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OKLAHOMA POPULISM: A HISTORY OF THE PEOPLE'S PARTY IN THE
OKLAHOMA TERRITORY

The University of Oklahoma

Ph.D. 1984

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THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA
GRADUATE COLLEGE

OKLAHOMA POPULISM:
A HISTORY OF THE PEOPLE'S PARTY
IN THE OKLAHOMA TERRITORY

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

by
WORTH ROBERT MILLER
Norman, Oklahoma
1984

OKLAHOMA POPULISM:
A HISTORY OF THE PEOPLE'S PARTY
IN THE OKLAHOMA TERRITORY
A DISSERTATION
APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

BY

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Preface

John Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath imprinted upon the American psyche the vision of Oklahoma as a land of grinding rural poverty and hopelessness. For many observers the region that late nineteenth century boosters labeled the "land of the fair God," became the epitome of how exploitative capitalism had perverted the American dream. Instead of the affluence and independence boomer elements had promised, privation and tenancy became the lot of most Oklahoma farmers in the first half of the twentieth century.

In recent years historians Garin Burbank and James R. Green have provided the details of the Oklahoma Socialist party, verifying the strength and vitality of the movement where it reached the apex of its electoral support in America. Scholars have done very little research, however, into the Oklahoma Socialists' agrarian predecessor, the People's, or Populist, party. Populists addressed many of the issues Socialists agitated as they were becoming problems in the new land. People's party solutions sometimes even mirrored those of the Socialists, most notably in advocating the government ownership of the railroads, telephones and telegraphs. It is doubtful, however, if more than a handful of Oklahoma Populists ever heard of Karl Marx before 1900. Their world view came from a thoroughly American egalitarian

tradition which stretched back through the democracy of Jefferson, Jackson and Lincoln to the ideology of the American Revolution. Because Populism had its intellectual roots in such a time-honored American tradition, its appeal far exceeded that of the Socialists. Only at the very peak of its popularity in 1914 did the Socialist party receive a share of the Oklahoma vote comparable to that of the Populist party's weakest showings.¹

The author wishes to express his sincere thanks to the following people for their assistance in the development of this work. My dissertation director, H. Wayne Morgan, provided me with needed encouragement and valuable suggestions. John S. Ezell and Jack Haley of the Western History Collections of the University of Oklahoma were quite helpful in leading me to possible sources of information. Because almost every major work on American Populism relies substantially upon information gleaned from newspapers, the cooperation of Ms. Barbara Mathis at the University of Oklahoma Journalism Library was particularly important to me. Newspapers not available there were viewed at the Oklahoma Historical Society. A variety of people too numerous to mention at both the Oklahoma Historical Society and the

¹ Populists received 18.0% of the vote in 1890. In those counties constituting the Oklahoma Territory in 1890, the Socialist party received 15.8% of the vote in 1914. The People's party received 20.5% of the vote in 1892. In 1914 the Socialists received 19.6% of the vote in those counties which made up the Oklahoma Territory in 1892. At no time did the Socialist party vote come within 10% of the Populist's later showings.

Oklahoma Department of Libraries in Oklahoma City provided valuable assistance. I also made liberal use of the University of Oklahoma Computer Services Office and would particularly like to thank Tanya Stewart and Gary Parent for their kind assistance. My special thanks also goes to Michael Roark of the Southeast Missouri State University at Cape Girardeau for sharing his suggestions and place of birth data on Oklahomans. John Womack, Sr., was kind enough to share his valuable knowledge of Cleveland County and her people with the author. Last, but certainly not least, I would like to extend my thanks to Merrily Cummings Ford for sharing several valuable family manuscripts concerning her grandfather Henry and great uncle Leo Vincent.

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ABSTRACT

The Oklahoma Territory was opened to white settlement in a series of land runs beginning in 1889. The vast majority of those migrating to the new land settled in Kansas or Texas before moving to Oklahoma. The People's party in Oklahoma had its origins in the south-central Kansas border area. Former Kansans provided the bulk of support for Oklahoma Populism in the first two years. Only in 1892 did Populism spread among enough southern-born settlers to validate the third party claim to transcend sectional loyalties.

Sectionalism has been an important factor in Oklahoma politics since 1890. Pearsonian correlations between voting and birthplace data, however, show that a rural-urban cleavage rivaled that of sectionalism during the Populist era. Counties served by rail at the time of their settlement produced sharply divergent cosmopolitan-hinterland culture areas. Laissez faire capitalism and Social Darwinism informed the ethos of the cosmopolitan culture. The infamous exploitations of Oklahoma's early years were the product of this more commercial region. Both the Democratic and Republican parties were strongest in cosmopolitan areas. Hinterland farmers, on the other hand, were the exponents of an egalitarian ethos which owed its inspiration to the republican

ideology of the American Revolution. This ethos was human rather than system oriented, and instilled certain trepidations about Gilded Age development in its adherents.

Since Oklahoma provided settlers with a new start, the People's party developed slowly in the new land. Populism was the ideology of those disillusioned with the panaceas of Gilded Age development. The third party blossomed, however, in the mid-1890s. This also coincided with the arrival of better third party leadership in the territory. The People's party fused with Democrats in 1896 and decimated the GOP at the polls. The move from a justice to an expediency orientation, coupled with Democratic footdragging in the overwhelmingly fusionist 1897 legislature, however, discredited third party leaders. Disillusionment, combined with an upswing in the economy in the late 1890s killed the People's party. Populism, however, did provide a real alternative to mainstream party control of Oklahoma politics in the mid-1890s by addressing many of the same problems that would later become issues for the Socialist party in the Sooner state.

Chapter I

KANSAS ORIGINS

For nineteenth century Americans westward expansion was an integral part of what made their nation the land of opportunity. When the prospects for personal advancement in the east, or in the old country, proved meager the hope for improvement continually led people westward. The idea of an egalitarian frontier where all men started as equals became an irresistible lure for those with ambition. The vast natural resources of the American interior promised independence and even wealth to those willing to seize the opportunity. Participation in the upbuilding of the great American empire afforded the frontiersman a status his allegedly effete eastern cousin could not hope to attain. Traditions stretching back at least to the Founding Fathers made the westward migrant the epitome of Americanism.

As the nineteenth century neared its end so did the land available for settlement in America. The opening of the two million acre "Unassigned Lands" in what is now central Oklahoma to black and white settlement in 1889 committed the federal government to a policy of bringing under cultivation the last truly arable virgin farm land in America. The pro-

cess set in motion in 1889 was designed to extinguish the claims of the Indian Territory's Native American population to the land set aside, supposedly in perpetuity, for their exclusive use a half century earlier. As expected, the region surrounding the Unassigned Lands fell to the homeseeker's plow in short order. By 1901 the entire western half of present-day Oklahoma would be under non-Indian control. The process was completed six years later when federal authorities dissolved the governments of the Five Civilized Tribes in eastern Oklahoma. With the 1889 run, the ten-year-old Oklahoma Boomer Movement, an amalgam of homesteader, mercantile and railroad interests, finally secured its entering wedge against Native American control of what they called "The Promised Land."²

More than anywhere else in the American west Oklahoma promised to fulfill the homesteader's dream of free land. The enormous government land grants made to railroads elsewhere would not extend into the new territory. Nor would federal authorities hold back the choicest acres for sale to speculators or the already prosperous. Aside from allotments to extinguish Indian claims and plots set aside for the maintenance of public education all of the Promised Land

² Arrell M. Gibson, Oklahoma: A History of Five Centuries (Norman: Harlow Publishing Co., 1965), p.299, Danney Goble, Progressive Oklahoma: The Making of a New Kind of State (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), p.4. The Oklahoma Organic Act provided for the automatic annexation of Indian lands to the new territory as they were opened to white settlement.

would be open to the homeless. Truly, Oklahoma was to be the land of the homesteader.³

To Boomers, Oklahoma was a panacea for all of the ills of the late nineteenth century. Most Americans already accepted the safety valve concept of westward expansion which Frederick Jackson Turner would soon immortalize. They believed the westward migration of excess workers would defuse the mounting labor troubles of the east. A new beginning for those ambitious enough to make the trek would keep social mobility open and undermine the development of economic classes. The new markets created would boost commerce in the adjoining states and industrial production in the east. For men representing a variety of interests Oklahoma provided the last best chance in America for the economic independence and personal success that traditionally went with westward expansion.

Nature provided an idyllic setting for the April 22, 1889, opening of the Unassigned Lands. An early spring furnished the virgin plains with a luxuriant carpet of bluestem grass. The beauty of the physical setting, however, belied the seriousness, even desperation, of the prospective settlers. Federal authorities had invented the land run especially for this opening. Since potential homesteaders vastly outnumbered the available claim sites a Darwinistic struggle for the land would ensue. Only the strong and ag-

³ Gilbert Fite, The Farmers Frontier, 1865-1900 (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), p.209.

gressive could hope to succeed. For this reason most of the homeseekers were in the springtime of their lives.

To facilitate passage to "The Promised Land" the government allowed entry on the surrounding Indian lands for a few days before the run. Most of the prospective homeseekers gathered on the northern border of the new lands. The recent bust in Kansas farming insured that northerners would constitute a majority of the new territory's population. Drought and mortgage foreclosures forced half of the residents of western Kansas to seek their fortunes elsewhere in the late 1880s. Rail transport, for those shunning the more traditional horse or wagon, also favored the northerner. Both the Rock Island and the Santa Fe lines entered Oklahoma from Kansas, but the former would not reach the southern boundary to the Unassigned Lands until after the run.

Settlers coming to Oklahoma in 1889 represented a wide variety of humankind. Blacks and whites; northerners, southerners and foreigners; merchants and farmers; honest and dishonest, all made the run for free land. Late nineteenth century America encompassed many differing patterns of life and values. Rail service, which linked more and more people to the cosmopolitan world, encouraged a more uniform culture. Many in the newly settled West and the war retarded south, however, still resided, both emotionally and physically, upon the periphery of this homogenizing civilization. Because of its central location, Oklahoma became a

crossroads for the various creeds found in Gilded Age America.

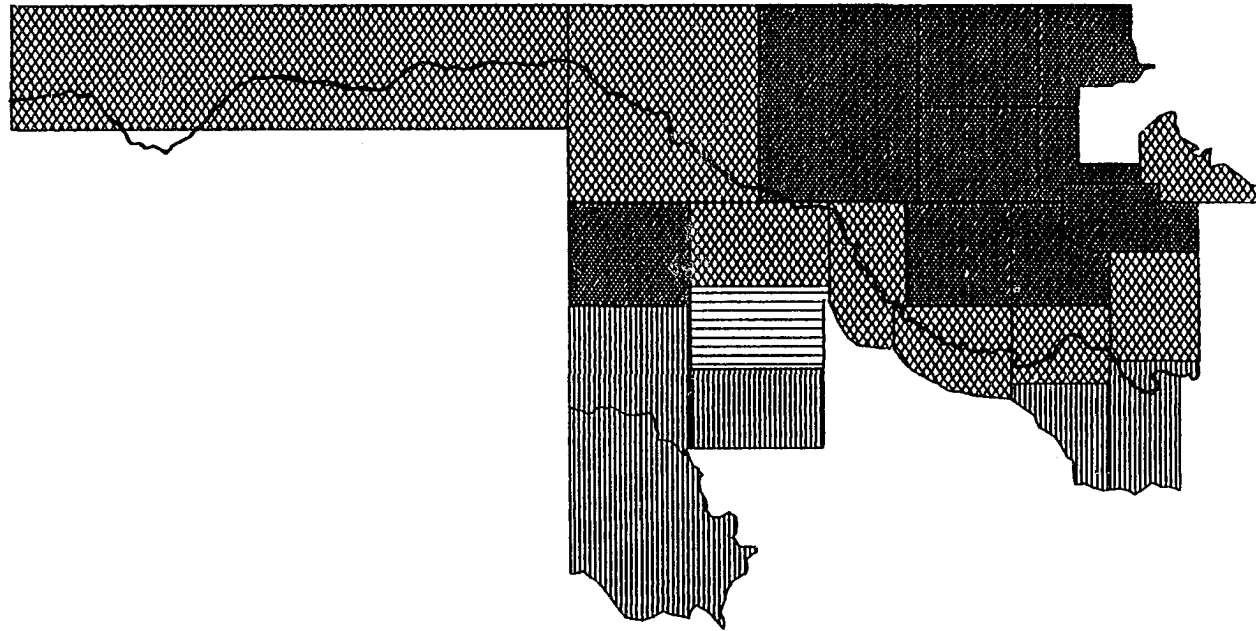
From the very first observers noted the importance of the settlement patterns Oklahoma's earliest migrants established in the cultural and political texture of the new territory. Northerners, with their Yankee traditions and Republican party sympathies, entered the Oklahoma Territory from Kansas and settled primarily north of the Canadian River.⁴ Sons of the South, with their sectional loyalties and Democratic party affections entered the new territory from Texas and settled mostly south of the Canadian. Map I, which shows Oklahomans' race and place of birth in 1900, reveals this pattern. While significant regional minorities existed in every county this north-south cleavage dominated most considerations of partisan politics in Oklahoma after 1889.⁵

Another migration pattern the earliest settlers formed would prove equally as important to the cultural and political makeup of Oklahoma in the 1890s. The early migrants' choice of transportation to "the Promised Land" produced

⁴ Oklahomans usually refer to the North Canadian River, which flows through Oklahoma City, as the "Canadian River."

⁵ For such treatments of Oklahoma politics see Oliver Benson, Oklahoma Votes, 1907-1962 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Bureau of Government Research, 1964); Stanley Jones, Oklahoma Politics in State and Nation (Enid: Haymaker Press, 1974) or James R. Scales and Danney Goble, Oklahoma Politics: A History (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982).

MAP I



LEGEND: BIRTH

 >60% NORTH/BLACK

 50-60% NORTH/BL

 50-60% WH SOUTH

 >60% WHITE SOUTH

RACE & PLACE OF BIRTH IN 1900

sharply divergent culture areas that would also prove important to partisan politics. Men with particularly commercial orientations; bankers, lawyers, merchants and speculators, came to Oklahoma by rail. As products of the late nineteenth century cosmopolitan world, the panaceas of laissez-faire capitalism, Social Darwinism and business boosterism constituted their gospel. Once in view of one of the designated townsites they bolted for the nearest unclaimed town lot. If they were particularly speculative they might even try for a nearby quarter-section in the hope urban expansion would move in their direction. In these railroad towns seekers of the main chance entered into a cut-throat scramble for profits. Drifters, entrepreneurs, exploiters and speculators all vied for whatever would turn a dollar. The resultant manipulations and slick deals naturally produced the carnival atmosphere endemic to all boom-town situations. An exceptionally exploitative population emerged in and around the railroad towns. In these cosmopolitan enclaves the tooth and claw version of "Gilded Age enterprise" reached the apex of its development. Constituting the apotheosis of the late nineteenth century's ruling ideology, cosmopolitan Oklahomans would provide the bulk of the two mainstream parties' electoral support.⁶

⁶ Norman L. Crocket, "The Opening of Oklahoma: A Businessman's Frontier, Chronicles of Oklahoma 56 (Spring, 1978): p. 94 and Michael Owen Roark, "Oklahoma Territory: Frontier Development, Migration and Culture Areas," (Ph. D. dissertation, Syracuse University, 1979), p. 166.

One man who took the railroad to Guthrie, the new territorial capital, on opening day was Henry Vincent, the reform minded editor of the American Nonconformist and Kansas Industrial Liberator. Although he went by train his heart was with those who travelled overland to the new territory. Not only did the young editor denounce the Darwinistic nature of the land run at the time, but more than forty years later he still expressed outrage at the petty exploitation he encountered. He bitterly recalled that it even cost him a nickel for a sip of water from the Cimarron River the day after the opening.⁷

After visiting Oklahoma City Vincent returned to Kansas reinforced in his belief that opening the new land was not enough to solve the nation's problems. His home-town of Winfield had been a center of Boomer activity. While Vincent did not begrudge the homeseeker a new chance, he had personally refrained from the boosterism prevalent among other south Kansas newspapers in 1889. In his own words Henry Vincent was an exponent of "the most ultra reform."⁸ The frontier safety valve was choked with too many refugees seeking too little land. He believed Americans finally would be forced to face the problems commercial and industrial development had produced.

⁷ American Nonconformist (Winfield, Kansas), 18 April 1889, Henry Vincent, "Henry Sez" (circa 1931) Unpublished Manuscript in the possession of Vincent's granddaughter Merri-ly Cummings Ford of Glendora, California.

⁸ American Nonconformist (Winfield), 7 October 1886.

Because of their slower mode of transportation homesteaders filled up the quarter-sections away from the railroad towns. Isolated from the cosmopolitan culture, these settlers held fast to the agrarianism of their fathers which exalted spiritual values above the material. Although no longer the self-sufficient yeoman of Jefferson's dream, agrarians still firmly believed that only through a union of personal liberty and communal equality could Americans achieve the vaunted objective of providing for the public welfare. These outposts of the Jeffersonian ideal would provide the breeding ground for the Populist Revolt of the 1890s.⁹

A variety of sources fed into and helped define the egalitarian values of late nineteenth century agrarianism. Puritan communalism, which placed controls upon rampant individualism in the community's interest, first established a tradition of substantive equality among Europeans in America. As visions of the community ideal waned with the commercialization of the colonial environment the Great Awakening of the 1740s revived the emphasis upon human equality. The most succinct and widely recognized exposition of the cherished balance between equality and liberty to affect the nineteenth century mind, however, came out of the Republican Ideology of the American Revolutionary period.¹⁰

⁹ Charles Maurice Wiltse, The Jeffersonian Tradition In American Democracy, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1935), p. 249.

¹⁰ For the progress of this model through American History

As the intellectual heirs of the English Commonwealth and Radical Whig traditions, America's Founding Fathers viewed history as a never ending battle between the forces of governmental power and personal liberty. Whig ideology prophesized alternating periods of social advance and decay as the forces of liberty and power vied for dominance. The attempt of eighteenth century European thinkers to assess the impact of the onrushing commercial revolution of their day easily fed into the Founding Fathers' Whiggish orientation. Enlightenment figures formed the theory that societies evolved from a crude simplicity to a civilized complexity through several discrete stages. By the late eighteenth century French and Scottish writers had settled upon four successive stages of social development; hunting, pasturage, agriculture and commerce. Each level of development occasioned a revolution in man's customs, habits, manners and morals. While the transition from hunting and pasturage to agriculture added values of civilization to the strength and vitality of the previous stages the advance to commercial complexity seemed to bring only corruption and decay in its wake.¹¹

see Rowland Berthoff, "Peasants and Artisans, Puritans and Republicans: Personal Liberty and Communal Equality in American History," Journal of American History 69, no. 3 (December, 1982): 579-614.

¹¹ Drew McCoy, The Elusive Republic (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1980), pp. 18-21, 40. For the Commonwealth and Radical Whig origins of the American Revolution see Robert Shalhope, "Toward a Republican Synthesis: The Emergence of an Understanding of Republicanism in American

To eighteenth century moralists it was "luxury" which "left minds stupefied and bodies enervated by wallowing forever in one continual puddle of voluptuousness" that corrupted societies. They laid "luxury" at the doorstep of the aggressive, greedy and hedonistic new commercial man. It was an easy step for the Founding Fathers then to perceive the divergence between the virtuous character of the frugal, industrious, and temperate colonial farmer and the social sickness luxury had brought to a refined England. In the end colonists separated themselves from the spreading cancers of the old world and in the process institutionalized an egalitarian spirit in the American psyche.¹²

In considering the problem of establishing a virtuous state the Revolutionary generation turned its attention to the American people's ability to maintain their liberty against the designs of those wielding power. The Founding Fathers quickly saw an independent citizenry as the foundation upon which the new nation must stand. Jeffersonians especially feared that the commercialization of society would bring a mass of poverty stricken laborers dangerously dependent upon a privileged class of property owning employers. The vastness of the American interior, however, could provide a fortuitous escape from degeneration into

Historiography" William and Mary Quarterly 3d. ser. 29 (Spring, 1972): 49-80.

¹² Gordon Wood, The Creation of the American Republic (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1969), p. 52, and McCoy, The Elusive Republic, p. 23.

the undesirable fourth stage of development.

Benjamin Franklin in his "Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind" (1751) reflected the prevalent late eighteenth century belief that population density propelled societies through their stages of development. Environmental explanations of social phenomena dominated the Age of Reason. To Franklin, commerce and manufacturing became necessary only when overpopulation drove large segments of the agrarian population off the land. So long as the land was not overcrowded men would not give up their independence for subservience to an employer. The vast American wilderness provided the means for stabilizing population density at the desirable agrarian stage of development. In America excess farmers could retain their independence by seeking homes on the frontier. So long as land was available for the homeless Americans could avoid the servile dependence of an impoverished citizenry.¹³

As the husbandman constituted the rock upon which the Republic stood Americans developed a freehold concept consistent with the advancement of the small farmer's interests. Included in this freehold concept were notions that all men had a natural right to land, contact with nature morally invigorated the farmer, and freehold tenure was a just source of dignity and status. For agrarians, labor, especially in agriculture, became the only legitimate source of wealth.¹⁴

¹³ McCoy, The Elusive Republic, pp. 49-52.

Believers in the agrarian ideal of a classless, egalitarian society, based upon the virtues of the morally invigorated freeholder, influenced Americans throughout the nineteenth century. The anti-monopoly ethos of the Jacksonian period owed much to the Jeffersonian tradition. For Abolitionists the slave's subservience and denial of the fruits of his labor violated the same egalitarian tradition. When workers transmitted the neo-Jeffersonian Locofoco Movement of the 1830s to the western frontier it fused with Bentonian Democracy to inform the Republicanism of Abraham Lincoln, as well as a number of late nineteenth century egalitarian efforts.¹⁵

Conflicts between economically and socially developed older sections and a regenerative egalitarian periphery have a long tradition in America. Movements of the periphery such as Puritanism, the Great Awakening, Carolina Regulators, the American Revolution and Radical Republicanism all contained egalitarian strains. The long standing aristocratic-egalitarian cleavage of the Tidewater-Piedmont struggle in the American South was in the same vein. Common to each peripheral group was a hostility to special privilege,

¹⁴ Henry Nash Smith, Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), p. 41.

¹⁵ Marvin Meyers, The Jacksonian Persuasion, Politics and Belief (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957), pp. 11, 228, 274-75; and Chester McArthur Destler, American Radicalism, 1865-1901 (Chicago: Quadrangle Paperbacks, 1946), chapter 1.

opposition to gross inequalities in wealth, antipathy toward luxury and a concern for human rights over those of property. The homesteader element of the Oklahoma Boomer Movement and the Populist party both operated within the time honored concepts implicit in the agrarian tradition and movements of the periphery.¹⁶

The Oklahoma Boomer Movement owed its genesis to railroad attorney Elias C. Boudinot's 1879 statement that a thorough examination of the pertinent laws and treaties showed that fourteen million acres of land in the western part of the Indian Territory actually belonged to the public domain. Boudinot's announcement suggested that the land was subject to homestead settlement. Railroad interests clearly favored freight-generating farmers to semi-nomadic Native Americans in the questioned territory. Boudinot, himself a Cherokee, favored legal action alone to open the region. But David L. Payne, a farmer and south Kansas politician, quickly emerged as the on the scene leader of the Boomers through his advocacy of direct action. Payne took his cue from earlier squatters federal troops had ejected forceably from the Cherokee Nation. In the spring of 1880 the Boomer leader began orchestrating a series of homesteader invasions of the Indian Territory. His plan was to create a court case in

¹⁶ For the latest explanation of the center-periphery conflict in American history and its influence upon the Populist party see James Turner, "Understanding the Populists," Journal of American History 67, no. 2 (September, 1980): 272-73.

which the questioned lands would be ordered open to settlement.¹⁷

The Boomer invasions were only the most flamboyant part of Payne's plan to open Oklahoma to settlement. Ranchers actually occupied the land in question under leases with Indian tribes. To secure their removal, Boomers sent lobbyists to Washington to urge a congressional investigation of the Indian cattle leases. To arouse support for the Boomer efforts Payne also established a newspaper, the Oklahoma War Chief in early 1883. Until his death in November, 1884, however, invasion was Payne's most prominent tool.

With Payne's death the Boomer Movement gradually developed a new stance. William L. Couch, Payne's successor, led one final invasion of the Indian Territory in December, 1884. Afterwards, Couch took the Boomers into a less belligerent phase. Signifying the change the Oklahoma War Chief, became the Oklahoma Chief and in place of homesteader intrusions Boomers began lobbyist invasions of the nation's capital. As the Republican administration of Chester A. Arthur had rebuffed the Oklahoma Movement, Boomers placed great hope in the incoming Democratic Administration of Grover Cleveland in 1885. When the new President signed legislation authorizing government negotiations for the purchase

¹⁷ Stan Hoig, David L. Payne: The Oklahoma Boomer (Oklahoma City: Western Heritage Books, 1908), pp. 60-64, William W. Savage, Jr., The Cherokee Strip Livestock Association: Federal Regulation and the Cattleman's Last Frontier (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1973), p. 69 and Fite, The Farmer's Frontier, p. 203.

of the questioned lands the Boomers' new tactics appeared to bear fruit. Jubilation soon turned to anger, however, when Cleveland showed no haste in fulfilling his commitment. The appointment of Samuel Crocker, an experienced agitator, as editor of the Oklahoma Chief marked the end of the Boomer honeymoon with Cleveland. The new editor immediately re-named the Oklahoma Movement's mouthpiece the Oklahoma War Chief.¹⁸

Samuel Crocker provided a direct link between the homesteader wing of the Boomer Movement and the People's party. In 1890 he would lead the Oklahoma third party ticket. The Crocker family migrated from their native England to the rustic simplicity of the American frontier shortly after young Samuel's birth in 1845. Eventually the family settled in southwestern Iowa where the elder Crocker took up farming and stock raising. Soon Crocker's father opened a general store leaving his children to manage the farm. Such responsibilities kept the future Boomer leader's formal schooling to a minimum. As a child Crocker permanently crippled his left arm. While the injury kept him out of the Civil War, his domineering and sometimes sadistic father found it insufficient reason to train young Samuel in any less arduous profession. To better his situation young Samuel set out on his own in his late teens. His childhood experiences, how-

¹⁸ I. N. Ferrill, "The Boomer's Last Raid," Sturm's Oklahoma Magazine 8, no. 2 (April, 1902): 37-40 and Oklahoma Chief (Caldwell, Kansas), 3 February 1885.

ever, left their mark. Throughout his adult life Samuel Crocker would empathize with those he believed to be hard working, but oppressed underdogs.¹⁹

Crocker's keen sensitivity to a lack of formal education led him to become a voracious reader in his spare moments. After shifting from job to job as a youth he finally saved enough money to open a general store. Permanent residence, a relatively secure profession and exposure to political economy through his reading soon led the young storekeeper into political activism. His favorite works were those of vehemently anti-corporation Abolitionist Amasa Walker. Speechmaking, writing and eventually editing his own newspaper brought Crocker to the center of Iowa's Antimonopoly and Greenback Movements.²⁰

Greenback monetary theory fit conveniently into the late nineteenth century agrarian ideology. An integral part of the American freehold concept was the belief that labor was the only valid source of wealth. Since value rested in production alone, money was simply a measure of how much work one had accomplished. Money only needed government fiat rather than metal with intrinsic value to be good. Such

¹⁹ Samuel Crocker, "The Autobiography of Samuel Crocker," Oklahoma Historical Society. (1913), pp. 1-5, 49 & 59. Crocker forever attributed his lame arm to medical malpractice. When told he would die of blood poisoning without the amputation of his infected right arm in 1890 Crocker ordered the doctor off his property at gunpoint. Crocker died in 1921.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 110.

ideas found especial affection on the debt-ridden frontier of the Great Plains after the Panic of 1873 began an accelerated deflation of farm produce prices. By the end of the Greenback Era Crocker's attacks upon accumulators, speculators and the pretensions of the wealthy had gained him the nickname of "Iowa's Political Agitator."²¹

With the eclipse of the Greenback party in the election of 1884, Samuel Crocker decided to cast his fortunes with a new crusade, the Oklahoma Boomer Movement. In the early months of 1885 he organized a small band of homesteaders and joined Payne's Oklahoma Colony in southern Kansas. "Iowa's Political Agitator" took over the editorship of the Oklahoma War Chief in June, 1885.²²

Throughout the Boomer Movement the Payne Colony focused upon cattleman occupation of the questioned territory. The farmer-rancher rivalry Crocker stepped into was as old as the West itself. Historian Edward Everett Dale, himself a former cowboy, once drew an analogy between ranching and the feudal society of medieval Europe that presents a revealing insight into the homesteader view of ranchers. Like every man on horseback, Dale contended, the cowboy considered himself superior to the man who walked. He was a knight, a chevalier, a Ritter or a caballero. Those who walked were

²¹ Walter T. K. Nugent, The Money Question During Reconstruction (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1967), pp. 59 & 62, and Crocker, pp. 115-16, 119, 128, & 144-45.

²² Crocker, "Autobiography," p. 181; and Oklahoma War Chief (Arkansas City), 18 June 1885.

timid men of limited vision, in short, peasants. By the 1880s America's greatest ranchmen often occupied ranges larger than the fiefdom's of many German princelings. Their riders were every bit as numerous as the men at arms of a medieval Baron. The rancher's brand was the counterpart of the feudal lord's coat of arms. His ranch house frequently served the same purpose as a medieval castle. From it the rancher dispensed rewards, provided justice and offered a gracious hospitality. If the cow country offered the modern knight no tilt or tournament, the rodeo provided an appropriate alternative. In short, the culture of the cattle kingdom was everything the egalitarian farmer feared and hated. The "Cattle Baron" and his hirelings easily conjured up in the homesteader's mind the vision of swaggering pseudo-aristocrats bent upon diverting the advance of American republicanism.²³

Samuel Crocker's commitment to the Boomer cause required no great shift in his political orientation. The intrigues cattlemen perpetrated upon Indian leaders to secure grazing rights in the Indian Territory frequently resembled those "of various European nations to gain or widen a sphere of

²³ Edward Everett Dale, "The Cow Country in Transition," in Arrell M. Gibson, Frontier Historian: The Life and Work of Edward Everett Dale (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1975), p. 317 & 323. The term "Cattle Baron" possibly originated with the Boomers. It appears in the pages of the Oklahoma War Chief more than a decade before the citation listed in A Dictionary of Americanisms (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), pp. 285-86. See the Oklahoma War Chief, 31 December 1885 and 17 August 1886.

influence among the savage peoples of Africa," according to Dale.²⁴ To secure exclusive use of the Cherokee Outlet ranchers even formed the restrictionist Cherokee Livestock Association. Boomers charged that the secretary of the interior promoted a beef monopoly in sanctioning the ill-gotten cattle leases in return for lavish political contributions. For years Boomers had maintained that the government excluded poor farmers from homesteads while squandering millions of acres upon "soulless corporations." In the Boomer mind "monopoly" in the person of the "Cattle Baron" prevented the opening of Oklahoma to the homeless poor. A corrupted commercial system combined with the hunting (Indians) and pasturage (ranchers) stages of development to destroy the advances in civilization agrarians had achieved.²⁵

The ascension of Samuel Crocker to the editorship of the Oklahoma War Chief marked the beginning of a broader reformist orientation to the paper. S. C. Smith, the War Chief's new owner, gave his editor a free hand in attacking national banks, government bonds, railroads and the tariff, in addition to the homesteader's natural enemy, land syndicates. As the outgoing editor, S. J. Zerger, wrote "monopoly will be handled with ungloved hands in all of its branches."

²⁴ Edward Everett Dale, "The Ranchman's Last Frontier," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, 10, no. 1 (June, 1923): p. 42, as quoted in H. Wayne and Anne Hodges Morgan, Oklahoma: A Bicentennial History (New York: Norton, 1977), p. 44.

²⁵ Oklahoma War Chief, 2 March, 1883 and Oklahoma Chief, 17 February 1885.

Crocker promised to "send the poison arrow of death into the heart of Master Monopoly, scalping . . . every purloining syndicate and chartered corporation of consolidated capital that tends to corrupt the body politic, cheat justice, rob labor . . . subvert popular government and render a higher and nobler civilization worse than impossible." Included on the War Chief's revised masthead were calls for universal suffrage and a federally controlled currency.²⁶

A Department of Interior report of 1885 listed what Samuel Crocker called the "cattle monopoly" investment in the livestock industry at \$12 million. The Boomer editor maintained that farming was "the most independent of callings" before the rise of the cattle kingdom. A quarter-century before, he claimed, the livestock industry had been confined largely to well regulated farms. At that time the farmer's stock provided a large portion of his margin of solvency. By permitting Cattle Baron grazing rights on the public domain for only a nominal payment to Indian leaders the government created an unfair discrimination against the mortgage and tax ridden farmer. Government favoritism encouraged the rise of the cattle kingdom, and in turn made farming "A Ruined Industry."²⁷

²⁶ Oklahoma War Chief, 11 & 18 June 1885. These terms were pseudonyms for Woman's Suffrage and Greenbacks. Crocker also called for a democratization of the political system through abolishing the Senate (America's House of Lords), the Electoral College, patronage and the President's veto power. Oklahoma War Chief, 18 & 25 June, 2 July and 20 August 1885.

In partisan politics the Boomer Movement developed a definite preference for the Democratic party in the early 1880s. David L. Payne had served in the Kansas legislature as a Democrat. A Democratic-Greenbacker fusion had elected Sidney Clarke, the Boomer Colony's best known Washington lobbyist, Speaker of the Kansas House. Samuel Crocker had campaigned for the Iowa Democratic-Greenbacker-Antimonopoly fusion in 1884, and promised a return engagement for the "turn the rascals out" fusion effort of 1886. Oklahoma Colony spirits were never higher when Sidney Clarke and pro-Boomer Congressman James B. Weaver, of Iowa, received an encouraging interview with the new Democratic President, Grover Cleveland, in early 1885. When the new chief executive failed to follow through on legislation authorizing negotiations with the Cherokees, Creeks and Seminoles or on the Attorney General's decision that the Indian cattle leases were invalid, the Boomer Movement turned against Cleveland.²⁸

²⁷ Oklahoma War Chief, 10 December 1885 and 17 August, 1886. Crocker also complained that it was the farmer's taxes that paid for the army which protected the cattlemen from homesteader invasion while the cattlemen, residing on untaxed Indian lands, paid nothing toward the maintenance of the government. Oklahoma War Chief, 3 & 24 December 1885 and 17 August 1886. The article, "A Ruined Industry" ran as a serial in the Oklahoma War Chief from 10 December 1885 to 4 February 1886.

²⁸ Oklahoma Chief, 12 March 1885 and Oklahoma War Chief, 3 September 1885.

In an attempt to intimidate his former Oklahoma Colony friends into silence, Cleveland secured sixty-eight treason warrants against the Boomer leaders in July, 1885. Samuel Crocker was the most prominent agitator arrested. Rather than post bail the War Chief editor chose to publicize his martyrdom by giving interviews from what he labeled "An American Bastile." From his cell Crocker dramatically charged that a "dangerous aristocracy" controlled government, bringing the time near "when toiling industry would be enslaved, incarcerated and even shot down for asserting the rights of free men."²⁹

Samuel Crocker found it no coincidence that "English and Scotch {sic} Dudes" made up a significant part of the Robber Baron class. The War Chief editor charged that while such "aristocratic enemies" received privileges the government refused to "honest, homeseeking American citizens," they would overthrow America's democratic institutions tomorrow if they could. Had not English landlords already legislated Ireland into "starvation's early grave," he asked?³⁰ Taking the Enlightenment view, inherited from the Founding Fathers, that societies were either advancing or declining, Crocker

²⁹ Oklahoma War Chief, 23 July & 13 August 1885. Although sixty eight treason warrants were secured only five or six were actually served. All charges against the Boomer leaders were dropped before the date of their trial. The government's purpose was obviously intimidation.

³⁰ Oklahoma War Chief, 25 June 1885 and 29 April & 13 May 1886. To avoid the fate of Ireland Crocker advocated legislation be passed limiting the ownership of land to 160 acres. Oklahoma War Chief, 3 September 1885.

feared that nation's increasing subservience to men of aristocratic pretensions was a harbinger of evil for the republic.

Jeffersonians feared that the prostration of agriculture would jeopardize American institutions. That farm poverty would bring a subservient underclass of workers in its wake never seemed so true to late nineteenth century egalitarians as in their own time. In their mind, crime, poverty and dependence each could be laid at the feet of unjust laws, which unworthy men passed and administered. Government officials who supported the Cattle Baron over the homesteader not only favored an indolent Europe and effete east over the industrious West, but they also created an unfair discrimination between capital and labor. According to Samuel Crocker a corrupted government placed the accumulator above the producer in the battle between those who fought "to hold the fruits of their labor" and those who sought "to steal them by law."³¹ Not surprisingly, in addition to his Boomer activities Samuel Crocker was also an organizer for the Knights of Labor, the largest producer-oriented organization of the mid-1880s in America.

In conjunction with his membership in the Knights of Labor Samuel Crocker let slip the rumor that he might "organize a people's party on a more liberal and reformatory platform, put a full ticket into the field and knock the brains

³¹ Ibid., 31 December 1885; 29 April; 7 & 21 May 1886.

of Democracy out."³² The Knights membership enjoyed an unparalleled growth in the mid-1880s and Crocker, along with many Knight's members, saw their union as a political organization. The order had even supported the Greenback-Labor party in 1880. In an 1886 speech on the Knight's official "Declaration of Principles" the union's Washington lobbyist, Ralph Beaumont, committed the labor organization "to secure to the wage worker the full enjoyment of the wealth they create." Specifically, the union pledged itself to support health and safety legislation, the eight hour day, nationalization of the railroads, telephones and telegraphs, abolition of child and convict labor, greenbacks, silver, a postal savings system and preserving the public domain for actual settlers. In January, 1886, the Knights specifically endorsed the Oklahoma Boomer Movement. In a categorization that would be repeated in the Populist Omaha Platform of 1892, Beaumont labelled the major issues agitating labor in 1886 as land, transportation and finance.³³

In a sense the Knights of Labor was the product of the failure of the frontier safety valve to cure industrial ills. Jeffersonian Democracy emphasized the social-utilita-

³² Oklahoma War Chief 23 July 1885.

³³ Oklahoma War Chief, 23 July 1885 & 11 March 1886; Gerald N. Grob, "The Knights of Labor, Politics and Populism," Mid-America 29, no. 1 (January, 1959): 3-7 and Ralph Beaumont, "A Lecture on the Declarations of Principles-Knights of Labor" (Cincinnati: George N. Bryan Co., 1886). Notably, Ralph Beaumont would become the Oklahoma Populist candidate for delegate to Congress in 1894.

rian function of the state. As great accumulations of wealth, with their inevitable corollary of exploitation, emerged, the Knights looked to a "cooperative industrial system" in which each man would remain independent by becoming his own employer. In this way "cooperation" became a logical development of the Jeffersonian tradition. Without his equal right to property, liberty would offer the citizen no more than the right to chose a master. As the future of American civilization depended upon an independent citizenry, the Knights proposed "to make industrial and moral worth, not wealth, the true standard of individual and national greatness." The high level of Knights of Labor activity eventually brought Henry and Leo Vincent, the men who would found the People's party in Kansas, to the south Kansas home of the Boomer Movement. From these origins the Oklahoma third party movement took root.³⁴

The reform heritage of Henry and Leo Vincent stretched back through the Greenback and Radical Republican Movements in America to the Chartist and Anti-Slavery agitation of England in the person of the Vincent's father, James. The Vincents' grandfather was the Congregationalist minister of Deal, Kent County, England from 1808 until his death in 1848. James Vincent briefly succeeded to his father's pa-

³⁴ Wiltse, The Jeffersonian Tradition, p. 247. The Principles of the Knights of Labor were reproduced in the Oklahoma War Chief, 11 March 1886. The first edition of the Nonconformist published in Winfield appeared 7 October 1886.

storate before migrating to America in November, 1848. Of the "strictest Puritan stock" Vincent came to the United States at the behest of an English anti-slavery society to stump the Old Northwest for human freedom. He met his wife to be, Mary Sheldon, the daughter of a presiding elder of the Methodist Church, while continuing his theological studies at Oberlin College in Ohio. In 1855 the Vincent family set out for "Bleeding Kansas" to do their part in making it a free state. They got only so far as the small town of Tabor, a colony of former Oberlin residents in southwestern Iowa, however, before running out of money and deciding to settle there. Four of the five Vincent children to survive infancy were born in Tabor. Growing up in a religiously oriented college town on John Brown's "Underground Railroad" the Vincent boys naturally became engrossed in the nineteenth century reform tradition.³⁵

As a diversion from the routine of farm life Henry and Leo acquired a small printing press in their mid-teens. At first they printed calling cards for the local college boys. Their father, a long-time contributor to various reform journals, however, suggested the family publish a newspaper. The first edition of the Nonconformist, with James Vincent,

³⁵ Harold Richard Piehler, "Henry Vincent : A Case Study in Political Deviancy," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Kansas, 1971), pp. 100-05 and Merrily Cummings Ford (Compiler), "The Invincible Vincents," (1939), pp. 2-4. This is a series of biographies Leo Vincent wrote for his family using his own reminiscences and letters from his two surviving brothers written especially for the purpose.

Sr. as editor and Henry and Leo Vincent as publishers and proprietors appeared in July, 1879. The elder Vincent identified his paper as "A weekly Anti-slavery Journal devoted to the cause of emancipation from slavery to bond-holders and railroad corporations." The Nonconformist would be passionately Antimonopoly and Greenbacker in political orientation.³⁶

As "traveling missionary", or solicitor, Leo built up a list of about 1600 subscribers, ranging over several states, before the move to Kansas in 1886. Much of the paper's growth resulted from young Leo's faculty for charming railroad officers out of free passes in spite of the Nonconformist's stridently anti-railroad orientation. In this way it was possible for him to attend gatherings throughout the region.³⁷

As the Iowa economy turned downward in the mid-1880s Leo raised the issue of relocating to the booming economy of south central Kansas. He had discovered Winfield as a hot-bed of Knights sentiments on one of his trips. With the move James, Sr., who remained in Iowa, gave up his editor-

³⁶ James Vincent, Sr. was formerly a staff correspondent to Greeley's Tribune, Garrison's Liberator and a variety of Iowa reform Journals. The Nonconformist was named after an English Abolitionist paper with connections to the Chartist Movement. A reprint of the first edition of the American Nonconformist can be found in the tenth anniversary edition. Ford, p. 7, Vincent, "Henry Sez," p. 1, Piehler, "Henry Vincent: A Case Study," p. 100 and American Nonconformist (Winfield), 25 July 1889.

³⁷ Ford, "Invincible Vincents," pp.27, 33-34.

ship to Henry, and Leo became the firm's official business manager. A year later brother Cuthbert joined the staff as "traveling missionary." Despite his retirement from the editorship the elder Vincent continued to supply a steady stream of articles on what he called his "third anti-slavery struggle." Prophetically, he feared this one would be "the most hopeless of all."³⁸

In their maiden edition from Winfield the Vincent brothers announced that their policy would be to advocate "the most ultra reform." Their first great journalistic cause after moving to Winfield was to defend the "Haymarket Riot Anarchists." The Nonconformist's sharp tone soon led the local courthouse elite to label the newcomers anarchists themselves. Almost certainly the Vincents' stridence emanated from their devout religious upbringing. Bible reading and prayer services were daily affairs in the Vincent household when Henry and Leo were children. As former school teachers the Vincent parents largely educated their own sons without recourse to public facilities. Since their father's life "was not given over to the one purpose of making money" the Vincent brothers easily accepted a strong moralism. Labeled an "idealistic country saver," Henry Vincent explained that "we never learned even to try to curry favor."³⁹ They

³⁸ American Nonconformist (Winfield), 14 April 1887. Cowley County, in which Winfield is located, had five Knights of Labor locals in 1886. Jonathan Garlock, Guide to the Local Assemblies of the Knights of Labor (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1982), p. 134.

were not, however, typical Bible thumpers. the Vincent children apparently accepted their father's belief that the world had not yet tried Christianity. In Henry's words they were "Working-class, shirt-sleeve, non-church-going men ... but without vices." Even their bitterest enemies conceded the Vincents led morally upright personal lives.⁴⁰

In Winfield the Vincents expanded their operations to include a speaker's bureau and the printing of patent insides for smaller papers in Kansas and the adjoining states. Their expansion mirrored the Knights turn toward direct political action in the wake of the Great Southwest Railroad Strike of 1886. Grover Cleveland's use of militia to break the strike led to a spectacular rise of political activity among laborers. In 1886, local labor parties polled 68,000 votes in New York City, 25,000 in Chicago and a clear majority of the vote in a three way race in Milwaukee. In 1887 the National Industrial Union Conference met in Cincinnati and organized the National Union Labor party. In Kansas the Vincents were at the center of the maelstrom. The Union Labor party succeeded in electing a candidate for sheriff in Cowley County in 1887.⁴¹

³⁹ American Nonconformist (Winfield), 7 October 1886; Ford, "The Invincible Vincents," pp. 3, 6; Vincent, Colorado Representative (Boulder), 7 December 1899; and Piehler, Henry Vincent; A Case Study," pp. 105, 121 & 122.

⁴⁰ Vincent, "Henry Sez," pp. 3-4;

⁴¹ Vincent, p. 5; Ford p. 28; Grob, pp. 9-12; and Harold Piehler, "Henry Vincent: Kansas Populist and Radical-Reform Journalist," Kansas History 2, no. 1 (Spring, 1979):

As the Nonconformist became recognized as a propagator of the political change sweeping Kansas the Vincents "became targets for all manner of Tory propaganda," in the words of Leo Vincent.⁴² Two events thwarted the reform effort's drive to victory in Kansas in 1888. First was the Republican party exposure of the constitution, oaths of office and ritual of a mysterious organization called the National Order of Videttes. This was apparently a secret Union Labor party auxilliary formed to prevent fusion with other parties. GOP spokesmen labeled it anarchist because its oath pledged members "to sacrifice their bodies to the just vengeance of their comrades should they fail to obey the commands or keep the secrets of the order."⁴³ The Vincent's defense of the Haymarket bombing anarchists gave credence to Republican charges.⁴⁴

The second damaging event of the 1888 Kansas campaign was the explosion of a bomb in the home of a Coffeyville express agent. As Henry Vincent later explained "Anarchists and bombs were sometimes associated. What better than to find

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⁴² As testament to the longevity of neo-Republican ideology among Populists, it should be noted that Leo Vincent still used the term "Tory propaganda" more than fifty years after the 1888 campaign. Ford, "Invincible Vincents," p. 28.

⁴³ Winfield Courier 4 Oct 1888 in Piehler, "Henry Vincent: Kansas Populist," p. 16.

⁴⁴ W. F. Rightmire, "The Alliance Movement in Kansas-Origin of the People's Party," Transactions of the Kansas State Historical Society 9 (1905-06): 2.

an infernal machine on our premises! But it didn't get as far as Winfield."⁴⁵ After receiving the package containing the bomb the express agent took it home. He had planned to drop it off at the railway station on his way to work the next day. The person who sent the package was never identified. In 1891, the Kansas House of Representatives, which the People's Party controlled, forced a congressional investigation, but it proved inconclusive. The testimony consisted mostly of circumstantial evidence, hearsay and innuendo. The most damaging evidence consisted of a second-hand story that Republican Governor Lyman Humphrey "had" to appoint the man the Vincent's claimed was the bomber to a position at the State Bureau of Labor Statistics. The Vincents' arch rival, Edwin P. Greer, editor of the Republican Winfield Courier, charged the bombing to the Vindettes.

Although the Union Labor party lost the 1888 Kansas election the Vincents were not downhearted. Thirty one percent of the party's national vote came from Kansas alone. The Vincents' dream of a mass rising against the dominant parties appeared near.⁴⁶ A major part of their success must be

⁴⁵ Vincent, "Henry Sez," p. 6.

⁴⁶ Piehler, "Henry Vincent: A Case Study," p. 154; Charles Richard Denton, "The American Nonconformist and Kansas Industrial Liberator: A Union Labor-Populist Newspaper, 1886-1891," (M. A., Kansas State College of Pittsburg, 1961), pp. 53-74, 93, & 95; and Joint Committee of the Legislature of the State of Kansas, Investigation of Coffeyville Explosion (Topeka: Kansas Publishing House, 1891), p. 288.

credited to the downturn of farming on the Great Plains in the late 1880s. Unusually abundant rains in the middle years of the decade encouraged farmers to move too far west. During the boom times speculators ran the price of farm land up exorbitantly. Farmers were caught short when drought struck in 1887. Kansans, who had raised thirty-one million bushels of wheat in 1882, managed only ten million in 1888. Reduced production should have sent farm prices higher, a bumper crop on the other side of the world caused just the opposite. Between 1888 and 1892 half of the population of western Kansas was forced to move. Many of these refugees migrated to Oklahoma, providing a ready clientele for agrarian insurgency in the new territory.⁴⁷

Debt was the crucial issue on the high plains in the late 1880s. In the four years after the drought began unpaid debts caused 11,000 foreclosures in Kansas. Meanwhile interest rates soared for the debt-plagued settler. The farmer's anger naturally turned toward bankers, and the "money conspiracy" they represented. Union Laborites lost no opportunity to tell farmers that corrupt legislation caused the deflation which made their chances of getting out of debt remote.

In an address before the Kansas State Historical Society in 1904 William F. Rightmire, an associate editor of the Nonconformist in the late 1880s, gave his version of how the

⁴⁷ In 1888 the Union Labor party polled 45,390 votes in Kansas, and 146,137 votes nationwide.

People's party in Kansas was founded. In December, 1888, Vidette leaders met in Wichita to form the State Reform Association and "select some existing organization, or to organize a new one, into whose ranks the reformers and farmers and laborers of Kansas could be enlisted as members." They chose the Southern Farmer's Alliance which Rightmire claimed "embodied every tenet of the platform on which the Union Labor party had waged its campaign." Believing that the word "labor" in the existing party's name posed too great an obstacle in recruiting farmers the Vincents readily agreed to the strategy. Rightmire claimed that he, Cuthbert Vincent and John R. Rogers (later the Populist governor of Washington state) traveled to Texas for initiation into the Alliance and brought it back to Kansas. His story is demonstrably wrong on this point. Three days after the Vidette meeting, better than 100 Alliacemen representing 5000 members in nine counties of Kansas met to organize the state organization of the Southern Alliance. It is clear, however, that the Union Labor leaders latched on to the Alliance for overtly political purposes at a very early date. In Kansas the Southern Alliance always emphasized both economic cooperation and direct political action.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Rightmire, "The Alliance Movement in Kansas," p. 3; American Nonconformist (Winfield), 28 November 1888 & 4 July 1889; Robert C. McMath, "Preface to Populism: The Origin and Economic Development of the 'Southern Farmer's Alliance' in Kansas," Kansas Historical Quarterly 42, no. 1 (Spring, 1976): 64-65; and Stanley Parsons (et. al.), "The Role of Cooperatives in the Development Culture of Populism," Journal of American History, 69, no. 4 (March,

Benjamin H. Clover, a former Greenbacker and Union Labor man, became the first president of the Southern Farmer's Alliance in Kansas. As a third party sympathizer he worked closely with the State Reform Association. In an Independence Day, 1889, article entitled "Objects of the Alliance" Clover made clear the political orientation of his order. Repeating a line from William Pepper's Kansas Farmer, Clover claimed "the farmers are hampered and crippled by combinations . . . {which} control legislation, state and national." He called upon Alliancesmen to "close up the ranks, stand shoulder to shoulder, and clear the decks of all old hindering prejudices, party strifes or sectional animosities . . . {to save} the America, given into our keeping by the Revolutionary Fathers, with the admonition that 'eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.'" ⁴⁹ Farmers and laborers, he continued, were all that stood between the "monarchy of wealth, on the one hand, and the anarchy of poverty, on the other." ⁵⁰

Clover and the Vincents believed that the "educational program" of the farmer's Alliance was its most valuable function. Vincent contended that "A people united by agitation could not be depended upon to remain united long . . . agitation puts in motion a force which once started can not

1983): 880 & 884-85.

⁴⁹ American Nonconformist (Winfield), 4 July 1889.

⁵⁰ Rightmire, p. 4 and American Nonconformist (Winfield), 4 July 1889.

be controlled, and in its energy destroys all." Education, on the other hand, created an "intelligent cohesibility." If the educator's lessons were correct, uniformity of belief among producers would create a concert of action that could "be depended upon to resist the diverting effects of both prejudice and passion." Alliance leaders believed that once farmers began rationally inquiring into their collective situation their thoughts would begin "boring holes into the ship of corruption."⁵¹ As the Populist Handbook for Kansas in 1891 put it, "A thoroughly informed people cannot be enslaved, nor kept in slavery long after they become educated."⁵²

In line with the Vincents' views on "education" they also claimed that only those whose principles or interests inclined them to work on behalf of the producer class should be trusted. In an article on political farming, Alliance leaders told their members "It is just as essential for you to send men of your own kind to represent you as it is for you to go out and cultivate your own crops."⁵³ Politicians swayed only by fear of losing office were especially to be distrusted.

⁵¹ American Nonconformist (Winfield), 4 July & 26 September 1889; and Territorial Topic (Purcell, Chickasaw Nation), 5 June & 21 August 1890. The Territorial Topic ran an Alliance column put out by the Vincent's in Kansas.

⁵² Henry and Leo Vincent, Populist Handbook for Kansas (Indianapolis: Vincent Bros. Publishing Co., 1891), p. 1.

⁵³ American Nonconformist (Winfield), 4 July 1890 and Territorial Topic, 5 June 1890.

The growth of the Vincents' new reform vehicle eventually led them to challenge the Union Labor party's national leadership for the direction of the party. While farm organization membership claims in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were notoriously unreliable, clearly there was a vast expansion of the Kansas Alliance between its December, 1888, organizational meeting and the 1890 election. Alliance sources claimed 21,000 Kansas farmers by April, 1889, 100,000 a year later and 145,000 just before the 1890 general election. In apparent ignorance of the Kansas phenomenon the Union Labor party's national leadership proposed to advance the cause of labor through a fusion with the Prohibition party. It was obviously a desperation move which Kansas party members believed was not only unnecessary but "a compromise with the narrowist kind of fanaticism." Such an obnoxious connection could ruin efforts to bring Alliancemen into the third party. The Vincent's terminology in denouncing the proposed merger revealed both the strong political orientation of the Kansas Alliance in its infancy as well as their commitment to the Alliance as a reform vehicle in early 1889. The Prohibition-Union Labor party fusion would consist of a Prohibition head and a Union Labor tail, the Nonconformist claimed, and "Platforms without men educated thereon do not amount to the paper on which they are printed." Although the new order offered an advanced organizational technique, the Vincents would always

consider the Alliance and the People's party to be simply Union Laborism under another name.⁵⁴

The immediate catalyst for founding the People's party in Kansas occurred in the Alliance's home county of Cowley in 1889. In the Republican county convention that year courthouse clique leaders Ed Greer and William P. Hackney directed the proceedings in such a heavy-handed manner that leading farmer representatives walked out. That night the rebellious Republican delegates met and decided to suggest a "People's Ticket" fusion to the Democratic and Union Labor leadership. Two weeks later Democratic and Union Labor Executive Committees met in separate conferences to plan strategy. The Democrats suggested a division of the ticket. When Union Laborites declined, the two parties decided to appoint special committees to come up with an acceptable plan. The committee for the Union Labor party consisted of former Republican Ed Green, former Greenbacker Ben Clover

⁵⁴ Parsons, "The Role of the Cooperatives," p. 881 and Nonconformist (Winfield), 21 March 1889. The Union Labor party platform of 1888 was quite similar to the Populist Omaha Platform of 1892. The First three planks of the Union Labor Platform deal with land, transportation, and money, with later planks calling for a graduated income tax and the direct election of Senators. The Money Plank called for Greenbacks "issued directly to the people, without the intervention of banks or loaned to citizens upon ample security at a low rate of interest." The latter contingency clearly foreshadowed the Populist Subtreasury Plan. In his collection of family biographies Leo Vincent reveals the connection between the Union Labor and People's Party in his own mind by writing, "the Nonconformist supported the People's party, whose candidate in 1888 was A. J. Streeter of Illinois." Ford, "Invincible Vincents," p. 10.

and former Democrat George Gardenhire. This group came up with the plan finally accepted. Neither party would make nominations. All anti-courthouse ring elements would unite in a separate "People's Convention." In this way the new movement avoided the stigma of an overt fusion simply for offices. Throughout the early years of the movement, the People's party in Kansas drew in relatively equal proportions from former supporters of each of the three parties of 1888.⁵⁵

On election day 1889 the people's party in Cowley County turned what was normally a 500 vote Republican margin into an 800 vote majority for the new party. The Cowley County "People's Movement" platform "favored such legislation as would give the producing class a just reward for their labor, favored the reduction of salaries of county officials, {and} opposed trusts and monopoly and ring rule in politics." As news of the "People's" victory swept the state inquiries on the new party's plan of action flooded the local chairman's mailbox.⁵⁶

Two weeks after the new third party's first victory Alliancemen assembled in their second state convention to reelect Ben Clover as their president. At this meeting, the

⁵⁵ Ford, p. 7; Piehler, "Henry Vincent: a Case Study," p. 163; American Nonconformist (Winfield), 30 July 1891 and Peter H. Argersinger, Populism and Politics: William Alfred Peffer and the People's Party (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1974), pp. 73-74.

⁵⁶ American Nonconformist (Winfield), 30 July 1891.

Alliance resolved to submit its platform to the Kansas congressional delegation for their approval or rejection. Only United States Senator P. B. Plumb gave his unqualified approval. Alliance county presidents met in March, 1890, to adopt direct political action and three months later members of the Alliance, Grange, Knights of Labor, Farmer's Mutual Benefit Association and single tax clubs founded the People's party of Kansas. Senator John J. Ingalls, the third party's primary target in 1890, had stated that "the purification of politics is an irridescent dream." The new party set out to prove him wrong. On election day the People's party carried five of the state's seven congressional races and elected ninety one of the 125 House members. When the state legislature convened in 1891 they elected William A. Peffer to succeed Ingalls.⁵⁷

George Gardenhire, a member of the Union Labor party committee to call for the original "People's Convention" in Cowley County, provides the direct link between the Oklahoma Populist movement and its Kansas origins. At the time he helped found the third party in Kansas, Gardenhire was the official Alliance organizer for the Oklahoma Territory. Gardenhire was born eighteen miles south of Chattanooga, Tennessee in 1841, and moved to Arkansas with his parents as a child. Serving with the Confederate Cavalry during the Civil War the future Alliance leader then moved on to south-

⁵⁷ American Nonconformist (Winfield), 6 March 1890; and New York World, 13 April 1890.

ern Kansas to start over in 1869. After some hardship in the early years Gardenhire eventually built up a successful farming and stock raising business. In April, 1889, he left his Kansas farm to the care of a son and made the run to Oklahoma. As with many other Cowley County migrants Gardenhire settled in Payne County, which became the earliest stronghold of Oklahoma Populism.⁵⁸ Following the pattern set in Kansas he organized Alliances throughout the northern section of the new territory. By April, 1890, the Alliance claimed 100 locals in Oklahoma in the new territory. At this point Gardenhire began holding "people's" conventions.⁵⁹

The People's party in the Oklahoma Territory originated in the south Kansas egalitarian movements of the 1880s. Throughout the Gilded Age successive waves of reform ferment kept alive a long standing political tradition that went back at least to the founding of the American nation. The physiocratic tradition which informed the Founding Fathers, and was later refined and synthesized in the democracy of Jefferson, Jackson and Lincoln, provided late nineteenth century agrarians with a value system they believed was valid for all times and situations.

⁵⁸ Biographical Record, This Volume Contains Biographical Sketches of Leading Citizens of Cowley Co., Kansas (Chicago: Biographical Publishing Co., 1901), pp. 181-82. Four of the five third party representatives elected to the Oklahoma Legislature in 1890 were from Payne County.

⁵⁹ A. D. Hickok, the Alliance organizer in the southern part of the Oklahoma Territory was also from Kansas.

With the materialization of standards that came with industrialization this egalitarian tradition came under severe attack. The newer cosmopolitan ethos did not, however, engross all Americans by the 1890s. In fact, the downturn of the farm economy in the late 1880s brought the newer ideology itself under criticism and caused many to reaffirm their faith in the old verities.

The Southern Farmer's Alliance in Kansas and Oklahoma provided a vehicle for mobilizing both third party veterans and old party farmers who were losing faith in the panaceas of "Gilded Age Enterprise." By reaffirming the values of the Jeffersonian tradition while at the same time introducing those concerned about the direction of American civilization to the possibilities of independent political action, the Alliance provided a valuable stepping stone from old party to new. The process was not one of convincing angry farmers to accept a strange new ideology, however, but one of committing men and women to accept the verities of the agrarian tradition, and Populism as its most logical next expression.

Chapter II

ORGANIZING THE OKLAHOMA TERRITORY

The beauty and immensity of the two million acre "Unassigned Lands" district that black and white migrants began to settle on the afternoon of April 22, 1889, lent credence to the Boomer's claim that this was "The Promised Land." Climate combined with terrain to reinforce the impression that infinite possibilities were at hand. As the Oklahoma District lay almost totally within the rich grasslands of the red bed plains, a luxurious mantle of bluestem grass stretched as far as the eye could see. The bluestem's height and density justly fascinated the early settlers. Frequently it obscured from sight all but the tops of their wagons. As it was springtime, the grass appeared to be an ocean of light green when viewed from upwind, darker if one faced the breeze. As the seasons changed it would turn reddish-brown, and then purple and copper. Small trees and shrubs broke the vastness of the rolling prairie only along creekbeds.

Geographically, the Oklahoma District lay between the wooded cross timbers of eastern Oklahoma and the semi-arid high plains, not far beyond the Unassigned Land's western

border. The region was constantly subject to alternating wet and dry periods. The earliest settlers moved out onto the plains during a wet cycle. This convinced many that the entire region could support most types of agriculture. Droughts, however, plagued the unwary prairie farmer in the late 1880s and early 1890s. As homesteaders burned and plowed the virgin land they destroyed the subtle ecology that held the topsoil in place.

Nature seemed to do everything on a grand scale in the new territory. When the newcomer asked a veteran of the plains if the wind blows this way all of the time, the reply might well be, "Hell no! It blows the other way about half the time."¹ With few topographical features to slow it, the wind always seemed strong on the plains. When cold fronts from the continental climate of the interior collided with humid, semi-tropical weather masses stretching up from the Gulf of Mexico gentle breezes could become violent cyclones on a moment's notice. Shallow streams could turn into raging torrents, sweeping away everything in their path. Migrants from the wooded east found Oklahoma both invigorating and frightening at the same time.

Oklahoma pioneers found little natural growth of use in building their new homes. The small trees and shrubs native to the area were suitable only for brush arbors and firewood. For the first few days after the run tents littered

¹ Edward Everett Dale, The Cow Country, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1942), p. 9.

the landscape. Industrious lumber and hardware merchants, however, booked every available space on the trains serving the new territory. Soon small frame buildings sprang up in and around the railhead towns. In the hinterland, dugouts and sod houses sufficed until the products of civilization arrived. In some places this would take several years.

Throughout the 1890s newspaper editors, land company agents and other assorted boosters promoted Oklahoma as an agricultural paradise. According to one paper the new territory was, "The greatest wheat country in the world . . . with corn bigger than saw logs and watermelons bigger than whales."² Best of all, virtually the entire district was open to homestead entry. By the end of July, 1889, 5764 settlers had filed on 903,962 acres of land. Within the next year 7033 more would file on another million. Not all of the filings, however, immediately resulted in farms. The prospect of 160 free acres attracted both homeseekers and adventurers to Oklahoma. While as many as 125,000 people made the Run of 1889 the territorial census of June, 1890, counted only 60,416 residents. The claimant had five years to build a dwelling and plant a crop. For some the opportunity to turn a quick profit through selling a relinquishment, or to hold a plot for speculative gain, proved more appealing than establishing a farm.³

² Watonga Republican, 9 August 1893.

³ Dennis Flynn, "Memoir," Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma, p. 12; Report of the Governor of Okla-

Most of the Oklahoma District's early settlers had to endure tremendous hardships their first two years. The April land run put them on the land too late to plant crops for 1889. With little capital they existed on stocked provisions of coffee, dried beans and flour. Most, however, were able to supplement their sparse diet with wild fruits and game. Farmers passed the time building houses, digging wells and breaking the ground for the 1890 planting. Unfortunately, a severe drought the next year caused farmers to spend their first two years in the territory without income from their crops. Some decided to return to older sections of the country. Most, however, were determined to stick with this last chance to own their own farm. Eventually, Congress and the territorial legislature, when it finally met in late 1890, provided aid to the destitute. To build up their new market, railroads also provided wheat seed at cost in 1890.*

Since the land run caused all men to begin as competitors, the choicest quarter-sections frequently went to the bully. Some rightful claimants dared not even set foot on their own land until the courts ordered an interloper to

homa (1893), p. 469 and Gilbert Fite, The Farmers Last Frontier, (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1966), p. 206.

* Fite, Farmer's Last Frontier, p. 206; Solon Buck, "Settlement of Oklahoma," Wisconsin Academy of Science, Arts and Letters, Transactions, 15, no. 2 (1907): 376 and Dora Ann Stewart, The Government and Development of the Oklahoma Territory, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1933), pp. 219-20.

leave. Recourse to litigation, however, could be expensive and time consuming. Almost certainly, lawyers reaped the greatest harvest of 1889. One settler found "more of them to the acre than anything else."⁵ Frequently, adventurers filed on lands they clearly had no legal claim to in the hope of extorting a few dollars from the rightful homesteader. More than one Oklahoma pioneer lost his farm for want of money to pay legal fees to defend it.⁶

If claim jumpers and drought plagued hinterland Oklahomans, town dwellers faced problems of their own. Perhaps one third of the migrants to the new territory tied their fortunes to one of the numerous townsites to spring up in 1889. Townsite companies organized in Kansas before the run founded El Reno, Oklahoma City and Stillwater. At Oklahoma City the Seminole Townsite Company counted many of the Payne Colony leaders among their number.⁷ The Santa Fe provided them with surveying jobs near the townsite the day of the opening. At noon, they quit their jobs, stepped off the right of way, and claimed every important town lot and quarter-section in sight. Before legitimate claimants could arrive on the scene the sooners had even filed patents on

⁵ American Nonconformist (Winfield), 19 September 1889.

⁶ Stillwater, Oklahoma Standard, 28 December 1889 and Buck, "The Settlement of Oklahoma," p. 376.

⁷ The most prominent politicians among the Seminoles were William Couch and Sidney Clarke, Democrats; Angelo Scott and D. A. Harvey, Republicans; and James B. Weaver and Samuel Crocker, future Populists.

their claims in Guthrie. They then proceeded to rush municipal elections and called in the army to safeguard their "rights." Other townsites suffered similar, although less outrageous, manipulations. By the end of 1889 even Republican papers were denouncing speculation in town lots as hindering material progress.^a

A territorial government capable of harnessing such exploitations was clearly the remedy early Oklahomans needed. The legislation opening the new lands was simply a rider to an Indian appropriations bill, and thus failed to provide for such institutions. Oklahomans were forced to live for more than a year with no legally constituted government. A large backlog of problems faced the first legislature.

The experiences of pioneers in Oklahoma's first year of settlement seemed to validate the pessimistic attitude of Henry and Leo Vincent's American Nonconformist. As they had prophesized, hardship and privation were the lot of many. Even before the opening the Nonconformist asked, "What difference does it make how fine a country is, how rich the soil, how excellent the climate, if it requires money {to keep} up expenses while raising a crop." Only a few Oklahomans had enough money to be called capitalists. Financiers in adjoining states, of course, were quite anxious to estab-

^a Danney Goble, Progressive Oklahoma: The Making of a New Kind of State, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979), p. 17 and Daniel Peery, "The First Two Years," Chronicles of Oklahoma, 7, no. 3 (September, 1929): 296-98; Norman, Transcript, 20 July 1889 and Stillwater Oklahoma Standard, 28 December 1889 & 1 February 1890.

lish banking facilities in the new territory. The Vincents noted that, "the shorter route to possession {of the land} is that of loaning money, while the poor fellows who do the work, develop the farms, will be in five years just where thousands of Kansas farmers are -- not in the ring, but 'in the soup.'"⁹ Opening the Oklahoma Territory to non-Indian settlement would benefit railroad stockholders more than the producers who worked the land under the present system, claimed the Vincents. Soon the homesteaders would be forced to mortgage their household furniture to meet expenses at rates of interest that would be considered usurious elsewhere. As destitute farmers defaulted on their loans a disproportionate number of second hand shops would emerge. One 1898 estimate valued the household furniture of the average Oklahoma family at \$7.50.¹⁰

To impose familiar patterns upon the unsettled situation in 1889, provisional grass-roots institutions sprang up in every locality. Municipal officers were elected, and in many cases franchises even let, without the formal sanction of law. As prospects for early congressional action waned Guthrie even called a convention to establish a provisional territorial government. Once in operation perhaps Congress would recognize it, the organizers calculated. In a fit of jealousy, however, Oklahoma City refused to participate and

⁹ American Nonconformist (Winfield), 4 April 1889.

¹⁰ Helen Candee, "Social Conditions in Our Newest Territory," The Forum 25, no. 4 (June, 1898): 431.

called a convention of its own at Frisco. The town rivalry destroyed hopes for a provisional setup and forebode a town conflict that would continue throughout the territorial period.¹¹

Finally, on May 2, 1889, Congress passed an Organic Act for Oklahoma. It gave legal sanction to the provisional municipal governments and established a territorial government. As with previous territorial governments the act was based on the Ordinance of 1787. It provided for six counties, with their seats of government set at Guthrie, Oklahoma City, Norman, El Reno, Kingfisher, and Stillwater. The Public Land Strip (today the panhandle) was attached as a seventh county. Legislative power was vested in an appointed governor and a two house elected legislature. After the governor commissioned a census and apportioned the territory the newly elected legislators would draw up a legal code and locate the territorial institutions. Aside from the governor, the president would also appoint a territorial secretary, the judiciary, an attorney general and a marshal. Each would serve for four years. As homesteads were not taxed until claims were proven (usually five years), Congress would appropriate general expenses for the territory. In the early years only railroads and personal property were taxed.¹²

¹¹ American Nonconformist (Winfield), 4 & 18 April 1889; Norman Transcript, 13 July 1889 and Purcell Territorial Topic, 29 August 1889.

Most descriptions of Oklahoma politics in the early territorial period emphasized the primacy of factionalism over an interest in ideology or issues. Such factionalism was endemic to all western territories in their early years. Local concerns, particularly the placement of townsites, territorial institutions and railroads, overshadowed other considerations. Men of the same political party frequently were strangers to one another. Until recognizable social and political relationships developed the system was disorganized. As most settlers were concerned primarily with the mundane chores of building a house or starting a farm those with tangible interests to promote normally emerged as the earliest political activists. Town boosters, newspaper editors, lawyers and other professional men, whose careers depended upon the growth of their communities, took the lead. Frontier businessmen, anxious to speed local development, also became prominent. Each realized that control of government would bestow economic privileges. Only with time, however, would enduring combinations emerge, and stable political alignments dominate.¹²

While early Oklahoma politics was primarily factional, there were two caveats. First, because the land was opened to white settlement later, the rise of the people's party

¹² Stewart, The Government of Oklahoma, pp. 49-59.

¹³ Kenneth N. Owen, "The Pattern and Structure of Western Territorial Politics," Western Historical Quarterly, 1, no. 4 (October, 1970): 377-81.

coincided in time with the earliest years of Oklahoma territorial politics. This lent a more ideological orientation to territorial politics as the third party grew. Second, because of its geographic location the balance between northerners and southerners was closer in the Oklahoma Territory than in most of the west. The land run method of settlement placed northerners, with their Republican party commitments, primarily north of the Canadian River.¹⁴ Southerners, with their Democratic party proclivities, on the other hand, settled largely south of the Canadian. Eventually, their respective regions would be known as "Jayhawker Country" and "Little Dixie." The presence of significant sectional minorities in each of the Oklahoma Territory's counties, however, tended to transform conflicting views about education, materialism, race and a hundred other cultural values into party commitment. While internal squabbles would plague both the Democratic and Republican party in the 1890s, those who cooperated with the opposition party risked being labeled sectional traitors. Less than a generation after Reconstruction, such a tag could devastate a politician's career.

Believing that partisan politics might impede the largesse of the federal government, early booster elements discouraged the drawing of party lines in the Oklahoma Territory. Republican editors from the south Kansas home of the

¹⁴ Oklahomans commonly refer to the North Canadian River, which flows through Oklahoma City, as the Canadian River.

People's movement also attempted to thwart partisan development. They hoped to divert angry farmers from transforming local Alliances into third party organizations. Frank Greer, who edited the territory's most prominent Republican paper, the Guthrie Oklahoma State Capital, believed "it would be a good idea for Oklahoma not to bring too much politics into the election of the legislature." His older brother, Ed Greer, edited the Republican Winfield (Kansas) Courier. While Republicans and Democrats might work arm in arm to promote community development, partisan feelings in the Gilded Age were far too strong to be sidetracked for long.¹⁵

Politics constituted one of the average American's favorite pastimes in the late nineteenth century. Men prided themselves on participating in the great democratic experiment that others in the most advanced nations of Europe could only dream about.¹⁶ Politics also provided a regular source of entertainment, featuring some of the era's most popular heroes and villains. Between 1856 and 1896 no race for the presidency polled less than 70% of the eligible voters. Although the Civil War was a quarter century in the past, and Reconstruction had ended thirteen years before, issues of race and the proper role of the government were

¹⁵ Stillwater Oklahoma Standard, 14 September 1889 and Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 12 June 1890.

¹⁶ In late nineteenth century Europe only France had universal manhood suffrage. Great Britain adopted it in 1918.

still far from settled in 1890. The industrialization process had raised the question of government's role in a democratic society to an even higher level in the late nineteenth century.

As the party of union during the Civil War, the inheritor of the Hamilton-Clay economic tradition and the repository of white Anglo-Saxon Protestant cultural values, the Republican party identified itself as the purveyor of nationalism and morality in the Gilded Age. While the period from 1876 to 1896 was actually one of party equilibrium, Republicans seemed to be in control most of the time. Their national orientation caused the GOP to develop far more leaders of national standing than their opponents. In the Gilded Age the Republican party was the party of "big government." The Hamilton-Clay tradition of government intervention to promote economic development defined the party's program in this era. As northerners tired of Reconstruction in the 1870s, GOP leaders embraced the protective tariff as the party's premier issue. Spokesmen successfully identified it with patriotism and prosperity. They claimed the tariff would sever the bonds of English economic domination and help bind the various sections of the United States into a fully integrated national economy. Appropriations for internal improvements in the tradition of Hamilton and Clay also formed a prominent part of the Republican program for national economic development in the late nineteenth century.

In addition to its economic program the party could also use its "big government" orientation to promote pietistic cultural values. Party professionals, however, generally understood the perils of moral authoritarianism in a culturally heterogeneous nation and rarely went beyond paying lip service to the slogans of prohibition and blue laws. To face the problems arising from industrialization the GOP promoted moderate doses of railroad regulation, civil service and currency reform. The tariff, however, remained the party's most effective, and most unifying, issue in the Gilded Age.¹⁷

While the GOP was the party of nationalism and WASP culture in Gilded Age America, the Democratic party firmly committed itself to decentralization, limited government and racism. More of a loose coalition of outgroups than a national party, Democrats failed to develop national leaders or policies in the late nineteenth century. Theirs was primarily a party of negativism.¹⁸ As inheritors of the Jefferson-Jackson tradition of small government and antipathy toward privilege, Democrats appealed most to those ill at ease with the course of national development. Republican

¹⁷ Lewis L. Gould, "The Republican Search for a National Majority," in H. Wayne Morgan (ed.), The Gilded Age (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1970), pp. 171-89 and Richard Jensen, The Winning of the Midwest (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), pp. 120-21.

¹⁸ The only major outgroup not to associate with the Democratic party was blacks. They were the outgroup of an even larger outgroup, southerners, and therefore, fell into the GOP camp through default.

policies seemed to subvert the immutable laws of nature, or impede the right to cultural heterogeneity. In contrast to the Republican nationalistic orientation, Democrats focused upon the individual, or at best the ethnic/sectional group. In contrast to the Jeffersonian oriented third parties of the era, however, Democrats proposed only negation to the encroachments of the expanding industrial culture. More than many Democrats liked to believe, they actually betrayed much of their Jeffersonian past in accepting large portions of the late nineteenth century panaceas of laissez-faire and Social Darwinism.¹⁹

In their common opposition to Republican pro-business policies, Democrats and third party advocates frequently found an affinity for one another. Later in the century Democratic exposure to third party ideas would be reflected in the progressivism of such men as William Jennings Bryan, James Stephen Hogg and Ben Tillman. By and large, however, Democrats and third party supporters stood together only in their opposition to a common foe. Once engaged in fusion, Democratic footdragging on positive reforms inevitably led to intra-third party recriminations over affiliation with the older party. While the term "keep in the middle-of-the-road," meaning no fusion with either of the old parties, is

¹⁹ While Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations, the Bible of laissez faire was published in 1776, it was widely quoted in America only after 1850. See Rowland Berthoff, "Peasants and Artisans, Puritans and Republicans: Personal Liberty and Communal Equality in American History," Journal of American History 69, no. 3 (December, 1982): 587.

most closely associated with the Populist infighting of the mid and late-1890s, the term actually appeared in the recriminations surrounding the defeat of the Union Labor party in 1888, and may even be older than that.²⁰

Gilded Age Americans believed politics was important. Seventy to eighty percent voter turnout was common before 1896. Late nineteenth century Americans also perceived a significant difference between parties. Ticket splitting in this period was rare. For this reason, weaning Democrats and Republicans away from their old party loyalties was not easy for third party organizers. As a half way station to ease the trauma of breaking with their former allegiance, and as a means of politically "educating" old party voters in an outwardly nonpartisan setting, third party leaders found the Farmer's Alliance an ingenious vehicle for mobilizing support behind the People's party.

Beginning in the Fall of 1889 George Gardenhire, the Alliance organizer for the Oklahoma Territory, traveled across the new land preaching the gospel of economic and political cooperation to farmers. By April, 1890, the Farmer's Alliance would claim 100 locals in Oklahoma. Alliance organizers met with greatest success wherever former Kansans were numerous. Some migrants had probably joined the new order before locating in the new territory.²¹

²⁰ American Nonconformist (Winfield), 21 March 1889.

²¹ Purcell Territorial Topic, 3 April 1890.

Contact with Kansas was a prime factor in the political development of the Oklahoma Territory. George Gardenhire constantly travelled back and forth between his new home and "the state" in his official capacity as an Alliance official. Most newspapers, whatever their political affiliation, received the bulk of their national and regional news from Kansas sources.²² To provide a brief summary of territorial news many papers simply reprinted the Wichita Eagle's Oklahoma column. Patent insides, which gave national news and party propaganda, normally were printed in Kansas and then mailed to editors in Oklahoma. The American Nonconformist and Industrial Free Press, both of Winfield, Kansas, provided such services for Alliance, and later for People's party organs in the Oklahoma Territory.

It is impossible to determine exactly what proportions of economic and political appeal Gardenhire and his subordinates used in organizing the Oklahoma Territory for the Farmer's Alliance.²³ Almost certainly they mirrored the efforts of Kansas organizers. Even where southerners predominated Oklahomans received their Alliance news from Kansas,

²² For the political affiliations of newspapers in this era of highly partisan journalism see N. W. Ayer, American Newspaper Annual (Philadelphia: N. W. Ayer & Co., 1880-present).

²³ The Oklahoma Press Association founded the Oklahoma Historical Society in 1893. After this date newspaper sources for Oklahoma are excellent. Most newspapers published before 1893, however, are missing. As the Historical Society did not seek out manuscript collections before 1920, little manuscript material pertaining to Populism is available there.

not Texas. The earliest newspaper to serve Alliancemen in the southern part of Oklahoma, for instance, was the Purcell Territorial Topic. Actually located across the South Canadian River in the Chickasaw Nation, the Topic began publication in August, 1889, and became the official Alliance paper of the Indian Territory in May, 1890. In March, 1890, the Topic began carrying the Alliance column of the Winfield Industrial Free Press. Certainly, news for those migrating to northern Oklahoma from Kansas came from a similar source.

In their efforts to organize farmers, Alliancemen proclaimed "Combination is truly the prevailing spirit of the age." Trusts, pools, rings and other unnatural amalgamations subverted the natural laws of commerce, and thus robbed the laborer of his due. To gain their favored position, the rich and powerful enthroned themselves behind a network of vicious legislation. This, Alliance leaders stated, forced the masses to combine in self-defence. Although drawing class lines was distasteful, men with similar interests to protect, must join hands to ward off the avarice of exploiters. Cooperation among producers, they claimed, was only "business upon Christian principles."²⁴

Fundamental to the Alliance appeal was the belief that the rich and powerful had not attained their positions legitimately. Agrarians forever considered immense fortunes suspect. No one man could accumulate so much through his own

²⁴ American Nonconformist (Winfield), 11 April 1889 and Purcell Territorial Topic, 9 July 1891.

labor. Manipulation or taking advantage of another's misfortunes must have come into play. It was not the envy of the poor, but the injustices of the rich that caused such cataclysms as the French Revolution, third party agitators proclaimed.²⁵ Alliance organizers portrayed the concentration of wealth they saw before them in apocalyptic terms: "Whatever pauperizes a people thereby degrades them, and lowers them in the scale of humanity."²⁶ The greed of the "Robber Kings" brought about an underclass of the poverty-stricken that was "contrary to the germs of our republican institutions and contrary to the laws of God." God had created all men equal, only man could impoverish man.²⁷

Because concentration of wealth created classes, Alliance leaders advised their followers to "do more voting for the right men and less petitioning to the wrong men."²⁸ Lawyers, bankers and millionaires could be trusted to legislate only in their own interests. They no longer properly represented the producers. Farmers should replace such men with their own kind. Only producers could be trusted to work in the interests of producers. Even the era's patriot statesmen seemed to "believe in that ridiculous and utterly absurd doctrine that made some to be poor and some to be rich,

²⁵ Purcell Territorial Topic, 7 August 1890.

²⁶ Ibid., 17 July 1890.

²⁷ Ibid., 7 August 1890.

²⁸ Ibid., 5 June 1890.

thereby justifying the robbery of the people by the money kings."²⁹ Rather than focus only upon the symptoms of their distress, Alliance leaders challenged producers to go to the heart of their problems, and overthrow their rulers. This pattern of anti-elitism is common to all so-called "populistic" men or movements.

Why do the money kings, professional politicians and partisan press attack the Alliance, organizers asked? Because the educational program of the Farmer's Alliance exposed such men as traitors, Alliamcemen replied. The fact that Alliance operatives drew such large numbers of farmers into their order through portraying the struggle as one between "us" and "them," suggested that the agrarians coming under the influence of the Farmer's Alliance were beginning to think of themselves as a conscious class. Plains farmers believed they constituted a group under attack from elements which were their natural enemies.³⁰

Alliance dissatisfaction with the Republican party in Kansas and Oklahoma gave Democrats much cause for jubilation in the early years of territorial government. They hoped a permanent realignment in favor of their party might be possible. According to the Democratic Oklahoma City Evening Gazette the Alliance seemed to "amalgamate with Democracy" quite naturally in South Carolina. Alliance resolutions

²⁹ Ibid., 7 August 1890.

³⁰ Ibid., 26 June 1890.

calling for tax reduction and open markets seemed to be drawn directly from Democratic platforms.³¹ Indian Territory Alliance leader H. C. Randolph, who influenced Alliancemen in Cleveland and Oklahoma Counties in the early years of the Oklahoma Territory, acknowledged that farmers must seek relief through legislation, but proclaimed the order strictly nonpartisan. As in other southern states, Randolph advised pushing the dominant party to nominate Alliance representatives for office. Several factors helped to retard the growth of the People's party among southern-born Oklahomans in 1890. The most important were hopes of reforming the Democratic party, fear of breaking with the white man's party while the Lodge Force Bill was before Congress in 1890, and the late organization of the Farmer's Alliance in southern Oklahoma.³²

Republicans had been the primary victims of the Alliance's move into partisan politics in Kansas, and GOP spokesmen advised farmers "to form an alliance with one of the two great parties." Claiming that the Republican party had framed and passed every significant reform measure to become law in the late nineteenth century, Frank Greer contended the GOP was the farmer's logical choice in seeking legislative relief.³³ The fact that farmers considered much

³¹ Oklahoma City Evening Gazette, 19 November 1890.

³² Farmers founded the Alliance local in Cleveland County 30 May 1890. H. C. Randolph organized the meeting. Purcell Territorial Topic, 5 June 1890.

of the Republican party's vaunted reform legislation antithetical to their interests, made Greer's overtures less than appealing. Farmer's "educated" in the Alliance ferment of Kansas and Oklahoma proclaimed both major parties in dire need of moral rejuvenation. Separated from their machine elements, Alliancemen claimed, both would be people's parties. Since both were "owned body and soul by capitalists and corporations," however, they could be expected to act in concert to break the people's movement. Farmers must work independently of both old parties. As the party out of power, however, Democrats hoped Alliancemen would join their cause in 1890.³⁴

According to popular legend the People's party was the first to organize in the Oklahoma Territory. This is true only if the Farmer's Alliance is considered a political party from its inception. In a literal sense, the People's party was the last to organize in the Oklahoma Territory. Republicans took the lead in formally organizing a political party in the new land. Guthrie Republicans organized a local GOP club in mid-November 1889. In anticipation of formal territorial government, and thus patronage appointments, Republicans met in Oklahoma City on January 17, 1890, to form a territorial organization. Democrats followed with their own territorial convention at Oklahoma City on March

³³ Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 26 July 1890.

³⁴ Purcell Territorial Topic, 27 March & 3 July 1890 and American Nonconformist (Winfield), 2 November 1890.

11, 1890. Alliancesmen, under the guidance of George Gardenhire, organized the first third party local at Stillwater on March 29, 1890, after both of the older parties had perfected territorial organizations. Representatives of the Alliance, Knights of Labor and Union Labor party then met in Oklahoma City June 21, 1890, to found the territorial organization of the People's party. They subsequently set August 13, 1890, as the date of the third party's first territorial convention. Surprisingly, a week after the third party's June meeting, Governor George W. Steele proclaimed August 5, 1890, a full week before the proposed third party's convention, as election day for the territorial legislature.³⁵

George W. Steele was born December 13, 1839, near Connorsville, Indiana. After graduating from Ohio Wesleyan University, Steele served as a Lt. Colonel under General William T. Sherman during the Civil War. In 1865, he returned to Indiana to take up banking and the practice of law. Steele's appointment as Governor of Oklahoma came through his personal friendship with President Benjamin Harrison.³⁶

³⁵ Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State capital, 16 November 1890; Purcell Territorial Topic, 20 March & 21 November 1890; Bunky (Irwin Jeffs), The First Eight Months, (Oklahoma City: McMaster Printing Co., 1890), p. 83; Stillwater Oklahoma Standard, 22 March & 5 April 1890; American Non-conformist (Winfield), 10 April 1890; Norman Transcript, 28 June 1890 and Hennessey Clipper, 1 August 1890.

³⁶ Thomas Arthur Hazell, "George Washington Steele, 1890-91," Chronicles of Oklahoma 53, no. 1 (Spring,

Steele proved to be a highly partisan Republican during his tenure in the Oklahoma Territory. To reduce minority representation he made each county an at-large election district.³⁷ At first Republican party slates did not reach into the countryside. It looked to third party activists as if the GOP planned to pack the legislature with urbanites. Steele, however, did intervene and forced fellow Republicans to include some rural representation on GOP tickets. Still, third party advocates were not amused. Without at-large districts they would almost certainly carry some rural districts in Kingfisher and Logan Counties, where ex-Kansans were numerous. As it stood, they would carry only Payne County. At one point Steele even attempted to have Payne annexed to Logan County.³⁸ In addition, Steele denied the third party representation on election boards. Third party leaders believed the governor's early election date was designed to "steal a march on the labor movement."³⁹ The Organic Act had charged Steele with dividing the territory into election districts after taking a census. Third party

1975): 11 and Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 21 May 1890.

³⁷ In addition one Representative was elected by the entire Oklahoma electorate.

³⁸ Robert E. Cunningham, Stillwater: Where Oklahoma Began (Stillwater: Stillwater Arts & Humanities Council, 1969), p. 194; Hennessey Clipper, 1 August 1890; Oklahoma City Evening Gazette, 28 August 1890 and Geo. W. Steele to Hon. John W. Noble, 1 July 1890, Interior Department, Territorial Papers, 1889-1912. (Microfilm).

³⁹ American Nonconformist (Winfield), 14 August 1890.

organizers were caught unprepared when Steele's election proclamation appeared only four weeks after census enumerators began their survey. The official territorial newspaper of the people's party, the Guthrie State Journal, was founded only in the wake of the governor's election proclamation.⁴⁰

Considering their lack of preparation the People's party fared quite well in Oklahoma's first territorial election. The People's party swept Payne County, electing a Councilor (Senator) and three Representatives. Not wishing to give the GOP the opportunity to win a plurality victory, local Democrats had declined to field a ticket. Their newspaper, the Payne Hawk, warmly supported the Alliance ticket.⁴¹ The third party came in second behind the Republican ticket in Logan and Kingfisher Counties. As the third party had nominated its ticket only a week before the election in Kingfisher County their showing was remarkable.⁴² In Canadian County the three parties ran so close that names scratched from party ballots proved decisive. Each of the three parties elected a Representative. The two Council seats, however, went to the Democrats.⁴³ The People's party was not on

⁴⁰ American Nonconformist (Winfield), 14 August 1890; Norman Transcript, 31 May 1890 and Frisco Herald, 17 July 1890.

⁴¹ Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 21 July & 13 September 1890.

⁴² Hennessey Clipper, 1 August 1890.

⁴³ One of the Council seats was elected jointly with Cleveland County. Mort Bixler of Cleveland County was the De-

the ticket in Beaver County, and polled miniscule totals in Cleveland and Oklahoma Counties. Although Democrats and Republicans made separate nominations in Oklahoma County, cleavages emanating from the Kickapoo-Seminole townsite controversy obliterated party lines. Kickapoo partisans printed a mixed ticket which carried the election. Democrats elected two councilors and three representatives, and Republicans elected one councilor and two representatives.⁴⁴

Unfortunately, territory-wide returns for the August 5 election did not survive. On August 23, 1890, however, Oklahomans returned to the polls to replace an at-large Representative who had died. Returns from this election are available, and presumably, resemble the first poll.⁴⁵

Table 1, which presents Pearsonian correlation coefficients between partisan choice and Oklahomans' place of

mocratic nominee. A. N. Daniels, the nominee of the Industrial Union (People's) party received the vote of many non-third party elements with his promise to get the legislature to move the Canadian County seat from EL Reno to Frisco.

⁴⁴ Norman Transcript, 9 August 1890; Oklahoma City Evening Gazette, 6 August 1890; American Nonconformist (Winfield), 14 August 1890 and Dan W. Peery, "The First Two Years," Part II Chronicles of Oklahoma, 7, no. 4 (December, 1929): 432-33.

⁴⁵ The prime exception seems to be in Canadian County where Republicans who voted for A. N. Daniels returned to their original allegiance. Republicans received 39.0%, Democrats got 34.8% and the People's party polled 26.2% of the county vote on August 23. The results of Oklahoma's second territory-wide election reveals the People's party to be almost exclusively a derivative of its Kansas origins.

TABLE 1			
Place of Birth or Race by Partisan Choice, 1890*			
Race or Place of Birth	Republican Party	Democratic Party	People's Party
North	.34189	-.89370	.82629
Northeast	.76866	-.84855	.50830
Midwest	.23144	-.85973	.85551
White South	-.68312	.79042	-.49394
White Border States	-.76171	.68535	-.32290
White Lower South	-.57018	.87221	-.65928
Blacks	.79231	-.24797	-.20462
European	.44550	-.02764	-.24501

birth (or race), reveals that the people's party drew over-

* Source: Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 6 September 1890 and Roark's 5% sample of the census. See footnote 104.

whelmingly from northerners, especially those born in the midwest.⁴⁶ The People's party correlations with midwesterners (.85551), and northerners in general (.82629) in 1890, are the only significant third party sectional correlations of the Populist era. In later years the People's party would draw from a more sectionally diverse electorate.

The Democratic and Republican parties also had a narrow appeal in 1890. The Democratic party received its support almost exclusively from white southerners. Although they frequently carried such northern states as Indiana and New York in the Gilded Age, few northern Democrats made the trek to Oklahoma. While the Republican-northern-born correlation for 1890 is quite weak, the GOP's appeal was not broadly based either. Republican correlations with white souther-

⁴⁶ Pearsonian product-moment correlation coefficients measure the relationship between two variables on a range from -1.00000 to +1.00000. Correlations close to +1.0000 signify the two variables are positively correlated. If the correlation is near zero there is little correlation between the two variables. And, if the correlation is near -1.00000 the variables are negatively, or inversely, correlated. Geographer Michael Roark provided the author with data on Oklahoman's place of birth from a 5% sample of the 1900 census manuscripts originally compiled for his dissertation: "Oklahoma Territory: Frontier Development, Migration and Culture Areas," PhD., Syracuse University, 1979. Dr. Roark is Assistant Professor of Geography at Southeastern Missouri State University at Cape Girardeau. For this study the New England states and New York make up the northeast; New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa, Nebraska and Kansas constitute the midwest; Delaware, Maryland, West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Missouri, Arkansas and the Indian Territory constitute the border states; and Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas make up the lower south. Oklahomans born in the American west, Cana-

ners, including those born in the border states, are strongly negative. The GOP drew some from midwesterners, more strongly than the People's party from those born in the northeast, and overwhelmingly from blacks. Most European-born Oklahomans came to the new territory via the north, and also favored the Republican party. Europeans who settled in the "Unassigned Lands" section of the Oklahoma Territory, however, were a peculiarly urban population, which also helps explain their GOP sympathies.

As suggested in the third party's protest over Governor Steele's decision to hold at-large elections within each county, there was a strong rural-urban cleavage between third party voters and supporters of the two older parties. Since every county in the Oklahoma Territory had an urban area this dichotomy is disguised when using county level data. With township (precinct) level data, however, the rural-urban cleavage becomes clear. Unfortunately, no precinct returns for either of the legislative elections could be located. Township level votes for the November delegate election from Cleveland, Logan and Kingfisher Counties, however, are available. The November returns appear similar to the August returns, with one exception. The People's party vote in Canadian, Logan and Payne Counties is significantly

da and other western hemisphere nations were combined in a category labeled "others," which made up only 0.4% of the population. Caddo, Comanche and Kiowa Counties, which were opened to white settlement after the 1900 Census, have been excluded from this study.

reduced. While voter fatigue in this, the third general election in three months may account for some of the decrease, the most likely factor was the disappointment of third party supporters with their legislative delegation. The delegate returns are similar enough to the legislative polls to make some general assessments.⁴⁷

Table 2 reveals Democrats and Republicans both correlated positively with urban residence in Kingfisher and Logan Counties. The People's party on the other hand received the bulk of their vote from rural sources. The third party poll in Cleveland County was miniscule. Those voting the third party ticket in Cleveland County, however, were largely from the midwest. The People's party vote correlates with midwesterners in Cleveland, Kingfisher and Logan Counties at at .43493, .66828 and .39917, respectively. Peculiarly, border state natives also correlate positively with Populism in Logan County (.47010). These, however, were mostly Missouri-born Oklahomans who had settled in Kansas before migrating to the new land.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ In Canadian, Kingfisher, Logan and Payne Counties, combined People's party dropouts account for 87.0% of the reduced poll. In Cleveland County the third party vote increased from 6.0% to 11.9% of the total, and in Oklahoma County the third party poll rose from 7.7% to 11.4%.

⁴⁸ Other border state groups primarily migrated through Texas or the Indian Territory to Oklahoma. See Roark, "Oklahoma Territory," p. 213.

TABLE 2			
Urban Residence by Partisan Choice, 1890*			
County	Republican Party	Democratic Party	People's Party
Cleveland	-.15375	-.33680	.44549
Kingfisher	.38644	.45364	-.50809
Logan	.59298	.36332	-.71151

Although economic conditions in the Oklahoma Territory were reputedly conducive to the growth of Populism, farmers migrating to Oklahoma from Kansas made up the overwhelming majority of third party advocates in 1890. Economic conditions only caused voters to consider their plight. This would open their minds to the third party appeal. Time to indoctrinate and organize was necessary, however, before non-Kansans could be drawn into the party. Republicans picked up a more urban ballot among northerners, plus blacks and European-born Oklahomans. Democrats, likewise, picked up an urban vote in the northern sections of the territory,

* Source: Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 8 November 1890; Hennessey Clipper, 14 November 1890 and Norman Transcript, 8 November 1890.

where Populism flourished in 1890. In the southern sections of the territory where Populism was in its infancy, Democrats polled well among both rural and urban white southerners.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ For this study urban areas are defined as those entities cited as cities" and "towns" in the 1900 census.

Chapter III
THE FIRST LEGISLATURE, 1890

At two o'clock, Wednesday, August 27, 1890, the first legislature of the Oklahoma Territory convened in the McKennon Opera House in Guthrie. The 1890 assembly was certainly the most exciting, and probably the most outrageous, legislature to sit during territorial days. For employing all of the fine and confusing points of parliamentary strategy and dilatory actions the first legislature was unexcelled.¹ The quality of representation ran the full spectrum of possibilities. Some men were seasoned legislators. Others, novices, but earnest in their endeavours. The suggestion of one editor that "a vast horde of political fiends who have been run through the political fanning mills of other states, dumped with the chaff and by adverse winds settled quite promiscuously over Oklahoma," however, also held much credence.²

¹ W. H. Merten, "Oklahoma Territory's First Legislature," Sturm's Oklahoma Magazine, 5, no. 5 (January, 1908): 37.

² Kingfisher New World in the Purcell Territorial Topic, 30 January 1890.

Nominally, Republicans held a majority in both houses of the 1890 legislature. The Council consisted of six Republicans, five Democrats, a People's party representative and an Independent, who generally voted with the GOP. In the House there were fourteen Republicans, eight Democrats and four third partyites. Local considerations, however, split the GOP from the very beginning. Before the legislature adjourned on Christmas Eve, the session developed a variety of combines, some reputedly held together only through the cohesive qualities of hard cash. Mobs even sought vengeance upon certain unpopular solons. conspiracy theories proliferated without end. At one point, a legislator even drew his revolver to obtain recognition from the Speaker of the House. By the end of the session, the suggestion of Representative Samuel Clark, of Payne County, that the legislature deserved a spanking met with general acclaim.³

Two primary tasks faced legislators in August, 1890: drafting a legal code and placing the territorial institutions, particularly the permanent capital. Placement of the capital quickly emerged as the prime concern of the assembly. The Guthrie-Oklahoma City rivalry which emerged in 1889 was aggravated when Congress designated Guthrie as the site for convening the first legislature. Located thirty-one miles north of Oklahoma City, in Logan County, Guthrie was overwhelmingly Republican. Northerners, blacks and Eu-

³ Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 1 November 1890.

ropean-born Oklahomans constituted more than 80% of its population. Logan County had the largest concentration of blacks in the territory.⁴ It was the only county in the territory to return a GOP majority in each of the territorial elections.⁵ Although northerners constituted a modest plurality in Oklahoma City, its black population was half that of Guthrie. Democrats (Fusionists in 1896) carried Oklahoma County five of eight times in the territorial elections. Both cities were on the Santa Fe line and claimed a population of approximately 10,000 in 1890.⁶

Although the people's party contingent constituted the smallest party in the legislature, the Guthrie-Oklahoma City rivalry offered the third party an opportunity to exercise far more influence than the size of the delegation warranted. As Governor Steele's at-large districts had caused the People's party to be grossly under-represented in the legislature, third party legislators found a certain poetic justice in their situation.⁷ George Gardenhire, the Alliance

⁴ The population of Guthrie was 39.1% northern, 30.4% black, 10.9% European and 19.6% southern. Logan County was 50.4% northern, 20.1% black, 7.3% European and 22.2% southern.

⁵ Logan County returned Republican majorities even in the three-way races of the early 1890s.

⁶ The population of Oklahoma City was 45.3% northern, 16.8% black, 8.4% European and 29.8% southern. The Republican party carried Oklahoma County in 1894, when the Democratic party collapsed, and in 1898 and 1900, when Populist voters became dissatisfied with fusion.

⁷ The people's party polled 22.2% of the vote in the legislative race, but held only 12.8% of the legislative seats.

organizer for Oklahoma, turned out to be the pivotal figure in forming the coalition which would control the legislature. He was elected to the Council from Payne County, and arrived in Guthrie the afternoon before the assembly was scheduled to meet. Republican legislators from Logan and Kingfisher Counties had already formed a coalition committed to keeping the capital in Guthrie and farming out the remaining public institutions to other counties. As Payne was the only county in the "Unassigned Lands" district not to have rail service in 1890, the Logan-Kingfisher combine excluded it from their plans.

Upon his arrival, George Gardenhire called upon Republican leaders and demanded recognition for his constituency in the form of locating the agricultural college in Payne County. If not appeased, the Alliance leader threatened to deal with the Democrats. As Payne was located northeast of Logan County, Guthrie would be far more convenient to Gardenhire's constituents than Oklahoma City. GOP leaders counted on popular opinion in Payne County to keep Gardenhire and company in line, and called the Alliance leader's bluff.⁸ Democrats, on the other hand, were most anxious to treat with the People's party. They conceded the agricultural college, organization of both houses of the legislature and some patronage in the legislature to the third party contingent.⁹

⁸ Gardenhire later charged that Guthrie interests offered him a \$2,000 bribe for his services. see the Norman Transcript, 20 September 1890.

Even with the fusion of Democrats and third party legislators, Oklahoma City forces still constituted a minority in both houses. To control the assembly Oklahoma County's two Republican representatives and one Republican councilor also had to be won over to the combine. When the legislature convened, the Council elected Gardenhire temporary president and elevated Republican Joseph Post to the temporary speaker's position. Both houses then immediately adjourned. That evening the Oklahoma County delegation travelled to Oklahoma City to confer with local Republicans. Oklahoma County's Republican legislators returned to Guthrie the next day with orders to vote with the Democrats, if necessary, to obtain the capital for Oklahoma City. To secure the vote of Councilor James L. Brown, who hailed from Edmond, located in Oklahoma County half-way between Guthrie and Oklahoma City, Democrats promised his town the normal school.¹⁰

Two days after the assembly first convened legislators permanently organized both houses. The names of George Gardenhire and William A. McCartney were placed in nomination for president of the Council. McCartney, a native of

⁹ Marion Tuttle Rock, Illustrated History of Oklahoma [Topeka: O. B. Hamilton & Son, 1890], p. 220 and Peery, "The First Two Years," [Part II], p. 451. As Republicans had hoped protests did emanate from Payne County, but to no avail. See the Norman Transcript, 6 September 1890.

¹⁰ The Oklahoma Normal College founded by the 1890 legislature is today known as Central State University. Peery, "The First Two Years," [Part II]: 452-56. Representative Jones was from Oklahoma City and Representative Trosper resided on a claim a few miles southeast of the city.

Pennsylvania who had moved to Kansas in 1882, was a lawyer and experienced parliamentarian. As McCartney was a former employee of south Kansas political boss, Bill Hackney, the people's party contingent could rejoice doubly in Gardenhire's seven to six victory. In the House, the names of Arthur N. Daniels, the Industrial Union (People's) Representative from Canadian County, and William H. Merten of Guthrie, were put forward for the post of speaker. Daniels was born in Galesberg, Illinois in 1860. A graduate of Knox College, he had read law and was admitted to the bar of Illinois in 1883. He served two terms in the Illinois legislature before migrating to Minnesota, and then Oklahoma. Merten, a Guthrie merchant of Prussian heritage, was born in Delaware County, Iowa, in 1845. A Union veteran, he spent a year in college and served twice in the Iowa legislature. Daniels won the speaker's chair with a fourteen to twelve margin. Although both Gardenhire and Daniels proved adequate in their posts, both acknowledged the better qualifications of their opponents in their acceptance speeches. Qualifications, however, had nothing to do with the issues.¹¹

James L. Brown of Edmond introduced the bill that would move the capital to Oklahoma City. Council Bill no. 7 breezed through committee and passed the upper chamber in

¹¹ Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 6 February 1921; Hennessey Clipper, 25 July 1890 and Rock, Illustrated Oklahoma, pp. 210-12.

mid-September. It then sailed through the House committee. When it reached the floor of the House, however, trouble struck. Republicans successfully rammed through an amendment delaying the date for moving the capital a week. Although seemingly innocuous, this action required a new vote in the Council on the bill. Democrat William Adair, of Cleveland County, and third party solons Ira N. Terrill and Samuel Clark, of Payne County, deserted the Oklahoma City combine to vote for the amendment. Suspecting a plot, Democrats sought out Councilor Charles Grimmer, of Beaver County (the Panhandle), and promised to build a railroad from Oklahoma City to Beaver City if he would join their ranks. When the Council met the next morning Gardenhire, as expected, also deserted the Oklahoma City ranks and voted with the Republicans to reject the new amendment, and thus kill the bill. Grimmer, however, made up the difference, and the amendment passed. In defending his action Terrill cited both the belief that Democrats could not deliver the promised agricultural college and the sentiment among his constituents against locating the capital in Oklahoma City.¹²

¹² Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 4 October 1890. As Terrill suspected the governor vetoed the Payne County agricultural bill. A later bill placed the college in Stillwater. Most accounts of Adair's motives center upon the liberal use of money to change his mind. He left the territory shortly after the session ended.

The eccentricity and sometimes outrageous behavior of Representative Terrill accounted for a good part of the first legislature's notoriety as a circus sideshow. Ira N. Terrill was born in Clark County, Illinois, in 1843. He moved to Kansas in 1874 and joined the Oklahoma Boomer movement in the early 1880s. Terrill accompanied William Couch on the Boomers' last raid into Oklahoma in 1883.¹³ He professed to be a lawyer and certainly created general aggravation with his litigious interruptions in the House. It was Terrill who demanded recognition from the speaker at gunpoint in the most colorful event of the first legislature.¹⁴

When Council Bill no. 7 passed the Council, as amended, Terrill moved to reconsider the measure in the House. As with the original amendment, the motion carried, fifteen to eleven. Democrats, however, considered this illegal since the bill had been reconsidered earlier.¹⁵ Representative

¹³ I. N. Terrill, "The Boomer's Last Raid," Sturm's Oklahoma Magazine, 8, no. 2 (April, 1909): 39-40.

¹⁴ In fairness to his party it should be noted that the Speaker he drew the revolver on, and the Sargent-at-arms who subsequently confiscated the firearm and ejected Terrill from the chamber both represented the People's party. Terrill's association with firearms would lead to his downfall shortly after the legislature ended. He holds the dubious honor of being the first Oklahoman convicted of murder under the criminal code which he, himself, had prominently supported in the legislature. Legal battles and a series of jail breaks kept him out of prison until 1894. He was judged insane in 1904 and paroled in 1906. Terrill spent the rest of his life campaigning in favor of prison reform. So long as he remained at large his actions did little to help the cause of the party he represented. See W. H. Merten, "Oklahoma Territory's First Legislature," p. 37.

Peery, therefore, enrolled the bill and presented it to the Speaker for his signature. Daniels signed the bill and handed it to Representative Peery, of Oklahoma County, to take it to the Council for Gardenhire's signature. The Council, however, had adjourned. The next morning Daniels asked the Council to return the bill, stating that he had signed it under a misapprehension. In the end, the Oklahoma City crowd concluded a deal with the Kingfisher County delegation to secure passage of the bill. If the governor vetoed the bill, Democrats promised to support a measure placing the capital in Kingfisher. In the Council, Republicans secured Gardenhire's signature with threats of impeachment. After all of the plots, counter-plots and midnight conferences, Governor Steele subsequently vetoed the Oklahoma City capital bill, stating that he saw no compelling reason to move the capital. Democrats fulfilled their promise to support a Kingfisher capital bill, but the governor vetoed it, as well.¹⁶

With the exception of James L. Mathews, third party representatives had deserted the Oklahoma City combine on the capital issue. Rumors of bribery naturally emerged. One

¹⁵ In order to prevent later reconsideration sponsors of a bill frequently called it up for reconsideration immediately after its passage and then voted not to reconsider it. In this case Clark and Terrill attempted to get an adjournment, but failed. Legislative Journal (1890): 218-19.

¹⁶ Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 18 October 1890. Grimmer and Beaver County, however, never got their promised railroad.

Democratic paper even labeled the Council president "Guthrie-hire." Gardenhire, however, showed no signs of sudden wealth, then or later. The Council president, however, did seem to have doubts about the ability, and perhaps the commitment, of Democrats to deliver the agricultural college to Payne County. Without Republican support, the governor might simply veto the college bill.¹⁷

In late September Councilor Charles Brown of Guthrie offered a substitute to Council Bill no. 7 locating the capital in Guthrie and the agricultural college in Stillwater. The entire Guthrie coalition voted for it. Gardenhire, however, remained loyal in his commitment to the Oklahoma City crowd at that time. House Bill no. 30, which located the agricultural college in Stillwater passed the House on a partisan vote on September 24. To insure the loyalty of the People's party on the capital issue, however, the Oklahoma City contingent then refused to bring the measure up for consideration in the Council. As public opinion in Payne County favored Guthrie, Gardenhire, Terrill and Clark went over to the Guthrie combine. Democrats recognized the third party defection when Terrill and Clark voted for the Republican amendment to the capital bill in the House. Before the Council acted upon the House amendment, Councilor James Brown of Oklahoma County quickly brought the agricultural college bill up for consideration in an attempt to revive

¹⁷ Oklahoma City Evening Gazette, 2 October 1890.

the splintering Democratic-People's coalition. The bill passed unanimously as the Guthrie partisans fulfilled their new commitment and the Oklahoma City supporters attempted to retrieve their old one. Gardenhire, however, voted with his new allies on the capital bill.¹⁸

Governor Steele later vetoed both Council Bill no. 7 and House Bill no. 30. While he cited political reasons in vetoing the capital bill, he mentioned only technical problems with the college bill. He had earlier informed the legislature that federal legislation on agricultural colleges applied to territories. The Assistant Commissioner of the Land Office notified him otherwise. As the bill had been passed under false pretenses, he could not let it become law.

James L. Mathews later introduced the legislation which located the agricultural college in Payne County. Oklahoma City partisans drafted an open letter giving Mathews sole credit for obtaining the college for Stillwater. Sixteen of the seventeen members of the Oklahoma City contingent signed it. Democratic sources contended that the governor had vetoed the original bill because of betrayal of Mathews's Payne County colleagues in the legislature, while the Oklahoma City partisans bailed out the only third partyite to remain loyal to them. The governor, however, was not averse to stating partisan reasons for vetoing legislation, as with

¹⁸ Peery, "The First Two Years," (Part III): 103-07.

the capital bill. He stated no such reasons in his veto of the college bill. Of the sixteen Oklahoma City partisans to sign the open letter for Mathews only six actually voted for the second agricultural college bill on final passage.¹⁹ The fact is, Guthrie supporters provided most of the necessary votes in the Council and Oklahoma City supporters did so in the House. Other than third party representatives, no combine or party voted as a unit to place the agricultural college in Payne County.²⁰

Oklahoma solons accomplished little of substance while the capital controversey raged. At the time the governor vetoed the Oklahoma City capital bill only two other measures had passed his desk. The first provided for the incarceration of felons and the second for badly needed aid to the destitute.

Governor Steele had estimated that fully one-third of the population away from the larger towns was in dire need of assistance in August. Republicans and third party legislators supplied the votes to provide relief. As exponents of retrenchment and self-reliance, Democrats labeled the mea-

¹⁹ Peery, "The First Two Years," (Part III): 122. Brown of Oklahoma County was actually the second bill's most vocal opponent.

²⁰ Four of the six votes against the bill in the Council came from members of the Oklahoma Combine. Journal of the First Session of the Legislative Assembly of the Oklahoma Territory (1890), pp. 995, 1014-15. The original copy of the open letter to Mathews can be found in the Robert A. Lowery Collection, Oklahoma State University.

sure "federal Aid to the niggers," and abstained.²¹

As Oklahoma constituted a meeting place for northerners and southerners, race emerged early as a hot issue. Council Bill no. 2, which established the public school system, provided for segregation. It passed the upper house on a partisan vote, with the Oklahoma City combine (five Democrats, Republican Brown of Oklahoma County and ex-Confederate Gardenhire) supporting it. Three of the four third party representatives in the House, however, opposed segregation.²² Eventually, Speaker Daniels came up with a compromise allowing local option on segregation. Green I. Currin, the only black to sit in the legislature, and a vocal exponent of integration, accepted the measure. Both Daniels and the governor believed segregation to be unconstitutional, but were forced to support local option as a means of getting a public school system.²³

A north-south split also emerged on adopting a legal code. Northerners generally favored the Dakota territorial statutes. Southerners, however, favored the Arkansas code.

²¹ Thomas J. Nenshon to the Secretary of the Interior, 16 August 1890, Territorial Papers; Legislative Journal (1890), p. 62; Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 6 September 1890 and Purcell Territorial Topic, 18 September 1890.

²² Legislative Journal (1890), p. 105. Representative Clark opposed "social equality for blacks." Purcell Territorial Topic, 30 November 1890.

²³ Legislative Journal (1890), pp. 404-05; Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 1 November 1890 and Purcell Territorial Topic, 13 November 1890.

It had been tested in court and presented no problems of unconstitutionality. In addition, it was the code Congress had put into affect in the adjacent Indian lands, and thus, would present no confusion when the Oklahoma Territory annexed them. Northerners, however, had the votes. The fact that lawyers might find the simpler Dakota statutes unrewarding was particularly appealing to People's party legislators.²⁴

Council Bill no. 2 allowed women the right to vote on school matters. Third party representatives desperately attempted to get woman's suffrage into the election bill as well, but to no avail. Daniels believed that the female ballot would provide the territory with better laws. When Representative McCartney introduced the Women's Christian Temperance Union liquor bill into the House, women's suffrage became unalterably tied to it. As there was little sympathy for prohibition in the legislature, women's suffrage also went down to rapid defeat.²⁵

The third party proved generally ineffective on economic legislation in the 1890 assembly. The People's party platform had denounced opposed usury, high public salaries,

²⁴ George Eldon Norvell, "A History of the First Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Oklahoma," (Masters thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1946), pp. 40-41.

²⁵ Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 11 October & 29 November 1890 and Legislative Journal (1890), p. 820. Republicans split five to five, with four absent, on the women's suffrage measure. Democrats uniformly opposed the measure.

and bonding for railroads and corporations. The Organic Act prohibited the last measure. Third party legislators, however, generally opposed all bonding. According to Representative Terrill "the interest bearing bonds of debt-ridden Kansas {stood} as a light house . . . to be heeded by wise men." He later facetiously attempted to retitile a bonding bill the "Rob the Many at the Expense of the Few Bill." Although third party legislators were able to get the legal rate of interest on bonds down to 5% in the House, Speaker Daniels moved to agree with the Council figure of 6% on the issue of usury. As for salaries, the people's party contingent constituted the entire opposition to the general appropriations bill on final passage.

The third party's only real legislative victory, other than securing the agriculutral college for Payne County, was to sabotage the militia bill. Congress had appropriated \$2,000 for the territorial militia. People's party legislators believed the new land needed no "standing army" and proposed that the appropriation be returned to the federal government.²⁶

In the final weeks of the legislature James Brown of Oklahoma County County introduced, and pushed through to passage, a libel bill newspapermen generally viewed as an attempt to silence criticism of the legislature. Although

²⁶ Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 6 September, 15 November & 6 December, 1890 and Legislative Journal (1890), pp. 674-75, 716, 825, 901 & 926-27.

most of the legislators supporting the measure were Republicans, some Democrats and People's party solons went along. In response to press criticism Representative Campbell of Guthrie claimed the course of the legislature so scandalous as to make the body libel proof.

Four-fifths of the legislation to pass the assembly was pushed through in the last week of the session, with solons literally ripping whole sections of legislation from the statutes of other states and introducing them into the assembly in order to finish before the session ended. While most of the legislation proved applicable, sections relating to the rights, duties and responsibilities of shipmasters, pilots, mates and seamen proved embarrassing in a territory where the deepest body of water could be traversed on foot much of the year.²⁷

Although the People's party had won for their small numbers unusual power in the legislature, securing the agricultural college and sabotaging the militia bill were the third party's only real victories in 1890. The circumstances surrounding the third party legislators' course, especially on the capital issue, brought general opprobrium upon the party. People's party voters vented their disapproval in the election for delegate, which took place while the legislature sat.

²⁷ Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 6 September 1890; Oklahoma City Evening Gazette, 13, 22 & 23 December 1890 and Norvell, "the First Legislative Assembly," p. 51.

Two positions were up for election, a delegate to finish out the current session of Congress, and one for the term to begin the next January. As a peace-making effort Governor Steele forced the Republican nomination of David N. Harvey, of Oklahoma City, over Dennis Flynn, of Guthrie, for both terms. If Guthrie kept the capital it was only fair that Oklahoma City got the delegate positions, Steele reasoned. Democrats realized coalition with the People's party was necessary to win and nominated real estate man Joseph G. McCoy, of Kingfisher County, for the long term and third party Representative James L. Mathews for the short one. Democrats were far from united in their choice of McCoy, however, as it took him fifty-four ballots to obtain the nomination. For their part People's party spokesmen found Mathews's actions in attending the Democratic convention and accepting the nomination disreputable. The third party nominated H. C. Diehl and Samuel Crocker, both of Oklahoma County, for the short and long terms, respectively. Diehl was an Oklahoma City hardware merchant and Crocker engaged in farming and real estate at the time.

Although weak from a bout with blood poisoning, Crocker made a two-month canvass of the territory. He travelled by wagon and spoke in every county except Beaver. Crocker's speeches were received well in most instances. He repeated much of the Greenback-Labor ideology he had used in previous campaigns. The third party's legislative scandals and the

fact that Crocker was a sooner, however, destroyed his candidacy.

On election day Harvey carried every county, except Cleveland. The People's party vote dropped nearly thirty percent from the August legislative ballot. In Payne County a majority of the third party voters simply declined to participate. At their 1892 county convention Payne County Populists even refused to seat the 1890 legislators. The movement which had swept Kansas in 1890, and threatened to prove significant in the Oklahoma Territory, was blunted largely because of its own leaders' failures. The moral appeal of third party spokesmen simply sounded hollow coming from men who made secret deals and then broke them, or who were sooners.²⁸

Problems of destitution, lot jumping and other exploitations seemed conducive to the rapid spread of a moralistic reform movement such as the People's party in 1890. Governor Steele's at-large districts and early election were designed specifically to avoid this prospect. The People's party still obtained power and notoriety through legislative fusion with the Democrats. If the third party legislators

²⁸ Dennis Flynn, "Memior," Royden Dangerfield Papers, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, n. d., p. 14; Purcell Territorial Topic, 23 October 1890; Oklahoma City Evening Gazette, 27 September, 8 & 10 November 1890; Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 6 September, 13 October and 8 November 1890 and Samuel Crocker, "Autobiography," Typed Manuscript, Oklahoma State Historical Society, 1913, pp. 322-27. It should be noted that D. A. Harvey was also a sooner. Such matters seemed less important to Republican voters.

had acquitted themselves more nobly, the third party movement might have spread beyond Kansas refugees more rapidly. In betraying their commitments, however, People's party leaders opened themselves up to charges of manipulation reminiscent of the exploitations they condemned. Until new leaders and new opportunities appeared, the third party's growth would be slow and painful. In contrast to its Kansas counterpart, the People's party got off to a rocky start in the Oklahoma Territory.

Chapter IV

TOWARDS THE ELECTION OF 1892

Late nineteenth century Americans lived in a world of revolutionary economic and social changes. Ambitious capitalists and entrepreneurs ranged far and wide across the continent in search of opportunities to exploit. Freight cars transported the bounty of a virgin continent to the burgeoning industrial centers of the northeast, and then returned to the hinterland with the finished products of America's industrial system. Manufacturing expanded at a fantastic rate. Laborers from Europe and rural America swarmed into the growing industrial centers to tend the machines of this transformation. Other migrants settled the Great Plains and made the region the bread basket of the world. Rapid economic development brought forth a truly new America in the late nineteenth century.

This transformation of the economy unsettled the country in the Gilded Age. Between 1860 and 1890 the nation's rail network expanded five-fold, and a truly national economy emerged. Quiet pockets of economic and social distinctiveness were rudely swept out of their placid isolation as an expansive national culture followed in the wake of the loco-

motive. The fruits of out-of-date techniques, secure in isolated local markets, rapidly gave way to the products of more efficient producers elsewhere. Specialization became endemic and life in general became more complicated. A younger, more aggressive class of entrepreneurs seized their opportunities and built up what seemed to be vast fortunes, thus, dramatically widening the gap between rich and poor, in the eyes of those left behind. Although the numbers of this economic elite were quite small, the press put them in the limelight and made them appear more numerous and typical than they actually were.¹

Rail lines became the purveyors of homogenization as inexpensive, standardized manufactured products replaced the more crudely fashioned creations of home industry. To purchase such treasures, of course, required the consumer to enter the money economy. The diversified yeoman farmer, with his mule and single blade plow, rapidly gave way to the specialized agribusinessman, with his farm machinery and fertilizers. As mechanization expanded the acreage a farmer could till, land hunger became acute. Dutifully, the government brutally swept the Great Plains clean of such impediments to progress as Indians and buffalo. But the farmer was an integral part of the world economy, and the

¹ Rail mileage in 1860 consisted of 33,000 miles of various gauged tracks. In 1890 the United States had 166,000 miles of standard gauge track. Samuel P. Hays, The Response to Industrialism, 1885-1914 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), pp. 126-29.

vagaries of feast or famine in Australia or the Ukraine now affected his everyday life. Although the new national economy expanded men's opportunities, it also limited their independence.²

In the South, the trauma of Civil War and Reconstruction waned slowly. The unsettled race question continued to plague the region and its people. What wartime fighting had destroyed, a post-war credit stringency prevented from rebuilding. In order to reunite land (plantations) with labor (ex-slaves) in the absence of capital for wages, the oppressive crop lien system came into vogue. Many poor whites, underfinanced and cultivating small parcels of marginal land, also slipped into tenancy before the turn of the century. Landlords, merchants and later budding industrialists combined to legislate on behalf of the new order.

Both the South and the West retained vestiges of colonial debtor economies well into the twentieth century. In the 1890s, industry in both sections remained largely extractive in nature. Both sections primarily furnished the industrialized northeast with agricultural goods and other raw materials. Low paid, unskilled laborers completed only the initial processing of crops and resources in these outlying regions. Finished products emanated almost exclusively from the northeast or abroad. The value added through the manufacturing process, which normally constituted the largest

² Ibid.

portion of a finished product's worth, accrued to the industrialized sections of the nation or Europe. Declining prices for raw materials, on the other hand, prevented significant capital accumulation in the South and West. Lack of capital, poor regional markets and few laborers skilled in the industrial arts hindered development in these regions. When investment capital from outside did materialize, it came with foreign controls, and normally the reinvestment of profits elsewhere.³

As the national economy expanded, its chaotic upswings and slumps affected more and more people. Two of America's three worst depressions occurred in this era.⁴ Widening disparities of wealth, multiplication of economic interests within a community, impersonalization of relations, ethnic and religious heterogeneity changed the world in which Americans lived. The social results of this new industrial world emerged in bold relief. Fabulous wealth existed in the presence of abject poverty, beauty stood next to squalor, and sophistication encountered the most profound vulgarity. The new national economy brought people closer together, yet divided them as never before.

Despite the problems emerging from late nineteenth century development much that was creative and welcome emanated from the Gilded Age. Industrialization provided jobs for a

³ Hays, The Response to Industrialism, pp. 126-29.

⁴ Only the depression of the 1930s can be considered worse than those of 1873-1879 and 1893-1897.

population which more than doubled between 1860 and 1900. Isolation and rustic crudity gave way to more varied and refined patterns of life. A bustling inventiveness created products that eased and enriched many lives. Such positive factors, however, could not completely overshadow the problems. Emotions of hope and despair lived side by side in the minds of many late nineteenth century Americans. Because Oklahoma was opened to black and white settlement only in 1889, the excitement and trauma of the period was telescoped into a very few years in the new land. This concentration of development would magnify the responses of optimism and gloom making Oklahoma a land of cultural, intellectual and social extremes.

As a territory Oklahoma was a ward of the nation. People in the new land naturally had a particularly strong interest in national affairs. Economic and political events of national scope vitally affected their lives. As most settlers came to the new territory with little capital, national credit and monetary policies were crucial to Oklahoma's economic development. With little land to tax in the early years, territorians had to look to Washington for fiscal support. Government aid for building rail lines to service the new land was also desired. The president appointed the executive and judicial officers of the territory, and Congress would decide when and under what circumstances Oklahoma would be admitted to statehood. Oklahoma's territorial sta-

tus, plus the fact that southerners and westerners made up the overwhelming majority of the population, meant the press would carry a substantial portion of national and regional news in the 1890s.

In partisan politics, the Gilded Age was a period of party equilibrium on the national level. Between 1876 and 1892 no president received a majority of the popular votes cast. Only twice were chief executives favored with party majorities in both houses of Congress (Republicans in 1889-1891 and Democrats in 1893-1895). Both times the mandate was sharply reversed in the next congressional race. National campaigns centered primarily upon the tariff, with demagogic appeals to Civil War and Reconstruction loyalties adding to the flavor of the times. Both measures favored the GOP. The protective tariff symbolized the Hamiltonian policy of government promoted economic development. Democratic opposition centered on a laissez-faire orientation toward economic policy. To win national elections, however, Democrats had to carry several states in the northeast and midwest where protection meant prosperity. As a loose combination of state and local parties, which frequently represented contradictory interests, Grover Cleveland's Democratic party coalition was always tenuous. With the added stress of economic depression, the Democratic party would split along already existing fault lines in the mid-1890s. Although "waving the bloody shirt of rebellion" proved less effective as

time passed, the tactic could still turn elections as late as the 1890s. Because banking and currency reform, civil service measures and railroad regulation divided the two closely matched parties, professional politicians preferred to avoid them when possible.

Banking and currency issues, as well as the monopolistic policies of railroads, particularly inflamed the voters of the South and West. The Civil War left the South in serious financial difficulty. Wartime expenditures left little hard cash in the region. The capital which had gone into slaves before the war evaporated with emancipation. As late as 1900 the South had only one bank for every 58,130 people. The national average was one to 16,000.⁵ The more lucrative field of industrial investment in the northeast created credit stringency and higher interest rates in the South and West. These regions also suffered higher railroad rates. The substantially lower purchasing power of colonial debtor regions forced railroads to move empty freight cars into the South and West at harvest time. The expense was passed on to the user. With less competition in these outlying regions, long-short haul differentials also emerged. The practice only mirrored the cosmopolitan policy of charging what the traffic would bear.

⁵ Sheldon Hackney, Populism: The Critical Issues (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1971), p. xi.

Presaging, and most likely informing, the progressive historians' interpretation of partisan politics in the Gilded Age as a sham battle over insignificant or false issues, many in the South and West charged that the dominant parties refused to address the real issues agitating the nation. In a series of meetings, beginning with the Ocala Convention of the Southern Farmer's Alliance of December, 1889, and including the Cincinnati Convention of May, 1891, and the St. Louis Convention of February, 1892, Kansans and other third-party advocates sought to bring together all of the egalitarian-oriented reform groups of the late nineteenth century. A new single national party would address the issues that Democratic and Republican leaders avoided.⁶

More than 1300 accredited delegates met at Omaha, Nebraska in July, 1892, to nominate a presidential candidate and write a national platform for the newly formed People's party of America. Leonidas L. Polk, the president of the Southern Farmer's Alliance was expected to receive the convention's highest honor. Unfortunately, he died a few weeks before the convention met. Federal Judge Walter Q. Gresham of Indiana, who had flirted with Populist doctrines, seemed to be the next best choice. He declined, however, shortly before the convention. Finally, the presidential nomination devolved upon General James B. Weaver of Iowa, the 1880 presidential candidate of the Greenback party. As his running

⁶ John D. Hicks, The Populist Revolt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1931), pp. 207-29.

mate the convention put forward ex-Confederate General James G. Field, of Virginia. The blue-gray ticket of Civil War veterans symbolized the new party's attempt at rapprochement between the West and South.⁷ The presentation of the platform, rather than the nomination of candidates, was the focal point of the Populists' 1892 national convention. As the Bible of Populism, the Omaha Platform fully revealed a frame of reference third-party spokesmen used in their critique of Gilded Age America. The preamble, which emanated from the pen of Ignatius Donnelly, was a catalogue of alleged late nineteenth century corruption and social decay. The nation, Donnelly contended, had been "brought to the verge of moral, political and material ruin." He claimed "Corruption dominates," whereby the nation was "rapidly degenerating into European conditions." According to the author, "governmental injustice {bred} two great classes--tramps and millionaires." Donnelly credited this degeneration from the egalitarian past to "a vast conspiracy against mankind . . . and if not met and overthrown at once it forebodes terrible social convulsions, the destruction of civilization, or the establishment of an absolute despotism." The great issue, Donnelly proclaimed, was "whether {or not} we are to have a republic to administer." Convention managers, notably, scheduled the presentation of the platform for the Fourth of July, the anniversary of the Dec-

⁷ Hicks, The Populist Revolt, pp. 229-37.

laration of Independence.⁸

Visions of catastrophe if contemporary relations persisted and utopia if men would only take hold of their own destinies were not left as uncharted territories of the mind in the literature of the 1890s. From 1888, when Edward Bellamy published Looking Backward, until the turn of the century nearly two hundred novels of the cataclysmic and utopian variety flooded the American market. It was a tidal wave of speculation about what the future might hold for the republic. Of the authors whose politics are known, better than eighty percent supported the Populist party. Ignatius Donnelly's Caesar's Column (1890) was one of the most dramatic and popular works of this genre. Next to the preamble to the Omaha platform, it was Donnelly's most noted work. Appearing only two years before the 1892 Populist convention, Donnelly's fictional account of the downfall of civilization made the social critique found in the Omaha platform a desperate plea for civic regeneration reminiscent of the American Revolutionary period.⁹

The vision of a nationalized economy, with an army of producers equally sharing the fruits of their collective toil, provided a blueprint for creating a fair society to many late nineteenth century egalitarians. In Kansas the

⁸ Hicks, The Populist Revolt, pp.236-37.

⁹ H. Roger Grant, "Populists and Utopia: A Neglected Connection," Red River Valley Historical Review 2, no. 4 (Winter, 1975): 482.

Vincent brothers sold copies of Bellamy's novel for 50¢ with a year's subscription to the American Nonconformist, and vigorously promoted the author's ideas. Samuel Crocker published his own utopian novel, That Island, in 1892, specifically for an Oklahoma readership. The work incorporated many of Bellamy's ideas.¹⁰

While the Omaha platform of the People's party appeared to be a crazy quilt of unrelated crackpot proposals to many contemporaries, it was not a hastily assembled document. It was the accumulation of a half-century of proposals that late nineteenth century egalitarians had promoted to save the America of the Revolutionary Fathers.¹¹

As with the Union Labor party platform of 1888 the body of the Omaha Platform called for reform in three major areas, land, transportation and finance. Oklahoma figured prominently in the land issue. At the Cincinnati Convention of 1891 Samuel Crocker, who served on the meeting's platform committee, secured adoption of a resolution on the land issue. As chairman of the Oklahoma People's party, he led the territorial delegation to the Omaha Convention. The Omaha

¹⁰ American Nonconformist (Winfield), 27 June 1889 and Samuel Crocker (Theodore Oceanic Islet), That Island (Oklahoma City: C. E. Streeter & Co., 1892), pp. 2-4 & 6. Crocker's novel contained several testimonials, including one from his old Boomer friend, Democrat Sidney Clarke.

¹¹ While the Omaha platform met with almost universal derision from the establishment in the 1890s, including a number of future progressives, many of the reforms contained in the document became law in the early twentieth century.

Platform called for an end to land monopolization for speculative purposes and prohibition of alien land ownership. The wording was a euphemism for suppressing the English land syndicates Oklahoma boomers fought in the 1880s.

On transportation the People's party adopted Bellamy's solution of nationalization. The sentiment of the convention, however, stopped far short of a call for nationalizing all industry. For Populists, the railroad issue was a matter of both economics and power. Railroad rates in the South and West were higher than for the industrial northeast. Railroad revenue per ton/mile in Kansas and Oklahoma was 27.8% above the national average. The Omaha Platform, however, cut to the core of the issue when its authors explained, "the railroad corporations will either own the people or the people must own the railroads." On finance the Omaha Platform called for the free and unlimited coinage of silver and gold at the ratio of sixteen to one, greenbacks and a graduated income tax to redistribute wealth. The document also endorsed the Subtreasury Plan of the Southern Farmer's Alliance. Credit stringency in the South and West, especially in Oklahoma where most settlers were cash poor and had little to mortgage, would make the finance plank the third-party's most popular proposal.¹²

¹² Seventeenth Annual Report on the Statistics of Railways in the United States, (1905), p. 99.

While notable reformers busied themselves founding a new national party in 1891 and 1892, third-party organizers in the Oklahoma Territory concentrated upon spreading the gospel of Populism beyond the reform party's original ex-Kansan base. In 1890, Oklahoma Populists drew electoral support almost exclusively from midwestern and northeastern-born migrants. Land constituted the prime motivation to migrate for those born in the midwest. Midwesterners born in rural areas and small towns east of the Mississippi River frequently took up rural residence farther west. The availability of land immediately after the Civil War, however, meant that most midwesterners made their first migration after they reached adulthood. For those midwesterners born in Kansas after the war the trek to Oklahoma was usually their first move upon leaving their parents home.¹³

Northeastern-born Oklahomans also showed a positive correlation with the People's party in 1890. The correlation, however, was lower as northeastern-born Oklahomans were far more urban in orientation than other sectional groups. They normally made a number of moves before landing in the Oklahoma Territory. Northeastern migrants usually left their home region as youths. Although almost one-half were born in rural areas, and migrated to rural situations, urban born northeasterners were especially attracted to small towns in

¹³ Michael Owen Roark, "Oklahoma Territory: Frontier Development, Migration and Culture Areas," (Ph. D. dissertation, Syracuse University, 1975), pp. 179-82.

the Midwest because of their growing business opportunities in the late nineteenth century. The northeastern-born migrants were far more likely to have commercial skills and business contacts back east than were midwesterners. In Oklahoma they exhibited an extreme physical mobility consistent with a speculative search for urban business opportunities.¹⁴

White border state natives constituted the second largest sectional group to migrate to the Oklahoma Territory. Although several upper South states had significant Republican party organizations in the late nineteenth century, this group's strong correlation with the Democratic vote of the Oklahoma Territory in 1890 (.68535) suggests that the new land's border state migrants shared political and social loyalties with those born farther to the South.

Several factors made border state migrants particularly strong prospects for conversion to Populism. Unlike northerners, the vast majority of southern-born Oklahomans had rural backgrounds. They were also less speculative in their migration patterns. On the whole they made fewer moves before arriving in the Oklahoma Territory, and rarely migrated from their state of birth before adulthood.

Because the upper south had a decentralized structure of trade in the late nineteenth century few migrants from this region exhibited aggressive commercial orientations. Border

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 157-66.

state natives frequently migrated in congregations or in kin-related groups, more typical of egalitarian peasant orientations. They consequently showed a tendency toward a safety-first pattern of agriculture which placed subsistence and local markets first, and crops for the larger commercial world second. When they came into contact with the commercial economy of the Oklahoma Territory, the third-party's anti-capitalism animus held significant appeal for those steeped in the traditions of a more parochial society.¹⁵

Although Missourians frequently settled in southern Kansas and then entered the Oklahoma Territory from the north, the largest group of border state migrants moved to northern Texas before entering the new land from the south. As northern Texas was a hotbed of Southern Farmer's Alliance activities in the late 1880s, many of these future Oklahomans were indoctrinated in the principles of the growing farm order. In Texas, however, Democratic Governor James Stephen Hogg retarded the transition from Alliance lobbying to third-party activism with an active campaign against the railroads in 1890. Alliansemen endorsed Hogg in his 1890 campaign, and many of them remained loyal to the Democratic governor in 1892, when Bourbon Democrats fused with Republicans in an attempt to evict Hogg from office and destroy the railroad commission his followers had established the year before. As with their Texan cousins, southern-born Oklaho-

¹⁵ Roark, "Oklahoma Territory," pp. 208-11, 223-24 & 231.

mans moved to third party activism later than did farmers in the plains states.¹⁶

White lower southerners, mostly born in Texas, also showed an exceptionally rural background. Most of their ancestors, however, had migrated from tidewater south. While they also frequently migrated in family units, lower southerners exhibited a distinctly more commercial orientation toward economic issues. Texas-born Oklahomans were normally substantially younger than their border state counterparts. As products of the frontier, ranching frequently held more appeal than farming for these migrants. With a relatively commercial outlook and a penchant for ranching lower southerners became the Oklahoma Territory's least Populistic sectional group.¹⁷

¹⁶ James Turner's survey of core Texas Populists in "Understanding the Populists," 67, no. 2 Journal of American History (September, 1980): 354-66, shows third party supporters in Texas to have resided primarily away from railroad towns, as they did in the Oklahoma Territory. Turner's fifteen "core" Populist counties, however, all went Populist in 1892 and remained Populist in 1894 and 1896. This reveals the rural basis of Populism in the early years of the reform movement in Texas, and suggests the orientation of migrants to Oklahoma from the Lone Star state. The real significance of the Populist movement in Texas, however, rests with the third party's success in growing beyond their circumscribed base of 1892. In 1896, for instance, the People's party carried 44.5% of the vote in the state's six most urban counties.

¹⁷ Although lower southerners show strong correlations with fusionist candidates in territory-wide elections in the late 1890s, local three-way races legislative races in Cleveland County, where lower south-born Oklahomans constituted 21.0% of the electorate, Populist votes produced correlations of -.46876 and -.42517 in 1896 and 1900, respectively. The Populist-lower southern correlation in the legislative races of 1898 was .22618. This

As third party organizers spread their message among southerners, other changes in the political landscape of Oklahoma emerged. Finding his office difficult and unrewarding, George W. Steele resigned from the governorship of Oklahoma in November, 1891, and returned to his native Indiana. Territorial Secretary Robert Martin then served as temporary governor until February, 1892, when President Harrison appointed district court judge Abraham Jefferson Seay as Steele's permanent replacement.

A. J. Seay's appointment as governor of the Oklahoma Territory was hardly calculated to undermine Populist organizing efforts. Seay was obese, a poor speaker and possessed an anti-labor background. He was born in Virginia in 1832. Three years later his family moved to south central Missouri where Seay grew to manhood. Politically, Seay moved from the Whig to the Know-Nothing to the Republican party before the Civil War. During the war he served in the Union army, rising to the rank of Lt. Colonel before war's end.

After the Civil War, Seay returned to Missouri to take up banking and law. He unsuccessfully contested "Silver Dick" Bland for Congress as a pro-gold Republican in the 1870s, and then found his calling as a district judge. During the Great Southwest Railroad strike Seay gained notoriety as the first judge to issue an injunction against the Knights of Labor. After twelve years on the bench union men effected

abberation, however, was largely the product of local considerations.

his defeat in the election of 1886. When President Harrison opened the Oklahoma Territory to black and white settlement in 1889 Seay migrated to the new land with a district court judge's commission in his pocket.¹⁸

Seay's first responsibility as governor was to organize local governments for the soon to be opened three million-acre Cheyenne and Arapahoe reservation, located to the west of the original Unassigned Lands district. As Oklahoma was a land of strangers, the new governor chose many men whose character was questionable. To his credit, however, Seay was quick to make replacements once indiscretions were uncovered. The federal government also had opened to settlement the Iowa, Sac & Fox, Pottawatomie and Shawnee lands, located to the east of old Oklahoma, the previous September. The new annexations made redistricting of the territorial legislative districts for the 1893 legislature necessary.¹⁹

While the Oklahoma Organic Act of 1890 established biennial sessions for the territorial assembly, the legislature neglected to provide for a general election in 1892. The obsession with the capital fight caused legislators to leave many holes in the legal system of the territory. Seay considered calling the 1890 Legislature into special session to

¹⁸ Harry E. Henslick, "Abraham Jefferson Seay: Governor of Oklahoma Territory, 1892-93," Chronicles of Oklahoma 53, no. 1 (Spring, 1975): 29-32, 42 & 44 and A. J. Seay, "Autobiographical Sketch of Abraham Jefferson Seay's Public Life," Abraham Jefferson Seay Papers, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, pp. 6-7.

¹⁹ Henslick, "A. J. Seay," pp. 33-34.

rectify the oversight, but this course would require a special territory-wide election to fill vacated seats.²⁰ As the most expedient course, Seay asked Oklahoma's delegate to Congress, David A. Harvey, to secure the proper legislation from Washington. At this point Henry E. Asp, the Oklahoma solicitor for the Santa Fe Railroad and a major Republican politico, intervened to kill any prospective election bill. He thought it untimely for Oklahoma to have a general election before the Cherokee Outlet, located between the older sections of Oklahoma and Kansas, was opened to non-Indian settlement. According to Asp "into it will pass a great body of Republicans and . . . {this will} settle the political complexion of this territory." Such pragmatic considerations of the political ramifications of federal actions would carry over into the battle over single or double statehood for the Oklahoma and Indian Territories. Not wishing to be labeled the man who derailed free elections in Oklahoma, however, Seay eventually traveled to Washington, D. C., to obtain the needed legislation.²¹

²⁰ A. M. Colson, the Councilor at large, returned to Kansas after the 1890 Legislature, thus requiring a territory-wide election.

²¹ Henslick, "A. J. Seay," pp. 37-38; Seay, "Autobiography," p. 4; Henry E. Asp to Hon. A. J. Seay, 27 June 1892 and Henry E. Asp to Hon. John W. Noble (Secretary of the Interior), 8 July 1892, Interior Department, Territorial Papers, 1889-1912 (Microfilm).

Congress appointed a three-man commission, consisting of Governor Seay, Democrat Leslie P. Ross and Populist Samuel Crocker, to conduct a census and lay out new legislative districts for the territory. to reapportion Oklahoma, The three men canvassed the territory in a mule drawn army ambulance and estimated the June, 1892, population of Oklahoma at 122,000, or approximately double that of 1890. When the commission met to redistrict the territory Governor Seay found himself in a distinct minority. Democrat Ross and Populist Crocker, the governor later claimed, gerrymandered the territory in favor of their two parties. Republicans, however, would still carry the Council and twelve of the twenty-six House seats with less than 50% of the vote in the fall elections.²²

While the race of 1890 centered on issues of local importance, such as placement of county seats and the capital fight, the 1892 campaign marked a change toward agitating broader questions. Foremost among the issues to emerge in the 1892 campaign was the fight for "free homes." To secure a patent to land in the Unassigned Lands region a homesteader only had to pay a \$14 fee to the federal land office. In the newly opened lands east and west of Old Oklahoma, however, an additional charge of \$1.25 to \$2.50 per acre was added to reimburse the federal government for payments to dis-

²² Samuel Crocker, "Autobiography," Oklahoma Historical Society, pp. 331-339; Abraham Jefferson Seay, "Autobiography of A. J. Seay," pp. 11-12 and Henslick, "A. J. Seay," p. 38.

possessed Indians. Although the homesteader's fees were stretched out over five years, many of the pioneers migrating to these lands could not raise the \$200 to \$400 necessary to secure title to their homesteads during the depression of the mid-1890s.

As a long-time advocate of homesteader interests, Samuel Crocker took up the issue of free homes for settlers in the newly opened regions. While traveling with the census commission in the Cheyenne and Arapahoe lands, Crocker organized Oklahoma's first "Free Homes Clubs" at Cloud Chief, in Washita County. Settlers warmed to Crocker's logic that free land for the poor was necessary to maintaining an independent yeomanry, the bulwark of republican institutions. The Populist spokesman was able to organize several other clubs in the western lands, and then carried his campaign to the east side.²³

In the struggle for political supremacy in the new land territorial politicians revealed much eagerness in recruiting followers in the newly opened sections. When the Cherokee Outlet opened in 1893 the free homes issue directly affected more than half of the territory's population. Men of all political creeds readily embraced the free homes issue. The real issue became which party could best secure the

²³ Crocker, "Autobiography," p. 336-39; Dan W. Peery, "Colonel Crocker and the Boomer Movement," Chronicles of Oklahoma 13, no. 3 (September, 1935): 294-95 and Tecumseh Herald in the Oklahoma City Evening Gazette, 20 September 1892.

needed legislation from Congress.

The most successful politician to ride the free homes issue to greater glory in the 1890s was the personable Republican postmaster of Guthrie, Dennis T. Flynn. Flynn had been a favorite to win the GOP nomination for delegate to Congress in 1890. As a peace offering to Oklahoma City Republicans still angry over the capital fight, however, Governor Steele forced the nomination of David A. Harvey of Oklahoma City. With the capital fight largely in the past, and Steele retired from the governor's post in 1892, Flynn easily displaced Harvey for the Republican nomination for delegate and rode the free homes issue to election in November.

Flynn, the son of Irish immigrants, was born in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania in 1861. His mother placed him in a Catholic orphanage near Buffalo, New York, when his father died three years later. At the age of twenty-one, Flynn moved west to seek his fortune and edited a small newspaper in Iowa before moving on to south Kansas. In the Sunflower State, Flynn read law, was admitted to the bar and served as the city attorney of Medicine Lodge for three years. In his spare time Flynn involved himself in townsite speculation, the loan business and editing another newspaper. Through his Kansas connections Flynn secured the Guthrie postmastership in 1889. As a Republican, Flynn represented the party that had opened the Oklahoma Territory and the party of ac-

tive government in the Gilded Age. He, thus, contended that the GOP was far more likely to pass a free homes bill than the Democrats.²⁴

Flynn's ability to seize the free homes issue came not only through his own attributes as a capable politician, but also through infighting and incompetence within the Populist camp in 1892. With the inclusion of southern-born Oklahomans in the Populist ranks, fusion with the Democratic party became a significant point of contention among third party supporters. The party still had the shadow of fusion, and then betrayal, hanging over it from the first legislature. In a sense the People's party had been founded in fusion. The original Cowley County, Kansas People's movement owed its first victory largely to the fact that local Democratic leaders declined to nominate candidates in 1889. The 1890 Payne County victory resulted from the same circumstances. For southern-born Populists, however, Democrats constituted an integral part of the elite from which they rebelled in joining the People's party.

In the eyes of many potential supporters, the People's party in Oklahoma was in jeopardy of becoming a Democratic party annex by 1892. In the February, 1891, elections for county officers, Populists fused with Democrats in all but heavily southern-populated Cleveland County. Democrats viewed the fusion arrangement as more than simply an expedi-

²⁴ Victor Murdock, "Dennis T. Flynn," Chronicles of Oklahoma 18, no. 2 (June, 1940): 106-13.

ent method of securing county offices. Oklahoma City Democrats, for instance, wanted to mobilize country support for their town, both as a commercial center and as a prospective capital city. To "cement mutual interests for future need," as the Democratic Oklahoma City Evening Gazette put it, they were willing to tender a large portion of the county offices to Alliance candidates in exchange for later considerations.²⁵

Oklahoma Democrats pragmatically viewed the Populist revolt as a prime opportunity to build an anti-Republican majority in a northern dominated territory. Democrats, however, shrewdly couched their appeal in ideological terms, downplaying their own pragmatic motivations. Both parties, Democrats claimed, stood together in their opposition to "Wall Street, with her thousands billions drawn from the sweat of millions of honest toilers." If all parties with an anti-northeastern capitalist bias united in 1892, Democrats predicted that "the mammoth corporations, the syndicate trusts, the high tariff laws, the iron kings and the plutocrats of the east will be swept from place and power," they prophesized.²⁶

Oklahoma Democrats developed the same type of appeal to Populists that their compatriots in the South made in 1890. Contending adequate reform was possible through the dominant

²⁵ Oklahoma City Evening Gazette, 23 December 1890.

²⁶ Ibid., 23 December 1890 and 28 January 1891.

party, southern politicians encouraged the Alliance to lend its influence to the election of progressives within the Democratic party. Alliacemen subsequently elected four governors, eight state legislatures and forty-two congressmen formally committed to their principles. Alliance support, for instance, was crucial to the election of James Stephen Hogg in Texas. When Oklahomans went to the polls to elect county officers in February, 1891, the Hogg-Alliance coalition was still intact. As most southern-born Oklahomans had recently migrated from Texas, it was natural that events in their former home state naturally influenced their choice of political strategy.²⁷

In the county elections of 1891 Oklahoma Democrats carried Cleveland County in a three-way race, and fusion tickets were elected in all of the remaining counties, except Logan. In Logan County, Republicans came closer to defeat in 1891 than at any other election in the territorial period. Ira N. Terrill's murder of a witness against him in a court case involving the former legislator's land claim in Guthrie two weeks before the election accounted for the margin of GOP's margin of victory in Logan County in 1891. Terrill's actions so outraged local citizens that marshals had to rush him from the county in the dark of the night to prevent his lynching. Elsewhere in the territory Fusion tickets carried the day. The anti-Republican victory of

²⁷ Hicks, The Populist Revolt, p. 178 and Oklahoma City Evening Gazette, 12 August 1892.

1891 encouraged Democrats to promote closer relations with Populistic elements. In 1892, however, Democrats would expect a larger slice of the political pie. Adopting the strategy of their Texas cousins, Oklahoma Democrats included a call for the establishment of a regulatory railroad commission in their 1892 platform.²⁸

²⁸ Purcell Territorial Topic, 22 January and 12 February 1901; Norman Transcript, 12 January and 7 & 28 February 1891 and Oklahoma City Evening Gazette, 28 January 1891.

Chapter V

FUSION OR THE MIDDLE OF THE ROAD

Throughout its existence the Oklahoma People's party struggled with the issue of fusing with Democrats or charting an independent course. With party machinery in the hands of midwesterners the third party's territorial convention was scheduled to coincide with that of the Democrats in 1892. Prospective fusion was the obvious motive. Once in convention, however, anti-fusion forces succeeded in nominating one of their own for the delegate race. The Populist nomination for delegate to Congress in 1892 fell upon a little known editor and part-time preacher from Dover, in Kingfisher County, N. H. Ward.

In line with their choice to run a separate ticket, Oklahoma Populists adopted a strictly middle-of-the-road, or anti-fusion, platform in 1892. They endorsed the Omaha Platform as "the most profound declaration of rights since the memorable 4th day of July, 1776." The territorial platform also specifically denounced fusion, called for free homes and demanded that Congress open the remaining Indian lands to white settlement. Oklahoma Populists specifically endorsed the actions of the third party's United States con-

gressional delegation, but remained notably silent on the third party's 1890 territorial representatives. Out of jail on appeal for his murder conviction, Ira N. Terrill attended the convention as a spectator, throwing a pall of despair over the entire proceedings.¹

Little was known, either at the time or later, of N. H. Ward, the rightfully obscure Populist candidate for delegate in 1892. Having served during the Civil War with General James B. Weaver, the Populist nominee for president in 1892, Ward's war service was his only claim to notoriety. As a candidate Ward proved woefully inadequate. His rambling speeches sometimes bordered upon profanity. A penchant for exhibitionism only partially masked his obvious inferiority as a candidate. Populists of all shades soon came to recognize his lack of knowledge on the issues. As a wave of disillusionment spread over the Populist effort, many party activists turned their attentions to the legislative races in an attempt to salvage something from the campaign.²

Democrats put forth Oklahoma City lawyer O. H. Travers for the Delegate race. A good speaker and experienced campaigner, the Democratic nominee proved far superior to his Populist counterpart. Travers's only weakness was in being

¹ Oklahoma City Evening Gazette, 17 August 1892.

² Frank McMasters to Leslie P. Ross, 29 June 1892, Leslie P. Ross Papers, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma; Norman Transcript, 18 August 1892; Norman Peoples Voice, 23 December 1892 and Oklahoma City Evening Gazette, 19 January and 19 July 1892.

a newcomer to the territory, having moved to Oklahoma in November, 1891. This forced the Democrats to shelve their traditional "carpetbag-rule" campaign against the GOP. Instead they focused upon the issue of statehood for Oklahoma. The Democratic platform endorsed "free homes," called for uniting the Oklahoma and Indian Territories into a single state, demanded establishment of a railroad commission, ratified their party's national ticket, opposed mixed schools and charged the GOP with importing Negro voters into the territory for overtly political purposes.

As the party of localism, Democrats found the rule of officials appointed in Washington "subversive of free born American Institutions." According to one Democratic spokesman, Oklahomans "instinctively rebelled against being in the position of an outlying province, governed by foreign rulers" appointed in Washington. With the McKinley Tariff as a major national issue, Democrats also stressed the notion that the next Congress would likely have a Democratic majority, and thus be more favorable to solicitations from a representative of their own party.

To secure as much Populist support as possible, Travers's campaign manager asked Sidney Clarke to canvass the territory for the Democratic nominee. Clarke, whose close ties to third party leaders was well known, went so far as to endorse a large portion of the Populists' Omaha Platform in his Oklahoma City address. The newly founded Norman Peo-

ple's Voice, which quickly became the mouthpiece of southern Populism in the Oklahoma Territory, denounced Clarke's appeal for Populist support as the same "old thread-bare promises" Democrats in the South had used before.³

Although their party was formally committed to a non-fusion course, Populists in Kingfisher, Logan and Payne Counties concluded election arrangements with local Democratic organization. Fusionist tickets appeared in one Council and three Representative districts. Democrats, also, declined to field tickets in one Council and two House districts and Populists returned the favor in another Council and two other House districts. On election day, Populists carried each of the seats where Democrats failed to field candidates, and elected their fusion candidate to the Council. Payne County voters also elected a Democrat and a Populist in three way races. Republicans carried the northern sections of the territory, with Democrats securing the southern districts. In Oklahoma County Samuel Crocker ran for the House seat of

³ Leander Pitman to Hon. Sidney Clarke, 19 September 1892, Sidney Clarke Papers, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma; Oklahoma City Evening Gazette, 19 September and 7 October 1892 and Norman People's Voice, 21 October 1892. Oklahoma City Evening Gazette, 29 July and 17 August 1892. Although the Democrats' statehood issue had sentimental appeal it was clearly impractical in 1892. Land was tax exempt until homesteaders proved their claims. Since they had five years to do this, the territorial tax base would be miniscule until settlers in the Unassigned Lands region proved up in 1894, and inadequate before 1898 when Cherokee Strip land became taxable. In a more practical vein, the Populist platform called for home rule and denounced federal interference "in matters justly pertaining to local territorial government."

outspokenly anti-Populist incumbent, James L. Brown, throwing the election to a Democrat.⁴

In the Delegate race Dennis Flynn won a plurality victory over Travers with Ward finishing a distant third. Populist organizing efforts among southern-born Oklahomans, and the establishment of a third party paper at Norman, in overwhelmingly southern Cleveland County, should have expanded the Populist party's electoral base far more than the three percentage points Ward gained over Crocker's total of 1890. Ward failed to carry a single county and was able to manage second in only Cleveland and Payne Counties. Travers even evicted the People's party from second place in Ward's home county of Kingfisher.⁵

Computer analysis of the 1892 returns in the Delegate race provides a far greater insight into the bases of Oklahomans' partisan choice in the first decade of territorial government than returns from the 1890 elections. County and township lines were moved slightly between the 1890 and 1892 elections. As data from the 1900 census corresponds to the boundaries of 1892, correlations between 1890 election returns and 1900 census data involve a greater margin of error than for later years. Agricultural data from the 1900 cen-

⁴ Oklahoma City Evening Gazette, 10 & 24 September, 25 & 26 October and 14 November 1892. In the sparsely populated west, the GOP carried the Council seat, but split the two House seats with the Democrats.

⁵ Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 8 November 1894. Flynn (Republican) carried 44.7% of the vote to Travers (Democrat) 34.8% and Ward's (Populist) 20.5%.

sus corresponds more closely to the patterns existing in 1892 than 1890 for two additional reasons: the 1892 returns' closer relationship in time with the 1900 census, and the severe drought of 1889 and 1890, which significantly retarded agricultural development in the Oklahoma Territory before 1891.

Table 3, which presents the correlations between Oklahomans' place of birth or race and the 1892 general election ballot, reveals a substantial broadening of the third party's sectional support consistent with the spread of Populism among southern-born Oklahomans. Populist correlations with northerners dropped from .82629 in the August, 1890, legislative ballot to -.01527 in 1892, while third party correlations with white southerners rose from -.49394 to .23112. In 1892 the party of renegade Republicans became a true third party, with an appeal that crossed sectional lines. The two mainstream parties continued to rely heavily upon sectional bases of support. The broadened third party appeal, however, moderated most sectional correlations with party voting compared with 1890.⁶

The conversion of significant numbers of southern-born Oklahomans to Populism constitutes only part of the explanation for the third party's sectionally balanced poll of

⁶ The People's party did increase its correlations with each of the other sectional groups in the November election, but only slightly. See the small magnitude of Populist increases in Cleveland and Oklahoma Counties where southern-born Oklahomans dominated in Table 4.

TABLE 3			
Place of Birth or Race by Partisan Choice, 1892*			
Race or Place of Birth	Republican Party	Democratic Party	Populist Party
North	.43030	-.39313	-.01527
Northeast	.52997	-.40110	-.12273
Midwest	.34606	-.33620	.01277
White South	-.67659	.45257	.23112
White Border States	-.54505	.18910	.40568
White Lower South	-.63257	.63685	-.05124
Blacks	.48386	-.41178	-.05506
European	.38880	-.06047	-.38247

1892. Midwestern-born Oklahomans, who constituted the bulk of the third party's support in the August, 1890, election

* Source: Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 11 August 1894 and Rark's 5% sample of the census. See footnote 46, Chapter two.

deserted the Populist cause in large numbers long before the 1892 general election. Populist correlations with midwesterners dropped from .85551 to .36518 between the August and November, 1890 elections. These third party defectors, however, did not return to the GOP. Each of the three parties' August vote correlates quite strongly with its November ballot. The Populist renegades simply declined to vote at all in the delegate race.⁷

Table 4, which presents the third party's percent of the ballot in each of the Unassigned Lands Counties in 1890 and 1892, sheds some light upon why midwestern-born Populists declined to vote in November, 1890. The dropouts occurred largely in Logan and Payne Counties where fusion with Democrats on the capital issue in the 1890 legislature was highly unpopular. The delegate election took place while the 1890 Legislature was still in session.

Populist betrayal of their Democratic allies on the capital issue gave Kingfisher its chance to secure the capital prize at the time of the delegate election. Populist fortunes in Kingfisher County, thus, were unaltered. The third party did suffer some decline in its portion of the vote in

⁷ The correlations between the August and November, 1890, votes for each of the parties is: Republican .90149, Democratic .89309 and Populist .92866. As midwesterners constituted 41.6% of the Unassigned Lands population, a major shift in their partisan affiliations would have substantially altered the correlations between the two sets of election returns.

TABLE 4			
Populist Percent of the Ballot by County, 1890-1892*			
County	Legislative Election Aug., 1890	Delegate Election Nov., 1890	Delegate Election Nov., 1892
Canadian	26.1	20.8	18.5
Cleveland	6.0	12.3	27.2
Logan	28.3	17.8	15.2
Kingfisher	24.3	24.8	24.7
Oklahoma	7.7	11.4	11.0
Payne	50.6	31.3	35.0

Canadian County. As the GOP vote remained stable while both Democrats and Populists suffered reductions in their totals considerations surrounding the capital fight probably explain this reduction as well. In Cleveland and Oklahoma

* Source: Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 6 September 1890 & 8 November 1890 and Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 8 November 1894.

Counties the People's party advanced, but still was clearly in its infancy. The one bright spot for the third party in the 1892 election was the significant growth of Populism in heavily southern-populated Cleveland County.

Table 5, which presents correlations between partisan choice in the two 1890 elections and partisan choice in 1892, reveals the significance of the 1890 Delegate election for Populists. The third party's 1892 vote is much more strongly related to the delegate results than the legislative returns in 1890. Although renegade Populists did not return to the GOP in the 1890 Delegate race, their defection constituted far more than just a temporary fit of pique at party representatives. The third party's campaign centered upon a moralistic appeal to shun the new capitalist ethic of exploitation. The wheeling and dealing of third party legislators in 1890 seemed to betray this appeal. Those early Populists, who found the third party's protestations of superior morality insincere, would never return to the People's party. Populist totals in 1892 and 1894, as well as Fusionist ballots in 1896 and 1898, all correlate far more strongly with the 1890 Delegate returns than the 1890 legislative poll. A comparison of Democratic and Republican ballots in 1890 and 1892 shows far more consistency in the makeup of the mainstream party's base of supporters. Failure on the capital race and the presence of Populist James L. Mathews on the Democratic party Delegate ticket [for the

short term) provide the most logical explanations for the weaker correlation between the Democrat's 1890 and 1892 Delegate ballots.

TABLE 5			
Partisan Choice in 1890 by Partisan Choice in 1892			
Partisan Choice	Republican Party, 1892	Democratic Party, 1892	People's Party, 1892
1890 Vote for Legislature			
Republican Party	.81677	-.52487	-.42535
Democratic Party	-.71208	.94021	-.25179
Peoples Party	.31971	-.76652	.55734
1890 Vote for Delegate			
Republican Party	.91148	-.29114	-.71987
Democratic Party	-.77457	.79505	.04797
People's Party	-.06683	-.70617	.80173

* Source: Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 6 September & 8 November 1890 and Oklahoma Representative, 11 August 1894.

Table 6, which presents the partisan correlations with urban residence in 1892, reveals a pattern quite consistent with the 1890 rural-urban party breakdown. Township pre-

TABLE 6			
Urban Residence by Partisan Choice, 1892			
County	Republican Party	Democratic Party	Populist Party
Kingfisher	.27713	.24681	-.50965
Logan	.47957	.06963	-.62299
Oklahoma	.03893	.16747	-.27840
Payne	.02836	-.28638	.15663

cinct) level votes for Logan, Kingfisher, Oklahoma and Payne Counties were located for 1892. In Logan and Kingfisher Counties the People's party was definitely the favorite of farmers living away from urban areas. Democrats and Republicans did much better in the cosmopolitan areas around the railroad towns. The retarded growth of the third party in Oklahoma County, where Sidney Clarke and other left-wing De-

mocrats undercut the Populist appeal, accounts for the weaker rural-urban correlations in this county (see Table 5). As Payne County still had no rail service in 1892, the rural-urban correlations in this county still remain insignificant in 1892.

Although farmers needed several years, in some cases, to establish firmly a farming pattern, Table 7, which presents the partisan correlations with the territory's three most important crops and two most significant livestock-raising operations, reveals a definite party breakdown resulting from Oklahoma farmers' pattern of agriculture. As a party of farmers, Populists show positive correlations with hog raising and each of the Oklahoma Territory's major crops. The third party's strongly negative correlation with cattle per farm is consistent with the traditional farmer-rancher conflict, and in Oklahoma was something of a holdover from the Boomer-cattle baron fight of the 1880s.

The People's party was clearly the party of corn and hog farmers in the Oklahoma Territory. Populist correlations with cotton and wheat acreage were too weak to be considered significant. Republicans, on the other hand, showed a positive correlation only with wheat acreage and ranching. All Democratic party correlations with patterns of agriculture are quite weak. The party of southerners, significantly, lost a substantial portion of cotton farmers to the People's party before the Cleveland depression of the mid-1890s.

Cotton, however, accounted for more than 10% of improved acres in only four Oklahoma counties.⁸

TABLE 7			
Agriclutural Factors by Partisan Choice, 1892*			
Agricultural Factor	Republican Party	Democratic Party	Populist Party
Corn Acreage	-.47912	.01257	.54879
Cotton acreage	-.43303	.22284	.23149
Wheat Acreage	.25264	-.32426	.10792
Hogs per farm	-.42082	-.18957	.73294
Cattle per farm	.20644	.25559	-.56292

To turn a consistent profit both corn and cotton farmers need 30 inches of rainfall per year. The wheat belt, on the other hand, traditionally lies between the 20 and 30-inch rainfall lines on the Great Plains.⁹ In Nebraska, David

* Source: Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 11 August 1894 and Twelfth Census, 1900, Agriculture (Part I), pp. 179-80, 293-94, 433, 470 & 471.

⁸ In 1900 Oklahoma farmers devoted 1,320,506 acres to corn, 1,279,826 acres to wheat and 240,678 acres to cotton. Cleveland, Greer, Lincoln and Pottawatomie were the only counties to have more than 10% of their improved acres planted in cotton by 1900.

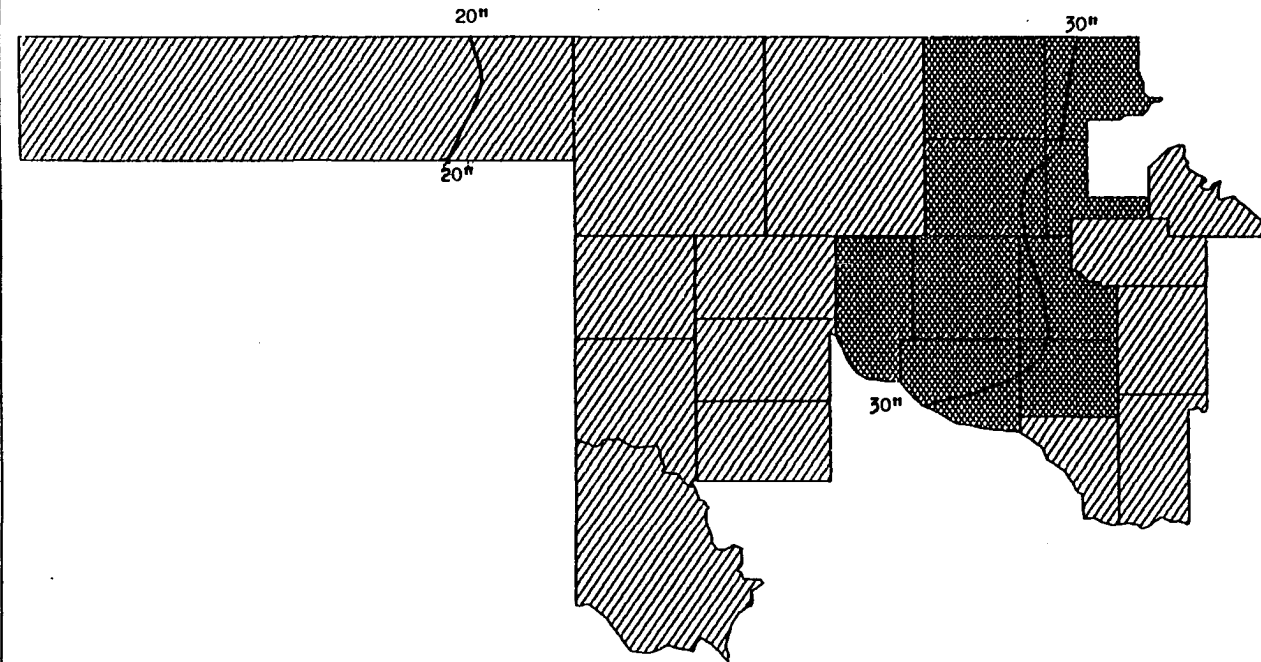
Trask has shown that Populism was strongest among farmers who attempted to raise corn in the dryer wheat belt. He goes on to suggest that their conversion to wheat in the late 1890s, when wheat prices were rising, accounts for the demise of the People's party.⁹ Map II, however, shows that the wheat belt in the Oklahoma Territory straddled the 30 inch rainfall line. Map III helps explain this seeming aberration. The wheat belt in Oklahoma followed the two main north-south rail lines. Wheat is the crop of the cosmopolitan culture in the Oklahoma Territory.

The Republican wheat farmer readily entered the cosmopolitan world of agribusiness where he expected a larger commercial operation, with substantial investment in fertilizer and machinery, to provide a considerable margin of profit. Republicans, alone, show a positive correlation with farm machinery in 1892 (.17667). The weakness of this correlation, however, suggests that slow capital accumulation hin-

⁹ Because of poor soil little farming occurred beyond the 26" rainfall line in the Oklahoma Territory, which roughly parallels the border between the Red Bed Plains of the eastern Oklahoma Territory and the Gypsum Hills of the western portion of the territory.

¹⁰ David S. Trask, "Nebraska Populism as a Response to Environmental and Political Problems," in Brian C. Blouet and Frederick C. Luebke (eds.), The Great Plains, Environment and Culture (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1979), pp. 65 & 75. In the 1890s Oklahoma Populists showed real strength in only three of the nine corn-belt counties west of the 30" rainfall line: Woods County, in the Cherokee Strip, which would open to white settlement only in 1893, Dewey County, in the Cheyenne and Arapahoe Lands and Greer County, which was separated from Texas and attached to Oklahoma in 1896.

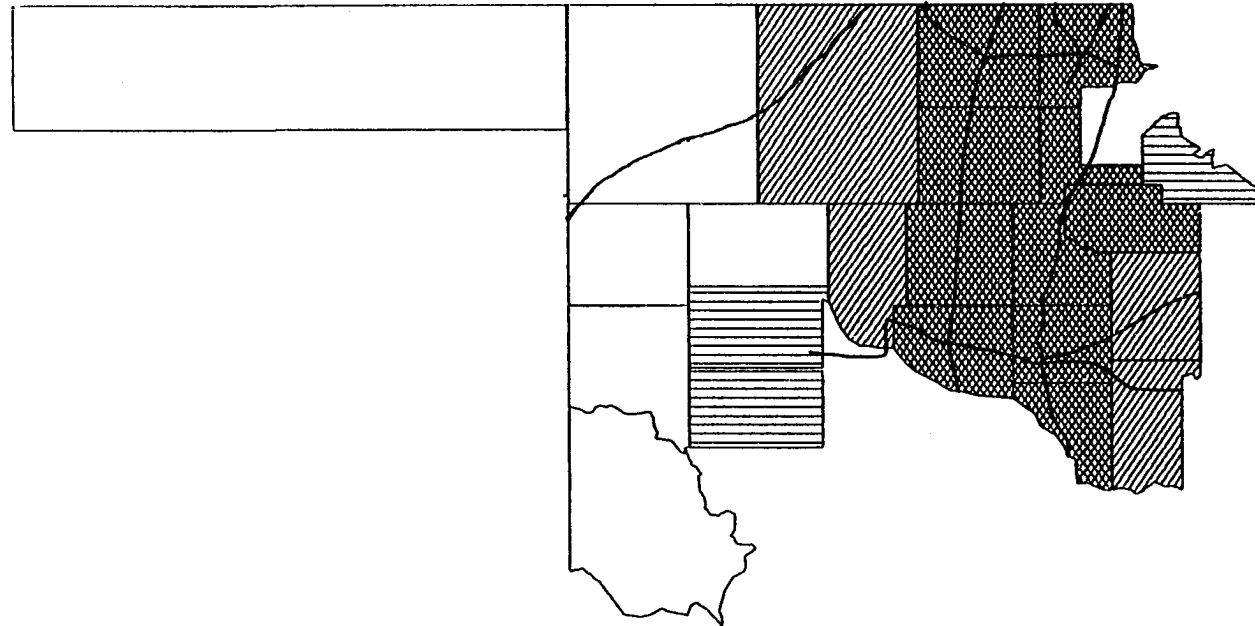
MAP II



LEGEND: ACREAGE  WHEAT  CORN

RAINFALL & PLURALITY OF CROP ACREAGE IN 1900

MAP III



LEGEND: ACREAGE  >50%  40-49%  30-39%  <30%

PERCENT IMPROVED ACRES & RAIL LINES IN 1900

dered mechanization in the early territorial years.¹¹ The investment necessary to mount a mechanized operation normally required significant debt for the newly settled farmer. When the Unassigned Lands farmers proved their claims in 1894 their lands became mortgageable. Unfortunately, farm debt figures from the 1890 census are not usable for Oklahoma, which opened to white settlement only the year before, and are not repeated in the 1900 census. In Kansas, however, Republican farmers tended to run up far greater debts than Populists on such commercialized ventures.¹²

In contrast to the agribusiness orientation of the Republican wheat farmer, Populists engaged in a more traditional family operation. Corn farmers invested far less on fencing and livestock than wheat farmers did on machinery. As the family farmer's homestead constituted both his business and his legacy, he was far less likely to mortgage it in an at-

¹¹ All later GOP correlations with the value of farm implements and machinery are stronger (for instance, .56239 in 1894). In 1892 Populists showed slightly stronger correlations than the Republican party with percent improved acres. For the rest of the 1890s the GOP correlation was strongest. None of the partisan correlations with percent improved acres, however, was large enough to be considered significant. Homestead entry made all farms the same size in the beginning. Only through sale and purchase, which first required capital accumulation, would farm sizes change significantly.

¹² Peter H. Argersinger, Populism and Politics: William Alfred Pepper and the People's party (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1974), p. 62; Walter T. K. Nugent, "Some Parameters of Populism," Agricultural History 40, no. 4 (Spring, 1966): 264. Wheat, corn and cotton acreage correlate with the value of implements and machinery per farm at .88905, -.54633 and -.39434, respectively.

tempt to mechanize his farm. Most important, rather than pin his hopes on the market value of a single crop the Populist corn farmer engaged in a more diversified operation. It is an axiom of agricultural economics that ten bushels of corn will put 100 pounds on a hog. The Populist correlation with hogs per farm in 1892 was even stronger than for corn acreage. The corn-hog farmer could either feed his corn to his hogs or place both commodities on the market separately. Between 1865 and 1897 corn and pork prices fluctuated so as to make one of these options profitable in all but three years. As wheat and cotton prices plummeted in the early and mid-1890s the vagaries of the marketplace affected the Populist corn-hog farmer far less than they did his mainstream party cousins.¹³

Table 8, which presents the partisan correlations with a variety of economic factors, further substantiates an economic cleavage to party orientation in 1892. Although the partisan correlations with the value of agricultural pro-

¹³ Fred A. Shannon, The Farmer's Last Frontier, Agriculture 1860-1897 (New York: Rinehart and Co, 1945), pp. 165-68. Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1957 (Washington, Bureau of the Census, 1960), pp. 290, 296-96 and 301-02. Cotton must also be considered a safer crop than wheat due to its greater drought resistance. The stronger Populist correlation with hogs per farm than corn acreage verifies the fact that third party voters were diversified operators. Subsistence farmers grew corn for human consumption and some commercial farmers grew a little corn to feed livestock without entering the corn-hog cycle. These men were less likely to vote Populist, and thus, reduced the third party's correlation with corn acreage below that of hogs per farm.

TABLE 8			
Economic Factors by Partisan Choice, 1892*			
Economic Factors	Republican Party	Democratic Party	Populist Party
Value of Agriculture Per Improved Acre	-.24238	.08910	.27421
Value of Agriculture Per Farm	.04830	.27309	-.39848
Value of Farm Machinery	.17667	.03544	-.25250
Tenancy, Cash & Share	-.44044	.09324	.40232
Cash Tenancy	-.25335	-.06309	.37741
Share Tenancy	-.50407	.17308	.37743
Value of Manufactured Goods	.15967	.20493	-.53030
Taxable Wealth Per Capita	.13657	.26114	-.48753

ducts per improved acre are almost nil, the negative Populist correlation with the value of agricultural products per farm suggests that Populist family farmers were less suc-

* Source: Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 11 August 1894 and Twelfth Census, 1900, Manufacturing (Part II), p. 730-31 Agriculture (Part I), pp. 115, 293-94 and House Executive Document 3089, Report of the Governor of Oklahoma, 52nd Congress, 2nd session, Vol. XIV (1893), pp. 469-70.

cessful at maximizing profits than their mainstream party counterparts. All of the correlations with the value of agricultural products in 1892, however, are too weak to be considered significant.

Another significant agricultural factor, tenancy, does appear to have progressed to the point where it affected farmers' partisan choice. Although Republicans could take credit for giving farmers a new chance at freehold tenure through passage of the Homestead Act and opening the Oklahoma Territory to non-Indian settlement, migrants to the "Promised Land" who quickly fell into tenancy found the GOP's panacea of hard work and self help less rewarding than the Populist exposition of substantive equality.

Considering cash and share tenancy separately provides more insight into the tenant farmer's choice of party. The only racial or sectional group to have a significant correlation with either form of tenancy was blacks with share cropping at .46244. This suggests a direct importation of the southern institution into the Oklahoma Territory. The overall Republican correlation with share tenancy in 1892, however, was -.50407. White Republicans, therefore, stood in stark contrast to blacks in their pattern of agriculture. Table 3 reveals a significant increase in black Populism in 1892. Most blacks, however, remained loyal to the party of emancipation.

Both cash and share tenancy correlate positively with urban residence in the 1890s. This confirms tenancy to be a product of commercial society. While Republicans correlated negatively with both types of tenancy, the figure for cash tenancy was far weaker. It was common for speculators to claim farm land near urban areas and then rent the plot out for cash while values increased. Some of these renters apparently accepted the values of the cosmopolitan culture in which they lived. Most, however, voted the Populist ticket. As the third party did very poorly in and near urban areas it appears that tenants constituted a substantial portion of the third party's vote in these areas. Stronger third party correlations with rural residence where rail lines served a county, however, confirms the fact that those living away from urban areas constituted the bulk of Populist supporters. The Populist charge that late nineteenth century capitalism was responsible for the widening gap between rich and poor had great appeal, both for those modernization left behind in the hinterland and those defeated in the struggle for wealth in more cosmopolitan settings.

Almost all accounts of Populism associate the People's party with agricultural poverty. The third party correlation with taxable wealth per capita in 1892 verifies this stereotype for the Oklahoma Territory. The correlations between partisan choice in 1892 and wealth in 1900, when the vast majority of homesteads were taxed, are quite similar.

The exclusion of land from taxation in 1892, therefore did not make such figures unusable. Taxable wealth in 1892 correlates most strongly with urban factors, such as the value of manufactured goods (.89260), and agribusiness variables, such as the value of farm machinery (.78050) and the value of farm products per farm (.80629). Table 8 shows each of these factors to be negatively correlated with Populism in 1892.

As the date for the second territorial legislature neared, Governor A. J. Seay wrote Samuel Crocker to inform him that while he had learned much on how to redistrict legislative districts from the Populist leader, he intended to teach his adversary even more on how to organize a legislature. Not a man to shrink from a challenge, Crocker traveled to Guthrie for the opening of the legislature in January, 1893. While Republicans constituted a majority in the Council they held only twelve of twenty-six seats in the House. Republicans, however, secured the loyal support of Democratic rancher James L. Stovall, of Cleveland County. GOP representatives played upon Stovall's fear that his Democratic colleagues might desert him on a Populist challenge to his seat in a deal to effect a legislative fusion. With the exception of votes on a few minor appointments, Stovall remained loyal to the GOP in their efforts to organize the House.¹⁴

¹⁴ Crocker, "Autobiography," p. 345 and Leslie P. Ross, "The Second Territorial Legislature," Sturm's Oklahoma Maga-

Prior to the meeting of the legislature the Democratic Oklahoma City Evening Gazette predicted that "the hermorrhoidite [sic] body of two years ago will probably be the coming model." To organize the House in 1893, however, it took the Democrats eight days and 149 ballots. When it became evident that their caucus nominee could not win, Democrats finally turned to Thomas R. Waggoner of Cleveland County. For Waggoner, a member of the first legislature, his election was a personal victory. When the Democratic convention in his district passed over his name for renomination in 1892, Waggoner ran as an independent, and won handily. As Waggoner had proven less than a stalwart Democrat in his independent campaign, his Democratic colleagues in the legislature subsequently ignored the Cleveland County legislator's bid for the speaker's nomination. Those Democrats who had slighted the Cleveland County legislator were forced to support him in the end in order to control the House. A coalition of eight Democrats, four Populists and Republican M. L. Stanley elected Waggoner the Speaker of the second legislature. Stanley was a business partner of Democratic Representative Daniel Peery. As their slice of the pie Populists secured the chief clerkship for Pat O. Cassidy, the editor of the third party's new territorial newspaper, the Guthrie West and South. James L. Mathews, the Demo-Populist legislator and candidate for Delegate to Congress in 1890,

became the messenger of the House. With Republican support Stovall retained his seat.¹⁵

Democrats and Populists faced an even greater challenge in the Council. Republicans controlled seven of the thirteen seats. In their caucus, however, four eastside Republicans, representing Lincoln, Logan and Payne Counties, voted themselves all of the plums, leaving their westside colleagues with the role of loyal supporters. W. A. McCartney, of Kingfisher County, also a member of the first legislature, declined the subordinate role and refused to support the eastside nominee, O. R. Fegan of Guthrie. As Fegan was a follower of ex-Senator John J. Ingalls, of Kansas, Democrats and Populists readily volunteered their services to McCartney. Crocker and Leslie P. Ross, the Democratic Council leader, approached McCartney and concluded a deal. Adding his own vote to that of the Democrats and Populists, McCartney became the President of the second Oklahoma Council. Democrats and Populists, therefore, also received the bulk of the House patronage in the second legislature.

The action of the Council highly embarrassed Governor A. J. Seay, who was present in the Council chamber at the time of the vote. He abruptly stormed out of the chamber. When Crocker and the governor inadvertently met later that evening the buoyant Populist leader teased Seay unmercifully about his promise to organize the legislature. Crocker la-

¹⁵ Ibid., El Reno Daily Herald, 7 December 1892 and Oklahoma City Evening Gazette, 16 November 1893.

ter expressed regret at antagonizing the governor in his hour of defeat. Crocker admitted Seay was "a pretty good old man" after the passions of the era subsided.¹⁶

A major factor in Crocker's assessment of Seay was the fact that he presided over the most economical legislature in territorial history. Populists had two reasons to favor economy in government. Their neo-republican mind set associated governmental extravagance with corruption and their natural constituency, Oklahoma farmers, were cash poor in the 1890s. Since property taxes constituted the bulk of the territory's fiscal resources, large governmental expenditures could bankrupt homesteaders.

Although Populists opposed extravagance in government third party legislators proved willing to support worthy programs. Populist legislators, for instance, supported Governor Seay's proposal to raise revenue for education through a license tax on liquor dealers. The prospective objects of the tax, however, may have accounted for much of their ardor. Populist W. B. Stone introduced and secured passage of a revised liquor code in line with the governor's opening message to the legislature. Third party legislators also uniformly supported the measure, as they did Democrat James K. Allen's local option bill. The House, however, quickly killed Allen's proposal as the author could get only

¹⁶ Crocker, "Autobiography," pp. 345-46 and Ross, "The Second Territorial Legislature," pp. 80-82.

the Populists and three Republicans to support him.¹⁷

The earliest expenditure to arouse passions in the second legislature was Republican O. R. Fegan's proposal to increase the number and salaries of legislative clerks. Populists, however, did not oppose the measure as a unit. Republicans pushed the bill through the Council while party lines were obliterated on the measure in the House. Seay immediately vetoed the bill. While legislators quickly overturned the governor's veto the House finally succumbed to the governor's wishes and failed to appoint the extra help. Three of the Populist in the assembly voted in favor of the measure. Populist Councilor Fielden S. Pulliam opposed the measure on the grounds that clerks would be paid more than janitors.¹⁸

For Populists the most obnoxious legislation of the second legislature clearly was the general appropriations bill. Third party legislators held the measure up until the final day of the session. Included in the Republican sponsored measure was a \$15,000 appropriation for a territorial exhibit at the Columbian Exposition of 1893. That poverty stricken Oklahoma farmers should finance support of "capi-

¹⁷ Oklahoma Territory Legislature, Journal of the House Proceedings of the Second Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Oklahoma: Beginning January 10, 1893 (Guthrie: State Capital Printing Company), p. 132.

¹⁸ House Journal (1893), pp. 72 & 128 and Oklahoma Territorial Legislature, Journal of the Council Proceedings of the Second Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Oklahoma: Beginning January 10, 1893 (Guthrie: State Capital Printing Company, 1893), pp. 44-45.

talism's showpiece" outraged the third party legislators. In the end, however, only four Democrats and one Republican joined the Populists in their opposition to the bill. Councilor Pulliam voted to pass the bill, protesting the choice of supporting "unwarranted extravagance or voting against needed appropriations."¹⁹

Third party legislators in the second assembly proved no more successful in securing populist economic legislation than had their predecessors in 1890. Populist legislators introduced bills on bonding, usury, taxes, limiting contracts, minimum wage and regulating railroads, telephones, telegraphs and mercantile agencies. Most were killed quickly in committee. A Populist bill on corporations, which did reach the floor of the House lost by a single vote. Republicans constituted the bulk of the opposition, while Democrats split on the issue.²⁰

Morality and race legislation also appeared in the second legislature. Perhaps the most notable act of the assembly was passage of Democrat Charles Wrightsman's anti-gambling bill. Populists, Republicans and two other Democrats passed the bill through the House. Only two legislators (a Democrat and a Republican) opposed the bill in the Council. On the race issue, Leslie P. Ross introduced a bill segregating

¹⁹ Council Journal (1893), pp. 317-18 and House Journal (1893), p. 396.

²⁰ House Journal (1893), pp. 325 & 452-71 and Council Journal (1893), pp. 330-66.

railroad facilities which Republicans defeated by a single vote. Populist Councilor Pulliam, an ex-Democrat, voted with the forces of racism on this issue. He was absent, however, when a vote on establishing a black college at Langston likewise met defeat. No votes on the race issue emerged from the second house in 1893.²¹

Although the fusion strategy proved more successful at the polls in 1892 than did that of the middle-of-the-road-ers, the legislative accomplishments of third party advocates in the second assembly were almost nonexistent. Populists introduced only twenty-eight of the 304 bills to appear in the legislature. Only three became law. None of the successful third party bills could be considered pertinent to major Populist issues. While fusionists within the third party had good reason to ridicule the mid-road strategy in the delegate race of November, 1892, their lack of accomplishment in the second legislature gave mid-roaders ammunition for future debates.²²

²¹ Council Journal (1893), pp. 182 & 289.

²² Populist sponsored laws emanating from the 1893 legislature included House Bill no. 59, on contracts on conditional sale of real estate and street railroad equipment; House Bill no. 75, on liquor, and Council bill no. 108, on townships. Council Journal (1893), pp. 365-66.

Chapter VI

DEMOCRATS AT THE HELM

As Oklahoma Populists prepared for another intra-party battle over fusion in the wake of the 1893 legislature, territorial Democrats looked forward to the inauguration of Oklahoma's first non-Republican governor. Fortuitous circumstances elevated Grover Cleveland to the presidency for the second time in 1893. Defeated for reelection on the tariff issue in 1888 he doggedly rode anti-protectionism back to the White House four years later. In 1892 Democrats captured the presidency and both houses of Congress for the first time since the 1850s.

During the Harrison years, Republicans, both at the national and local levels conveniently provided a series of policy excesses for Democrats to capitalize on in 1892. The McKinley Tariff of 1890 seemed to favor the northeast and raised protectionism to its highest level in the nineteenth century. High government expenditures successfully allowed Democrats to attack the GOP "Billion Dollar Congress" of 1890. The Lodge "Force Bill," which threatened to reestablish federal oversight where black voting rights were abridged, aroused both white southerners and northern urban

political bosses who feared the measure also could be applied to them. In the electorally crucial midwest GOP pietists pushed prohibition, blue laws and measures requiring the use of the English language in schools with such zeal that backlash became inevitable.

Grover Cleveland considered the landslide of 1892 a personal triumph. Few candidates defeated for the presidency had then secured renomination from their party. Fortunately for Cleveland, the Democratic party of the Gilded Age was such a diffuse coalition of local interests that it produced few men who could effectively challenge an already established national leader for party honors.

Cleveland composed his second administration with personal rather than party rule in mind. The new president condemned the office seeking of party regulars as a "demoralizing madness for spoils," and looked elsewhere for administrative talent. He filled his cabinet with friends and men with little popular following. For Postmaster General he chose a former law partner, Wilson Bissell. As Secretary of State he appointed renegade Republican Walter Q. Gresham for Attorney General the President chose a less than personable railroad lawyer, Richard Olney. The appointments revealed a definite dislike, perhaps fear of, forceful men with independent power bases.¹

¹ H. Wayne Morgan, From Hays to McKinley, National Party Politics, 1877-1896 (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1969), p. 445-46.

To insure the victory of 1892, Democrats fused with Populists in a number of western states. Fusion was a pragmatic decision for western Democrats to keep the presidential electors from this normally Republican region out of the GOP column. Fusion oriented Oklahoma Democrats hoped President Cleveland would continue to foster this winning strategy with the appointment of a man acceptable to Populists as their new territorial governor in 1893. Their hopes centered upon the candidacy of Sidney Clarke, whose close ties to third party leaders were well known to most Oklahomans.²

Sidney Clarke secured a wide range of support in his bid for the Oklahoma governorship. Local Democratic executive committee members from heavily northern Kingfisher and heavily southern Pottawatomie Counties promoted his appointment. So did Democratic editors Frank McMaster, of the Oklahoma City Evening Gazette and Mort Bixler of the Norman State Democrat. As a former abolitionist Clarke also received the warm support of black politico E. P. McCabe, "in the name of the colored people." Both outgoing Republican Delegate David A. Harvey and his replacement, Dennis T. Flynn, also sent unsolicited recommendations for Clarke to the President.³

² John D. Hicks, The Populist Revolt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1931), pp. 255-57 & 265-69.

³ "List of Letters, Petitions and Papers, etc., Recommending Hon. Sidney Clarke for Governor of Oklahoma Territory;" E. P. McCabe to the President, 23 March 1893; D. A. Harvey to

From Populist sources Clarke secured the endorsement of James B. Weaver, the party's recent presidential nominee, Kansas Senator William A. Peffer and a number of minor third party notables. The most noteworthy Populist recommendations, however, came from former speaker of the Oklahoma House, Arthur N. Daniels, and Clarke's old Boomer colleague, Samuel Crocker. Both men were fusionists. Daniels specifically mentioned the ease with which "a union of our people with the Democratic party" could be arranged with Clarke as governor. Although Crocker's letter of endorsement was respectful and laudatory of Clarke he unthinkingly listed his return address as "'Agitator Place,' Oklahoma, O. T." Whether Crocker, who the Cleveland administration had served with a treason warrant in 1885, figured into the new president's final decision or not is impossible to determine. Administration sources did recognize Crocker, as the list of Clarke's endorsements identified him as "Col. Samuel Crocker." No such reference, however, appeared in his letter to the president. The Populist leader had picked up the honorary military title in his Boomer days.*

the President, 27 March 1893 and Dennis T. Flynn to the President, 3 March 1893, Sidney Clarke Papers, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma.

* A. N. Daniels to Grover Cleveland, n. d. (received 23 March 1893) and Samuel Crocker to the President, 6 March 1893, Sidney Clarke Papers.

Whether through obstinance or obtuseness, Grover Cleveland followed the precedent he set in selecting his cabinet and chose to reject the qualifications of all who applied for the position of governor of Oklahoma. He asked territorial Democratic chairman Leslie P. Ross to put forward a non-political prospect. Ross named Norman banker William Cary Renfrow, the man credited with getting the Unassigned Lands' third county named after the Democratic president. Cleveland immediately tendered Renfrow the appointment. Fusionists in both Democratic and Populist camps were sorely disappointed. For third party leaders Cleveland's choice for governor would dictate a middle-of-the-road course for 1894.⁵

William Cary Renfrow was born in Smithville, North Carolina on May 15, 1845. The son of a moderately well to do planter, Renfrow was able to attend school until 1862, when he enlisted in the Confederate Army. After the war Renfrow relocated to Arkansas, taking up residence near Russellville, half way between Fort Smith and Little Rock. He soon built up a prosperous mercantile business and married a native of his adopted state.⁶

⁵ James F. Morgan, "William Cary Renfrow, Governor of Oklahoma, 1893-1897," Chronicles of Oklahoma 53, no. 1 (Spring, 1975): 48.

⁶ Morgan, "William Cary Renfrow," p. 47

Throughout his life, Renfrow exhibited an exceptional talent for the commercial entrepreneurship cosmopolitan America exalted in the late nineteenth century. By the time he died in 1922 he would be one of the wealthiest men in Oklahoma. His business career revealed a physical mobility common to many small entrepreneurs of the Gilded Age. It consisted of a series of new starts, related to previous endeavors only through reinvestment of capital from earlier undertakings.⁷

In the fall of 1889 the lure of fresh prospects in the newly opened Oklahoma Territory brought Renfrow to Norman, the only railroad town in the Unassigned Lands to have a southern-born majority. Since he moved to the new land after the April 22 run, Renfrow staked no claim. Instead, he opened a lucrative livery business with the capital he brought from Arkansas. He invested the profits from this enterprise in bank stock, until in 1891 he controlled a majority share in the Norman State Bank. He also freely speculated in town lots, quickly gaining title to approximately four percent of the property in Norman.⁸

⁷ Perhaps Smithville, North Carolina was the only true home Renfrow ever knew. He was buried there in 1922 after living the last fifty-six years of his life in Arkansas, Missouri and Oklahoma. Morgan, William Cary Renfrow," p. 64.

⁸ Michael Owen Roark, "Oklahoma Territory: Frontier Development, Migration and Culture Areas," (Ph. D., Syracuse University, 1975), p. 350 and Morgan, "William Cary Renfrow," p. 47.

Renfrow's rapid business success easily secured him the presidency of the Norman Board of Trade in 1890. He also served as a delegate to the founding convention of the territorial Democratic party and the Democratic National Convention of 1892. As the epitome of the "self-made man" Grover Cleveland so admired, the president readily tendered Renfrow the governor's appointment once fellow Normanite, Leslie P. Ross, explained his background. As in the past Renfrow freely pulled up stakes and relocated for his new endeavor. Although Norman would claim him, Renfrow resided in Guthrie for the entire four years of his term as governor of Oklahoma.⁹

As a banker, urbanite and speculator Renfrow would receive little support or sympathy from the rising forces of Populism in the Oklahoma Territory. Essentially an entrepreneur, the new governor also had to learn the business of politics on the job. Sworn in only four days after his appointment, Renfrow's native intelligence led him to appoint Roy V. Hoffman, the editor of his party's territorial newspaper, the Guthrie Oklahoma Leader, as his personal secretary and advisor. Frank Greer, the editor of the Republican Guthrie Oklahoma State Capital, lost no time in labeling his rival "Governor Roy," and suggesting Hoffman was the real power behind the throne in Oklahoma.¹⁰

⁹ Ibid., 47-48.

¹⁰ Guthrie Daily Oklahoma State Capital, 5 June 1893 and Morgan, "William Cary Renfrow," pp. 48-49.

As with his predecessor, one of the new governor's first acts was to appoint county officials for lands soon to be opened to black and white settlement. The run for the Cherokee Outlet, located between the previously opened sections of Oklahoma and the state of Kansas, was scheduled for September 16, 1893. When Hoffman's publishing company received the printing contracts for the new county governments, charges of official malfeasance emerged. Editor Greer accused Renfrow of forcing the new county officers to order supplies from Hoffman before receiving their commissions. Rumors Renfrow owned half interest in the Oklahoma Leader also freely circulated, but were never proven. The governor weathered the storm in relative complacency. The offensive link with Hoffman was severed in October, 1894, when the Democratic editor was appointed Assistant United States Attorney for Oklahoma.¹¹

Although Renfrow pledged to appoint men strictly on the basis of merit in his inaugural address, the new governor proved highly partisan in his subsequent actions. Once in office, Renfrow called for the resignation of three leading Republican office holders: Attorney General Charles Brown, Treasurer Samuel Murphy, and Superintendent of Education Joseph Parker. Acknowledging the governor's right to a Democratic administration Brown resigned immediately. Murphy promised to leave at the end of the month, but through GOP

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 49-50 and Guthrie Daily Oklahoma State Capital, 11 April 1893.

pressure lingered on for seven more before resigning. Renfrow finally secured a court order evicting Parker from office.¹²

While battling Murphy and Parker, Renfrow also turned his attention to the Republican administration of the Agricultural College. Charging extravagance and misappropriation of territorial funds, the governor discharged the entire Board of Regents. When he subsequently appointed the director of his own bank as treasurer of the college, however, his enemies howled conspiracy. As the Panic of 1893 spread to Oklahoma rumors that the First National Bank of Oklahoma City might fail emerged. If it did, Renfrow's Norman State Bank would likely follow. The Governor later admitted that the Agricultural College's new treasurer divided the institutions reserve funds between the two ailing banks in a timely fashion. The scandal subsided, however, when an investigating committee from the Republican controlled 1895 legislature amazingly substantiated the governor's charges against the school's former regents.¹³

The Panic of 1893 and the depression which followed was clearly the worst of America's early industrial period. At its nadir economic activity declined about 25%. The all encompassing nature of railroad expansion in the late nineteenth century meant that few Americans were still isolated

¹² Morgan, "William Cary Renfrow," pp. 50-52.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 52-53.

from the affects of business stagnation. By the end of 1893 some 500 banks and 16,000 business firms had closed their doors. Between fifteen and twenty percent of the work force was unemployed. Although recovery would begin in 1897, most industries would not return to full capacity until after the turn of the century.¹⁴

As early as mid-1892 signs of declining investment, which could lead to economic stagnation, began to emerge. From a twentieth century view it is possible to see a number of serious faults in the American economy of the Gilded Age. Many industries expanded far beyond the market demands for their products and services. Between 1880 and 1890, for instance, railroad's laid more than 74,000 miles of track. Many lines were hastily constructed to secure regional markets from penetration of competitors. Expectations of future traffic where large population concentrations would never exist, however, brought credit-ridden rail lines to their knees in the 1890s. Other industries closely linked to the fortunes of rail expansion, such as steel, soon found their own operations overextended as well.¹⁵

As the center of banking activity, a large portion of the nation's reserve capital gravitated to New York banks. In the frenzy of economic expansion of the 1880s such resources

¹⁴ John Spalding, Great Depressions: 1837-1844, 1893-1897, 1929-1939 (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foreman & Co., 1966), pp. 58-59.

¹⁵ Harold U. Faulkner, Politics, Reform and Expansion, 1890-1900 (New York: Harper and Row, 1959), pp. 141-45.

were used freely for speculative purposes, both in the industrial northeast and the boom areas of the trans-Mississippi West. The opening of vast tracts of virgin farmland in the prairie states, and penetration of rail lines into the piedmont areas of the South, brought a flood of agricultural products to both American and European markets. Although wages rose slightly in the Gilded Age the expansion of agricultural products vastly outstripped consumption. This sent agricultural prices downward and many western and southern farms into the hands of mortgage holders. Between 1880 and 1890 the farmer's share of the nation's wealth produced dropped from 26% to 21%. Industries dependent upon farmer prosperity, such as railroads and farm machinery manufacturers, likewise suffered reverses because of the decline in American farmer's purchasing power.¹⁶

Perhaps the most immediate precipitant of the Panic of 1893 was the considerable liquidation of European investment in the United States, beginning in 1890, when the London banking house of Baring Brothers collapsed. The withdrawal of badly needed capital at a time when American investment was overextended caused a substantial call on collateral that by 1893 could not be met. The result was a curtailment of credit, a decline in the value of stocks, numerous bank failures and finally economic collapse.¹⁷

¹⁶ Spalding, Great Depressions, pp. 61-62 and Faulkner, Politics, Reform and Expansion, pp. 145-46.

¹⁷ Morgan, From Hayes to McKinley, p. 446-47 and Faulkner,

As economic stagnation spread over the nation in the Spring of 1893, eastern business interests convinced President Cleveland that a crisis of confidence had triggered the growing depression. The Sherman Silver Purchase Act of 1890, they claimed, caused investors to doubt the government's commitment to maintaining the gold standard. Between 1890 and 1893 the redemption of treasury certificates caused federal gold reserves to decline nearly \$132,000,000. As reserves neared \$100,000,000 entrepreneurs questioned the soundness of the currency and became timid in their investments. Cleveland's advisers convinced him that only through dramatic action to save the gold standard could the administration restore investor confidence and rejuvenate the economy.

In the campaign of 1892 Grover Cleveland called for a significant reduction in the tariff. Although those associated with the affected industries would also exhibit a lack of confidence in the Democratic administration, reducing the tariff united the president's party far more than the currency issue. Instead of uniting his party with a special session of Congress to deal with the tariff, Cleveland chose to tackle the money issue first and asked Congress to repeal the Sherman Silver Purchase Act of 1890. The action split the President's party before he had a chance to fulfill his campaign promises on the tariff.

Men of all parties in the South and West expressed the opinion that something more fundamental than investor confidence was responsible for the Panic of 1893. Since the Civil War the American population had doubled and the volume of business had tripled. The amount of money in circulation to handle this increased activity, however, had actually declined. The resulting deflation, they noted, had caused economic hardship in the cash-poor outlying regions of the nation long before 1893. Prices for agricultural products had dropped steadily in the previous two decades. Mortgage payments, however, had not. As credit stringency increased so did interest rates. The reduced purchasing power of southern and western farmers, critics of deflation contended, also translated into unemployment in industrial America. According to such men the American economy simply ran out of money in 1893. Further reducing the volume of money through repeal of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act, they claimed, would only aggravate an already desperate situation.

By national standards Oklahomans were poor and newly settled upon the land when the depression of 1893 struck. Credit to erect buildings, build fences, buy fertilizer, secure implements and buy seed was particularly important to farmers. Settlers could not mortgage their land, however, until they had proven their claims. The five-year residency period requirement to secure title to a homestead in the Unassigned Lands region of Oklahoma came in 1894 for most sett-

lers. While title to a homestead gave the earlier settler collateral for a mortgage, credit was still tight. Title to the land also meant inclusion on the tax rolls. Newer settlers, on the other hand could use only their household effects as collateral for loans. As late as 1898, however, the value of the average Oklahoma family's household furnishings was estimated to be only \$7.50. Money and credit would be prime issues in the early years of the Oklahoma Territory.¹⁸

In addition to the Oklahoma farmer's lack of credit in the 1890s, the declining price of agricultural products that came with depression made his plight even worse. Oklahoma cotton prices bottomed out at 4.6¢ a pound in December, 1893, while wheat reached its nadir at 48¢ a bushel a year later. Blaming the nation's problems on paternalism, the Cleveland administration also suspended the free distribution of seed to the needy in 1893. Low commodity prices, credit stringency and the new migrants' inherent poverty made the depression of the 1890s a particularly desperate period for many Oklahoma farmers.¹⁹

Although a series of radical political movements can be associated with areas of agricultural distress in the late nineteenth century, the relationship between poverty and the

¹⁸ Helen Candee, "Social Conditions in our Newest Territory," The Forum 25 (June, 1898): 431.

¹⁹ Oklahoma Agricultural Experiment Station, Oklahoma Agricultural Statistics, 1894-1947 Miscellaneous Publication MP-14, 1947, pp. 13 & 15.

rise of the People's party is more sophisticated than simple economic determinism. Hard times has been the lot of the vast majority of men and women throughout recorded history. Most, however, lived out their lives resigned to the fact that they would always be poor. That Kansas and Oklahoma farmers cast their lot with the People's party as the rural economy turned sour in the late 1880s and early 1890s was the exception rather than the rule. If rural poverty alone was the cause of the Populist Revolt the Oklahoma Territory would have experienced a much stronger third party movement.

In good times most people are quite content to accept the explanation of their nation's opinion-making elite on how their society should operate. Such explanations are part and parcel of the basic assumptions which define the nation. Frequently they devolve into the kind of unthinking patriotic shibboleths that justify proscription of all who question the accepted verities. So long as men see the basic assumptions of society as providing a just order, few will question them. Economic dislocations which make victims of honest, hard working men and women, however, frequently promote a reexamination of the precepts upon which the society's supposedly just order are based.²⁰

²⁰ Clifford Geertz, "Ideology as a Cultural System," in David Apter (ed.), Ideology and Discontent (New York: Free Press, 1964), pp. 47-76.

When the gap between idealized and real conditions becomes noticeable, those who find the previously dominant explanations unrewarding are likely converts to an alternative value system if it is available in the society. At this point the newly accepted truths can trigger and then direct action in formerly complacent individuals. In the case of western Populism, plains farmers did not join the People's party simply because they were going broke. Economic stress raised in their minds the possibility that the contemporary economic system might not be just. In a society based upon proper principles hard working, honest men succeeded. Their economic failures were clearly unjust, in their own minds. This led them to reexamine their fundamental beliefs about society, the economy and politics. They discovered an essentially pre-industrial critique of commercial society which had been adapted to the conditions of the late nineteenth century that seemed to address their innermost concerns. Egalitarian spokesmen of the Gilded Age, who had presented essentially the same explanation of the nation's ills for decades, finally mobilized an unprecedented following among those who found the mainstream panaceas of laissez-faire, social Darwinism and business boosterism unrewarding in the face of economic upheaval and apparent government indifference.

The coalescence of the necessary ingredients for producing the Populist movement, economic distress, a rethinking

of society's accepted verities, and contact with what might be called the Old Radicalism of Gilded Age egalitarian propagandists, occurred at slightly different times in various localities. The substantial showing of the Union Labor party in Kansas in 1888 suggested that the Sunflower State was ready for political revolt. Little more than organizing potential supporters into a farmer organization which provided liberal doses of egalitarian political indoctrination, and dropping the word labor, which had urban connotations unpopular with farmers, from the third party's name, was necessary to produce the Populist Revolt in Kansas. In 1890 the third party movement in the Oklahoma Territory was simply a derivative of its Kansas parent.

Not all economically depressed plains farmers joined the People's party in the 1890s. Many who started over in Oklahoma revealed a lingering commitment to the newer cosmopolitan ethos in relocating. Those who believed that a faulty economic system was the cause of their problems realized that starting over in Oklahoma was only a temporary palliative. They made the trek to the new land only when circumstances left them no choice. Most of the migrants to the new territory, however, seemed to have lingering hopes that a new start was all they needed to achieve success and prosperity. Not surprisingly, the People's party in early Oklahoma was the weakest of the three major parties, while its

Kansas parent was the strongest.²¹

As the Panic of 1893 settled into a prolonged depression, breadlines, unemployment and vagrancy spread over the nation. The dispossessed quickly depleted the resources of private charity. Some cities dispensed aid, but state and federal authorities took the attitude that Americans should support the government, not vice-versa. Millions came to know genuine and prolonged privation. There were even reports of starvation. As unemployment spread, "tramps" became a familiar sight. Wandering aimlessly in search of work, they frightened and irritated respectable society. They became tangible examples of what their more fortunate cousins might become in time. To some people, tramps became a sign of the nation's general degeneration into social collapse.

In 1892 Jacob S. Coxey, a well-to-do Massillon, Ohio businessman, put forward a scheme designed to create jobs, expand the currency and improve transportation in America. The plan called for the federal government to issue \$500,000,000 in non-interest bearing government bonds (a euphemism for greenbacks) to state and local governments,

²¹ For further readings on the "Old Radicalism" theme in Populism see Christopher Lasch, The Agony of the American Left (New York: Random House, 1969); Gene Clanton, "Populism, Progressivism, and Equality: The Kansas Paradigm," Agricultural History 51, no. 3 (July, 1977): 559-81 and John L. Thomas, Alternative America: Henry George, Edward Bellamy, Henry Demarest Lloyd and the American Adversary Tradition (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983)

"upon exactly the same terms that it loans to national bankers," for the construction of roads. In the spring of 1894 Coxey decided to "send a petition to Washington with boots on," to prod what he considered to be the time-serving Democratic Congress into action. He named his delegation the Commonweal Army to emphasize the public good he claimed his scheme would accomplish.²²

Populists generally sympathized with the Coxey movement. Local Commonweal armies, committed to the cause of "General" Coxey sprang up throughout the nation, but especially in the West. The movement was met with fear, ridicule and hostility in most places. Many Populists were concerned that the movement might further taint their party with charges of anarchism. Lurid tales of outrage and pillage preceded Coxey's Army on its march to Washington. Borrowed trains and pilfered chicken coops, however, proved to be the movement's most egregious offenses. Speculation as to the meaning of it all quickly led to overreaction. Mainstream papers freely offered the simplistic solution of repression. When Coxey and his pathetic band of marchers attempted to deliver their petition to the president, on May 1, authorities arrested the leaders for walking on the White House lawn. Rather than legislative action "General" Coxey's march on Washington produced a strengthened determination on the part

²² Lawrence C. Goodwyn, The Populist Moment (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 208; Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 2 April 1894 and Morgan, From Hayes to McKinley, pp. 465-67.

of the establishment not to yield to "mob rule."²³

Coxey's Army provided third party editors in Oklahoma the material they needed to dramatize an apocalyptic view of the fruits of late nineteenth century development. Some controversy arose among Populists in Oklahoma, as elsewhere, about the advisability of associating with the Coxey movement. National committeeman Pat Cassidy endorsed the objectives, but not the principles of the Commonweal army, and proclaimed the order "not a Populist movement." Third party editors, however, vigorously promoted Coxey's Army. John Allan, of the Norman People's Voice, asked if Congress "will dare deny petitions, if petitioners go in person." Patent insides, which most Populist newspapers carried, labeled Coxey's Army "the first lobby the honest peasantry of this country ever sent to Washington." J. C. Tousley, editor of the Kingfisher Reformer, proclaimed, "Coxey's cause is the people's cause," and Mont Howard, of the El Reno Industrial Headlight, asked Populists "to vote as you would shoot."²⁴

Oklahoma Commonwealers claimed a membership of more than 2,200 by mid-1894. As their General they chose John R. Furlong, a mysterious faith healer, who frequently advertised

²³ Ibid., pp. 466-68.

²⁴ Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 14 April 1894; Norman People's Voice, 10 March & 16 April 1894; Kingfisher Reformer, 15 June 1894 and El Reno Industrial Headlight, 24 March & 30 May, 1894. The Canadian County Populist Executive Committee forced Howard out of the editorship at El Reno in 1895. He moved on to the Populist Medford Mascot and later that year founded Oklahoma's first Socialist Labor party local.

his services in the Guthrie Oklahoma Representative. In this era when the fields of education, law and medicine were being professionalized, Furlong represented the epitome of the Populist denial that the cosmopolitan culture had discovered any ultimate truths. A native of Ireland who had studied for the priesthood as a youth, Furlong parted company with the Catholic Church years before coming to Oklahoma. He did, however, retain a strongly religious moral bent. Probably his greatest notoriety came from leading the fight against capital punishment in 1895. Politically Furlong was a Bellamy Nationalist and served as secretary of the Populist territorial executive committee in the mid-1890s.²⁵ To cut expenses Oklahoma Commonwealers tried to make a deal with the Santa Fe to carry them to Washington in boxcars. The trek apparently never came off. In the wake of Coxey's arrest in Washington, John Allan printed the "suppressed speech" Coxey planned to deliver from the steps of the White House. The Kingfisher Reformer warned that while Coxey had gone to Washington in peace, if relief was not forthcoming soon "the next army will go with their war paint on."²⁶

²⁵ Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 14 July 1894; Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma Leader, 10 October 1896; and Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 20 May 1894. Something of a political gadfly, John Furlong followed Leo Vincent to Boulder, Colorado in the late 1890s. Oklahoma City Oklahoma Champion, 25 March 1898.

²⁶ Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 21 April 1894; Norman People's Voice, 25 May 1894 and Kingfisher Reformer, 17 May 1894.

Oklahoma's mainstream party editors responded to the Commonweal movement with predictable vilification. Frank Greer, editor of the Republican Guthrie Oklahoma State Capital, claimed Coxeyites simply wanted "something for nothing, in order to go on a pleasure tramp, while the workingmen of the country are putting in spring crops." Greer claimed that "every man that {sic} wants work in Oklahoma can get it." He believed the commonweal movement was "useless and dangerous to the public good." Personally, he preferred the "less villianous traitors of thirty-four years ago." In the same vein the Republican editor of the Mulhall Chief suggested that those Commonwealers stranded in the nation's capital after Coxey's arrest "may even be forced to the extremity of going to work if contributions are not forthcoming." Democratic editors exhibited an equal disapproval of the Coxey movement, although with less originality. The main thrust of their critique centered upon Coxey's army being the product of protectionism, and praying that all vagrants would soon be sent to the rock pile.²⁷

The Coxey movement provided editors of all political outlooks with a dramatic opportunity to vaporize upon what ailed the nation in the spring of 1894. Western farmers, suffering from declining commodity prices, and silver miners thrown out of work when Cleveland secured repeal of the

²⁷ Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 28 April & 5 May 1894; Mulhall Chief, 3 August 1894; Alva Pioneer, 30 March & 18 May 1894 and Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma Leader, 16 April 1894.

Sherman Silver Purchase Act, proved to be the strongest supporters of the Commonweal movement. Coxey's popularity in Oklahoma was verified in August, 1895, when he came to Guthrie to speak. He was the Populist nominee for governor of Ohio at the time. According to the State Capital, "the tail boards of the wagons of the enthusiastic farmers who gathered here to greet General Coxey stuck over the corporation lines {to the city} in every direction." Greer found enthusiasm for the "great itinerant windbag . . . one of the queerest phases of public life." Rumors Coxey might move to Oklahoma and run for Congress spread rapidly.²⁸

As the Coxey excitement began to subside, new storm clouds spread over the national political scene. George M. Pullman, the builder of the famed railroad sleeping car, operated a company town next to his factory on the outskirts of Chicago. Pullman considered his company town a showcase for a stable industrial order. Rules at the town, however, were said to be more rigid than the laws of Russia. Pullman's seeming paternalism did not divert him from making a profit, even at the depths of the depression of the 1890s. Between July, 1893 and May, 1894, Pullman laid off forty percent of his work-force, and cut the wages of those remaining more than twenty-five percent to stay ahead of expenses. Rent, utilities and services at the company town,

²⁸ Guthrie Daily Oklahoma State Capital, 18 August 1895; Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 24 August 1895 and Perkins Journal, 24 August 1895.

however, remained unaltered. By late 1893 there were nasty rumors of starvation at Pullman, Illinois.²⁹

On May 11, 1894, Pullman employees finally went on strike. In the midst of depression, management easily found the strikebreakers necessary to replace them. The strikers turned to the American Railway Union, the nation's largest trade union, for help. Union president Eugene V. Debs sympathized with the strikers and asked Pullman officials to arbitrate. The official word from the Pullman Company was that there was "nothing to arbitrate." American Railway Union member immediately voted a boycott. When it went into effect on June 26, Union men were careful to move mail trains on schedule to avoid legal difficulties with federal authorities, but sidetracked Pullman cars. Railroad companies proclaimed their contract with Pullman inviolate and refused to let their trains move without Pullman cars. The action stalled almost all rail traffic west of Chicago. Railroad companies pooled their resources in the General Managers Association, which provided guards for railroad property, blacklisted workers and influenced authorities.³⁰

On July 2, Attorney General Richard Olney secured one of the most far reaching injunctions in American History against the strikers. President Cleveland then ordered fed-

²⁹ Ray Ginger, Age of Excess: The United States from 1877 to 1914 (New York; Macmillan & Co., 1965), p. 167 and Morgan, From Hayes to McKinley, pp. 468-69.

³⁰ Ginger, Age of Excess, pp. 167-69 and Morgan, From Hayes to McKinley, pp. 469-72.

eral troops into Chicago to break the strike the next day. The violence, which had been slight up to this point, then became spectacular. Mobs destroyed railroad cars, razed the central roundhouse at the switching yard and put part of the nearby Columbian Exposition to the torch. Although men not associated with the American Railway Union did most of the damage, the strikers got the blame. The strike was broken in short order, participants were blacklisted and Debs was packed away to prison for conspiracy. Attorney General Olney appointed a railroad lawyer as the special federal attorney for cases arising out of the strike.³¹

In Oklahoma, as elsewhere, Populists and Coxeyites immediately took Debs' and the American Railway Union's side in the struggle. Third party supporters believed that they were witnessing the cataclysm predicted in such Populist tracts as Ignatius Donnelly's Ceasar's Column. The Coxey and Debs movements were associated in the popular mind in the South and West with Populism. Oklahoma Populist spokesmen embraced them as their own. This provided them with a sense of participating in momentous events of national importance.

³¹ Morgan, From Hayes to McKinley, pp. 469-72 and Ginger, Age of Excess, 167-69. Illinois governor, John Peter Altgeld, vehemently protested the use of federal troops without his consent, which was unconstitutional, but in vain.

As General of the local Commonweal Army, John Furlong telegraphed words of encouragement to Debs. Allusions to the "slavery" of Pullman workers, the "bastille in Pullman, Illinois" and charges of "an increase of the standing army . . . to crush all resistance to further encroachments on our liberties" adorned Populist newspapers. John Allan proclaimed Debs' prosecutors "the lineal descendants, in spirit, of the men who dragged Garrison through the streets of Boston with a rope around his neck, mobbed Wendell Phillips and executed John Brown." Populist editors were quick to claim that government ownership of the railroads would have prevented the whole mess.³²

Oklahoma's Democratic and Republican leaders were almost a unit in favor of Cleveland's actions in the Pullman strike. While admitting the justice of labor's grievances, Frank Greer proclaimed the fight was between "Debs and the people, not Debs and Pullman-and the people always win." He also charged that "red-mouthed foreigners" were behind the turbulence and suggested the "anarchy should be stopped instanter {sic} by government orders to 'shoot to kill.'" All mainstream party spokesmen seemed to agree with the editor of the Alva Pioneer when he noted that while "every Populist was not an anarchist, every anarchist was a Populist." Revealing the growing ambivalence within Oklahoma Democratic

³² Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 21 July 1894; Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 21 June 1894; Perkins Excelsior, 7 September 1894 and Norman Peoples Voice, 10 February 1895.

ranks, Mort Bixler of the Norman State Democrat, praised Cleveland's back-bone in putting down anarchy only to congratulate Oklahoma County Democrats for refusing to commend Cleveland for sending troops to Chicago, less than two weeks later.³³

Populist farmers had identified bad legislation and insensitive legislators as the primary cause for the nation's problems. They easily accepted the proposition that a union of interests existed for Populist farmers, Coxeyites and union men. Articles and cartoons playing upon this proposed union of the oppressed appeared frequently in Populist sheets. Most third party editors, also had supported the strikers at the Homestead Strike in 1892.

In principle Oklahoma Populists did not accept strikes as useful tools to secure demands. The laws of the nation, they claimed, were slanted too much in the interests of capital. They were not surprised, then, when Cleveland successfully broke the Pullman Strike. Meaningful and lasting change, they claimed could only be achieved at the ballot box.³⁴

³³ Alva Pioneer, 27 July 1894; Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 14 July 1894; Alva Pioneer, 7 September 1894 and Norman State Democrat, 14 & 25 July 1894.

³⁴ Stillwater, Payne County Populist, 22 June 1894; Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 5 July 1894 and Norman People's Voice, 16 September 1892.

Populists held high hopes for a mass influx of urban workers into their ranks with the events of 1894. Debs, therefore, became a major third party spokesman overnight. The National Reform Press Association covered his speeches and provided articles and letters he wrote to third party papers. Embracing the rhetoric of his newly adopted party, Debs charged that both of the old parties "are controlled by the money power and both are equally debauched by its influence," to the uniform accord of Populist spokesmen. He claimed to prefer the GOP because it "does not hesitate to boldly champion every measure calculated to enlarge the power of plutocracy, where the Democratic party makes professions of loyalty to the people and then turns traitor in the supreme hour of trial." Charging that the "money power now exerts barbaric sway" over America, Debs asked the truly patriotic to "defy public opinion and take your stand with men like Jackson." Along with Jacob Coxey and former abolitionist Lyman Trumbull, who helped found the Republican party in the 1850s and converted to Populism on the labor issue in 1894, Eugene V. Debs came to symbolize to Oklahomans the rapidly growing fortunes of the People's party, both in Oklahoma and the nation, in 1894.³⁵

³⁵ Alva Review, 18 & 30 August 1894; Norman People's Voice, 20 September 1895, 8 November 1895 & 3 April 1896 and Kingfisher Reformer, 8 November 1894.

Chapter VII

POPULISM AT FLOODTIDE

The People's party in Oklahoma entered a new phase of development in the mid-1890s. The slow growth of Oklahoma Populism's early years gave way to spectacular accessions to the third party movement after 1892. One major factor in the rejuvenation of Oklahoma Populism was the Cleveland Administration's response to the Panic of 1893. Repeal of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act elevated the silver issue to a position of prime importance in debtor regions such as the South and West. Cleveland's over reaction to the Coxey movement and the Pullman Strike also alienated many who sympathized with the unemployed and those who were anti-railroad.

As the depression of the 1890s deepened many people who had committed themselves to the dominant ethos of the Gilded Age began having second thoughts about the economic and social orthodoxies of the period. Tight credit, high interest rates, low commodity prices, high shipping costs and taxes levied upon lands as settlers proved their claims led some to question if Oklahoma was really the "Promised Land." Many Oklahomans who had migrated to the new land in 1889 had

met enough disappointment and hardship by 1894 to become prime candidates for conversion to Populism.

The appearance of several important new third party leaders in the mid-1890s also helped boost the advancing fortunes of the People's party in the Oklahoma Territory. Vigorous, talented leaders, untainted with scandal, were in short supply in the early years of Oklahoma Populism. Samuel Crocker was an admitted Sooner, and although an experienced editor he never engaged in the newspaper business in Oklahoma. George Gardenhire, who had obvious organizational talents, forever disqualified himself as a major spokesman for the moral imperatives of Populism through his slick dealing in the first legislature. N. H. Ward simply lacked the balance necessary to mobilize potential supporters. For Oklahoma Populism to be more than a petty nuisance to the GOP, or an annex to the Democratic party, new leaders had to emerge with the moral authority and requisite talents to disseminate effectively the doctrines of Populism to those searching for new answers. From 1892 to 1894 a significant number of third party newspaper editors arrived on the Oklahoma scene and quickly became a vital leadership cadre. John S. Allan, Ralph and Leo Vincent were the ablest and most important of these new editors.

John Sterling Allan, the son of Scottish immigrants, was born in Sparta, Illinois, about forty miles southeast of St. Louis, in January 1866. Allan resided in a county evenly

divided between Democrats and Republicans. His anti-establishment Scottish heritage led him to cast his first vote for the Union Labor party in 1888. After receiving a law degree from Park College, in Missouri, he moved to Norman, Oklahoma in 1891, established a law office, and became active in real estate. He helped organize the town's first Presbyterian church. Along with other local Populists Allan helped found the Norman People's Voice in mid-1892. He assumed the editorship of the paper in 1893 and made journalism his primary calling for the next seventeen years. To emphasize his commitment to the natural rights philosophy of the Founding Fathers, as refined and synthesized in the Abolitionist movement, Allan added the following poem to the masthead of his paper upon assuming its editorship:

Before the law was written down with
parchment or with pen,

Before the law made citizens, the moral
law made men.

Law stands for human rights, but when
it fails those rights to give,

Then let the law die, my brother, but let
human beings live.

Although a northerner in an overwhelmingly southern populated county, Allan quickly became a leader of the middle-of-the-road faction of the Oklahoma Populist party.

In September, 1891, Henry and Leo Vincent moved the American Nonconformist from the south Kansas birthplace of the Oklahoma Populist movement to Indianapolis, Indiana. They hoped to establish it as a national People's party organ. Overexpansion and a bank failure associated with the Panic of 1893, however, broke the Vincent brothers financially. They were forced to sell the paper they had started as teenagers. Older brother Henry then moved to Chicago where he became associate editor of the Populist Express. Fred Bailey, who had just purchased the Guthrie West and South, invited Leo, the youngest of the Vincents, to move to Oklahoma and become his partner. The opportunity to relocate "amidst thousands of our former Nonconformist readers" proved appealing. Although only thirty-two years of age, the younger Vincent brought vigor and fifteen years of reform press experience to the territory's third party movement. In March, 1894, Vincent took over the West and South. In honor of Ignatius Donnelly's newspaper, the Representative (St. Paul), the young editor renamed his new charge Oklahoma Representative. A few months later Oklahoma Populists named Vincent territorial chairman of the People's party.¹

¹ Merrily Cummings Ford (Complier), "The Invincible Vincents," (1939), pp. 35-36. This is a series of biographies Leo Vincent wrote for his family using his own reminiscences and letters his two surviving brothers written for the purpose.

Born in Yorkshire, England in 1844, Ralph Beaumont was by far the oldest of the Oklahoma Populist party's new leaders. Beaumont's parents brought him to the United States at the age of four. He attended common school in Webster, Massachusetts until the age of ten and then was apprenticed to learn the shoe trade. Beaumont volunteered for the Union Army in 1862, and served until the end of the war. He then relocated to Elmira, New York, where he practiced his trade and became active in labor union activities. Beaumont was elected Grand Worthy Foreman at the founding convention of the Knights of Labor in 1869. Always a strong advocate of political action, Beaumont represented the Knights at the founding convention of the Greenback-Labor party in 1878. In 1884 he turned to journalism as an investigative reporter. Both Democrats and Greenbackers picked up his stridently anti-protectionist broadsides in the mid-1880s. Beaumont was chairman of the Knights of labor resolution committee which endorsed opening Oklahoma to settlement in 1886. He became the union's Washington lobbyist that same year. Later Beaumont was active in the founding of the People's party, and campaigned widely for the third party movement in the 1890s. He moved to Oklahoma City in January, 1894, and founded his own paper, the Oklahoma State a month later.²

² Gerald Grob, "The Knights of Labor, Politics and Populism," Mid-America 29, no. 1 (January, 1959): 5, 9, 16 & 17 and Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 20 July 1894.

The rise of reform editors to a position of leadership was crucial to the growth of the third party movement in the Oklahoma Territory. Most Populist editors were relatively young. The success or failure of their chosen endeavor hinged primarily upon the fortunes of the third party movement. As most Populist newspapers (all in Oklahoma) were weeklies, editors had the time, interest and, with youth, the energy necessary to take leadership roles and build the Populist party. The reform editor's importance to the Oklahoma Populist movement grew as the number of third party papers increased. Oklahoma had two Populist newspapers in 1891, six in 1892, eleven in 1893, twenty in 1894 and twenty-one in 1895. Wherever Populism flourished in the 1890s, reform editors constituted a substantial portion of the third party's leadership.³

A new spirit of confidence and vigor emerged in third party ranks with the arrival of Beaumont and Vincent in early 1894. Both men were noted Populist spokesmen with strong third party credentials. Vincent's position, however, was more central and delicate than Beaumont's. Guthrie was the

³ Seymour Lutzky, "The Reform Editors and their Press," (Ph. D. dissertation, State University of Iowa, 1951), p. 48; American Nonconformist (Winfield), 26 March 1891; N. W. Ayers, American Newspaper Annual (1892): 616-17; (1895): 637-41 & (1898): 668-72 and Pawnee Appeal, 26 April 1895. Populists still claimed twenty-one reform papers in 1897. Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 7 January 1897. It should be noted that some short-lived newspapers never appeared in Ayers. The El Reno Populist Platform, founded in 1894 and retitled the Industrial Headlight in 1895, is a good example.

territorial capital. Populists looked to Vincent's paper for guidance on territorial matters. Also, Fred Bailey invited Vincent to Oklahoma to replace A. G. Copeland, a fusionist, as editor of the Guthrie Populist organ. Part of Leo Vincent's new role was to reconcile the various factions within the territorial party. Mid-roaders had started their own newspaper, the short-lived Oklahoma Populist, in Guthrie the previous July. Although Vincent opposed fusion in principle, he would never be as strident or as consistent as John Allan of the Norman Peoples Voice.

After several months in the editor's chair at Guthrie, Vincent began criticizing Allan for neglecting the Democratic party's "twin brother in political sin--the Republican party." Allan assured his colleague that he could blast the GOP "just a little bit better than we can the other fellow," when the occasion presented itself. He claimed there were so few Republicans in Cleveland County, however, that "it is wasting powder to expend it upon them, but you can use a whole magazine in Logan County." The exchange pointed to a problem the third party in Oklahoma would always face. Even middle-of-the-roaders disagreed over which of the mainstream parties deserved the brunt of the Populist attack.*

* Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 6 July 1894 and Norman Peoples Voice, 3 March 1894. The presence of the Populist editor's old nemesis, Frank Greer, whose brother edited the Winfield Courier, in Guthrie as the editor of the Oklahoma State Capital may have been a factor in the younger Vincent's special animus toward the GOP.

In July, 1894, Vincent and other Populist editors found good reason to focus their undivided attention upon the Democratic administrations, in both Washington and Guthrie. In the wake of the violence associated with Cleveland's breaking of the Pullman Strike in Chicago, citizens of Enid and Pond Creek, in the newly opened Cherokee Outlet, began settling differences they had with the Rock Island Railroad through acts of sabotage.

Men associated with the Rock Island, which passed through both towns, apparently manipulated Indian allotments to control land in and around the two proposed townsites. The federal government had selected the two townsites as county seats before the September, 1893, opening. When General Land Commissioner Silas W. Lamboreau got wind of the plot he moved the location of each county seat three miles to the south. Rival railroad and government towns appeared on the sites at the time of the opening. Rock Island officials provided service to the railroad towns, but refused to stop at the government sites. The railroad company apparently expected to force citizens of the government towns to relocate to the railroad's townsites.⁵

Citizens of Enid applied pressure of their own upon receiving their city charter in November, 1893. The first act of the Enid City Council was to pass an ordinance limiting

⁵ Berlin B. Chapman, "The Enid 'Railroad War:' An Archival Study, Chronicles of Oklahoma 43, no. 2 (Summer, 1965): 126-38.

the railroad to a speed of four miles per hour while passing through town. Perry, on the Santa Fe line, passed a similar ordinance at the same time. As the reduced speed would allow patrons to jump on and off the train at the government townsite, the Rock Island chose to ignore the law. Attempts to arrest the conductor for speeding proved fruitless, as the trains carried the U. S. Mail.⁶

On September 29, 1893, Representative Joseph Wheeler of Alabama introduced a bill which required the Rock Island to establish depots and service at the government towns. Delegate Flynn vigorously endorsed the measure. The proposed legislation passed the House in short order, but was sidetracked in the Senate when opponents successfully fastened to it a county seat election amendment. Democrats, who controlled the city council of Enid, claimed the amendment "will be a death blow to our party in the territory." Vice President Adlai Stevenson, however, cast the tie-breaking vote to pass the bill as amended in the Senate. The county seat election amendment successfully blocked passage of the bill for ten months.⁷

With favorable legislation blocked in Congress, Enid's city attorney attempted a judicial solution to the railroad conflict in the Spring of 1894, but to no avail. In mid-June citizens of Pond Creek tore up track and wrecked a

⁶ Norman Peoples Voice, 18 & 25 November 1893 and Chapman, "The Enid Railroad War," p. 151.

⁷ Ibid., pp. 141, 151-62.

train. When railroad attorneys successfully overturned a writ of mandamus favoring Enid on July 11, 1894, the Populist Enid Coming Events proclaimed "it is evident there is no justice to be found in our courts." Another train was wrecked the next day. At this point Marshal E. D. Nix asked Attorney General Olney for authority to raise an army of deputies. Along with a troop of United States Cavalry, Nix's deputies arrived in Enid and Pond Creek the next day and placed the towns under martial law. Two railroad bridges were burned July, 16. According to Clark Hudson, the editor of the Populist Alva Review, "the Rock Island people are saved the trouble of burning their bridges behind them by the accommodating people of Oklahoma." On August 1, the United States Senate finally withdrew the county seat amendment and settled the whole matter.⁸

Throughout the "Enid Railroad War" Oklahomans of all political faiths supported the government town's right to secure railroad service. Only Roy Hoffman's Guthrie Oklahoma Leader was on the Rock Island's side. Frank Greer reasoned that the Enid and Pond Creek situations were different from the events surrounding the Pullman Strike. He claimed that the railroads had done no wrong at Chicago. In Oklahoma the Rock Island had defied municipal law. Greer asserted that if the government were to "make the railroad company obey the municipal laws of Pond Creek and Enid . . . {there} will

⁸ Ibid., pp. 169-89; Enid Coming Events, 12 July 1894 and Alva Review, 21 July 1894.

be no need to complain of the people." Most mainstream party editors put their hopes for relief in favorable legislation.⁹

Ralph Bray, editor of the Populist Enid Coming Events, put forth the typical third party critique to the railroad war. A former Greenbacker and an exponent of Bellamy Nationalism, Bray contended that government ownership of the railroads was the only solution. He chided the Democratic city council for the ineffectiveness of their speeding ordinance and claimed the legislation pending before Congress was unconstitutional, a position many noted lawyers took at the time. For Populists the real issue was between government and corporate railroads. A court order eventually silenced Bray and more than 100 other citizens of Enid and Pond Creek. Populists editors elsewhere immediately raised the cry of arbitrary government, but to no avail.¹⁰

Flynn, Greer and other Republicans emphasized a legislative approach to the Enid and Pond Creek situations throughout the railroad war. Eventually their contention that relief was possible within the contemporary political system proved valid. Populists, who claimed nationalization was the only solution, found their position undercut when the Senate finally passed the depot legislation unamended. Cyn-

⁹ Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 28 July and 18 August 1894.

¹⁰ Norman Peoples Voice, 4 June 1897; Enid Coming Events, 2 March 1894; Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 4 August 1894 and Alva Review, 14 July 1894.

ics attributed the support of the normally pro-railroad Greer to the concerns Santa Fe officials had that the conflict might get out of hand and "Oklahoma, when it gets to be a state, will pass railroad legislation that will be a yoke on the necks of railroads."¹¹

Democrats, such as Attorney General Olney, Marshal Nix and acting Governor Thomas J. Lowe (Benfrow was out of the territory during most of the violence) became associated in the popular mind with the Rock Island's cause, and were thus discredited. In the wake of the battle, Oklahoma Leader editor Roy Hoffman apologized for taking the railroad's side in such profuse and flatulent language as to draw further ridicule from almost every quarter. When Leo Vincent noted that the Choctaw Railroad circumvented Tecumseh on its way from Oklahoma City to Shawnee in December, 1894, mainstream party spokesmen recognized the propaganda value he expected from the issue and responded with almost uniform silence.¹²

To get the jump on both Democrats and Populists in the turbulent election year of 1894, Oklahoma Republicans scheduled their territorial convention for mid-May in Oklahoma City. Editor Greer proudly reported that the meeting was enthusiastic and harmonious. Ex-Governor A. J. Seay nominated Dennis Flynn, the incumbent Delegate to Congress, for a second term in Washington. He won by acclamation. The

¹¹ Enid Daily Wave, 18 July 1894.

¹² Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 18 August 1894 and Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 13 December 1894.

GOP territorial platform denounced both the federal and territorial Democratic administrations, praised Flynn for his work in Washington, endorsed the McKinley Tariff and called for the free and unlimited coinage of American silver. Greer noted that the Oklahoma Republican platform contained "the first straight-out declaration for free coinage of American silver ever made in a Republican platform in this nation," and he hoped it would not be the last.¹³

Frank Greer accepted the financial question as the paramount issue of the mid-1890s. The Democratic Wilson-Gorman Tariff, he maintained, was proof positive that protection was a dead issue. He also expressed the fear that his party had drifted away from its original principles and contended the GOP could no longer rely upon the "safe" issues of the previous twenty years for victory. He called for more vigorous prosecution of monopolies and pled with Republicans to take the lead on the silver issue.¹⁴

Greer's seeming turn toward Populism in promoting free silver and antimonopoly was more apparent than real. A commitment to these positions did not constitute a substantial break with the success ethic or self-made-man myth Greer and most Oklahoma Republicans espoused. When asked how much money the nation needed, Greer replied "all we can get, without injuring that we already have, and the way to get it is

¹³ Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 19 May 1894.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 23 June and 28 July 1894.

by using the resources nature has given us," namely gold and silver. On monopolies, the Republican editor believed that laws which allowed unnatural accumulation of wealth should be abridged, but "the opportunity for a man to accumulate according to his aptitude and his natural powers must not be interfered with." Unlike Populists Greer believed that the differences in men's abilities could naturally result in wide disparities in wealth. The Republican editor also asserted that "men who are failures in private life {business} are not the ones to select for success in public life." Most Populist leaders, he claimed, were "the disgruntled, disappointed and defeated elements of the two old parties." Such lack of success disqualified them for political preference. Paternalism was the cause for all of America's problems, Greer claimed. The Populist idea that legislation "is the panacea for all the ills of mankind, is born of ignorance." According to the Republican spokesman, laws should give every man an equal opportunity and "protect him in his constitutional rights and in his accumulations." If some people find themselves "enslaved," he stated, "it is done by their own carelessness, perversity or ignorance."¹⁵

In contrast to the enthusiasm and harmony within GOP ranks, Oklahoma Democrats were in almost complete disarray by the date of their August 1 territorial convention. Feuding between opponents and supporters of President Cleveland

¹⁵ Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 27 October & 3 November 1894.

and his policies had been rampant for a year. In January territorial Democrats had removed Leslie P. Ross as chairman of their party. Roy Hoffman, however, retained his seat on the executive committee. According to silverite Mort Bixler of the Norman State Democrat, Hoffman also continued to insult and drive out of the party every man who failed to "make a servile and cringing bow to Renfrow." The governor's friends attributed such attacks to the "kicking" of those passed over for appointments.¹⁶

Although silverites easily gained control of the Democratic convention's permanent organization in 1894, they did not completely control the proceedings of the meeting. For the Delegate nomination Democrats named silverite Joseph Wisby over Leslie P. Ross by a two-to-one margin. Compromises worked out on the platform, however, left the party with an aura of schizophrenia for the campaign. The 1894 Democratic platform favored the free and unlimited coinage of American silver, free homes and immediate single statehood. By specifying American silver, both Democrats and Republicans mirrored Cleveland's concern that foreign countries might flood the American Treasury with the white metal, and demand gold in return. Democrats also expressed sympathy for labor's "just demands, when made in a peaceable and lawful manner," denounced the Rock Island for its ac-

¹⁶ Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 20 January 1894; Norman State Democrat, 3 February 1894 and Oklahoma City Press-Gazette in the Norman State Democrat, 11 August 1894.

tions in the Cherokee Outlet and then endorsed both the national and territorial administrations. Silverites attempted to block the endorsement of Cleveland, but failed. Opponents made much of the anomaly of a silverite critic of the current Democratic administration running on a pro-Cleveland platform.¹⁷

The Oklahoma Representative put forth the official Populist response to the Democratic and Republican silver planks. Editor Vincent labeled them, "two links of bologna--so alike in smell and complexion . . . {that they} must be from the same dog." He published the mainstream party's silver planks side by side in the Oklahoma Representative so Populist spokesmen could cut them out and ask their opponents at debates which was which. The results proved quite embarrassing to Democratic and Republican representatives on occasion.¹⁸

As Leo Vincent predicted after the Democratic Convention, the race in 1894 would be between Republicans and Populists. According to the Guthrie editor a greater gap now existed between Populists and Democrats than Populists and Republicans. Third party sources, however, would provide most of the attacks on the Democrats in 1894. Frank Greer seemed to fear that most Democrats would go over to the People's party.

¹⁷ Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 9 August 1894; Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 11 August 1894; Norman State Democrat, 4 August 1894 and Stillwater Payne County Populist, 10 August 1894.

¹⁸ Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 5 & 20 September 1894.

ty, and thus, gave Wisby a much more favorable press than expected. As it became obvious Wisby, the Democratic candidate, would finish a distant third, notable Democratic spokesmen dropped from the race.¹⁹

Leo Vincent put forth his ideas on the Populist campaign of 1894 in an Oklahoma Representative article four days before the July 10 third party territorial convention in El Reno. Vincent suggested Populists nominate for the head of their ticket a man who possessed three requisite qualities: he should be a known Populist of stable character, should have a clean record and should not be so partisan as to be offensive. Vincent's first two points were obvious jabs at the third party's first two delegate nominees. His third point looked to the strategy of securing as many Democratic votes as possible without actually engaging in overt fusion. The depression, repeal of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act, and the administration's actions in the Enid Railroad War, made the Democrats the smallest party in Oklahoma. Turning the Democratic arguments of previous years upon their former exponents, Vincent contended that for Democrats to vote for an obvious loser was foolish. Democratic leaders, he contended "should step aside like men and give the Populists a chance." Vincent recognized that sectionalism hurt the third party movement, while a rural-urban cleavage made Populists a major contender in Oklahoma. He thus praised De-

¹⁹ Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 9 August, 13 September & 25 October 1894.

mocratic leaders from the county for their sincerity in supporting silver, a low tariff and antitrust legislation. The People's party, he emphasized, had supported each of these issues from its inception, while urban oriented Democrats had betrayed their party on these issues. Vincent called for a statesman-leader capable of recruiting men who, although disenchanted with their old allegiance, might be offended through intemperate attacks upon their former party.²⁰ Although Vincent claimed his suggestion was not in the interest of any particular candidate he obviously favored Ralph Beaumont for the Delegate nomination. Beaumont's association with the Knights of Labor and his vigorous lobbying for the opening of Oklahoma to non-Indian settlement in the 1880s made him widely known in the new territory. As a long time third party figure Beaumont was well versed on Populist issues. He was a good speaker, and while his New England accent may have been a handicap, Oklahoma was still a land of migrants from the older sections of the nation.²¹

To a certain degree Vincent's statement on party strategy rekindled the fusion issue among Oklahoma Populists. Fusionists interpreted the editor's statement as favoring the nomination of "some conservative man whom the Democrats can endorse." Beaumont vigorously denied the need to nominate a man suitable to Democratic leaders to win in November. The

²⁰ Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 14 June 1894 and 25 August 1894.

²¹ Ibid., 27 September 1894.

Oklahoma County Populist Club, he claimed, had three times the membership on its rolls as the third party received votes in 1892. According to Beaumont, similar advances elsewhere in the territory insured the third party a substantial poll even without Democratic help.²²

Ninety-nine delegates, two-thirds of whom claimed Civil War service, met at El Reno on July 10, 1894, to nominate Ralph Beaumont as the Populist candidate for Delegate to Congress.²³ Beaumont had four opponents for the nomination. None, however, were serious contenders. As Leo Vincent later noted, most "doubtless learned many things commendable to themselves that up to that time they were ignorant of" during the nominating speeches. He also proudly noted that less than half of the delegates had taken the train to the convention and none were officeholders. Vincent was named chairman of the party's central committee, which automatically made him Beaumont's manager for the campaign.²⁴

In their platform Populists endorsed the Omaha Platform of 1892, called specifically for free coinage of silver, denounced both the Democratic and Republican parties as agents

²² Oklahoma City Oklahoma State in the Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 28 June 1894.

²³ Fifty-six ex-Union soldiers and ten ex-Confederate soldiers attended the convention. This exceeded the number of Civil War veterans to attend both of the old party conventions in 1894.

²⁴ Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 2 June 1894 and Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 12 July 1894. John Allan was elected permanent secretary of the convention.

of the money power, called for boards of arbitration for labor disputes and expressed their sympathies for Coxey, Debs and the people of Enid and Pond Creek. At the territorial level the third party favored free homes, single statehood, better laws on leasing school lands and scaling all official salaries "in proportion to the reduction in prices for products, and the wages of laborers." Vincent earlier had identified taxation as the "great overshadowing issue in Oklahoma." According to the Populist leader, the territory's tax rate was grossly and unjustly inflated, "exceeding that of any other state or territory." With drought, debt and poverty as the lot of most Oklahomans, local and territorial expenditures, especially on salaries, should be reduced. Fully a quarter of the taxpayers in the territory were delinquent, he claimed. The issue was particularly significant in the older regions of the territory. Homesteaders received title to their lands after five years. For those in the Unassigned Lands this came in 1894. Land became taxable once a homesteader received title to his claim.²⁵

Democrats and Republicans denounced Ralph Beaumont as a "carpetbagger," who a clique of Populist leaders imported for sinister purposes. Nicknames such as "Rollingstone" Beaumont and "Anarchist" Beaumont quickly emerged. Frank Greer of the Republican Oklahoma State Capital, revived ru-

²⁵ Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 21 May and 12 July 1894.

mors of a Vidette-like secret machine controlling the People's party. Greer gave Beaumont, Vincent and Fred Bailey top honors in the secret order. Vincent and Greer then rehashed the Kansas election of 1888, replete with charges of who was to blame for the infamous Coffeyville bombing.²⁶

Beaumont moved to offset his liability as a newcomer with a vigorous campaign in 1894. The Populist nominee canvassed the territory with a schedule of debates and camp meetings. At Norman he declared the tariff a minor issue. At Perkins he spoke of his Civil War service, and how at the end of the war the government had discharged him, but not the bondholders. To offset some of the old parties' sectional appeal the Populist leadership ran what Vincent called an "old soldier" campaign. As greenbackers Vincent and Beaumont called for the kind of money "that came to your rescue during the war." Beaumont also suggested that the easy way to nationalize the railroads was to "simply foreclose the mortgage on the Union Pacific which the Republicans for twenty years have failed to collect." Free silver and taxation, however, proved to be the third party's most important issues.²⁷

²⁶ Alva Chronicle, 20 July 1894; El Reno Democrat in the Norman State Democrat 13 June 1894; Norman State Democrat, 11 & 18 August 1894; Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 22 September 1894 and Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 20 September 1894.

²⁷ Norman People's Voice, 25 May 1894; Stillwater Payne County Populist, 7 September 1894; Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 27 September 1894 and Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 22 September 1894.

The "financial question" was one of the most vital political issues of the late nineteenth century. How much money circulated through the American economy affected prices, the availability of credit, interest rates and income. Since monetary policy established the basic ground rules upon which the economy operated, the stakes were high. Those who controlled the rules of credit and commerce, to a great extent, determined who got the largest share of America's expanding productive capacity.

Before the Civil War Americans relied upon a metal basis for their currency. The government set the legal ratio between the value of gold and silver at sixteen to one in 1834. As the intrinsic value of sixteen ounces of silver was greater than one ounce of gold at the time, people generally hoarded the white metal and used gold for currency. The federal government's need for money to finance the Civil War caused Washington to suspend specie payments (the redemption of paper currency with gold and/or silver) in 1862. During the war federal authorities printed approximately \$450 million of fiat money, called greenbacks. The result was inflation, commercial liquidity and general prosperity. Orthodox financial circles, however, looked toward the resumption of specie payments and redemption of greenbacks with metal after the war. The Public Credit Act of 1869 pledged the federal government to such a policy.

Arguments over monetary policy went well beyond the realm of technical financial considerations in the late nineteenth century. Exponents of various monetary positions quickly wrapped their fiscal positions in blankets of moralistic slogans to gain support. Because retirement of greenbacks would cause deflation, unless a major silver or gold strike occurred, bankers and other creditors generally favored what they called "honest money," meaning currency based upon the intrinsic value of some metal. They asserted that the nation's honor was at stake. Those who had supported the war effort through purchase of government securities, they claimed, had assumed the dollar would be returned to par. Redemption of greenbacks was necessary, therefore, to convince the holders of capital of the long term reliability of the government and stability of the dollar. Investors, otherwise, might be timid and stunt the economic growth of the nation. The failure to redeem greenbacks in specie would also destroy foreign confidence in the dollar, and thus, foreign trade as well.

Debtors, particularly in the cash poor South and West, took the opposite side of the monetary question. They focused upon the unfairness of deflation. Contracting the volume of currency in circulation would cause a corresponding decrease in commodity prices and wages. As each of the scarcer dollars gained in purchasing power, the debt a mortgage-ridden farmer owed increased. The debtor would have to

sell more and more products to make the same dollar he had borrowed. As crop production rose faster than consumption, agricultural prices declined, giving the farmer even less for his labor. With less money circulating through the economy, credit would also be more difficult to obtain, and in a creditor's market, interest rates would increase.

When the federal government revised its coinage list in 1873, silver was eliminated from the schedule of metals to be coined. This made trade with nations on the gold standard easier. As silver was largely hoarded at the time, demonetization seemed irrelevant. Large scale silver strikes and development of a new technique to process low grade ore in the mid-1870s, however, lowered the value of the white metal. If silver had remained on the coinage list at the ratio of sixteen to one deflation would not have been as severe in the late nineteenth century. Debtor spokesmen and silver interests immediately labeled the demonetization of silver the "Crime of 1873."

As the free coinage of silver and gold at a ratio of sixteen to one would cause an expansion of the currency exponents of greenbacks desired, while overcoming the fears many had about fiat money, "free silver" became a popular slogan in the South and West. In 1878 and 1890 Republican leaders found it politically expedient to authorize the limited coinage of silver with the Bland-Allison and Sherman Silver Purchase Acts, respectively. Fiscal conservatives believed

that uncertainty about the currency after the Sherman Act caused the Panic of 1893. When Grover Cleveland accepted their argument and secured repeal of the law in 1893, he catapulted the silver issue to national prominence.

According to western and southern spokesmen the demonetization of silver was a Wall Street plot to advance the interests of bankers and other creditors. Federal expenditures would force the floating of government bonds. Banks would use their reserves to purchase these bonds and then place them with the Treasury as security for bank issued paper money. The only difference between a government bond and a greenback, Populists claimed, was the interest bankers secured through a bond issue. According to Leo Vincent, the old parties wanted interest bearing bonds, in large denomination which only the rich could purchase, while Populists desired non-interest bearing bonds (greenbacks) in small denominations for the benefit of all.²⁸

To Populists government bonds were merely a subterfuge the rich used to concentrate money into their own hands. The producer orientation of third party spokesmen led them to espouse a labor theory of value. Labor, not investment, speculation or slick deals, they claimed, produced wealth. Capital appropriated wealth without human exertion under the current system. This, they claimed, was against the laws of nature and God. Because interest was not the product of hu-

²⁸ Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 3 October 1895.

man labor it was considered legalized thievery. According to Populist logic laws allowing capital such an advantage over human labor led to "concentrated wealth" which in turn meant "autocratic and plutocratic government, always tending toward monarchy."²⁹

Because labor alone produced wealth, Populists contended that money was no more than a tool civilized nations used to facilitate exchange. True money was devoid of intrinsic value. If the rich could control the nation's monetary system, however, they could reap the profits of others' labor through manipulation. Receiving interest on bonds was one way. Keeping circulating medium at a minimum to drive up interest rates on private and business loans was another. According to Leo Vincent, hard money really meant hard to get money. In Oklahoma and other cash poor regions entrepreneurs such as ex-Governor A. J. Seay could borrow money in Missouri at six percent interest and loan it out in Oklahoma at twelve percent. Populists considered such activities immoral and unfair.³⁰

Because the nation's laws favored capital over producers, "the relation between debt-makers and debt-payers is that of master to slave," Reverend A. G. Copeland wrote when he edited the Guthrie West and South. John Allan wrote that he

²⁹ Norman Peoples Voice, 18 November 1892.

³⁰ Clark Brown, "Biography of Abraham Jefferson Seay," Abraham Jefferson Seay Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma, p. 13.

"would like to see the {other} ministers getting on the Lord's side of the money question," and suggested they start by reading up on usury. For Populists the labor theory of value only expressed God's natural laws. The men who created wealth through their own labor should receive the full benefits of its value. According to Leo Vincent merchants, money lenders, railroads and other capitalists set the price for their goods and services at a percent above cost, regardless of the labor involved. To maintain their profits the difference between what the capitalist earned and his workers received was stolen from the laborer. Vincent proclaimed that "the law that labor recognizes is the law of the great Father above . . . {while} the law that capital works by is Mammon worship."³¹

In a letter to the El Reno Industrial Headlight, William McDonald, a member of the Canadian County Populist Executive Committee, put forth the quintessential Populist remedy to the financial question. McDonald called for abolition of "all vicious laws on the books, of which the national banking law is the chief source of all our problems." He went on to assert that national bankers, who Populists claimed controlled the amount of currency in circulation in their own interests, were "the mainspring of all the trusts and combines which enslave us." According to Leo Vincent a go-

³¹ Guthrie West and South, 19 October 1893; Norman Peoples Voice, 2 December 1893 and Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 8 November 1894.

vernment owned banking system which circulated the greenbacks "that freed the chattel slave" during the Civil War, in time, would also "free the wage slave" as well.³²

While Oklahoma Populist spokesmen were almost exclusively greenbacker in principle, they also found it expedient to promote free silver in 1894. When Kansas Senator William A. Peffer came to Oklahoma to campaign for Beaumont and the Populists he focused primarily upon the silver issue, with only casual references to greenbacks. As the editor of the Kingfisher Reformer, put it, "we are for free silver because it will give us more money and put a temporary stop to further contraction." Free coinage of silver, they claimed, was only a first battle on the road to full consideration of greenbacks. Free silver was, however, only the first step on the "ladder to monetary progression." All Oklahoma Populist leaders, at one time or another, proclaimed greenbacks superior to silver. Fusionists, such as Samuel Crocker, A. G. Copeland and Ralph Bray were every bit as vigorous in the promotion of greenbacks as Leo Vincent and John Allan. Cleveland's repeal of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act simply gave Oklahoma Populists an audience they might not otherwise have had. Since large portions of both old parties opposed coinage of the white metal, Populists could logically proclaim "the People's party is the only straight silver party in existence," and capitalize upon the issue's popularity.

³² El Reno Industrial Headlight, 16 May 1895 and Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 12 December 1895.

Both Democrats and Republicans noted that Populists were really greenbackers rather than silverites.³³

The third party campaign went well until the last month of the race when a scandal over redistricting emerged. As in 1892 new accessions to the Oklahoma Territory caused the need for a new census and redistricting. Federal legislation authorized Governor Renfrow to appoint a three man commission to redistrict the territory. The governor appointed Democrat Allen Hill of Perry, Republican W. T. Walker of Norman and fusion Populist S. B. Oberlander of Enid (formerly of Oklahoma City). The commission selected Hall, the Democrat, chairman. Renfrow obviously expected a Democratic-Populist fusion on the committee. Oberlander, however, balked at a Democratic plot to inflate the census returns for several counties to secure extra representation for southern-born, and presumably Democratic, voters. Hall and Renfrow applied various types of pressure to secure the help of Oberlander, including the governor's taking the Populist commissioner's arm and physically leading him into a secret meeting with Hall.³⁴

³³ Kingfisher Reformer, 27 September 1894; Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 4 October 1894; Kingfisher Reformer, 31 August 1893; Enid Coming Events, 24 December 1896; and Guthrie West and South, 6 July 1893; Alva Review, 16 May 1895; Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 1 September 1894 and Norman State Democrat, 5 February 1896.

³⁴ Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 22 September 1894. the federal legislation authorizing Renfrow to appoint the commission allowed him to appoint two members of a single party to the commission. Excluding Populist representation from the redistricting process, however,

Eventually, Renfrow removed Oberlander from the redistricting committee and replaced him with Populist Councilor Fielden S. Pulliam, who proved more pliable. Renfrow subsequently accepted the Pulliam-Hall plan as the official report of the commission. Oberlander and Walker constructed their own plan and claimed that the legislation setting up the committee did not provide for the removal of members, once appointed. The Democratic gerrymander, however, remained in force.³⁵

In explaining his part in the redistricting controversy, Pulliam simply claimed that he got a better deal for his party with the Democrats. The Populist Councilor, however, had been one of Beaumont's prime competitors for the delegate nomination. The charge that he betrayed his party after losing the delegate nomination to secure a safe Council district seemed valid to Populists such as Leo Vincent. Pulliam, thus, lost his bid for renomination by a three to one margin at the third party's Council Convention. He bitterly charged that Vincent headed a secret organization which ruled the People's party and labeled the new Council nominee, B. F. Tankersley, a Vidette. Tankersley won the Council seat with only a twenty-four vote margin in November.³⁶

would have given third party spokesmen another issue to use against the Democrats in 1894.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 29 September & 13

S. B. Oberlander also failed to receive his party's nomination for the Council. Ralph Bray, editor of the Enid Coming Events, defeated him by a four to one margin for the nomination. Oberlander seemed reconciled to his defeat at the time and the nomination was made unanimous. The week before the election, however, he issued a broadside charging fraud in the selection of several delegates to the Council Convention. Bray lost by thirty votes on election day.³⁷

In line with the Populist's middle-of-the-road orientation, each party nominated separate candidates in each of the legislative districts in 1894. Third party support for Independent Republican C. H. Tandy, a black, in the Guthrie House district was the only exception. Regular Republican Cassius Barnes still carried the district easily. Populists also nominated Green I. Currin, the only black member of the first legislature, for a House seat in Kingfisher County. His loss meant that the 1895 legislature would be the first without a black representative.³⁸

Even gerrymandering the territory could not help the Democratic party in the election of 1894. Renfrow's party carried only four of the thirty-nine legislative seats and Wisby came in last in the delegate race with only 24.9% of

October 1894 and Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 6 December 1894.

³⁷ Enid Coming Events, 4 October & 18 November 1894 and Alva Pioneer, 14 December 1894.

³⁸ Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 20 December 1894.

the vote. As Populists constantly made a moralistic appeal for support in their campaigns, the redistricting scandal and its aftershocks hurt the People's party most on election day. Beaumont still secured 34.0% of the vote in the delegate race and the third party won twelve seats in the 1895 legislature.³⁹

Table 9, which presents the correlations between partisan choice and Oklahoman's place of birth and race in 1894, showed no significant change for the mainstream parties compared to the 1892 figures. Republicans still drew mostly from northerners, blacks and Europeans. Except for the GOP-midwestern figure, the correlations are slightly weaker for 1894, but not markedly. The Democratic party, likewise, still showed positive correlations with white southerners. As in 1892, however, the correlation with whites born in the lower South was much stronger than the correlation with upper southerners.

The 1894 Populist correlations with Oklahoman's place of birth shows some minor alterations when compared with the 1892 figures. The opening of the Cherokee Outlet to black and white settlement, rather than any significant shift of voters in the older sections of Oklahoma, however, best ex-

³⁹ As Populist Councilor George H. Coulson was still officially a member of the Kansas legislature at the time of his election, Republicans successfully challenged him for his seat, this reduced the Populist delegation in the 1895 legislature to eleven. Republican George Vickers and Populist B. B. Bain tied for House District no. 20. Vickers was chosen by lot to represent the district.

TABLE 9			
Place of Birth or Race by Partisan Choice, 1894*			
Race or Place of Birth	Republican Party	Democratic Party	Populist Party
North	.47046	-.46199	.22964
Northeast	.34707	-.23515	-.00895
Midwest	.45322	-.46941	.26232
White South	-.69237	.57997	-.16927
White Border States	-.45335	.28484	.04935
White Lower South	-.77849	.73152	-.32437
Blacks	.40008	-.37426	.16555
European	.51812	-.27041	-.14944

plains this change. The correlation coefficient between the 1892 Populist vote and the 1894 third party vote in the older sections of the territory is .91501. The influx of Mis-

* Source: Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 11 August 1894 and Roark's 5% sample of the census. See footnote 46, Chapter two.

souri-born upper southerners, who either came directly to the Cherokee Outlet or via Kansas, rather than through Texas as did most upper southerners, accounts for the lower Populist-upper South correlation. Missouri was the most commercially advanced of the border states, and thus unlikely to provide converts to Populism. Settlement in the Cherokee Outlet also substantially explains the increase in the Populist-midwestern correlation for 1894. Midwestern-born Oklahomans correlate with Populists at .81163 there. These were mostly refugees from the drought-ridden Kansas Seventh Congressional District. Their exodus to Oklahoma was a major cause of the defeat of "Sockless" Jerry Simpson in 1894.

Table 10, which presents the percent change in each party's vote by county for 1894, reveals a Populist gain in each county in the territory. Democrats, on the other hand, lost ground in all except Custer and Day Counties. These counties polled exceptionally light votes in 1892.⁴⁰ Republicans suffered a reduction in their percentage of the vote in all except Canadian, Cleveland and Oklahoma Counties. These were the only counties that had rail service at the time they were opened to non-Indian settlement to return a Democratic plurality in 1892. In these counties, where sharply defined cosmopolitan and hinterland cultures existed, urban Democrats unhappy with their former allegiance went over to the GOP, while their rural Democratic cousins

⁴⁰ The total votes in Custer and Day Counties in 1894 were 101 and 30, respectively.

joined the People's party. In areas without rail service at the date of their opening, the migration of Democrats to the People's party was even more substantial. The 1894 Populist vote, for instance, correlates more strongly with the 1892 Democratic ballot than the 1892 third party poll in the lands opened to white settlement in 1891 and 1892.⁴¹

The results of tables 9 and 10 seem to present a contradiction. Populists made substantial gains in the election of 1894, but this did not result in a significant shift in the partisan correlations with Oklahoman's place of birth. The explanation for this anomaly lies in the most significant statistical factor connected with the election of 1894, a substantial increase in voter turnout. Only 56.7% of males over the age of twenty-one voted in 1892. In 1894, 81.2% of the eligible voters in the Oklahoma Territory went to the polls.⁴² Every county in the Oklahoma Territory experienced an increase in voter turnout in 1894. Most counties could boast an increase of better than 25%. Table 10 shows that this increased voter participation largely benefited the

⁴¹ In the lands opened to settlement in 1891 and 1892 the 1894 Populist vote correlates with the 1892 Democratic vote at .56017 and with the 1892 Populist poll at -.29433. Lincoln and Pottawatomie Counties account for two-thirds of the population in the lands opened in 1891 and 1892.

⁴² Voter turnout for the general elections in the Populist era in the Oklahoma Territory were: 49.7% in the 1890 legislative race (August 27), 56.1% in the 1890 Delegate race, 56.7% in 1892, 81.2% in 1894, 72.6% in 1896, 58.2% in 1898, 67.9% in 1900 and 61.9% in 1902.

TABLE 10			
Percent Change in Partisan Vote by County, 1892-1894			
County	Republican Party	Democratic Party	Populist Party
Beaver	-2.0	-4.3	6.3
Blaine	-8.5	-0.9	9.4
Canadian	0.6	-10.2	9.6
Cleveland	5.7	-14.9	9.2
Custer	-6.8	5.6	1.1
Day	-27.0	17.6	9.3
Dewey	-9.0	-17.4	26.4
Kingfisher	-1.8	-12.1	13.9
Lincoln	-2.1	-6.2	8.4
Logan	-8.4	-6.1	14.5
Oklahoma	2.2	-19.5	17.3
Payne	-2.0	-4.7	6.7
Pottawatomie	-1.6	-21.5	23.2

People's party. Table 11, which presents the correlations between each party's 1892 and 1894 ballots, reveals a substantial consistency in partisanship in Old Oklahoma (the Unassigned Lands and Beaver County). There were significant changes in voters party affiliation of voters in the lands opened to white settlement in 1891 and 1892. This region of

the Oklahoma Territory, however, held only 19.1% of the Oklahoma population in 1894.⁴³ While some old party voters converted to Populism in 1894, the major portion of the third party's advance came from mobilizing those who had not voted in earlier elections. Depression, antipathy towards those in power and effective third party leadership finally made the People's party in the Oklahoma Territory a major political force.

TABLE 11			
1894 Partisan Vote by 1892 Vote for Same Party			
	Republican Party	Democratic Party	Populist Party
Oklahoma Territory	.66880	.46832	.64720
Old Oklahoma	.96956	.84200	.91501
1891-1892 Openings	.63138	.25310	-.29433

Table 12, which presents the partisan correlations with urban residence in 1894, reveals a pattern quite consistent with the 1890 and 1892 election. The two mainstream parties

⁴³ In 1894 Old Oklahoma contained 45.6% of the territory's population, the areas opened in 1891-1892 held 19.1% and the Cherokee Outlet contained 35.2%.

TABLE 12			
Urban Residence by Partisan Choice, 1894			
County	Republican Party	Democratic Party	Populist Party
Canadian	.26347	.21682	-.43559
Cleveland	.39246	.40449	-.62108
Garfield	.41104	.11055	-.48585
Kingfisher	.32108	.42577	-.49815
Lincoln	.37022	.01845	-.27615*
Logan	.45095	.45591	-.62328
Oklahoma	.07438	.35679	-.44974
Pawnee	-.29528*	.78503	-.84922
Payne	-.45508*	.51600	-.02201*
Woods	.03066	.43017	-.40794

show positive correlations with urban residence in all but Pawnee and Payne Counties. Populists, on the other hand, show a rural basis of support at the .40000 level, or greater, in all but Lincoln and Payne Counties. Lincoln, Pawnee

* Source: El Reno Populist Platform, 16 November 1894; Norman Peoples Voice, 17 November 1894; Enid Coming Events, 8 November 1894; Kingfisher Reformer, 15 November 1894; Chandler Publicist, 16 November 1894; Guthrie Daily Oklahoma State Capital, 11 November 1894; Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 9 November 1894; Pawnee Times-Democrat, 9 November 1894; Stillwater Eagle-Gazette, 8 November 1894 and Alva Pioneer, 14 December 1894.

and Payne Counties were the only counties to provide usable data for 1894 not to have rail service at the time they were opened to white settlement. The divergent cosmopolitan and hinterland cultures resulting from the mode of transportation Oklahomans taken in migrating to the new land persisted in the older sections of the Oklahoma Territory and also appeared in the newly opened Cherokee Outlet. The increased voter turnout of 1894, however, did not appreciably change this rural-urban basis to partisan choice in the Oklahoma Territory.

Table 5thirteen, which presents the correelations between types of agriculture and partisan choice in 1894, shows some shift in the party loyalties of Oklahoma farmers when compared to 1892. As in the previous election, Populist farmers show positive correlations with each of the territory's major crops. The safer, more diversified corn-hog cycle, however, is still the most significant agricultural factor accounting for affiliation with the People's party. There is a minor shift of Democratic corn-hog farmers to the GOP in 1894 as a result of the depression. Many cotton farmers who voted the party of Cleveland in 1892 also moved on to either the Popu- list or Republican parties in 1894. By 1894, the People's party is also clearly the party of cotton farmers. Populism again shows a strongly negative correlation with cattle per farm (ranching). Of the agricultural products represented in table 13, beef was by far the most

profitable in 1894, The more prosperous cattle ranchers, thus, remained with the party of Grover Cleveland.

TABLE 13			
Agricultural Factors by Partisan Choice, 1894*			
Agricultural Factor	Republican Party	Democratic Party	Populist Party
Corn Acreage	-.29569	-.07537	.47297
Cotton acreage	-.08716	-.15232	.35900
Wheat Acreage	.52724	-.45304	.14813
Hogs per farm	.17731	-.39632	.46159
Cattle per farm	-.09551	.41025	-.58074

The Republican party correlation with wheat acreage in 1894 was substantially greater than it was in 1892. Table 14, which presents the partisan correlations with a variety of economic factors for 1894, also reveals a substantial increase in the correlation between the value of farm machinery and the GOP vote. The wheat culture, which got off to a slow start in the Oklahoma Territory because of drought and

* Source: Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 11 August 1894 and Twelfth Census, 1900, Agriculture (Part I), pp. 179-80, 293-94, 433, 470 & 471.

poor credit resources finally began to mature in 1894.⁴⁴ The larger scale operation implicit in mechanization is the product of the late nineteenth century cosmopolitan culture. Agribusinessmen involved in the wheat culture, thus, are closely associated with the Republican party. A comparison of the Republican correlations with the value of agricultural products per farm and per improved acre reveals the results of mechanization. The per acre productivity of Republican wheat farmers is quite low. Such farms were profitable only because mechanization allowed the agribusinessman to till more land than the Populist family farmer.

In 1892, Populists showed a positive correlation with per acre productivity. The depression of the 1890s, however, flooded the People's party with less productive cotton farmers. The Populist correlation with the value of agricultural products per farm and per improved acre, thus, are negative in 1894. The Democratic party's strong correlation with the value of agricultural products per improved acre and with per capita wealth in 1894 was largely the product of ranchers constituting a significant portion of those remaining with the party of Grover Cleveland.

Both Republicans and Populists gained significantly in their correlations with the value of manufactured goods in 1894. The Populist advance, however, only represented third

⁴⁴ The correlation between wheat acreage and value of farm machinery is .88905.

TABLE 14			
Economic Factors by Partisan Choice, 1894*			
Economic Factors	Republican Party	Democratic Party	Populist Party
Value of Agriculture Per Improved Acre	-.59434	.55080	-.23468
Value of Agriculture Per Farm	.33919	-.07092	-.27692
Value of Farm Machinery	.56249	-.36104	-.04835
Tenancy, Cash & Share	.18271	-.41816	.49213
Cash Tenancy	.22182	-.39704	.41075
Share Tenancy	.13246	-.37512	.47824
Value of Manufactured Goods	.46050	-.26104	-.09458
Taxable Wealth Per Capita	-.58595	.61400	-.35117

party gains in Canadian, Cleveland and Oklahoma counties. These counties accounted for 45.8% of the Value of manufactured goods in the Oklahoma Territory. Table 12, however,

* Source: Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 11 August 1894 and Twelfth Census, 1900, Manufacturing (Part II), p. 730-31 Agriculture (Part I), pp. 115, 293-94 and House Executive Document 3089, Report of the Governor of Oklahoma, 54nd Congress, 2nd session, Vol. XVI (1896), pp. 422-23.

shows the Populist vote was exceptionally rural in these counties. The third party's support for Coxey and Debs apparently did little to attract Oklahoma's industrial workers in 1894.

Both the Republican and Populist parties gained support among tenant farmers in the mid-1890s. The People's party, however, was definitely the party of tenant farmers in 1894. The late nineteenth century egalitarian's tradition of promoting freehold tenure made the Populist party an obvious repository for those unable to secure a homestead. The third party's consistent correlations with tenancy suggests that the assertions of historians of Oklahoma socialism that the People's party failed to face the land issue is not valid. For Populists, land was simply one of many important issues they addressed.⁴⁵

The negative Populist correlation with per capita wealth in 1894 is consistent with the third party's negative correlation with the value of agricultural products per farm and per improved acre, as well as its correlation with tenancy. Table 15, which presents the partisan correlations with per capita wealth by date of settlement, shows a uniformly negative correlation between Populism and wealth. Because only the prosperous remained with the party of Cleveland during the depression of the 1890s, the Democratic party correla-

⁴⁵ James R. Green, Grass-Roots Socialism: Radical Movements in the Southwest, 1895-1943 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978), p. 7.

tions with per capita wealth is uniformly positive. The greater commitment to ranching in those areas opened to black and white settlement after 1889 is responsible for the stronger Democratic correlation with wealth in these areas. Republicans show positive correlations with per capita wealth in Old Oklahoma, but negative correlations elsewhere. This is a result of land being taxed only in Old Oklahoma in 1894. Republicans resided upon the more valuable land of cosmopolitan America near the railheads.

TABLE 15			
Per Capita Wealth by Partisan Choice, 1894			
Region	Republican Party	Democratic Party	Populist Party
Old Oklahoma	.58534	.46329	-.34960
1891-1892 Openings	-.74662	.60733	-.27586
Cherokee Outlet	-.38596	.72804	-.69236

The emergence of a talented and vigorous cadre of new third party leaders combined with antipathy toward the Democratic administration's handling of labor turmoil and the

depression of the 1890s to make the People's party the major opposition to the GOP in the Oklahoma Territory in the mid-1890s. New leaders, such as Leo Vincent, Ralph Beaumont and John Allan, agitated the old issues in a vigorous fashion, and highlighted those gaining importance in 1894, such as free silver, government favoritism toward corporate power and taxation. The Cleveland and Renfrow administrations, on the other hand, proved quite inept at handling the depression or the turbulence associated with victims of economic collapse. Cleveland also failed to keep platform promises to lower the tariff significantly and curb corporate power. Cleveland and Renfrow also failed miserably to use their patronage power to strengthen their party or even bring respect to their administrations.

By 1894 the People's party was one of the two largest political parties in half of the states of the union. In most plains and western states the Democratic party could not even secure even 20% of the vote in 1894. The absence of fusion, however, did throw many elections to the GOP. Republicans naturally proclaimed the death of the People's party where prominent third party spokesmen were defeated, despite the Populist's growing vote. There was some question by 1894 as to whether the Democratic or Populist party would become the major opposition to the GOP in America's traditionally two party system.

The Cleveland administration and the depression of the 1890s can be given partial, although certainly not exclusive credit, for the substantial gains the People's party made in 1894. In Oklahoma, the basic pattern of support for the Populist party was already established before Cleveland took office in 1893. Less prosperous northern and southern hinterland farmers engaging in a safer, more diversified pattern of agriculture in a family farm setting where commitment to the egalitarian precepts of Jeffersonian democracy was strongest, constituted the bulk of the third party's electoral support both in 1892 and 1894. As in other states, the Democratic party began to provide more converts to Populism than the GOP in 1893, as Cleveland and his party assumed control of national affairs. Acceding to the demands of bankers to demonetize silver, the failure of tariff reform and the Cleveland administration's perceived closeness to corporate interests led many Democrats to question whether their party really represented their values, just as Republicans had done during the Harrison administration.

Despite the shift of some old party voters to third party ranks, the sectional and economic makeup of People's party support in the Oklahoma Territory did not change significantly in 1894. The mobilization of non-voters, rather than relying primarily upon old party converts is one reason for this. The third party's radical appeal, however, must also be taken into consideration. Those strongly committed to

the cosmopolitan ethos of the Gilded Age were not likely converts to Populism no matter how far economic conditions deteriorated. Cosmopolitan oriented Democrats simply moved to the Republican party in the mid-1890s. While the third party gains were substantial, they were basically among voters whose sectional and socio-economic outlooks were similar to those already committed to the People's party. The shift in loyalties of converts to the Populist party in the mid-1890s seems to occur after a few years residence in the Oklahoma Territory. In 1894 the most important shifts in party loyalty occurred in the lands opened to non-Indian settlement in 1891 and 1892. Midwesterners made up the overwhelming portion of third party supporters in the newly opened Cherokee Outlet, as they did in the Unassigned Lands in 1890. Disillusionment with the promise, perhaps even the panacea, of the "Promised Land," which came for many after a few years residence in Oklahoma, was a necessary part of the conversion process in the Oklahoma Territory. Before this occurred settlers generally remained loyal to whatever party they had affiliated with before coming to the new land.

Chapter VIII

REPUBLICANS TRIUMPHANT: THE 1895 LEGISLATURE

Republicans quickly proclaimed the demise of the People's party in the wake of the election of 1894. Prominent Populists such as Lorenzo Lewelling and "Sockless" Jerry Simpson of Kansas, Davis Waite of Colorado, Reuben Kolb of Alabama and Tom Watson of Georgia met defeat in the off year elections. The third party reverses, however, belied the fact that popular support for the People's party was growing rapidly. Populists doubled their nationwide poll of 1892. The failure to fuse with Democrats in the West, however, threw many formerly Populist offices to the GOP. Fraud and violence, on the other hand, accounted for the margin of Democratic victory in many southern races. The Democratic party in the West and the Republican party in the South rapidly tottered toward collapse. Which of the three major parties would survive in the normally two-party American system was by no means certain in 1895.

John Allan spoke for most Populists when he claimed that the Democratic party had gone the way of the Whigs. The aristocratic element of the Democratic party would go Republican, he predicted, while the rank and file would join the

People's party. In the Oklahoma Territory, Populists more than trebled their 1892 vote and captured half of the county offices in the region opened to non-Indian settlement before the run for the Cherokee Outlet.¹

The People's party became the major opposition to GOP control of the Oklahoma Territory with the collapse of the Democratic party in 1894. Democratic reverses, however, were severe enough to deliver both houses of the third Oklahoma legislature into the control of the Republican party for the first time. Although Governor Renfrow was a Democrat, his views were not far removed from those of the GOP. He would veto only two bills emanating from the third assembly.

Although Republicans would control sixteen House and seven Council seats in the 1895 legislature, the GOP's margin of victory in many of the legislative races was quite slim. Less than 100 votes separated winning Republican candidates from their Populist opponents in six House races and one Council race.² Third party victories in these races would have made Democratic legislators the swing vote. There was, however, no certainty that they would combine with the Populists. Most of the Democrats in the third legislature were

¹ Norman Peoples Voice, 17 November 1894 and Alva Review in the Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 22 November 1894.

² Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 6 December 1894. Populists lost four of the House seats by less than twenty votes. Populist and Republican candidates, for instance, tied in one district. The GOP candidate won the seat by lot.

supporters of President Cleveland, and voted with Republicans in organizing the 1895 assembly.³

Defeated Republican candidates filed contests against two Populist legislators from the newly opened Cherokee Outlet in 1895. Both had served in the 1893 Kansas legislature. In the House, the Republican candidate for the Medford Representative seat charged Populist R. H. Walling with voter fraud. His plea fell upon deaf ears, however, as the House seated Walling by a twenty-four to one vote.⁴

Republican James P. Gandy contested the seating of Populist George Coulson with charges of both voter fraud and ineligibility for the legislature. Gandy's affidavits in the voter fraud case, however, proved more questionable than the vote. GOP legislators still declared Coulson ineligible for the Council on other grounds, however, and replaced him with Gandy.

Republicans charged that Coulson was not a legal resident of Oklahoma at the date of his election. According to GOP sources Coulson's family still resided in Kansas, he was still a member of the Kansas legislature, and he received a resident tax exemption on his Kansas farm in 1894. Coulson, a sixty-nine year old farmer, staked his claim in Woods County in September, 1893. Although he still owned and operated a farm in Kansas, it was heavily mortgaged and the

³ Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 17 January 1895 and Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 12 January 1895.

⁴ Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 19 January 1895.

Populist legislator expected to lose it.⁵ Since the elderly farmer's financial situation forced him to live in a dugout, his wife, who was in poor health, returned to Kansas for the winters of 1893-94 and 1894-95. As Coulson's wife was not in the territory at the time the third legislature met, Coulson's true residence seemed questionable. Because Kansas law automatically unseated any legislator moving from the state, Coulson had not bothered to resign from the Kansas legislature. He also had not applied for the Kansas \$200 resident household exemption. The local tax assessor automatically conferred it upon Coulson in ignorance of Coulson's Oklahoma residence. In a straight party line vote, with Democrat Robert Ray voting with the Populists, GOP Councilors found this sufficient cause to replace Coulson with Gandy.⁶

Since Gandy clearly did not receive a plurality of the votes cast, Populists saw Coulson's replacement as thwarting the will of the people. Leo Vincent speculated that the GOP's motive in replacing Coulson, and not Walling, was to establish a two-thirds Democratic-Republican majority in both houses in case Governor Renfrow vetoed any bills. As the House had already denied a Populist challenge to the seat of Democrat S. A. Waits, of Cleveland County, Walling's removal was not necessary for the mainstream parties to se-

⁵ Coulson did lose his Kansas farm to a mortgage company in 1894.

⁶ Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 7 & 14 February 1895.

cure a two-thirds majority in the House. When Populist Councilor E. H. Spencer, of Payne County, denounced the use of "Alabama Methods" in unseating Coulson, Republicans refused to allow his statement to be printed in the Council Journal. GOP Council President John H. Pitzer, an El Reno Lawyer, later freely admitted to the press that seating Gandy was a purely partisan move.⁷

Although Republicans controlled Oklahoma's third legislature only through victory in several exceptionally close races, GOP legislators found no reason to tread lightly in exercising their mandate. They quickly voted down the Populist's claim to proportional representation on committees in the Council, and then excluded third party Councilors from both the Railroads and Corporations, and the Judiciary Committees. Populists did, however, succeed in getting bills printed after the first reading so they could be inspected outside committee.⁸

Republicans also moved swiftly to hire what Mort Bixler, editor of the Norman State Democrat, labeled "an army of committee clerks" for the third legislature. The Democratic-Populist controlled second legislature (1893) was the

⁷ Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 19 January & 9 February 1895; Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 7 & 21 February 1895 and Norman Peoples Voice, 16 February 1895. As a consolation, Republican Councilor O. R. Fegan, of Guthrie, appointed Coulson Clerk of the Committee on School Lands.

⁸ Norman Peoples Voice, 12 January 1895 and Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 17 January 1895.

least expensive of the territorial years. Republicans, Bixler claimed, made the its successor "the most reckless and extravagant." Only Populists, however, voted against the House's clerk hire bill. Republicans also pushed a bill through the Council giving Union veterans preference in government jobs. John Allan, who sat in the third legislature, claimed the veterans had only performed their duty and voted against the measure along with Democrat Robert Ray. Other Populists, however, voted for the bill. The measure never came up for a roll call vote in the House.⁹

Once the third legislature was organized, Populists had some difficulty in keeping their colleagues at their posts in Guthrie. In the second week of the session the Council adjourned for a junket to Topeka to witness the election of Democrat John Martin to the United States Senate. One Republican and three Populists refused to make the journey. Populist Councilor James Doom also declined at first, but later agreed to accompanying the younger councilors as a chaperon. He refused, however, to go on what Leo Vincent labeled "an irrigation junket to El Reno," the following weekend.¹⁰

⁹ Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 31 January 1895 and Norman State Democrat, 13 February 1895. There were two committee clerks in each house of the 1893 legislature. In 1895 almost every committee had a clerk.

¹⁰ Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 24 & 31 January 1895.

Because of his former legislative experience, James E. Doom of Pottawatomie County quickly emerged as the leader of the third party in the Council. Although a man of strong convictions, and "proud of the title 'crank,'" he was forever pleasant in demeanor, and on occasion, far more jocular than his name suggested. A reporter once asked him why his colleagues were so lackadaisical in debating a probate bill. The senior Councilman attributed his colleagues unenthusiastic response to the lack of a sufficient lobby to draw their finest oratorical efforts.¹¹

Doom's knowledge of the classics, which he frequently quoted, quickly made him a close friend of John Allan. The relationship probably served to harness the young legislator's earnestness in debate. On more than one occasion Allan came to recognize the warmth of his argument before crossing the bounds of impropriety, and tempered his language. Populists in the House, where no such moderating force emerged, proved far more intemperate and pugilistic in spirit. Even the third party's bitterest enemies came to respect the aged Doom, labeling him "the father of the Council."¹²

¹¹ Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 16 March and 23 February 1895.

¹² Norman Peoples Voice, 16 March 1895; Norman State Democrat, 26 January 1895 and Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 2 February 1895.

A survey of roll call votes in the third legislature revealed a distinct partisan orientation to voting in the 1895 assembly. Of the thirty-nine members of the third legislature, only one, Republican W. A. Hogan, voted more often with the members of another party than his own. Hogan's record resembled that of the People's party more than the GOP. The Republican legislator was a northern-born Lincoln County farmer. Certain counties near the transition zone between northerners and southerners in the Oklahoma Territory, such as Lincoln, retained a more sectional political orientation than the territory as a whole in the 1890s. This held agrarian Republicans, such as Hogan, loyal to the GOP, while his counterparts elsewhere migrated to the People's party. All legislators other than Hogan, however, voted with the majority of their own party more often than with members of the opposition. As the Democrats in the third legislature were supporters of President Cleveland, the survey showed the Populist position frequently was closer to that of the GOP than the Democratic party, although the margin of difference was slim.¹³

Proposed legislation took a definite partisan orientation in the third assembly. Populists, for instance, supported a number of bills designed to benefit the debtor. Before he was removed from his seat in the upper chamber, George Coul-

¹³ Populists in Lincoln County in 1894, for instance, correlated with white southerners at .64681. In this instance the People's party simply replaced the Democratic party as the party of southerners.

son introduced a bill allowing owners of real property sold under decree of foreclosure to reclaim their land within eighteen months through paying the amount of the judgement and the taxes accrued. The bill, however, never got out of committee. Neither did a bill Republican Representative William A. Knipe introduced exempting all land and personal property in the Cherokee Outlet from taxes. Populists instead called for an extention on the payment of taxes for all Oklahomans, but in vain. The advice of Frank Greer, editor of the Republican Guthrie Oklahoma State Capital, that "no large changes are needed in our laws" seemed to prevail among GOP legislators in Oklahoma's third congress. Populists in the House, however, were able to unite with seven Republicans and two Democrats to repeal the part of the territory's statutes which allowed imprisonment for debt. Although GOP opposition in the House was significant, the bill met no resistance in the Council and became law.¹⁴

The most important laws to emanate from the third legislature concerned county taxes and expenses. Republican Representative Robert A. Lowry introduced and pushed to passage a bill which limited county expenses to 80% of the

¹⁴ Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 31 January 1895; Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 12 & 26 January & 2 February 1895; Journal of the Council Proceedings of the Third Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Oklahoma, Beginning January 8, 1895 and Ending March 8, 1895 (Guthrie: State Capital Printing Co., 1895), pp. 954-55 and Journal of the House Proceedings of the Third Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Oklahoma, Beginning January 8, 1895 and Ending March 8, 1895 (Guthrie: State Capital Printing Co., 1895), p. 1057.

year's levy. County commissioners were charged with establishing a separate fund for each type of expenditure, estimating all expenses for the coming year and then adding 25% to cover expected delinquencies in order to establish the sum which had to be raised through taxes each year. They could then issue county warrants, but only up to 80% of the taxes levied. The measure was designed to create more faith in the warrants, which were heavily discounted in many counties. The rigidity implicit in establishing several funds and the overtaking to cover delinquencies led Populists to believe Oklahomans would suffer markedly increased taxes only to satisfy warrant scalpers. Of the Populists in the House, only R. H. Walling voted for the measure.¹⁵ Democrats and all Republicans, except W. M. Smith, a Grant County farmer who John Allan labeled a first class "capital striker" and invited to join the People's party, voted for the bill. Councilmen passed Lowry's bill unanimously in the rush to finish business on the last day of the session.¹⁶

One factor which made the estimation of county expenses difficult under the new tax law was a simultaneous change in county salaries. Republican Councilor O. R. Fegan introduced a fee and salary bill into the 1895 legislature designed to reduce the expenses which threatened to bankrupt a

¹⁵ Walling, a Medford physician, was the only non-farmer Populist in the 1895 House.

¹⁶ Alva Pioneer, 29 March 1895; Alva Review, 28 November 1895; House Journal (1895), pp. 954-55 and Council Journal (1895), p. 1057.

number of counties in the territory. The bill cut district clerks' salaries substantially. It also absolved counties from paying court costs in misdemeanor cases and half of the fees in felony cases. The salary of jurors was cut and the county was required to pay the expenses of witnesses only if they were indigent. The bill, however, did raise the salaries of some minor officials. John Allan, who supported the measure, predicted the bill would save each county \$8,000 to \$10,000 a year. He hoped this would put counties on a cash basis and free them from the tender mercies of warrant scalpers. Three of the four Populists in the Council voted for the bill. Senator Doom later explained that Populists voted for the measure only because it was better than the previous law. Third party legislators would have reduced salaries even more, he claimed. In the House, third party legislators split two to two on the fee and salary bill, with three absent. With the exception of W. A. Hogan, Republicans supported the measure unanimously. When the Oklahoma Supreme Court declared the district clerk's salary cuts unconstitutional in September, 1895, the effect of the fee bill was to substantially raise county expenses, and thus taxes. Although Councilors Allan and Doom claimed the law was a non-partisan product many Populist spokesmen denounced the "Republican sponsored" measure as typical of the GOP's penchant for extravagance.¹⁷

¹⁷ Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 9 February 1895; Norman Peoples Voice, 9 & 16 March & 13 September 1895;

As more and more Oklahoma farmers began receiving title to their lands in the mid-1890s they began to mortgage their farms. The issue of high interest rates quickly became important. The 1890 and 1893 legislatures defined usury as any interest rate above 12%. Cosmopolitan elements, however, considered such laws an intimidation of capital. Populist Councilor B. B. Tankersley, however, introduced a bill into the 1895 legislature reducing the legal interest rate to 7%. Republicans, in what John Allan labeled Oklahoma's "House of Lords," amended the bill so as to repeal all usury laws and then jocularly complimented Tankersley for introducing a piece of "Populist legislation" they could finally support. The third party legislator angrily disowned the bill, which passed over third party protests. R. H. Walling was the only Populist legislator to vote for the measure. Only two Republicans and one Democrat broke ranks to vote with the People's party on this highly partisan measure. Leo Vincent sarcastically predicted that with "the bars to the rapacious money sharks" abolished, "filthy lucre would become plenty, interest rates would jump below zero and the laboring classes and other poor men would be greatly benefited."¹⁸

Council Journal (1895), pp. 1055; Norman Peoples Voice, 2 October 1896; House Journal (1895), pp. 958-59; Alva Review, 2 January 1896 and Chandler Publicist, 1 May 1896.

¹⁸ Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 23 February 1895; Norman Peoples Voice, 9 February 1895; Stillwater Payne County Populist, 8 March 1895; Council Journal (1895), p.

Despite their minority status, Populist legislators were not reticent in introducing their own special brand of legislation in the third assembly. Democrats and Republicans, however, quickly tabled Populist sponsored resolutions memorializing Congress in favor of free silver and denouncing President Cleveland's bonding schemes. Populist Councilor E. H. Spencer was able to push a bill taxing gold bearing obligations to a vote. Republicans and the Council's lone Democrat unanimously voted against the measure. A similar vote killed Spencer's initiative and referendum bill. Both old parties, however, supported Populist B. B. Tankersley's bill prohibiting corporations from hiring private armed detective forces (Pinkertons).¹⁹

Oklahoma City Republican Henry St. John introduced two anti-railroad bills into the 1895 House. One required railroads to reimburse farmers for livestock their trains killed. The other required rail lines to pay damages for personal and property losses connected with their operations. Although Populists strongly supported both measures, St. John was unable to secure enough support among his fellow Republicans to pass the bills. Democrats and Republicans also unanimously voted down a Populist bill requiring the Choctaw Railroad to establish depot facilities at Tecum-

1055; House Journal (1895), pp. 1058-59 and Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 21 February 1895.

¹⁹ Council Journal (1895), pp. 1055-57 and House Journal (1895), pp. 956-59.

seh, which it circumvented in favor of Shawnee. Republicans also finally pushed a militia bill through the third legislature over the protests of both Democrats and Populists.²⁰

Populist legislators, as might be expected, parted company with the mainstream parties on a number of financial issues in the 1895 legislature. A Populist sponsored bill requiring the registration of promissory notes designed to locate liquid capital for tax purposes never got out of committee. Only one Republican joined Populists on the Tankersley Usury Bill and a Republican bill allowing counties to fund their existing indebtedness into long term bonds ran the gauntlet of third party protests and became law. Although Republicans joined the third party on a Populist sponsored bill making it illegal for territorial and county officers to speculate in county bonds and warrants, Governor Renfrow vetoed the measure.²¹

Party line votes, with Democrats joining Republicans, also occurred on several tax exemption measures. The mainstream parties supported tax relief for railroads, while Populists sought a \$100 exemption for all taxpayers. Populists also constituted the bulk of the opposition on clerk hire for the legislature and supreme court, as well as fund-

²⁰ Norman Peoples Voice, 26 January 1895; Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 2, 10 & 23 February & 2 March 1895; Council Journal (1895), pp. 1012, 1014 & 1055-56 and Norman State Democrat, 13 February 1895.

²¹ House Journal (1895), pp. 954-55 & 958-59; Council Journal (1895), pp. 1055 & 1057 and Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 16 March & 2 February 1895.

ing for the Oklahoma Historical Society. Historian Karel Bicha contends that "almost without exception the Populist approach to public spending was that of the meat-axe." In Oklahoma, where capital was scarce and most land not taxable, third party legislators were definitely concerned about government expenses. Their focus, however, was not as indiscriminate as Bicha suggests. Populists opposed measures which proliferated the number of appointive offices. In Populist eyes, politicians repaid special favors with patronage appointments, thus shifting the cost of reimbursement to the taxpayer. Their primary function, third party advocates feared, was to loot the territory's meager treasury.²²

Populist legislators were not so tight-fisted, however, as to oppose spending on needed improvements. B. B. Tankersley introduced and pushed to passage a road construction bill in the third legislature and Populists in the House provided the margin of victory on a bill to establish a territorial penitentiary. The penitentiary bill, however, never came up for a vote in the Council. In the vote on the 1895 assembly's general appropriation bill, only three of the eleven third party members voted against the measure. Popu-

²² House Journal (1895), pp. 954-57; Council Journal (1895), pp. 1012, 1055-56; Karel Bicha, Western Populism: Studies in an Ambivalent Conservatism (Lawrence: Coronado Press, 1976), p. 123. The funds for the Oklahoma Historical Society were designated for binding the newspaper collection, a function Populist legislators believed could wait for better economic times. William Campbell, the President of the society at the time, was a Republican member of the first legislature, and thus viewed as a typical placeman.

lists proved quite willing to spend on needed projects, but vehemently opposed anything smacking of patronage sinecures.

Morality legislation received a cool reception in the 1895 assembly. Populist R. J. Nesbitt, who served as a Democrat in the first legislature, introduced a liquor licensing bill into the House that most Democrats and Republicans supported. Four of the seven Populists, however, voted against the bill, and it was killed in the Council without a roll call vote. Populists constituted the bulk of the opposition on a bill legalizing prize fighting. Texas Governor Charles A. Culberson secured legislation stopping a scheduled fight for the world's championship in El Paso. Oklahoma legislators hoped to lure the fight to the new territory with favorable legislation. The editor of the Stillwater Payne County Populist spoke for third party legislators when he denounced the bill as converting Oklahoma into the "Mexican bull pen" of the United States.²³

Republican Representative W. H. Mason introduced into the third legislature a civil rights bill prohibiting discrimination in public facilities in the Oklahoma Territory. C. H. Tandy, the black Independent Republican Populists supported for the Guthrie House seat in the 1894 election, was the moving spirit behind the measure. Populists in the

²³ Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 23 February 1895; Alwyn Barr, Reconstruction to Reform, Texas Politics, 1876-1906 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971), p. 161; Stillwater Payne County Populist, 8 March 1895. House Journal (1895), pp. 954-57; Council Journal (1895), p. 1057.

House split, however, four to three in favor of the measure. In the Council only John Allan and Democrat Robert Ray opposed the bill. Governor Renfrow labeled the bill an obvious play for the black vote and vetoed the measure.²⁴

Perhaps the most controversial moral issue to come before the 1895 legislature was the attempt to abolish capital punishment in the Oklahoma Territory. Oklahoma City black John Milligan, a convicted murderer, was the first man sentenced to hang in the Oklahoma Territory. On January 9, the night before date of his execution, John Furlong, the secretary of the Populist territorial central committee, secured a sixty day stay of execution for the condemned man from acting Governor T. J. Lowe. He then appealed to the third legislature to abolish the death penalty, and thereby save Oklahoma from what he called "the stain of legal murder." To make his appeal nonpartisan, he secured the support of Angelo Scott, Oklahoma City's Republican Councilor. Scott introduced Council Bill no. 134, which gave the governor the option of imprisoning for life anyone sentenced to death. To sway public opinion Furlong wrote a number of impassioned pleas for newspaper publication in early 1895. He also addressed both houses of the legislature in February. Although his motives were primarily moral, he also made a practical appeal. Punishment, he claimed, had but two purposes, to re-

²⁴ Stillwater Payne County Populist, 15 February 1895 and Norman State Democrat, 20 March 1895. House Journal (1895), pp. 956-57 and Council Journal (1895), pp. 1056-57.

form the criminal and to make society secure. Neither, he argued, required the death penalty.²⁵

Frank Greer of the Oklahoma State Capital vehemently opposed the abolition of capital punishment and kept up a steady barrage of anti-repeal editorials throughout the controversey. According to the Republican editor, there was "too much sympathy for criminals." He contended that "the law of capital punishment . . . was made by God when the world's human code was handed down in imperishable record." What safety, he asked, is there when "mock sympathy helps bloody-handed villains out of the clutch of justice?" Scott's bill narrowly passed the Council, but was defeated by a single vote in the House. Republicans split badly over the measure, while Democrats opposed it. With the exception of James Doon, all Populist legislators voted to abolish capital punishment. When Milligan's stay of execution expired in March, he was hanged.²⁶

The 1895 legislature made several important changes in the Oklahoma election code. Since the People's party was now the territory's second party, Democrats and Republicans expanded the number of judges and clerks at each polling place from two to three. Previously only the two largest parties in each county were represented. This frequently

²⁵ Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma Leader, 10 October & 2 February 1895 and Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 14 February 1895.

²⁶ Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 2 February and 2 & 16 March 1895. Council Journal (1895), p. 1055.

excluded Populist representation at the polling places. With the new law, however, each party was represented and Democrats were kept on the election boards, insuring a mainstream party majority in all cases.²⁷

Oklahoma's third legislature also passed the nation's first anti-fusion law in 1895. Republican Councilor George Orner sponsored the bill, which provided a prison sentence of up to five years for any candidate, election judge or official printer who allowed the name of a candidate to appear on more than one ticket. Fusion arrangements usually encompassed the appearance of the agreed upon candidate's name under both the Democratic and the Populist columns. Only a generation after the Civil War, the Democratic party still carried too much secessionist baggage for many ex-Republicans to mark the Democratic column, no matter what the candidate might otherwise represent. As the Populists in the third legislature were all middle-of-the-roaders, they joined the GOP in supporting the bill. Democrats, naturally constituted the bill's only opposition and Roy Hoffman immediately proclaimed the measure unconstitutional. Since supporters of the bill clearly had the votes to overturn a veto, Renfrow signed the bill into law.²⁸

²⁷ Alva Pioneer, 5 April 1895 and Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 30 March 1895.

²⁸ Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 16 & 30 March 1895. House Journal (1895), pp. 958-59; Council Journal (1895), p.1056.

The third electoral change to emanate from the 1895 legislature was the most controversial. Because Governor Renfrow had manipulated the 1894 legislative redistricting board so effectively, the GOP controlled 1895 legislature took over the duty of apportioning the territory for 1896. Populist Representative N. H. DeFord put forth a reapportioning bill which satisfied Democrats, Populists and six of the House's fifteen Republicans. Seven GOP legislators, however, voted against the measure. Republicans in the Council subsequently amended the bill along highly partisan lines. This produced a straight party line vote in the upper chamber and Populist charges of gerrymandering. Essentially, the measure, as amended, spread the GOP vote out to maximize the number of seats Republicans could win in a three way race in 1896.²⁹

Assessments of the third legislature largely followed party lines. The editor of the Alva Chronicle spoke for Republicans when he stated that "while it did not do everything expected of it, it did splendid work for the territory." A new school land lease law, which would give lease holders the right to compensation for improvements was the most notable omission. Roy Hoffman's Democratic Guthrie Oklahoma Leader, charged that most of the legislation passing the assembly in the final three days of the session was "en-

²⁹ Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 14 November 1895; House Journal (1895), pp. 956-57; Council Journal (1895), p. 1057.

gineered by money and fraud by the Republican members." When the Logan County grand jury returned indictments against thirteen members of the 1895 legislature both Democrats and Populists reveled in the news. Hoffman then published a list of twenty-eight legislators who Guthrie saloon keepers claimed had skipped town before paying their bills.³⁰

Although Populists put the old parties on record as favoring Grover Cleveland's pro-gold monetary policies, and established the third party as the GOP's major opposition, they were no more successful in securing third party legislation than Populist representatives of previous legislatures. The repeal of usury legislation, creation of a territorial militia and proliferation of patronage positions, in fact, signified a regression from previous assemblies. Many Americans were not certain whether Populism was advancing or declining as a movement in the wake of the 1894 elections. Third party candidates received more votes than in 1892, but the lack of fusion in the West severely reduced the number of Populist office holders. Oklahoma Populists gained both voters and offices in 1894. Compared to the third party's influence in the 1890 and 1893 legislatures, however, such advances actually translated into less power.

³⁰ Alva Chronicle, 15 March 1895; Norman Peoples Voice, 16 march 1895 and Guthrie Daily Oklahoma Leader, 22 march 1895.

Chapter IX

THE ROAD TO FUSION

Most Americans, and certainly most Oklahomans, clearly realized that the American party system was highly unstable by 1895. Populists visualized the election of 1896 as another 1860, when events catapulted the young and vigorous Republican party to national power. Intra-party debates over what strategy to use in elevating the People's party to power in 1896 intensified as the important election year neared. Populist leaders had discovered that the money question, and more specifically advocating the unlimited coinage of free silver at a ratio of sixteen to one with gold, was their most important issue in recruiting converts to the third party movement.¹

In February, 1895, the Populist party's Washington congressional delegation issued an open letter to the party's rank and file declaring the money question to be the "mightiest and most fundamental controversey of the present century." Although the manifesto was worded vaguely enough to imply greenbacks as well as silver, emphasizing free coinage

¹ McMaster's Weekly Magazine in the Norman Peoples Voice, 22 May 1896.

was clearly the purpose of the Populist leader's address. Because third party leaders, both nationally and in Oklahoma, were essentially greenbackers, however, focusing on the silver issue was to a significant degree a pragmatic political maneuver.²

How to use the silver issue and what the fight for the coinage of the white metal came to symbolize differed from man to man as party strategy developed. The popularity of W. H. "Coin" Harvey's free silver tract, Coin's Financial School, reflected the growing importance of the issue among westerners and southerners in the mid-1890s. According to A. W. Stone of Woods County, Harvey's book was "creating a revolution." J. C. Tousley, editor of the El Reno Industrial Headlight (formerly the Populist Platform), advised all voters to read Harvey's book and offered a free copy to new subscribers. Both Tousley and John Allan of the Norman Peoples Voice inaccurately proclaimed Harvey a Populist. Neither man, however, jettisoned his greenback heritage in promoting "Coin" Harvey's ideas. According to Tousley, free silver would not permanently settle the money question. Harvey's book, however, would do great work in disrupting the old parties. Many people, he contended, "will read it when they wouldn't look at a Populist document." If the free silver issue could get such people to thinking, Tousley contended, "there is a chance to convert them to every prin-

² El Reno Populist Platform, 28 February 1895.

ciple set forth in the Omaha platform.³

Other Oklahoma Populist leaders held a variety of opinions on the silver issue. Leo Vincent feared that making silver the main issue in the hopes of securing new converts might backfire on the People's party. Emphasizing free silver, he claimed, could so educate and commit the people to intrinsic value that converting them to greenbacks might prove impossible. In the meantime the money power could buy up all of the silver mines and control both gold and silver. John Allan agreed that the money issue was much larger than the silver question, but silver, he claimed, was included in it. As gold-bugs ruled both of the old parties Allan advised silverites to join the People's party, "the only true silver party." A C. Towne, editor of the Populist Alva Review, believed free silver was "essentially a Populist demand." He claimed emphasizing it did not require Populists to discard any of their other demands. If third party demands could be impressed upon the public only one at a time, he claimed, "we are making progress toward victory." According to Towne, Populists needed to stand firm on silver while Democrats and Republicans straddled the issue in order to create confidence in the third party. Otherwise a new party committed to free silver would emerge, and indefinitely postpone Populist success.⁴

³ Alva Review, 2 May 1895; El Reno Industrial Headlight, 9 May & 27 June 1895 and Norman Peoples Voice, 29 June 1895.

⁴ Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 12 September 1895; Norman

Populists also were divided on the meaning of the new Silver party which appeared in 1895. Tousley believed it would amount to nothing because prominent mainstream silverites such as Richard Bland of Missouri, William Jennings Bryan of Nebraska and Henry M. Teller of Colorado refused to join. Since Populists already belonged to a silver party, the new organization certainly could not look to it for converts. Tousley did, however, take the opportunity to denounce mainstream party silverites as insincere for refusing to join the People's party, which was uniformly committed to free silver before the new party was founded. William McDonald, a member of the Canadian County Populist Executive Committee, warned Industrial Headlight readers that "the leading figures of the movement are invariably either Democrats or Republicans . . . {who} expect the Pops to whoop 'em up by doing the voting, leaving them masters of the field as in the past."⁵

Oklahoma Populists were not able to make a monopoly of the silver issue without a strong protest from GOP spokesmen. Ex-Governor A. J. Seay proclaimed the Republican party record on silver a good one. McDonald shot back, "who demonetized silver in 1873?" The editor of the Alva Republican claimed that the white metal had never been demonetized and that there was more of it in circulation than at any

Peoples Voice, 8 & 15 June 1895 and Alva Review, 13 June 1895.

⁵ El Reno Industrial Headlight, 9 May 1895.

other time. He found it peculiar "to hear a Populist ranting about the silver question when they are in favor of paper money." Frank Greer of the Guthrie Oklahoma State Capital agreed, claiming that the Populist party "had but one object, . . . {propagating} the old greenback idea of irredeemable paper money." They advocated free silver "only as a temporary substitute." Greer, of course, was correct. In a letter to the editor of the Kingfisher Reformer, however, a reader put his finger on what the silver issue came to symbolize to Populists when he wrote, "if silver . . . can be effectively stricken down, as it is now, then the citadel of the people's power is broken."⁶

The prospect of riding the free silver agitation to power in the mid-1890s colored the thinking of all third party activists. Involved in these considerations was what the Populist party's exact relationship should be towards the disintegrating Democratic party and those still loyal to it. As the political vehicle of southern-born Oklahomans, the Democracy, as it was called, represented men excluded from the territory's social and political elite. Sectionalism was still a factor, even in the 1890s. Southerners' minority status, in a sense, made them outsiders. Because the People's party drew overwhelmingly from hinterland farmers, who were likewise underrepresented among the territory's ruling elite, it also represented outsiders of a sort. The

⁶ Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 1 June 1895 and Kingfisher Reformer, 3 January 1895.

long history of fusion in Oklahoma, and the rest of the West, emphasized the natural affinity many followers of these two parties felt for one another. Most Oklahoma Populists considered the rank and file of the dissolving Democratic party to be excellent prospects for conversion to Populism. How to wean such men away from the Democratic party, however, was a matter of debate. Should the Cleveland administration be singled out for the bulk of the third party's abuse in the hope local Democratic leaders might join the People's party and bring their followers with them, or should local Democratic leaders also bear the brunt of the third party attack?

Populist editors constituted a large segment of the Oklahoma Populist party's leadership in the mid-1890s. Most of these men were middle-of-the-roaders, and proud of the substantial gains their approach secured for the People's party in 1894. A National Reform Press Association reprint published in a number of Oklahoma third party papers in January, 1895, told loyalists that fusion meant death to their movement. The article summed up the attitude of many Oklahoma Populist leaders when it proclaimed, "we cannot serve God by compromising with the Devil." Another reprint in March claimed that if Populists kept "our skirts clear of these pure and simple silver men, we will be the gainers and can do the act of 1860 over again." Reprints from other mid-road sources, such as Tom Watson's Peoples Party Paper

and the Chicago Sentinel (where Henry Vincent worked) graced the pages of the Norman Peoples Voice every edition after John Allan returned from the third legislature. Ralph Bray, editor of the Enid Coming Events, boosted such mid-roader organs as the Southern Mercury and the Coming Nation as proper repositories of Populist thought in the mid-1890s. In tune with this surge of middle-of-the-road activity, J. C. Tousley found the "fine and cleverly constructed platforms" of the old party leaders so worn out that their pleas for voters to support them "just one more time . . . will no longer deceive the people." John Allan, too, had doubts about local Democrats' sincerity in adopting a free silver stance in 1895. Less than six months before, he charged, "three-fourths of the Democrats in this {Cleveland} county who signed the call for a silver convention were loud-mouthed gold standard men." The editor of the Alva Republican summed up the emerging dilemma of Oklahoma Populists in June, 1895, when he noted that "so many Democrats and Republicans have crowded on to the Populist platform, recently, that the Pops will have to build an addition, or get off."⁷

⁷ Stillwater Payne County Populist, 4 January 1895; Chandler Publicist, 4 January 1895 Coming Nation in the El Reno Industrial Headlight, 29 March 1895; Enid Coming Events, 4 July 1895; El Reno Industrial Headlight, 30 May 1895; Norman Peoples Voice, 1 June 1895 and Alva Republican, 7 June 1895. Julius Wayland edited the Coming Nation before founding the Populist Appeal to Reason later in 1895. The paper subsequently became the leading Socialist party paper in the nation in the twentieth century.

Plans to create a supposedly non-partisan territorial bimetallic league to promote free silver at a June 26, 1895, Oklahoma City conference developed the first major breach in Populist ranks on how to deal with mainstream party silverites. Leo Vincent advised Populists to "witness the deliberations of these novice silver politicians," but "to be on the alert." If any earnest friends of silver emerged, he wrote, "they are friends of the Populist platform." Although he was willing to meet with silverites from other parties, he did not advise fusion or trimming the Omaha platform to emphasize the silver issue. The honest Democrat, he claimed, "has nothing to hope for from a return of that party to power." If former Republicans, Democrats and even single plank silver men "should go part way with us . . . while he is with us he will be treated courteously and with kind respect." Vincent believed that since the gold power had progressed so far in recent years a crisis of civilization was near. The election of 1896, he claimed, "would tell the tale." Democrats, Vincent proclaimed, should now "return once more to the primitive faith of the fathers and join the shattered remnants of their legions to the People's party. Allan saw the meeting as a mainstream party plot and advised that the convention be "let severely alone." He noted that the call for the silver convention contained the signatures of forty-six citizens of Canadian, Cleveland and Oklahoma Counties. Of the twenty-eight Cleveland County

Silverites, twenty-five, he claimed, were Democrats. Nebraska Democrat William Jennings Bryan would be the featured speaker.⁸

The Populist debate over how to deal with Democratic silverites reached the level of a formal newspaper debate in January, 1895, when Leo Vincent published an open letter from fusionist S. B. Oberlander entitled "Suggestions for Populists." Vincent had held the controversial letter more than a week before printing it. He finally decided to release the address without editorial comment in hopes of completely airing the party strategy debate before the 1896 conventions.⁹

S. B. Oberlander contended that there was neither logic nor political sagacity in the minority rule of Republicans when Democrats and Populists could unite and safeguard their rights through evicting the GOP from power. Political parties, he asserted, "cannot stand the strain of perpetual defeat." Although the principles upon which parties were based might be eternal, to secure them in law, he claimed, required majorities. Oberlander contended that "every right and liberty everywhere has been founded on a concession on the part of the forces that denied the right or restrained liberty." He stated that the forces which opposed the cen-

⁸ Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma Leader, 27 June 1895; Norman Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 6 February & 30 January 1895 and Norman Peoples Voice, 1 June 1895.

⁹ Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 16 January 1896.

tralization of power had to learn from their defeats. The People's party "must have an inning," he contended, if it was to perpetuate itself.¹⁰

Oberlander not only assumed that the Populist and Democratic parties had stabilized in size, but also that there was a natural affinity between them. Disaster at the polls, he contended, could destroy the cohesive power of the Populist party since it was drawn from such discordant elements in the Oklahoma Territory as northerners and southerners. The disappointed might then find it more rewarding to attach themselves to another organization. All shades of political opinion which "opposed the centralization of power, class legislation, the monarchical tendencies of plutocracy based upon wealth {sic}, jealous of the growing power of vast corporations, combines and trusts, and believing with Jefferson 'that a privileged class in a republican form of government is a dangerous class,'" he contended, should be united against the common enemy. He even went so far as to suggest that "Populism is Democracy intensified." Democrats would make friendly allies, he added, if Populists would offer the olive branch and make just concessions.

Oberlander admitted that concessions were necessary for victory. But, "in unification there is strength, the result, power." Late nineteenth century egalitarians, he contended, had grown battle scarred and gray in defeat defend-

¹⁰ Ibid.

ing the eternal principles of Populism. He had witnessed the rise and fall of other third parties, and was imbued with the cyclical view of economic, social and political development implicit in the Enlightenment-based ideology of Populism, there was a sense of urgency in Oberlander's argument. He feared the People's party might miss the opportunity to succeed while so close to victory.¹¹

In the weeks following the publication of Oberlander's address, Leo Vincent received numerous letters, both pro and con, on the it. E. H. Spencer, the third party Councilor from Payne County, wrote what Vincent considered to be the most able refutation of Oberlander's views. Vincent published Spencer's letter in the Oklahoma Representative three weeks after the Oberlander address, again without editorial comment.¹²

E. H. Spencer contended that "from the very nature of things the Democratic party can never be a natural ally of the Populists." According to Spencer, the Democratic party was a machine "whose master-wheel is located at Washington." It was simply a "counterfeit presentment of the GOP." While there was an affinity between the "masses of Democracy" and Populism, as there was between the rank and file of the Republican party and the third party movement, Spencer contended that coalition with the Democratic party was "as an-

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 6 February 1895.

tagonistic to the principles of Populism," as fusion with the GOP. The Democratic and Populist parties were "utterly incompatible," Spencer claimed, and he warned that the fusion of two parties "always proves to be the death of the least venal one." If Oklahoma Democrats were sincere in favoring monetary reform, he stated, "let them prove their faith by their works and sever their connection with the old party." For Spencer, there was hope and assurance in the "unification of the industrial classes of all parties," but not in fusion.¹³

A week after Spencer's address, Leo Vincent finally provided Oklahoma Populists with his own views on the subject of party strategy, which he defined as somewhere between the two previously stated extremes. He expressed the hope that his suggestions would bridge the gap between the two sides and meet with the approval of both. To do so Vincent addressed himself primarily to the territorial situation.¹⁴

Leo Vincent contended that the common people were fed up with the "corrupt, ring-ridden, decayed relics of a past virtue and usefulness." On all questions concerning Oklahoma voters, he contended, there were but two sides. He, thus, wanted to see only two sides in the campaign of 1896. Those disposed to quibble too much, he stated, "will find the machine Republicans are in again." The GOP, he contend-

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

ed, "houses nearly all of the ignorance and vice in Oklahoma." Vincent was careful to proclaim that he was not advocating fusion. The anti-fusion law of the 1895 legislature precluded that anyway, he claimed. He believed that reformers, however, were too sensitive about the word compromise. Vincent reminded Populists that "the inception of the People's party was a compromise." The Populist party was born in Cowley County when rebelling Republicans, Democratic leaders and the Union Labor party Executive Committee compromised on a "People's Convention" in 1889. Such a combination won in Cowley County while three-way races elsewhere in Kansas left the GOP in control, he noted. Vincent claimed that a similar condition existed in Oklahoma in 1896, he noted, and added that "no principles were abandoned in Cowley County" in 1889.¹⁵

Leo Vincent agreed with E. H. Spencer that Oberlander's approach implied working with the Democratic machine. The machine, he contended, "was what that party and all others, . . . want to get rid of." He did agree that there was a natural affinity between rank and file Democratic voters and Populists. Oklahoma Democrats, he claimed, only "think they are Democrats, but they are not." Nine-tenths of them favor free silver and oppose banks-of-issue, he contended. The rest of the third party's planks were only "questions of policy which social evolution is sure to develop into law."

¹⁵ Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 13 February 1895.

Such national issues, he contended, should not affect Oklahomans to a degree that they would "obscure our local evils." Producers, regardless of party, opposed "high taxes, infamously corrupt officials and the credit wrecking, warrant scalping fraternity," Vincent charged. In the name of their common interests, the Populist chairman asked Democrats to either come over to the People's party at once, or move into the Silver party and help put out a platform at St. Louis [where both the Populist and Silver parties were scheduled to meet simultaneously in July], "which we can all stand on." With the same urgency found in Oberlander's letter, Vincent told both Democrats and Populists that "our principles are of no avail without the offices through which to enact them into law."¹⁶

Vincent apparently saw the Silver party as a way-station on the road to Populism for Democrats fed up with Cleveland and Renfrow. If the Democratic party had not endorsed free silver and nominated William Jennings Bryan at the Chicago convention of 1896, Vincent's open letter might have been considered simply a better stated version of Spencer's.

¹⁶ Ibid. Ignatius Donnelly put forth the idea that Populists should meet at the same time as the Silver party, adopt a platform and then have a conference committee meet with silverites and choose a presidential candidate. The National Reform Press Association met in January, 1896, and put out a resolution calling for the People's party to hold its national convention after the other parties in order to pick up silverite renegades and adopted Donnelly's plan for consolidating reform elements. Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 5 December 1895 and 16 January 1896.

Neither brooked fusion. Both men wished to recruit the Democratic rank and file for the third party. But the sense of urgency found in Oberlander's address was also present in Vincent's. This belief that victory must come in 1896 was widespread in the Populist movement in the mid-1890s. As one Oklahoma Populist put it "almost every leader in reform favors the mustering of all reform forces before it is too late." Such an attitude opened the possibility of making compromises to secure the help of Democrats.¹⁷

The debate over trimming the Omaha platform to pick up support, and how Populists should deal with Democrats, continued in Oklahoma Populist ranks until the national conventions of the two parties in July, 1896. Even Clark Hudson of the Oklahoma City Oklahoma Champion, the most conservative of the major third party editors, believed "amalgamation of the Populists and the disaffected free silver elements of the old parties . . . [could] be done without the sacrifice of a single principle or forfeiture of name or organization." Hudson did believe, however, that it was wise to drop the subtreasury plan, which he considered extraneous, from the Omaha platform. He did not, however, advocate stripping the platform to a single plank. Hudson did contend that this was what the Republican party had done in

¹⁷ Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 16 January, 6 & 13 February and 7 May 1896. The last quote was from Miles Allen, a veteran of the Greenback and Union Labor parties, who feared the People's party might go the way of its predecessors. He was elected to the 1897 legislature on the fusion ticket.

1860 to win. E. H. Spencer quickly countered that the Republican party platforms of 1856 and 1860 had nine and seventeen planks, respectively. For Spencer, trying to "smother the Omaha platform, except for the free coinage plank, would be suicidal," he claimed. Such a measure, he believed, would alienate thousands from Populism.¹⁸

The idea of dropping certain planks from the Omaha platform was not the panacea of only the right wing of the People's party. Ralph Bray, a labor leader before coming to Oklahoma and a vocal Bellamy Nationalist, believed that the subtreasury system was not essential. If the Populist financial reforms were enacted into law, he claimed, "every farmer's corn crib and wheat bin would be his subtreasury." Bray ceased publishing the Omaha platform in his paper in April, 1896, although his endorsement of a nation constituted on the principles of Bellamy nationalism remained. N. S. Mounts, editor of the Populist Tecumseh Leader, also advocated dropping planks from the Omaha platform "that the American people will not at this time give serious consideration." Such a trimming of the platform was not for the purpose of fusion, which he opposed, but rather to help recruit converts to Populism. Neither Bray, Hudson, nor Mounts, however, advocated a single plank platform for 1896.¹⁹

¹⁸ Oklahoma City Oklahoma Champion in Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 27 February 1896 and Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 26 March 1896.

Although most Oklahoma Democrats favored free silver before the election of 1894, and Joseph Wisby, the Democratic nominee for delegate to Congress, was an exponent of the white metal, many of the party's leaders broke with the Cleveland and Renfrow administrations only in 1895. The Democratic party's weak showing in the election of 1894 probably accounts for many of these conversions. Roy Hoffman, the editor of the Guthrie Oklahoma Leader, resigned as Governor Renfrow's personal secretary on the eve of the 1894 election. In May, 1895, he turned his paper into a full fledged free silver sheet. His animosity toward Wisby for his attacks on office holding Democrats, however, remained. Subscribers to the Democratic Alva Chronicle, could also get a free copy of Coin's Financial School beginning in May. Such conversions led to the belief that the silver crusade had captured the Democratic party by mid-1895.²⁰

The June, 1895, Silver convention in Oklahoma City proved to be a big success for the Democratic party. William Jennings Bryan, who also spoke at Enid, Guthrie and Purcell on his swing through the region, mesmerized his audience with a three and a half hour harangue at Smith's Grove, on the

¹⁹ Enid Coming Events, 11 June & 2 April 1896 and Tecumseh Leader in Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 5 March 1896.

²⁰ Norbert R. Mahnken, "Bryan Country" in Paul W. Glad (ed.), William Jennings Bryan: A Profile (New York: Hill & Wang, 1968), pp. 136-37; James F. Morgan, "William Cary Renfrow, Governor of Oklahoma, 1893-1897," Chronicles of Oklahoma 53, no. 1 (Spring, 1975): 50; Alva Chronicle, 3 & 10 May 1895 and Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma Leader, 16 May 1895.

outskirts of Oklahoma City. Estimates of the size of his audience ranged from 1,500 to 3,000. Although John Allan, for the Populists, and A. J. Seay, for the Republicans, warned their respective party members to stay away, men from all parties attended. Oklahoma City Republican C. G. Jones, a member of the first legislature, presided over the meeting when fellow Republican J. N. Harvey, Oklahoma's first delegate to Congress suddenly disappeared.²¹ To warm up the audience, Sidney Clarke, the old Boomer leader, preceded Bryan with a speech of his own. Bryan spoke again at the Opera house that evening, when the Oklahoma Territory Bimetallic League was founded. Democrats Sidney Clarke and Mort Bixler were elected president and vice-president. Populists Asa Jones and Leo Vincent became the order's secretary and assistant secretary.

Despite the effort to emphasize the meeting's nonpartisan nature, it was an overwhelmingly Democratic affair.²²

Democratic spokesmen, especially where southerners were in the majority, used the Oklahoma City Bimetallic Convention to wean support away from the People's party. Mort

²¹ Harvey later explained that his wife was suddenly taken ill.

²² Oklahoma City Daily Times-Journal, 26 June 1896; Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma Leader, 27 June 1896 and Norman State Democrat, 29 June 1896. Democratic papers such as the Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman and Norman State Democrat, notably failed to mention Vincent's appointment, which seemed rather insignificant considering he was the chairman of the territory's largest free silver party. Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 26 June 1896; Norman State Democrat, 29 June 1896 and Norman Transcript, 28 June 1896.

Bixler, editor of the Norman State Democrat, charged that Populists played into the hands of gold standard forces when they refused to unite with Democrats. Populists, he added, only "pretended to be for free silver, but don't want it except by the grace of the People's party." Populist failure to join the Bimetallic League, the editor claimed, was evidence they were insincere in their support of the white metal. J. C. Tousley, editor of the El Reno Industrial Headlight, denounced the convention as only a fraud to get the Democratic party "right on the silver question." Relations between Democratic and Populist leaders, however, were warmer where northerners dominated. Ralph Bray, editor of the Enid Coming Events, for instance, strongly supported the formation of local non-partisan silver clubs in Garfield County.²³

United States Marshal Patrick Nagle put forth the goldbug version of the Democratic party's course in the Oklahoma Territory. Although he claimed to speak only for himself, free silver Democrats and Populists believed he spoke for the territory's Democratic office-holding clique. Nagle proclaimed his loyalty to "sound money" and asserted that President Cleveland had never misled the people on the money question. Free silver, on the other hand, was no more than "a gigantic scheme of repudiation," he charged. The federal

²³ Norman State Democrat, 19 June & 3 July 1896; El Reno Industrial Headlight, 20 June 1896 and Enid Coming Events, 8 August 1896.

office holder warned that those who promoted a fight of the West and South against the East should remember the lessons of Appomatox. The Democratic party could not win with a silverite at its head, he charged. The real purpose of fusionists, according to Nagle, was "to sacrifice the national Democracy for the local office."²⁴

Nagle saved his most venomous remarks for the People's party. According to the Democratic marshal, the Populist party was "the Siberia of the Republican party." The passions that inspired Populism, he charged, were the same as those which "inflamed the mind of Mirabeau and nerved the hand of Danton." Nagle charged Populists with fostering class conflict. They were particularly prejudiced toward lawyers, who he claimed were among the class "which bring about peaceful reform." According to Pat Nagle, "the field, workshop and the streets are the home of the revolution."²⁵

In the eyes of Patrick Nagle there was no fundamental difference between free silver Democrats and Populists. Those who could accept free silver, he charged, "can accept the other tenets of Populism." Nagle claimed that "the so-called People's party is rotten with socialism," and that Oklahoma Democrats were becoming "rotten with Populism." Nagle had no illusions, however, about the relative strengths of free silver and gold forces within the territo-

²⁴ Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma Leader, 28 May 1896.

²⁵ Ibid.

ry's Democratic party. His position was in the minority, and becoming moreso every day. Both the Democratic party's minority status and the events of 1896 pushed Democrats toward the Populists.²⁶

Sensing that 1896 would be a difficult year for the GOP in the Oklahoma Territory, Republicans held their territorial convention early to get the jump on the opposition. The GOP convention, which unanimously renominated Dennis Flynn for delegate to Congress, was enthusiastic and harmonious. The platform renewed Oklahoma Republicans' commitment to the "party of progress and prosperity," and advocated protection, reciprocity and bimetallism. As in 1894, Republicans advocated the unlimited coinage of American silver only. On territorial matters the GOP platform endorsed the Fegan Fee and Salary Act of 1895, criticized the Democratic Supreme Court for striking down the reduction in district clerk's salaries and denounced the Democratic Board of Equalization for "placing a raised and fictitious valuation on all property in 1895, except railroad property." A week later Republicans met in Oklahoma City to chose delegates to the GOP national convention. The convention chose an uninstructed delegation with Henry Asp, General Council for the Santa Fe, and John I. Dille, General Council for the Rock Island, at its head. According to one Populist paper the Republican party was "true to its masters . . . {having} chosen as

²⁶ Ibid.

their representatives six railroad tools."²⁷

The GOP's association with corporate interests, weakness on the silver issue and the rise of William McKinley, who Oklahomans associated with a high protective tariff, served to mobilize anti-Republican sentiments and promote a combination of all reform forces. Negative reference groups common to silver Democrats and Populists had been prominent since 1895. Charges of bankers' conspiracies to manipulate the political system filled the pages of reform papers, adding to the sense of urgency pervading anti-Republican forces. Recognizing the growing importance of free silver, Republicans tried to straddle the issue. In Oklahoma County, Republicans endorsed "bimetallism at a ratio fixed by law." John Allan noted that Cleveland, Carlisle and Rothschild did also. Allan added that McKinley had written the Oklahoma Republican plank on finance which Frank Greer had introduced at the GOP's territorial convention.²⁸

According to reform press reprints published in Oklahoma's Populist papers, McKinley was "owned, body and soul, by Wall Street." Not only was he a goldbug, but he was also the exponent of a tariff high enough "to protect eastern manufacturers against all competition." When McKinley received the Republican nomination for president in June, Ok-

²⁷ Ibid. and Enid Coming Events, 2 April 1896.

²⁸ El Reno Industrial Headlight, 29 March 1895; Norman Peoples Voice, 19 July 1895 & 28 March 1896; Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 27 February 1896 and Norman Peoples Voice, 3 April 1896.

Oklahoma Republican spokesmen could do little more than claim that "a proper adjustment of the tariff will cure most of the existing ills," and claimed that free homes and statehood were more important. According to a reprint in the Democratic Alva Pioneer, the choice in 1896 would be between "Bland and the masses," and "McKinley and the classes." Leo Vincent claimed that if he had published all of the letters he had received in the wake of McKinley's nomination, the Oklahoma Representative would have been three times as large.²⁹

The Republican party's position on national issues hurt the GOP in the Oklahoma Territory. The GOP's manipulative style served to push Democrats and Populists together. House Bill no. 1 in the 1895 legislature provided for restoring the records of Payne County, which were destroyed in a January, 1895, courthouse fire. The conflagration fueled existing charges that the outgoing Republican office holders feared a Populist investigation of the county's official records. In order not to inconvenience anyone, Populists charged the GOP firebugs did save the real estate mortgage records, the marriage records and a few court dockets. All records having anything to do with county warrants, however,

²⁹ Silver Knight in the Norman Peoples Voice, 22 May 1896; Alva Republican, 26 June 1896; Alva Pioneer 3 July 1896 and Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 30 July 1896. Most Oklahoma Democrats favored Richard "Silver Dick" Bland of Missouri for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1896.

were burned.³⁰

Republicans also had the charge of gerrymandering the Oklahoma legislative districts hanging over their heads in 1896. Populists figured that with their 1894 vote they could carry only three house and one Council seats with the new apportionment. House District no. 18, in Logan County, was shaped like a backwards "h" and an "L" lying on its side, with the two sections connecting only at an imaginary point where two townships touched at their corners. Three townships away from the railroad, which had returned strong Populist polls in 1894, were added to Guthrie to make up House District no. 17.³¹ District no. 18 surrounded it on three sides. The remaining hinterland sections of Logan County were split up into three different districts. In Garfield County, Enid and North Enid, which were only three miles apart, were placed into two separate districts in hopes urbanites could out-poll hinterland voters in both.³² Woods County, the only county in the Cherokee Outlet to go Populist in 1894, was divided up into six House and three Council districts. The only district entirely within the boundaries of the county, however, contained the entire extent of the Santa Fe railroad through the county. Two town-

³⁰ Stillwater Payne County Populist, 4 January 1895.

³¹ Two of the townships had returned Populist majorities in the three way race.

³² Enid was the Oklahoma Territory's third largest city in 1896.

ships had the bad fortune to be completely excluded from the 1896 apportionment, and thus their voters were disfranchised.³³ The more Democrats and Populists considered the apportionment, the more they saw cooperation as the only way to defeat it.³⁴

Although the Republican gerrymander was a vital issue in 1896, the subject of taxation emerged as the most important issue of 1896 in the Oklahoma Territory. More than any other issue it served to push silver Democrats and Populists into combination in 1896. As the party of small government, the Democracy had a long tradition of retrenchment in public affairs. Populists opposed high taxes for two reasons; most Oklahomans were quite poor and the revenue seemed to go mostly toward paying what they considered to be the exorbitant salaries of Oklahoma's office holding elite.³⁵

Because county commissioners in several Oklahoma localities had issued warrants in excess of the legal percentage of tax assessments, the territorial Board of Equalization, in essence, doubled Oklahoma's tax valuations in 1895. The

³³ The two townships were Hickory in Grant County and Cedar Valley in Blaine County.

³⁴ Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 5 December 1895; Norman Peoples Voice, 21 & 14 August 1896; Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 12 November 1894; Enid Coming Events, 6 August 1896; Chandler Publicist, 24 July 1896 and Stillwater Payne County Populist in the Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 27 August 1896.

³⁵ A third reason, taxes being mostly on farm land, was important to those who had received title to their homesteads. These people were almost exclusively located in the Unassigned Lands district of the territory.

Board's purpose was to save the territory's credit through legalizing the excess warrants. Although a Democratic Board of Equalization raised the valuations, a Republican law kept county commissioners from subsequently reducing the levy. By this time both Populists and silver Democrats considered Oklahoma's Democratic office-holding clique assistant Republicans. A chorus of protests emanated from reform sources. Only Frank Greer's Oklahoma State Capital defended the Board's actions. Populists found the fact that a prominent spokesman of the "party of governmental extravagance" should defend doubling Oklahomans' taxes appropriate.³⁶

Other factors made the tax situation even more aggravating. The 1895 legislature separated the valuations of railroad property from the jurisdiction of the Board of Equalization. While the Board hit Oklahoma landowners hard with a tax increase, railroads were actually under-assessed. The Supreme Court then lowered the railroad's valuations another 30% in 1896. Democratic office holders added insult to injury in April, 1896, when the same court ruled that although the raised assessments of the Board of Equalization were unconstitutional, the taxes should still be collected because most taxpayers had already paid their taxes. Leo Vincent

³⁶ Enid Coming Events, 28 November 1895 and Norman Peoples Voice, 22 November 1895. Greer, reputedly was a large holder of county warrants. The value of taxable property in the Oklahoma Territory rose from \$19,947,922.86 in 1894 to \$39,275,189.21 in 1895. Report of the Governor of Oklahoma, House Document, 54 Congress (first session), {3383} XVI {August 28, 1895}, p. 515.

found the Republican party's territorial platform, which Frank Greer ostensibly authored, particularly insincere in denouncing the raised taxes, since Greer was defending the increased valuations in his paper at the same time.³⁷

As territorial issues began to loom larger in mid-1896, talk of an amalgamation of like-minded men of all parties replaced conversations about the pragmatic values of fusion among anti-Republican activists. Leo Vincent advised looking after the delegate, legislative and county campaigns and letting national affairs take care of themselves. As a territory, Oklahoma had no say in the presidential race anyway, he noted. According to Leo Vincent, the major source of "oppressive misrule," was at home. Ralph Bray reported in the Enid Coming Events that even local middle-of-the-roaders had "caught the idea that the issue in this county is not the Omaha platform, but economical county administration and the consequent defeat of the Republican gang." John Allan agreed that "the greatest portion of the wealth of this country is fast getting beyond the power of taxation and the expenses of government are beginning to press heavily upon the shoulders of industry." High taxes and thieving official rings, Leo Vincent proclaimed, were the main issues in the Oklahoma Territory in 1896. As the Democratic and Popu-

³⁷ Norman Peoples Voice, 20 December 1895 & 26 June 1896; Alva Republican, 17 April 1896; Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 9 April 1896; State Capital in the Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 23 April 1896 and Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 13 August 1896.

list national conventions, which threatened to split Oklahoma Populists, drew near, territorial Populist leaders were actively agitating the unifying theme of lower taxes.³⁸

Democrats met in Oklahoma City on March 26, 1896, to select delegates to their national convention. The meeting was tumultuous in the extreme. Administration forces were well represented and pushed a minority report on the platform endorsing Cleveland's tenure, except on finance, and requiring the Chicago delegates to abide by the convention's results. After the statements of the report's sponsors, Joseph Wisby commenced an anti-office holder tirade that brought Leslie P. Ross to his feet with documents from Wisby's 1894 campaign for delegate which showed that federal officeholders had financed his run for office in 1894. The ensuing scuffle saw chairs knocked over and pistols drawn. Cooler heads, however, called for an adjournment until the evening. At that session planks endorsing the Cleveland and Renfrow administrations were easily voted down. The delegates chosen to attend the Chicago convention, however, were generally pro-administration. The convention's platform charged them to vote as a unit for unqualified silver men and positions only, and instructed them in favor of Richard Bland for the presidential nomination.³⁹

³⁸ Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 11 June 1896; Enid 11 June 1896; Norman Peoples Voice, 20 December 1895 and Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 14 May 1896.

³⁹ Norman Peoples Voice, 29 May 1896 and Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma Leader, 28 May 1896. The vote on endorsing Bland

Populist reports on the Democratic convention revealed the widening gap in third party ranks over relations with the Democratic party. John Allan emphasized the convention's lack of unity. It was "the most disgraceful convention ever held in Oklahoma," he wrote. Ralph Bray, however, focused upon the platform and claimed that Democrats had gone "a fair way to take their organization away from the shysters and to turn the party back toward the doctrines of Jackson and Jefferson." Leo Vincent also focused on the platform, claiming "the only difference observable this year between the Populist and Democratic platforms is in name."⁴⁰

To choose Oklahoma's nine delegates to the Populist party's 1896 national convention Leo Vincent decided to experiment with four regional conventions, rather than a single territory-wide meeting. His purpose was to cut transportation costs. Third party representatives were to meet at Enid, El Reno, Oklahoma City and Perry on May 22 to choose two delegates and two alternates each. The conventions would also adopt resolutions and vote for an at large delegate and an at large alternate. Because the meetings represented the various regions of the Oklahoma Territory they provide some gauge of the sentiments of local Populist lead-

was 125 to 123. Many Democrats believed an uninstructed delegation could secure more for Oklahoma.

⁴⁰ Norman Peoples Voice, 29 May & 5 June 1896; Enid Coming Events, 4 June 1896 and Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 4 June 1896.

ers on party strategy for 1896.⁴¹

Leo Vincent and his Logan County colleagues attended the Perry convention where fusionists and middle-of-the-roadsers seemed to compromise. Vincent and fusionist Ralph Bray received the convention's vote for at large delegate and alternate, respectively, while middle-of-the-roader E. H. Spencer became one of the regional delegates. The Perry resolutions denounced government favoritism towards the railroads, governmental extravagance and the repeal of territorial usury legislation. The resolutions also endorsed free silver and proved to be the only set of regional resolutions to specifically mention paper money.⁴²

The Enid convention overwhelmingly endorsed Ralph Bray for the delegate at large position. Bray, however, withdrew in favor of Leo Vincent and took the convention's vote for alternate at large. For regional delegates, the Enid convention chose George Coulson and William Garrison, a distant relative of the famous abolitionist. Coulson, Garrison and Garrison's althernate, R. W. Hurt, were members of the 1891 Kansas legislature which evicted John J. Ingalls from the United States Senate in 1891. The Enid resolutions endorsed

⁴¹ The People's party in the Indian Territory was finally organized at this time for the purpose of sending representatives to the St. Louis convention. Since whites were ineligible for office in the Indian nations the Farmer's Alliance had not developed into the People's party in the Indian Territory. Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 11 June 1896.

⁴² Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 29 May 1896.

free silver, called for government control, and if necessary government ownership, of all corporations performing public functions. It also endorsed the "alliance and cooperation of all reform elements of the state and nation." The Enid convention was the most fusionist oriented of the four regional meetings.⁴³

Because southern-born Populists were more numerous at the El Reno and Oklahoma City conventions, anti-fusion sentiments were more noticeable at those meetings. The Oklahoma City convention unanimously ratified a compromise set of resolutions which endorsed the Omaha platform, the initiative and referendum and "all honorable means to bring about a patriotic union of all reform forces." A fusionist and a middle of the roader were chosen as delegates, with fusionist Clark Hudson and mid-roader John Allan as alternates. Cleveland and Pottawatomie Counties were able to secure enough votes from the Lincoln and Oklahoma County delegations to select A. D. Hickok, a former president of the territory's Farmer's Alliance, over Leo Vincent for delegate at large.⁴⁴

⁴³ Enid Coming Events, 21 May 1896 and Alva Review, 21 May 1896. The Enid convention was moved up to May 16 because of scheduling problems with the convention's meeting place.

⁴⁴ Norman Peoples Voice in the Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 4 June 1896. The vote in the delegate at large election was 45 for Hickok and 44 for Vincent.

At El Reno, where delegates from newly acquired Greer County were prominent, middle-of-the-roaders ruled the proceedings. Convention resolutions endorsed the Omaha platform, free homes and the initiative and referendum. It was the only set of resolutions not to mention free silver by name. Strict middle-of-the-roaders were chosen as delegates and alternates, and the convention tendered its votes to Leo Vincent for the at-large delegate slot, but only if he would sign a statement endorsing the Omaha platform. Vincent's recent flirtation with fusion elements caused many at the El Reno gathering to fear that he favored trimming the Omaha platform. Vincent satisfied the middle-of-the-road concerns and became the at large delegate to the St. Louis convention. Ralph Bray won the alternate at large slot with a five vote margin.⁴⁵

National events moved rapidly in mid-1896. The Republican nomination of William McKinley for the presidency in June helped the GOP in the crucial Northeast, but gave silver Democrats and Populists an edge over the GOP in the West. On the eve of the Democratic national convention in early July, Leo Vincent was still certain that silver elements could not control the Democratic party. J. C. Tousley of the El Reno Industrial Headlight, however, had already

⁴⁵ Watonga Condor in the Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 4 June 1896. The United States Supreme Court ruled that Greer County was part of Oklahoma in 1896. It was formerly considered part of Texas where middle-of-the-roaders were strong.

predicted a silver victory at the Chicago convention and proposed Populists make separate nominations and then let the two parties' executive committees sort out the mess. John Allan apparently agreed, and reprinted Tousley's plan in the Norman Peoples Voice.⁴⁶

Fusion elements were elated when news that the Democratic national convention had endorsed free silver and nominated William Jennings Bryan for the presidency. W. H. French, editor of the Populist Chandler Publicist, claimed "Bryan has been an outspoken advocate of all the fundamental principles of the Peoples party for a number of years," and forgave him for not leaving the Democratic party. Clark Hudson of the Oklahoma City Oklahoma Champion proclaimed that the Democratic party had "nominated a Populist for president," and attributed the move to "an outcropping of Jeffersonian principle" among old party loyalists. Ralph Bray contended that the Democratic party had "broken loose from the grasp of plutocracy and is trying to return to its former moorings." According to Leo Vincent, the nomination of Bryan was the only instance in American history when "a political party had succeeded in correcting and purifying itself."⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 9 July 1896 and El Reno Industrial Headlight in the Norman Peoples Voice, 9 July 1896.

⁴⁷ Chandler Publicist, 17 July 1896; Oklahoma City Oklahoma Champion in the Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 23 July 1896; Enid Coming Events, 16 July 1896 and Guthrie Oklahoma Representatative, 16 July 1896.

In the words of Leo Vincent, the Republican party had "planted a Tory fort on American soil" in nominating William McKinley and "in the adoption of the single gold standard."⁴⁸ A. C. Towne, editor of the Alva Review, proclaimed that if McKinley and the GOP won, "a period of oppression and imprisonment by injunction . . . will be the lot of the downtrodden." The success or failure of McKinleyism, he claimed, depended upon whether the St. Louis convention nominated or rejected Bryan. Although John Allan and the middle of the roaders were less enthused, the Norman Peoples Voice did see McKinley's election as a threat, and that his policies had "brought one of the most happy and prosperous peoples in the world to the very doors of penury and want."⁴⁹

The Oklahoma delegation to the 1896 Populist national convention acted and voted with the majority of their colleagues on most issues. The first test of strength between fusionists and middle-of-the-roaders came over the seating of a contesting middle-of-the-road Illinois delegation (mostly Chicago socialists). The Oklahoma delegates voted unanimously in favor of seating the challengers, who secured

⁴⁸ The Republican national platform actually called for bimetallism through international agreement, which Populists considered a dodge.

⁴⁹ Republicans, of course, attributed what prosperity the nation had seen since 1861 to the protective tariff. Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 16 July 1896; Alva Review, 16 July 1896 and Norman Peoples Voice in the Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 30 July 1896.

their seats by the narrowest of margins. In the contest for permanent chairman of the convention, however, the Oklahomans split 4 1/2 to 4 1/2. The election of Senator William V. Allen of Nebraska as permanent chairman placed forces favorable to the nomination of William Jennings Bryan in control of the convention's machinery.⁵⁰

When it became obvious to middle-of-the-roaders that they could not beat Bryan for the presidential nomination in a straight fight, they fell back upon the tactic of reversing the order of nominations. By choosing the vice presidential nominee first, middle-of-the-roaders made certain Bryan's Democratic running mate, Maine banker and shipbuilder Arthur M. Sewall, did not slip through on the Commoner's coat-tails. They also hoped Sewall's rejection would cause Bryan to withdraw his name from the nominating process, which he threatened to do. Oklahoma delegates voted six to two, with one absent, in favor of reversing the order of nominations. They then supported the candidacy of Tom Watson of Georgia, who subsequently won the vice presidential nomination. Bryan, of course, did not fulfil his threat to withdraw from the nomination, and Oklahoma delegates voted unanimously to tender the Nebraskan the Populist nomination for the presidency.⁵¹

⁵⁰ St. Louis Republic, 24 July 1896.

⁵¹ Ibid., 25 & 26 July 1896.

Oklahoma delegates at the 1896 Populist national convention were true to the divergent nature of their constituency. Most settlers in the new land had migrated from Kansas or Texas. These states were the two greatest adversaries at the convention. Kansas Populists proved to be some of the strongest exponents of fusion with the Democratic party, particularly after loosing many offices in the three-way race of 1894. Their passion for a deal with the Democrats has led some men, then and now, to suggest simple office seeking as a prime motive. Texas Populists, on the other hand, experienced a dramatic and sustained growth of their party through 1896, and were the most rabid middle-of-the-roaders at the St. Louis convention. Except for the final vote on Bryan, Oklahoma Populists voted with the Texas delegation more than with their Kansas cousins.⁵²

The Oklahoma delegation's only major break with the rapidly shifting majorities at the St. Louis convention came when T. H. Gold of Washita County signed and supported a minority report on the third party's platform. Jerome Kearby, a Texas middle-of-the-roader, was the author of the measure. His platform gave equal emphasis to gold, silver and paper money. The convention, however, adopted the majority report which made free silver the prime issue. Oklahoma delegates were able to get a strong free homes plank in the third party's national platform. Guthrie farm journal editor Jules

⁵² Lawrence Goodwyn, The Populist Moment (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 230-263.

Soule, along with fusionist editors Ralph Bray and W. H. French were chosen to be Oklahoma's members of the Populist National Committee. Bray was also named the Oklahoma member of the presidential notification committee, while middle-of-the-roader N. A. Ruggles was appointed to the vice presidential notification committee.⁵³

To Leo Vincent the Democratic nomination of William Jennings Bryan upon a free silver platform was a dramatic and most significant event. Free silver symbolized the Populists' battle with plutocracy for control of the nation's future. Vincent and many other third party advocates had worked hard for decades for such a showdown. The fact that a Democrat carried the banner for "the people" was not as important as the fact that the battle finally was being joined. Before Bryan's nomination, fusion with the Democrats in Oklahoma, Vincent claimed, "seemed utterly improbable." The Nebraskan's victory at the Chicago convention, however, made an arrangement with local Democrats "wise and expedient for the inauguration of genuine reform." According to the Populist editor, a complete change had come over the Democratic party. The result, as he saw it, was a determination "to revolutionize Oklahoma politics and upset some of the pernicious work of the Republican lawmakers."⁵⁴

⁵³ Houston Post, 25 July 1896; Kirk Harold Porter and Donald Bruce Johnson (comp.), National Party Platforms, 1840-1960 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1961), p. 105 and Omaha Nebraska State Journal, 26 July 1896.

⁵⁴ Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 10 September 1896.

Chapter X
THE CAMPAIGN OF 1896

A week after the St. Louis convention adjourned, 235 Oklahoma Populists met in Guthrie to nominate their candidate for delegate to Congress. At the opening of the convention Leo Vincent tendered what ostensibly was his retiring address from the chairmanship of the party. He would be reelected to the post, however, at the end of the proceedings. The major thrust of Vincent's address was the necessity of beating the Republican party in the election of 1896, especially in the races for the territorial legislature. He focused at length upon the black voter's inordinate loyalty to the party of emancipation. The approach surely warmed the hearts of most Oklahoma Democrats. Although the Populist chairman rejected disfranchisement, he did call upon white taxpayers to protect themselves "by standing squarely against any vote, white or black, that is needed to further the designs of the selfish and unscrupulous." The black vote, Vincent claimed, was the margin of Flynn's victory in 1894.¹

¹ Norman Peoples Voice, 14 August 1896.

For the 1896 campaign Vincent emphasized the importance of purifying the Oklahoma legislature. Although all new territories were particularly susceptible to corruption the 1895 legislature was responsible for the greatest portion of the "corruption and vicious legislation" present in the new land, he claimed. Vincent also recounted the gerrymandering controversy, denounced the repeal of usury legislation and then focused upon the "arbitrary doubling of property valuations." He then proclaimed it "a moral duty that every man who has a care for the purity of our laws and institutions should unite."²

Leo Vincent specifically called for fusion with the Democrats for the 1896 territorial campaign. Through the nomination of Bryan, who Vincent labeled "an idol of the People's party," the Democratic party had regenerated itself. Since plutocratic forces had captured the Republican party, he claimed, a union of reform forces "bound together by certain ties of mutual interest," was necessary and desirable.³

Before the convention began considering nominations for the delegate slot, the platform committee presented its work, which the convention accepted unanimously. The 1896 Populist territorial platform affirmed Oklahoma Populists' loyalty to the third party's new national platform and acknowledged the financial question to be the paramount issue

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

of the national campaign. The platform specifically made calls for free silver, pensions for Union soldiers and free homes. At the territorial level Populists denounced the repeal of usury laws, called for revision of the powers of the Board of Equalization, denounced the 1895 GOP gerrymander and called for official salaries to be "commensurate with the price of labor and its products."⁴

Since a number of counties had favorite sons for the delegate nomination, thirteen men were nominated for the party's highest honor. Among those nominated were John Allan, Samuel Crocker, Fielden S. Pulliam, George Gardenhire, E. H. Spencer, N. A. Ruggles and William Oliver Cromwell, who claimed lineal descent from the famed leader of the English Commonwealth. Before the balloting each of the nominees was given ten minutes to address the convention. Most attacked the GOP, gold and McKinley. Gardenhire tried to withdraw his name from consideration, but the Payne County delegation was adamant. Thomas Smith, the editor of the Kay County Populist, was more successful in withdrawing his name. Although not formally nominated for the post, Leo Vincent received some votes on all but the last of the twenty three ballots it took to secure a nomination.⁵

⁴ Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma Leader, 6 August 1896.

⁵ Ibid.

Most delegates remained loyal to their county favorites through the first thirteen ballots. James Y. Callahan of Kingfisher County led on all but the second ballot, but only by a small margin.⁶ After the dinner break, which occurred before the fourteenth ballot, delegates from the southern part of the territory began to unite alternately upon E. E. Bennett of Canadian County, Delos Walker of Oklahoma County and N. A. Ruggles of Pottawatomie County. Northerners, likewise, began to mass their votes around second choices from the northern part of the territory. On the twenty third ballot heavily northern populated Logan County and heavily southern Greer County went over to Callahan. This started a stampede which ended in his nomination by acclamation.⁷

James Y. Callahan was born in Dent County, Missouri in 1842. He left his native Ozark Mountains at the age of thirty to settle in southwestern Kansas. He served two terms as a Republican Registrar of Deeds in Kansas before returning to Missouri in 1887 to take up the Methodist ministry. The Populist nominee moved to the Oklahoma Territory at the opening of the Cheyenne and Arapahoe lands in April, 1892. He staked his claim five miles northeast of Kingfisher, where he engaged in farming and rode the Methodist cir-

⁶ Cronwell received 42 votes to Callahan's 41 on the second ballot.

⁷ Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma Leader, 6 August 1896 and Norman Peoples Voice, 7 August 1896.

cuit. Callahan received the Populist nomination for the territorial legislature in 1894, but lost. The Kingfisher Reformer identified him as "a thorough reformer."⁸

Callahan's first big challenge was to secure the nomination of the Democratic party for the delegate slot, and thus effect fusion. The Populist convention had adopted a resolution calling for a union of Democrats and Populists on the delegate and legislative races. Democratic representatives had named four men they would support for the delegate nomination while the Populist convention was in session. Callahan's name, however, was not among them. Arrangements for local fusion, however, proceeded as if Callahan's endorsement was assured. Both parties, thus, had much to lose if the Democrats failed to nominate the Kingfisher County Populist.⁹

Opinion within the Democratic party was divided on the question of fusion. Even before the Populists had nominated Bryan, Oklahoma City editor Frank McMaster had proclaimed

⁸ Elmer L. Fraker, "The Election of J. Y. Callahan," Chronicles of Oklahoma 33, no. 3 (Autumn, 1955): 353 and Kingfisher Reformer, 18 November 1894. Fraker interviewed Callahan's daughter for this article and claims Callahan left the Republican party in 1888. The article contains so many other factual errors, however, that this may not be true.

⁹ Chandler Publicist, 7 August 1896; Alva Republican, 14 August 1896; Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma Leader, 6 August 1896 and Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 30 July 1896. A fusion arrangement was secured in Garfield County even before the Populist's territorial convention. In Logan County fusion was arranged immediately after the convention.

fusion essential if Democrats wanted to "get a single county office or member of the legislature." He furthermore believed that it could only be effected if Democrats conceded the delegate nomination to the Populists. Others, however, believed that Bryan's name at the head of a straight Democratic ticket would give them the delegate seat without Populist help. Mort Bixler of the Norman State Democrat, who had been boosting Temple Houston, the flamboyant son of Texas ex-Governor Sam Houston, as a straight Democratic candidate, charged that McMaster enjoyed "the distinction of being the only citizen of Oklahoma of whom it can truly be said he is neither useful nor ornamental to the community in which he lives." Bixler further spoke for Cleveland County Democrats, saddle-sore from years of John Allan's attacks, that fusion would never occur in Cleveland County.¹⁰

The Democratic and Populist territorial committees held a joint meeting in Oklahoma City on August 20, 1896, and put out statements calling upon all party members to unite with other silverites on the legislative races. Democrats, however, refused to run under the Populist banner. Third party representatives conceded to the name "Free Silver Party" for the fusion ticket. Democrats agreed not to certify any separate nominations made for the legislature before their territorial convention, which was scheduled for September 3

¹⁰ McMaster's Weekly in the Norman Peoples Voice, 24 July 1896; Norman Peoples Voice, 21 August 1896 and Norman State Democrat, 13 August 1896.

at El Reno.¹¹

Mort Bixler, Temple Houston and W. S. Denton of Enid had already broken with fusion Democrats long before the delegate convention in El Reno. At the Chicago convention each had supported a non-fusionist for national committeeman, in spite of their pledges not to do so when named delegates to the convention. At El Reno, Bixler, Denton and Roy Hoffman of the Oklahoma Leader emerged as the leaders of the anti-fusion element. Hoffman was nominated for temporary chairman of the convention, but was narrowly defeated. Bixler, naturally, charged manipulation. The fusion candidate for the permanent chairman of the convention, however, was elected unanimously.¹²

When the resolutions committee was unable to present the party platform at the appointed time, J. Y. Callahan was invited to the platform. As he was not a Democrat he declined to address the convention, but consented to answer questions. W. S. Denton asked the first and most damaging question. He wanted to know if Callahan had voted in favor of mixed schools while serving on his district school board. The Populist nominee admitted to voting for the measure in order to lower taxes, but noted that there were no blacks in the school his children attended. Although Callahan's fa-

¹¹ Chandler Publicist, 28 August 1896 and Norman Peoples Voice, 28 August 1896.

¹² Alva Pioneer, 31 July 1896; Norman State Democrat, 10 September 1896 and Norman Peoples Voice, 11 September 1896.

ther had served in the Union Army during the Civil War, his wife was the daughter of a former Confederate soldier, he claimed, and thus, he would never "let her children and mine go to school with colored children." Callahan was then asked if he was a prohibitionist. He stated that he was a at the personal level, but was not a political prohibitionist. Denton then asked if he would support Sewall. Callahan replied in the affirmative. J. L. Isenberg, the editor of the Democratic Enid Wave, then asked about Watson. Callahan said he was for him, too, and believed that the two parties' national committees would work out a deal on the vice-presidential nomination.¹³

Since fusionists were passionate for the Populist candidate's nomination, and in the majority, the inquisitors were howled down after the question on the vice-presidential nominee. Callahan had parried the questions well and fusionists did not want too deep an inquiry into the candidate's background or beliefs. As Mort Bixler later put it, Callahan was "for and against mixed schools, he was a prohibitionist that did not believe in prohibition and he was in favor of Bryan and Sewall and Bryan and Watson." Both Democrats and Populists clearly trimmed much of what they stood for to effect the fusion of 1896.¹⁴

¹³ Norman Peoples Voice, 11 September 1896 and Norman, State Democrat, 10 September 1896.

¹⁴ Norman State Democrat, 10 September 1896.

In an attempt to end the debate a fusionist delegate finally moved that Bixler, Denton and Hoffman be appointed a committee to ascertain the position of Dennis Flynn on mixed schools, prohibition and Sewall. When the party platform endorsed a fusion ticket, it was approved overwhelmingly. Dan Peery, a member of the first two territorial legislatures, then moved that Callahan be endorsed. The Populist nominee was elected by voice vote, a conference committee to meet with third party representatives was appointed and the convention then adjourned.¹⁵

Roy Hoffman played the part of party loyalist in the wake of the Democratic territorial convention. He declared that the Democrats and Populists "think exactly alike on essential issues." Both parties, he claimed, opposed monopoly, corporate rule and aggregated wealth. They also agreed upon a reform of the currency. Except for specific denunciations of mixed schools and the anti-fusion law, the 1896 Democratic territorial platform was quite similar to its Populist counterpart. Denunciations of the Fegan Fee Bill, repeal of usury legislation and the GOP gerrymander were all included. According to John Allan, Mort Bixler found out that his status in the Democratic party was "about the same as any other Republican."¹⁶

¹⁵ Norman Peoples Voice, 11 September 1896 and Norman State State Democrat, 10 September 1896.

¹⁶ Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma Leader, 10 & 17 September 1896 and Norman Peoples Voice, 11 September 1896.

James Y. Callahan embarked upon an extensive speaking tour of the territory for the rest of the campaign. He spoke primarily on free silver, but gave some time to free homes and single statehood, which both Democrats and Populists endorsed. When the Populist candidate's campaign manager, Spencer Sanders, the editor of the Kingfisher Reformer, was severely injured in a fall from a train on a campaign trip, some Populists charged foul play. Vincent, however, labeled the incident an accident. The fusion candidate issued numerous challenges to Dennis Flynn for a joint debate, but the GOP candidate studiously avoided his opponent. Flynn campaigned almost exclusively on the free homes issue.¹⁷

All Populist leaders and most Democratic leaders supported Callahan's candidacy. T. J. Lowe, the second ranking Cleveland appointee in the territory, even spoke in favor of Callahan and bimetallism. Four Democratic newspaper editors, including Mort Bixler of the Norman State Democrat, however, refused to support the Populist candidate. The territorial fusion arrangement called for Cleveland County Democrats to endorse John Allan for a second term in the Council, which Bixler opposed.¹⁸

¹⁷ Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma Leader, 24 September 1896; Norman Peoples Voice, 2 October 1896; Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 29 October 1896; Elmer Fraker, "The Spread of Populism into the Oklahoma Territory" (Masters thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1938), pp. 57-58; Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 27 August 1896; Norman Peoples Voice, 16 October 1896 and Alva Republican, 14 August 1896.

Democrats and Populists successfully fused on Free Silver candidates in twelve Council and twenty two House races in 1896. Democrats declined to fuse on the Cleveland County Council and House seats.¹⁹ A three-way race also emerged in House district no. 25, which included Custer, Greer, Roger Mills and Washita Counties. On election day Democrats won narrow plurality victories in the Cleveland County races, while Populist G. P. Cherry carried House district no. 25. In House district no. 23, which included Alva, in Woods County, A. E. Herr ran a straight Populist race against a Free Silver nominee and the incumbent Republican, George W. Vickers. Herr outpolled the Free Silver candidate by a two to one margin, and came within fifteen votes of beating Vickers. Middle-of-the-road and renegade Republican candidacies in the Guthrie House and Council districts proved inconsequential.²⁰

¹⁸ Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma Leader, 12 November 1896 and Norman State Democrat, 29 October & 10 September 1896. Other Democratic newspapers which refused to endorse Callahan were the Perry Noble County Sentinel, Shawnee Chief, and the Yukon Weekly.

¹⁹ The Council seat and one of the two House seats for Cleveland County also took in part of Pottawatomie County.

²⁰ Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma Leader, 26 November 1896 and Alva Republican, 22 November 1896. In House district no. 26, which included Beaver and Woodward Counties, in far western Oklahoma, an independent candidacy appeared, but a straight Democrat won a plurality victory. No Free Silver or Populist candidates appeared in this ranching district.

On election day James Y. Callahan won a narrow victory over Dennis Flynn in the delegate race, carrying fifteen of the territory's twenty three counties. Because of the Republican gerrymander, which spread the GOP vote out in anticipation of a three-way race, Republicans won only three seats in the 1897 House and none in the Council. GOP candidates in Logan (Guthrie) County and Blaine County won majority victories, while George W. Vickers was reelected to his House seat in a plurality victory.²¹

Table 16, which presents the correlations between partisanship and Oklahoman's place of birth and race, reveals an increasing sectionalization of Oklahoma's voting patterns when compared to the correlations of previous years (see Tables 3 and 9). The GOP correlation with northerners is .43030 in 1892, .47046 in 1894 and .56678 in 1896. While the opening of the heavily northern populated Cherokee Strip helps explain the increase between 1892 and 1894, only heavily southern populated Greer County was added to the Oklahoma Territory between the 1894 and 1896 elections. Fusion in 1896 was the primary cause for the increase in the GOP-northern correlation. The correlation between the 1896 Free Silver vote and white southerners is greater than either the Democratic-white southern or the Populist-white southern correlations of 1894. The 1896 figure is the product of a mixing of southern-born partisans of both anti-Republican

²¹ The official vote in the delegate race was 27,435 for Callahan to 26,267 for Flynn.

parties. This mixing effect can also be observed when white border state natives and white lower southerners are taken separately.

TABLE 16		
Place of Birth or Race by Partisan Choice, 1896		
Race or Place of Birth	Republican Party	Free Silver Party
North	.56678	-.56678
Northeast	.40471	-.40471
Midwest	.50390	-.50390
White South	-.63054	.63054
White Border States	-.60266	.60266
White Lower South	-.54063	.54063
Blacks	.25407	-.25407
European	.39694	-.39694

Table 17, which presents the correlations between the free Silver vote of 1896 and the Democratic and Populist votes of 1892 and 1894, reveals the substantially Democratic nature of support for the 1896 Callahan candidacy. Although both anti-Republican parties show positive correlations with the free Silver vote in 1892, when Populists did poorly at the polls, the third party's correlation was still weaker than that of the Democratic party. The vote resulting from the strictly middle-of-the-road 1894 Populist campaign, which increased the party's correlation with northerners and catapulted the People's party into the role of being the GOP's major opponent, bears almost no relationship to the 1896 Free Silver ballot.

TABLE 17		
1896 Free Silver Vote by Democratic and Populist		
Votes of 1892 & 1894		
Year	Democratic Party	People's Party
1892	.55843	.37358
1894	.62990	-.09941

Looking at the problem of determining the makeup of the 1896 vote from the Republican side of the picture is more revealing. Dennis Flynn received majorities in only two counties, Logan and Beaver, in 1894. He received majorities in eight in 1896. Although his 1896 poll was 28.5% above his 1894 ballot, the population of the Oklahoma Territory rose 23.7% between the two elections. Much of Flynn's increase, therefore, can be attributed to a simple growth of the territory's population.²² Callahan's vote in 1896, however, was actually 2.2% below the combined vote of Wisby and Beaumont in 1894. Obviously there was a substantial disaffection with a fusion in 1896 among anti-Republican voters. Voter turnout in the Oklahoma Territory dropped from 81.2% in 1894 to 72.6% in 1896. Table 17 suggests that it was mostly Populists who lost the motivation to vote when presented with the fusion ticket of 1896.

Since the 1892 Populist vote was more strongly correlated with the 1896 Free Silver ballot than the 1894 third party poll, those most disenchanted with fusion in 1896 were largely the same people first attracted to the People's party through the strong middle-of-the-road campaign of 1894.²³

²² The correlation between Flynn's 1894 and 1896 votes is .82420.

²³ An up turn in the economy does not appear to be a major factor in the dropout of Populist voters. While the commodity prices for crops associated with mainstream party voters, namely cotton and wheat, rose, the crops most closely associated with Populist voters, corn and hogs, declined between the two elections. Cotton prices rose from 4.59¢ per pound in 1894 to 6.66¢ in 1896 and wheat

Ralph Beaumont's campaign had been thoroughly within the late nineteenth century egalitarian tradition. He had focused upon a broadly based reform package designed to bring industrializing America into line with the moral imperatives of Jeffersonian democracy. In 1896, Populists supported a Democrat for president, emphasized free silver to the detriment of the third party's other issues and, in Oklahoma, focused primarily upon the tax issue.

Narrowing the Populist appeal to emphasize free silver in 1896 was not an isolated event. Around the turn of the twentieth century other broad reformist groups, such as prohibitionists and the women's rights movement, also substantially narrowed their demands. On the liquor question the broadly reformist Prohibition party, which had a platform quite similar to that of the Populist Omaha platform in the 1890s, gave way to the primacy of the single issue Anti-Saloon league. The women's rights movement also changed from a broadly reformist orientation to a single issue, woman's suffrage group in the twentieth century. Such transitions betrayed a weakening of confidence on the part of advocates in their ability to really transform American society. The result was a shift in the emphasis of reform from the older

prices rose from 48.9¢ per bushel in 1894 to 72.1¢ in 1896. The selling price for corn dropped from 45.1¢ per bushel in 1894 to 21.4¢ in 1896 and the price of hogs dropped from \$6.06 per head in 1894 to \$4.50. Statistical Atlas of the Unbited States from Colonial Times to 1957 (Washington: Bureau of the Census, 1961), pp. 291, 297 & 301.

justice oriented, broadly reformist movements, which sought major changes in the system, to the more pragmatic, expediency oriented single issue campaigns of the twentieth century, which only sought selective changes in contemporary society. This period of change from justice to expediency oriented reform also witnessed a 30% drop in voter participation.²⁴

Although William Jennings Bryan's free silver campaign was a failure, Americans did adopt prohibition in 1919 and woman's suffrage in 1920. Voter turnout, notably, was lower for the 1920 and 1924 elections than for any other modern American presidential elections. The widely accepted belief that late nineteenth century politicians refused to face the issues confronting industrializing America, while the progressive reformers of the early twentieth century did, appears questionable in light of the widespread decline in voter turnout during this period. Many American voters of this era clearly believed that something near the opposite was true. Specifically, many Oklahoma voters mobilized in the broadly reformist third party campaign of 1894 found the more expedient Jekyll and Hyde fusion of 1896 unrewarding.

²⁴ Aileen Kraditor, The Ideas of the Woman's Suffrage Movement, 1890-1920 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), pp. 43-56 & 68-74. Nationwide voter turnout in the election of 1896 was 79.3%. In 1924 turnout reached its modern nadir of 48.9%.

Table 17 shows that blacks and Europeans had a significantly reduced correlation with the GOP in 1896 when compared to 1894. Blacks and Europeans, however, made up less than 10% of the Oklahoma population in the 1890s. The reduced correlations were largely the product of the GOP's declining vote in counties where these two groups were numerous. Consulting the correlations derived from township level data in counties where blacks and Europeans were numerous, however, shows that there really was little change in their support for the Republican party between 1894 and 1896.²⁵

Table 18, which presents the correlations between urban residence and anti-Republican votes in 1894 and 1896 for those counties with usable data for both elections, shows a mixing effect between urban Democrats and rural Populists, except in Canadian, Lincoln and Logan Counties. Lincoln and Logan Counties experienced unusually high turnouts in 1896, which kept the Free Silver correlation with rural residence high. The weakness of the third party in Canadian County in 1894 explains the aberration in this locality.²⁶ Table 19, which shows the partisan correlations with urban residence

²⁵ Blacks made up more than 10% of the population in only four counties in the 1890s. Township level data is available for three of them; Kingfisher, Logan and Oklahoma. The Republican-black correlations actually rose slightly in these counties between 1894 and 1896. Data could not be found for Blaine County, the other county with a black population of more than 10%.

²⁶ Of the counties listed in Table 18, the People's party came in third in 1894 only in Canadian County.

TABLE 18			
Urban Residence by Anti-Republican Vote, 1894 & 1896			
County	Democratic Party, 1894	Free Silver Party, 1896	People's Party, 1894
Canadian	.21682	-.48734	-.43559
Cleveland	.40449	-.00251	-.62108
Kingfisher	.42572	-.22232	-.49815
Lincoln	.01845	-.32165	-.27615
Logan	.45591	-.61472	-.62328
Oklahoma	.35679	-.06402	-.44974
Payne	.51600	.35793	-.02201
Woods	.43017	-.01064	-.40794

in Cleveland and Custer Counties, where three-way House races occurred in 1896, reveals a continuing rural basis of Populist support, although at a lower level than in 1894 in Cleveland County (see Table 18).

Table 20, which presents the partisan correlations with several agricultural factors in 1896, reveals a minor reduction in the GOP correlations with cotton and wheat acreage compared to 1894 (see table 13). The selling price for both commodities rose between 1894 and 1896. This made the GOP's role as the party of depression victims in the Oklahoma Ter-

TABLE 19				
Urban Residence by Partisan Choice,				
1896 House and Delegate Races				
County	Republican Party	Democratic Party	Free Silver Party	People's Party
Cleveland County				
Delegate	.00251	--	-.00251	--
House	-.20538	.44709	--	-.47548
Custer County*				
Delegate	.32357	--	-.32357	--
House	.44030	-.01820	--	-.66035

ritory less important. Republican correlations with corn acreage and hogs per farm, which correlated positively with the People's party in 1894, were largely unchanged in 1896. A comparison of Tables 13 and 20, otherwise, shows a mixing of Democratic and Populist voters in 1896.²⁷

* Custer County was not included in the previous table because 1894 figures could not be located.

²⁷ Cotton prices rose from 4.59¢ per pound in 1894 to 6.66¢ in 1896 and wheat prices rose from 48.9¢ per bushel in 1894 to 72.1¢ in 1896. The selling price for corn dropped from 45.1¢ per bushel in 1894 to 21.4¢ in 1896 and the price of hogs dropped from \$6.06 per head in 1894 to \$4.50

TABLE 20		
Agricultural Factors by Partisan Choice, 1896*		
Agricultural Factor	Republican Party	Free Silver Party
Corn Acreage	-.31857	.31857
Cotton acreage	-.27532	.27532
Wheat Acreage	.30504	-.30504
Hogs per farm	.02281	-.02281
Cattle per farm	.17385	-.17385

Table 21, which presents the partisan correlations with a variety of economic factors in 1896, reveals a reduction in the strength of each factor's correlation with the GOP when compared with 1894 (see Table 14). The Republican party correlations in Table 14 that were negative in 1894 are less negative in 1896. Those that were positive in 1894 are lower or even slightly negative in 1896. This is the result of partisan choice turning more on considerations of sectionalism (see Tables 9 and 16) and less on economic factors in 1896.

* Source: Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 11 August 1894 and Twelfth Census, 1900, Agriculture (Part I), pp. 179-80, 293-94, 433, 470 & 471.

TABLE 21		
Economic Factors by Partisan Choice, 1896*		
Economic Factors	Republican Party	Free Silver Party
Value of Agriculture Per Improved Acre	-.37210	.37210
Value of Agriculture Per Farm	.29815	-.29815
Value of Farm Machinery	.35705	-.35705
Tenancy, Cash & Share	-.09487	.09487
Cash Tenancy	.02719	-.02719
Share Tenancy	-.16315	.16315
Value of Manufactured Goods	.21594	-.21594
Taxable Wealth Per Capita	-.39700	.39700

Fusion in 1896 blunted the moral cutting edge which served as the basis for mobilizing less commercially oriented hinterland farmers into supporting the People's party in

* Source: Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 11 August 1894 and Twelfth Census, 1900, Manufacturing (Part II), p. 730-31; Agriculture (Part I), pp. 115, 293-94 and House Executive Document 3089, Report of the Governor of Oklahoma, 54nd Congress, 2nd session, Vol. XVI (1896), pp. 422-23.

the 1890s. The overwhelming victory of fusion forces in the 1896 legislative races was primarily the product of the Republican gerrymander which backfired when Democrats and Populists circumvented the anti-fusion law of 1895. Callahan's victory over Flynn in the delegate race, on the other hand, was exceptionally close. According to exponents of fusion, however, the experiment was highly successful. Populists seated only eleven men in the 1895 legislature, they would seat twenty in 1897. Even more important, the Republican legislative delegation dropped from twenty four to three, and a Populist replaced Dennis Flynn in the United States Congress. Clark Hudson, a strong exponent of fusion, compared the results of the 1894 and 1896 elections and proclaimed fusion a success. Populists had learned that "in union there is strength," he claimed. Other fusionists, such as national committeeman W. H. French, likewise called upon Populists to "continue the combination." Whether the 1897 Oklahoma legislature would prove the value of fusion to those who constituted the backbone of the People's party or not, remained to be seen.²⁸

²⁸ Oklahoma City Oklahoma Champion in the Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 3 December 1896 and Chandler Publicist, 4 December 1896.

Chapter XI

REFORMERS AT WORK: THE 1897 LEGISLATURE

Excitement pervaded the city of Guthrie as the opening of the fourth legislature neared. Legislators, party leaders, the press, lobbyists and an army of aspirants for appointive office flooded the capital city in the week before the assembly met. Reformers would finally have their day. When the House went into session on January 12, 1897, one of the first resolutions called for the cutting of a large window in the west side of the lower chamber to let in sufficient light for reformers to fulfill their mission. Bold action was expected of the fourth assembly and the members, especially in the House where Populists had a plurality, seemed to be clearing the decks in preparation for a general assault upon the territory's statute books.¹

The Republican gerrymander of 1895 produced a legislature in 1897 markedly different from its predecessor. GOP lawmakers spread out the Republican vote in anticipation of a three-way race in 1896. The plan backfired, of course, when Democrats and Populists circumvented the anti-fusion law of

¹ Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 14 January 1897 and Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma Leader, 14 January 1897.

1895 and fielded candidates under the Free Silver party heading. Twenty-four Republicans sat in the 1895 Assembly. In 1897 the GOP sent only three representatives to Guthrie. Democrats and Populists, on the other hand, increased their legislative delegations from four and eleven, respectively, in 1895 to eighteen each in 1897.²

Since voter turnout dropped significantly among Populists in 1896 there were several narrow victories for the fourth legislature. Nine candidates (five Democrats, two Republicans and two Populists) won their seats by fewer than 100 votes. These winning candidates beat four Republicans and five Populists.³ Had the results been reversed the People's party would have had majorities in both houses of the 1897 legislature. In reality, however, Democrats elected seven Councilors and Populists six. In the House there were three Republicans, eleven Democrats and twelve Populists. Third party legislators did have the opportunity to secure another seat in the 1897 House when S. J. Fulkerson of Woods County challenged the election of Republican J. P. D. Mouriquand. The House, however, agreed to the findings of a special committee assigned to the case in which two Democrats and a Republican out-voted the two Populists on the committee. Fulkerson noted that the third party showed Mouriquand far

² Seventeen of the Populists and fourteen of the Democrat were elected on fusion tickets.

³ Three of the winners (a Democrat and two Republicans) defeated Populist candidates by less than 20 votes.

more consideration than the GOP had exhibited in unseating George Coulson in 1895.⁴

Because politics reflects a variety of economic and social cleavages, a collective biography of the men who sat in the Oklahoma legislatures of the Populist era presents some interesting revelations about the three parties. Partisan affiliation, place of birth, age and occupation were available on most of the legislators of the Populist era, and for all of those who sat in the 1897 legislature.⁵ Table 22 shows the partisan affiliation of the legislators who sat in the Oklahoma assemblies between 1890 and 1901.⁶ Although several Oklahoma specialists have labeled the territorial period predominantly Republican in politics, GOP dominance

⁴ Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 28 January 1897.

⁵ Of the 204 men to sit in the Oklahoma legislature between 1890 and 1901, usable data beyond the solon's partisan affiliation was located for 184. The partisan affiliation of each man was determined. Place of birth data was uncovered for 68.4%, age data for 77.8% and the occupations of 84.2% were determined. As each assembly had thirty-nine members there were 234 seats filled in the first six legislatures. Twenty-six men served in two legislatures and two men served in three. Robert J. Nisbett was the only legislator to represent more than one party. He was catalogued as a Democrat in 1890 and 1901 and a Populist in 1895. The men for whom no usable data could be discovered (except party) were limited to three legislatures; 1890 (one), 1893 (nine) and 1901 (ten).

⁶ A variety of sources were consulted in compiling the collective biography. WPA indexes of "mug book" histories and newspapers are located at the Oklahoma Historical Society. The former is a valuable source. Unfortunately few newspapers were indexed. Newspaper reports of election returns proved to be a particularly good source for determining the partisan affiliation of legislators. When

was far more apparent than real.⁷ Republicans elected only 48.7% of the assemblymen in the Populist era and controlled both houses of the legislature only in 1895 and 1899.⁸ Fusionists, on the other hand, organized both houses of the 1890, 1893 and 1897 assemblies, and the Council in 1901.⁹

In addition to partisan affiliation, the 1897 legislature was different from its predecessors in a number of other ways. The fourth assembly was the only legislature of the Populist era not to have at least twice as many northern-born legislators as southerners. Southerners, however, did not constitute a majority of the 1897 legislature's membership. The fourth assembly contained twenty northerners (2 Republicans, 8 Democrats and 10 Populists), eighteen southerners (10 Democrats and 8 Populists) and one foreign-born legislator (a Republican). Table 23, which presents the birthplace of Oklahoma Legislators by party between 1890 and 1901, shows that the place of birth aberration for 1897 was

they ran on fusion tickets, returns from earlier elections in their locality frequently revealed the legislator's party affiliation. Much biographical information was secured through surveying the newspapers which preceded elections.

⁷ Oliver Benson (et. Al.), Oklahoma Votes, 1907-1962 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Bureau of Government Research, 1964), p. 32 and Stephen Jones, Oklahoma Politics in State and Nation (Enid: Haymaker Press, 1974), p. 16.

⁸ Only in 1899 did the GOP also control the governorship.

⁹ Democrats and Populists, of course, required the aid of renegade Republicans to organize the 1890 and 1893 legislatures.

TABLE 22			
Partisan Affiliation of Oklahoma Legislators, 1890-1901			
Legislature	Republican Party	Democratic Party	Populist Party
1890 Council	7	5	1
1890 House	14	8	4
1890 Legislature	21	13	5
1893 Council	7	5	1
1893 House	12	10	4
1893 Legislature	19	15	5
1895 Council	8	1	4
1895 House	16	3	7
1895 Legislature	24	4	11
1897 Council	0	7	6
1897 House	3	11	12
1897 Legislature	3	18	18
1899 Council	8	4	1
1899 House	17	4	5
1899 Legislature	25	8	6
1901 Council	5	5	3
1901 House	16	6	4
1901 Legislature	21	11	7

largely the product of GOP losses in the 1896 election. Although the proportion of southern-born Populists in the 1897 legislature was slightly larger than usual, all but two of the third party assemblymen, however, came to the new land via the Midwest, and served largely northern-born constituencies.¹⁰ The place of birth pattern of Democrats in the 1897 legislature was not significantly different from that of other legislatures of this period. Although the diverse birthplaces of Populist legislators reflected the makeup of the party's rank and file, this was not true of the Democrats. Voting correlations show that rank and file support for the Democratic party was overwhelmingly southern-born. Throughout the Populist years northern and southern-born politicians vied for position within the Democratic party. Northern Democrats obviously received more than their share of the party's plums in this era.

Members of the 1897 legislature were, on the whole, significantly older than members of the previous assemblies. This might be expected because of the large number of Populists elected in 1896. The literature of the era generally portrays Populism as the ideology of old men who could not adjust to the realities of industrializing America. Populists in the fourth Oklahoma legislature, however, constituted the youngest group of legislators. Table 24, which

¹⁰ Southerners did make up sizable minorities in several of these districts.

TABLE 23							
Birthplace of Oklahoma Legislators by Party,							
1890-1901 and 1897							
Birthplace	Republican Party		Democratic Party		Populist Party		
	1890-1901	1897	1890-1901	1897	1890-1901	1897	
North	85.5%	66.7%	41.1%	44.4%	65.1%	55.6%	
South	10.8%	--	58.9%	55.6%	34.9%	44.4%	
Foreign	3.6%	33.3%	--	--	--	--	

presents the average age of Oklahoma legislators by party between 1890 and 1901, shows little change in the average age of Populist legislators between the earlier assemblies and the 1897 body. Populists seemed older because their world view owed more to an older ideology than did that of their Democratic and Republican counterparts.

Mainstream party solons in the 1897 assembly were significantly older than their counterparts in previous legislatures. The fact that those Democrats who worked with Populists in the fusion campaign of 1896 were older than usual suggests that the stereotype of older men being more committed to an older ideology may have been true for Democrats. Many of the Democratic fusion candidates were nominated be-

TABLE 24				
Average Age of Oklahoma Legislators by Party, 1890-1901				
Legis- lature	Republican Party	Democratic Party	Populist Party	Total
1890	42.4	42.1	42.5	42.3
1893	38.6	36.9	41.5	40.5
1895	40.4	32.5	37.5	39.0
1897	49.0	46.9	42.7	45.1
1899	38.0	38.6	44.4	39.1
1901	43.1	40.0	53.2	43.9
Total	40.5	41.6	43.4	41.9

cause of their acceptability to the third party.¹¹ When the People's party collapsed after the 1897 legislature successful third party candidates elected to the 1899 and 1901 legislatures were significantly older than their predecessors. For the entire era, however, Populist party legislators were not significantly older than their mainstream party counterparts.

By far the greatest divergence between Populists and mainstream party representatives was in their occupations. Table 25, which presents the occupation of Oklahoma legislators by party in the Populist era, suggests a distinct cosmopolitan-hinterland cleavage between partisans of the main-

¹¹ The average age of fusion Democrats in 1897 was 46.1 years. The small number of cases for Democrats in 1895, Republicans in 1897 and Populists in 1901 help account for the extreme average ages for these parties in the years in question.

TABLE 25							
Occupation of Oklahoma Legislators by Party,							
1890-1901 and 1897*							
	Republican Party		Democratic Party		Populist Party		
Occupation	1890-1901	1897	1890-1901	1897	1890-1901	1897	
Farming	19.5%	33.3%	21.1%	27.8%	69.8%	77.8%	
Law	41.2%	66.7%	36.8%	44.4%	7.0%	5.6%	
Professions**	15.5%	--	22.8%	--	14.3%	16.7%	
Trade & Commerce***	22.7%	33.3%	3.5%	11.1%	7.0%	5.6%	
Finance & Real Estate	11.3%	--	17.5%	5.6%	--	--	
Stock-Raising****	7.2%	--	12.5%	22.2%	9.3%	16.7%	

stream and Populist parties. Lawyers were the most numerous representatives of the Democratic and Republican parties,

* Because some men listed multiple callings several of the columns total more than 100%.

** This category includes preachers, teachers, physicians, druggists, journalists, engineers and postmasters.

*** This category includes merchants, a lumber yard owner, a miller and a railroad contractor.

**** Stockraising covered several different types of operations. All but one of the Populists in this category listed their occupations as "farming and stockraising," which indicates the diversified form of agriculture associated with Populism elsewhere in this work. Half of the Republicans are also listed this way. All of the Democrats, however, can be classified as ranchers.

while farming constituted the overwhelming calling of third party legislators. When the largely cosmopolitan categories of the law, trade & commerce and finance & real estate are combined, they account for 73.2% of the Republican and 56.1% of the Democratic legislators. Only 11.5% of the third party's representatives fall into this category.¹² To delineate the cosmopolitan-hinterland dichotomy further, the legislators were divided into three residence categories; those who lived in railroad towns or county seats, those who lived in other towns, and those who maintained a rural residence. Table 26, presents the rural and urban residence of Oklahoma legislators, which again verifies cosmopolitan-hinterland breakdown to partisan affiliation. Although fewer Democrats than Republicans had cosmopolitan callings, and a few more Democratic solons maintained a rural residence, the Democratic figures in both cases are much closer to those of the GOP than to the People's party.

¹² There were three Populist lawyers; A. N. Daniels, Ira N. Terrill and John Allan. Daniels and Terrill lived in hinterland small towns at the time they served in the territorial legislature, although Daniels later moved to Guthrie, and then Enid. Allan was primarily a journalist at the time he served in the assembly. It could not be determined if any of the men engaged in real estate at the time of their legislative service. Allan did in the twentieth century. The other Populist to fall into this cosmopolitan classification was lumber merchant Charles N. Brown of Clifton, a hinterland small town in southern Lincoln County. Brown served in the 1895 and 1897 legislatures.

TABLE 26			
Rural and Urban Residence of Oklahoma legislators,			
1890-1901			
	Republican Party	Democratic Party	Populist Party
Railroad Towns & County Seats	65.6%	65.6%	13.3%
Non-Cosmopolitan Towns	15.6%	8.2%	8.9%
Rural Residence	18.8%	26.2%	77.8%

Populist legislators did not appear to be significantly less experienced in public office than Democrats or Republicans. At least 50.0% of the third-party legislators could claim previous experience in an official capacity. The figures for Republicans and Democrats were 56.6% and 43.5%, respectively. There was some divergence, however, in the educational level of the three parties' legislators. At least 29.2% of all Republican, 30.4% of all Democrats attended college. Only 21.2% of the Populists definitely went to college. This is probably a product of the Populist's rural, less commercial background. Unfortunately, experience and education information on the territorial legislators

could be found in only 50.0% and 45.3% of the cases, respectively. Information on ethnicity, religion and Civil War service proved to be even less available. Ethnicity and religion data produced no significant patterns that could not be explained through sectionalism. There were no ex-Confederate Republicans, although the only white Republican from the deep South was the son of a Confederate soldier. The Democratic and Populist parties could claim veterans from both sides of the Civil War. At least 42.3% of the legislators, however, were less than 18 years old in 1865.

Taken as a whole the collective biography validates the Populists' contention that their party, moreso than that of the Democrats or Republicans, was a party of the people. Both Republican and Populist legislators reflect their respective rank and file supporters in place of birth. In the crucial categories of occupation and residence, however, only the Populists truly represented most Oklahomans. Two-thirds of the voters in the Oklahoma Territory in the 1890s were farmers. The legislators' educational attainments were surely above that of their constituents for all parties, but less so for Populists. The third-party voters' choice of representatives clearly revealed an antipathy toward men who were products of the late nineteenth century's cosmopolitan culture. The only part of the collective biography which seems to contradict this strain of anti-elitism is the surprisingly high level of previous political experience Popu-

list legislators claimed. There was always something of an egalitarian counter-elite, however, present throughout the late nineteenth century. Greenbacker, Union Laborite and Populist leaders constituted an alternative, presenting men for election who closely represented the citizen-statesman ideal, as opposed to the allegedly professional political elite of the old parties.¹³

The 1897 legislature presented Oklahoma Populists with a moment of truth for their party. W. D. Hayman, a hinterland Logan County farmer spoke for most party supporters when, in a letter to the editor of the Oklahoma Representative, he charged that the fourth legislature "will either make the Populist party of Oklahoma the majority party or it will completely disorganize it." The people expected radical legislation, another letter to the same paper stated. Assemblymen received much advice on the legislation they should promote in the two months between the Free Silver victory of November, 1896, and the opening of the fourth legislature on January 12, 1897. Leo Vincent summed up much of what Populist voters expected of their legislators when he published shopping lists of reform measures which included a 12% usury law, stricter rules outlining the powers of the Board of Equalization, heavier taxes on railroad

¹³ Another possibility is that since mainstream party spokesmen constantly questioned Populist's fitness to govern, third party candidates emphasized their previous experience, thus leaving better information on the subject for the historian.

property, the removal of political influence from the school land department, legislation to protect bank deposits, reductions in official salaries, a scaling down of appropriations and the abolition of useless offices. John Allan contended that those who believed the statute books would retain little more than their covers and flyleaves after the fourth legislature adjourned were too optimistic, and predicted compromising with Democrats would leave many of the statutes "running sores not healed." Allan had already experienced the questionable charms of dealing with Democrats on their terms. Cleveland County Democrats had ignored the territorial fusion agreement that accorded Allan a second term in the Council and narrowly defeated him in a three-way race.¹⁴

Two days before Christmas, 1896, nine Democrats and seven Populists attended a legislative caucus in Oklahoma City to discuss the upcoming assembly. Plans were made to continue the electoral combination in the fourth legislature, prospective legislation was discussed and the numerous applications for clerkships were canvassed. The proceedings led Roy Hoffman to predict that Democrat J. W. Johnson, an Oklahoma City lawyer, would be named president of the Council, while Populist John Hogan, a Pawnee County farmer, would become Speaker of the House. Johnson was a goldbug before

¹⁴ Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 7 January 1897 and 3 & 31 December 1896; Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma Leader, 24 December 1896 and Norman Peoples Voice, 8 January 1897.

1896, but seemed properly anti-administration thereafter. Hogan had founded the territory's first third party paper, the Guthrie Oklahoma State Journal, in 1890. Hoffman believed that Hogan's elevation would inevitably make Leo Vincent the Chief Clerk of the House.¹⁵

When the fourth territorial legislature met on January 12, 1896, J. W. Johnson duly received the unanimous vote of the Council for president. Johnson then divided the Council's appointive offices between Democrats, Populists and Free Silver Republicans. He naturally chose a Democrat as chief clerk and appointed three Democrats and two Populists to the rules committee. In the House, however, the Free Silver caucus did not function as smoothly. A growing rift between J. Y. Callahan and Leo Vincent broke into the open and allowed J. C. Tousley of El Reno to put together a west-side coalition and secure the speakership. Aside from the north-south cleavage of the 1890s, there was an east-west rivalry centering on people living near or to the west of the Rock Island line and those residing around or to the east of the Santa Fe Railroad. Those in the west expressed jealousy over the seeming control of political and economic affairs of those in the east.

¹⁵ Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma Leader, 24 December 1896 and Norman Peoples Voice in the Norman State Democrat, 30 July 1896.

In a six page deposition, J. Y. Callahan charged Vincent with treachery and unfaithfulness during the 1896 campaign. His charges surrounded a proposed debate between Callahan and Flynn at Mulhall in Logan County. Callahan issued the challenge to Flynn, but GOP managers wanted to limit the debate to the free homes issue. When it seemed that no arrangement could be reached, Vincent filled out Callahan's schedule with engagements in Blaine and Woods Counties, far to the west of Mulhall. Republicans then sent out flyers advertising the debate. This caused Callahan to rush east. When he arrived on the scene, Republicans still would allow only a debate on the free homes issue. Democrat Virgil Hobbs, the Chairman of the Free Silver party central committee, then declined to share time with the GOP candidate. Callahan eventually came to believe that Vincent had planned the whole debacle to embarrass him. The release of Callahan's charges, which Trousley personally secured from the Populist Congressman, was timed to secure the El Reno editor the speakership, which it did.¹⁶

Vincent immediately demanded a hearing before the third party's territorial committee. After surveying the evidence the Populist central committee laid the blame on a misunderstanding and issued a statement that it "unqualifiedly exonerates Chairman Vincent." Callahan refused to accept the central committee's findings. His charges, thus, sealed a

¹⁶ Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 15 October 1896 and 14 & 28 January 1897.

breach which had been growing for months between Vincent and the third party's more rabid fusionists. In the process of moving back to a middle-of-the-road position, however, Vincent received a general roasting from both sides, and replied in kind.¹⁷

Exponents of radical legislation had good reason for joy in the early days of Oklahoma's fourth legislature. Logan County Populist William L. Sullivan gained a quick reputation as an "abolitionist," introducing legislation to eliminate the territorial militia and the office of oil inspector. Both were the refuge of placemen, according to Populists. The militia, which Leo Vincent labeled the "protégé of a shoddy aristocracy," still conjured up visions of a standing army in third party eyes. The legislation establishing an inspector of coal oil, according to John Allan, was a well meant, but injurious, law. The inspection process had the effect of establishing a monopoly without keeping dangerous fluids, out of the territory. Rejected oils could still be sold in the Oklahoma. Unscrupulous oil companies who knew this flooded the territory with dangerous burning fluids, while honest or uninformed oil dealers avoided Oklahoma. Since the Republican measure established an ineffective appointive office, Populists saw it as a

¹⁷ Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 28 January 1896. Ralph Bray and N. S. Mounts proved to be Vincent's most vocal critics. Bray even denied Vincent was chairman of the People's party, stating that he had been superseded by Virgil Hobbs, when the Democrat was named chairman of the free Silver party. Enid Coming Events, 4 February 1897.

sinecure. While making the office effective was a better solution, not enough Democrats would have supported the measure to secure its passage. In line with the abolitionist spirit of the third party legislators, Populist Councilor William Garrison, the most experienced legislator in the 1897 assembly, brought bills with him to Guthrie for the abolition of contracts requiring payment in gold and capital punishment. The Council, where Democrats were in the majority, however, would prove more conservative than the House.¹⁸

Abolition was not the only theme of the 1897 Oklahoma legislature. As expected Populists introduced a 12% usury bill and strongly supported Democratic Council President J. W. Johnson's bill regulating the operation of railroads. Kingfisher County Populist Thomas Willis, who was studying for the bar at the time, introduced the widely expected bill to revise Fegan's 1895 fee and salary act. He also introduced a radical anti-trust bill which not only would fine, but would also imprison violators. Garfield County Democrat, William L. Berry, who Vincent came to believe was one of the best Populists in the assembly, put forward a bill

¹⁸ Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma Leader, 21 January 1897; Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 28 January, 11 February and 19 March 1897; Norman Peoples Voice, 19 March 1896; Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma Leader, 25 February 1897 and Journal of the Council Proceedings of the Fourth Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Oklahoma: Beginning January 12, 1897, (Guthrie: Leader Publishing Co., 1897): 1320 & 1328. On final passage of the bill abolishing the office of oil inspector three of the five Populist present in the Council abstained. Council Journal (1897), p. 1371.

that would limit the authority of the Board of Equalization, and Guthrie Democrat John DeBois introduced a measure to extend the date for paying 1896 taxes.¹⁹

Although Populist spokesmen generally lauded the fourth legislature in the early days of the session, as time passed and bills were delayed or compromised an aura of apprehension spread among third party observers. The only bills to reach the governor's desk in January related to extra clerk hire. Members of the Democratic-Populist controlled 1893 legislature had prided themselves upon keeping such expenses to a minimum. The so-called extravagance of the Republican 1895 legislature became a campaign issue in 1896. In 1897, however, it seemed as if every committee required its own clerk. Third party legislators were, if anything, worse than their Democratic counterparts on the issue. Populist representatives clearly distrusted the motives of Republican legislators in the previous assemblies, but believed that the large amount of work expected of the 1897 legislature warranted more clerks. Populist legislators apparently believed that their background made them more representative of their constituency than their mainstream party colleagues. Leo Vincent, however, was in no mood to afford the

¹⁹ Journal of the House Proceedings of the Fourth Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Oklahoma: Beginning January 12, 1897, (Guthrie: Leader Publishing Co., 1897), pp. 1143 & 1148; Council Journal (1897), p. 1322; Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma Leader, 21 January 1897; Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 28 January, 4 & 18 February and 18 March 1897 and Enid Coming Events, 25 February.

third party representatives the benefit of the doubt after his run in with Callahan and Tousley. According to the Oklahoma Representative, the legislature should "quickly demonstrate its earnestness in the matter of reform by beginning with itself." Editor Vincent still affirmed, however, that third party legislators were aggressively in favor of reform, while their Democratic counterparts were more conservative.²⁰

Garrison's anti-gold contract bill passed the Council in early January. The final vote, however, was an ominous note for the so-called "free silver" forces. Only two Democrats joined Populists in passing the bill.²¹ Since it had passed the more conservative Council, Vincent predicted it would become law. In the House an even more portentous vote occurred at the same time. Only three Democrats joined Populists in passing Shannon's usury bill. Once in the Council, the measure was immediately replaced with a milder substitute. The third party's anti-militia bill also passed the House with the support of only three Democrats.²²

²⁰ Council Journal (1897), pp. 1129-32, 1371; Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma Leader, 21 January 1897; House Journal (1897), pp. 1090-91; Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 14 & 28 January 1897 and Norman Peoples Voice, 22 January 1897.

²¹ One of the two Democrats was Henry Steele Johnson, who voted with the third party more often than with Democrats in the 1897 assembly. Council Journal (1897), pp. 1371-71.

²² Council Journal (1897), pp. 1371-72; Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 4 & 11 February 1897; House Journal (1897), pp. 1192-93; Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma Leader, 4 & 11 February 1897 and Norman Peoples Voice, 5 February 1897.

By February it seemed clear that Democratic legislators would put a brake upon all reform legislation that they could not claim as their own. Johnson's anti-railroad bill easily cleared the Council, with five Democrats and all six Populists voting aye. Berry's measure leashing the Board of Equalization passed the House without a dissenting vote. Only one Democrat and one Republican, however, joined Populists on a third party sponsored woman's suffrage bill. Leo Vincent, who had turned over editorial control of a column on women's issues in the Oklahoma Representative to his wife, was outraged at the suffrage measure's defeat. House Democrats also pushed through a radical bill outlawing both black-white and Indian-white marriages. The Council, however, struck out the latter provision. Old party legislators also generally opposed liquor legislation, which most Populists favored. They also wrangled inconclusively with badly needed school land legislation, official salaries and a new election law as well in February.²³

As the legislative process began to bog down, some of the more radical Populist editors began expressing their impatience. Vincent threatened to disown fusion if the stump orators who had "dilated to their fullest lingual capacity" in the cause of reform the previous fall continued to pander to cries of "do nothing rash, preserve the existing order, be

²³ Council Journal (1897), p. 1371; House Journal (1897), pp. 1192-93; Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma Leader, 25 February 1897 and Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 18 & 25 February 1897.

careful, {and} ouch!" In early March Vincent proclaimed representative government "inadequate," and began the vigorous promotion of Populist Representative James K. Graves' referendum bill, which never got out of committee. A week later he published a letter from W. A. Turner which predicted revolution would be the ultimate result if the masses could not get sufficient relief through the ballot.²⁴

As the date for adjournment neared, legislators seemed to awaken to their duties. John Hogan got his bill providing low cost government insurance through the House, despite the cries of anguish from the so-called insurance trust. A fee and salary bill much like the Fegan measure of 1895 also emerged from the lower body.²⁵ Democrats substituted their own usury bill for that of the Populists, and then struck out the penalty provision before sending it to the governor. A badly needed bill forcing private banks to register with a newly established banking commission and submit to semi-annual audits also reached the governor's desk. The Democratic sponsored measure would end the parade of transient banking institutions which had fleeced the Cherokee Outlet residents of their meager savings since the opening. A Po-

²⁴ W. A. Turner was the Free Silver candidate for the Guthrie House seat in 1896. Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 25 February and 4 & 11 March 1897.

²⁵ The fee and salary bill which passed the House and eventually became law removed the pauper provisions for the witness fees and put a ceiling upon the total fees an official could earn. The salaries and fees, however, remained much as they had been before. Norman Peoples Voice, 5 March 1897.

populist sponsored bill establishing a normal school in Alva, in the Cherokee Strip, also passed the legislature. A bill giving the "text book trust" an exclusive contract with the territory's schools, however, also passed the Assembly. Even Roy Hoffman, the editor of the Democratic Oklahoma Leader, denounced the measure, believing it would surely destroy fusion for the future. In the end Democrats had sidetracked or gutted much of the Populist sponsored reforms. Their footdragging, in fact, left more than fifty unresolved pieces of legislation on the legislative calendars when the assembly adjourned on March 12, 1897.²⁶

Governor Renfrow pocket vetoed the uniform textbook bill at the end of the legislative session along with seven other measures. In all, the Democratic governor vetoed an even dozen bills. Most were the pet projects of Populists or Democrats who frequently voted with their third party colleagues. Bills receiving Renfrow's official disapproval were Garrison's anti-gold contract bill, Speaker Tousley's measure allowing voters to elect non-attorneys to the position of probate judge, Populist Dale Lytton's bill allowing the legislature to remove territorial officials and a Democratic substitute bill abolishing the office of oil inspector, which most Populists had supported. Measures receiving

²⁶ Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma Leader, 25 March 1897; Alva Republican, 29 January 1897 and Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma Leader, 4 & 18 March 1897. Although a Populist introduced the Alva college bill, voting on the measure was largely along regional rather than party lines.

the pocket veto, in addition to the school book bill, included Berry's bill limiting the powers of the Board of Equalization; a Democrat sponsored, but Populist supported, school land law; Willis' anti-trust bill; and a tax on wholesale beer distributors. According to the Oklahoma Representative, "about all the reform measures that succeeded in passing a semi-hostile legislature were squelched by the governor." Such power in the hands of an executive, Vincent proclaimed, was "a dangerous prerogative." Republicans, however, pronounced the governor's use of the veto the Oklahoman's only safeguard against "ignorant" legislation.²⁷

Three measures Democrats particularly liked, and Governor Renfrow readily signed into law, dealt with Oklahoma's black population. The 1897 legislature provided for segregated schools, established a college for blacks at Langston and passed an election law designed to disfranchise illiterate blacks.²⁸ Democrats sponsored and unanimously voted for each of the measures. Republicans opposed the election law which also reversed the anti-fusion law of 1895.²⁹ Only J. P. D.

²⁷ Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma Leader, 18 March 1897; Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 18 March 1897 and Alva Republican, 26 February 1897.

²⁸ The election law abolished the use of devices on ballots, arranged names in a single column under each office and alternated the order of candidates by party for each office.

²⁹ The anti-fusion law of 1895 may have been a factor in the reduced voter turnout of 1896. Some scholars attribute much of the reduced voter participation of the twentieth century to legal manipulation. In Oklahoma, however, removal of the anti-fusion legislation did not reverse the

Mouriquand voted against segregated schools. Although several Populists opposed segregation, all third party members either voted for the anti-black legislation or were absent for the final votes.³⁰

On the eve of adjournment Roy Hoffman proclaimed fusion "a great success." According to the Democratic editor, the fusion parties stood together on the "fundamental principles of economy and progress," and enacted "a large number of wise measures." He predicted that popular demand would keep the coalition intact. As an endorsement of Hoffman's views Ralph Bray reprinted the Democratic editor's assessment in the Enid Coming Events. To drive home his point, Bray published a comparative study showing the fourth legislature's appropriations to be significantly reduced, compared to its predecessor's. Similar comparisons emerged from the Oklahoma Leader. John DeBois, the democratic Councilor who represented Guthrie in 1897, enumerated the laws he found most important. They included the usury law, banking reform and lower appropriations, fees and salaries. The Democratic

trend toward lower voter participation. Voter turnout in Oklahoma in 1898 was significantly lower than it was in either 1896 or 1894, despite the repeal of the 1895 anti-fusion law. A bibliography of the debate over legal manipulation of the voting process, along with a discussion of anti-fusion legislation, can be found in Peter H. Argersinger, "'A Place on the Ballot:' Fusion Politics and Antifusion Laws," American Historical Review 85, no. 2 (April, 1980): 287-306.

³⁰ Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma Leader, 18 March 1897; Alva Republican, 2 April 1897; House Journal (1897), pp. 1192-93 and Council Journal (1897), pp. 1371, 1373.

Alva Pioneer added that the only Democratic or Populist editors who denounced the legislature, simply had not yet "secured a 'rake off.'"³¹

Critics of the fourth legislature were quick to reply to the uncritical pronouncements of Democratic and Populist fusionists. The editor of the Democratic Lexington Leader, found the Council "dominated by a set of jackleg lawyers who can't see anything but their own importance." The Alva Republican proclaimed the 1897 legislature a blow to the territory's prosperity and predicted capital would steer clear of Oklahoma. Leo Vincent took particular exception to Councilor DeBois' claim to being a reformer, and pointed to his votes against the Populist sponsored anti-gold contracts bill and Shannon's fee and salary measure.³²

Territorial chairman Leo Vincent, who had been the father of fusion in 1896, rapidly became the darling of middle-of-the-roaders in the wake of the 1897 legislature. The Guthrie editor believed that "the logic of events pointed with irresistible force to a cooperation with Democracy," in 1896. He saw very little of "Jefferson and Jackson reincarnated," however, in the "regenerated Democracy" of 1897.

³¹ Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma Leader, 11 March 1897; Enid Coming Events, 8 April 1897; Guthrie Daily Oklahoma Leader, 25 March 1897 and Alva Pioneer, 26 March 1897. Appropriations from the third legislature (1895) totaled \$170,896, while the fourth legislature (1897) appropriated \$150,322.

³² Lexington Leader in the Norman Peoples Voice, 19 March 1897; Alva Republican, 19 March 1897 and Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 18 March 1897.

Most of the proposed legislation to appear in the Oklahoma Representative before the 1897 legislature met had been defeated, vetoed or subverted.³³

Vincent had nothing but adulation for several of the third party legislators of 1897, most notably Garrison and Willis. Other Populist assemblymen, however, received the full brunt of the Populist editor's criticism. Delbert Randolph, for instance, had killed Willis' fee and salary bill with a negative vote. A study of his call votes in the Council shows Randolph and D. B. Learned both voted with Democrats more often than with members of their own party. Vincent's brother, Henry, noted that none of the fusion legislatures of 1897 were "composed of the same material as constituted the '89 and '91 {Kansas} legislative bodies." Kansas and Oklahoma legislators, he claimed, had done nothing more significant than "fiddle and snort over the adjustment of fees and salaries."³⁴

J. C. Tousley, who Vincent had a personal grudge against, received the Guthrie editor's sharpest barbs. According to Vincent, Tousley had killed Johnson's railway bill the day after he had "sat at a princely banquet given by the Santa Fe." Tousley had also proclaimed his desire to see a "reasonable" usury bill at the time Democrats killed a Populist

³³ Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 6 May, 8 April and 18 March 1897.

³⁴ Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 25 March 1897 and Council Journal (1897), pp. 1371-73.

sponsored measure. Vincent also noted that the El Reno editor had voted for his own pocketbook, instead of for his constituents, on a measure reducing the price of legal printing. By the end of the session, Vincent claimed that no paper in the territory, including Tousley's own "little proof-sheet press . . . {had} the effrontery to arise to the speaker's defence" Vincent labeled the El Reno legislator "the worst of all the Populist failures."³⁵

Other evaluations of the 1897 legislature were not so critical. Populist national committeeman W. H. French, who edited the Chandler Publicist, thought many of the comments Populist editors had put forth were harsh and unjust. Few of the men who served in the fourth assembly, he noted, were experienced legislators. On the whole, French believed that the 1897 body had made fewer mistakes and passed more wholesome legislation than had its predecessors. Republican Cassius Barnes, however, who became Oklahoma's fifth governor shortly after he completed his legislative duties in 1897, proudly proclaimed that "no vicious legislation" had ever emanated from an Oklahoma legislature. He went on to state that Oklahomans could rejoice in the knowledge that "all propositions against the interests of corporate investments have been uniformly defeated."³⁶ Leo Vincent accorded the

³⁵ Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 18 March and 22 April 1897.

³⁶ Chandler Publicist, 30 April 1897 and Report of the Governor Of Oklahoma (1897), p. 37.

third party legislators' failure "to support Populist measures" to a lack of grounding in the principles of the People's party. He hoped that "organization and education, the peaceful handmaidens of evolution, will yet remodel our social order on the lines of fraternity and equality." As to specific individuals, however, Vincent promised to have "an egg hatching for every member of the late legislature who betrayed his constituents."³⁷

The fourth legislature was a debacle for the People's party in the Oklahoma Territory. Exponents of fusion had promised a revolution in government from the so-called reform assembly. Populist legislators, however, did not have a majority in either house and therefore became victims of Democratic negativism. Regenerated Democracy proved largely illusory in the 1897 legislature. Although certain Democrats, namely Henry Steele Johnston and J. W. Johnson, pushed hard for specific reforms, most of their old party colleagues subverted or killed promised reforms.

The People's party had represented itself to the voters as a viable option to the political control of the mainstream parties before 1896. Failure to produce the promised results, however, quickly discredited third party leaders. The deepening fusion-middle-of-the-road cleavage among party leaders became critical with the Callahan-Vincent controversy. Ever after the People's party failed to speak with a

³⁷ Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 25 March and 1 April 1897.

single voice. This also helped remove the party as a viable alternative. The problem of assessing exactly what Populists would do if given power, however, must remain a mystery. At no time did the People's party ever control both houses and the governor's chair of any state or territory. Mainstream party officeholders, thus, forever had a break upon unwanted Populist legislation.

Chapter XII

THE FRUITS OF EXPEDIENCY

Slightly less than a month after Oklahoma's fourth legislative assembly adjourned, Leo Vincent resigned as chairman of the Populist party's territorial committee. His feud with J. Y. Callahan and criticism of the do-nothing 1897 fusion legislature had alienated him from much of the third party's leadership. Having changed his mind on fusion, he was definitely out of step with his colleagues in the Oklahoma reform movement. Harmony, he noted, was needed, and retiring to the ranks would allow him to speak his mind more freely.¹

Vincent recounted his tenure as party chairman in his letter of resignation. When he was chosen to take over leadership of the party in July, 1894, he found practically no organization, no data on party supporters or contributors and the "mixed conditions incident to past fusion with the Democrats." With a middle-of-the-road course in 1894 and an aggressive veteran of past egalitarian crusades at the head of the Populist ticket, Vincent applied his noteworthy organizational talents to a territorial party stillborn

¹ Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 8 April 1897.

through incompetence and scandal. The result was a four-fold increase in the third party's vote. Because free silver forces triumphed in the Democratic party with the nomination of William Jennings Bryan, however, Vincent came to believe that "a united effort seemed a destiny in 1896 under LIKE platforms."²

Leo Vincent threw his "whole force, reputation and even family interests" into the free silver campaign of 1896. Callahan, however, ran behind rather than ahead of his ticket, and won only a narrow victory over Flynn. Democrats and a few self-seeking Populists, Vincent claimed, then poisoned Callahan's mind against the territorial chairman. When the delegate-elect refused to accept the findings of the party's executive committee in the controversey, a lasting disharmony entered the reform movement. Although events were different elsewhere, a widening breach between fusionists and middle-of-the-roaders appeared at the same time wherever the People's party was active.³

According to Leo Vincent, the "superficial and juvenile conduct" of the 1897 legislature, "precluded any chance for a successful continuation" of fusion, in his mind. The nature of fusion, however, bound Populists and Democrats together for two years. The Guthrie editor stated that he could no longer be helpful in "a repetition of the past nor

² The emphasis is Vincent's.

³ Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 8 April 1897.

guarantee sanction of all party conduct in the future." Vincent's resignation letter, however, was a reaffirmation of his political faith more than a concession of victory to those who opposed him within the party. His real reason for resigning was his plan to move from the territory in the near future. Although he would not publicly announce his plans for several months, Vincent had been offered the editorship of a proposed third party paper at Boulder, Colorado.*

Although Vincent planned to leave Oklahoma, he retained an interest in the party he had helped construct. His resignation from the chairmanship spurred a plethora of editorial responses from his journalistic colleagues. His old nemesis, Frank Greer, feigned understanding of Vincent's exasperation. Greer labeled Vincent's offspring, the 1897 legislature, a humiliating failure, and noted that the expected chief clerkship and printing contracts had gone to others. According to Greer, the ungrateful free silver legislators had "jumped onto their creator and benefactor like a pack of wolves and bore him torn and bleeding to the

* Merrily Cummings Ford (compiler), "The Invincible Vincents," Unpublished manuscript in the possession of Mrs. Ford, p. 36. Evidence Colorado was already on Vincent's mind came in the form of small filler on the editorial page of the edition which contained his resignation letter. Vincent called Colorado "one of the most progressive states," and noted that it had woman's suffrage and had abolished capital punishment. John Furlong, the leader of Oklahoma's fight to abolish capital punishment could also be found in Boulder in 1898. Whether he preceded or followed Vincent is unknown. Ibid. and Oklahoma City Oklahoma Champion, 25 March 1898.

ground." Vincent expected a pecuniary interpretation from Greer and attributed it to "the utter absence of a principle in the minds of the average old party advocate."⁵

Roy Hoffman, Guthrie's Democratic editor, also had some acrid comments to make upon Vincent's retirement. He claimed that the Populist editor had resigned at the request of the third party's territorial committee, an error he was forced to retract the following day. Hoffman, as well as almost all other commentators, freely acknowledged Vincent's organizing talents. The Populist editor, he asserted, was "a good drillmaster, but of no account as a leader." According to Hoffman, Democrats were largely responsible for Callahan's victory in 1896. For this reason, Hoffman concluded, Populism and Democracy might have "a direct and common sympathy" with each other, but with Vincent at the helm it had no common aim. With the Populist editor gone from the chairmanship, however, Hoffman predicted future success for fusion.⁶

Vincent reprinted the remarks of most Oklahoma Populist editors on his resignation, whether complimentary or not. Occasionally, he added editorial comment, such as when A. C. Towne found reason to criticize the chairman's role in fusion. Vincent noted that Towne's discovery of the middle-

⁵ Guthrie Daily Oklahoma State Capital in the Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 15 April 1897.

⁶ Daily Oklahoma Leader, in the Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 15 April 1897.

of-the-road must have been even more recent than his own. The Alva editor's virulent anti-fusion tirade was printed directly under an endorsement of William Jennings Bryan for president in 1900.⁷

In returning to a middle-of-the-road position, Leo Vincent found the comments of John Allan on his resignation the most noteworthy. The Norman editor took occasion to lecture the territorial chairman on the pitfalls of working with the Democratic party. Rather than take offense at the one Oklahoma Populist editor who had remained consistent in his commitment to the middle-of-the-road, Vincent stated that "we like him the better for it." According to Allan, Vincent had lost his Populist principles a year before and "had floundered around ever since on a sea of doubt." As party chairman in 1896, Allan noted, Vincent had an enthusiastic and well organized party. He also had a strong and vigorous press, "abundantly supplied with justice and truth to shell the works of the enemy." Why, then, did the party chairman show such signs of distress, Allan asked? In answer to his own query, Allan noted that "the reformer is prone sometimes to step aside to try and avoid some of the dangers he beholds in the distance." Allan was pleased, however, that his colleague had found that the smoother path did not lead to reform, and again had "set his face to the blast . . . steering neither to the right nor the left for seeming tem-

⁷ Alva Review in the Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 22 April 1897.

porary expediency."⁸

Vincent agreed with Allan that enthusiasm, rather than reason, had ruled third party deliberations in 1896. The ensuing stampede, Vincent believed, allowed inferior men to crowd to the front and receive the party's favors. Regaining his balance, Vincent recalled that the success of reform depended upon the "intelligent and sympathetic cohesion" which came from education in the principles of Populism. Vincent labeled the free silver victory of 1896 a victory of numbers, but not of principles. The 1897 legislature showed all, Vincent contended, that Democrats, and some Populists, lacked the proper grounding in reform principles to achieve lasting change. The result was disillusionment at the third party's wasted opportunities.⁹

Leo Vincent probably felt some personal responsibility for the destruction of the People's party in Oklahoma. He was one of the first fusionists to recognize the damage that resulted from Populists' decision to adopt fusion for a quick victory in 1896. Vincent, however, did not kill Populism. The most important Populist goals were national in scope. Other men, such as national party chairman Herman Taubeneck and 1892 Populist presidential candidate James B. Weaver, were far more instrumental in the third party's move from the justice orientation that had built the party to the

⁸ Norman Peoples Voice in the Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 22 April 1897.

⁹ Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 8 & 15 April 1897.

expediency orientation that helped to destroy it. In a sense the People's party always contained the seeds of its own destruction. Because Populists viewed society from the cyclical Enlightenment perspective, they were particularly susceptible to the now or never appeal of Bryan Democracy. Free silver symbolized the battle against what Populists saw as the forces of monopoly and oppression, and they feared that such a devolution from civilization would surely follow a McKinley presidency. Vincent's course in 1896 was symptomatic of the course most other well-meaning Populists took. Southern Populists, most notably Texans, constituted the bulk of the forces opposed to fusion within the People's party in 1896. They had better reason to question the sincerity of a "rejuvenated Democracy," because they resided in areas where Democrats constituted the oppressive elite. Texas Populists, in particular, had broken from the progressive wing of the Democratic party to found the People's party in 1892. After the Populist party in Texas was clearly dead, however, many third party veterans returned to their former allegiance and rebuilt the ill-fated 1890 coalition with progressive Democrats.¹⁰

Leo Vincent seemed to prefer Jesse Dunn, the Populist county attorney of Woods County, or third party assemblyman Thomas Willis as his replacement in the territorial chair-

¹⁰ Worth Robert Miller, "Building a Progressive Coalition in Texas, the Reform Democrat-Populist Rapprochement, 1900-1907," Journal of Southern History (forthcoming).

man's office. When Logan County Populists chose to endorse their own man, Rev. L. F. Lavery, a retiring but widely known man, Vincent was able to support him. As J. Y. Callahan declined to attend the executive committee meeting which chose Lavery to replace Vincent, it was a placid affair. Vincent had announced the sale of the Oklahoma Representative, to Clark Hudson, effective July 15, the week before. H. S. Mounts of the Tecumseh Leader, joined Hudson in Guthrie as the paper's new business manager. Hudson and Mounts would send the Oklahoma Representative into bankruptcy in 1898. In his last edition before moving to Colorado, Leo Vincent prophetically told Oklahoma Populists to "keep your eye on Eugene V. Debs and his Social Democracy movement . . . it is the beginning of a far reaching revolution."¹¹

Since the vast majority of Populists to sit in the 1897 legislature came from the hinterland of Oklahoma Territory, it might be expected that they better reflected the true sentiments of rank and file Populist than a Guthrie editor. The results of the 1898 election, however, proved this to be wrong.¹² As early as March, 1898, the Populist territorial committee voted to fuse with the Democrats in the 1898 elections. Lavery, Hudson, Bray and French, who became the movers and shakers of fusion Populism in the late 1890s, met

¹¹ Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma Leader, 22 April 1897 and Guthrie Oklahoma Representative, 29 April and 8 & 15 July 1897.

¹² The 1897 Populist legislators also had a much higher educational level and more experience in public office than the average Populist voter.

with Democrats in May and agreed upon a joint convention with the older party.¹³

At the Democratic-Populist territorial convention, held July 13, 1898, in Oklahoma City, the crucial vote on fusion came on a motion to appoint a conference committee to meet with the Democrats. Fusionists won the poll 148 to 29. The two conventions joined into one for the delegate nomination. A two-thirds majority was necessary for nomination. Democrats, who were determined to secure the delegate nomination for themselves in 1898 remained adamant throughout the night. Shortly after nine o'clock the next morning, on the seventy-fourth ballot, they finally triumphed, and nominated James R. Keaton, an Oklahoma City lawyer and former district court judge, for the delegate slot. Keaton chose Clark Hudson as his campaign manager and the Populist territorial committee elected W. H. French to replace Laverty as party chairman.¹⁴

Cleveland County Populists bolted the Oklahoma City fusionist convention and on September 1, 1898, held their own convention in Guthrie. A. S. Hankins, a little known man from Woods County received the middle-of-the-roaders' highest honors. In his memoirs, Dennis Flynn later claimed that his friends manipulated the entire middle-of-the-road con-

¹³ Oklahoma City Oklahoma Champion, 11 March and 13 May 1898.

¹⁴ Norman Peoples Voice, 15 July 1898; Oklahoma City Oklahoma Champion, 15 July 1898; Norman Transcript, 1898 and Blackwell Times-Record, 21 July 1898.

vention in order to split the anti-Republican vote. Whether true or not, Hankins did not draw enough votes to affect the outcome of the 1898 election.¹⁵

On November 8, 1898, Republicans achieved their greatest electoral victory of the territorial years. Dennis Flynn was returned to Congress with a 58.3% to 39.1% victory over Keaton. Hankins collected the remaining 2.5% of the vote. the GOP's vote in 1898 was quite similar to their 1896 poll. Stay at home Populists, however, severely reduced Keaton's total. Voter turnout in 1898 was 58.2% compared to 72.6% in 1896, and 81.2% in 1894. Table 27, which presents the correlations between the Democratic and Populist votes of 1894 and the Fusion and Democratic ballots between 1894 and 1902, shows that Populists constituted the major share of the fusion dropouts in 1898. The 1894 Democratic and Populist votes correlate with each other at $-.72804$. This verifies the fact that the two parties drew from substantially different elements of the Oklahoma population. Callahan's vote in 1896 correlated much more strongly with that of the Democrats than with Populists in 1894. The correlation between Keaton's ballot in 1898 and the democratic vote in 1894 is even stronger. Fusion, particularly under the leadership of a Democrat, proved quite distasteful to those constituting the Populist legions in 1894.

¹⁵ Alva Pioneer in the Chandler Publicist, 16 September 1898 and Dennis Flynn, "Memoir," Royden Dangerfield Papers, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma, pp. 40-41.

TABLE 27				
Partisan Choice, 1894, and Democratic-Fusion Votes,				
1894-1902				
Year	Party	1894 Republican	1894 Democratic	1894 Populist
1894	Democratic	-.81523	1.00000	-.72804
1896	Fusionist	-.82903	.63473	-.09331
1898	Fusionist	-.76049	.67205	-.23760
1900	Fusionist	-.55687	.35043	.06588
1902	Democratic	-.73485	.62237	-.18384

Fusionists also met massive defeat in the territorial legislative races. Eighteen Democrats and eighteen Populists sat in the 1897 legislature, only eight and six, respectively, were elected to the 1899 assembly.¹⁶ In the mid-1890s each of the three political parties active in Oklahoma successively collapsed in a territory-wide election. Cleveland and Renfrow's Democratic party came in a distant third in 1894. The rise of the People's party and the inadequacies of Democratic leaders account for this collapse. In 1896 the GOP carried only three legislative districts. This was largely the product of a Republican gerrymander

¹⁶ Only one of the men to sit in the 1897 legislature was reelected in 1898, Thomas Doyle, who won in a three way race in 1898.

which backfired. Callahan beat Flynn in the delegate race of 1896 by only a slim margin. The results of the 1896 election, however, do show Republican supremacy in the Oklahoma 1890s to be largely mythical. The GOP normally was the largest party in the territorial years, but in the heyday of the Populist Revolt it was not a majority party. The Free Silver party, to which Populists tied their future in 1896, collapsed at the polls in November, 1898. This time, however, gerrymandering had nothing to do with the outcome of the election. The apportionment of 1895 remained intact through 1900. The People's party simply was in the throes of dissolution and unable to poll its former vote.

Fusion candidates appeared in thirty-one districts, while middle-of-the-roaders fielded thirteen candidates in 1898.¹⁷ Two Cleveland County middle-of-the-road Populists secured enough Republican votes to be elected, while fusion Populists carried three House and one Council seat. Democrats, on the other hand, carried three fusion and five non-fusion races. Seven of the fourteen non-Republicans to sit in the 1899 legislature, therefore, were not elected on fusion tickets. By November, 1898, not only many voters, but also

¹⁷ Both fusion and middle-of-the-road tickets appeared in three House and two Council districts (Lincoln, Logan and Payne Counties). Of the eight three-way races without fusion candidates, six occurred in predominantly southern populated areas. In the three way races Democrats won five, Populists won two and the GOP won one. Where middle-of-the-roaders challenged fusion tickets Democrats won one seat and Republicans four.

many successful politicians had rejected fusion.¹⁸

The battle between fusionists and middle-of-the-roads within the Oklahoma Populist party did not subside after Leo Vincent left the territory. Despite A. S. Hankins' candidacy in 1898, however, John Allan retained his position on the third party's territorial committee until 1900. The final break between Allan and the fusionists came at the April, 1900, convention of the People's party at Enid. The convention assembled to chose delegates to the third party's national convention. Fusionists chose Sioux Falls, South Dakota as the site of the Populist national convention of 1900. Middle-of-the-roads, on the other hand, proposed to hold a separate convention in Cincinnati. When the Enid convention chose delegates to attend the Sioux Falls convention, the Cleveland and Greer County delegations walked out. Fusionists met in joint convention with Democrats in August, 1900, in Oklahoma City. They chose Populist probate judge Robert A. Neff over Democrat William Cross for the delegate slot on the thirty-first ballot. Middle-of-the-roads held their own convention, also in Oklahoma City, on September 1 and chose John S. Allan for their delegate nominee. Neither of the Populist conventions was heavily attended.¹⁹

¹⁸ Norman Transcript, 11 November 1898.

¹⁹ Alva Review, 12 April 1900; Guthrie Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, 12 April 1900; Norman Peoples Voice, 13 April & 3 August 1900 and Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 2 September 1900.

Unlike J. Y. Callahan, who was a former Republican and joined the people's party only in 1892, Robert A. Neff was a longtime third party warhorse. He had edited a Union Labor party paper in Wichita, Kansas in the 1880s. Neff's candidacy revived the old Populist enthusiasm to a slight degree. Voter turnout rose from 58.2% in 1898 to 67.9% in 1900. Table 28, which presents the correlations between mainstream party votes and place of birth for the entire territorial period, shows a rise in sectional voting with the commitment to fusion in 1896. There was some regression from this tendency, however, in 1898 and 1900. Fusion in 1896 rejoined white border state Democrats with white border state Populists. Since Populists had a negative correlation with white lower southerners in 1894 the fusion-lower South correlation of 1896 is reduced when compared with the white lower South-Democratic figure of 1894. The increase in the correlation between northerners and the GOP in 1896 reveals some disenchantment with fusion among northern-born Populists. In 1898 the fusion-white South correlation declines substantially. White border state Populists obviously did not consider fusion a return to the Democratic party and declined to vote for Keaton. Hankins, the middle-of-the-road candidate, drew primarily from Texas-born Oklahomans, accounting for the slight decline in white lower South-fusion correlation in 1898. Neff's candidacy in 1900 was able to revive white border state support for fusion to a degree.

Allan, on the other hand, did slightly better than Hankins among ex-Texans. The GOP correlations with northerners, at the same time, declined to approximately their 1894 levels.²⁰

TABLE 28						
Mainstream Party Vote by Place of Birth, 1890-1904						
Date	North	North-east	Mid-west	White south	White Border States	White Lower South
	Republican			Democrat		
1890	.34189	.76866	.23144	.79042	.68535	.87221
1892	.44086	.55833	.35085	.55530	.34252	.67167
1894	.46262	.34466	.44440	.58157	.30482	.72661
	Republican			Fusionist		
1896	.52763	.42396	.51107	.65384	.65457	.55625
1898	.56374	.56003	.52240	.50297	.34065	.52967
1900	.47487	.38289	.45967	.45730	.43277	.40469
	Republican			Democrat		
1902	.77741	.76184	.72270	.88468	.68978	.87503
1904	.75495	.68990	.71286	.78570	.53571	.82518

²⁰ The vote for Hankins correlates with lower southerners at .71851 in 1898. Allan's correlation with lower southerners in 1900 was .79963.

In partially reviving third party enthusiasm, Robert A. Neff was able to secure 45.7% of the vote in 1900. Dennis Flynn, who was elected to his fourth and last term in Congress in 1900, received 52.1% of the vote, while Allan and Socialist candidate E. T. Tucker split the remainder of the vote evenly. In the legislative races Democrats and Populists fused in thirty three districts. In Cleveland county Populists fused with Republicans and in the far west ranching country Democrats ran straight tickets. Populists elected four fusionists to the House and two fusionists and a middle-of-the-roader to the Council. Democrats, on the other hand, elected three fusionists and three straight Democrats to the House and four fusionists and a straight candidate to the Council. Third party Councilors proved to be the swing vote in the Council and joined Democrats in organizing the upper house in 1901. They received little, however, in return for their help. The only third party issue to pass either house of the 1899 or 1901 legislatures was George Coulson's initiative and referendum bill of 1901. Councilors passed the measure as a courtesy to the aged Populist legislator. It was quickly killed, however, in the GOP controlled House.²¹

On March 22, 1902, the Populist territorial committee met in Oklahoma City and accepted a Democratic invitation for rank and file Populists to enter the Democratic primaries.

²¹ Alva Review, 17 January 1901 and Norman Peoples Voice, 8 March 1901.

Democrats nominated William Cross. He had lost the delegate nomination to Robert Neff in 1900. Cross lost to Flynn's replacement, Bird McGuire, by less than 400 votes in November, 1902. In the legislative races of 1902, Populists fused with Democrats in five districts, with Republicans in two, with Socialists in one and fielded one middle-of-the-road candidate. All lost. The Populist Revolt in Oklahoma was at an end.²²

Table 28, which shows the mainstream party correlations with Oklahoman's place of birth, reveals a substantial increase in sectional voting with the demise of the People's party in 1902. The GOP-northern correlation jumps from .47487 in 1900 to .75495 in 1902. When blacks and European born Oklahomans are added to northerners, the correlation with Republicans in 1902 is .87247. The Democratic-white southern correlation, likewise, jumps from .45730 in 1900 to .78570 in 1902.²³ This dramatic rise in all sectional correlations between 1900 and 1902 suggests that the intervening period marks a dividing line between two substantially different political universes. After 1900 political contention turned largely upon considerations of sectionalism in

²² Alva Review, 27 March 1902. The vote in the 1902 delegate race was 45,803 for McGuire (R) and 45,499 for Cross (D). Middle of the roaders did field a delegate candidate, H. E. Straughen, in 1904. He received only 1.7% of the vote and the correlations with his vote show none of the patterns common to earlier third party candidates.

²³ The subsequent drop in the Democratic-white south correlation of 1904 is the result of a increase in the Socialist-white border state correlation of that year.

the counties which comprised the Oklahoma Territory. Before 1902, however, other factors, most notably the cosmopolitan-hinterland dichotomy, were also important to partisan choice.

In June, 1895, Populist editors G. C. Halbrooks and Mont Howard met in the offices of the Medford Mascot and founded the first socialist local in Oklahoma. Since Daniel DeLeon's Socialist Labor party was the only nationally organized socialist party at the time they affiliated with the doctrinaire Marxist's group. After the Socialists unity convention of 1901, the Medford local was the first in Oklahoma to organize under the new Socialist party label.²⁴

When Eugene V. Debs founded the Social Democratic party in June, 1897, press reports identified the movement as a successor to the American Railway Union. Even mainstream party sources noticed that the new party's mode of development paralleled that of the People's party. Debs had supported the Populist party in the mid-1890s and surely knew that the agrarian movement's origins laid in the transition of the Southern Farmer's Alliance to the People's party.²⁵

The socialism of Lawrence Gronlund and Edward Bellamy, which had roots in the same egalitarian tradition as Populism, permeated Oklahoma Populist papers in the 1890s. The

²⁴ Green, James R. Grass-Roots Socialism: Radical Movements in the Southwest, 1895-1943 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978), pp. 13-14 and Appeal to Reason (Girard, Kansas), 5 September 1903.

²⁵ Weekly Oklahoma Leader, 24 June 1897.

fusion-middle-of-the-road dichotomy had no bearing upon Oklahoma Populists' later espousal of socialism. Ralph Bray, one of the third party's most rabid fusionists, was also a Bellamy Nationalist. John Allan seemed to agree with Milton Park of the Dallas Southern Mercury when he defined socialism as "applied Christianity as taught by Jesus." Allan believed that there was no difference between Populists and Socialists over policy, only on means. He essentially saw socialism as the long range goals of Populism. Socialists, he claimed, believe in "cutting the dog's tail off close behind the ears . . . {while Populists} believe we must grow into the socialist state by piece meal and that the shortest cut around is not always the most feasible route." Allan's antipathy toward short cuts surely was the product of the Populist party's experience with fusion. Growth for the new egalitarian party would come as it did for the people's party, through education and nothing else.²⁶

The process of educating the people on socialism began in earnest in Oklahoma just before the turn of the century. By mid-1899 excerpts from Julius Wayland's Socialist Appeal to Reason, appeared regularly in the pages of the Alva Review. Wayland had founded the Coming Nation in 1893 and the Appeal to Reason in 1895 as Populist organs. Even fusionist Roy Stafford of the Oklahoma City Oklahoma Champion began carrying Socialist literature in February, 1900. He became a De-

²⁶ Dallas Southern Mercury in the Norman Peoples Voice, 27 July 1900 and Norman Peoples Voice, 28 December 1900.

mocrat, however, when he took over the Daily Oklahoman, later that year.²⁷ In December, 1898, James W. Hadley, a Canadian County Populist elected to the 1899 legislature on a fusion ticket, attended the founding meeting of the El Reno Social Democratic local. When the Social Democratic party perfected its territorial organization in October, 1899, J. N. Clark, who would chair the 1900 middle-of-the-road Populist convention was in attendance as a delegate. The platform adopted at the conference endorsed "legal tender treasury notes," or greenbacks. In 1902 Socialists chose Thomas Smith, the editor of the Kay County Populist (renamed the Oklahoma Socialist in 1901) as their candidate for delegate. According to John Allan's colleague, Milton Park, "Populists are every whit as much socialists as those who are popularly known under that name." Just as the People's party replaced the Union Labor party as the next logical expression of the late nineteenth century egalitarian movement, the Socialist party would carry this tradition into the twentieth century. In the counties which comprised the Oklahoma Territory in the 1890s, however, the Socialist party would never come close to Beaumont's share of the vote in 1894.²⁸

²⁷ Stafford brought his old partner, Clark Hudson, back to Oklahoma City after a sojourn in Arkansas to edit the Daily Oklahoman in 1902. The paper turned decidedly to the right, however, when E. K. Gaylord bought Stafford out in 1904. Oklahoma City Weekly Oklahoman and Champion, 29 March 1900 and Walter M. Harrison, Me and My Big Mouth (Oklahoma City: Britton Publishing Co., 1954), pp. 52-53.

²⁸ El Reno News, 16 December 1898; Norman Peoples Voice, 27 October 1899 & 16 February 1900 and Oklahoma City Daily

Not all Oklahoma Populists went into the Socialist party after 1900. Reduced voter turnout after the mid-1890s indicates that many simply dropped out of active political participation. In their eyes the plutocrats had won, and nothing significant could be done to alter this. Many of the third party's leaders, however, joined the agrarian wing of the Democratic party. Samuel Crocker, the earliest of the Oklahoma Populist leaders, became a Democrat after the turn of the century. In 1912 he ran for the state legislature, receiving significant Socialist support in his race. He endorsed Theodore Roosevelt for the presidency, however, and lost. He died in 1921, never having held public office.²⁹

George Gardenhire, the man responsible for importing the Farmer's Alliance into the Oklahoma Territory, returned to southern Kansas in 1898. Nothing is known of the later life of the third party's 1892 delegate nominee, N. H. Ward. Ralph Beaumont, the Oklahoma Populist standard-bearer of 1894 returned to his duties as a traveling third party lecturer in early 1895. J. Y. Callahan stumped the territory for Keaton in 1898 and Neff in 1900. Otherwise he retired from politics and moved to Enid, where he engaged in busi-

Oklahoman, 2 September 1900. Southern Mercury in the Norman Peoples Voice, 23 November 1900. Smith received 2.0% of the vote in 1900.

²⁹ Samuel Crocker, "The Autobiography of Samuel Crocker." (Unpublished Manuscript, Oklahoma Historical Society, 1913), p. 375 and Dan W. Peery, "Colonel Crocker and the Boomer Movement," Chronicles of Oklahoma 13, no. 3 (September, 1935): 276.

ness.³⁰

John Allan was elected secretary of the 1908 Populist national convention. He later supported agrarian Democrats such as Thomas P. Gore, who was a Populist in the 1890s. Allan continued editing the Norman Peoples Voice until 1910. It may have been the last officially Populist newspaper in the country. In 1917 the Norman Transcript, Norman State Democrat and the Norman Peoples Voice merged and became the Daily Transcript. The consolidation symbolized the lessening importance of partisan affiliation in the twentieth century. Allan died in 1930.³¹

Leo Vincent became chairman of the Colorado Populist party in 1899. He gave up journalism in 1903, however, to build and sell homes. In 1909 he became Assistant Insurance Commissioner of Colorado, and in 1914 he joined the Internal Revenue Service as a field agent. He opened an entertainment hall in the university district of Boulder in 1924. A fire, however, ended the venture in 1927, and he moved to

³⁰ Biographical Record, This Volume Contains Biographical Sketches of Leading Citizens of Cowley County, Kansas (Chicago: Biographical Publishing Company, 1901), p. 282.

³¹ Norman Transcript, 27 August 1939; Nadine Runyun (ed.), Pioneers of Cleveland County, 1889-1907 (Norman: Cleveland County Historical Society, 1971), pp. 11-13 and Ayers American Newspaper Annual (1911): p. 765. The Peoples Voice was renamed the Cleveland County Enterprise by its new editor, but was still listed as a Populist paper in the 1911 edition of Ayers. A few broadsides and information about speaking engagements in Thomas P. Gore's 1922 campaign can be found in the Allan papers, which are in the possession of his daughter Mrs. Marjorie Lenore Allan Garrett of El Reno, Oklahoma.

California to take up mushroom farming. In 1936, at the age of 74, Vincent took the only wage earning job he ever held, an elevator pilot at a Hayward, California industrial plant. He died in 1955.³²

Henry Vincent, Leo's brother and partner at the American Nonconformist, served on the editorial staffs of several midwestern Populist papers in the 1890s and wrote the official Populist version of Coxey's march on Washington. He joined Leo at the Boulder Colorado Representative in 1899, but left a year later. He then worked at the Pueblo Bessemer Steel plant until 1907, when he moved to Girard, Kansas, the home of Julius Wayland's Appeal to Reason. The Vincent home in Girard became a mecca for visiting Socialist dignitaries, most notably Eugene V. Debs. Vincent became district secretary of the Socialist party in 1908. Poverty and recent moves in search of work characterized his later life. He was severely injured in an automobile accident in 1931 and died four years later. In the depths of the depression of the 1930s, Henry Vincent reminisced about his days as a third party activist. He recalled that Kansas Republican John J. Ingalls, who Populists retired from the Senate in 1891, uttered the infamous phrase, "the purification of politics is an irredescent dream." Looking back on the egalitarian crusades of his lifetime, Vincent wondered "if there isn't more truth than poetry" in the Republican Senator's

³² Merrily Cummings Ford (Complier), "The Invincible Vincents," [1939], pp. 36-37.

remark.³³

³³ Harold Richard Piehler, "Henry Vincent: A Case Study in Political Deviancy," (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Kansas, 1971), p. 215; Mary Vincent Cummings, "Memories of Girard, Debs and Me," p. 1-10. Unpublished manuscript in the possession of Vincent's granddaughter, Merrily Cummings Ford of Glendora, California. Harold Piehler, "Henry Vincent: Kansas Populist and Radical-Reform Journalist," Kansas History 2, no. 1 (Spring, 1979): 25 and Henry Vincent, "Henry Sez" (circa 1931), p. 4. Unpublished Manuscript in the possession of Vincent's granddaughter, Merrily Cummings Ford of Glendora, California.

Chapter XIII

CONCLUSIONS

The Populist Revolt was the product of the still republican mind of the late nineteenth century as it evaluated the results of the economic, political and social revolutions of Gilded Age America. Throughout the late nineteenth century spokesmen representing a series of egalitarian third party movements put forth an apocalyptic critique of the Gilded Age's cosmopolitan ethos which was rooted in the ideology of the Founding Fathers. They gained mass followings primarily in hinterland areas where the cosmopolitan ethos had not replaced the farmer's commitment to the older tradition. Third party agitators were especially successful in mobilizing a following where economic and political conditions discredited major party spokesmen, such as on the Plains and in the South.

Whether the course of late nineteenth century development constituted an advance of civilization or a degeneration towards barbarism became a major point of contention in America with the coming of the Populist revolt. Cosmopolitan elements looked back to the pronouncements of John Locke, who elevated property rights to an equal place beside human

rights, for inspiration in judging contemporary events. These men could point to such material factors as growing wealth, expanded production and the proliferation of services as signs of the nation's advance. They were, in essence, system-oriented. The plight of a few individual victims was a small price to pay for the significant advances the nation as a whole made.

The republican ideal of the Founding Fathers, which informed the Populist's assessment of late nineteenth century events, viewed the protection of individual liberties as the ultimate goal of society. The role of government was the promotion of social conditions which aided the individual's God-given right to self fulfillment. This humanistic orientation was moral in nature and based upon precepts of justice to the individual. It dictated the rejection of any social development which encouraged the debasement of any human. Such a viewpoint naturally had special appeal to those who saw themselves as victims of the contemporary system.

When the railroad first appeared in a region the almost universal response was enthusiasm for the new commercial and industrial world. Farmers and merchants alike wanted to believe that they were on the brink of the sustained prosperity the panaceas of laissez faire capitalism and Social Darwinism promised. The more aggressive farmers bought machinery, fertilizer and more land, all on credit. Commer-

cial farmers quickly discovered, however, that they were the most efficient producers of the age. Their agricultural production vastly outpaced the capacity of other Americans, and even the world, to purchase. Prices for agricultural commodities plummeted. Because production outstripped the growth of the money supply deflation increased their woes. Railroad operators and other middle men, however, took their profits regardless of the farmer's plight. In spite of this, commercial elements proclaimed the emerging economic system just, and laid the blame for agrarian problems on the farmer. He overproduced, they claimed. A crisis in agriculture occurred where mortgages were numerous, credit tight and transportation costs more expensive.

The people of the upland South experienced very much the same kind of disillusionment in the late nineteenth century. The results of economic dislocation there were, if anything, worse. Money was more scarce. The crop lien system kept most blacks in economic bondage and by 1900 brought many poor whites into economic subservience as well.

As the economy of the Plains and the South worsened, farmers turned to their elected officials for aid. Government had provided tariffs to protect manufacturers and workers, land grants to aid railroads and deflation to help creditors in the late nineteenth century. When farmers put forth their claims upon the political process, however, they received little more than the slogans of laissez faire. The

inadequate response of the Gilded Age's political elite to the plight of the farmer produced a political crisis in these outlying regions of the nation.

Many southern and western farmers had never completely committed themselves to the panaceas of Gilded Age enterprise. Although they had entered the world of commercial agriculture they were primarily family farmers, not agribusinessmen. Farming for them was not only a means of sustenance but an honorable way of life which contributed to the vigor of America's republican institutions. By the 1890s, however, their operations were often only marginally profitable. Diversification, however, saved them from the worst effects of the late nineteenth century's agricultural crisis. This reaffirmed their commitment to the more traditional ethos. In the darkest days of the Depression of the 1890s many who had committed themselves to the dominant ideology of the era began to have second thoughts about their new commitment and search for new answers. They, too, frequently found the ideology of the Founding Fathers more rewarding.

The cyclical interpretation of social development which late nineteenth century egalitarians inherited from the Founding Fathers invested positive connotations toward the simplicity, equality, industriousness and frugality of a developing society and a negative attitude toward the alleged hedonism, luxury, venality and exploitation of a developed

nation. Their Whiggish orientation caused them to see the latter as a triumph of power over liberty. This included government favors to banking elites, aid to monopolies, a widening gap between rich and poor and driving farmers off the land and into a dependent subservience. The political leaders of that age used patronage, pensions and franchises to build majorities and silence critics. They then financed their manipulations through bonding schemes which rewarded insiders and saddled future generations with a seemingly impossible debt to pay. When the Founding Fathers came to believe that George III conspired to impose this Anglicanization process upon Americans, the colonists revolted and institutionalized the republican values in the newly formed American nation.

Late nineteenth century egalitarians believed the principles handed down from the Founding Fathers were universal truths valid for all times and situations. Many of the economic and social developments of the Gilded Age, furthermore, appeared to be quite consistent with the inherited warnings for social degeneration. Lawmakers seemed to abdicate responsibility for monetary policy to America's, and worse yet England's, banker elite. Government policies such as the protective tariff and railroad land grants appeared to promote the ultimate consolidation of wealth and power, monopoly. The gap between the rich and the poor distinctly widened in the late nineteenth century. A derivative of

this concentration process was the economic destruction of the independent family farmer, the bulwark of liberty in a republic. Rather than use the power of government to stem this spreading cancer, Populists believed that America's Gilded Age political elite aided the process through unneeded extravagance, financed through bonding schemes likely to force future generations into economic dependence.

To return America to the path charted at the nation's founding, late nineteenth century egalitarians devised a series of remedies which, when combined, formed the Omaha platform of 1892. With the exception of the Alliance's sub-treasury plan, each of the demands catalogued in the Populist's 1892 platform had appeared in previous third party manifestos. The People's party was only the largest and most successful of a series of late nineteenth century egalitarian movements which shared a common spirit rooted in the republican ideology of the American Revolution.

At first glance Populist remedies appear to be a hodge-podge of crank proposals which taken together reveal an ambivalence between proto-socialism and commitment to retrogressive small government. Republicanism provided late nineteenth century egalitarians with a common evaluation of Gilded Age development. There was some some diversity of opinion, however, as to the relative importance of specific remedies. Most adherents accepted the bulk of their party's programs to some degree. The unity of this thought in the

Populist's arsenal of demands can only be understood in terms of the republican ideology of the American revolution.

One lesson Populists learned from their understanding of the American Revolution was that all officeholders must be watched very closely. Power was considered ever aggressive. Liberty, on the other hand, was easily subverted if not vigilantly defended. When the Revolutionary leaders turned their attention to the problem of Americans retaining their liberties they visualized a republican government supported by an independent citizenry as the best safeguard. Individual economic independence was necessary to withstand the temptations and threats of those with political power. Only an egalitarian society, with widespread property ownership could insure that none would be so powerful as to have the ability to misuse power and none so poor as to be unable to withstand the encroachments of those wielding power.

With America's vast land reserves men such as Thomas Jefferson looked to widespread freehold tenure as the key to maintaining the required egalitarian state. Samuel Crock-er's origination of the free homes issue was thoroughly within this tradition. Republican government, according to Populists, should aim solely at promoting personal independence. The degeneration of freeholders into tenancy, on the other hand, forbode dire consequences for the nation. Populist correlations with tenancy in the 1890s in Oklahoma attest to the fact that they spoke to the concerns of those

upon the fringe of agricultural society. Socialists would take up the land issue as their own in the twentieth century.

Much of the legislation Populists promoted and supported in the Oklahoma legislatures was designed to stop the ongoing concentration of land ownership and protect the small freeholder. Because most homesteaders were quite poor, Populists advocated economy in government. High taxes to finance government spending could drive small holders into the clutches of mortgage companies or force sheriff's sales. Populist legislators also opposed bonding schemes. Because land was not taxable until the homesteader had proved his claim, local and territorial officials frequently wished to put off the cost of government operations until the tax base expanded. Populists suspected, sometimes quite correctly, that officials really just did not want to face the voters after significantly raising taxes to finance their own salaries. Populists also sought school land lease legislation that would secure the value of a renter's improvements to him (thus encouraging development), obtain a reasonable rent for the support of government and parcel out land in small plots suitable for farming, instead of ranching as Governor Renfrow had done.

Although Populists were quick to oppose anything they saw as extravagance in government, retrenchment was not their panacea, as it was for the Democrats. Populists joined De-

mocrats in opposing high salaries, extra clerk hire and in abolishing offices seen as unnecessary. So long as the populace was in economic trouble, they believed politicians should be leashed in their extravagance. Third party legislators, however, were willing to spend on relief to the needy, education and building roads. The militia and offices such as the oil inspector, on the other hand, were seen as unneeded sinecures for political favorites. The militia also conjured up visions of a standing army in an era which saw Grover Cleveland use the army to crush the Pullman strike.

When third party legislators achieved a modicum of power in 1897 many of them seemed to reverse their stand on clerk hire. This seeming inconsistency points to one of the most important facets of Populism, their anti-elitism. Populists viewed the cosmopolitan ethos as immoral. This easily translated into seeing exponents of the new ideology as conspiratorial. Cosmopolitan spokesmen forever dwelled upon the virtues of free enterprise while their disciples sought aid from the government in the form of tariffs, land grants and franchises. Considering the circumstances Populists naturally looked to the Founding Fathers' warnings about conspiracies to subvert their liberties. Once popular representatives achieved power and expected to rewrite the statute books, however, third party legislators no longer saw clerk hire in conspiratorial terms. Many Populist spokesmen, however, did.

The apparent Populist ambivalence about active government was rooted primarily in considerations of who would control the government. So long as elements hostile to their interests remained in power third party advocates seemed intent upon leashing them. Populists were particularly opposed to non-elected officer making policy. Independent regulatory agencies implied elite rule without popular control. The Board of Equalization's doubling of taxes in 1895 and the court's subsequent validation of the levy left taxpayers without direct recourse in a supposedly democratic system. Third party legislators were not, however, opposed to regulation and regularly introduced and supported the bills of others designed to control such agencies as railroads and banks. Abolishing the oil inspector's office was the only apparent exception. The issue was not agitated in terms of ending regulation, however, but on the grounds that the office was ineffective, and thus a sinecure.

In the national arena Populists looked to an active government as the salvation of the nation. They called for elected representatives to restore monetary policy to popular hands and then reverse the trend toward concentrated wealth with the graduated income tax. Greenbacks would be used to reflate the currency and provide needed credit in outlying regions of the nation. Postal savings banks would secure the deposits of the average citizen who often lost everything through the speculations of bankers. Populist

spokesmen called for government ownership of the railroads, telephones and telegraphs. They reasoned that such monopolies concentrated too much wealth and power into the hands of the few. Although this solution seemed to contradict the Populist's antipathy toward a the proliferation of offices, a return of the American people to their egalitarian heritage and popular control made active government acceptable

To facilitate the return of popular control over the political system Populists advocated a number of direct democracy reforms such as popular election of the president and senators, and the initiative and referendum.¹ Where Adam Smith feared the power of the government Populists feared the power of the few and looked to popular control of an active government as their savior.

The more advanced Populists, such as Leo Vincent, recognized that the frontier had closed and that many in the future would not be able to maintain their economic independence through freehold tenure. To achieve individual independence in an industrial age, Vincent and others promoted the cooperative industrial schemes of the Knights of Labor. As partners in an enterprise (which implied equality), rather than as wage earners (which meant subservience), industrial workers would be able to maintain their personal independence. This facet of Populism, of course, laid the

¹ The Organic act which opened Oklahoma to white settlement provided for the secret ballot, which Populists elsewhere endorsed.

groundwork for the next egalitarian wave, socialism.

Populist anti-elitism also manifested itself in a number of other ways. Third party legislators generally opposed bills that would professionalize what today is called the professions. Such preference smacked of granting a special franchise. More importantly, however, Populists wished to deny the Gilded Age elite's claim to special status. Such men were seen as wishing the government to grant them monopoly status because of their superior advantages, namely better education. Populists believed the people rather than the elite should judge the qualifications of professionals. The trend toward professionalization seemed akin to establishing an aristocracy. As modern medicine, for instance, was in its infancy, examples of patients knowing better than the doctor were, of course, numerous. The case of Samuel Crocker's refusal to allow the amputation of his arm in 1891 was a prime example. This anti-professionalism orientation, however, did have its bizzare side, such as John Furlong's faith healing. Populist anti-professionalism was primarily a cultural decision based upon denying their opponent's superior knowledge.

Although the People's party in Oklahoma exhibited some characteristics of both plains and southern Populism, the third party movement in the Oklahoma Territory more closely resembled that of Kansas than Texas. While most early Oklahomans were quite poor, and tenancy did become significant

in certain areas before 1900, most territorial farmers were able to secure a homestead. The major problem farmers faced in the West was holding on to the land they already owned. Social conditions in the South, however, frequently resembled class warfare. Furnish merchants and other landlords used their economic power to control a sometimes restive population.

While important individual exceptions can be found, most Oklahoma Populists living in northern dominated areas supported fusion, while most where southerners were numerous were middle of the roaders.² This was especially true for the rank and file, and suggests the cleavage centered more upon which major party constituted the local cosmopolitan elite than any major philosophical differences that may have existed.

How well most Populists understood the workings of the modern industrial economy can be questioned with some validity. While some Populists understood that many undesirable events in a modern industrial society are due to the impersonal workings of a complex economic system rather than conspiracies, many did not. Using the conspiracy metaphor, however, definitely labeled the opposition as immoral and provided more urgency and a stronger motivation for action

² This assessment is based more upon the nomination and support for middle-of-the-road of fusionist candidates for the territorial legislature than voting in the Delegate to Congress race. Neither the 1898 nor 1900 middle-of-the-road delegate nominees mounted active campaigns.

than considerations made upon calculations not invested with moral overtones. Although Populists chose economic policy as their battlefield, morality was their cause. They were not, however, unique in their conspiracy mindedness. The so-called anarchist plots associated with the agrarian and labor troubles of the late nineteenth century played an equally important role in the minds of their cosmopolitan rivals, who might have been expected to know better. Industrialism was in its infancy, however, and most men struggled to understand the meaning of its impact.

Populists certainly looked backward to an previous moral order for their inspiration. They did recognize, however, that commercial and industrial society was a permanent part of the American landscape. Instead of engaging in a frenzy of Luddite retrogression they attempted to address the problems they confronted, within the limits of their morally based mind set. They accepted industrialism, but demanded that it be made humane. The adoption of many of their solutions in the twentieth century attests to the practicality of their reforms. Populists wanted both the benefits of industrialization and a moral social order.

Many scholars have noted the almost religious fervor of the Populist appeal. For many the People's party replaced the church as their vehicle for moral expression. The apocalyptic vision of Populism encouraged a drive for quick victory. Populists believed that the crisis of the age was

upon them in 1896. The result would be either civilization or barbarism, they contended. Even many of the party's oldest and most noted leaders gave in to this appeal. Those not disheartened through this transition from justice to expediency clearly lost heart upon Bryan's defeat.

The nomination of William Jennings Bryan for president in 1896 saved the Democratic party from going the way of the Whigs. Three major parties vied for the allegiance of the American electorate in the 1890s. Had men such as Grover Cleveland controlled the Democratic party in 1896 the People's party could well have replaced it as the GOP's major rival. Had the People's party survived as a major force in American politics the American electorate would have been presented with a continuing debate over the commitment to capitalism. Instead, the great political debate of twentieth century America has been over how best to save capitalism.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

Manuscript Collections

The major reason Oklahoma Populism has been largely neglected as a research field is the dearth of manuscript materials pertinent to the subject. Ms. Merrily Cummings Ford of Glendora, California possesses several typescripts useful to the Kansas origins of Oklahoma Populism, namely Henry Vincent's "Henry Sez" and Leo Vincent's family biographies which Ms. Ford compiled as "The Invincible Vincents." Samuel Crocker's autobiography, which was written in pencil but later typed under the direction of Professor Royden Dangerfield of the University of Oklahoma, contains much useful information on the author's activities as an egalitarian spokesman, both in the Oklahoma Boomer Movement and later as a Populist leader. Although the manuscript was never published it is located in the book collection of the Oklahoma Historical Society in Oklahoma City. The Royden Dangerfield Papers at the Western Historical Collections at the University of Oklahoma also contain a number of other interesting and useful typescripts, particularly Dennis Flynn's short

memior. The Western History Collections also holds the newly accessioned papers of Sidney Clarke, which contain significant information on his activities in the Boomer Movement and his effort to be appointed governor of Oklahoma in 1893. The Interior Department's territorial papers (1889-1912), which are on microfilm, also contain a limited amount of useful information about politics in the territorial period. The papers of Frederick S. Barde and Fred L. Wenner at the Oklahoma Historical Society and Leslie P. Ross and Milton L. Turner at the Western History Collections of the University of Oklahoma also contain information of major party affairs in the territorial era, but little on Populism.

Newspapers

Because individual Populists left so few resources for historians and since it took less than \$150 to establish a small newspaper in the 1890s, most works on the People's party rely heavily upon the period's highly partisan press. Students of Oklahoma history are blessed with perhaps the finest state newspaper collection in the nation. The Oklahoma Press Association founded the Oklahoma Historical Society in 1893. The Historical Society has been on the exchange lists of most Oklahoma papers ever since. Although many papers published between 1889 and mid-1983 have been lost, the Oklahoma Historical Society holds almost every ed-

ition of each paper published in Oklahoma after mid-1893. Those published before World War I are now all on microfilm.

Most nineteenth century newspapers rejected the charade of nonpartisanship prevalent in America today and openly represented the viewpoint of a political party, much as present-day European papers do. In the 1890s most major Oklahoma towns had at least three newspapers, one for each of the active parties. Frank Greer's Guthrie Oklahoma State Capital was the territorial mouthpiece of the Republican party. Because Guthrie was the territorial capital, the GOP the largest party in the territorial days and most editions of Greer's paper, even between 1889 and 1893, have survived, it is the most useful source on Oklahoma politics in the 1890s. Its Democratic counterpart was Roy Hoffman's Guthrie Oklahoma Leader. The State Capital and Leader both appeared in daily and weekly versions. Since the weekly version was normally a compilation of the previous week's daily editions for farmers, most information about Populism can be found in the weekly editions. Populists sponsored a series of Weekly Newspapers in Guthrie beginning with the State Journal in 1890. No copies of this paper are known to still exist. The Guthrie West and South succeeded the State Journal in 1891, and was in turn succeeded by Leo Vincent's Oklahoma Representative in 1894 and the fusionist Oklahoma State Register in 1898. John S. Allan's Norman Peoples Voice, which first appeared in 1892, was the most notable third party pa-

per in southern Oklahoma. Its Democratic and Republican rivals were the Norman State Democrat and Norman Transcript, respectively. Other Populist newspapers of note are the Stillwater Payne County Populist, Alva Review, El Reno Populist Platform (which was renamed the Industrial Headlight in 1895), Kingfisher Reformer, Enid Coming Events, Chandler Publicist and Tecumseh Leader. Many of the smaller Populist organs, such as Thomas Smith's Newkirk Kay County Populist, primarily contained ready-print articles from larger third party papers and the Populist's news service, the National Reform Press Association. Most ready-prints came from the midwest and also appeared in the larger Populist papers, even in southern dominated areas.

Almost every town to have a Populist paper in the 1890s also had a Democratic and a Republican rival in the same locality. Information on the partisan affiliation, day of publication, editor and number of subscribers for each newspaper can be obtained from N. W. Ayers, American Newspaper Annual. Ayers also provides useful information on commercial facilities, terrain and crops in the various Oklahoma localities.

For the south Kansas origins to the Oklahoma and Kansas People's party there are two particularly important newspapers. Samuel Crocker's Oklahoma War Chief (Arkansas City and Caldwell, Kansas) was the official mouthpiece of the Oklahoma Boomer Movement. It also contained substantial doses

of greenback and anti-monopoly propaganda. Henry and Leo Vincent's American Nonconformist and Kansas Industrial Liberator (Winfield, Kansas) was relocated to south Kansas from the Vincents' southwest Iowa home in 1886 and successively promoted the fortunes of the Greenback, Union Labor and People's parties. It was moved to Indianapolis in 1891. The Nonconformist's Republican rival was Ed Greer's Winfield Courier. Ed Greer was the older brother of Frank Greer, the editor of the Guthrie Oklahoma State Capital.

Government Documents

The published results of the 1900 United States census are far more useful than those of the 1890 United States census for determining the agricultural, commercial, population and wealth patterns of the Oklahoma Territory during the Populist era. Because Oklahoma was opened to white settlement only in 1889, and farmers suffered drought conditions the first two years, patterns derived from the 1900 census are probably more accurate for Oklahoma in 1892 or 1893 than those gleaned from the 1890 census. Oklahoma also contained only seven counties in 1890 (six of which were enlarged in the two succeeding years), while all twenty three counties listed in the 1900 census were opened to white settlement by the fall of 1893 (part of Lincoln was opened in 1895). The most important problem with the 1900 census is the lack of place of birth information for the territory.

Geographer Michael Roark of the University of Missouri at Cape Girardeau, however, was kind enough to furnish the author with the results of a 5% sample of the 1900 census manuscripts which he conducted for his dissertation.

The annual Report of the Governor of Oklahoma to the Secretary of the Interior contains the results of the biennial territorial census used for redistricting the Oklahoma legislature during the territorial period and a tabulation of the value of taxable property. Although the population information is highly useful, property values taken from this source must be used carefully. The land of homesteaders was not taxable for the first five years of residence. The governor's report also contains information on transportation, commerce and government expenses. The House and Council Journals for all but the first legislature contain highly useful tabulations of roll call votes and action taken on specific bills. The Journal of the First Session of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Oklahoma (Guthrie: State Capital Printing Co., 1890) combines both the House and Council journals without tabulation, and is quite rare. A copy can be found at the legislative library in the capital building at Oklahoma City.

Farm commodity prices were secured from several sources. Oklahoma Agricultural Statistics, 1894-1947 Miscellaneous Publication MP-14 (Stillwater: Oklahoma Agricultural Experiment Station, 1947) contains some useful data. So does His-

terical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1957 (Washington: Bureau of the Census, 1960). Data on agriculture can also be found in Guthrie farm journal, Home, Field and Forum, August, 1895, which Populist George Soule edited.

Works Progress Administration indexes of turn-of-the-century mugbook histories and newspapers are located at the Oklahoma Historical Society in Oklahoma City. These were essential to compiling the collective biography of territorial legislators, as well as providing useful information on other men prominent in Oklahoma politics in the 1890s. Although the mugbook index is quite extensive, the newspaper index contains citations from only a few papers.

Published Primary Sources

There is a substantial amount of published primary material pertinent to the Oklahoma settlement and territorial days. Dan Peery, "The First Two years," Chronicles of Oklahoma (Part I) 7, no. 3 (September, 1928): 278-322; (Part II) 7 no. 4 (December, 1928): 419-57 and (Part III) 8, no. 1 (February, 1929): 94-128 provides a vivid portrayal of early Oklahoma and the first legislature. As a Democratic member of the 1890 legislature representing Oklahoma County, Peery was understandably critical of those Populists who deserted Oklahoma City in the capital fight. A more favorable treat-

ment can be found in Marion Tuttle Rock, Illustrated History of Oklahoma (Topeka: J. B. Hamilton & Son, 1890). Rock was a Populist. Other useful sources on early Oklahoma local history include E. Bee Guthry, "Early Days in Payne County," Chronicles of Oklahoma 3, no. 1 (April, 1925): 74-80 and Irwin Jeffs (Bunky), The First Eight Months (Oklahoma City: McMaster Publishing Co., 1890). Guthry was a Cleveland Democrat. Little is known of Jeffs, who left the territory shortly after the publication of his book. Information on the 1890 legislature also can be obtained from W. W. Merten, "Oklahoma Territory's First Legislature," Sturm's Oklahoma Magazine 5, no. 5 (January, 1908): 36-41 and on the 1893 assembly from Leslie P. Ross, "The Second Territorial Legislature," Sturm's Oklahoma magazine 6, no. 2 (May, 1908): 80-82. Both were prominent members of the legislature they wrote about. Merten was a Republican and Ross a Cleveland Democrat. Perhaps the best primary account of living conditions to emanate from the Oklahoma 1890s is Helen Candee, "Social Conditions in Our Newest Territory," Forum 25, no. 4 (June, 1898): 426-37. Internal evidence suggests Candee was a Democrat. W. F. Rightmire, "The Alliance Movement in Kansas-Origins of the People's Party," Transactions of the Kansas State Historical Society 9 (1905-1906): 1-8 provides information, some of it of questionable validity, on the south Kansas origins of the People's party.

Between 1888 and 1900 more than 100 novels of the utopian variety were published in America. Samuel Crocker (Theodore Oceanic Islet), That Island (Oklahoma City: C. E. Streeter & Co., 1892) was surely one of the more detailed, and thus boring, of this genre. Crocker's novel was written specifically for an Oklahoma audience. It maps out the transition of a bountiful island nation (a thinly disguised version of the Populist view of America in the 1890s) from oppressive capitalism to Populism. The transformation occurs in a single day when the masses read a book on political economy, authored by a genius of old wealth (Crocker was born on an English estate, although he was by no means wealthy) and distributed by a secret reform group (reminiscent of the Union Labor party's Videttes). The book is useful for discerning the details of how a Populist state might operate and provides some insight into the third party expectation that education would cause a sudden, massive political revolt against those in power. This is useful to understanding the Populist move to fusion in 1896. Crocker was a fusionist.

Secondary Sources on Oklahoma

The most useful general studies of Oklahoma history are H. Wayne and Anne Hodges Morgan, Oklahoma: A Bicentennial History (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1977) and Arrell M. Gibson, Oklahoma: A History of Five Centuries (Norman:

Harlow Publishing Co., 1965). For the boomer-rancher conflict which preceded the opening of the Oklahoma Territory to white settlement there are a number of fine studies. Arrell M. Gibson, Frontier Historian: The Life and Work of Edward Everett Dale (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1975) combines essays on Dale, who was a cowboy himself in the 1890s, and reprints several of Dale's best sketches of cowboy life. Carl Rister, Land Hunger: David L. Payne and the Boomers (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1942) still provides valuable insights into the boomer movement and Stan Hoig, David L. Payne: The Oklahoma Boomer (Oklahoma City: Western Heritage Books, 1980) is useful for the activities of this early boomer leader. William W. Savage, Jr., The Cherokee Strip Livestock Association: Federal Regulation and the Cattlemen's Last Frontier (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1973) details rancher attempts to resist the encroachments of farm interests. Dan W. Peery, "Colonel Crocker and the Boomer Movement," Chronicles of Oklahoma 13, no. 3 (September, 1935): 273-95 gleans information from Royden Dangerfield's typescript of Crocker's autobiography. The article downplays Crocker's egalitarian political activities in a manner reminiscent of the nonpartisanship of the Progressive Era.

There are a good number of sources relevant to the settlement and development of Oklahoma. Older studies such as Solon Buck, "Settlement of Oklahoma," Wisconsin Academy of

Science, Arts and Letters, Transactions 15, no. 2 (1907): 325-80 and Gilbert Fite, "Pioneering in West Texas, the Indian Territory and Oklahoma, 1865-1900, The Farmers Frontier, 1865-1900. (New York: Holt Rinehart & Winston, 1966) are still quite usable. Norman Crocket, "The Opening of Oklahoma: A Businessman's Frontier," Chronicles of Oklahoma 55, no. 1 (Spring, 1978): 85-95, provides insight into the activities of those scrambling for advantage in the cosmopolitan areas of early Oklahoma. Jerome O. Steffen, "Stages of Development on Oklahoma History," in H. Wayne and Anne Hodges Morgan, Oklahoma: New Views of the Forty-Sixth State. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982) sets the economic development of the Oklahoma Territory in the context of broad national trends. Because Michael Frank Doran, "The Origin of Culture Areas in Oklahoma, 1830-1900." (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Oregon, 1974) was completed before the 1900 census manuscripts were opened to scholars, Michael Owen Roark, "Oklahoma Territory: Frontier Development, Migration and Culture Areas," (Ph. D. dissertation, Syracuse University, 1979) supercedes the older study. Both provide valuable insights into the mingling of cultures in Oklahoma. N. James Wilson, "Oklahoma and Midwestern Farmers in Transition, 1880-1910, and Donald E. Green, "Beginnings of Wheat Culture in Oklahoma," in Donald E. Green (ed.), Rural Oklahoma. (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Historical Society, 1977) provide useful studies of the development of agriculture in Oklahoma.

There are a number of sources which deal with political development in the Oklahoma Territory. Most focus at least as much attention upon intraparty maneuvering as interparty conflict. Danney Goble, Progressive Oklahoma: The Making of a New Kind of State (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), which also provides insightful chapters on settlement and development, is the best. Goble's ideas are also summarized in the opening chapter of James R. Scales and Danney Goble, Oklahoma Politics: A History (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982). Older studies such as Dora Ann Stewart, The Government and Development of the Oklahoma Territory (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1933) and Roy Gittinger, The Formation of the State of Oklahoma, 1803-1906 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1942) are also useful. The Spring, 1975, edition of the Chronicles of Oklahoma contains biographies of each of the territorial governors. Most are quite good. Other works valuable to the study of territorial politics are George Eldon Norvell, "A History of the First legislative Assembly of the territory of Oklahoma," (Master's thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1946); Eldon L. Clemance, "A History of the Democratic Party in Oklahoma Territory." (Master's thesis, Oklahoma State University, 1966) and Victor Murdock, "Dennis T. Flynn," Chronicles of Oklahoma. 16, no. 2 (June, 1940): 106-113. Glen Shirley, Temple Houston, Lawyer With a Gun (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980) provides insight into

the life and character of a prominent Cleveland Democrat. Berlin Chapman, "The Enid 'Railroad War:' An Archival Study," Chronicles of Oklahoma 43, no. 2 (Summer, 1965): 126-79 is the definitive study on this important subject.

The best source for the Kansas Origins of Oklahoma Populism is Harold Richard Piehler, "Henry Vincent: A Case Study in Political Deviancy," (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Kansas, 1971). Piehler's findings on Vincent's Kansas sojourn are summarized in Harold Piehler, "Henry Vincent: Kansas Populist and Radical-Reform Journalist," Kansas History 2, no. 1 (Spring, 1979): 14-25. Charles Richard Denton, "The American Nonconformist and Kansas Industrial Liberator: A Union Labor-Populist Newspaper, 1886-1891," (Master's thesis, Kansas State College of Pittsburg, 1961) also provides some interesting information. James R. Shaber, "An Interpretation of the Agrarian Reform Movement in Oklahoma from 1890-1923." (Master's thesis, University of Tulsa, 1959) is based largely upon secondary materials. John Edward Thompson, "Radical Ideological Responses to the Closing of the Frontier in Oklahoma, 1889-1923." (Ph. D. dissertation, Rutgers University, 1982) provides an interesting contrast between radical and reform oriented agrarian political expression, but also is primarily based upon secondary materials.

Most secondary works on Oklahoma Populism are thin and sometimes inaccurate. Elmer Fraker, "The Spread of Populism

into the Oklahoma Territory." (Master's thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1938) is based mostly upon secondary materials. Elmer L. Fraker, "The Election of J. Y. Callahan," Chronicles of Oklahoma. 33, no.3 (Autumn, 1955): 350-59, benefits from an interview with the subject's daughter, but is so riddled with factual errors that it must be considered unreliable. Donald K. Pickens, "Oklahoma Populism and Historical Perspective." Chronicles of Oklahoma. 47, no. 4 (Winter, 1969-1970): 377-387, assesses the validity of Richard Hofstadter, The Age of Reform: Bryan to F. D. R. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955) in the Oklahoma context and rightfully contends that the findings of C. Vann Woodward, Norman Pollack and Walter T. K. Nugent are more applicable. Pickens also contends that middle-of-the-roaders moved into the Socialist party after the turn of the century. At least two of the five examples he presents, however, were fusionists.

H. L. Meredith, "The Agrarian Reform Press in Oklahoma." Chronicles of Oklahoma. 50, no. 2 (Spring, 1972): 82-94, provides useful information on the operation of several Populist newspapers and his "The 'Middle Way,' The Farmer's Alliance in the Indian Territory, 1889-1896." Chronicles of Oklahoma. 47, no. 4 (Winter, 1969-1970): 377-387, is the only work on this subject. His contention that a leadership decision rather than the lack of elections prevented the formation of a Populist party in the Indian Territory is debatable. Terry Paul Wilson, "The Demise of Populism in Ok-

lahoma Territory." Chronicles of Oklahoma. 43, no. 3 (Autumn, 1965): 365-74, fails to recognize the significance of the Free Silver ticket in 1896 as a means of circumventing the anti-fusion law. He rightfully attributes fusion to economic desperation, the free silver panacea and a penchant for pseudo-religious causes, but neglects causes more specific to Oklahoma, such as the doubling of taxes and the Republican gerrymander of 1895. He also inaccurately assumes southern-born Populists returned to the Democratic party immediately after 1896.

Secondary Sources on Populism

The secondary materials available on American Populism are both extensive and quite varied. As with all historical subjects, interpretations have varied with the environments in which they were produced. In the 1890s eastern-oriented scholars largely dominated American historical writing. Establishment-oriented in their economic and social attitudes, easterners gave agrarian unrest little attention. When they did focus upon the protest movements of the Plains and the South they were usually condescending or even openly hostile.

At the very same time Populism focused attention upon the South and the West, a number of young historians from the affected regions were beginning their careers. Frederick

Jackson Turner, who presented the more liberal focus of this rising generation, became the most notable scholar of this genre. The thought and writing of Turner and his generation was a scholarly expression of the newly emerging reform sentiment known as Progressivism. Very much in the mode of the Populists, the Progressive historians tended to recast American history in a series of dualisms roughly paralleling the "people" versus the "interests" struggle they associated with their own era. Sometimes they saw struggles between sections, such as North versus South during the Civil War and Reconstruction. The conflict of the Populist era, however, was seen as between East and West, with the South joining the latter. Usually such sectional dichotomies only represented deeper economic cleavages in American society. Themes such as city versus country, farmers versus businessmen (with workers as a swing vote), human rights versus property rights and Hamiltonianism and Jeffersonianism pervaded the writings of the progressive historians.

Frederick Jackson Turner perceived Populism in just such sectional and, at base, economic terms. Turner contended that the continual advance of settlement across the American landscape established a series of frontier situations which rejuvenated the egalitarian roots of American society and accounted for the continuing uniqueness of America's democratic development. For Turner, the frontier acted as a safety-valve, allowing the nation to avoid potential unrest

from those elements which had lost out in the struggle for economic independence in more developed regions. In Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Problem of the West," Atlantic Monthly 78 (September, 1896): 289-97, he views Populism as the backwash of frontier egalitarian traditions when the frontier closed and the safety-valve disappeared. Because of the closing of the frontier, Turner forecast a tumultuous future for America, which in a sense can be considered a milder form of the Populists' own apocalyptic view of the future.

The Progressive historians vaguely associated democracy with the frontier West and discovered a series of conflicts pitting the regenerate West against the entrenched economic privilege of the East which stretched all the way back to colonial times, giving depth and historical meaning to the conflicts of their own day. This produced a rough association in the minds of Progressive historians between the reform movements of the past and Progressivism. Solon Buck, The Granger Movement (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1913) and The Agrarian Crusade (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1920) are usable presentations of this theme. The Progressive historian's magnum opus on Populism, however, came with John D. Hicks, The Populist Revolt (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1931). Hicks presented Populism as thoroughly within the Jeffersonian and Jacksonian traditions, and as a predecessor to Progressivism. More re-

cent historians have not substantially undermined his elucidation of the underlying economic grievances of the farmer as the primary cause for Populism. Progressive historians presented Populism primarily as interests group politics, with have-nots demanding their fair share of the nation's bounty.

Like Turner his mentor, Hicks was a midwesterner and tended to overstress the role of his section while neglecting the southern contribution to the Populist revolt. When the depression of the 1930s finally undermined the promises of the New South boosters, a number of young scholars from this section began domesticating the Progressive interpretation for their own region. The most notable scholar of this group, C. Vann Woodward, contended that the strife of the 1890s was not only sectional, but also between farm and industry within the South itself. Woodward found his hero of southern liberalism in Tom Watson, who resisted the racism of his era and attempted to unite poor blacks and whites in a rational, economic-interest political coalition. C. Vann Woodward, Tom Watson, Agrarian Rebel (New York, Macmillan & Co., 1938) presented the progressive interpretation of southern Populism and laid the groundwork for his greatest literary triumph, Origins of the New South (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1951). Again the American past was seen as an arena of conflict between contending forces, namely the "classes" and the "masses." As with the

Populists, economics was the battleground, but morality was the question. Woodward asked many of the same questions the Populists did; namely who is in charge and what are they after? Woodward's scholarly approach, however, allowed the expression of his disapproval only through the subtle medium of irony. A prime example is recounting the story of the defeated and disillusioned Tom Watson turning the "nigger question" upon his enemies and routing them in the new century, but with disastrous consequences for southern race relations.

Several older state studies, presented in the progressive tradition, are still quite usable today. Alex Mathews Arnett, The Populist Movement in Georgia (New York: Columbia University Press, 1922) presents the agrarian revolt in terms of the "wool-hat boys" versus the "Bourbon oligarchy." Roscoe C. Martin, The People's Party in Texas (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1933) is the effort of a political scientist who found support for the People's party's strongest among whites located on poor farm land. William Dubose Sheldon, Populism in the Old Dominion (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1935) is an undergraduate essay which rightfully found its way into print. Albert D. Kirwin, The Revolt of the Rednecks, Mississippi Politics, 1876-1925 (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1951) cast the Populist revolt in the form of a study in class conflict.

There are several more recent state studies of Populism in the progressive tradition. Henry Clay Dethloff, "Populism and Reform in Louisiana," (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Missouri, 1964) contends Populists and other anti-lottery elements stimulated a moral reawakening which led to reform. William Ivy Hair, Bourbonism and Agrarianism (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1969) shows how Bourbon elements crushed biracial agrarianism in Louisiana. William Warren Rogers, One-Gallused Rebellion: Agrarianism in Alabama, 1865-1896 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1970) presents the third party effort as a progressive reaction to economic distress which sought to achieve permanent benefits for both poor blacks and poor whites. Martin Gerald Towe, "The People's party in Missouri," (Ph. D. dissertation, St. Louis University, 1971) presents Populism as rural interest group politics. In "The People's Party in Arkansas," (Ph. D. dissertation, Tulane University, 1975), John McDaniel Wheeler shows Populism was strongest in the Arkansas piedmont, where farmers attempted commercial agriculture on poor soil. Richard Leverne Niswonger, "Arkansas Democratic politics, 1896-1920," (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 1974) contends progressive Democrats undercut Populism and created a two faction system (within the Democratic party) which resembled a two party cleavage after 1896. Arnold Mark Pavlovsky, "'We Busted Because We Failed,' Florida Politics,

1880-1908," (Ph. D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1974) presents the Alliance and Populist movements as economically motivated, but undermined by the race issue.

As the nation passed through the crucible of the great Depression and the New Deal, a spirit of reform swept through academia, even infiltrating the northeast. The role of ideology in mobilizing the masses also seemed to gain importance in the 1930s and 1940s with the rise of Hitler. Not surprisingly an eastern scholar found intellectual origins from his own region to the economic and political ferment of the South and West in the 1890s. Chester McArthur Destler, American Radicalism, 1865-1901 (New London: Connecticut College Press, 1946) uncovered radical eastern urban roots to a number of supposedly western agrarian stereotypes and proposals. He thus portrayed Populism as the radical synthesis of an ideological intercourse between city and country, East and West. Donald Edgar Walters, "Populism in California, 1889-1900," (Ph. D. dissertation, University of California at Berkeley, 1952) shows the strong connection between Bellamy Nationalism and Populism on the west coast. Bellamy was a native of Boston.

While the United States and the Soviet Union were allies during World War II a communist interpretation of Populism emerged from the pen of American Communist party ideologist Anna Rochester. The Populist Movement in the United States (New York: International Publishers, 1943) placed Populism

in a Lenninist framework, detailing certain alleged parallels between the American agrarian movement and Soviet socialism.

While the turbulent 1930s reminded scholars of the essential divisions in America's past, the Second World War and the 1950s did just the opposite. With Pearl Harbor Americans pulled together as never before. Postwar troubles with the Soviet Union kept this syndrome alive in the following decade. In times which seemed to require national unity, American scholars discovered an essential continuity to the American past. Perceived foreign threats, however, were not the only factors directing American historiography. World War II caused the greatest redistribution in wealth in American history. Not only did full employment with massive government spending (with windfall profits taxes to keep the rich from getting too much richer) finally create a truly middle-class economy, but the spread of commerce and industry to the South and the West created a more homogeneous and integrated nation. Like Tocqueville's portrait of America, consensus, or revisionist, historians found America adventurous in manner, but conservative in substance.

Since the scholarly community was not immune to the more conservative national mood of the 1950s, revisionists reduced the importance of traditional turning points in American history, rediscovered continuity in the national past and emphasized the basic stability of American institutions.

They either denied or trivialized as unnecessary previous conflicts in American history. The relatively new use of psychoanalysis in social science, which had its roots in wartime concerns about Adolf Hitler's behavior, helped explain conflict as irrational. Scholars of all backgrounds and political outlooks came to see Populism as less a realistic response to actual grievances than as an irrational reaction to their declining status in the late nineteenth century. By far the best and most influential consensus interpretation of Populism can be found in Richard Hofstadter, Age of Reform: From Bryan to F. D. R. (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1955). In the consensus spirit of homogenizing the American past, Hofstadter spelled Populism with a small "p" and included all silverites. A liberal disenchanted with America's weak efforts at social reconstruction, Hofstadter attributed this failure to the lack of a truly radical American past. He saw Populists not as forward-looking reformers, but as nostalgic, backward-looking petty capitalists. Instead of pushing for real reform, Hofstadter suggested that Populists exhibited provincialism, a conspiracy syndrome and a penchant for scapegoatism which manifested itself in nativism, anti-semitism, anti-intellectualism and anglophobia. They were harrassed little country businessmen, insecure about their declining status in an industrializing America.

Hofstadter's concerns about the Populists' allegedly retrograde tendencies articulated the concerns of his era. With the McCarthy scare, less careful scholars (usually not historians) produced even more critical analyses of the agrarian movement. Perhaps the most bizzare was Victor Perkiss, "Populist Influences on American Fascism," Western Political Quarterly 10, no. 2 (June, 1957): 35057. Perkiss provided a highly questionable definition of Fascism which included middle class economic programs, anglophobia, anti-semitism, plebicitary democracy and a commitment to conspiracy theories, especially about the "money power." His loose application of this definition to Populists, however, suffered from its equal applicability to previous American egalitarian figures, such as Jefferson and Jackson.

Hofstadter's seductive analysis of Populism did not remain unchallenged for long. C. Vann Woodward, "The Populist and the Intellectual," The American Scholar 28, no. 1 (Winter, 1959): 55-72 presented most of the criticisms future scholars would level against the consensus school. While acknowledging previous historians had been too uncritical of the agrairans, Woodward provided evidence that the Populists' opponents were usually worse offenders, and asked if it was fair to emphasize traits not primarily associated with the movement and ignore the more egregious failings of their opponents on the same subjects.

Because Hofstadter's analysis of Populism was more of a think-piece than a well researched interpretation of the movement, several scholarly careers were launched by shooting holes in Hofstadter's, Age of Reform. Walter T. K. Nugent studied Kansas Populist attitudes in detail and absolved third party advocates in this important Populist state of irrationality (and particularly anti-semitism) in The Tolerant Populists (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963). Norman Pollack went farther, and in studying the rhetoric of western Populism found a coherent and radical critique of industrializing America, similar to Marxism and, in his mind, valid for contemporary America in The Populist Response to Industrial America (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1962). In Norman Pollack, "Fear of Man: Populism, Authoritarianism and the Historian," Agricultural History 39, no. 2 (April, 1965): 59-67 he attributed the denigration of Populism to elitist historian's fear of the masses, particularly in light of the careers of Hitler and Stalin. Irwin Unger denied Pollack's charges in the same edition of Agricultural History, and emphasized Hofstadter's theme of Populists being naive, simplistic and essentially retrograde. H. Wayne Morgan, "Populism and the decline of Agriculture," in H. Wayne Morgan (ed.), The Gilded Age (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1970) provided an economic explanation of Populism which conceded some of the negative characteristics the consensus revisionists had found.

While anti-consensus efforts brought considerable enlightenment to the study of the agrarian crusade in the decade after Hofstadter's Age of Reform appeared, the light seemed to turn to heat in the mid-1960s. This mirrored the growing convulsions appearing in American society at the time. In the same edition of Agricultural History that contained Pollack and Unger's tirades, J. Rogers Hollingsworth found this debate a dead-end until a better social history of the 1890s determined exactly who constituted the average Populist. Hollingsworth alluded to a newly developing field of historical research which historians Samuel P. Hays, Lee Benson and Allan Bogue were pioneering. In a major paper distributed at the 1964 American Historical Association convention, Hays criticized the narrative approach to writing history for its preoccupation with prominent individuals, dramatic episodes and ideological combat over national policy positions. Hays' sympathies clearly laid with the consensus school. He particularly denounced the progressive historian's tendency to focus upon ritual clashes between the "people" and the "interests." Instead of focusing upon the rhetoric of leaders, Hays contended, historians should delve into the subtlties of structures, systems and local relations to discover the social context in which large masses of people actually lived. To do this, election returns, legislative roll call votes and census materials became powerful tools for constructing the social basis of

political behavior. Social science historians began creating research designs which owed their genesis to the statistical techniques of sociology and political science. They then led their readers through the details of their assumptions and methods as they presented their findings.

In "Some Parameters of Populism," Agricultural History 40, no. 4 (October, 1966): 255-270, Walter T. K. Nugent examined mortgage data on county level political leaders in central Kansas (a hotbed of Populism) and concluded that third party leaders were less speculative than their mainstream party counterparts, which matched Populist rhetoric. O. Gene Clanton, Kansas Populism (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1969) also studied the Kansas third party leadership in detail and identified them as rural and middle-class. A belief in the efficacy of government intervention was the only tenet he found that they all had in common.

Stanley B. Parsons, The Populist Context: Rural versus Urban Power on a Great Plains Frontier (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1973) brought the rural-urban theme which Robert Dykstra had pioneered in "Town-Country Conflict: A Hidden Dimension in American Social History," Agricultural History 38, no. 4 (October, 1964): 195-204 into full flower. Parsons found a continuous tug-of-war between farmers and village elites for political and economic leadership in six representative Nebraska counties. He contend-

ed that most radical populist rhetoric came from nationally syndicated "boilerplate" articles, and seldom reflected local sentiments. According to Parsons, Populists simply wanted better entry into the existing system. They were small-time rural businessmen reacting to economic circumstances through interest group politics.

In Populism to Progressivism in Alabama (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), Sheldon Hackney also finds a correlation between support for the People's party and geographic isolation from towns and villages. A combination of geographic mobility and downward social mobility made supporters peripheral to the dominant society. Rather than reformers, however, Hackney finds outsiders attempting to enter the system. They were power rather than reform oriented. Although Hackney admits that Populists were less imbued with the mythology of the New South, he contends there was no conflict over ideology. Populists accepted the existing society. They just wanted better entry into it. Jerry Wayne DeVine, "Free Silver and Alabama Politics, 1880-1896," (Ph. D. dissertation, Auburn University, 1980) also presents Alabama Populists as similar to their democratic opponents in their attitude toward government power.

While Hackney deals quite superficially with the race question (in the form of black Republican leader's attitudes toward fusion) other scholars have addressed the subject more directly. Jack Abramowitz, "The Negro In the Populist

Movement," Journal of Negro History 38, no. 3 (July, 1953): 257-289 found C. Vann Woodward's contention that Populists behaved well on the race question correct. At the opposite end of the spectrum, Robert Saunders, " Journal of Negro History 54, no. 3 (July, 1969): 240-261 contends that Democrats and Populists were essentially similar in their racial attitudes and political tactics. Gerald H. Gaither, Blacks and the Populist Revolt: Ballots and Bigotry in the "New South" (University: University of Alabama Press, 1977) holds these earlier assessments to be simplistic. Gaither found a meaningful biracial Populist coalition based upon self-interest, which degenerated into interracial discord as white Populists realized they would not receive the bulk of black votes.

J. Morgan Kousser, The Shaping of the Southern Politics: Suffrage Restriction and the Establishment of the One-Party South, 1880-1910 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974) uses sophisticated statistical techniques to show disfranchisement was a conservative plot designed to suppress white political dissent rather than simply to eliminate blacks from the political system. Worth Robert Miller, "Building a Progressive Coalition in Texas: The Populist-Reform Democrat Rapprochement, 1900-1907," Journal of Southern History (forthcoming) shows progressives led disfranchisement, which was aimed exclusively at blacks, in order to fasten Populist elements to their wing of the Democratic party in Texas.

Peter H. Argersinger, "'A Place on the Ballot,' Fusion Politics and Antifusion Laws," American Historical Review 85, no. 2 (April, 1980):287-306 presents the case for legal restrictions helping to destroy the People's party in the West.

With the cultural awakening of minority groups (blacks, hispanics and native Americans, for instance) in the 1960s and 1970s, it is not surprising that the sociological approach to late nineteenth century American history produced an ethno-cultural school of thought. Paul Kleppner, The Cross of Culture: A Social Analysis of Midwestern Politics, 1850-1900 (New York: The Free Press, 1970) and Richard Jensen, The Winning of the Midwest: Social and Political Conflict, 1888-1896 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971) contended that cultural factors, especially religion and ethnicity, were at least as important in explaining partisan choice as economic factors. In place of a struggle between the "people" and the "interests," ethno-culturalists posited a system of political affiliation based upon "pietist" and "liturgist" religious categories. As people rarely change their religious outlook, the ethno-cultural interpretation is more in harmony with the precepts of consensus history. Both downplay the importance of economic conflict and dramatic turning points in American history. Joanne Elizabeth Wheeler, "The Origins of Populism in the Political Structure of a Midwestern State: Partisan Preference in Illinois, 1876-1892," (Ph. D. dissertation, State

University of New York at Buffalo, 1976) contends that the People's party provided an alternative for those evangelicals disenchanted with the GOP, but who could not stomach Democratic party.

James Edward Wright, The Politics of Populism: Dissent in Colorado (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974) and Peter H. Argersinger, Populism and Politics: William Alfred Pepper and the People's Party (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1974) both use social science techniques. Wright and Argersinger, however, each use narrative approaches, with structural analysis as supplements, and highly qualify the force of the ethno-cultural factors for the Populist era. Wright finds both ethnic and economic conflict in late nineteenth century Colorado. It is economic conditions endemic to the state, particularly the problems of silver miners and irrigation farmers, Wright contends, which transformed the consensus politics of the 1880s into the essentially economic conflict of the Populist period.

The conclusions of historians of the People's party in other mountain states are generally consistent with those of Wright. William Joseph Gaboury, "Dissension in the Rockies: A History of Idaho Populism," (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Idaho, 1966) shows underprivileged farmers and workers made up the bulk of the third party effort. Thomas A. Clinch, Urban Populism and Free Silver in Montana (Helena: University of Montana Press, 1970) contends that the third

party movement in Montana was almost exclusively a labor movement. Robert W. Larson, New Mexico Populism (Boulder: Colorado Associated University Press, 1974) presents the the People's party as a pragmatic, multi-issue movement originating in conflicts essentially indigenous to the territory. Each of these interpretations is consistent with the progressive interpretation of American Populism.

In a sense, Argersinger's effort is more ambitious than Wright's. He analyzes the career of William A. Peffer within the context of both his Kansas constituency and the larger framework of the national movement. Through statistical analysis, Argersinger concludes that Populism was a political movement which grew from real economic grievances. He finds the energetic reform movement of the early 1890s, however, transformed into an ineffective adjunct of the Democratic party in the mid-1890s, as ex-Republicans drop out and ex-Democrats join. Argersinger is more strident in rejecting the ethno-cultural assumptions of Kleppner, et. al. His identification of ex-Republicans as middle-of-the-roads and ex-Democrats as fusionists, however, makes the movement seem rather transient, which is at odds with his portrayal of Populism as a promising cause which was betrayed.

Robert W. Cherny, Populism, Progressivism and the Transformation of Nebraska Politics, 1885-1912 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981) is a later study in the tradition of Argersinger and Wright. Cherny found cultural

politics most important in the pre-Populist era, when political amateurs dominated and high turnover in office occurred. Cherny contends partisan choice turned upon economic themes in the first half of the 1890s. During the Populist era the GOP became the party of prosperity, while the People's party represented the underdog, and Democrats drew primarily from prosperous antiprohibitionists. Cherny finds Populism cutting across ethnic and cultural lines in the heyday of the third party movement. Voting patterns, however, slowly returned to the pattern of the 1880s as the Populist thrust abated.

David S. Trask, "The Nebraska Populist Party: A Social and Political Analysis," (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Nebraska, 1971) also shows how Populists' economic concerns undercut the ethno-cultural basis to pre-1890 Nebraska politics. Trask notes that Populism was strongest among those not socially integrated into their communities, and particularly among corn-hog farmers who had recently moved into areas too dry for this form of agriculture. David S. Trask, "Nebraska Populism as a Response to Environmental and Political Problems," in Brian W. Blouet and Frederick C. Luebke (eds.), The Great Plains: Environment and Culture (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979) carries forward the thesis of Populists engaging in an unprofitable form of agriculture and astutely notes that there were two simultaneous catalysts which produced Populism, agricultural convulsions

and the political elite's insufficient response to the farmer's problems.

While the new social history has caused historians concerned with Populism to broaden their research tools (and frequently to narrow the geographic scope of their studies) economic conflict has remained the primary theme in the study of the Populist movement. Jeffrey C. Williams, "Economics and Politics: Voting Behavior in Kansas during the Populist Decade," Explorations in Economic History 18, no. 3 (1981): 233-56, however, uses sophisticated statistical techniques to show that both economic and religious-cultural factors affected partisan choice in Kansas in the 1890s. The ethno-cultural interpretation of late nineteenth century politics, otherwise has proven to be largely inadequate in explaining why the Populist revolt occurred.

One problem with social science techniques is the ecological fallacy. Explained simply, this is using one level of data to say something about another. An example would be to assume that aggregate county level discoveries can be applied with assurance to individuals. A strong correlation between rural poverty and Populism, for instance, does not necessarily mean that all poor farmers were Populists or that all Populists were poor farmers. Statistical analysis of aggregates only reveals tendencies. One statistical study on Populism, however, does bridge the ecological fallacy to deal with individual Populist supporters. John David

Dibbern, "Grass Roots Populism, Politics and Social Structure in a Frontier Community," (Ph. D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1980) presents data on individuals whose names were gleaned from the membership rolls of the Marshall County, South Dakota, Farmer's Alliance. In the progressive tradition Dibbern found debt to be the greatest factor motivating political dissent among Alliance farmers. Such men were generally married, had a family and were more recently settled upon the land than their non-Alliance counterparts. They were family-oriented commercial farmers who had gone into significant debt to develop their farms. Rather than poverty stricken, Dibbern found Alliancemen upwardly mobile, but particularly vulnerable to economic reverses. He adds the caveat that Alliancemen not only were not nativistic, but that the Alliance served to bring native and immigrant farmers together.

At approximately the same time as the new social history emerged, another group of historians, whose perceptions were drawn largely from the civil rights, war on poverty and anti-Vietnam War movements of the 1960s emerged in response to the intrinsically conservative message of the consensus historians. Consensus history, they claimed, tended place the past at the service of a complacent and elitist definition of society which in turn affirmed the values of the contemporary system. According to the conservatives of the consensus school, radicalism was un-American. New left his-

torians, as the younger group were called, took up the challenge of discovering a truly radical American past which would legitimize the complaints they had about how America utilized her tremendous resources. In essence, they neither accepted the results of the American industrialization process nor the premises of the liberal state, and sought to criticize the contemporary system through comparison with past arrangements in American society.

Norman Pollack, The Populist Response to Industrial America: Midwestern Populist Thought (New York: Norton, 1962) was an early effort in the new left vein. Michael Rogin, McCarthy and the Intellectuals: The Radical Specter (Cambridge: M. I. T. Press, 1967) examined the social roots of McCarthyism, which some consensus historians contended were populist, and found them to be conservative and elitist. The People's party Rogin contended, was a forward-looking, anti-capitalist (but not anti-industrial) mass-movement, essentially an American equivalent of Marxism.

In response to the social science historian's contention that their research designs and rigorously tested hypotheses transcended the subjective and normative limitations of humanism to present an unbiased analysis, the radical historians of the 1970s contended that numeric analysis might be helpful for description, but not for explaining why historic phenomena occurred. They looked to popular mentalities, folk rituals and class consciousness for explanations of

past behavior, and deny the social science presumption that the actions of differing groups and individuals are based upon equivalent assumptions, and thus can be numerically compared.

Both social science and radical-new left historians contend that they are writing social history, or history "from the bottom up." Social science history does, however, use the norms of contemporary society and is more at home with the modernization, or stages of growth, school of thought which glorifies western industrial development. John Madden Langston, "The Kansas Economy in Historical perspective, 1860-1900," (Ph. D. dissertation, Kansas State University, 1968) provides an exposition of the modernization theme for this Populist state. Louise Elaine Rickard, "The Impact of Populism on Election Patterns in Kansas, 1880-1900," (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Kansas, 1974) likewise presents Populism as a response to the kind of economic change implicit in modernization theory. Radicals contend that this is too deterministic and short-circuits individual thought processes. They protested that it relegated losers in conflicts to historical oblivion. Stephen Hahn, The Roots of Southern Populism: Yeoman Farmers and the Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry, 1850-1890 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983) presents Populism as a product of the transformation from self-sufficient yeoman farming to commercial agriculture in two Georgia counties. His conclusions, how-

ever, have more of a progressive historian theme, with Populists rebelling against economic inequities and local political and economic elites in an attempt to resist proletarianization.

To understand the meaning of contemporary society, the new left contends, the social context of historical phenomena must be considered in its entirety. Robert McMath, Populist Vanguard: A History of the Southern Farmer's Alliance (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1975) uses social science concepts of organization and social movements (as opposed to numeric analysis) to discover the dynamics involved in the proto-Populists Southern Farmer's Alliance. The Alliance, McMath contends, grew best in unsettled frontier-like conditions which encouraged new forms of social organization. The Alliance's ability to socialize its adherents made it analogous to a church, providing explanations for actions and direction to people experiencing the tensions of social and economic instability. This helps to explain the development of the Populist's collective mentality and the near-religious fervor the third party produced. Peter Hays Argersinger, "Pentecostal Politics in Kansas: Religion, the Farmer's Alliance and the Gospel of Populism," Kansas Quarterly 1, no. 4 (Fall, 1969): 24-39 provides an earlier exposition upon the church-Allaince thesis. Although Argersinger uses qualification in Populism and Politics: William Alfred Pepper and the People's Party, (as do

many other non-social science historians) his vociferous defense of Peffer and his ideas place him in the new left-radical school of thought.

James Youngsdale, Populism: A psychohistorical Perspective (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1975) contends Populism formed around marginal groups when large scale industry threatened petty capitalism. He uses Adlerian psychology to rescue the Populists from Hofstadter's Freudianism. Youngsdale's defining Populism in terms which include non-People's party elements, such as Robert La Follette and the Minnesota Farmer-Labor party, however, is of questionable value. While he does not fall into Hofstadter's mistake of lumping all free silverites with Populism, he does overstate the case for Bryanism being the antithesis of Populism.

The most ambitious product of new left scholarship on Populism is Lawrence Goodwyn, Democratic Promise: The Populist Moment in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), which is also available in abridged form as The Populist Moment: A Short History of the Agrarian Movement in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978). The strong connection between the progressive historians and the new left can be found in Goodwyn's tribute to C. Vann Woodward in the acknowledgement to the latter edition. Goodwyn posits the emergence of a mass based "movement culture" out of the economic setbacks of the Alliance's experiments in coop-

erative buying and selling. The failure of economic cooperation drove Alliancemen into political action to obtain government cooperatives with the Alliance's subtreasury plan, he contends. According to Goodwyn, the educational value of the cooperative effort made the Populist revolt more than simple interest group politics. According to Goodwyn the subtreasury agitation also implied greenbackism, participatory democracy and replacing capitalism with the cooperative commonwealth. Goodwyn contends that the collateral, but essentially alien and conservative "shadow movement" of the free silverites subverted the promising radical thrust of Populism, derailing the third party from restructuring American society along more humanitarian lines. Goodwyn draws a strong distinction between middle-of-the-roaders, who he contends were socialized into the greenback-cooperative-subtreasury ideology, and fusionists, who he associates with the "shadow movement." He appends conspiratorial motives to fusionists to the degree that his work is best viewed as a modern day exposition of the Texas middle-of-the-road position of 1896. Goodwyn's assertion that disillusionment about the lost promise of Populism resulted in the hegemony of the elitist progressive alternative is perceptive and valuable.

Stanley B. Parsons (et. al.), "The Role of Cooperatives in the Development of the Movement Culture of Populism," Journal of American History 69, no. 4 (March, 1983) raises

significant doubts about a movement culture emerging from the economic setbacks of the Alliance's cooperative experiments resulting in Populism as Goodwyn asserts. They show that the decline of cooperatives and the rise of the People's party correlated only in Texas. In a parting shot, Parsons (et. al.) note that the Populists did not need a "movement culture" significantly different from the inherited traditions of greenback, antimonopoly and labor movements of previous decades to mobilize them. Gaye Keller Bland, "Populism in Kentucky, 1887-1896," (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Kentucky, 1979) shows the Alliance origins to Populism in Kentucky, but casts the third party movement more in the mold of progressive history.

Karel D. Bicha, Western Populism: Studies in an Ambivalent Conservatism (Lawrence, Kansas: Coronado Press, 1976) appeared the same year as Goodwyn's Democratic Promise, but received a decidedly less enthusiastic audience. Bicha attempts to present the evidence for the highly negative view of Populism which Hofstadter neglected in his poorly researched Age of Reform. His constant confusion of goals with tools, hatchet-job biographies of leaders he admits are "untypical" and illogical explanations of administrative and legislative dynamics betray a virulent animus toward the movement which obscures the few valuable perceptions to be found in his work. With these, however, the author usually overplays his hand, comparing the third party's obsession

with keeping government expenses low to using a meat-axe, for instance. More importantly, Bicha fails to explain why Populists had such orientations. The extreme lengths he goes to misinterpret the evidence against the Populists leaves Hofstadter's treatment of the agrarians shortcomings the superior product. Gene Clanton, "'Hayseed Socialism' on the Hill: Congressional Populism, 1891-1895," Western Historical Quarterly 15, no. 2 (April, 1984): 139-62 provides a useful antidote to Bicha's assertions about Populist conservatism in the national congress.

One theme which appeared in Hofstadter's Age of Reform has resurfaced with a new vigor in recent years, although perhaps without the same implications. Hofstadter explained Populism in terms of a commitment to an archaic "Agrarian Myth," rooted in Jeffersonian thought. Although Hofstadter's use of agrarianism had negative connotations, earlier treatments portrayed the Populist debt to Jeffersonian ideas in a much more favorable light. Examples can be found in Charles M. Wiltse, The Jeffersonian Tradition in American Democracy (New York, Hill and Wang, 1935), Chester McArthur Destler, American Radicalism, 1865-1901 (New London: Connecticut College Press, 1946) and Robert McCloskey, American Conservatism in the Age of Enterprise, 1965-1910 (New York: Harper and Row, 1951). Paul W. Glad, McKinley Bryan and the People (Philadelphia and New York: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1964) uses the "Agrarian Myth" and the "Myth of the Self

Made Man" to explain the essential conservatism of the 1896 presidential candidates, but finds the Populists more innovative and realistic than their opponents, despite their commitment to the "Agrarian Myth." Christopher Lasch, The Agony of the American Left (New York: Vintage, 1969) sets Populism firmly within the physiocratic tradition and the democracy of Jefferson, Jackson and Lincoln, which he considers both promising and limiting.

Bernard Bailyn, The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967) and Gordon Wood, The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787 (New York: Norton, 1969) served to revive and refocus the study of the Founding Fathers in terms of their commitment to a common republican ideology. Studies placing Populism within the framework of a neo-republican ideology emerged in the 1970s. Thomas Wayne Riddle, "The Old Radicalism in America: John R. Rogers and the Populist Movement in Washington, 1891-1900," (Ph. D. dissertation, Washington State University, 1976) and Dean Stephen Rockwood, "The Populist Ideology," (Ph. D. dissertation, Miami University, 1977) are examples. Gene Clanton, "Populism, Progressivism and Equality: The Kansas Paradigm," Agricultural History 51, no. 3 (June, 1977): 559-581 contrasts the neo-republican egalitarian premises of Populism with the elitist assumptions of Republican party progressives. Democratic party progressivism, he concludes, was a case of co-opted Popu-

lism. Dorothy Ross, "The Liberal Tradition Revisited and the Republican Tradition Addressed," in John Higham and Paul K. Conkin (eds.), New Directions in American Intellectual History (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977) directly addresses the emerging recognition of a dualistic intellectual tradition in the late nineteenth century.

Bruce Palmer, "Man Over Money": The Southern Populist Critique of American Capitalism (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980) presents the best exposition of the Populist's commitment to humanism, and their producerist orientation, to date. Palmer contends Populists believed in a simple market economy which made goods and services, but not labor, legitimate products of manufacture and trade. Without being able to profit from the labor of others the gap between rich and poor would be minimal and producers would thus avoid economic dependency. In "The Roots of Reform: Southern Populists and their Southern History," Red River Valley Historical Review 4, no. 2 (Spring, 1979), Palmer more explicitly makes the connection between Populism and the republican tradition. John L. Thomas, Alternative America: Henry George, Edward Bellamy, Henry Demarest Lloyd and the Adversary tradition (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983) likewise places the political economy of these writers (Bellamy and Lloyd were Populists) within the republican ideal. Donald Charles Burt, "Utopia and the Agrarian Tradition in America," (Ph. D. dissertation, University of

New Mexico, 1973) and Christine McHugh, "Edward Bellamy and the Populists: The Agrarian Response to Utopia," (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Illinois at Chicago Circle, 1977) also show the strong connection between Populism and the utopian movement of the late nineteenth century.

The state of the literature on Populism in the mid-1980s seems to be moving toward a recognition of the republican roots of the Populist critique of American capitalism. If, in fact, there were two late nineteenth century American minds, one liberal and the other republican, progressive historians may not have been too far off base in seeing a dualistic society. Social science techniques show Populist strength came largely from hinterland areas, where the newer liberal synthesis had not fully penetrated and where the economy was not as developed as in more cosmopolitan areas. Economic convulsions, in turn, appear to have been a significant catalyst to giving late nineteenth century neo-republican spokesmen a hearing. Although neo-republican egalitarians based their critique upon pre-industrial premises, the solutions they presented were designed to bring justice and humanity to an industrial America, and not to turn the clock back to some pre-industrial utopia. The validity of the Populist arguments and the efficacy of their proposed solutions can be seen in the progressive historian's adoption of many aspects of the Populist critique of American society, and in the passage into legislation of many of the third party's demands in the Twentieth century.