The Populist Challenge, 1889-1892

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THE POPULIST CHALLENGE

1889-1892

By

Wallace Ward Reichelt

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of Master
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CHAPTER I

THE FARMERS' ENTRY INTO POLITICS

In the quarter century following the Civil War conditions in the nation seemed to some to grow steadily worse. The People's party developed from an agrarian movement which was an effort on the part of the farmers to rid themselves of those forces curtailing their personal, political, and economic freedom.

The resources of the United States were so vast that the people had always considered them unlimited. When these resources became less abundant, the people did not realize what was happening. Something was making their lives harder for them, and they attempted to personify this nebulous enemy by such names as Invisible Government, Money Interests, the Gold Bugs, and Wall Street. The railroads, however, were the particular target of the western farmers.

The difficulties arose from "... the increase of population in proportion to the amount of land and other natural resources." The monetary problems resulted from the fact that during the years following the Civil War the gold output actually decreased while the population increased tremendously.

2 Ibid., 141.
each year causing a decrease in the amount of money per capita. Also during these years several European countries went on the gold standard, thus making gold even more scarce. This situation was "... at the root of the third-party movements: Greenback party, Populists, Silver party; of the free silver movement; of the distress among farmers who held mortgages on their land and of all who owed money."4

By 1878 there was about half the amount of currency per capita that there had been in 1864. With both gold and silver in circulation, gold was hoarded because of its greater value, and it became increasingly difficult to secure the gold demanded in the payment of debts. While the gold output decreased, there was a sharp increase in the silver output, and the silver mine owners and the farmers together organized several political parties, the former furnishing the funds, the latter the clamor and the zeal.5

Although the farmers seemed to have similar difficulties, in the south and west their distress was much more acute than in the east. Moreover, the political outlook of the western farmers was different from that of the southern farmers. The eastern part of the country was settled slowly, and there was time to deal with their problems gradually as they arose. The vast areas west of the Mississippi were settled rapidly due to the railroads.

4 Sullivan, 156.
5 Ibid., 157-168 passim.
Dumond makes the statement that "The homestead policy . . . had long served as a safety valve whereby men dissatisfied with economic and social conditions in the long settled districts could escape into a new and freer environment." When these free lands were gone, dissatisfied persons had to face conditions which they found distasteful. "A society at once so new and so numerous was immediately confronted with problems that it could not comprehend, much less solve." 7

The government had encouraged anyone who would expand and who could develop the vast resources of the country, and as a result, huge corporations had been built up, many of them ruthlessly. The railroads had been thus backed by the government, which had made vast land grants to them and had lent them huge sums of money. The railroads had encouraged settlers by offering low fares and rates, but once the settlers were established, the railroads did everything they could in the way of sharp practice to make money from handling freight. 8

It took a great deal of money to establish farms; there were houses and barns to build, seeds and equipment to buy, and animals and families to feed. Consequently most of the farms were mortgaged. Money poured in from the east for the mortgages, and all this money and easy credit, due to rising prices,

led the westerners to overinvestment, speculation, and extravagance. 9

As long as there were bumper crops the boom lasted, but in 1887 Kansas was hit suddenly by lack of rainfall. Hot winds and chinch bugs finished off the crops. Easterners became worried and stopped investing; many farmers lost their farms. 10 The remainder of the western states suffered the same fate as Kansas, but deflation came more slowly. Farther east in the Middle Border, the farmers did not leave their farms, but they too were discouraged and discontented. 11

In the south many of the plantations were divided and sold after the Civil War when the south was so impoverished. With the banks paralyzed, the farmers could not mortgage their farms, so they had to mortgage their crops. Merchants advanced goods, taking a lien on the future crop. With the merchant holding the lien, the farmer could not buy from anyone else, and the merchant could charge whatever he wished for supplies. Merchants insisted that cotton be the crop raised, because it could not be eaten and because it was not perishable and could be held for a better price. This made cotton the virtual money of the south. 12

With so many new farms in the west there was a much greater supply of

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farm products, and crops were worth less and less. Farmers blamed the eastern capitalist, and the western farmers also blamed the railroads.

Beset on every hand by demands for funds with which to meet his obligations to the bankers, the loan companies, or the tax collector and funds with which to maintain his credit with the merchants so that he might not lack the all-essential seed to plant another crop or the few necessities of life that he and his family could not contrive to either produce for themselves or to go without—the farmers naturally enough raised the battle cry of 'more money'.

Various agrarian movements sprang up to cope with these problems, and the luckless farmers were quick to accept the doctrines of revolt which the agitators preached to them. One of the best known of the early organizations was the Patrons of Husbandry, out of which grew the Granger Movement, most of whose activity was directed against the railroads. The People's Antimonopoly party in Minnesota was a farmers' organization, and the National Greenback party also had the farmer and his problems in mind.

During the 1870's and 1880's a great many new farm organizations sprang up; in the northwest the Farmers' Alliance; in the south the National Farmers' Alliance and Industrial Union for white members, to be followed shortly by the Colored Farmers' Alliance; in Illinois and vicinity the Farmers' Mutual Benefit Association; in Michigan and the old northwest were the Patrons of Industry and a Farmers' League. The Northern and Southern Alliances were the most important, as they were the most widespread and powerful, and because it

13 Hicks, 87.
was from the Alliances that the Populists came into being.\textsuperscript{14}

As early as 1882 some Nebraska farmers formed an Antimonopolist party, after which time the Nebraska Alliance used all its power to influence elections. Two years later the Minnesota Alliance had the Democrats and the Republicans bidding against each other for Alliance support, and two Alliance men were elected as state representatives.\textsuperscript{15} In Iowa in 1886 the state House of Representatives had so many organized farmers that a prominent agriculturalist was elected Speaker.\textsuperscript{16} The Agricultural Wheel of Arkansas had shown a tendency toward politics from the beginning, and in 1886 the State Wheel put an independent ticket in the field. Their candidate for governor polled over twenty thousand votes.\textsuperscript{17} In 1888 the Union Labor party platform favored the reform demands of the Agricultural Wheel, the National Farmers Alliance, and the Knights of Labor, and the Democrats of Arkansas won by only fifteen thousand votes even with Republican support for their ticket.\textsuperscript{18} In the same year South Carolina farmers, running as Democrats, won a majority in the lower house and elected almost half of the state senators.\textsuperscript{19}

Railroad grievances were the chief reason the Northwestern Alliance gave

\textsuperscript{14} Fred E. Haynes, \textit{Third Party Movements Since the Civil War}. State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City, 1916, 228-229.
\textsuperscript{15} John D. Hicks, "The Origin and Early History of the Farmers' Alliance in Minnesota", \textit{Mississippi Valley Historical Review}. December 1922, IX, 219.
\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Appleton's Annual Cyclopedia}. D. Appleton and Co., New York, 1886, 446.
\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Ibid.}, 1886, 41.
\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Ibid.}, 1888, 40.
\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Ibid.}, 1888, 744.
for its political activity. It directed so much power against the railroads that by 1892 it had secured an Interstate Commerce Commission and thirty state transportation boards, although these proved to be ineffective. 20

At first the Alliances elected lawyers and politicians to represent them, but these men played politics and did not always keep the good of the farmer in mind. Then the Alliances elected farmers, but they were too naive in the ways of politics to hold their own with the experienced politicians, and they, also, were unsatisfactory.

It was inevitable under the circumstances that there should be a strong demand for the transformation of the Alliance into an independent political party. In the years 1889 and 1890 new members flocked into the order as never before, and with these notable accessions the plausibility of third-party action was correspondingly increased. 21

Professional third-party politicians urged the organization of a political party, offering themselves as leaders of the new movement.

The People's party had a small beginning in Cowley county, Kansas, in 1889. Reform tickets were put up in almost all of the counties under the name of Union Labor or Alliance, according to the fancy of the person who mentioned them. The stronghold of the Alliance was Cowley county, and there the Union Labor and Democratic parties backed the reformers, uniting against the Republicans, and held a People's party convention on September 31, 1889. Union

20 Hicks, The Populist Revolt, 147-151.
21 Ibid., 151.
Labor provided the candidates; the Alliance provided the votes. The reform tickets won in counties where the Alliance was strong.  

A national People's party was completely developed between 1889 and 1892 during a series of conventions. The Northern and Southern Alliances held the first of these conventions in St. Louis in December 1889, where they drew up a set of farmers' demands which were not designed to be a new political party platform. The farmers demanded free coinage of silver and gold, abolition of national banks, plenty of paper money, prohibition of alien ownership of land, prohibition of futures in grain, reduction of the nation's income to expenses, government ownership of railroads, and sub-treasuries.  

The set-up for a third political party was there, even though Alliance leaders frowned on the idea. Although political action was contemplated, the plan was to work through the existing parties. An attempt was made to combine organized labor, organized agriculture, and the advocates of the single tax. After the St. Louis convention the name People's party was used to designate the reformers.  

On the last day of the St. Louis meeting of the Southern Alliance, the "Committee of the Monetary System" introduced a plan for the relief of agriculture which became known as the sub-treasury plan. The committee 

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22 Barr, 110.
24 Hicks, The Populist Revolt, 125.
consisted of C. W. Macune, past president of the Southern Alliance and editor of its official journal, the National Economist; Colonel L. L. Polk, new president of the Southern Alliance and editor of Progressive Farmer; Leonidas F. Livingston, the president of the Georgia Alliance and a state political power; W. S. Morgan, author of A History of the Wheel and Alliance, which the convention had just made official; and H. S. P. Ashby, prominent member of the Texas Alliance. Macune offered the plan to the convention saying that the Alliance had tried to cover too much territory in its demands; that it should concentrate on one thing, and he offered the sub-treasury plan as that thing.

This plan called for the establishment of warehouses in every county in every state that produced $500,000 worth of non-perishable farm products a year, each county to donate the land and a warehouse to the government. The sub-treasury department was to accept these crops, examine them, classify them, and give a certificate of deposit showing the amount and quality. The sub-treasury would then pay the farmer eighty percent of the local current value of his crop. Within the year, the farmer was to sell his crop for what he could get for it, the buyer to pay the farmer the price agreed upon minus the sum advanced by the sub-treasury. The buyer was to pay that amount plus a high rate of interest to the sub-treasury when he took the product stored. There were minor regulations, but that was the essence of the plan.

The plan caused much discussion in the meeting, but it was adopted by most of the members. It aroused a great deal of criticism. Non-Alliance people helped to advertise it by their adverse criticism; newspapers and lecturers talked about its good points. One admirer wrote:

There is nothing smacking of paternalism in this proposition. On the contrary, it is in fullest harmony with the democratic idea of government, i. e., that what the individual can do for himself he shall be permitted to do without government interference; but that which he cannot do as an individual, or by association with any number of his fellows less than the whole, yet which is necessary to the prosperity of all, the government shall do for all.

Sub-treasury enthusiasts pointed out that the plan was the same as that under which the national banks operated. The banks issued paper money up to ninety percent of the value of the government bonds they submitted to the United States treasury as security. The farmers were merely asking for the same privilege already accorded the bankers. The biggest point the farmers made was that the plan would "... emancipate productive labor from the power of money to oppress." Sub-treasury enthusiasts pointed out that the plan was the same as that under which the national banks operated. The banks issued paper money up to ninety percent of the value of the government bonds they submitted to the United States treasury as security. The farmers were merely asking for the same privilege already accorded the bankers. The biggest point the farmers made was that the plan would "... emancipate productive labor from the power of money to oppress." Senator Zebulon Vance introduced the bill to Congress, but the Congressmen were afraid of it. It was turned over to various committees until Representative Watson of Georgia insisted on a report. The House Ways and Means Committee, in whose hands it was at the time, reported it unconstitu-

29 Hicks, The Populist Revolt, 190-192.
tional, evidently feeling that the plan was too controversial. Northern Alliance members never did care for the plan, and it created a rift in the Southern Alliance causing a decline in membership.\textsuperscript{30} It died a natural death, as there was no point in fostering a plan that threatened the entire reform movement. It did, however, last long enough to be a platform plank in the early days of the People's party.\textsuperscript{31}

\textsuperscript{30} Herman Clarence Nixon, "The Cleavage Within the Farmers' Alliance Movement". \textit{Mississippi Valley Historical Review}, June 1928, XV, 25.

\textsuperscript{31} Hicks, \textit{The Populist Revolt}, 204.
CHAPTER II

POLITICAL ACTION IN 1890

Populism was rampant in the south as well as in the north and west. The Southern Alliance aimed at control of the Democratic party, making it plain that no third-party movement was under way to divide the vote of the southern whites. Colonel Polk, of Raleigh, North Carolina, who had just been elected as Southern Alliance president, had already been at work in his own state to secure the rural vote for Alliance principles and candidates. In his new capacity, he was strong enough to bring pressure to bear outside his own state.  

In South Carolina prior to 1890, Benjamin Ryan Tillman had led toward this control of the Democratic party, and he persuaded the Alliance to let him go on in his own way. For the 1890 election he organized the farmers, and before the Democratic convention, they met and nominated a full ticket with Tillman for governor. They were opposed by the regular Democrats, who wanted Joseph H. Earle for governor. The Earle-Tillman debates attracted vast crowds. Tillman was so popular that when the regular Democratic convention was held, he and his entire ticket were nominated.  

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1 Ibid., 170.  
2 Appleton's, 1890, 778-779; Francis Butler Simkins, Pitchfork Ben Tillman. Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1944, 146.
Tillman was not very interested in the Alliance. He tolerated it only to help his own program along. He was a farmer and looked like one. He had had the misfortunes which befell the rest of the farmers, so he really understood and believed in their grievances. At first he had tried to help the farmers through agricultural education, but although he did well, that did not get to the root of the trouble. He then blamed crop mortgaging, deciding that the state was at fault for allowing such conditions to exist, so he turned to politics to try to remedy the evil.

The year 1890 was not the year to elect a governor in North Carolina, but the state was almost as well organized as South Carolina. The Alliance dominated the Democratic state convention. Four out of nine congressional candidates were Alliance men, and three more supported the Alliance. Colonel Polk, the leader, published a newspaper, the Progressive Farmer, and he had been active in reform before the Alliance. He became an ardent Alliance man. He was an able writer and orator, and he spoke as far from home as Kansas and South Dakota.

Georgia was strongly pro-Alliance, and it expected the Alliance to enter politics. Both gubernatorial candidates, L. F. Livingston and William J. Northren, were Alliance men.

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3 Simkins, 148.
4 Ibid., 57.
5 Appleton's, 1890, 625.
7 Arnett, 102-103.
One of Georgia's youngest Alliance leaders was Thomas E. Watson of the tenth district. He was a poor boy who worked his way up and became a lawyer practicing criminal law. He was naturally combative with an uncontrolled temper, and he always suspected his opponents of having the worst of motives. He defended the underdog, and when the farmers' crusade began, he entered the political field. 8 He said of the Populist program:

Applying the principles of Jefferson to present day conditions, we seek to restore the Government to old landmarks and to bring about what Jefferson and Lincoln meant when they spoke of "Government of the People". 9

In 1882 Watson was elected to the Georgia legislature but refused renomination. When he took up the Alliance cause, he made war against the jute trust, and in 1890 he campaigned for the congressional nomination. 10

In South Carolina Tillman asked for and got a reapportionment of the legislative districts and for changes in the educational system of the state that would improve rural schools and stress agriculture and mechanics in higher education. He also asked for reorganization of the railroads with honest men in charge, but the railroad bill that passed was so unsatisfactory that he vetoed it. 11

North Carolina passed a railroad bill similar to the one Tillman vetoed, and Georgia also made some railroad legislation. Everywhere in the south the

8 Ibid., 112.
9 Thomas E. Watson, "The People's Party Appeal". Independent, October 13, 1904, CVII, 832.
10 Arnett, 113-114.
11 Simkins, 183-184.
crop-mortgage question was left untouched, and hard times continued.\textsuperscript{12}

The Alliance was pleased with southern election returns. Alliance candidates won the governorships of Georgia, South Carolina, and Tennessee, and the Alliance supported candidates won in Texas. It won eight state legislatures, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. About forty-four Alliance men won seats in Congress, and two or three United States senators supported Alliance principles.\textsuperscript{13}

In February 1887 the Union Labor party was organized by the various groups of discontent. In 1888 it got quite a few votes in Arkansas, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Texas, and Wisconsin. However, the name was a poor vote getter in the west, because it suggested the violent acts of the 1885 and 1886 organized labor strikes.\textsuperscript{14}

In 1890 the Union Labor leaders again offered their services to the reformers. In Topeka, Kansas, on June twelfth a state convention was held for the purpose of organizing the new party. Several groups besides the Alliance were represented. The St. Louis convention demands were to be used as a platform, and the party was called the People's party. Full state and congressional tickets were to be nominated at a later convention to be held in

\textsuperscript{12} Arnett, 120-122.
\textsuperscript{13} Drew, 307-308.
\textsuperscript{14} Frank Basil Tracy, "Menacing Socialism in the Western States". \textit{Forum}, 1893, XV, 338; Barr, 1146.
August. John F. Willits was named for governor at the August convention.\textsuperscript{15}

Nebraska, with less help from the Union Laborites, and with reluctance on the part of the Alliance, took similar third-party action. At Lincoln in July 1890, John H. Powers, the president of the state Alliance, was nominated for governor.\textsuperscript{16}

South Dakota held its convention June seventh in Huron to decide on an Independent party. Later in the summer, the members nominated their state Alliance president, H. L. Loucks, for governor.\textsuperscript{17}

In North Dakota another Alliance president, Walter Muir, was a gubernatorial nominee. The Prohibitionists and the Democrats each got four places on the state ticket chosen by the Alliance men.\textsuperscript{18}

Both R. M. Hall, the Alliance president, and Ignatius Donnelly wanted to be nominated for governor of Minnesota, and due to the resultant feud between the two men, a "dark horse", Sidney M. Owen, farm journal editor, won the nomination.\textsuperscript{19}

The Alliance and the Union Labor party joined together in Colorado to nominate an Independent Fusion ticket. The Industrial party of Michigan, formed by the Alliance and the Patrons of Industry, put a full state ticket in the field.\textsuperscript{20}

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\textsuperscript{16} John D. Barnhardt, "Rainfall and the Populist Party in Nebraska". \textit{American Political Science Review}, \textbf{XX}, August 1925, 539.
\textsuperscript{17} Appleton's, 1890, 782.
\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Ibid.}, 1890, 629.
\textsuperscript{19} Hicks, \textit{The Populist Revolt}, 157.
\textsuperscript{20} Haynes, 242-243.
\end{flushright}
The independent conventions of 1890 and the subsequent campaign were marked by a peculiar fervor.

One must go back to medieval Europe, on the eve of the First Crusade, for an emotional situation comparable to that in which Kansas moved. Every conceivable gathering place—the schoolhouses, the churches, the rural town halls, open squares, and meadows—was regularly thronged with great crowds which came to listen, sing, shout, and cheer on the local leaders who had sprung up almost miraculously.21

Rumor of an anarchist uprising spread throughout the east. Godkin of the Nation showed the eastern feeling when he wrote, "We do not want any more states until we can civilize Kansas."22 The established parties sneered and jeered at the reformers, but thousands of Alliance men deserted their former parties to cleave to the Alliance cause.23 Mrs. Diggs defended the farmers in a satirical vein.

It is known and said of American politics, that our best men, as to brain and character, are not the dominant factor. The men of best manhood, who would give large, true service rather than engage in schemes and intrigues, are barred out of office life. The officeholding class and the corporation-serving press have always heretofore addressed the farmers as the "solid yeomanry", "bone and sinew" of the country. These same farmers, now threatening to cast their own ballots, are become "old hayseed Socialists", and accused of seeking class legislation. Whereas once the farmer men admired and obeyed, they will now think

22 Haynes, 239.
23 Frank Basil Tracy, "Rise and Doom of the Populist Party". Forum, October 1893, XVI, 243.
and act—a great crime. What presumption, for
men whose sole legitimate political function
should be to vote, to turn dictators, and
instruct their business agents, the office
holding class, as to legislation which they
consider necessary.24

Annie L. Diggs was second only to Mrs. Lease of Kansas among Alliance
women. Mrs. Diggs began her crusade in 1877 when she found out that the
university men in Lawrence, her home town in Kansas, were drinking. She had a
gift of words which she used to write and speak for liberalism in religion
prior to taking up the Alliance cause.25

Tracy, who so disliked the Populists, said of the orators:

Putting a gill of fact and grievance in a
gallon of falsehood and lurid declamation,
these oratorical Alliance quacks doled out an
intoxicating mixture. . . . All the ridicule,
abuse and evasion (of the Democratic and
Republican Press) aided wonderfully the Alliance
cause. Its members shouted that they were being
persecuted in their "battle for human rights" and
converts came more rapidly.26

Political rallies of all kinds were a feature of the campaign, picnics,
basket dinners, and barbecues. Tremendous numbers of farmers attended; in
Kansas sometimes as many as twenty or twenty-five thousand. At these rallies,
in addition to speeches, there was entertainment in the form of races, games,
bands, glee clubs, and singing. The farmers loved to sing, and sometimes they
arrived and departed from the rallies marching and singing songs and carrying

24 Annie L. Diggs, "The Farmers' Alliance and some of its Leaders". Arena,
April 1892, V, 592.
25 Barr, 1169.
26 Tracy, "Rise and Doom of the Populist Party", 243-244.
banners. The favorite songs were party words set to familiar tunes, "The Hayseed" perhaps being the most typical.

I was once the tool of oppression,
And 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.27

To the reformers it was more important to control the state legislatures than it was to control the state executive departments, "... for only through legislative initiative could the desired reforms be achieved."28 Kansas elected ninety-one legislators and five congressmen. The legislature unseated John F. Ingalls and send William A. Peffer of Topeka as United States senator in Ingall's place.29 The Independents in Nebraska were nearly as successful as they were in Kansas, although the prohibition issue somewhat clouded the campaign, as the anti-prohibitionists were alleged to have perpetrated some frauds. The Independents won a considerable majority in both houses of the state legislature, but the Republicans won all the state offices.

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27 Robert E. Carlson, Editor, Farmers' Alliance Songs of the 1890's. Federal Writer's Project, Lincoln, Nebraska, December 1893, 5.
28 Hicks, The Populist Revolt, 158.
29 Barr, 1169-1170.
except that of governor, which was won by a Democrat. Except Minnesota and South Dakota both did well, the latter securing an Independent United States senator, the Reverend Mr. James H. Kyle, a Congregational minister.

Senator William A. Peffer of Kansas was born in Pennsylvania. Subsequently he lived in Indiana, Missouri, Illinois, Tennessee, and finally Kansas. Early in life he expressed strong anti-slavery and pro-temperance views. During the Civil War he fought in the Union Army. When he moved to Warren county, Kansas, in 1870, he began to publish a newspaper in addition to his law practice. He was active in politics, first as a Republican, but in 1888 he became an Alliance enthusiast.

Hamlin Garland described Senator James H. Kyle as the youngest man in the Senate. He lived in Aberdeen, South Dakota, but he was born in Ohio in 1854. "Senator Kyle is as lucid, open, and wholesome as Senator Peffer seemed to me introspective, inscrutable, and in a way morbid." There was great interest in the Alliance party in Congress. Only nine of the men formed a solid bloc, although there were nearly fifty Congressmen with Alliance tendencies. The nine men refused to enter either the Republican or Democratic caucuses in the House, thus creating a tension.

There seems approaching a great popular upheaval similar to that of '61. Everywhere as I went through the aisles of the House, I saw it and

30 Haynes, 241.
31 Ibid., 252.
33 Ibid., 456.
34 Ibid., 447.
heard it. The young Democrats were almost in open rebellion against the domineering policy of the old legislators. The Republicans were apprehensive, almost desperate. Place-holders were beginning to tremble; but in the midst of it the men who were advocating right and justice instead of policy sat eager, ready for the struggle. They have everything to win and nothing to lose in the vital discussion and reorganization which, in their judgment is sure to come.35

Although the Alliance expected great things of the legislatures that it elected, very little was accomplished.

Only a little of the great amount of remedial legislation that was urged in Kansas was passed. A bill forbidding alien ownership of land in Kansas was put through; one forbade combining of forces by livestock dealers to prevent competition; and another was an attempt to regulate warehouses and the handling of grain.36

Nebraska was more interested in the railroad problem. The Newberry Bill was passed, which provided a detailed schedule of maximum rates with revisions of freight classification. However, the governor vetoed the bill.37 Although the Independents were discouraged over the veto, they had better luck with other legislation. The Australian ballot act was passed; $100,000 relief was voted for the western Nebraska drought area; warehouses and elevators were made subject to inspection; mutual insurance companies were legalized; the bounty to beet sugar makers was repealed; and Congress was

35 Ibid., 457.
36 Barr, 1156-1157.
37 Frank Haigh Dixon, "Railroad Control in Nebraska". Political Science Quarterly, December 1898, XIII, 634.
urged to foreclose the national mortgage on the Union Pacific, as the railroad used that as an excuse to keep rates high. For inexperienced opposition, this was a good record.38

Ignatius Donnelly, who was a member of the Minnesota Senate, decided that the chief Alliance measure should be an amendment to the Constitution which would give the states authority over the railroads and elevators. Neither this measure nor any other important Alliance measure passed the stated legislature.39

Donnelly was of Irish parentage, born in Pennsylvania on November 3, 1831. He was in Minnesota at the time of the panic of 1857. He had been a real estate promoter and a lawyer, but he turned to anti-slavery politics. At the age of twenty-eight he became the Republican Lieutenant-Governor of Minnesota. In 1863 he was sent to the House of Representatives in Washington where he served three terms. Although he had been a Republican in the early days when the party stood for reform, he later joined the Liberal Republicans. He led the Grangers of his state against the railroads, and in 1888, he almost became the Union Labor candidate for governor of Minnesota.40 That same year he visited Ireland, where he was asked to become a candidate to Parliament on the Liberal ticket. He told the Irish that although he was interested in their fight for home rule, he was first and last an American.41

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38 Hicks, The Populist Revolt, 183-184.
39 Ibid., 185.
Donnelly was also an author. Caesar's Column was a novel pointing out the dangers of corrupt government, and Doctor Huguet was a story about the oppression of the Negroes. He was considered the finest of the Populist orators, and he could speak convincingly about any political or economic subject. His reasoning was clever and adroit, but it was not very profound. "No one could more easily make the worse appear the better reason, and apparently no one delighted more in doing so."

Neither the local third parties of the north nor the Southern Alliance working with the Democrats accomplished enough. A national third party was the only way—a party to lead the states and to support them.

\[42\] Ibid., 122.

\[43\] Hicks, The Populist Revolt, 163.
Although the time for the formation of a third party was ripe, the Northern and Southern Alliances did not agree on a course of action. Their differences of opinion were threshed out in a series of conventions, finally being partially resolved at the Cincinnati conference.

On December 2, 1890, the Supreme Council of the Southern Alliance met in Ocala, Florida. The Florida State Alliance entertained royally. It arranged a "Semi-Tropical Exposition" for the entertainment of the visitors. Perhaps this attracted more third-party advocates than would have gone for a mere convention. There were free train rides to local points of interest, free hotel accommodations, free use of orange and lemon groves, drives, receptions and demonstrations.

The leaders of the Southern Alliance were very active in trying to merge all the farmers' organizations, and at Ocala they succeeded in merging with the Mutual Benefit Association and the Colored Farmers' Alliance. The American Federation of Labor refused to cooperate, because the farmers were employers. The Knights of Labor were losing their strength in the

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1 *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 3, 1890.
2 Hicks, *The Populist Revolt*, 207.
3 Haynes, 232-233.
industrial regions, and in an effort to maintain some of their power, they began to take an active part in agrarian affairs. 4 The farmers

... were hostile instinctively to the labor movement, which after 1886 was believed to be "tainted" with anarchism; and they looked with disfavor upon the current agitation for the eight-hour day; while for their part the leaders of organized labor, such as Samuel Gompers, warned their followers to keep free of entanglements with the "employing farmers" and seek wages in solid money. 5

The St. Louis demands were accepted at Ocala with minor changes. The sub-treasury plan was not endorsed and government control of railroads and telegraphs was requested rather than government ownership. Tariff reduction was also recommended. 6

The Kansas Alliance, having joined the Southern Alliance, was officially represented. It was this Kansas delegation that was so determined on third party action. 7 The south did not want a third party, because it did not want its one party system threatened. It wanted to keep the Negroes politically suppressed. 8

Macune suggested a compromise; that they do nothing until about February 1892, then hold a delegate convention, the delegates to be chosen on a basis of fair representation from all the organizations of producers. If those

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6 Drew, 291.
7 Miller, 469.
8 Chamberlain, 341; Chicago Tribune, December 5, 1890.
delegates should decide to form a third party, then "... it must not be feared." This compromise was adopted, and a committee was appointed to promote the convention. This committee held an informal meeting in Ocala and decided to meet in Washington in January 1891 with similar committees from other groups.

The extreme third-party advocates wanted immediate action, so they decided to issue a convention call so worded that it would appear to be of far greater scope than merely an Alliance project, greater even than all the farmers' organizations. The call was drawn up by the three Vincent brothers of Winfield, Kansas, two of whom were editors of Non-Conformist, a radical paper. Captain C. A. Power of Indiana and General J. H. Rice of Kansas helped. They chose Cincinnati, February 23, 1891, as the place and the date, but changed the latter to May 19, 1891, so that it would not conflict with the meeting of the Kansas state legislature. Delegates were invited from the following organizations: Independent party, People's party, Northern and Southern Alliances, Farmers' Mutual Benefit Association, Colored Farmers' Alliance, Union Labor party, Union and Confederate soldier organizations, Citizens' Alliance, Knights of Labor, plus all other groups which had agreed to the St. Louis demands.

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9 Hicks, The Populist Revolt, 208.
10 Drew, 309.
11 George E. Plumbe, Editor, Chicago Daily News Almanac and Political Register, 1892, 188.
12 Chicago Tribune, December 24, 1891.
The Annual Northern Alliance meeting was held in Omaha, January 27, 1891. Members were generally in favor of a third party, not wishing to join either the Republicans or the Democrats. They also drew up a plan that differed from the Cincinnati call. They stated six fundamental principles:

- free silver,
- abolition of national banks and use of direct legal tender notes,
- government ownership of railroads and telegraphs,
- prohibition of alien ownership of land and of gambling in stocks, options, and futures,
- a Constitutional amendment calling for direct election of president, vice-president, and senators, and
- the Australian ballot system.

A petition was to be circulated stating these principles and calling for a convention to nominate a president and a vice-president upon that platform. When five million signatures had been obtained, each state was to select a representative to serve on a national committee, which would meet in Cincinnati on February 22, 1892, to plan a nominating convention and to fix the ratio of representation based on the signatures on the petition.

Macune's committee met on January 22, 1891, in Washington. Ben Terrell of Texas was elected president of the group which was called the "Confederation of Industrial Organizations." They decided to call a conference of the orders February 22, 1892, the place and other arrangements.

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13 Ibid., January 28, 1891.
14 Ibid., January 29, 1891.
15 Hicks, The Populist Revolt, 210.
16 Chicago Tribune, January 24, 1891.
to be left to an executive committee. The Federation did not plan on a third-party movement.\(^{17}\)

The extremists wanted speedier action than either of these plans promised, so they continued to plan for the Cincinnati convention. This early convention was popular in the northwest, particularly in Kansas.

The Cincinnati convention met on May 19, 1891.\(^{18}\) It was not a true convention according to the Chicago Tribune, which said of it, "Despite the fact that it is styled a convention, it is almost apparent this early that the forthcoming gathering will be in reality a big mass-meeting. There has been no idea of conforming to a basis of representation."\(^{19}\) It was called the "National Union Conference". Judge W. F. Rightmire of Kansas was temporary chairman until William A. Peffer was elected permanent chairman. Captain Power read the call, and as he mentioned the name of each organization invited to take part, he asked the representative to rise. There were more Farmers' Alliance members than any others, but many delegates belonged to several organizations. The National Reform Press Association of which Macune was president was meeting in Cincinnati at the same time, and over a hundred members, due to Macune's influence, were allowed seats. Some southerners with no credentials at all were allowed to join in debating the issues.\(^{20}\)

\(^{17}\) Ibid., January 25, 1891

\(^{18}\) Chicago Daily News Almanac, 1892, 188.

\(^{19}\) Chicago Tribune, May 18, 1891.

\(^{20}\) Ibid., May 19, 1891
There were over 1400 recognized delegates representing thirty-three states and territories. Kansas had more than 400 and Ohio at least 300. Illinois and Nebraska had about 150 each, and the remainder were mainly from the northwest.21

At the point when the conference authorized the state delegations to select members for the customary committees, including the committee on resolutions, Ignatius Donnelly suggested that a national executive committee should also be chosen, which committee presupposed a third party. James B. Weaver of Iowa was furious and accused Donnelly of trying to pledge the convention to a third party without a discussion of the question.22 By letter Colonel Polk advised the postponement of third-party formation until 1892. The Governor of Wisconsin began a speech against organizing a third party, but the opposition made such an uproar that he could not finish.23

The Kansas, Massachusetts, and Minnesota delegates wanted to form the party at once.24 Donnelly headed the radical group; Weaver headed the conservative group that wanted to discuss the matter at length and form a third party in the election year.25 The conservatives may have thought that they would get more southern support later.

Donnelly headed the committee on resolutions, which tried to reconcile the two groups of thought by: immediate formation of the People's party with

21 Ibid., May 18, 1891.
22 Hicks, The Populist Revolt, 213.
23 Haynes, 248.
24 Ibid., 248.
25 Chicago Tribune, May 20, 1891.
A national executive committee chosen in general session and three representatives from each state; and this committee was to attend the convention on February 22, 1892 in St. Louis and attempt to unite all groups in the party. If this could not be done, the committee would call a national convention to meet not later than June 1, 1892, to select a presidential ticket. This arrangement insured a third party, and when it was read, the convention cheered for half an hour. 26

The platform restated the demands made at St. Louis, Ocala, and Omaha. 27 The Prohibitionists and those who wanted women's suffrage wanted those items included in the platform. Neither cause was looked upon with particular favor by the convention, and Ignatius Donnelly excluded the items from the platform very tactfully. He is quoted in the Donnelly Scrapbooks as saying, "We believe that the party that, in such a crisis as this, shortens its platform, lengthens its muster roll. . . . We feel that we are not here so much to proclaim a creed as to erect a banner around which the swarming hosts of reform could rally." 28

Both radicals and conservatives were pleased with the action taken. The Northern Alliance's Omaha plan for forming a third party was dropped. Southern Alliance officials were also satisfied with the outcome of the Cincinnati conference.

26 Hicks, The Populist Revolt, 214-215.
27 Chicago Tribune, May 21, 1891.
28 Hicks, The Populist Revolt, 215.
One significant result of the Cincinnati convention that seems to have been overlooked at the time was that the professional third party men insured for themselves, quite apart from what the farmer organizations might do later, a prominent place in the councils of the new party.29

The Weekly Iowa Register said of the convention that it was the "... most grotesque political convention of magnitude that has ever been assembled in the United States... that it lacked unity of purpose and... courage of action."30 However, third-party action was now assured, but it required another series of conventions to evolve a national party.

29 Ibid., 216-217.
30 Haynes, 248-249.
CHAPTER IV

FORMATION OF THE PEOPLE'S PARTY

Plans for the 1892 campaign were made far in advance. Five members of the national executive committee of the People's party, of which H. E. Taubeneck of Illinois was chairman, met in St. Louis on June 19, 1891 to consider their campaign tactics. They decided to make special efforts in Kentucky and Iowa during the remainder of the year. Secretary Schilling was directed to establish a literary bureau to send third-party propaganda to the reform press of which there were between 600 and 700 papers. Plans were made to form People's party clubs, and it was decided the campaign would be conducted differently from old party campaigns. They agreed to reproduce the features of the Kansas campaign of 1890.

Few states held elections in 1891, and the third party results were very poor even though its advocates worked hard. In Iowa the People's party had a full state ticket. The vote was light, but A. J. Westfall, who ran for governor, had run for Congress as an Independent in 1890 from the eleventh Iowa district. He conducted a vigorous campaign and attracted a great deal of interest. Democrat Horace Boies won the election. The fact that he was for free silver and against prohibition probably won many votes that otherwise

1 Chicago Tribune Tribune, May 21, 1891.
2 Chamberlain, 341.
would have gone to Westfall. 3

In Nebraska the choosing of a supreme court judge gained wide attention. In 1890 the election of Democrat James E. Boyd for governor was contested, by Independents on the ground of fraud, and by Republicans because they said Boyd was not a legally nationalized citizen of the United States and therefore ineligible. The Republican state supreme court saw to it that Boyd was declared ineligible, and they allowed John M. Thayer, who had been governor the preceding term to take Boyd's place. 4 The Democrats had no candidate for the 1891 election, so they backed the Independent candidate for supreme court judge, but even so the Republicans won, despite the partisanship of the court. 5 The farmers were not particularly interested in the election, as crops were good that year. 6

In Kansas both Republicans and Democrats were afraid of the new party, so the Democrats did not back the People's party as they had in 1890. However, the Populists managed to win a goodly number of county officials and district judges. 7 About twelve members of the legislature were elected in Kentucky although the third-party vote was light. 8 Third-party leaders expressed themselves as satisfied with their meager triumphs, saying that their main aim was to perfect their organization and to prepare for the campaign of 1892. 9

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3 Chicago Daily Tribune, June 25, 1891; Appleton’s, 1891, 384.
4 Appleton’s, 1891, 559-560.
5 Ibid., 1891, 562.
6 Barnhardt, 535.
7 Barr, 1155.
8 Appleton’s, 1891, 408.
9 Hicks, The Populist Revolt, 221.
Just subsequent to the 1891 elections the state central committee of the people's party of Kansas issued the following Manifesto:

Every branch of business is depressed. The merchant fails for want of trade and the banker from depreciation of values. Labor is unemployed and inadequately paid. Our cities are the abode of poverty and want and consequent crime, while the country is overrun with tramps. Starvation stalks abroad amid an overproduction of food and illly clad men and women and helpless children are freezing amid an overproduction of clothing. We hold these conditions are the legitimate result of vicious legislation in the interests of the favored classes and adverse to the masses of American citizens, and we appeal to the great body of the people, irrespective of occupation or calling, to rise above the partisan prejudices engendered by political contests, and calmly and dispassionately examine the facts which we are prepared to submit in support of our claims. We appeal to reason and not to prejudice, and if the facts and arguments we present can be refuted we neither ask nor expect your support.¹⁰

The Supreme Council of the Southern Alliance met in Indianapolis on November 18, 1911.¹¹ The executive committee of the People's party appeared at the meetings to try to obtain full cooperation from the Southern Alliance, and the executive committee of the Confederation of Industrial Organizations also appeared to repeat the call for the St. Louis conference to be held February 22, 1892, and to ask for the support of all reform orders for the new party.¹²

Colonel Polk recommended a conference with the Reform Press Association to consider the best means of disseminating reform literature, and he said the Alliance must be kept from entanglements with any party, repudiating the idea that he ought to be the candidate for president for

¹⁰ Barr, 1162.
¹¹ Appleton's, 1891, 283.
¹² Chicago Daily Tribune, November 20, 1891.
James B. Weaver of Iowa was enthusiastically received when he gave a speech on the general situation. Jerry Simpson of Kansas spoke in a similar vein. The People's party leaders claimed that the "Big Five", Polk, Macune, Livingston, Tillman, and Terrill, were the ones who stood in the way of third-party endorsement. Most of the delegates were willing to support the People's party, but a goodly number were so set against dividing the southern Democratic vote that they withdrew from the Alliance. The southerners asked that the Alliance platform be made a test of admission to any party caucus called for the purpose of nominating a candidate for Speaker.14

On January 7, 1892, a short time before the Democratic caucus was held, twenty-five Alliance Congressmen met in Washington in secret and most of them decided to go along with the Democrats.15 Thomas E. Watson of Georgia and Jerry Simpson of Kansas led a group which adhered to the Indianapolis decision, and they made Watson their candidate for Speaker. The group consisted of Watson, Simpson and four other Kansans, one from Minnesota, and two from Nebraska.16

The Alliance Congressmen in the Democratic caucus helped to make Charles F. Crisp of Georgia the Speaker. Crisp was for free silver, and the Alliance faction felt they had secured a victory in choosing Crisp and thus making the

13 Ibid., November 20, 1891.
14 Haynes, 254-255.
15 Appleton's, 1892, 257.
16 Arnett, 130.
money question the big issue in the 1892 election. 17

On January 8, 1892 the State Presidents of the Farmers' Alliance met in
Washington where they made a decision to present a platform based on the
principles set forth in the Ocala demands to the Republican, Democratic, and
Populist nominating conventions, but that the Alliance as an organization
would not affiliate itself with any political party. 18

The National Farmers' Alliance scheduled its twelfth annual meeting for
January 27, 1892 in Chicago. It developed into a conference of reform groups
with Miss Frances Willard as chairman. The Farmers' Alliance, Union Labor,
the People's party, the National Reform party, and the Greenbackers all
attended, but the Prohibitionists seemed to dominate the meeting. Miss
Willard, in her opening address, said that the purpose of the conference was to
gather all the reform elements in the country together and to decide how to
elect a president and to acquire prohibition simultaneously. 19

The conference agreed upon some reform suggestions to present to the
meeting to be held in St. Louis in February, these suggestions favoring
greenback money, government control of railroads, women's suffrage, limited
ownership of land, and disapproval of the saloon. Weaver and Donnelly were
two of the seven persons on the committee which was appointed to present the
suggestions. The People's party delegates were very doubtful about the
prohibition clause, and Donnelly and Taubeneck were among those who expressed

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17 Ibid., 130.
18 Chicago Daily Tribune, January 9, 1892.
19 Ibid., January 28, 1892.
the opinion that the prohibition item would not be acceptable to their party.20

The Exposition Music Hall, with a wall banner proclaiming, "We do not ask for sympathy or pity. We ask for justice."21, was the scene of the St. Louis conference held on February 22, 1892. Ben Terrill of Texas called the meeting of nearly a dozen national organizations to order. The conference was not familiar with many of the groups represented, so a credentials committee was appointed. Eventually about 800 delegates, representing twenty-one national and local orders, were admitted. Ignatius Donnelly made a motion to seat delegates from the Women's Christian Temperance Union. This motion was passed, and Frances Willard and two other delegates took seats. Terrill read a suggestion that "moral reforms" be left until there was more time. Polk spoke only on the money question, and Terrence Powderly, president of the Knights of Labor, who followed Polk, mentioned Weaver's nomination in 1880. Donnelly, the last speaker, predicted that the Republicans and the Democrats would unite against the People's party. The convention rejected prohibition, at which point Miss Willard rose from her seat and swept from the hall.22

Leonidas F. Livingston led some delegates from Alabama, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia who announced that they would withdraw from the convention if definite third-party action were taken. As a result, the conference devoted itself to drawing up a list of demands,

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20 Haynes, 257.
21 Hicks, The Populist Revolt, 224.
22 Chicago Daily Tribune, February 23, 1892.
postponing the decision of a third party. The only change in the platforms of Ocala and Cincinnati was the indorsement of government ownership of railroads. The labor leaders and the northwest anti-railroad delegates were responsible for this indorsement. The southerners did not like the railroad plank, but they let it stand, because the northerners allowed them the sub-treasury plan.

Donnelly wrote a long and flowery preamble to the platform which practically promised a third party to combat the ills set forth therein. Donnelly read his preamble, and Hugh Kavanaugh read the demands. The crowd cheered for about ten minutes, joined by thousands outside of the building. Livingston quickly made a motion to adopt the platform without mentioning the preamble, and the motion was carried enthusiastically. However, one delegate saw the purpose of Livingston's motion, and he rushed through another motion to include the preamble, thereby pledging the convention to future third-party action.

The convention was adjourned after a few minor resolutions were adopted, but most of the delegates kept their seats. Doctor Macune at once began to organize a mass meeting. General Weaver, who was elected chairman, appointed a committee of fifteen to meet with the executive committee of the People's party to call a nominating convention. Among others the committee was composed of General Van Wyck of Nebraska, C. W. Macune of Texas, L. L. Polk of North Carolina, J. F. Willits and Mary Lease of Kansas, and Ben Terrill of

23 Ibid., February 23, 1892.
24 Hicks, The Populist Revolt, 227.
25 Chicago Daily Tribune, February 23, 1892.
Texas. This group decided to meet July the fourth, leaving a subcommittee to choose the place.26

The executive committee of the People's party had taken no part in the St. Louis conference, but it now set July 4, 1892 at Omaha for the nominating convention. Donnelly wanted the convention to be held at once before the Democrats or the Republicans could gather forces to combat the new party. Weaver wanted to wait until both parties had rejected the demands, then the voters who agreed to the demands, but who wanted to remain with the Democrats, would feel that the Democrats had rejected them. That would make them favorable to the third party. Weaver got his way.27

A subcommittee asked for local mass meetings to be called on March 26th, the last Saturday in the month, by those who approved the platform and the preamble, to ratify the St. Louis demands and to take the initial steps in choosing delegates to the Omaha convention. Each meeting was to form a local organization and appoint a committee of three to meet at the county seat not later than April 16th. The April meeting was to decide the time, the place, and the basis of representation for county conventions, and to appoint a committee of three to confer with other county committees in the same congressional districts to fix the basis of congressional representation. State executive committees were to meet as soon as possible to set dates for state nominating conventions and to decide how the state delegates to the national convention were to be chosen. There were

26 Ibid., February 23, 1892.
27 Chicago Daily Tribune, February 25, 1892.
to be eight delegates at large and four delegates from each congressional
district, an appropriate total of 1776 to be present at the July 4th
convention.28

The People's party held its preliminary meeting of the national
nominating convention on July 2, 1892 in Omaha. There were several speakers,
Donnelly of Minnesota, J. C. Manning of Alabama, Colonel S. F. Norton of
Illinois, and Alexander Campbell also of Illinois, who was introduced as the
"original greenbacker". Before adjourning until July the 4th, a committee on
resolutions was named.29

In some places there was not enough third-party interest to warrant
delegates, but when the Omaha convention met on July 4th, there were 1366
accredited delegates with no seats contested. H. L. Loucks was permanent
chairman. The platform was based on the demands of previous conventions and
Donnelly's preamble was included. It deplored existing conditions, specifi-
cally mentioning the railroads. This railroad plank was more popular than
free silver at the convention. The platform asked for safe currency issued
only by the federal government, for free coinage of silver and gold, for an
increase in money to the minimum of fifty dollars per capita, for a graduated
income tax, for honesty and economy in government spending, for government
ownership of railroads, telegraphs, and telephones. It demanded that
corporations return all excess lands to the government, and it was against

28 Hicks, The Populist Revolt, 229-230.
29 Chicago Sunday Tribune, July 3, 1892.
alien ownership of land.30

The party had an additional set of resolutions which were not written into the platform, but to which they were sympathetic, hoping for support from additional groups. These unwritten planks included: pensions for war veterans; restrictions on undesirable immigration; and eight hour day for labor; abolition of the use of private detectives in labor strife; a single term for president and for vice-president; direct election of United States senators; the initiative and referendum and the Australian ballot.31

The People's party made an effort to keep the party in the hands of the people rather than allow it to get into the hands of party bosses. They adopted a "self-denying ordinance" which stated that no federal, state, or municipal office holder was eligible to sit or to vote in any People's party convention.32

The platform was accepted with wild cheers and frenzied enthusiasm before the reading of it was finished. About 15,000 persons shouted and celebrated for about half an hour before the convention could proceed.33 These demands had developed into the sacred creed of the Populists.34 An unsympathetic newspaper reporter gives a vivid description of the turmoil

31 Ibid., 512.
32 Hicks, The Populist Revolt, 236.
33 Chicago Daily Tribune, July 5, 1892.
34 Appleton's, 1892, 421.
which followed the reading of the platform:

... when that furious and hysterical arraignment of present times, that incoherent intermingling of Jeremiah and Bellamy, the platform, was adopted, the cheers and yells which rose like a tornado from four thousand throats and raged without cessation for thirty-four minutes, during which women shrieked and wept, men embraced and kissed their neighbors, locked arms, marched back and forth, and leaped upon tables and chairs in the ecstacy of their delirium,—this dramatic and historical scene must have told every thoughtful witness that there was something at the back of all this turmoil more than the failure of crops or the scarcity of ready cash.35

Colonel Polk had become more and more friendly to the new party after the Cincinnati convention. He evidently definitely had an eye on the presidential candidacy, because he tried to curry favor in the north by saying in a speech in Kansas in 1891, that he had always been favorable to the preservation of the Union. As he had been in the Confederate army, the southerners did not care much for his bid for northern sympathy. However, he was a popular and powerful man, and had he not been nominated for president, he surely would have had second place on the ticket, but he died shortly before the Omaha convention.36

With the death of Polk, talk turned to Judge Walter Q. Gresham for presidential candidate. Gresham was an Indiana Republican, whom the Populists looked upon with favor because of his decisions regarding the operation and

35 Tracy, "Menacing Socialism in the Western States", 332.
36 Chicago Sunday Tribune, July 3, 1892.
control of railroads, particularly the Wabash system. He was believed to be a friend of organized labor and to favor free silver. On the Saturday before the nominations, Gresham sent a telegram in which he refused to consider the nomination under any circumstances. Members from Indiana, Illinois, and Iowa sent four prominent delegates to Chicago to try to persuade the judge to reconsider, but they failed to change his mind.

Senator Leland Stanford of California had been mentioned as a possibility, but the California delegation at the St. Louis convention had denounced him as "an unprincipled monopolist", so he was no longer considered. Donnelly, although he was the greatest orator the Populists had, was not considered because of his questionable reputation in previous Minnesota politics.

General Weaver was left, then, as the natural choice. He had run for president in 1880 on the Greenback ticket, and in every section of the country he had friends and supporters. However, his connection with unsuccessful third parties over a long period of time was not in his favor. Weaver carried the odors of these past defeats, and he was not the menace to the established parties that Gresham would have been. "General Weaver is an honest man, personally, but he has boxed the compass in politics, always ready warmly to

37 Arnett, 141.  
38 Chicago Sunday Tribune, July 3, 1892.  
39 Chicago Daily Tribune, July 5, 1892.  
40 Hicks, The Populist Revolt, 235.  
41 Hicks, "Origin of the Alliance in Minnesota", 110.  
embrace any 'ism' in the loving ecstasy of political hunger.\footnote{43}{James B. Weaver was born in Ohio. He was well educated, having graduated from the Cincinnati Law School. Shortly afterwards he went to Iowa. During the Civil War he fought in the Union army where he was brevetted brigadier general for gallantry. He was a Republican who, because he was a strong prohibitionist, never held other than minor offices. In 1874 he had almost been nominated by the Republican party as Congressman from the sixth Iowa district, but was beaten by a machine candidate. Saloon and corporation interests backed Governor Kirkwood of Iowa for renomination in 1875, as they did not want prohibitionist Weaver to win the Republican nomination. In 1876 he became a Greenbacker. As such, and with the help of the Democrats, he was elected to Congress in 1878. In 1880 he ran for president of the United States on the Greenback ticket, touring the entire eastern part of the country on a speaking tour. He was again a Greenback Congressman from 1883 to 1887, but he was not reelected in 1888. In 1890 he joined the Union Labor Industrial party of Iowa. He was less versatile than Donnelly and more conservative, inspiring the confidence of those who did not like the existing conditions, but who were afraid of radicalism.\footnote{44}{Some delegates felt that Weaver's past defeats were a handicap and offered a younger man, Senator Kyle of North Dakota,\footnote{45}{Fred Emory Haynes, \textit{James Baird Weaver}. State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City, 1919, Passim.}}\footnote{45}{\textit{Chicago Daily Tribune}, July 4, 5, 1892.}}
nomination 995 to 275 votes. 46 Weaver was the choice of the conservative element of the party; Kyle was the choice of the liberals and of the free silver men from the mountain states. 47

Simpson had picked Colonel Beverley of Virginia for second place, but as Beverley was seventy-two, he agreed to withdraw in favor of a younger man. 48 As Weaver was a northerner, two southerners were proposed for vice-president, General James G. Field of Virginia and Ben Terrill of Texas. Field won with 733 votes to 554 for Terrill. 49 Field was an ex-Confederate general; Weaver was an ex-Union general.

Field had been prominent in Virginia since the Civil War. He had served in the California campaign during the Mexican War, and he had been a quartermaster with the rank of major during the Civil War. His title of "general" was merely a title of courtesy. From 1877 to 1882 he was the attorney-general of Virginia, and he was considered a good Democratic party leader. He had been actively interested in the early Farmers' Assembly, but he had not joined the Alliance. 50

46 Stanwood, 513
47 Buck, 145.
49 Stanwood, 513.
50 Sheldon, 84.
The combination of Weaver and Field left much to be desired. Weaver was too well balanced to be a striking figure, and he was not the menace to the established parties that Gresham would have been, and although Field was a popular man in Virginia, the following he brought to the People’s party was small.
CHAPTER V

THE 1892 CAMPAIGN

The next problem after the convention was over and the ticket drawn up was to get adherents from the Republicans and the Democrats. The Republicans had held their convention on June 7, 1892 in Minneapolis. Although Benjamin Harrison was renominated on the first ballot, with Whitelaw Reid as his running mate, it was only because he had control of the party machine. Harrison had first been elected on his grandfather's reputation. He was an able administrator, but he alienated his own party by appointing many personal friends and relatives to office and by his suspicion and his efforts to restrict the influence of James G. Blaine, his Secretary of State. The spoils element and the business men wanted to nominate Blaine, whose personal magnetism, they felt, would check the western Populists. The climax of dissension among the Republicans was reached on June fourth when Blaine resigned his post, giving no reason for his resignation, but asking that it be effective immediately. Harrison did not take as firm a stand on the money question as Cleveland, but most southerners would never vote for a Republican.

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1 Chicago Daily News Almanac, 1893, 49.
2 Paxson, 211.
3 Chicago Daily Tribune, May 29, June 2, 4, 5, 1892.
The Democratic convention was held in Chicago on June 21, 1892. Grover Cleveland had lost the 1888 election by forcing the tariff issue. Between 1888 and 1892 he practiced law in New York, during that time gradually regaining his popularity with the people. He was unpopular with the men who managed the caucuses and conventions, but he was the only national Democratic leader since the Civil War. David B. Hill of New York, who was supported by Tammany Hall, was Cleveland's leading opponent in 1892. Many southern Alliance men preferred Hill, feeling that he could be more easily swayed on the money question than Cleveland. The convention nominated Cleveland with Adlai E. Stevenson of Illinois sharing the ticket.

Both parties came out for bimetallism. The only two Democratic planks which were similar to the Populist demands were enforcement of anti-trust laws and immigration restrictions. The Republicans made an effort to curry favor with labor by favoring immigration restrictions and laws to protect workers in hazardous occupations, and to placate the farmers by favoring extended postal service, condemning trusts, and asking for the return to the government of excess lands held by corporations.

Third-party leaders began a campaign of educating the people to their beliefs, pointing out that the Democratic party, although it could be controlled in the south, could not be controlled nationally, and that

4 Stanwood, 491; Paxson, 214.
5 Arnett, 148; Chicago Daily Tribune, June 17, 1892.
6 Chicago Daily News Almanac, 1893, 49.
7 Ibid., 1893, 131-133.
legislation must be national to be effective. A great many Southern Alliance men had waited until after the Democratic convention to decide upon a course of action. They did not like Cleveland, because he stood for hard money. Colonel Polk had said that if the Democrats declared for the Alliance platform, he would hold the farmers, who were under his control, in line for the Democratic party. Upon his death, H. L. Loucks of South Dakota, who was vice president of the Southern Alliance, succeeded to the presidency. Loucks was a Canadian by birth, a farmer with a college education. He moved to South Dakota several years before the Alliance movement began, and he called the first People's party convention in that state in June 1890, where he was nominated candidate for governor. Loucks had been an ardent third-party man from the beginning, and he urged the southerners to join the People's party. Representative Everett of Georgia asked what was the good of deserting a party which they controlled and joining another which would only split the white vote.

The southern Democrats had always done all they could to eliminate the negro vote. In 1888 the Republicans had won a small majority in Congress and had tried to pass a Federal Election Bill, referred to as the "Force Bill", designed to protect the negro Republican voter in the south. Although the bill was shelved, the Democrats set themselves even more solidly against the

8 Thomas E. Watson, "Debate", Arena, VI, June 1892, 203.
9 Arnett, 148.
10 Hicks, The Populist Revolt, 240.
12 Hicks, The Populist Revolt, 239.
Republicans. They felt just as strongly against the Populists, who also proposed to divide the Democratic vote in the south. 13

The Populists set out at once to secure the negro vote through the Colored Alliance. The Democrats put up a fight, resorting to bribery, intimidation, stuffing of ballot boxes, and falsification of election returns. Wagonloads of negroes were brought in from South Carolina to vote the Democratic ticket. The Populists were refused representation on the election boards, and votes were counted as the boards thought they should have been cast, not as they were cast. In Augusta, Watson's district, the total vote was twice the legal vote. 14

Watson could have had the nomination for Populist governor of Georgia, but he chose to run for reelection to Congress. Although the Populists refused fusion with the Republicans, probably fearing loss of caste, W. L. Peek, Populist candidate for governor, said that he would welcome their votes, so they put his name on the Republican ticket, and also used Populist congressional nominees. 15

The North Carolina Republicans considered joining with the People's party, but they finally nominated their own state ticket. Elias Carr, who had been president of the state Alliance, ran for governor on the Democratic ticket. One of the People's party planks asked for the Australian ballot to

13 Appleton's, 1890, 238.
14 Arnett, 154-155.
15 Ibid., 143-155, passim.
prevent intimidation at the polls.\textsuperscript{16}

Tillman of South Carolina had such a large following that had he joined
the Populists, he would have furnished some real opposition to the Democrats.
Neither the Populists nor the Republicans had state tickets, both supporting
Tillman. The Populists nominated presidential electors only.\textsuperscript{17}

In Alabama, Alliance man R. F. Kolb tried to be nominated as governor
on the regular Democratic ticket, but he failed, so the Kolb faction formed
the Jeffersonian Democratic party with Kolb heading the ticket. After much
deliberation Kolb decided to accept also the Populist nomination for
governor.\textsuperscript{18} At the convention where the merger was accomplished, both
Weaver and Field spoke.\textsuperscript{19} This partnership proved unpopular, as later while
speaking for the Populist cause, Kolb was pelted with rotten eggs on
several occasions.

In Virginia many of the gentlemen farmers, one of whom was Colonel
Beverley, became Alliance and Populist advocates. In the spring of 1892 the
Populists entered Virginia, and for five years the People's party struggled
there to win an election. They never succeeded because of the firm
Democratic entrenchment; because Senator John W. Daniel, who was the most
popular Virginian and had a tremendous following, was a Democrat; and

\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Appleton's}, 1892, 527-528.
\textsuperscript{17} Simkins, 172.
\textsuperscript{18} John B. Clark, \textit{Populism in Alabama}. Auburn Printing Co., Auburn,
Alabama, 1927, 132-133.
\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Chicago Daily Tribune}, September 16, 1892.
\textsuperscript{20} Clark, 144.
because a third party would split the white vote. Republican boss Mahone
controlled the negro vote in the state, and the white Virginians showed their
racial loyalty by voting Democratic.21

Florida Populists had met in Ocala on February 8, 1892 and pledged
themselves not to support any candidate who did not endorse the Populist
demands. The Republican voters were free to vote Populist, as their party
made no nominations.22

The Populists were active in Texas. Two of their workers were Dr. W. C.
Macune and Mrs. Bettie Gay, a widow, who also wrote and spoke for prohibition,
woman suffrage, and the Alliance.23 Texans were particularly interested in
land reforms, asking for the return of lands held but not used by
corporations, and for the forfeiture of land by grantees who had not complied
with the terms of their grants, and for the prohibition of the alien owner-
ship of land. All the reclaimed lands were to be used for homesteading. The
Germans, whose vote the Populists had made an effort to secure, refused to
support a party they knew was for restriction of immigration, against alien
ownership of land, and anti-Catholic. The Democrats renominated their
liberal governor, who had satisfied the people by fighting the railroads and
corporations.24

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21 Sheldon, 25, 54, 72.
22 Appleton's, 1892, 279.
23 Annie L. Diggs, "The Women in the Alliance Movement", Arena, VI,
June 1892, 171-172.
24 Roscoe C. Martin, "The People's Party in Texas", University of Texas
Bulletin, University of Texas, Austin, February 22, 1933, 47, 107.
The Democratic party in about half the southern states had Populist planks in their platforms in an effort to keep members with Populist ideas from deserting Democratic ranks. For example, the Florida Democratic platform demanded unlimited coinage of silver, abolition of national banks, legal tender notes to replace the national bank notes in circulation, increase in money to at least fifty dollars per capita, a national law to eliminate dealing in futures, and government control of railroads, besides some other minor demands. The Carolinas, Georgia, and Texas put demands into their Democratic platforms that were similar to those of Florida. The South Carolina Democrats approved the Ocala demands by name. 25

Most of the third-party men were farmers with real grievances; the towns and the cities remained Democratic. The southerners who did adhere to the third party were considered as traitors by their neighbors, worse even than the Republicans. The tendency for the Populists and the Republicans to work together was true throughout the south. Republican names were often found on Populist local tickets, and the charge was made that Republican money was used to aid the People's party. However, Republican help was really a hindrance, as thousands of Populists went back to the Democratic fold because they thought that the Republicans would take over the People's party. 26

The Democrats knew that Populists in the west would be recruited from the Republican party, and the more Populists thus recruited, the better chance Cleveland would have of being elected. The leaders of the Democratic party

25 Appleton's, 1892, 279.
26 Arnett, 150-152.
were William C. Whitney, a stock speculator, Henry B. Payne, an oil monopolist, August Belmont, banker, Henry Villard, railroad baron, and Richard Croker, a city boss. These men and their kind were the targets of the Populist wrath, and they in turn, had no love for the Populists. However, a fusion between these two antagonistic groups was arranged in several states.27

The Kansas Populists held their state convention on June fifth in Wichita and nominated a full ticket. When the Republicans met on June 30th, a reform faction forced the endorsement of some of the Wichita planks of the Populists. The Democrats did not put up a ticket but endorsed the Populist ticket and platform. A few "Stalwart Democrats" revolted and decided to aid the Republicans.28 The campaign was carried on mostly by candidates for the state offices. It was conducted in the same manner and with the same fervor as that of 1890. There were parades five miles long, and the meetings were gala affairs. There was some violence in Kansas where feeling ran so high. Congressman James Otis, when he spoke in Princeton, Franklin county, was pelted with rotten eggs. One man was murdered in Hugoten, and a plot to murder Jerry Simpson was uncovered.29

The North Dakota Populists met and nominated electoral, state, and congressional candidates with both Cleveland and Weaver electors included in the ticket. When the Democrats met, they endorsed all of the Populist

27 Appleton's, 1892, 370-371; Stanwood, 329-330.
28 Appleton's, 1892, 370-371; Barr, 1177-1178.
29 Barr, 1179.
doctrines and candidates and made no nominations of their own. 30

The People's party convention in South Dakota was the largest ever held in the state. It lasted a week and was of the zealous camp meeting variety. South Dakota had three full party tickets in the field. 31

Ignatius Donnelly, who was the Populist candidate for governor of Minnesota despite the fact that W. W. Erwin, chairman of the Minnesota Alliance, threatened to withdraw Alliance support of the People's party if Donnelly were nominated, 32 began campaigning early. By July he had given sixty-five speeches, calling himself the "Great Commoner" and attracting large crowds. Other third party men were resentful because Donnelly refused to accept fusion with the Democrats, saying that he had tried it before and it had always failed. The Republican nominee was Knute Nelson, a reform candidate whom the Populists would have liked to have had as their own. The Democrats did their best to undermine Donnelly by nominating a Catholic named Lawler. His nomination split the heavy Catholic vote which would otherwise have gone to Donnelly, 33 who, because he was Irish, was mistakenly assumed to be a Catholic. 34 Although he objected to fusion, Donnelly wanted Democratic support. He explained that the Populists were short of lawyers.

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30 Appleton's, 1892, 530.
31 Ibid., 1892, 707.
32 Chicago Daily Tribune, July 13, 14, 1892.
33 Appleton's, 1892, 469-470; Hicks, The Populist Revolt, 258-261.
34 Everett W. Fish, Donnelliana. F. J. Schulte and Co., Chicago, 1892, 127.
and two Democratic lawyers were nominated on the Populist ticket for seats in the state supreme court. The Democrats reciprocated by placing four of their nine presidential electors for Weaver. 35

The Democrats wanted the Republicans to lose the election, but although they were willing to help the People's party in some sections, in others they were afraid of what the Populists would do if they won. J. Sterling Morton, the Nebraska Democratic leader, was against fusion, in fact, he was in favor of stamping out Populism. 36

In Nebraska, as well as in Minnesota, the campaign was largely a contest of personalities. The Populist nominee for governor was Charles H. Van Wyck, a prominent politician, who before the Civil War had been a congressional representative from New York. He had held anti-railroad and anti-monopolistic views since Granger times. At the Omaha convention there had been some talk of Van Wyck as presidential nominee, but that died out because the Nebraskans wanted him as governor. As candidate for governor he promised to sign the Newberry Railroad Rate Bill vetoed by Governor Boyd the year before. 37 Van Wyck was a good man, so the other two parties made unusually good nominations. Lorenzo Crounse, the Republican candidate, had served on the state supreme court and in Congress. Crounse was against railroad control, and the

35 Appleton's, 1892, 469-470.
37 Ibid., III, 198.
Republicans had kept him in the background until the Populist threat. J. Sterling Morton, who was the Democratic candidate, was not an outstanding reformer, but the Nebraska Democrats had not nominated as able a man for years. Morton was for hard money, and he had no grudge against the railroads. He was nominated to hold as many Democrats in the party as possible. Although all three parties had full tickets, there was fusion in two or three congressional districts.

Even though Iowa was Weaver's home state, Populism was never very strong there. Only small groups turned out to hear Mrs. Lease speak. Free silver was the popular issue. At the People's party convention a resolution was passed condemning nine United States congressmen from Iowa who betrayed their pledges to secure free and unlimited coinage of silver.

The states in the Great Lakes area did not experience the droughts and the hard times that plagued the farmers in the plains region to the west. The people lacked the grievances to spur them to embrace Populism with much ardor. The Populist state conventions used the national platform as a basis for their own platforms, adding planks concerning local grievances. The Illinois group favored a Constitutional amendment to guarantee a weekly pay day for workers and asked for a law against truck stores, and Indiana wanted the office of county assessor to be abolished.

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38 Ibid., III, 244.
39 Ibid., III, 244.
40 Haynes, Third Party Movements, 325.
41 Appleton's, 1892, 359.
42 Ibid., 1892, 343.
43 Ibid., 1892, 355.
In the mountain states the Populist reform doctrines were of little interest, but the older parties ignored the silver question, and when the Populists demanded free silver, the people of the mountain states formed local "silver clubs". State conventions of silverites were held, and there was a national silver convention in Washington, D. C., in May 1892. As a result, many of the Democrats and Republicans in the silver states deserted their parties in favor of the Populists. 44

At the Colorado Republican convention, Harrison was denounced for his opposition to free silver. The Democrats endorsed the Populist ticket headed by Davis H. Waite and supported the Weaver electors. 45

The Nevada Democrats warned that they felt under no obligation to vote for a candidate who was against free silver. A Silver party was organized, which sent delegates to the Omaha convention, and afterwards instructed its electors to vote for Weaver and Field. An anti-Harrison faction of the Republicans joined the silverites; among them was F. G. Newlands, who became the universal silver candidate for Congress. Nevada was the only state in which the Republicans did not put up a good fight against the Democrats and the Populists. 46

All three parties defended free silver in Idaho, and each one nominated a full ticket, but later the Democrats supported the Weaver electors. An Idaho Populist plank asked for the exclusion of Chinese immigrants. 47

44 Ibid., 1892, 127.
46 Ibid., 1892, 490.
47 Ibid., 1892, 340.
Democrats and Populists fused in Wyoming, nominated James E. Osborne for governor, and pledged the electors to Weaver.\textsuperscript{48} The sentiment in the other mountain states was for free silver, but there was no real Democratic opposition.\textsuperscript{49}

As there was practically no silver mined in Oregon, the Democratic state convention rejected free silver, but the state central committee adopted one of the Populist electors.\textsuperscript{50} The Oregon Populists had a prohibition plank in their platform.\textsuperscript{51}

The eastern farmers were well established and suffered less from debt and drought than the western farmers. They were closer to the markets and did not have high freight rates to pay. They could sell for less than the western farmers and still not suffer. Nor were the industrial classes in the east interested in Populism. The laborers voted as they always had voted, despite the fact that the People's party wanted to improve the lot of the masses of labor. The Populists held nominating conventions in most of the eastern states, but their campaign lacked color and attracted little notice.

The People's party was very poor, having only fifty dollars in the treasury at the time of the Omaha convention. Small sums were solicited with some success, and ladies auxiliaries made gifts.\textsuperscript{52} They passed a bucket

\textsuperscript{48}Ibid., 1892, 827.
\textsuperscript{49}Hicks, \textit{The Populist Revolt}, 265.
\textsuperscript{50}Ibid., 265.
\textsuperscript{52}Haynes, \textit{Third Party Movements}, 276.
after the speeches and collected a shower of silver dollars. What they lacked in money, they made up in enthusiasm, for they had a host of campaign speakers, among whom were Jerry Simpson, William Peffer, Mrs. Fanny Randolph Vickrey, woman suffragist, Prohibitionist, and Single Taxer, and Mrs. Marion Todd, editor of the Express, a Chicago Reform paper, who worked hard addressing large and small meetings all over the country. Few of the party workers had any political standing and most of them were young. It was easier for them to join a weak party than to stand alone. Tracy claimed that at least ninety percent of the party candidates were exhorters without personal or political integrity, who had unsavory reputations at home.

As Josephson said, "The menace of the Populists lay... not so much in their doctrines as in the determination which they showed to dispense with both of the two national political corporations..." He likened the Populists to the Jacobins of the French revolution, a party of small proprietors and petits bourgeois, saying that the Populists "... would establish, as in Europe, the pattern of the class interest or 'belief' party in a republic which had contented itself with professional patronage parties".

The Populists flooded the country with literature. The Arena of 1892

53 Chicago Daily Tribune, July 14, 21, 1892.
55 Paxson, 211.
56 Tracy, "Rise and Doom of the Populist Party", 246.
57 Josephson, 479.
58 Josephson, 479.
carried debates by leading members of the three parties as to why each party should be elected. Thomas Watson and James H. Kyle presented the Populist case. Both men emphasized that the People's party would restore the government to the people, claiming that the old parties were in the hands of the money powers. 59 Mrs. Diggs and Mrs. Valesh also wrote for the Arena, which printed most of the Populist campaign writings. Mrs. Emery wrote several books, the most popular being Seven Financial Conspiracies.

Mrs. Eva McDonald Valesh was Minnesota's female contribution to the cause. She was both witty and attractive, which added to her popularity as a speaker. 60 She tried to win the industrial groups by saying that they had much in common with the farmers. She pointed out that, "Each organization would be the gainer from close contact and interchange of views with the other". 61

Mrs. Sarah E. V. Emery was a Michigan school teacher and temperance worker. She was active in the Greenback party, and had been a Michigan representative to the conference of Industrial Organizations in St. Louis in 1892. 62 As the title of the book suggests, Mrs. Emery was interested in the financial facet of the grievances.

We have the rich amassing colossal fortunes while the laboring classes are sinking to lower and lower depths of degradation.

60 Diggs, "The Women in the Alliance Movement", 172-173.
62 Diggs, "The Women in the Alliance Movement", 167-169. Hicks, 166, gives Mrs. Emery's home state as Kansas.
Since a man's social, intellectual and moral status depends largely upon his material prosperity, is not that legislation to be denounced which impoverishes the masses, thus degrading them in all the relations of life? 63

The rumor was circulated among the Populists, by the national executive committee, that Judge Gresham had promised to make several speeches for their cause, but Gresham emphatically denied that he would take any part in their campaign. 64 The story was printed that there was a secret organization within the Alliance, called "The Band of Gideon", which was organized by Doctor Lacune at the Ocala convention. Nearly all of the Alliance leaders were supposed to be members. "It's purpose is to strike the two old parties wherever they may be in control. It contemplates the raising of a political legion of 300 men in each congressional district of the Union." 65 The Chicago Tribune maintained that it was a subversive organization and more of a menace to the country than the old "Know-Nothing" party. 66

Weaver began his campaign immediately after the Omaha convention, presenting his first speech at Council Bluffs, Iowa, on July seventh, with the free and unlimited coinage of silver as his main theme. To counteract this speech, the Republicans sent John H. Walker of Massachusetts to speak there the following day against free silver. In Des Moines on July

64 Chicago Sunday Tribune, August 14, 1892.
65 Chicago Daily Tribune, August 15, 1892.
66 Ibid., August 15, 1892.
fourteenth Weaver spoke of the party as a great brotherhood of farmers and labor. Weaver made many similar speeches throughout his home state.

In Lincoln, Nebraska, General Weaver and Mrs. Lease were introduced after a parade of floats representing the issues of the day. These two toured the west together, speaking to enthusiastic crowds. Mrs. Lease observed that in some localities in Nevada the old parties had too little strength to form the usual party committees.

Mary Elizabeth Lease was the main Populist woman orator. Although she was married and the mother of four children, she took up the study of law and was admitted to the bar in 1885. She first worked for the Union Labor party and the Alliance, and in the 1890 campaign she became famous for her fiery speeches. Weaver introduced her at the St. Louis conference as "Our Queen Mary."

The "Pensacola Address" was Weaver's and Field's joint acceptance of the Populist nomination. It was not given until September seventeenth, and the charge was made that they had purposely waited until after the southern primaries. It was stated in the address that Kolb had been cheated at the polls and that the Arkansas election was also fraudulent. The address was construed as an attempt to split the southern vote.

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67 Ibid., July 8, 9, 15, 1892.
68 Ibid., The Populist Revolt, 261.
69 Barr, 1165.
71 Melvin J. White, "Populism in Louisiana During the Nineties". Mississippi Valley Historical Review, V, June 1918, 9; Chicago Daily News Almanac, 1938, 166.
Weaver and Mrs. Lease also toured the southern states. Mrs. Lease had a way of winning her audiences even in the hostile south. "She has that old 'hallelujah' twang to her voice so fetching in the Sunny South and in the rural districts of the West." The newspapers claimed that a woman political speaker was a disgusting spectacle, revolting to southern manhood. Weaver's record as a Union soldier was now dragged out and severely criticized. In 1891 Livingston and Weaver had toured the state of Georgia together, but in 1892 Livingston refused to support the People's party and made speeches against Weaver, who embarrassed Livingston by frequently recalling their former tour during which Weaver was so courteously treated.

As the tour continued, the audiences became progressively more disagreeable. Weaver and Mrs. Lease were unable to finish their speeches in Albany, Georgia, because of the hoots and jeers. In Macon, Weaver attempted to make a speech from a balcony but withdrew when someone threw an egg at him. The last southern speech was scheduled for Atlanta. Arrangements had been made for a large meeting, but Weaver refused to attend, saying that there was no free speech in the south, and he had already been offered too many indignities.

Field was as unpopular in the north as Weaver was in the south.

Northern newspapers printed excerpts from speeches Field had made before he

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72 Chicago Daily Tribune, September 21, 1892.
73 Ibid., July 18, 1892.
74 Ibid., September 20, 1892.
75 Ibid., September 22, 23, 24, 1892.
became a national candidate. He had bragged about the number of Union soldiers he, personally, had killed during the war, and he had made the statement that he wished all the Union soldiers had been killed. Despite having said that he would never appear in any place where the Confederate flag was not honored, he made an extensive speaking tour of the silver states in July and August. 76

He claimed in one of his speeches that the People's party would break up the solid north, the solid south, the solid Grand Army of the Republic, and the solid negro vote. 77 Weaver's prediction was that all the states west of the Mississippi River would vote the Populist ticket, completely disorganizing the Republicans. 78

76 Ibid., July 18, 22, 1892.
77 Ibid., August 14, 1892.
78 Hicks, The Populist Revolt, 266.
CHAPTER VI
FAILURE OF THE POPULISTS

The Populists made a good showing for a new party, being the first third party to break into the electoral college since the Civil War. 1

Weaver won ten electoral votes in Kansas, four in Colorado, three each in Idaho and Nevada, and one in Oregon, a total of twenty-two electoral votes. Harrison had 145 and Cleveland 277. Cleveland's popular vote was 5,556,543; Harrison's was 5,175,582; Weaver trailed behind with 1,040,886. 2

The solid south remained solid. The Populists had thought that the farmers, who would not dream of joining the Republicans, could be induced to join a new party. Even in the upper south, where the Republicans might have won had the Democratic vote been split, Populism was not popular enough to weaken the Democrats. 3

Weaver's prediction that the west would vote the Populist ticket proved to have some truth in it. Fusion tickets won in Wyoming and Colorado, and Weaver electors were chosen by large majorities in Colorado, Idaho, and Nevada. 4 Populist governors were elected in Colorado.

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1 Appleton's, 1892, 755.
2 Stanwood, 517.
3 Hicks, The Populist Revolt, 248, 268.
4 Appleton's, 1892, 755.
Kansas, and North Dakota, and at least fifty state officials and 1500 county officials and members of state legislatures were elected by the People's party. Only eight or ten pure Populist United States Representatives were elected, but there were more than that who owed their election to office to deals of one kind or another with the Populists. 5

In Minnesota the Populists held the balance of power in the state Senate and won one seat in Congress. 6 The state fusion ticket in North Dakota won every office except that of secretary of state, but the Republicans won a majority in both houses of the legislature. Each presidential candidate had one of the state's three electoral votes. 7

The Populists did better in Kansas than anywhere else. The state voted for Weaver and elected the entire People's ticket. They won five out of the seven seats in Congress. However, the Republicans had a narrow majority in the House, which resulted in a charge of fraud, but the vote remained unchanged. 8

Harrison won over Weaver by only a small margin in Nebraska, because a great many Democrats joined the Populists. The Republicans won all of the state offices, but the Populists won in three of the six congressional districts. No party had a majority in the state legislature. 9 Crounse contributed to Van Wyck's defeat as governor by showing that while Van Wyck

5 Haynes, Third Party Movements, 274, 231.
6 Appleton's, 1892, 470.
7 Ibid., 1892, 530.
8 Ibid., 1892, 370-371; Barr, 1163, 1167.
9 Appleton's, 1892, 497.
was a Congressman from New York he had favored land grants to railroads.

Weaver made a poor showing at home, as he polled less than five percent of the total Iowa vote. 11 Of the states which used fusion, Wyoming was the only one in which Weaver electors were not chosen. Little silver was mined there, so the free silver plank had no meaning for the people. 12 The one Populist elector on the Oregon Democratic ticket won more votes than any other elector. 13

Fusion in the West aided Cleveland considerably, although he probably would have won, even though many Republicans did join the Populists. 14 However, the vote would have been very close, and it is difficult to estimate the outcome.

Despite the fact that the time was auspicious for a new party to elect a president, due to the unpopularity of the major party candidates and to the fact that the people had genuine grievances, 15 the Populists had a number of handicaps which they were unable to surmount. Although the party evolved from the Alliance, not all the Alliance members wanted a separate political party. The South was particularly against third-party organization, because it did not want the vote to be split to give the Negroes an opening

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10 Morton and Watkin, I, 632.
11 Hicks, The Populist Revolt, 263.
12 Appleton's, 1892, 227.
13 Ibid., 1892, 265.
14 Josephson, 516.
wedge into politics. Even those who were Populists at heart held racial loyalty above party loyalty. The Democrats enticed the farmers into remaining within their ranks by adopting reform planks at many state conventions. The northern speakers did not add to the popularity of the party because of the adverse publicity which they received. The fraudulent election returns further decreased the Populist chances of victory in the south.

There was a difference in viewpoint between different sections of the country: the southern farmers felt that a scheme such as the sub-treasury plan would prove a panacea; the western farmers were sure that railroad legislation would solve their problems; and in the mountain states the only Populist plank of interest was free silver. Before the party was formed there was disagreement between the north and the south on the sub-treasury plan and on the railroad question. In the conventions there was friction between the silver group and the farm element, with the silver men attempting to gain control and the farmers more than reluctant to relinquish it. 16 When the party was formed, these differences remained, with the three factions pulling in several directions.

The farmers in the east and the middle west maintained a tepid attitude toward the problems of the western farmers, problems with which they themselves did not have to contend. In 1892 these western farmers were more prosperous than they had been in 1890, so the need for reforms was not as pressing to them as it had been. After all, what they wanted was more money.

"They are fast getting it and the faster they get it the more reluctant they become to ride forty miles in a lumber-wagon through the rain to hear Mrs. Lease and General Weaver make speeches." 17

Probably many of the persons who voted the Populist ticket in local elections were more cautious in a national election, maintaining their former party affiliations. The national Democratic party made a few concessions to the reform group, and the Republicans put some of the more conservative demands in their platform, which kept the milder reformers within the ranks.

It took a long time to get the People's party organized due to the divergent opinions of the various factions. Lacking adequate support, a bid was made to swell the ranks. This was accomplished by inviting the cooperation of the multiplicity of reform groups throughout the country. Each of these groups had a favorite reform which of necessity was added to the original demands in order to obtain support from that group. Both Donnelly and Macune pointed out that the demands were too inclusive; that the party should stress one thing and work for that. The result was a heterogeneous rabble of rabid liberals among whom the Prohibitionists were very prominent, Weaver himself being one of them. The Greenback, Union Labor, and National Reform parties also joined the Populists, the last being disciples of Edward Bellamy, whose novel, Looking Backward, directed public attention toward

17 Gleed, 257.
18 Chamberlain, 339; Hicks, The Populist Revolt, 215.
social questions. Among this collection were the third-rate politicians, the professional candidates adhering to any party which would support them. Even such critical writers as Tracy and McVey admitted that the rank and file were honest but questioned the sincerity of most of the party leaders.

Some of the Populist demands were, for those times, too radical to have a national appeal. The sub-treasury plan was condemned as being paternalistic, and some of the other demands were deemed socialistic because they asked that the federal government adopt legislative powers hitherto delegated to the states. The people had been educated to a belief in free enterprise and the conservative element of the nation looked askance at the prospect of such legislation.

The fervid character of the political rallies led the conservatives to believe that the Populists had an ulterior motive—that they were working for something more than fifty dollars per capita—possibly not realizing the dire distress of poverty. The consensus in the eastern section of the country was that these Populists were anarchists and must be kept out of power. Who could predict what extremes of legislation these radicals would pass if they ever gained control of the government?

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20 Tracy, "Rise and Doom of the Populist Party", 244; McVey, 191.
21 Josephson, 472-473.
The People's party wished to keep the control of the nation in the hands of the farmers, who knew little or nothing of government or economics. These men proposed to better conditions without the aid of experienced or politically wise counsel, not profiting by their previous failure to make legislators out of farmers. As Tracy sarcastically remarked, "Indeed it is marvelous how these men no matter how ignorant and unlearned will furnish readily and confidently solutions for all problems of finance—the most intricate, delicate and least understood of all Government concerns." Despite their wish to use rural candidates, they were persuaded to nominate some reform politicians who imposed their services on the party. This was construed by some to indicate a lack of belief in their own convictions.

The party was too poor to carry on an effective national campaign. It would have been able to collect more money and gain additional support had it not alienated the press by excluding it from all of the Alliance meetings and discouraging it from attending the conventions. The Alliance was a secret organization which had maintained its own local newspaper group, inadequate to publicize a countrywide campaign. In retaliation the excluded newspapers ridiculed the Populists and coined foolish nicknames for the various candidates. Among others were "Jumping Jim" Weaver, who earned his through his membership in a number of political parties; "Whiskers" Peffer, who was obviously named, as his most distinguishing physical characteristic

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23 Tracy, "Rise and Doom of the Populist Party", 244.
was a waist-long beard; and "Sockless Jerry" Simpson, who was so called because he had derided an opponent's elegant grooming, remarking that if he, himself, were elected to Congress, he could not afford to wear silk socks. 24

The party following was bound to be limited because only one class of persons was represented—the dissatisfied, composed mostly of agriculturalists. As McVey pointed out, "Such a party seldom formulates any underlying principle of action." 25 The People's party planks did not include many items to capture the interest of the urban population, 26 except for the labor class. However, the American Federation of Labor did not support the Populists because the farmers were employers of labor.

Perhaps the greatest reason for failure was the party ticket. Locally it was largely composed of unsuccessful politicians from minority groups, of men with limited followings, of men who had not obtained the confidence of the people, either because of their affiliation with movements of dubious value, or because they were young, inexperienced and untried in politics. The national candidates had been chosen for their sectional appeal, and neither Field nor Weaver ever managed to become popular outside of his own part of the country. The Populists, in their efforts to please both the north and south, pleased neither. The southern newspapers ruined Weaver's

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25 McVey, 186.
chances in the south, and the northern press made clear that Field was a poor candidate in whom to place one's confidence. Weaver's defeat as presidential candidate on the Greenback ticket conveyed the suggestion of his mediocrity. He lacked a colorful and dynamic personality. A party with an even less justifiable cause could have shown better results if it were championed by an inspired and preeminent leader. Weaver was a conservative liberal, always wanting to hold back, never being one to make a bold stand and fight hard for what he considered right. Mrs. Valesh herself realized Weaver's ineffectualness, for she wrote that what the party lacked, but needed the most, was a leader of the stature of Jefferson or Lincoln. Without such leadership, the party was destined to disintegrate.

27 Valesh, 731.
APPENDIX A

OMAHA PLATFORM, JULY, 1892

Assembled upon the 116th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, the People's Party of America, in their first national convention, invoking their action the blessing of Almighty God, puts forth, in the name and on behalf of the people of this country, the following preamble and declaration of principles:

The conditions which surround us best justify our cooperation: we meet in the midst of a nation brought to the verge of moral, political, and material ruin. Corruption dominates the ballot-box, the legislatures, the Congress, and touches even the ermine of the bench. The people are demoralized; most of the States have been compelled to isolate the voters at the polling-places to prevent universal intimidation or bribery. The newspapers are largely subsidized or muzzled; public opinion silenced; business prostrated; our homes covered with mortgages; labor impoverished; and the land concentrating in the hands of the capitalists. 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 into European conditions. The fruits of the toil of millions are boldly stolen to build up colossal fortunes for a few, unprecedented in the history of mankind; and the possessors of these, in turn, despise the republic and endanger liberty. From the same prolific womb of governmental injustice we breed the two great classes—tramps and millionaires.

The national power to create money is appropriated to enrich bondholders; a vast public debt, payable in legal tender currency, has been funded into gold-bearing bonds, thereby adding millions to the burdens of the people. Silver, which has been accepted as coin since the dawn of history, has been demonetized to add to the purchasing power of gold by decreasing the value of all forms of property as well as human labor; and the supply of currency is purposely abridged to fatten usurers, bankrupt enterprise, and enslave industry. A vast conspiracy against mankind has been organized on two continents, and it is rapidly taking possession of the world. If not met and overthrown at once, it forebodes terrible social convulsions, the destruction of civilization, or the establishment of an absolute despotism.

1 Stanwood, 509-513.
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. Neither do they now promise us any substantial reform. They have agreed together to ignore in the coming campaign every issue but one. They propose to drown the outcries of a plundered people with the uproar of a sham battle over the tariff, so that capitalists, corporations, national banks, rings, trusts, watered stock, the demonetization of silver, and the oppressions of the usurers may all be lost sight of. They propose to sacrifice our homes, lives and children on the altar of mammon; to destroy the multitude in order to secure corruption funds from the millionaires.

Assembled on the anniversary of the birthday of the nation, and filled with the spirit of the grand general and chief of the forces who established our independence, we seek to restore the government of the Republic to the hands of "the plain people", with whose class it originated. We assert our purposes to be identical with the purposes of the National Constitution, "to form a more perfect union and establish justice, insure domestic tranquillity, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty for ourselves and our posterity." 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; that the civil war is over, and that every passion and resentment which grew out of it must die with it; and that we must in fact, as we are in name, one united brotherhood of freemen.

Our country finds itself confronted by conditions for which there is no precedent in the history of the world; our annual agricultural productions amount to billions of dollars in value, which must, within a few weeks or months, be exchanged for billions of dollars of commodities consumed in their production; the existing currency supply is wholly inadequate to make this exchange; the results are falling prices, the formation of combines and rings, the impoverishment of the producing classes. We pledge ourselves, if given power, we will labor to correct these evils by wise and reasonable legislation, in accordance with the terms of our platform. We believe that the powers of government—in other words, of the people—should be expanded (as in the case of postal service) as rapidly and as far as the good sense of an intelligent people and the teachings of experience shall justify, to the end that oppression, injustice, and poverty shall eventually cease in the land.
While our sympathies as a party of reform are naturally upon the side of every proposition which will tend to make men intelligent, virtuous, and temperate, we nevertheless regard these questions—important as they are—as secondary to the great issues now pressing for solution, and upon which not only our individual prosperity but the very existence of free institutions depends; and 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.

We declare, therefore,—

First. That the union of the labor forces of the United States this day consummated shall be permanent and perpetual; may its spirit enter all hearts for the salvation of the republic; and the uplifting of mankind!

Second. Wealth belongs to him who creates it, and every dollar taken from industry without an equivalent is robbery. "If any will not work, neither shall he eat." The interests of rural and civic labor are the same; their enemies are identical.

Third. We believe that the time has come when the railroad corporations will either own the people or the people must own the railroads; and, should the government enter upon the work of owning and managing all railroads, we should favor an amendment to the Constitution by which all persons engaged in the government service shall be placed under a civil service regulation of the most rigid character, so as to prevent the increase of the power of the national administration by the use of such additional government employees.

First, Money. We demand a national currency, safe, sound, and flexible, issued by the general government only, a full legal tender for all debts, public and private, and that, without the use of banking corporations, a just, equitable, and efficient means of distribution direct to the people, at a tax not to exceed two percent per annum, to be provided as set forth in the sub-treasury plan of the Farmers' Alliance, or a better system; also by payments in discharge of its obligations for public improvements.

(a) We demand free and unlimited coinage of silver and gold at the present legal ratio of sixteen to one.
(b) We demand that the amount of circulating medium be speedily increased to not less than fifty dollars per capita.
(c) We demand a graduated income tax.
(d) We believe that the money of the country should be kept as much as possible in the hands of the people, and hence we demand that all state and national revenues shall be limited to the necessary expenses of the government economically and honestly administered.
(e) We demand that postal savings banks be established by the government for the safe deposit of the earnings of the people and to facilitate exchange.

Second, Transportation. Transportation being a means of exchange and a public necessity, the government should own and operate the railroads in the interest of the people.

(a) The telegraph and telephone, like the post-office system, being a necessity for the transmission of news, should be owned and operated by the government in the interest of the people.

Third, Land. The land, including all the natural sources of wealth, is the heritage of the people, and 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.

Resolutions

Whereas, Other questions have been presented for our consideration, we hereby submit the following, not as a part of the platform of the People's party, but as resolutions expressive of the sentiment of this convention.

1. Resolved, That we demand a free ballot and a fair count in all elections, and pledge ourselves to secure it to every legal voter without federal intervention, through the adoption by the States of the unperverted Australian or secret ballot system.

2. Resolved, That the revenue derived from a graduated income tax should be applied to the reduction of the burden of taxation now resting upon the domestic industries of this country.

3. Resolved, That we pledge our support to fair and liberal pensions to ex-Union soldiers and sailors.

4. Resolved, That we condemn the fallacy of protecting American labor under the present system, which opens our ports to the pauper and criminal classes of the world, and crowds out our wage-earners; and we denounce the present ineffective laws against contract labor, and demand the further restriction of undesirable immigration.

5. Resolved, That we cordially sympathize with the efforts of organized workingmen to shorten the hours of labor, and demand a rigid enforcement of the existing eight-hour law on government work, and ask that a penalty clause be added to the said law.
6. **Resolved**, That we regard the maintenance of a large standing army of mercenaries, known as the Pinkerton system, as a menace to our liberties, and we demand its abolition; and we condemn the recent invasion of the Territory of Wyoming by the hired assassins of plutocracy, assisted by federal officials.

7. **Resolved**, That we commend to the favorable consideration of the people and the reform press the legislative system known as the initiative and referendum.

8. **Resolved**, That we favor a constitutional provision limiting the office of President and Vice-President to one term, and providing for the election of senators of the United States by a direct vote of the people.

9. **Resolved**, That we oppose any subsidy or national aid to any private corporation for any purpose.

10. **Resolved**, That this convention sympathizes with the Knights of Labor and their righteous contest with the tyrannical combine of clothing manufacturers of Rochester, and declares it to be the duty of all who hate tyranny and oppression to refuse to purchase the goods made by said manufacturers, or to patronize any merchants who sell such goods.
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A history of the politicians of the period, stressing the fact that party organization was the dominant factor in the political life at that time.


Besides giving the background of both the National Wheel and the Alliance, the author explains the complaints of the farmers and their aims to better conditions.


A three volume history which includes biographies of the chief political figures of the state. Chapter nine of volume III deals with the Populist era.

Gives a brief impartial description of the farmers' cause and Populism.


Contains figures and facts to prove the distress of the farmers, and advocates the sub-treasury plan, more currency, and government control of railroads.


Book used in this thesis only for population data.


An undergraduate thesis, well written and well documented.


An impartial account of Tillman's riotous political career.


Gives authoritative statistics on the nominating conventions and the elections.


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The thesis submitted by Wallace Ward Reichelt has been read and approved by three members of the Department of History.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

January 18, 1949

Date

Signature of Adviser