condemned since it "crowds out our wage-earners."

One resolution expressed sympathy with the Knights of Labor in "their righteous contest with the tyrannical combine of clothing manufacturers of Rochester" and recommended a boycott of goods produced by these unfair employers.

Of general interest in the North was the resolution supporting fair and liberal pensions to former soldiers and sailors of the Union forces in the Civil War.

8. POPULISTS ON MONEY

On the money question the Populists, like the Greenbackers of the 1870's, believed that the more currency there was in circulation the happier everyone would be. The old fight over Civil War greenbacks had become a dead issue with the success of the Resumption Act in 1879. But the "quantity theory" of money persisted.

Also, like the Greenbackers, the Populists of the 1880's and 1890's wanted a managed currency. Basing their ideas largely on the writings of Edward Kellogg whose book on *Currency: The Evil and the Remedy* had first appeared in 1844, the Populists dreamed of stabilizing prices even while they demanded free and unhampered capitalist competition. Senator Allen summed it up thus:

"We believe it possible by legislation so to regulate the issue of money as to make it of approximately the same value at all times. The value of money ought to bear as nearly as possible a fixed relation to the value of commodities. If a man should borrow a thousand dollars on five years' time today, when it would take two bushels of wheat to pay each dollar, it is clear that it ought not to take any more wheat to pay that debt at the time of its maturity, except for the accrued interest."[39]

How to embody this theory in concrete legislation was a problem the Populists never solved, so they concentrated on two simple

proposals for increasing the quantity of money in circulation. One was the revival of free coinage of silver. The other was a plan for subtreasuries in farm states to issue government currency against farm products as security.

That there was a shortage of currency in the West and the South has been admitted by such a conservative authority as Davis R. Dewey in his *Financial History of the United States.*[40] For until the Federal Reserve System was set up in 1914 much of the currency consisted of national banknotes. And although the Banking Act of 1863 was intended to provide for equitable distribution of banking resources in the various regions of the country, these remained heavily concentrated in the more industrialized states.

Also, in basing upon its holdings of government bonds a national bank's capacity to issue banknotes, the National Banking Act had made no provision for rapid changes in the volume of currency required. This lack of flexibility was a serious defect in relation to the ups and downs of business. And it was continuously troublesome in relation to such seasonal activities as "moving the crops."

Many years later, when the Federal Reserve System was created, flexibility of currency was provided by relating the volume of banking credit and banknotes to the volume of commercial paper (trade notes, bills of lading, etc.) deposited with the bank. And government crop loans from the Commodity Credit Corp. (which began to function early in the Roosevelt New Deal of the 1930's) were similar to the subtreasury plan of the Populists.

Free coinage of silver became the basic money plank in the People's Party programs. This demand had appeared in the 1870's, stimulated by silver producers who saw their profits threatened by a sharp decline in the market price of silver. It was enthusiastically pushed by those who looked to an increased volume of currency as the solution for their price problems.

Up to the middle of the nineteenth century silver had played an important role as money in international trade. The United States, like the chief European countries, had used both gold and silver as unlimited legal tender. In this country, both metals were accepted

for coinage, and under an act of 1834 their relation to one another was fixed at 16 ounces of silver equaling one ounce of gold. This ratio was substituted for the previous fifteen to one in an attempt to discourage silver and attract more gold to the mint. For already the business world was learning the practical advantages of gold over silver as a money metal: much greater value in a given weight and also greater durability.

At this 1834 ratio of sixteen to one, gold was slightly overvalued at the mint and was already displacing silver when the process was greatly speeded up by the mid-nineteenth century discoveries of gold in Russia, Australia, and the United States. These reduced the value embodied in each grain of gold. More than ever, the traders in precious metals found it profitable to sell their gold at the mint and to sell their silver not at the mint but in the open market. Now also gold became sufficiently abundant to serve the money needs of the leading capitalist nations. They no longer required silver as a means of payment for large transactions. One country after another took legal steps toward adopting a single gold standard as the basis of money. Before 1890, all of western Europe was "on gold."

Just when silver was officially excluded in the United States has been a subject of partisan controversy. The Greenbackers and the Populists found it in an act of February, 1873, pointedly omitting the silver dollar from the coins which might be minted and serve as unlimited legal tender. They called it the "crime of 1873" and blamed it for the crisis which broke upon the country about six months later. But historians remind us that the act of 1873 did little more than repeat the basic provisions of a law passed twenty years earlier for standardizing the content of subsidiary silver coins of less than a dollar. By 1853 the silver dollar had dropped out of circulation within the United States. Professor Laughlin states it this way in his *History of Bimetallism in the United States*:

"At the existing and only nominal Mint ratio of 1:16, the silver dollar could not circulate, and no attempt was made in the act [of 1853] to

bring it into circulation. It is, therefore, to be kept distinctly in mind that in 1853 the actual use of silver as an unlimited legal tender equally with gold was decisively abandoned. . . . The country had willingly acquiesced in the practical adoption of the single gold standard, and so well did the situation satisfy all demands that the question of gold and silver dropped out of the public mind."[41]

General uncertainties as to the future of the dollar were unquestionably a factor in this crisis of 1873. Gold reserves had been increased, but neither gold coins nor government notes based on gold were in circulation. The Resumption Act had not yet been passed. But the silver issue had not been raised. And more basic than the course of the dollar, as a cause of the crisis, was the collapse of grossly inflated speculation, and a serious slump in the volume of foreign trade after the Franco-Prussian War.

When the Act of February, 1873, was passed, it aroused no immediate discussion. The market price of silver was still far above the mint ratio of sixteen to one. No one would find any profit in offering silver bullion for coinage when silver was bringing more dollars in the open market than at the mint! But already the price of silver was slipping. It was losing its favored position as a money metal in the capitalist world. And when shortly afterwards it dropped far below the ratio at the mint, silver interests immediately began their demand for renewal of silver coinage. This was taken up eagerly by those who had always wanted expansion of the currency and who were aroused to new action by the general price decline which continued steadily from 1873 to 1879.

Pressure for silver money was strong enough to obtain from Congress the Bland-Allison Act of 1878 as a compromise between the free silver interests and those who demanded a single gold money standard. Under this act the Treasury was required to purchase monthly not less than two and not more than four million dollars worth of silver for coinage in dollars of 371¼ grains of pure silver (or 412½ grains of standard silver, nine-tenths pure). These would be "a legal tender at nominal value for all debts and dues, public and

private, except where otherwise stipulated in the contract."[42] They represented the old ratio of sixteen ounces of gold to one ounce of silver.

This was in no sense free coinage of silver. It involved purchase from government revenue of silver at the current market rate and left with the government any profit from the difference between the market price and the number of silver dollars which would be turned out at the mint. It also gave the silver mining industry each year an assured outlet for at least $24,000,000 worth of its product. Never before had the government bought either gold or silver bullion for coinage. "The purchase of silver bullion, with intent to buoy up its price, is unique in monetary history."[43]

In order to get this silver into circulation, while strengthening its own gold reserves, the Treasury in September, 1880, began "offering drafts on the Sub-Treasuries in the West and South, payable in silver certificates to those who wished to make remittances there, in exchange for deposits of gold coin at the New York Sub-Treasury. It amounted to a transfer of funds to distant parts of the country free of charges for exchange. This fell in with the usual demand in the autumn for remittances to the West for 'moving the crops.' "[44]

So long as business was expanding this steady addition to the nation's currency was absorbed without difficulty. But as time went on, with the depression of 1884-87, the increased silver purchase required under an Act of 1890, and the worldwide difficulties which culminated in our panic of 1893, this experiment in subsidizing silver became a serious danger to the capitalist world.

To the Populists the fight for free coinage of silver was an essential part of their struggle against domination by bankers and the monopoly power of finance capital.

9. A PEOPLE'S CAMPAIGN

Convention delegates had scarcely emerged from the excitement of the gathering at Omaha, and the sense of comradeship and strength which it had given them, when shots fired at Homestead, Pennsylvania (July 6, 1892), in the Pinkerton attack on Carnegie steel mill strikers, brought them back sharply to the realities of struggle.

A few days later, a similar battle was fought at a silver mine owned by prominent eastern capitalists in the Coeur d'Alene district of Idaho. On August 13, railroad switchmen at Buffalo, New York, started a strike for which the governor promptly ordered out the state militia. And almost the same day, organized "free" miners in Tennessee took possession of several mines and forcibly released state convicts who were working there at low cost to the employers.

These four episodes following in swift succession stimulated the righteous wrath of the Populists. They saw more clearly than ever that corporations were greedy and brutal and had the government on their side.

As the weeks went by, industrial activity was slackening, although 1892 did not see the financial panic, spectacular failures, and mass unemployment of the following year. But many business uncertainties were added, in 1892, to the sharpening industrial struggles. The financial world had not forgotten the failure of a leading British bank in 1890, and the extreme tightness in the money market. Government gold reserves had been drawn down to the danger point as Europeans began to unload their holdings of American securities. To meet the capital payments for these foreign holdings in American companies, the stream of gold shipped abroad from the

United States reached unprecedented heights. In 1891, short crops abroad had temporarily increased the export demand for grain and the shipments of gold from Europe. But in 1892 exports were already less than they had been the year before.

Prices for the two basic commercial crops—wheat and cotton—were wavering at points very unsatisfactory to the farmers. The next two years would see them dropping much lower, but even 1892 saw nothing so satisfactory to farmers as 90 cent wheat or 12 cent cotton.

The People's Party carried on a vigorous campaign with speakers, parades, leaflets, and press. They were saying things that the masses wanted to hear. Even the generally non-political American Federation of Labor endorsed two planks in the People's Party platform: the initiative and referendum and the government ownership of telegraph and telephone. And several local unions actively entered the People's Party campaign.

OTHER MINOR PARTIES

Among middle-class reformers, the People's Party vied with the Prohibition Party for support. The Prohibitionists had first entered a presidential campaign in 1872 with three demands: prohibition of liquor traffic, equal suffrage for women, and lower rates for postage and transportation. On the basis of various reform issues, along with prohibition, they had participated in all five presidential campaigns of the 1870's and 1880's, with an increasing constituency. By 1888, when the Union Labor Party's farmer candidate, Alson J. Streeter, had received some 147,000 votes in 23 of the 38 states, the Prohibition Party had rolled up 250,000 votes, drawn from every state in the Union. Not until 1892, however, did the national Prohibition Party develop a broad platform touching on most of the issues with which the Farmers' Alliances and the People's Party were concerned.

A few days before the Omaha convention, the Prohibitionists at Cincinnati (June 29, 1892) adopted a platform whose demands on currency and on land were almost identical with those of the Al-

liance-People's Party movement. On transportation, the Prohibition Party stopped short of public ownership of railroads and other public utilities but demanded strict government control, with no higher charges than were necessary "to give fair interest on the capital actually invested."

Tariff demands were omitted from the People's Party platform because the party's leaders distrusted the Democrats' manipulation of tariff reform. The Prohibition platform recognized that the tariff was no longer treated by the leading parties "as an issue between great and divergent principles of government, but is a mere catering to different sectional and class interests." It stated the general principle that necessary revenue "should be raised by levying a burden on what the people possess, instead of upon what they consume."

The People's Party failed to include a woman suffrage plank in their Omaha platform. The Prohibitionists demanded again that "No citizen should be denied the right to vote on account of sex, and equal labor should receive equal wages, without regard to sex."

More explicit than the People's Party platform was the Prohibitionists' demand that "speculations in margins, the cornering of grain, money and products, and the formation of pools, trusts and combinations for the arbitrary advancement of prices should be suppressed."

Labor demands, on the other hand, were notably lacking in the Prohibition platform, except for one basic principle: "All men should be protected by law in their right to one day of rest in seven."

The People's Party preamble declaimed against corruption:

"We have witnessed for more than a quarter of a century the struggles of the two great political parties for power and plunder, while grievous wrongs have been inflicted upon the suffering people. We charge that the controlling influences dominating both these parties have permitted the existing dreadful conditions to develop without serious effort to prevent or restrain them."

More vigorous was the Prohibitionists' arraignment of the Republican and Democratic parties "as false to the standards reared by their founders; as faithless to the principles of the illustrious leaders of the past to whom they do homage with the lips. . . . Each protests when out of power against infraction of the civil service laws, and each when in power violates those laws in letter and in spirit; each professes fealty to the masses, but both covertly truckle to the money power in their administration of public affairs. . . ."

A third minor party, which made its first presidential campaign in 1892, was the Socialist Labor Party. At that time, the S.L.P. still represented the main stream of socialist thinking and socialist organization in the United States. It had been organized in 1877 after more than twenty years of socialist effort within this country. Socialist thinking was deeply rooted here, and the transition from the older utopian socialism to a workers' movement had begun here—as in western Europe—even before Karl Marx and Frederick Engels clarified the issues with their *Communist Manifesto* of 1848. Socialist organization here had preceded the founding in 1864 of the International Workingmen's Association. William H. Sylvis, A. C. Cameron, and Richard F. Trevellick of the National Labor Union all had the socialist view of human progress. And when the First International disintegrated in 1872, there were many different groups within this country ready and eager to unite in a Socialist Labor Party.*

The S.L.P. platform in 1892 included immediate demands similar to those of the People's Party and the Prohibition Party: national ownership of all means of transportation and communication; municipal ownership of waterworks and lighting plants; recovery of land grants by the United States; exclusive right of the government to issue money; progressive income and inheritance taxes; direct vote and a secret ballot in all elections; and referendum in law-making. It stood for universal suffrage and compulsory free

* They met first at Philadelphia, in July, 1876, and organized the Workingmen's Party of the United States. The following year they changed the name to Socialist Labor Party of North America.

education. As distinctive labor demands, the platform included shorter hours and employers' liability laws.[45]

Although these demands paralleled the populist platforms of the People's Party and the Prohibition Party, the Socialist Labor Party's whole background and approach to current issues were totally different from theirs. The S.L.P. was concerned with preparation for a socialist order. The Populists turned to government ownership of public utilities and banking only as a means of checking the abuses of capitalism. They thought the growth of the power of monopolies could be stopped. Populism was essentially a defensive movement of small business.

POPULISTS AT THE POLLS

Together General Weaver of the People's Party and John Bidwell of the Prohibitionists polled 11 per cent of the people's vote. But the new People's Party, with 1,027,329 votes, outnumbered the Prohibition Party by roughly four to one, and the People's Party alone had the equivalent of some 4,200,000 votes today.

In the northeastern states and in Ohio and Illinois the People's Party lagged behind the Prohibitionists. In Wisconsin and Michigan they were about equally strong. But throughout the West and South, the People's Party was the outstanding Populist organization. The Prohibition Party obtained no representation in state or federal government. The People's Party strengthened most of the minority footholds which had been won by state parties two years before.

The Socialist Labor Party's 21,534 votes in 1892 were confined to seven eastern states and came chiefly from the industrial centers of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Massachusetts.

Four states (Kansas, Colorado, Idaho, Nevada) sent all their electors to vote for Weaver, of the People's Party. Along with these twenty there went one Weaver elector from North Dakota and one from Oregon. Also, in four western states (South Dakota, Nebraska, Wyoming and Oregon) and in Alabama more than one-third of the popular vote went to the People's Party, but here it was so distributed that it obtained no representation in the electoral college.

The People's Party had 8.5 per cent of the total popular vote for President, but it obtained only 5 per cent of the electoral college vote.

William V. Allen, a Nebraska Populist, was elected in 1892 with the aid of Democratic legislators for the six-year term in the United States Senate and joined his two Populist colleagues (Peffer of Kansas and Kyle of South Dakota) who had been elected two years earlier. In Kansas, the Populists had again a clear majority in the joint session of the legislature. But they elected a Democratic Senator (for the unexpired term of a deceased Republican). They hoped thereby to hold the support of the two Democrats who held balance of power in the Kansas lower house.

In the House of Representatives, the People's Party delegation was increased from nine to ten. Tom Watson of Georgia failed of re-election and no southern state had third-party representation. But now both Colorado Congressmen were Populists, along with the eight from Kansas, Nebraska and Minnesota. Senator William M. Stewart and Congressman Francis G. Newlands of Nevada were elected by a Silver Democratic Party which had repudiated Cleveland and gave its votes to Weaver. But only on the silver issue did they stand squarely with the Populists.

With the aid of Silver Democrats, People's Party candidates for governor were in 1892 elected for the first time by four western states: Colorado, Kansas, North Dakota and Wyoming.

Not all the states had state elections in 1892, but including holdovers from the previous year there were 345 People's Party representatives sitting in nineteen of the forty-four state legislatures in 1893.* Also in Oklahoma the territorial legislature included one People's Party senator and four representatives.

All these figures, astonishing as they are for a newly organized political party, understate the importance of the Populist movement

* Eight southern states: Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Tennessee, Texas, South Carolina. Ten western states: Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Washington, Wyoming. And in the Northeast, rock-ribbed Republican Vermont had two Populists in the legislature.

at this period. They do not show, for example, the extent to which fraud and trickery and intimidation were used to defeat People's Party candidates. In Virginia, it was believed that the Populist candidate for Congress from the Fourth Congressional District had been really elected but then fraudulently counted out. In Georgia the lines of the Tenth Congressional District which had elected Tom Watson in 1890 were redrawn to exclude the two counties which had polled the largest Watson vote and to add two other counties where Populist feeling was much less developed. In both years, the district included the city of Augusta which had fewer Populists than the rural counties. In Augusta, in 1892, the ballot was so successfully padded that the total vote was far above the number of legally registered voters.

Watson himself said of this election: "They have intimidated the voter, assaulted the voter, murdered the voter. They have bought votes, forced votes, and stolen votes. They have incited lawless men to a pitch of frenzy which threatens anarchy."[46]

In Kansas, where the People's Party elected the governor and a majority (25 to 15) in the state senate, the Populists challenged the votes reported for four of the Republicans in the lower house. In one of these cases the election clerk admitted having "carelessly" reversed the figures for Populist and Republican candidates. The case was carried to the courts, but after long delay the state supreme court refused to take jurisdiction and threw the decision back to the house as judge of its own elections. While the case was pending a conflict raged which delayed all legislative action. As the House was constituted the Republicans numbered 59 (including the one whose case was in question and who honorably refused to occupy his seat); 56 were Populists and two were Democrats.

Hostilities developed such tension that the Kansas state militia were called out, but the commander was a Republican who refused to carry out the orders of the Populist governor. This Kansas election war was played up by newspapers throughout the nation to prove that Populists were lawbreakers and anarchists, although they

had only refused to accept election returns in which gross error was publicly admitted!

In several states, candidates elected on old-party tickets had campaigned on Populist planks. This was most generally true in the South, but in the West, also, a few Democrats, even in 1892, were elected as fusion candidates with the aid of People's Party voters. In Nebraska, for example, the Democrats helped to elect the two Populist Congressmen, and the Populists of the first district gave their votes to the Silver Democrat, William Jennings Bryan.

In Alabama the party situation was peculiarly confused. Some regular Democrats endorsed Populist demands. The most influential group of Alliance men worked within the Democratic Party as a separate group of "Jeffersonian Democrats" (and were derided by their opponents as Popocrats). Outside of the Democratic ranks there was also a People's Party of Alabama which, in some places, worked with the Republicans! Obviously, in such a situation, the People's Party third of the legislature did not adequately represent the Populist masses within the state.

OLD PARTIES UNDER POPULIST PRESSURE

The strength of Populist feeling among the American people is perhaps most truly indicated by the action of the old parties themselves. These parties were dominated by the leading business interests but they found it desirable to make gestures toward satisfying the Populist demands. This was most markedly true in southern states where the Populists were working within the Democratic Party. But the Populist movement definitely affected national policies also.

Congress in 1887 had recognized the principle that interstate commerce should be subject to federal regulation. But the first Interstate Commerce Act dealt only with transportation. Three years later, regulation of other monopolies was supposed to be made possible by the first general Anti-Trust Act, sponsored by Republican Senator John Sherman of Ohio. Both Democrats and Republicans

included in their 1892 campaign platforms a demand for such further legislation as might be required in this field.

The Populists were demanding free coinage of silver. They were not satisfied with the Bland-Allison Act of 1878, under which a stated minimum of silver must be purchased for coinage by the government every month. Under pressure also from the silver mining interests of the mountain states silver was a major issue in the Congress of 1890. The Democrats were prepared to go much further than the Republicans. But the Republican majority carried Senator Sherman's compromise measure, doubling the volume of silver which the Treasury must purchase annually. In payment for this silver, the Treasury issued legal-tender currency notes redeemable in gold or silver coin at the discretion of the Secretary of the Treasury.

This compromise did not satisfy either the Populists or the silver mining interests. So in the 1892 campaign both old parties tried to promise something more without offending the financial interests who insisted that the single gold standard was essential for business stability. The Republicans demanded "the use of both gold and silver as standard money" with restrictions "to secure the maintenance of the parity of values of the two metals" both within the United States and throughout the world. The Democrats denounced the Sherman Silver Purchase Act "as a cowardly makeshift." But after declaring for the "use of both gold and silver, without discriminating against either metal," they hedged with wordy restrictions. Some of the state and local candidates, in the regions further removed from Wall Street influence, came out more openly for free silver during the campaign.

Wage workers' votes were now increasingly important in deciding the election returns, and the Populist movement had clearly registered its concern over labor conditions and the exploitation of workers by capitalists. Some months before the national campaign conventions, and before the People's Party was organized, the preliminary Populist convention at St. Louis had included in the pre-

amble to its platform a fiery statement (which was later carried over into the campaign platform of the People's Party):

"The urban workmen are denied the right of organization for self-protection; imported pauperized labor beats down their wages; a hireling standing army, unrecognized by our laws, is established to shoot them down, and they are rapidly degenerating to European conditions. The fruits of the toil of millions are boldly stolen to build up colossal fortunes, unprecedented in the history of the world, while their possessors despise the republic and endanger liberty."

Labor unions were growing, and between the Populists and the organized workers the old parties found it desirable to include labor planks in their 1892 campaign platforms. Both of them came out for restricting immigration and for protecting the "lives and limbs" of railway workers in interstate commerce. The Republicans also recommended state safety laws for mines and factories. The Democrats proposed state laws against tenement homework (the "sweating system"), against contract labor by convicts, and against factory work by children under fifteen. Their arguments for and against the tariff were focused on the effect upon the working class.

10. POPULISTS IN OFFICE

Nowhere had the People's Party obtained a majority giving them outright control of a state government. Populist minorities in several state legislatures were far more substantial and powerful than the little handful of Populists in Congress. They came fairly close to control in Kansas. And it is worth while to see just what the Populist minorities in Congress and in certain western states attempted to do. For the record was distorted by the "regular" press of the day, ready, like the Red-baiters of our own time, to magnify

blunders and to create pretexts for discrediting these earnest men and women who were trying to curb profiteering and corruption and to make the United States a better place for the people.

Populists elected to Congress in 1890 had begun immediately to press for federal reforms, many of which have since been written into law. They introduced the first bills for the rural free delivery, which has been important in vitalizing the farm population. They tried to strengthen the Interstate Commerce Act so as to achieve genuine equality of freight rates for all shippers. They moved for a federal income tax. They tried to prohibit the use of railroad passes and telegraph franks by judges and members of Congress. They demanded federal funds and a federal agency for irrigation of arid lands.

These Populists in Congress also showed, from the beginning, active concern for the condition of wage workers. They proposed to compel the use of safety appliances on railroads and to standardize working conditions for metal miners in western areas not yet admitted to statehood. They presented petitions from many parts of the country for a federal study of housing in city slums. They supported the movement to make the federal government responsible for pure foods and drugs. And they led the demand for investigation of the Pinkerton detective agency.

Most of their bills and amendments were simply stifled in committee. But they had brought forward issues which troubled great masses of people and the movement gained momentum. Tom Watson, for example, had vainly demanded a Congressional inquiry into the Pinkerton system. After the battle at Homestead, such an inquiry was undertaken by the Senate.

As the crisis of 1893 developed, the Populists in Congress demanded other special investigations: on railroad finances, costs, and carrying charges; on grain trading and the interlocking interests of elevators, millers, and railroads; on the banking system; and on the labor conflicts at Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. Nothing was done at that time, but a few years later a monumental investigation of "questions pertaining to immigration, to labor, to agriculture, to manu-

facturing, and to business" was ordered by Congress, and the U. S. Industrial Commission appointed to carry out the investigation included two men identified with populism. The chairman was Senator James H. Kyle of South Dakota, and one of the five Congressmen appointed to the Commission was John C. Bell, a Democrat from Colorado who was twice elected as a Populist and retained Populist support.

A federal income tax was enacted in 1894 largely because the Populists had worked for it. That law was cast aside by the courts as an encroachment upon the powers of the states. But the idea had taken root and some years later the Sixteenth Amendment to the Constitution prepared the ground for our present income tax laws passed in 1913 and subsequently developed.

Tom Watson had thrown his enthusiasm and his cleverness into a bill for the subtreasury plan. For years nothing came of it. But forty years later the New Deal set up the Commodity Credit Corporation with its crop loans.

Senator Kyle presented petitions of Negro citizens in the District of Columbia that the government exhibit at the World's Fair should include "facts relating to the industrial, moral, and educational development of the American Negro during the last thirty years." The resolution was referred to a committee and buried.

Throughout their work in Congress, the Populists gave much attention to currency questions, upholding the demand for free coinage of silver put forward by many Democrats, including Congressman William Jennings Bryan of Nebraska.

IN THE STATES

In Kansas, the legislature in joint session memorialized Congress with a request to strengthen the interstate commerce law. And it passed a joint resolution for popular referendum within Kansas on equal suffrage. Silver Democrats and Populists both supported a law authorizing the payment of debts within Kansas in any legal-tender money of the United States, even if the contract had specified payment in gold. And the Populists obtained passage of two laws

to ease the farmers' situation. One required the railroads to provide track scales for weighing of grain before shipment. The other forbade seizure of occupied land for debt before the defaulting debtor had been granted a full year's time for redemption.[47]

In several other states, old-party politicians supported important Populist measures, trusting perhaps that they would be annulled by the courts. For example, in Nebraska the "Independent" minority won old-party support for a bill under which railroad rates within the state might be lowered by the State Board of Transportation and raised by the State Supreme Court. After five years of litigation, an injunction against the operation of this law was sustained by the U. S. Supreme Court.

In western wheat states, measures for state-owned grain elevators had been pushed for several years. North Dakota and Minnesota enacted such measures in 1893, but they were badly drawn and when taken before the courts they were declared invalid.

In Minnesota, the Republican governor, Knute Nelson (although a corporation lawyer and later a Red-baiting United States Senator), saw the importance of heeding the farmers' demands. Populists and Republicans worked together to strengthen and extend earlier provisions for inspection of the grading and weighing of grain. They also made it a crime to create trading pools or trusts. But the Populists tried unsuccessfully to obtain taxation of all unused land held by the railroads under government land grants.

Ignatius Donnelly, whose home state was Minnesota, was employed by the 1893 legislature to investigate lumber company frauds in the use of state timber lands and also a local coal combine's price fixing and restraint of trade. The grand jury refused to indict on the basis of evidence Donnelly gathered. This led Governor Nelson to initiate a broad regional anti-monopoly convention which was held in Chicago in June, 1893. The convention had no definite result, and Donnelly called it a humbug. But the fact that over a hundred Republicans, Democrats, and Populists met together to discuss more effective regulation of trusts and monopolies indicates the extent and the strength of Populist feeling.

BLOODLESS WAR IN COLORADO

The Populist Governor Davis H. Waite of Colorado faced a peculiarly difficult situation. Many of his silver supporters had no interest in other aspects of populism, and even including the Silver Democrats the Populists fell short of a majority in the legislature. Waite proposed that Colorado should accept "all silver dollars, domestic and foreign, containing not less than 412½ grains nine-tenths fine silver" as legal tender for payment of all debts in Colorado.[48] This proposal stirred up a hornet's nest and was rejected.

While controversy over this was still raging, Governor Waite clashed with the Denver board of police which he had himself appointed. Charging them with corrupt protection of gambling houses, the governor ousted two of them and replaced them with Populist appointees. Shortly convinced that the new appointees were carrying on the same old system of blackmail and bribery, he removed them also. But forthwith an armed force of city police and firemen and sheriff's deputies took possession of the city hall for the purpose of barring entrance to the latest members of the police board. Before the dispute was settled by decision of the State Supreme Court (which upheld Governor Waite), the state militia had been called out and federal troops were held in reserve at the railroad station. No armed clash actually occurred, but from one end of the country to the other Governor Waite's attempt to root out bribery from the city police administration was turned against the Populists.

In February, 1894, while Denver was still an armed camp, organized silver miners along Cripple Creek began a determined strike against lengthening of the workday from eight hours to nine. Feeling ran high on both sides, and with the massing of sheriffs' deputies, the strikers' pickets also carried arms. Expecting to be attacked, the strikers built fortifications and prepared to resist.

Governor Waite openly expressed his sympathy with the strikers and visited Cripple Creek to see that their rights were respected by the sheriff's deputies. Finally having failed in his two attempts to

bring about a settlement, and noting that the sheriff said he had no control over his men, Governor Waite called out the national guard. Without bloodshed the four months' strike was finally won.

The Silver Democrats of Colorado, in their 1894 nominating convention, not only abandoned Governor Waite but censured "imbecility in high positions."[49] That year, also, the Colorado Republicans declared "that the paramount issue in the State is the suppression of the spirit of anarchy—the restoration and maintenance of law and order."

But the Populists again nominated Waite for governor. And the "imbecility" of this "fanatic" evidently appealed to the people of Colorado. For the vote for Waite was larger by 30,000 in 1894 than it had been two years earlier. More Populists were sent to the state legislature, where they actually obtained in 1894 a majority in the senate. But the voting population had been increased by the influx of settlers and by the granting of woman suffrage in 1893. So in spite of greatly increased support, Governor Waite had less than half of the total vote for governor, and a Republican stepped into office as his successor. Only one of the two Populists who had represented Colorado in Congress was re-elected.

CLASS STRUGGLE IN 1893-94

Meantime, in 1893, one of the periodic crises of capitalism had created panic in the financial world and started a prolonged industrial depression. Hundreds of banks failed. Railroad construction came to a standstill and factories closed down. More workers than ever before were unemployed. Less sudden, but no less devastating was the decline in prices for basic crops. These had seemed low in 1892, but by October, 1894, cotton was wavering around six cents a pound, and the average price of wheat touched a low of less than 52 cents a bushel.

Among the Populists this meant increased agitation for free coinage of silver and more emphasis on the problems of the wage workers. At the same time, the Populist demands for greater

political democracy and for public ownership of railroads and other utilities were gaining new supporters in the field of labor.

Again, as in 1892, the American Federation of Labor stepped over from its concern with wages and working conditions to broader political issues. It was officially represented at the large Chicago convention in August, 1893, of the American Bi-metallic League made up of silver enthusiasts from all political parties. At its own convention in December, the A. F. of L. adopted a resolution favoring free coinage of silver, and this position was reaffirmed each year until after the broad upturn of business had begun in 1897-98. The A. F. of L. also repeated in 1893 the previous year's demand for nationalization of the telegraph. A minority desired an alliance with the People's Party, but instead of such a definite political stand the convention instructed the Executive Council to "effect and perfect an alliance between the trade and labor unions and the farmers' organizations to the end that the best interests of all may be served."

This 1893 convention of the A. F. of L. also discussed and submitted to member unions a political program brought forward by Thomas J. Morgan, a Chicago delegate of the Machinists' Union. Morgan was a Socialist, and his program included three kinds of demands. It expanded and developed points that should be covered by laws for the protection of workers: universal compulsory education; abolition of the sweating system; definite employers' liability for injuries on the job; and abolition of the contract system in public works. Like the Omaha platform of the People's Party, it sought greater political democracy through the initiative and referendum, and it favored public ownership of railroads as well as telegraph and telephone. And it was distinctively socialist in proposing not only public ownership of all utilities but "the collective ownership by the people of all means of production and distribution."

Strong elements in the American Federation of Labor opposed the socialist plank, and the program was never officially adopted by the Federation. Socialists charged that it was defeated by trickery at the 1894 convention after it had been overwhelmingly endorsed by referendum. Unions unconditionally accepting the entire pro-

gram included industries and groups as diverse as coal mining (United Mine Workers of America) and textiles, and tailors, machinists and street-railway employees. Eleven state federations endorsed it (including New York, Ohio, and Illinois, and Kansas, Nebraska, and Montana). Eight city centrals endorsed it but these did not include either New York or Chicago.*

As the depression deepened many thousands of workers went on strike to defend themselves against wage cuts and longer hours. Labor conflict reached a new stage of development in 1894. On the workers' side there was a definite movement toward industrial unionism. This had many set-backs and, except among the coal miners, it did not become a powerful force until some forty years later. But in the 1890's the United Mine Workers was growing in the northern coal fields, the Western Federation of Miners was leading militant struggles among the metal miners of the West, and the American Railway Union led by Eugene V. Debs was trying to weld into a single class-conscious body the many crafts of railroad shop work and railroad operation.

Mine owners, railroad officials, and other large employers feared the growth of working-class solidarity shown by industrial unions and sympathetic strikes, and they sharpened their weapons against labor. Employers had invoked the Sherman Anti-Trust Act of 1890 as giving a new basis for eliminating "combinations of labor, as well as of capital." This interpretation was upheld by a federal court in 1893 and was maintained until 1914 when labor unions were excluded from anti-trust laws by the Clayton Act. Later the application of the Clayton Act was sharply restricted by a Supreme Court decision of January 3, 1921. Again in 1894 the Sherman

* Those unconditionally endorsing the entire program included also the following unions: iron and steel workers, lasters, woodworkers, flint-glass workers, brewery workers, painters, furniture workers, waiters, shoe workers, mule spinners, and German-American typographical union. State federations included also Maine, Rhode Island, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Missouri. City centrals were Baltimore, New Haven, Cleveland, Toledo, Lansing, Saginaw, Grand Rapids, and Milwaukee.

Anti-Trust Act was invoked as basis for the civil injunction issued by a federal court to break the Pullman and railway strike. When Debs and the other strike leaders refused to obey this injunction, the case was carried up to the highest court. Meantime, federal troops were sent by President Cleveland to Chicago to intimidate the strikers and break the strike.

But troops and injunctions failed to break the spirit of the strikers. And while Debs was spending six months in the Woodstock jail for contempt of court, he had time to study and ponder labor history and socialist writings. Shortly after his release, Debs began to throw all his energies into the movement for socialism.

Another milestone of labor history was set in 1895 by the Supreme Court decision in the Debs case, for this was the first time that the highest court had "passed on the scope and validity of an injunction in a labor controversy" and placed the use of labor injunctions on a "firm legal basis."[50]

11. POPULISTS IN 1894 CAMPAIGN

Labor struggles of 1894 illustrated well the sharpening class contrasts which the Populists had noted in their 1892 campaign. But in the state and congressional campaigns of 1894, most of the Populist platforms avoided labor demands more definite than a reference to the Omaha platform. Many Populists did not fathom the depth of the conflict which was developing. For example, the Minnesota platform, drafted under the guidance of Ignatius Donnelly, referred to the arrest of Debs and then stated:

"We therefore recommend to our suffering countrymen, especially those of the laboring classes, that peaceful and effective remedy for

wrongs which, in this country, the ballot gives to free men, and which destroys no property except watered stock, and injures no values except those of fiction and fraud."

Beyond this, the Minnesota People's Party platform had nothing to offer to wage workers.

Those few state platforms of the People's Party which set forth explicit labor planks in 1894 were mainly concerned with such issues as the Democrats and Republicans had also raised in their bidding for the labor vote: restricting immigration, or eliminating competition of convict labor with free labor, or compelling the employer to assume liability for industrial accidents. Even Republicans in Nebraska, New York and Wisconsin demanded, in 1894, the workers' right to organize; and West Virginia Republicans went on record against the use of Pinkerton thugs. The Populists repeated their demand for enforcing an eight-hour day, and they wanted sanitary inspection of working places and other improvements in working conditions. At least three state Populist parties (California, Nevada, New York) demanded public works for the unemployed. Two went definitely beyond such demands.

Kansas Populists recognized the class line-up and condemned "the policy of all the governing parties in this Nation whose legislation has favored capital and oppressed labor, and we hereby declare our sympathy with all toilers in their efforts to improve their conditions, and demand such legislation as will result in removing some of the burdens of toil by shortening the hours of labor without lessening their daily wage."

The New York platform demanded "that the so-called conspiracy laws be modified so that wage workers may do collectively what is lawful when done by them singly."

But even these New York Populists wanted compulsory arbitration of strikes involving public works or corporations. And Kansas and Arkansas Populists wanted broader use of arbitration for settlement of all strikes. On this point they stood with many state platforms of the older parties—especially Prohibitionists and Repub-

licans of the North and West. Compulsory arbitration was, of course, bitterly opposed by organized labor.

Platforms, however, tell only part of the story. And already the People's Party included many persons who went beyond the platform statements in their concern for the workers. In 1894, for example, the Colorado People's Party platform merely referred to the Omaha statement and added nothing new on labor. But we have seen how the actions of Governor Waite had put the party on record as siding with the striking miners against the mine owners. Waite held the support of the majority within the Colorado party, although many in that state and elsewhere who cared primarily about the silver issue found his positive friendliness to labor disturbing.

The Georgia platform had only one labor plank, demanding abolition of the convict leasing system. But Tom Watson, leading Georgia Populist, scored the violence used against strikers. He bitterly denounced President Cleveland for breaking the railway strike. The Administration, he said, "has shown by its every word and deed that Cleveland considers but one side of the question (after the election) and that side is capital."[51] Watson's biographer writes:

> "The arrest of the leaders of Coxey's Army of protest for treading on the Capitol grass reminded him that 'Carnegie stole two hundred thousand dollars from the government, and Cleveland did not prosecute him as the law requires.' "[52]

Coxey's Army was a workers' project, planned, financed and led by Populists in the spring and summer of 1894. As the numbers of unemployed workers mounted in the depression which followed the financial crisis of 1893, some of the Populists realized that nothing short of federal action could relieve the acute distress of the unemployed and their families. They proposed that the government should borrow against treasury notes $500,000,000 to finance employment in federal construction of improved public highways. Further, as a separate measure of relief, they proposed that the government should make available to states, counties, towns and cities

legal-tender treasury notes against which the Treasury would receive as security non-interest-bearing bonds which might be issued by a state, county, town, or city up to 50 per cent of its total assessed valuation.

Realizing the political importance of mass demonstrations, Carl Browne of Berkeley, California, and Jacob S. Coxey, a wealthy Populist of Massillon, Ohio, developed the plans under which seventeen different columns of unemployed workers converged upon Washington in the summer of 1894. They were "the sandwich-men of poverty, the peripatetic advertisers of social misery."[53] One section of the "Commonweal Army" (which the newspapers promptly dubbed Coxey's Army) passed through Iowa in the spring and, during its ten days at Des Moines, General Weaver spent much time with them, advised them, and helped them to gather funds from sympathetic citizens. Later another section went through Kansas when the Populists were holding their state convention. They were warmly welcomed and were given $102 gathered in a collection from the convention delegates.

When the "Army" marched into Washington, they presented the plan for federal financing of unemployment relief, and a bill embodying it was introduced by Senator Peffer of Kansas. Senator Allen asked for a Senate Committee to receive the leaders of the "Commonweal Army" and hear what they wanted. Haldoer E. Boen, a Populist Congressman from Minnesota, introduced a resolution that the Secretary of War should provide tents and camping grounds within the District of Columbia for all organized bodies of laboring people who came to wait upon Congress and should see to it that their rights as citizens were respected and protected.

All such proposals were, of course, smothered at birth. The old-party politicians had no intention of allowing serious discussion of the unemployed masses. Not yet did they see in the Populist vote nor in the growth of labor organization any serious challenge to the supremacy of the business interests which they served. Some forty years later, history was repeated with a difference. When Hoover was in the White House, the unemployed marched upon Washing-

ton in the great demonstration of December, 1932, and were again refused a hearing. Again many were arrested on various pretexts. But in the following year, the Roosevelt Administration initiated a broad federal program of relief and public works.

AT THE POLLS

Populism gained ground during the crisis of 1893 and the struggles which followed. The banking crisis, seeming on the surface of things to be due to a shortage of gold, gave fresh drive to the demand for free coinage of silver. And the chorus of approval from big business over President Cleveland's handling of the railroad strike in the summer of 1894 alienated some workers who had been Democrats and increased labor support for the People's Party.

State and congressional candidates of the People's Party received in 1894 a vote larger by nearly half a million than the popular vote for Weaver as presidential candidate in 1892.* But this often repeated fact does not tell the whole story. In both campaigns any attempt to measure the strength of the People's Party is complicated by extremely irregular variations—from one state to another and even from one district to another—in the policy toward fusion. And from then on, the voting strength of the People's Party was to be less and less a true index to the strength and influence of the Populist movement.

Until after the 1892 election, Populists in the western states had often co-operated with the Democrats, as another party opposed to

* Popular vote for Weaver was 1,027,329. Total vote in 1894 for state and congressional candidates was 1,523,979. For congressional candidates alone in 1892, the People's Party vote had been 1,122,012. This was larger by 94,683 than the popular vote for Weaver. Two years later (1894) congressional candidates polled 1,263,951. In 1894, there were eighteen states in which at least one state candidate of the People's Party received more votes than the party's congressional candidates. Adding these excess votes to the congressional totals, we have 1,523,979 as the total vote for People's Party candidates in 1894.

the Administration. But with Grover Cleveland, a Democrat, in the White House, more of the western Populists made independent nominations in 1894. In the South, on the other hand, fusion meant co-operation with the southern Republicans, who had not wholly abandoned their radicalism of the Civil War and Reconstruction period. On the whole, there was more collaboration between southern Populists and southern Republicans in 1894 than there had been two years earlier, before Cleveland was elected. But both regions showed important exceptions to these general trends.

In Kansas, after the considerable success of 1892, the People's Party was torn by dissension. Leaders disagreed on immediate goals and on the question of fusion with the Democrats. These quarrels came into the open, with a turmoil of name-calling which aired "the most vindictive names known to the science of etymology," according to Elizabeth N. Barr, daughter of a Populist, in her history of the Kansas movement. In the campaign of 1894, one group worked with the Democrats, the other put up an independent People's Party ticket. Of course the People's Party lost ground but, in spite of everything, they did actually elect one-third of the new legislature.

In Nebraska in 1894, William Jennings Bryan, as an ardent Silver Democrat, swung Democratic support for the first time to the Populist candidate for governor. So while Colorado and Kansas went back to Republican governors, Nebraska stepped out with a Populist, Governor Holcomb, at its head. But even while the Populists won increased support for their governor and congressmen, the Democratic-Populist numbers in the Nebraska legislature were reduced and Republicans obtained control.

In the South, collaboration in 1894 between Populists and Republicans was most marked in North Carolina, Georgia, Florida and Alabama. Here the Republicans made very few separate nominations. But in Virginia the Republicans, who had supported several Populist candidates in 1892, set up their own tickets in 1894. In South Carolina, the Tillman movement still held the Populists within the Democratic Party, although Tillman spared no words in

his denunciations of President Cleveland. Elsewhere in the South, many separate candidates were named for important offices by Republicans and by People's Party, pretty much as they had been two years before.

That on the whole the People's Party increased its following is beyond question. And the fact that a million and a half votes were rolled up for its candidates in 1894 (in addition to some 200,000 given to the Prohibition Party) shows the extraordinary ferment of live political interest within the country.

Even where more of the voters supported the People's Party, this increase was not always reflected in larger political representation. In part, but only in part, this was due to deliberate falsification of the count. Such methods were especially noteworthy in southern districts, where white politicians commonly manipulated Negro votes to their own advantage. In Georgia, for example, "repeating and ballot-box 'stuffing' were, apparently common. . . . Numerous precincts were thrown out on technicalities. Fearing legal contests, the victors in a number of cases hid or destroyed the ballot boxes. 'We had to do it!' declared a veteran office holder. 'Those d—— Populists would have ruined the country!' "[54]

Failure to concentrate campaign efforts in strategic districts also affected the results. So, in Minnesota, People's Party candidates received a larger percentage than before of the total vote for congressmen, but Haldoer E. Boen who had represented the Seventh District failed of re-election. Here also the number in the legislature who had been nominated or endorsed by the Populists was cut from twenty to fourteen, although Sidney M. Owen, the People's Party candidate for governor, received twice as many votes as Ignatius Donnelly had received two years before.

Taking the country as whole, People's Party candidates for Congress received more votes and a higher percentage of votes in 1894 than in 1892, but the total Populist group in the new (54th) Congress was reduced from fourteen to ten. The fact that Alabama and

North Carolina were now represented did not offset the losses in western states.*

Within the states, the 1894 elections increased the Populist minorities in twelve state and territorial legislatures and reduced it in nine others. These figures do not include the two states which, in 1894, for the first time elected a solitary Populist nor the state which lost in 1894 the one Populist it had elected two years earlier. North Carolina and Colorado now ranked ahead of Kansas in the relative size of their Populist minorities. Most striking was the shift in North Carolina from a Democratic majority to control by Populists and Republicans. In 1892, the line-up had been Democrats, 138; Republicans, 20; People's Party, 12. Two years later it was Democrats, 56; Republicans, 64; People's Party, 100.†

Taking the country as a whole, however, People's Party figures do not include all of those who were elected with People's Party support or featured Populist demands in their election campaigns.

* Four Senators in the 54th Congress: Marion Butler of North Carolina joined William V. Allen of Nebraska, William A. Peffer of Kansas, and James H. Kyle of South Dakota. The House included one Representative from Alabama; one (instead of two) from Colorado; one (instead of six) from Kansas; one (instead of two) from Nebraska; two from North Carolina.

† People's Party legislators were more numerous in 1894 than in 1892 in North Carolina (45% of total); Colorado (41%); Idaho (28%); Georgia (24%); Montana, including fusion (22%); Washington (21%); Oklahoma Territory (21%); Texas (15%); Oregon (11%); Tennessee and Florida (5%); Missouri (2%). In 1894 California and Connecticut each had for the first time one People's Party representative in the state legislature.

People's Party legislators were fewer in 1894 than in 1892, but still over 10% of the total in Kansas (33%); Alabama (32%); Nebraska (21%); South Dakota (20%); North Dakota (13%); fewer, and under 10% of the total, in Arkansas (7%); Kentucky (4%); Minnesota and Wyoming (2%); and Louisiana, none.

12. FUSION AND DECLINE

Already the movement had within itself certain trends which would soon undermine the independence and organized strength of the People's Party. The former line-up of the people versus the monopolies was being distorted (under organized pressure from the silver-mining interests) into the narrower fight for free silver versus the bankers. At the same time, many of those Populists who had a genuine concern over wage-workers' problems were moving toward a class concept of our capitalist world which would carry them out from populism into the Socialist movement. Others, expecting greater immediate results from a party of protest, were easily discouraged when their minorities seemed ineffective. They would soon lead the line of "summer soldiers" who rejoined the ranks of the major parties.

Within those parties themselves, the crisis of 1893 and the depression which followed had stirred up much genuine sympathy with the Populist viewpoint. Many western Democrats had not only taken up the demand for free coinage of silver but vigorously opposed the way in which President Cleveland and Wall Street bankers had worked together to pull the country out of the financial crisis. Most of the Republicans in the South were closer to the Populists than to the big-business lawyers and politicians who had come into national control of the Republican Party. And wherever the southern Anti-Bourbons were working within the Democratic Party, they were also anti-Cleveland and pro-silver. The free-silver idea had even captured some southern Democrats who had nothing else in common with the Populists.

By 1895 it was estimated that two-fifths of all the Republicans in the entire country and three-fifths of the Democrats were on the

silver side in the new line-up against the bankers. Only in the industrial states of the Northeast was there widespread support of the single gold standard.

DEMOCRATS BID FOR POPULIST VOTE

Furthermore, the Democratic Party machine was jittery. Congressional elections in 1894 had given a sweeping Republican majority. This was largely due to resentment against the administration which happened to be in power when the crisis threw millions of workers on the streets, cut the wages of those still employed, and drove farm prices lower than they had been in any year since before the Civil War. And since clouds of depression still darkened the national horizon in 1896, Democratic leaders reckoned that their only hope of remaining in power rested in a demagogic appeal to the Populist vote.

Democrats had tried to bait the insurgent elements with the Gorman-Wilson tariff revision in 1894, which included a federal income tax as a source of revenue to offset the cuts in import duties. But the free-trade Populists criticized the new tariff act as a measly compromise,* and the income tax had been promptly nullified by the Supreme Court as unconstitutional. At the election which followed in the autumn of 1894, People's Party voters had increased even though it was an "off" year with no presidential candidate. If the Populists were allowed again to draw off their considerable block of votes in a three-cornered contest, the Democratic Party would certainly be voted out of the White House. At all costs the Democrats must have support from the "Solid South" and they must regain their lost footholds among insurgents in the North and West.

There was also within the Democratic Party a definite cleavage between the forces of finance capital and the interests of the people. It was symbolized by the fight for free silver, but it went much

* President Cleveland, elected on pledge of low tariff, considered it an example of "party perfidy and dishonor." (*The Yearbook of Agriculture*, 1940, p. 1192.)

deeper. The popular revolt which had created the People's Party in 1892 had now penetrated the ranks of the Democratic Party. Party leaders were confronted not merely with the need of drawing Populist votes to prevent a disastrous three-cornered contest. They feared that great numbers of Democrats might withdraw from their party and join the ranks of the Populists.

Republicans held the first of the 1896 nominating conventions. When they announced adherence to the single gold standard, Senator Teller of Colorado withdrew with a group of pro-silver delegates from five western states (Montana, Utah, Colorado, Idaho, South Dakota). A few others voted against the gold plank but remained within the Republican fold.

At the Democratic convention shortly afterwards, free silver forces were led by Senator James K. Jones of Arkansas, Governor Altgeld of Illinois (who had protested Cleveland's intervention in the railway strike), and Senator Tillman, the Anti-Bourbon leader of South Carolina. Some of the delegates were genuine silver enthusiasts. Some saw a silver plank as a desperate expedient for keeping the party in power. But there were plenty of businessmen among them who were staunch supporters of gold.

The convention wavered as the inner struggle went on between big business and the people. Then William Jennings Bryan of Nebraska made his skillful and moving oratorical appeal for silver as the great weapon of the people against Wall Street rule. Then idealism, hatred of Wall Street, subservience to the silver interests, and hardboiled maneuvering for party power combined in committing the majority of the delegates to a platform strongly tinged with populism. There was talk of nominating the Silver Republican, Senator Teller. But Bryan was the obvious candidate—a brilliant young man, just old enough to serve as President and well known as a good party Democrat who had worked successfully with the People's Party in his native state. His eloquent speech at the convention closed with an emotional appeal: "You shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns, you shall

not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold."[55] This swayed the delegates and clinched Bryan's nomination.*

To strengthen the appeal to the Populist vote, the Democrats not only demanded free coinage of silver but also opposed any issuance of money by privately owned national banks. They demanded stricter control of railroads. They included a long but indefinite plank on the income tax. Their only "labor" planks were the old demands for restricted immigration and for the compulsory arbitration of disputes which labor itself opposed. They protested the abuse of injunctions but failed to make any clear connection with the workers' right to strike. As before, they opposed protective tariffs and favored tariff "for revenue only." To appease the Wall Street forces, the Democrats nominated as vice-presidential candidate, Arthur M. Sewall of Maine, who was a banker, a railroad director, and head of a shipyard.

That populism had penetrated the ranks of the Democratic Party had been clear long before the convention met. And many Populists had warned against compromise with the Democratic machine. One southern editor, as far back as April, 1895, had written:

O, come into my party, said the spider to the fly—
Then he sharpened up his pencil and winked the other eye.
The way into my party is across a single plank—
You can take it from your platform, the rest can go to—blank.[56]

When the People's Party delegates met at St. Louis in July, 1896, they faced the one big question: Should they endorse (or nominate) Bryan or should they put up a separate presidential candidate? Opinion was sharply divided. Most of the southern Populists opposed any dealings with the Democrats.

"Men who had turned Populist had been ostracized socially, had been discriminated against in business, had suffered personal insults

* A small minority of "gold" Democrats withdrew from the convention and organized the short-lived National Democratic Party which obtained less than 140,000 votes for its candidate, John M. Palmer of Illinois.

and even physical injuries. How could they now unite with the enemy? 'For God's sake don't indorse Bryan,' a Texas Populist wrote to one of the St. Louis delegates. 'Our people are firm, confident and enthusiastic; don't betray their trust. Don't try to force us back into the Democratic Party; we won't go.' "[57]

Support of Bryan was opposed also by northern delegates as diverse as Senator Peffer of Kansas, Ignatius Donnelly of Minnesota, Henry Demarest Lloyd and Clarence Darrow of Chicago, Jacob S. Coxey of Ohio, and the labor leader, Robert Schilling. They believed that it would compromise the People's Party on almost every point except the money question. And it would permanently weaken their independent organization.

But Senator Allen of Nebraska, James B. Weaver of Iowa, and Jerry Simpson of Kansas were vigorously supporting Taubeneck, the party's executive secretary who was determined to put through the endorsement of Bryan. Even Senator Butler of North Carolina was persuaded that the People's Party might nominate Bryan and still maintain its independence. Tom Watson, of Georgia, was not present. He had staunchly opposed fusion, but when the convention wired him for permission to nominate him as vice-presidential running-mate with Bryan, he accepted the nomination. At least this gave an opportunity for Populists to support Bryan without also supporting the banker, Sewall.

PEOPLE'S PARTY LOSES BY FUSION

In the end, only the Republicans were happy. McKinley sailed into office with a larger plurality than had been given to any candidate since General Grant. The Bryan total fell short of the 1892 figure for Democrats plus Populists, and only a tiny fraction of the Bryan votes was given to the Bryan-Watson ticket—just over 200,000 in the country as a whole. Republicans had a safe majority in both houses of Congress, even when Populists voted with the Democrats. Bryan had carried the South from Virginia and Tennessee to Texas. He carried most of the West. But the Republicans recaptured California and North Dakota and actually swung Ken-

tucky over to their side. In the Northeast McKinley had such strong support in the industrial centers that it more than balanced the considerable rural vote for Bryan. McKinley carried all the states from Maine to Minnesota.

In this campaign of 1896, the Republican manager, Mark Hanna, gave nationwide publicity to threats of mass unemployment, wage cuts, and a financial panic in case Bryan were elected. It was the first campaign in which a party boss operated on a national scale and used such methods. His cohorts exaggerated the bad effects of the Democratic tariff measure of 1894. On the silver issue they carried on a "campaign of instruction" which amounted to intimidation. This seriously influenced the labor vote and even many of the farmers who had been voting Populist. It was an important factor in McKinley's election.[58]

For People's Party congressional candidates, the total vote was slashed to one-third of its high figure of 1894. Decline was sharpest in the North and West, but even in the South the People's Party vote was smaller than it had been. And yet the smaller vote was so distributed that the People's Party representatives in Congress were increased from ten to twenty-two. North Carolina and Kansas led with ten Populist Congressmen between them. John C. Bell of Colorado and M. W. Howard of Alabama were re-elected. And three other states now had for the first time a Populist in Washington.* Also, Idaho and Washington, with fusion majorities in their state legislatures, each sent one Populist to the Senate, bringing the group of Populist Senators up from four to six.† In both Houses of Congress there were also a few others who had run as Democrats or as southern Republicans with People's Party support.

At least eighteen state legislatures showed a definite increase in Populist representation, but more than ever the true picture is

* California, two; Illinois, one; Montana, one.

† Senator Peffer of Kansas was gone but his seat had been given to another Populist, William A. Harris. Senator Kyle was re-elected as an Independent from South Dakota. Allen of Nebraska and Butler of North Carolina held over from previous elections.

blurred by the prevalence of fusion and the considerable number of candidates elected as "Silver Democrats" or even "Silver Republicans." In some southern states the People's Party was supporting Bryan for President and at the same time working with the Republicans on state and local issues.

Real trends in popular feeling were also obscured by the old problem of corruption at the polls. This was still considered to be most serious in the South. But in North Carolina the Republican-Populist legislature of 1895 had passed and a Democratic governor had signed a new law to safeguard free and honest elections. "The law worked reasonably well, and for perhaps the first time since the emergence of the 'solid South' non-Democratic voters in a strictly southern state had a chance to show approximately their full strength."[59] It is significant, however, that while the Republican-Populist majority in the North Carolina legislature was increased by the 1896 election, this increase went exclusively to the Republicans while the number of Populists dropped slightly.

In four other southern states (Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee, Texas) the People's Party lost ground in the legislature and the Democratic majority was considerably strengthened.

Throughout the South, the Negro question was becoming an increasingly important element in the situation. The white Populists, except in South Carolina, had generally stood for fair and honest treatment of Negroes. Many of the party committees included Negro members, and several Negroes had been supported for office. But the white minority who upheld such attempts at political equality were not strong enough, either in numbers or in conviction, to resist the rising tide of anti-Negro propaganda. And the state machines of the Democratic Party, aroused by the double "threat" of Populist opposition to Bourbon rule and of Negro participation in political life, started a systematic drive to restore the payment of a poll tax as a basic requirement for suffrage.

Between 1889 and 1903 ten southern states adopted the poll tax laws which have, in practice, excluded most of their Negro voters, along with great numbers of their poorer white voters. Later re-

volts against this limitation of democracy have reduced the number of poll tax states from eleven to seven, and a strong minority in the 78th Congress (1943) is pressing for federal action to bring the remaining poll tax states into line.*

Actually, the 1896 campaign marked the beginning of the end for the People's Party. "Middle-of-the-Road" Populists who had never accepted the support for Bryan made independent nominations in the presidential campaign of 1900, but obtained only some 50,000 votes. Four years later the Fusion Populists had come back into the fold but, although they nominated Tom Watson, who was well known throughout the country, the reunited People's Party gathered less than 115,000 votes. By 1908, when Watson ran again, the figure had shrunk to about 29,000, and this was the last attempt to carry on the People's Party.

The party's groups in Congress and in state legislatures had also dwindled rapidly after the 1896 elections. Senator Kyle, of South Dakota, before he finished his term in 1903 had gone over to the Republicans. In the 1900 election, three Populist Congressmen were re-elected with fusion support, but no new People's Party candidates were added as the terms of other Populist representatives expired. By 1904 the People's Party had disappeared from Congress and less than a dozen of its members were holding solitary seats in state legislatures.

POPULISTS SWELL SOCIALIST MOVEMENT

Thousands of former Populists had, however, joined the ranks of a new Socialist Party, broader in its appeal than the old Socialist Labor Party. This new party, in which Debs was the outstanding

* Georgia had never given up this old provision, but it was the only state which had such a limitation of the suffrage when the Farmers' Alliance was moving into the southeastern states. Those requiring a poll tax in 1943 are: Georgia; Mississippi, since 1890; Arkansas, since 1893; South Carolina, since 1895; Alabama and Virginia, since 1901; Texas, since 1903. Others, passed in the reaction against populism but repealed before 1943, were Florida, 1889 to 1936; Tennessee, 1890 to 1942; Louisiana, 1898 to 1934; North Carolina, 1900 to 1920. This list does not take account of educational qualifications required with or without a poll tax in several southern states.

leader, drew in other militant labor men. It appealed to readers of Bellamy's *Looking Backward* and to other middle-class reformers who had found socialist ideals in the teachings of religion. And in the early months of the 1900 campaign, a majority of the Socialist Labor Party went over to it. When Debs was nominated for the presidency that year by the Socialist Party, his running mate was Job Harriman of California who had been a leader in the S.L.P.

The Socialist Party although primarily a party of the industrial workers was also strong in many of the western states. A new *Appeal to Reason,* which obtained a circulation never yet equalled by any other radical paper in this country, was published in Kansas and preached a socialism strongly tinged with populist thinking. It flayed the capitalist system and summoned workers and farmers to demand nationalization not only of public utilities but of all large-scale production. Socialist Party platforms also carried forward the old Populist demands for greater democracy in our political life.

When this Socialist Party vote reached its peaks in 1912 and 1920, it still had less mass support than the People's Party had had in 1892 and 1894. But along with its new base in industrial areas, the Socialist Party actually obtained relatively more votes in some of the old Populist strongholds of the West than in any of the eastern states.* It was estimated in 1908 that farmers made up about one-sixth of the Socialist Party membership.

* In 1912, Debs had 901,873 votes or 6 per cent of the total, as against Weaver's 1,027,329, or 8.5 per cent of the 1892 total. In 1920, when the Debs vote rose to 919,799, the total vote had been greatly increased by the federal amendment granting woman suffrage, so the Socialists had less than 4 per cent of the total. Even including as another heir of the Populists the Farmer-Labor Party of 1920, with its 265,411 votes, the combined total of Debs and Christensen votes was less than 5 per cent of the 1920 total.

Highest Percentages of State Votes

For Debs in 1912				For Debs and Christensen in 1920			
Nevada	16.5	Idaho	11.3	Washington	21.6	Nevada	6.9
Oklahoma	16.4	Oregon	9.7	So. Dakota	19.0	California	6.8
Montana	13.6	Florida	9.3	Wisconsin	12.0	Montana	6.8
Washington	12.4	Ohio	8.7	Minnesota	7.6	Wyoming	6.2
California	11.7	Wisconsin	8.4	New York	7.6	Illinois	6.0

13. POPULISM IN THE OLD PARTIES

Although the People's Party has long since vanished from the scene, populism has remained to this day as an active element in our political life. Principles originally set forth by the People's Party were much broader and deeper than the issue of free silver. The silver question had lost its mass appeal when prosperity returned after 1897 and prices began to move upward. But the fight to defend the economic and political rights of the little businessman and the small producer continued and found new expression, even while the party which had formulated this underlying essence of populism was gasping its way toward complete extinction.*

The People's Party had been most deeply rooted among the grain farmers of the West and the cotton farmers of the South. Most of its leaders were born and bred on farms or in trading centers closely concerned with agriculture. For the most obvious forms of modern monopoly had hit the agricultural population sooner and harder than they hit the small producers in other fields of work. Trusts in transportation and telegraph developed earlier than trusts in manufacturing. So in the years when the farmers' political parties were expanding, the industrial areas provided poor soil for the seeds of populism. And the People's Party had forfeited its independent strength before the populism of the eastern states and the industrial centers had ripened for vigorous political effort.

* It should not be forgotten, however, that the Prohibition Party was continuing its independent existence with many Populist demands in addition to its crusade against liquor. It gained a vote rising from about 142,000 in 1896 to 259,000 in 1904 and remained well over 200,000 even in the 1912 campaign.

It was primarily the organized farmers who had won the first anti-trust laws (of 1887 and 1890). But these laws were none too effective and the capitalists who profited from monopoly used every kind of device to evade their intent. Trusts continued to increase and to flourish.

In the campaign of 1896, the Democrats disregarded the subject —since at that time a demand for enforcement of anti-trust laws would have reflected on a Democratic administration. But in 1900, after four years of the McKinley (Republican) administration, the Democrats tried to cash in on the increasing popular resentment against industrial combinations. They accused the Republicans of "dishonest paltering with the trust evil" and "failure . . . to enforce the anti-trust laws."

But the "paramount issue" raised by the Democrats in 1900 was opposition to the imperialist expansion which in 1898 had reached a new stage of development with the war against Spain. They overlooked, of course, the Venezuelan episode of 1895 when a Democrat, President Cleveland, had stretched the Monroe Doctrine almost to the point of war against Great Britain, with his assertion that "Today the United States is practically sovereign on this continent, and its fiat is law upon the subjects to which it confines its interposition."[60] And neither Democrats, Republicans, nor Populists seemed to grasp the connection between our imperialist advance over subject peoples and the increasing power of monopoly at home. The inner relationship of domestic and foreign policy was not yet clear.

So in the 1900 campaign the dwindling People's Party could adopt a platform which vigorously denounced both Republicans and Democrats as fighting a sham battle against trusts and monopoly, while at the same time it kept silent on questions of foreign policy. The Republicans could find in Theodore Roosevelt, an ardent imperialist, the perfect vice-presidential candidate to wipe off the smear of the dollar marks with which cartoonists had been continuously decorating Mark Hanna, big boss of the Republican Party. Roosevelt, who dashed off to fight against Spain the moment

war was declared in 1898, had repeatedly held the front page as a crusader against political corruption and "malefactors of great wealth."

When President McKinley was assassinated in September, 1901, Theodore Roosevelt began his seven and a half years as President of the United States. Throughout that period he continued to pursue a strongly imperialist policy in foreign affairs while he shouted against the corruption and lawlessness of big business at home. But although the Roosevelt administration made gestures of enforcing the anti-trust laws, the domain of powerful banking houses interlocked with industrial corporations continued to expand.

How difficult it was to draw any line between "reasonable" or "legitimate" combinations and "monopoly" is illustrated by the famous episode which has been played up as causing the decisive break in 1912 between Theodore Roosevelt and the Republican machine. When Roosevelt was president, his administration approved the action of the United States Steel Corporation in acquiring ownership of Tennessee Coal and Iron Co. Some years later, after relations had become strained between Roosevelt and William H. Taft, his Republican successor in the White House, the Attorney-General charged that the acquisition of Tennessee Coal and Iron Co., approved by Roosevelt, was the decisive act which had made U. S. Steel a monopoly.

In the early 1900's, while anti-trust suits dragged through the courts, a new generation of clever newspaper men was uncovering the countless details of "invisible government" by big business. Magazines devoted to exposure articles sold by the hundreds of thousands and piled up wealth for their owners. These "muckrakers" built up a public disillusioned with both old parties and did much to prepare the way for a new attempt at independent political organization.

Republicans held their own in the 1908 election. Even while nominating Taft, a corporation lawyer, to run against the Democrat, Bryan, they took full credit for the Roosevelt administration with its "brave and impartial enforcement of the law," and "the

prosecution of illegal trusts and monopolies." They reminded voters that the anti-trust laws had been passed by Republican majorities. They also claimed extension of the rural free delivery system and proposed a postal savings system—measures for which People's Party Congressmen had begun to battle early in the 1890's.*

Popular feeling against big business was stirring in all sections of the country. Agitation increased for such old Populist demands as a federal income tax; direct election of senators; popular power to recall officials acting against people's will; and direct participation in law-making through the initiative and referendum.

Democrats had advocated in the 1908 campaign a constitutional amendment allowing Congress to levy a federal tax related solely to the individual's income, without apportioning the burden among the several states. Republicans had ignored this issue. But the following year, the Republicans, in the hope of winning support for upward revision of the tariff, proposed and carried through the income tax amendment. They may have expected to prevent ratification by the state legislatures, and it was only after four years delay that this, the Sixteenth Amendment, was finally adopted in February, 1913.

Direct election of senators had been brought before Congress six times since 1893, and in June, 1912 (after the Demcorats had obtained a majority in both Houses), it was passed and referred to the states. On this proposal the state legislatures acted promptly and the Seventeenth Amendment was ratified in June, 1913.

The issue of direct legislation by the people had meantime been gaining ground within several states. Before 1913, the initiative and referendum had been incorporated in eighteen state constitutions, and the referendum (without the initiative) in Nevada. Most of these states were west of the Mississippi, but it is notable that they did not include such one-time Populist strongholds as Kansas and Iowa, while they did include Illinois, Ohio, and Maine.

One of the most important actions of the Democratic majority

* A limited rural free delivery had been set up in 1896.

in the Congress elected in 1910 was the appointment of a special investigating committee, under the chairmanship of A. P. Pujo of Louisiana, which brought J. P. Morgan and other high financial figures before the bar of Congress for public questioning. This "Money Trust" investigation made available to the public a mass of information on the network of interrelated interests in control of banking and industry. The fact that such an investigation was under way was undoubtedly an element in the Democratic victory in 1912. And the fearlessness of its published reports certainly aided the re-election of Woodrow Wilson as Democratic President in 1916.

PROGRESSIVE PARTY OF 1912

Theodore Roosevelt and progressive forces within the Republican Party came out in open conflict with it in the campaign of 1912. Finding at the Republican national covention that it was impossible to crack the inner fortress of the party machine, one-third of the delegates walked out under Roosevelt's leadership. Times had changed since the nineties when Roosevelt had denounced the Populists as revolutionists who should be lined up against a wall and shot.[61] Now there were tens of thousands of Socialists who really desired to end the capitalist system and were going to roll up 900,000 votes in the 1912 election. Regulation of big business and protection for farmers and wage workers were seen in a new perspective as safety measures that would insure against revolution. And actually Roosevelt became the leader of a third party which, in its ideas and in the size of its following, marked the peak of the Populist opposition movement in the United States.

The Republicans, bereft of their Progressive minority, adopted a high-sounding program in which they appealed to the memory of Abraham Lincoln and swore their unchanging faith in government of the people, by the people, for the people. They promised everything: social and labor legislation; federal farm credit; upholding the integrity of the courts (but also their authority); opposition to special privilege and monopoly; scientific inquiry as to increase in cost of living. They claimed as a distinctively Repub-

lican policy the conservation work in which Theodore Roosevelt had done constructive pioneering.

The Democrats were also driven to make new statements. "A private monopoly is indefensible and intolerable." They said they were against holding companies, interlocking directors, stock watering, discrimination in price, and control by any one corporation of so large a proportion of any industry as to make it a menace to competitive conditions. Under the banner of Thomas Jefferson, they went on record as opposing any candidate for President "who is the representative of, or under any obligation to, J. Pierpont Morgan . . . or any other member of the privilege-hunting and favor-seeking class." They pointed out that the Democratic Congress elected in 1910 had required publicity of campaign expenses and proposed the amendment for popular election of senators. They promised party primaries for election of delegates to nominating conventions.

In appealing for the farmers' vote, the Democrats proposed "enactment by Congress of legislation that will suppress the pernicious practice of gambling in agricultural products by organized exchanges or others." They recommended a study of farm credit societies in other countries as preliminary to creating a system of rural credit agencies in the United States. And they proposed extension of rural free delivery and establishment of parcel post.

But the new Progressive Party outdid them both. It claimed both Lincoln and Jefferson, and attempted to combine a strengthening of the federal government with proposals for more direct participation by the people. "This country belongs to the people who inhabit it. Its resources, its business, its institutions and its laws should be utilized, maintained or altered in whatever manner will best promote the general interest. It is time to set the public welfare in the first place." They charged the Republican Party with "deliberate betrayal of its trust" and the Democratic Party with "fatal incapacity . . . to deal with the new issues of the new time." "Unhampered by tradition, uncorrupted by power, undismayed by the magnitude of the task, the new party offers itself as the instru-

ment of the people to sweep away old abuses, to build a new and nobler commonwealth."

The Progressive Party was essentially populist in its ideas and purposes, recognizing the desires of the masses and holding out promise that the people's interest could be protected through a purified government and a regulated capitalism. It included a broad program of social and labor legislation. But in relation to the fight against monopoly and the special needs of the farmers it had little that was not also written into the old-party platforms.

In the twenty years since the Omaha Platform had been adopted by the People's Party, much of the populist program had sunk deeply into the consciousness of the American people. No party could dare to shape its appeal to the voters without including some promise of action against monopoly and special interests and for a fuller application of political democracy. The Progressive Party was distinctive in the 1912 campaign in the breadth of its program and the evangelical fervor of many who rallied under its banner. It recognized the people's concern with underlying principles. For example, in relation to the courts, which had become notorious for their interference with labor's freedom of action and for their service to big business, the Progressive Party demanded "such restriction of the power of the courts as shall leave to the people the ultimate authority to determine fundamental questions of social welfare and public policy."

In the election, the new Progressive Party was defeated. Not, however, by the regular Republicans who lagged far behind the Progressives in the country as a whole.* The Democrats swept into power because they also had found a standard-bearer who could be placed before the voters as a people's champion, unsullied by political intrigue.

* Popular vote in 1912: Total, 15,036,542; Wilson, 6,293,019; Roosevelt, 4,119,507; Taft, 3,484,956; Debs, 901,873; Chafin (Proh.), 207,928; Reimer (Soc.-Lab.), 29,259. Taft ran ahead of Roosevelt in 19 states: all of New England except Maine; New York, Delaware, Ohio, and Missouri; Wisconsin, Wyoming, Idaho, and Utah; and Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, Texas, and New Mexico.

Woodrow Wilson had been, in his youth, a lawyer in Atlanta, keenly interested in the development of the new industrial South against which Tom Watson was doing battle. But Wilson had left the Bar for college teaching and had risen to be president of Princeton University. There, aided by a few wealthy liberals, he had entered the political arena in New Jersey, home state of Standard Oil and other great corporate interests. As Democratic candidate for governor in 1910, Wilson had carried by a large majority that normally Republican state.

In 1912 the Democratic Party machine recognized the strategic value of such a candidate as Woodrow Wilson. With his name heading their ticket, the uncounted millions of Democratic voters wanting a president who would oppose the "invisible government" of Wall Street would have no need to abandon their party allegiance and vote for Theodore Roosevelt. And actually Wilson carried 40 of the 48 states.* In six of the states which have been traditionally Republican, Roosevelt ran ahead of Wilson.† Only two states (Utah and Vermont) went for Taft.

It is noteworthy, however, that the Progressive Party, definitely organized only a few months before the election and operating without the aid of any established party machinery, drew more than one-fourth of the popular vote,—a tremendous increase over the People's Party in 1892 with its scant 9 per cent of the total. Mainly, this increase occurred in the northern states, from the Atlantic to the Mississippi, and in California, home state of Hiram Johnson, vice-presidential running mate of Theodore Roosevelt. Several western states, on the other hand, where the People's Party, in fitful collaboration with Democrats, had drawn a sizable minority in 1892 or even a majority (as in Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Nevada) gave a sharply reduced percentage to the Progressives and helped to swell the vote for Woodrow Wilson.

* But only in eleven southern states did the Democrats receive more than half of the total ballots cast: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia.

† California, Michigan, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Washington.

WORLD WAR YEARS AND AFTER

Before the World War began President Wilson and the Democratic Party had made two gestures toward the regulation of big business. They created the Federal Trade Commission which has given the public some facts on "unfair" business practices and, in its earlier years, led to some definite actions against monopoly. And they passed the Clayton Anti-Trust Act which attempted to define the borderlines of monopoly and, in response to labor demand, excluded unions from prosecution under the anti-trust laws. This Act, as we have noted, was greatly weakened by Supreme Court decisions.

When the World War began, President Wilson, in spite of wide popular support, was swept along by financial forces beyond his control. The labor movement was still weak and politically undeveloped. And the abstract principles of freedom, justice, and human rights to which the President and millions of his fellow citizens were sincerely devoted could not be clearly distinguished from the desires of the financial interests which controlled the mainsprings of our economic life. The populist tradition of opposing monopoly while upholding the capitalist system was helpless before the crucial decisions of those World War years.

And as time went on, the Wilson administration was drawn into a declaration of war, necessary only for the defense of that very network of financial interests which the Democratic Pujo Committee had been exposing. Actually, the worldwide power of Wall Street and its British financial allies was enormously strengthened by the war. And the vindictive penalties exacted by the Allies from the German people brought on a severe crisis in that country which helped to prepare the soil for Hitler's dictatorship.

Meanwhile, in the Northwest, farmers who had gained nothing from the fine promises of the 1912 campaign were organizing to obtain action within their own states. The Non-Partisan League, created in 1915, developed a program for state elevators, state agencies for distributing farm supplies and marketing farm products, a state bank for rural credit and a state fund for insurance of crops. It

spread from North Dakota and Minnesota where it originated. And by 1918 the election returns in these states and three others (Montana, Idaho, and South Dakota) showed 64 state senators and 157 members of state assemblies elected with active Non-Partisan League support against bitter reactionary opposition. While it lasted this populist outburst had extraordinary fervor, and the memory of those years still lives among the older farmers of the Northwest. The league still functions in North Dakota, largely now as an appendage of the Republican Party.

The league's ambitious plans of the early post-war years were dashed by a bankers' boycott. The program in North Dakota, for example, could not be financed without a sizable bond issue, and the state could find no bankers who would touch the deal.

Even in its most active years the Non-Partisan League attempted little or no independent political organization. But in South Dakota and Montana and in seventeen other states beyond the range of the League's activities, a Farmer-Labor Party hastily organized at Chicago plunged into the presidential campaign in 1920 with a typical Populist platform and gathered 265,411 votes for its candidate, F. L. Christensen. More than one-fourth of these votes were cast in the state of Washington.

Farmers' problems became extremely serious as the high war-time prices collapsed in 1920. New waves of independent organization appeared in the farming states. So the Republican administration called a national farm conference in Washington to hear what all the farm leaders and the agricultural experts had to say. That same year (1922) the Capper-Volstead Act exempted producers' co-operatives from anti-trust restrictions. And a grain futures act (similar to a cotton futures act of 1914) made a gesture of regulating the speculators. The following year (1923) a federal intermediate credit agency was set up to supplement the federal long-term mortgage credit which had been made available under an act of 1916.

But something more than co-operatives and credit and half-hearted regulation of speculators was needed to deal with the un-

sold surplus of farm products, the decline in the price of land, and the farmers' widespread loss of farm ownership.

Independent political organization continued. And when the sixteen railroad labor unions called a Conference for Progressive Political Action in 1922, several farmers' organizations were represented. As this C.P.P.A. developed toward the presidential campaign two years later, its program included immediate measures for protection of farmers and of wage workers, along with familiar demands for greater political democracy and for heavier taxes on large incomes, inherited property, and corporation profits.

In the 1924 campaign, the C.P.P.A. nominated U. S. Senator Robert M. LaFollette of Wisconsin for President. Running with the endorsement of the railway labor unions and the executive council of the American Federation of Labor, La Follette received a total of 4,667,312, a record never yet equalled for a labor candidate in this country. But it is noteworthy that several A. F. of L. unions had thrown their support to one of the old-party candidates.[62] And actually La Follette was relatively stronger in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and several other western states than in the industrial states of the East.

When the boom of the later 1920's collapsed and prices slid further and further downward after 1929, tens of thousands of farmers were unable to meet even the current interest on their mortgage debts. A spontaneous movement for a "farm holiday" on debts spread from the Dakotas through neighboring states. Even as far east as Pennsylvania, some sheriffs' sales were blocked by gatherings of farmers who bought in the property for a few cents and prevented a normal settlement. This "farm holiday" movement among farmers and the "hunger marches" of unemployed workers pushed the problems of relief into the forefront of the 1932 campaign. Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected on a program which promised a New Deal for the "forgotten man." Under his administration, a broad program of federal aid to farmers was developed. Smaller bank deposits were protected by a system

of federal deposit insurance. Control of speculative trading in farm products was strengthened.

With our active participation in the Second World War, as a member of the United Nations, the government is pledged to defend our political democracy against the assaults of fascism. The people's struggle against monopoly is temporarily merged in the struggle against those fascist forces which seek to rob the people of their hard-won political rights and make them subject to brutal dictatorship.

President Roosevelt sets forth the purpose of the United Nations as establishment of the four freedoms: freedom from fear; freedom from want; freedom of speech; freedom of religion. Vice-President Henry A. Wallace is bolder in his statements of the rights of the common man. He is a true heir of the Populist movement still dreaming that the "free enterprise" of pre-monopoly capitalism can be restored without any basic change in our economic system.

14. POPULISM AND SOCIALISM

Populism appeared when monopoly began to take on new forms which seriously encroached upon the freedom of capitalist competition. It carried on during the last three decades of the nineteenth century the struggle for political democracy which has been an integral part of American life from the period of the American Revolution to the present war for survival of the United Nations under attack from fascist powers. This long historic struggle has had many high points, symbolized for us by such figures as Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, and Abraham Lincoln. But always the work has been carried forward by the people themselves.

The Populist movement produced no great leaders but it represented many diverse groups banded together against the increas-

ingly oppressive power of big business. Debtors were stirring against the tyranny of private banking. Farmers were in revolt against exploitation by industrial interests which controlled the outlets for their product and the manufacture of farm equipment. Wage workers were organizing to protect themselves on the job and looked to political action as a normal part of their struggle.

Populism sought to overthrow the "invisible government" by monopoly and finance and to recapture for the masses of people—workers, farmers, small producers, small businessmen and professionals—the control of the government. Populist struggles brought certain decisive victories which strengthened our political democracy. And we have now a wealth of information on the workings of monopoly and the power of finance capital within this country, together with a considerable measure of regulation and control.

These are notable achievements, resulting directly from the Populist movement, but they have by no means solved our economic and political problems. They do provide the basis for further progress, and they are worth defending at all costs from attack by fascist forces. They make imperative a quick and decisive victory in the present war with Nazi Germany and Japan. Defense of "government of the people, by the people, and for the people" is our primary concern. To this end, victory in the war against the fascist nations takes precedence over all other issues.

But already people are wondering what kind of world we shall have in this country after the war is over. Will the contrasts of wealth and poverty be further sharpened by war profits, as they were after the First World War? Will there be again terrible periods of mass unemployment and despair?

When this war against fascism is completely won, the American people—workers, farmers, small businessmen, housewives, Negro and white, Jew and Gentile—will be trying to shape a future that is better than the past. That they will be ready to move rapidly toward socialism is extremely doubtful. The Populist tradition is so strong among us and so deeply rooted in the earlier stages of capitalist development that many sincere defenders of democracy

and economic security for the masses still seek a revival of the past instead of looking toward a creative future. And no responsible group within the United States would propose or support a minority move, an attempt to "set up" socialism before the majority of the American people desire it.

In spite of this obviously apparent fact, fear of socialism has long been cultivated by reactionary forces within this country. They do not forget that parallel with the Populist movement there was taking shape an American Socialist movement rooted primarily in the working class. They know very well that the Communist Party of the United States was organized by the forward-looking majority within the old Socialist Party. It carries on the work which was started by Eugene V. Debs more than forty years ago and which, in turn, was rooted in many generations of the American working class.

At various times the servants of finance capital have used Populist measures as sops to quiet popular unrest, as brakes to retard the growth of socialist thinking. Even many who genuinely oppose monopoly and "invisible government" by finance capital raise their voices to misrepresent the nature of socialism.

Vice-President Henry A. Wallace is today the outstanding heir of the Populists. He fights against monopoly, but at the same time he opposes socialism as the enemy of free enterprise. He is nostalgic for the kind of freedom which flourished in the earlier stages of capitalist development. Free individual enterprise was then definitely a historically progressive force, promoting the quest for labor-saving devices and increasing the productivity of human labor. But rooted in this type of free competition, and growing out of it as inevitably as night follows day, have been the vast units of industrial production and the aggregations of private capital which the Populists have opposed.

Looking backward and trying to restore the past is futile, if not positively harmful to human progress. Today our problem is concerned with utilizing the enormous technical advance, the intricate economic structure built up under capitalist development. Life

itself poses the question: How can this complex social mechanism be brought into the service of the people as a whole? How can its vast productive capacity be addressed to the abolition of poverty? Can we find a richer freedom in working together, using together this great apparatus of production and distribution?

Advocates of socialism have always believed that the piling up of private wealth (with its relative impoverishment of the masses) and the undue control of our economic and political life by an inner circle of finance capitalists are inherent in the private ownership of socially utilized means of production. Only through social ownership, instead of private ownership, can the immensely valuable mechanism of industry and trade be brought into the service of the people as a whole. Only thus can political freedom and equality become a reality in our complex society.

This is so clear and so obvious that those who fear any advance toward socialism spend much thought and energy on misrepresenting the one country which now operates under a socialist economy. Valiant devotion of the Soviet people to their socialist motherland has begun to dispel the fog of prejudice. But most Americans—including Vice-President Wallace—do not yet understand the reality of popular democratic rule in the Soviet Union.

The political structure of Soviet democracy differs from our kind of democratic structure, but this does not mean that it denies to any of the people the full participation in political life which democracy implies. And the national planning of their socialist economy has not ruled out the "freedom of enterprise" which some Americans set up as a fetish to be defended against "socialist regimentation." For in the Soviet Union it is supremely true that its miracles of economic development have been produced by the free initiative of the people themselves. They have resulted from a constant interplay of individual effort, local planning, and free popular government on the one hand, and nationwide consultation, nationwide planning, and expert assistance on the other.

Furthermore, like our own United States, the Soviet Union has been a pioneer among nations. From our American Revolution

there developed the first democratic republic. From the Russian Revolution of 1917 there developed the first nation which has shaped its economy to assure to all citizens freedom from want.

Populism in the United States was rooted primarily among farmers and other small producers and traders—classes which had dominated economic life until they were oppressed and displaced by the growth of industry.

Socialism has its mass base primarily among the industrial wage workers, a class brought forth by capitalist development and destined for a greater role as capitalism gives place to socialism. Workers are being shaped by life itself for creative effort, creative leadership toward socialism. Working together, jobless together, organizing for better conditions and realizing together that they are producing wealth for the capitalist class—wage-workers learn from experience to see more clearly than any other class the meaning of solidarity. Their common struggles lay the foundation for a socialist freedom far richer than any individual freedom of business competition.

Standing with the workers are many idealists from other economic groups, together with working farmers, salaried technicians, and others who feel the pressure of the capitalist system and know that only by moving together toward new horizons can we create a better world.

A NOTE ON SOURCES

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