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The Agrarian Protest in Louisiana, 1877-1900.

William Ivy Hair

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THE AGRARIAN PROTEST IN LOUISIANA
1877-1900

A Dissertation

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in

The Department of History

by

William Ivy Hair
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M.A., Louisiana State University, 1953
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Economic and political unrest among rank-and-file people of the rural South reached an unprecedented level during the last decades of the nineteenth century. Between 1877 and 1900, white farmers and sharecroppers became disillusioned with the conservative Democratic regimes which had been established at the end of Reconstruction; Negro agriculturists, in these same years, were grossly exploited by their employers and by the political elite which ruled the states of the late Confederacy. The Greenback party, the Farmers' Alliance, and, finally, the People's party, attempted to unite in mutual action the disadvantaged rural population of both races. A number of historians have already examined the pattern of post-Reconstruction agrarian protest in most southern states. However, a comprehensive study of the subject in Louisiana has hitherto not been attempted.

To understand the nature of agrarian protest in Louisiana, the basis for its grievances, and the causes of its ultimate failure, a broad-gauged examination of the social, economic, and political conditions prevalent in the state in the 1877-1900 period was mandatory. Louisiana newspapers, both urban and rural, furnished key insights.
The private letters of leading citizens which related to political and economic matters revealed much about upper class attitudes. Legislative records, combined with registration and election figures and United States census reports, provided extensive documentation of the undemocratic methods and the conscious social neglect prevalent in Louisiana in the years under discussion. To provide a flavor of contemporary life and emotions, and to avoid misinterpretations, the narrative of this study has been interspersed with expressions of opinion by those persons who were directly involved in shaping Louisiana's destiny during the years after Reconstruction.

The Populist, or People's, party, organized nationally in 1891, was supported in Louisiana by the same rural elements which also furnished the bulwark of Populist strength in other agricultural states of the South and West. But in no other state, the evidence suggests, was the Populist cause so hopeless. Even though sixty per cent or more of Louisiana's voting population supported the Populist-Republican state ticket in 1896, the conservative Democratic regime refused to bow to the wishes of the majority; the customary methods of vote fraud, economic coercion, and outright violence were intensified. Leaders of the poor whites threatened the planter-merchant oligarchy with class war, but the threat was not carried out. Louisiana agrarianism had been dealt a mortal blow. In the years following 1896,
lower class whites became increasingly apathetic toward politics; their Negro allies, meanwhile, were disfranchised through legislative action and constitutional revision.

The attempt to unite poor white and poor Negroes under the Populist banner in Louisiana was paralleled in other southern states, but the biracial agrarian efforts in the Pelican State had certain distinctive facets. By 1898, when Populist leaders in other southern commonwealths had generally concluded that the Negro-poor white alliance was hopeless, and that disfranchisement of the blacks would benefit the white agrarians, Louisiana's state Populist platform spoke up for civil rights and bitterly opposed the movement to eliminate Negroes from the registration rolls. It is concluded that the severity of conservative Democratic methods in Louisiana aroused a biracial class consciousness in that state, temporary though it was, which is unequaled in southern history.
INTRODUCTION

Louisiana's colorful but often tragic history gives her a unique place among American commonwealths. A strain of irony seems to course through everything associated with the Pelican State; it is fitting that two of Louisiana's leading products are sugar and salt, and that two of her culinary delights are pecan pralines and hot peppers. Certainly the years from the end of Reconstruction to the end of the nineteenth century illustrate the irony of the state's history. In 1876 the disputed election returns from Louisiana provoked violent controversy on the national level because the outcome of the presidential campaign hinged upon those returns, yet registration and election figures indicate that the Hayes-Tilden returns, though rife with fraud, more honestly represented public opinion than the official totals announced in any state contest for the remainder of the century. In 1876 both sides stole votes. Afterward, this prerogative rested solely with the triumphant Bourbon Democracy.

That the Pelican State was exploited by venal politicians during the Reconstruction years few would deny; even historians of such diverse opinions as E. Merton Coulter and
W. E. B. DuBois agree that the Louisiana Carpetbaggers were a corrupt lot. But after 1876 Bourbon misrule replaced Radical misrule. Spectacular stealings at both the ballot box and the State House continued, and no state in the post-Reconstruction South permitted so disastrous a neglect of schools and other public institutions as did Louisiana. Ruling in the name of home rule and white supremacy, Governors Nicholls, Wiltz, McEnery, and Foster were either unable or unwilling to curb the more repressive and brutal elements among the dominant oligarchy, and the disadvantaged majority of people, both white and black, were economically exploited and politically ignored.

Bourbon repression naturally provoked unrest among the lower classes. First in 1878, and then again with the People's party of the 1890's, agrarian reformers came forth to challenge the state Democratic regime. Yet Louisiana posed special and exasperating problems for any reform movement. Lower class interests were not only divided by the racial antipathies common to all southern states, but the ethnic, religious, and even language differences between the poor whites of northern and southern Louisiana posed formidable obstacles to any statewide effort of protest. Moreover, the Democratic oligarchy, militant and shrewd, dealt out severe treatment to any political or economic dissenters. Only once was Bourbon rule really threatened. In the state election of the spring of 1896, poor whites and
Negroes attempted to combine with dissident elements among the upper class; the incumbent regime found well over half the state's voting population aligned against it. But the oligarchy proved equal to the emergency. The usual methods of vote fraud, intimidation, and violence were intensified, and Louisiana Populism was smothered with a savagery unparalleled in the South.

Researching and writing on Louisiana of the late nineteenth century has proved to be a demanding and depressing task. Many times, preconceived notions or tentative hypotheses had to be abandoned. And, obviously, not all questions have been answered in the following pages, nor have all possible avenues of inquiry been explored. But my research thus far has compelled me to sympathize with the agrarian reformers of that day, and to deplore the tactics by which the ruling Bourbons retained power and beat down even mild and conciliatory efforts at reform. That the reformers themselves might have been equally vicious and self-seeking if given the reins of power is, of course, possible. But the point is that they were denied the opportunity to prove the sincerity of their words. The Bourbons not only refused to permit free elections, but heaped up unnecessary thousands of fraudulent votes in order to drown out and discourage the voices of protest. Nor is it necessary to judge the Louisiana Bourbons by the standards of the present in order to condemn them; their undemocratic and even pitiless
actions were atavistic in the nineteenth century, and repulsed, at the time, many persons who would normally be allied with vested interests. So as to avoid misinterpretation, and to provide a flavor of contemporary life and emotions, the narrative of this study has been interspersed with numerous expressions of opinion by those persons who were directly involved in shaping Louisiana's destiny during the years following Reconstruction.
CHAPTER I

POLITICS OF THE NEW DEPARTURE

April of 1877 was a month for celebration in Louisiana. The Federal government had abandoned the Carpetbagger government in the State House; military Reconstruction was over. Some scenes of revelry had grotesque overtones. In New Orleans, conservative Democrats welcomed a select number of Carpetbaggers, Scalawags, and Negroes into the "compromise" legislature which assembled, appropriately, in Odd Fellows Hall.\(^1\) The solons cheered when a white supremacist named Captain Kidd presented a gold-headed cane to a Negro Republican from a parish with the felicitous name of Concordia.\(^2\) Upriver, Baton Rouge residents greeted the restoration of home rule in noisy fashion, and "the loudest and longest ringing . . . was the bell of the Mount Zion (colored) Baptist Church. Long after the others had stopped, its clarion notes sounded forth: 'Nicholls is Governor!'

\(^1\)\textit{Nation}, XXIV (April 19, 1877), 277; \textit{New York Times}, April 25, 28, 1877.


Louisiana is free!"\(^3\)

Five months earlier the state election had been held. At the same time, November of 1876, Louisiana had joined with less turbulent commonwealths in the selection of a President of the United States. The national Republican ticket was headed by Rutherford B. Hayes; Stephen B. Packard represented Republican hopes to retain control of the state government. The Democratic presidential nominee, Samuel J. Tilden, was less important to Louisiana partisans than gubernatorial candidate Francis T. Nicholls. The election returns produced the anticipated imbroglio on the state level. Both Nicholls and Packard claimed victory.\(^4\) But quite unexpectedly, the presidential vote in the fifty-seven parishes took on decisive importance. The outcome of the national election hinged upon the electoral votes of Louisiana, South Carolina, and Florida: the only states still under military Reconstruction. Hayes needed all their electoral votes to achieve even the slimmest of victories in the electoral college; yet first returns showed Tilden leading in each of the three.\(^5\) But fortunately for the

\(^3\)Daily Picayune, April 28, 1877.


\(^5\)C. Vann Woodward, Reunion and Reaction: The Compromise of 1877 and the End of Reconstruction (Boston, 1951), 17.
Republicans, Louisiana and the other states in question permitted a special returning board to "review" election returns; in all three, the Hayes partisans who made up the boards transformed an apparent Democratic victory into a Republican victory.

The tangled web of negotiations between southern Democrats and northern Republicans which smoothed the way for the inauguration of Hayes need not be detailed in this study. In brief, southern congressmen agreed not to join diehard northern Democrats in a filibuster to prevent the electoral commission's awarding of the disputed states to Hayes. In return, northern Republicans gave assurances to the South that Hayes would withdraw Federal soldiers from support of the remaining Carpetbagger governments; Hayes himself had previously indicated (though not publicly) his disapproval of military intervention in the South. Economic as well as political factors were involved in this famous "Compromise of 1877." Interwoven with the political dickering, and perhaps even more important, was the fact that northern Republicans began turning friendly ears to southern demands for Federal appropriations to finance railroads, levee construction, river and harbor clearance, and other

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6Ibid., passim, for the best account of negotiations on the national scene. For events in Louisiana, see McGinty, Louisiana Redeemed, passim; also, Ella Lonn, Reconstruction in Louisiana After 1868 (New York, 1918), 473-525.
desired projects.  

Uncertainty and mutual distrust arose to plague the secret negotiations of Hayes Republicans and southern Democratic politicians during the winter of 1876-77. The outcome, both for Louisiana and the nation, was frequently in doubt. In New Orleans, the state capital, both Packard and Nicholls moved ahead as if assured of ultimate victory; each took an oath of office on January 8. Packard and his legislature occupied the State House with the help of the outgoing Republican Governor, William Pitt Kellogg. The Nicholls government had to bide its time in Odd Fellows Hall. But there was no doubt that the Democrats were in de facto control of the state. Packard's hope for Federal help in overthrowing the rival Democratic government faded as the inauguration of Hayes approached; United States troops in New Orleans guarded Packard in the State House but made no

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7C. Vann Woodward, Origins of the New South: 1877-1913, Vol. IX of A History of the South, eds. Wendell Holmes Stephenson and E. Merton Coulter (Baton Rouge, 1951), 23-50. "It would be futile," wrote Woodward in Reunion and Reaction, "to attempt to decide . . . which of the 'two forces' [political or economic factors] was the more effective in winning the southerners over and breaking the filibuster." Before his inauguration, Hayes did not publicly commit himself on the question of maintaining troops in the South; President Grant, however, on February 26, 1877, frankly admitted that further use of the troops would be contrary to popular opinion in both North and South. Grant also promised southerners that the troops would soon be removed. See Woodward, Reunion and Reaction, passim.

8New Orleans Times, January 9, 1878.

9Nation, XXIV (January 11, 1877), 19.
hostile move toward Odd Fellows Hall. Packard's legislature began to dwindle as a number of the shrewder members, "reduced to [their] last chew of tobacco and . . . sup of whiskey,"\textsuperscript{10} sensed the drift of events and moved over to seek recognition, or financial reward, in the Nicholls house.\textsuperscript{11}

On April 5 the arrival in New Orleans of a special commission from President Hayes gave proof that the national Republicans were ready to carry out their part of the bargain. The President's commission did nothing which a simple withdrawal of troops would not have accomplished; however, the presence of these dignitaries gave a moral weight to the rather sordid proceedings.\textsuperscript{12} With the aid of a "contingent fund," a select number of Packard men were bribed into entering the Nicholls house, thus giving the Democratic legislature a quorum of members whose election was undisputed by both parties.\textsuperscript{13} Edward A. Burke, who played such a leading role in the Compromise of 1877, remarked years later that the Hayes commissioners were: "No more than a mere set of clerks to carry out the work that

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{10} \textit{New York Times}, April 24, 1877.
  \item \textsuperscript{11} \textit{Daily Picayune}, January 3, 14, 1877.
  \item \textsuperscript{12} \textit{Nation}, XXIV (April 26, 1877), 241.
  \item \textsuperscript{13} \textit{New York Times}, April 22, 24, 1877.
\end{itemize}
The phrase "New Departure" had again come into vogue. First used in the Reconstruction South during the presidential campaign of 1872, it referred to a coalition of practical-minded southern Democrats with the Liberal Republican movement in the North; both groups had hoped to end Reconstruction and defeat President Grant's bid for re-election. This first New Departure failed. But four years later, in the tense months between November of 1876 and April of 1877, political commentators revived the expression. The second attempt at New Departure was more significant; it referred not only to the acquiescence of southern Democrats to the seating of Hayes, but to portents of lasting political and economic change throughout the South.

The Nicholls legislature pledged its good faith to the bargain by resolving that, under Democratic home rule, Negroes as well as whites would enjoy political freedom and equality under the law; public education for both races would be continued; and "kindly relations between white and colored citizens on a basis of justice and mutual

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14 New Orleans Times-Democrat, October 15, 1887.


16 New Orleans Times, February 24, April 24, 1877.
confidence," would mark Louisiana's history in the future. In addition, worried local Republicans were assured of immunity from prosecution for "past political conduct." This promise of fair play from New Orleans must have eased Hayes's conscience. For he surely realized his conciliatory policy would be criticized in the North if, in the future, Republican blood was spilled in the state. The President was soon informed that Packard had said: "How basely you [Hayes] have betrayed the Republican party in Louisiana and with what alacrity you have turned over the poor negroes to the Democrats to be outraged and murdered by them."  

The New Departure, supposedly, was a two-way street. Louisiana Democrats, for their part, expected fruits of the new policy from Washington. When the Daily Picayune remarked that "Louisiana . . . needs letting alone" the reference applied to political meddling only; economic intervention on the other hand, was not only desired but was impatiently awaited. Theoretically, States' Rights was still sacred dogma. But in view of Louisiana's choked harbors

17 New Orleans Democrat, April 17, 1877.
18 Nation, XXIV (April 19, 1877), 227.
20 Daily Picayune, April 10, 1877.
and crumbling levees, strict construction of the Constitution must be "abandoned for the laxity of the present." Enviously viewing Federal generosity in northern climes, the South sought her share "as an act of justice."

Yet in President Hayes's mind, the most important aspect of the New Departure was its implied reorganization of the Republican party in the South. The desertion of Packard constituted a final abandonment of the whole theory of Radical Reconstruction. By 1877 the Republican party of the North had shed its midwestern agrarian origins and was dominated by the economic and social ideas of conservative businessmen. The Radical policy of using military force in the South so as to keep poverty-stricken Negroes from falling under the political domination of their white landlords and employers was clearly incongruous. Moreover, threats made against large property by some Carpetbag and Scalawag leaders probably discredited them more in the eyes of Northern Republicans than did their frequent and flagrant acts of dishonesty while in public office.

Unrealistic as it might seem, the end of military

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21Ibid., April 28, 1877.
22Shreveport Evening Standard, October 16, 1878.
Reconstruction was in fact an attempt to increase and stabilize the voting strength of Republicanism in the South. As Hayes viewed it, the new appeal would be aimed toward the "better class" of southerners whose economic views coincided with those of northern Republicans. Race issues were to be pushed aside as irrelevant to the more significant business interests. A strong precedent for such an alliance did exist. The defunct Whig party of ante-bellum days had, until the mid-1850's given the South a vigorous two party system; southern men of property in the Whig party had joined with northern businessmen of the same political faith, in common opposition to the supposed equalitarian tendencies of Jacksonian Democracy. Of the two men elected to the presidency from the old Whig party, one came from Hayes's state of Ohio and the other was a Louisiana planter. Most of the great planters of the pre-war South were Whigs. One competent authority estimated that from two-thirds to three-fourths of the slave population was owned by Whigs.

25 *Nation*, XXIV (April 19, 1887), 227.
28 William Henry Harrison, elected in 1840; Zachary Taylor, elected in 1848.
Close advisors and personal friends of President Hayes supported him in the attempt to give southern Republicanism a more respectable and Whiggish mien. General James M. Comley, described as the President's "most devoted friend," travelled down the Mississippi in May of 1877 to sound out native white southerners on the hoped-for political New Departure. "I find," he wrote Hayes, "that on the river there is a sort of general feeling that the old Whig Party is to be revived... The expectation that 'Henry Clay Whiggery' is to live again... It seemed wonderful." Comley's letter reinforced previous information that leading businessmen in New Orleans endorsed the neo-Whig aspect of the New Departure.

Curiously, some reasoned that the last state to be free of Reconstruction might also be the first to embrace the Whiggish New Departure. "Louisiana is a peculiar state," John B. Robertson of New Orleans wrote Hayes's Postmaster-General David M. Key: "She contains so many heterogeneous elements that it is not at all improbable she will be

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30 Charles R. Williams, The Life of Rutherford Birchard Hayes: Nineteenth President of the United States (Boston, 1914), II, 421-22.

31 James M. Comley to Rutherford B. Hayes, April 30, 1877, Hayes Papers.

32 Andrew J. Kellar to Rutherford B. Hayes, April 20, 1877, Hayes Papers.
the first to lead off in the reconstruction of parties in the Union.  

Secretary of War Richard W. Thompson believed a change in party name would be necessary because of "the prejudices existing in the South." In accord with Thompson's idea, the *Daily Nation* of Washington, D. C. announced itself as the organ of "a new Whig Party." As a practical politician he surely realized the danger of alienating Union veterans and southern Negroes accustomed to the Republican designation.  

As envisioned by the President, the new "respectable" Republican party in the South should turn its back on most of the old Radicals of military days but not, of course, renounce Negro votes. National Republicans blandly assumed the Negro would always herd toward the party of emancipation. "The colored citizens," a group of neo-Whig enthusiasts in New Orleans told Hayes, "are almost instinctively Republicans and nothing will drive them into the .... Democratic Party except coercion." Ex-Congressman Chester B. Darrall,  

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33 John B. Robertson to David M. Key, April 26, 1877, Hayes Papers.  
34 St. Louis *Republican*, quoted in *Daily Picayune*, April 26, 1877.  
35 De Santis, *Republicans Face the Southern Question*, 47.  
36 John Ray, John E. King, and others to Rutherford B. Hayes, April 21, 1877, Hayes Papers.
a Carpetbagger merchant-planter of St. Mary Parish, wrote to Hayes that although "fear and uneasiness" was prevalent among rural colored people, it would "wear away as they see that no harm comes to them and that you do not abandon them or the party they have looked to for protection." Darrall also believed white Democrats had come to realize, by Hayes's generous dealings with Nicholls, that the Republican party was no longer a revolutionary ogre. "I think we have reached their hearts," he said.37

Visiting Louisiana in 1879, Republican politician Stewart L. Woodford of New York gave the Daily Picayune a frank statement of the ultimate purposes of the New Departure:

The Republican party at the North comprises the wealth, intelligence and respectability of the community, and it is not strange then that it should desire alliance with the same element in the South, allowing the ignorant masses to go where they belong, to the Democratic party. ... 38

When the New York visitor spoke of "ignorant masses" he presumably referred only to the poor whites. Since Negroes were regarded by party leaders as unswerving Republicans they were excused--politically, at least--from such contempt. Reduced to bare simplicities, the Republican argument proposed that Negroes should continue to vote

37Chester B. Darrall to Rutherford B. Hayes, April 27, 1877, Hayes Papers.
38Daily Picayune, November 25, 1877.
for the party because it had once been liberal, and wealthy whites should join the party because it was now conservative.

Hayes's New Departure was an antithesis of the original Republican approach in Louisiana. Northern rule first entered the state in May of 1862 with the ungainly form of General Benjamin F. Butler, military administrator of the captured Confederate city of New Orleans. History could not have selected a more suitable actor to play the first scene in the drama of Louisiana's Reconstruction. Butler began his long political life as a workingman's advocate in the left wing of the Jacksonian Democracy in his home state of Massachusetts. This "rascally but thoroughly intelligent" politician-soldier, during his stay in New Orleans, distributed food rations to the poor and inaugurated a public works program which cleaned up the pestilence-ridden city and gave government employment to the heads of poor families. Butler's assumption of responsibility for the welfare of the masses was a bold, new concept in a region hitherto dominated by a planter-merchant

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40 Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Age of Jackson (Boston, 1945), 342.

41 Ibid., 520.

42 Shugg, Origins of Class Struggle in Louisiana, 186.
oligarchy.

To conservative Louisianians, the words and deeds of Butler "betrayed the soul of a dangerous demagogue" bent on "humbling and ruining the upper classes." The Union General did not conceal his attempt to align the poor of both races against the entrenched gentlemen-rulers of the state; in fact, he apparently believed that he had inaugurated a great proletarian movement of protest in the Deep South. But the years of Reconstruction which followed witnessed the quick submergence of welfare-state Radicalism. Venal Carpetbaggers, Scalawags and Negro politicians, acting under military protection, exploited both rich and poor. In truth, Butler's own conduct revealed the Janus face of Louisiana Republicanism; his peculations in cotton and sugar were foretastes of worse to come. For over a decade, "poor, distracted, downtrodden Louisiana" suffered under a satyrnalia of corruption, moderated, to a slight degree, by half-hearted measures of reform.

The so-called Radicals did little toward economic

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45 Samuel H. Lockett, "Louisiana As It Is" (unpublished longhand MS, 1873, deposited in Howard-Tilton Library Archives, Tulane University), v.
change in the state. The Freedmen's Bureau, set up by Congress to take charge of abandoned and confiscable Rebel land, made feeble and short-lived efforts to divide up the great plantations. The Bureau also distributed provisions to disaster-stricken areas, making no distinction between the races, and provided relief work for the unemployed in the years from 1865 to 1868. However, this work came to an end in the latter year, when the Bureau turned over its duties to generally unsympathetic local authorities.

The Constitution of 1868, under which Louisiana obtained readmittance to the Union, gave the ballot to the freedmen and erected the framework of a state-supported, desegregated public school system. But proposals to limit the size of land purchases and place additional taxes on speculative holdings were beaten down in the convention. This destruction of hopes for economic reform through political Reconstruction resulted partly from the misconduct and hypocrisy of self-seeking Radical officials, but also


47 Ibid., 164-75.

48 Louisiana, Constitution of 1868, Arts. 98, 135.

49 Highsmith, "Louisiana During Reconstruction," 206.
because the great majority of whites put racial issues above any mutual class interest they might have with the Negro. The largest majorities turned in for the Conservative-Democratic party during Reconstruction often came from poverty-stricken white parishes. However, at least a few of the seeds of class protest planted during Reconstruction germinated years later among the poor whites and Negroes of the State; the Populist party of the 1890's attempted to create an economic and political coalition similar to that envisioned by Butler in the 1860's.

The Whiggish New Departure of 1877 was not unanimously endorsed by Louisiana Republicans. In the dying hours of Stephen Packard's government, his authority confined to about one acre of the state, this Maine Carpetbagger reverted to the language of economic Radicalism. Packard fumed over his desertion by Hayes and the business community of New Orleans. His words sounded like Butler's, and like those to be used by Populist orators a generation later:

The so-called Nicholls Government rests its claim... on the support it receives from the rich and aristocratic classes of this city. It is a threatened oligarchy of wealth, and a menace to the middle and poorer classes... A government established on such a basis would tend to make the rich richer and the poor poorer... white as well as black.50

(italics mine).

The conservative press of the city was horrified by

50Daily Picayune, March 28, 1877.
the "vicious spirit" of Packard's address. One newspaper remarked that "Louisiana cannot afford a Government which is prepared to experiment in Communism and organize raids upon business capital under pretentious appeals to the ... lower classes." Equally infuriating was Packard's threat to summon rural laborers for a march on New Orleans "to scatter hand grenades instead of seed."

Outside New Orleans many Negro and Scalawag supporters of Republicanism gave evidence of dissatisfaction with the new Hayes policy. Editor W. Jasper Blackburn of the Homer Iliad, an old foe of secession and a staunch Unionist through the war, refused to concede the legitimacy of the Nicholls government. By the fall of 1877, in St. Landry, Natchitoches and Avoyelles Parishes, a Workingmen's party was organized by former Republican politicians with a view of appealing to the laboring classes of both races. It is probably not coincidental that St. Landry witnessed a series of lower class independent movements throughout the

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51Ibid., March 29, 1877.
52Ibid., March 28, 1877.
53Vienna (La.) Sentinel, quoted in ibid., April 5, 1877.
54Washington (La.) Enterprise, quoted in Daily Picayune, September 30, 1877; Natchitoches People's Vindicator, quoted in Daily Picayune, October 6, 1877; Marksville Bulletin, quoted in Daily Picayune, December 13, 1877.
1880's\textsuperscript{55} and, along with Natchitoches Parish, successfully united Negro and poor white voters under the Populist banner in the last decade of the century.\textsuperscript{56}

One aged member of the Grange in Louisiana beseeched Hayes to reject the "Money Power" which had boarded the Republican party during the Grant years; he advised that the New Departure be transformed into an alliance with liberal and independent elements in the South. "Stand by the Laborer and with Producers and Plow holders," Lewis Huber, a retired farmer living in New Orleans, wrote the President.\textsuperscript{57} He suggested that Hayes endorse the Greenback party platform; such a move, Huber predicted, "will thoroughly bust up the Democrat Party." The President received similar letters from North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia;\textsuperscript{58} however, inflationary ideas were repugnant to Hayes's hard money economic philosophy.

The Conservative-Democratic party of Louisiana, in

\textsuperscript{55}James E. Richardson to J. M. Currie, August 1, 1882, in William E. Chandler Papers (Division of Manuscripts, Library of Congress). Cited hereafter as Chandler Papers.

\textsuperscript{56}Natchitoches \textit{Louisiana Populist}, November 16, 1894. Cited hereafter as \textit{Louisiana Populist}.

\textsuperscript{57}Lewis Huber to Rutherford B. Hayes, April 22, 1877, Hayes Papers.

\textsuperscript{58}De Santis, \textit{Republicans Face the Southern Question}, 58-59.
the first months after Reconstruction, showed visible splits over local and personal issues; but there appeared to be no inclination to fuse politically with Hayes's Republican party. Some northern observers of the Nicholls legislature realized this fact from the beginning. "From a political standpoint," a correspondent of the New York Times observed, the President's policy "is almost . . . certain to be a disastrous failure." The Times man pointed out that though Louisiana's Democrats were jubilant over Packard's collapse, "that they should feel any gratitude to President Hayes . . . has never entered their minds." The same newspapermen suggested that although many of the "old Whigs" of 1861 had opposed secession, this did not necessarily indicate that they would now join Republican ranks, even of the respectable Hayes variety. Property losses during the war and the social upsets of Reconstruction had made "these rich men" ardent Democrats.

In 1877 the Conservative-Democratic party of Louisiana, as in other southern states, obviously had the loyalty of most native whites of all economic backgrounds. Wealthy planters and merchants were in the party because of their distaste for high taxes, financial irresponsibility, and the

59 New York Times, April 26, 1877.
60 Ibid.
labor-upsetting actions which had characterized the Radical regime. Most poor whites supported Democratic candidates because of inbred racial antipathy to the Negro, whose aspirations, now that he was free, seemed to pose a threat to the white man's place in society. Thus, the "Conservative-Democratic" appellation (sometimes the words were reversed) was used to satisfy both the elite and the mass of the home rule party. But by 1878, within a year of Reconstruction's demise, the party was self-confident to the point of dropping the dual designation. As a rule, Louisiana's rulers relied thereafter upon the simpler name of "Democrat."  

Another term, "Bourbon Democracy," has often been applied to characterize the leadership of the home rule party of the South in the years after Reconstruction. Northern newspapers such as the Chicago Times used it as a political epithet in accusing southern leaders of reactionary tendencies; it was claimed that the southerners had learned nothing from war and Reconstruction, and yet had forgotten none of the bitterness of those years.  

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62 Daily Picayune, January 11, 1878.

63 Ibid., November 4, 1879. See also Francis Butler Simkins, A History of the South (New York, 1956), 311-25.
narrowly defined, "Bourbon" would not apply to most of the partisans who redeemed Louisiana from Radicalism. They had learned from the past. Especially were some of them avid students of the newer techniques in vote fraud, bond swindles, and assorted other forms of peculation, which Carpetbaggers such as Henry Clay Warmoth had brought to Louisiana. As one Democrat wrote, Warmoth taught "our people as well as his . . . a great many things hitherto not found in the books." But the Pelican State had witnessed wrongdoing in high places long before Warmoth's time; his methods were sometimes audacious and novel, but his purposes were well understood by those familiar with ante-bellum politics. A northern observer submitted an interesting hypothesis: that it was Louisiana which corrupted the Carpetbaggers, not the reverse.

The dominant element in the Nicholls administration had no desire to turn the calendar back to 1860; at least, they did not wish to do so in an economic sense. Louisiana's redeemers believed the state should seek out and encourage business development. Outside capital was eagerly invited. Agriculture, of course, was not entirely forgotten; it

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64Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, March 4, 1890.
could join in the new order by adopting more scientific and businesslike methods. Above all, the old planter-merchant oligarchy of the ante-bellum period was being revised by new ideas, new faces, and new money.

Yet if "Bourbonism" be equated to a feudalistic state of mind, to the proposition that the privileged few of one race deserve to dominate the incapable many of all races, then the home rule Democrats of Louisiana deserved the appellation. Business ideas of the post-Reconstruction South retained overtones of plantation feudalism. And a reduction in state expenditures for social services, even below the ante-bellum level, was justified on the dual grounds of Louisiana's poverty and the need for attracting outside capital with low taxation. Noblesse Oblige was still considered the best philosophy for an orderly society. "We must admit," said the official journal of the state government in 1882, "we are ... Bourbon."

The upper echelon of the Louisiana Democracy of 1877 embraced the dogmas of neo-Whiggish economics, and in private life engaged in mercantile or financial pursuits.

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67 New Orleans Democrat, August 26, 1877; St. Joseph North Louisiana Journal, May 10, 1879. For a good definition of New South Bourbonism, see International Review, X (March, 1881), 199.


69 Baton Rouge Daily Capitolian-Advocate, March 7, 1882.
However, the turbulent Reconstruction era was scarcely over before those capitalists who were not directly engaged in politics began to realize that business interests would be compromised whenever political expediency or personal ambition intervened. As early as 1878 urban merchants were joining in the chorus of complaints against the Louisiana Democracy. By 1878, even the President of the New Orleans Cotton Exchange protested the methods and aims of the men he helped bring to power two years before. Louisiana businessmen were beginning to learn, much to their indignation, that nothing in the state took precedence over the desires of those who struggled for political power.

Three men were foremost in the ranks of the Democratic party of Louisiana at the end of Reconstruction: Governor Francis T. Nicholls, Lieutenant-Governor Louis A. Wiltz, and the behind-the-scenes political manager, Edward A. Burke. All three were Confederate veterans; or, in Burke's case, claimed to have fought for southern independence.

Forty-three years of age when he became governor, Nicholls had lived quietly as a small slaveholder in Assumption Parish before the war. He attained the rank of

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70Daily Picayune, October 27-31, 1878.
71New York Times, November 19, 1878.
72Woodward, Origins of the New South, 70.
brigadier general in the Confederate army and served bravely, losing an arm and a leg on the battlefields of Virginia. Both Nicholls's political naiveté and the vote appeal of his heroically mangled body commended him to shrewd Democratic managers. Even the Republicans shrunk from criticizing the man. Yet the governorship proved to be a severe disappointment to Nicholls; he soon discovered that powerful elements within the party were thwarting his moderate approach to racial and political problems. "From the very beginning," Nicholls wrote, "there were men around me trying to injure me and break down my influence. . . ." Republican politicians shrewdly evaluated the Governor's position. Warmoth was moved to comment that "Nicholls is a good man, but from the country. . . . They are running over him while they are using him." And Warmoth added that disreputable Democrats felt obliged to run "men of character" for office in 1876; but, once in power, these self-seekers had shoved the decent (Nicholls) element aside.


74New Orleans Republican, July 26, 1876, quoted in Nichols, "Francis T. Nicholls, Bourbon Democrat," 36.


76Cincinnati Enquirer, quoted in Daily Picayune, November 22, 1878.
Wiltz, thirty-four years old, had aspired to the governorship at the state Democratic convention which nominated Nicholls. He was of mixed German and Spanish ancestry, and had married into a wealthy French family. Wiltz had served as a captain in the Confederate army; after the war, he became a banker-politician in New Orleans, and was elected to the Mayor's office in 1872. Beginning in 1877, Lieutenant-Governor Wiltz helped organize an anti-Nicholls faction in the Democratic party. His most valuable ally in this work was Edward A. Burke.

Burke, unlike Nicholls and Wiltz, was not a native Louisianian. Thirty-five years old in 1877, he claimed Kentucky as his place of birth. However, rumors of northern origin were circulated by his enemies; they enjoyed calling him "the Carpetbag boss." Friends referred to him as "Major" Burke, and claimed that he rose to that rank in the service of the South. A fawning newspaper article related

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77 McGinty, *Louisiana Redeemed*, 34.
80 *New York Times*, November 19, 1879; *New Orleans Democrat*, December 13, 1879.
81 *New York Times*, November 19, 1879. Professor C. Vann Woodward believes that Burke was of northern origin, but did become a major in the Confederate army. However, Woodward, like other researchers, was unable to conclusively pin down Burke's career before he arrived in Louisiana in 1870. Cf. Woodward, *Reunion and Reaction*, 191-93; *Origins of the New South*, 70-71.
that at age twenty-three Burke was chief of the Field Transportation Bureau of the Confederacy's Trans-Mississippi Department, "with the largest property account of any officer in the Confederacy. . . ." Burke arrived in New Orleans in 1870. He worked as a common laborer, until he obtained a salaried position on the New Orleans, Jackson and Great Northern Railroad. Less publicized was his business affiliation with Charles T. Howard's Louisiana State Lottery Company. The Major's activities, by the mid-1870's, had spread in all directions; he entered politics, managed the Nicholls campaign against Packard in 1876, and was a key figure in the negotiations with northern Republicans in 1876-77. Carpetbaggers envied and admired Burke; ex-Governor Kellogg smiled when he told the Major that the Democrats could not get along without him. In 1878 Burke was elected State Treasurer and promised to be "a safe custodian of the public funds. . . . A foe to extravagance." But looking after Louisiana's treasury required only a portion of this ambitious man's time; in 1879 he became Managing Editor of the New Orleans Democrat.

82 Shreveport Times, quoted in Winnfield Southern Sentinel, July 23, 1886.
83 Ibid.
84 Woodward, Reunion and Reaction, 192.
85 Daily Picayune, November 19, 1879.
86 Ibid., November 1, 1878.
purchased it a year later, and then consolidated this paper with another city daily to form the powerful Times-Democrat in 1881.

Probably as early as 1877 Wiltz and Burke saw the advantages to be gained from joining forces against the more upright Nicholls element of the party. Certainly by the time of the constitutional convention of 1879 a solid political alliance between the two was concluded: an agreement which spelled the doom of the incumbent administration. With Wiltz presiding, the constitutional convention cut Nicholls's term short by calling for a new gubernatorial election, and at the same time lengthened Burke's term as treasurer to six uninterrupted years.

Nicholls, "the maimed and noble chieftan," went back to private life with the realization that Burke and Wiltz had amputated his political career with a skill which exceeded that of the Confederate surgeons who relieved him of an arm and leg.

The factional quarrels which beset the Louisiana Democracy seldom spilled over into national politics; at

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89 This was Major Burke's oratorical description of Governor Nicholls, quoted in Daily Picayune, November 3, 1879.
least, not to the point of aiding the plans of President Hayes for a revived Republican party in the state. Hayes never presumed that the Louisiana whites would come over en masse to his remodeled party. But he did classify the Pelican State as one of seven ex-Confederate commonwealths where his "pacification policy" was expected to bear political fruit. Democratic Congressman Randall L. Gibson was closely associated with the President's plans; for a time, Gibson had a large voice in selecting men for key Federal jobs within the state. Soon, however, Hayes received bad news from Louisiana. The President's political emissary, James M. Comley, had arrived in New Orleans and had suddenly reversed his estimate of the Whiggish revival along the Mississippi. "The 'old Whig' sentiment I spoke of," Comley wrote Hayes, "petered out before we reached New Orleans. There is nothing here to hang an old Whig party on. The truth is there does not seem to be anything except the Customs House to hang anything on here...." Comley also informed the President that local Republicans were restless over reports that the administration planned to shun Carpetbaggers in the distribution of Federal patronage.

90 Rutherford B. Hayes to William D. Bickham, May 3, 1877, quoted in Charles R. Williams (ed.), Diary and Letters of Rutherford B. Hayes (Columbus, 1924), III, 432.

91 John E. Leonard to Rutherford B. Hayes, May 12, 1877, Hayes Papers.

92 James M. Comley to Rutherford B. Hayes, May 11, 1877, Hayes Papers.
The Comley dispatch may have had something to do with the President's decision to use more caution in his attempts to bulwark Deep South Republicanism. In addition, White House mail was being flooded with tales of woe from those who felt abandoned. "Mr. President I give you my word as a Christian woman," wrote Mrs. C. C. Antoine, wife of the Negro ex-Lieutenant Governor of Louisiana, "some time we have not a nickel in the house. . . . Mr. President . . . do something for my husband. . . ." Members of the returning board of 1876 were especially clamorous in reminding Hayes of their past labors in his behalf. After some delay, Hayes felt obliged to reward those Louisianians who had helped put him in office; even Packard was given the lucrative consulship in Liverpool, England.

In line with Hayes's policy, dignified old Whigs in Louisiana were soon forced to share Federal appointments with less well-mannered white and Negro Radicals. The reluctance of many distinguished white applicants to proclaim themselves Republicans irritated the President, just as his insistence upon the point irritated the former. Congressman

93 Mrs. C. C. Antoine to Rutherford B. Hayes, August 18, 1878, Hayes Papers. As Lieutenant-Governor from 1873 to 1877, Antoine held the highest office to which any Louisiana Negro has ever been elected. But after Reconstruction he slipped into obscurity. In 1890, a brief report told of Antoine's arrest in Fort Worth, Texas, on a charge of public drunkenness. Fined $5.00, and unable to pay, Antoine was "sent to the rock pile." Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, July 10, 1890.

Gibson was "extremely pained" when Hayes angrily told him: "My policy must not be mistaken. My determination is to appoint none but Republicans to office..." Hayes's increasingly stiff attitude was also attributable to the fact that his New Departure policies in Louisiana and elsewhere were coming under steady attack by the Stalwart faction within his own party. Led by Senators Roscoe Conkling and William E. Chandler, the Stalwarts opposed pacification of ex-Confederates because it interfered with the "bloody shirt" campaign tactics by which they won political power in northern states, and because they felt it would accomplish nothing in the South.

The troubles of Hayes in Washington and Nicholls in Louisiana were analogous in many respects. Just as Hayes was opposed by the congressional Stalwarts, so, in Louisiana, did "unreconstructed" Democrats complain that Nicholl's "reconciliation of the Radicals was the silliest policy... an insult to the intelligence and virtue of those who have... so bravely carried on the war against wrong...."

Dissident native whites felt the war against Radicalism was

95 Charles Gayarre to K. R. Rogers, June 12, 1877, Hayes Papers.

96 De Santis, Republicans Face the Southern Question, 106-115.

not yet won; when the "compromise" legislature met again in 1878, there were sixty-two Democrats against fifty-two Republicans in the House of Representatives, and twenty Democrats against sixteen Republicans in the State Senate. This margin, felt the Democratic extremists, was too slim.

Nor did the rejoicing over Reconstruction's end hide the strong current of discontent among the articulate white population of Louisiana. Only the most naive could believe that the Democratic party had emerged from Reconstruction with pure hands, or that the political troubles of the state were over because Governor Nicholls had been installed in office. The day that Federal troops left the vicinity of the State House one conservative writer felt obliged to throw a sour note into the festivities:

The era through which we have just passed has left its impress. . . . There has not been a steal in the past twelve years in which some of those who proudly enroll themselves among the "oldest and best" have not had their hands.99

The role of the Louisiana State Lottery in Democracy's victory was common knowledge. Chartered by the Carpetbagger legislature of 1868, the lottery managers shrewdly drifted toward the Democratic party as the day of Radicalism waned. The chief spokesman for the lottery,

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98Daily Picayune, January 7, 1878.
99New Orleans Times, April 24, 1877, quoted in New York Times, April 28, 1877.
Charles T. Howard, was a former New Yorker who was not the sort of man to ignore either politicians or public relations. In seeking to gain respectability for his gambling concern he purchased the services of two southern gentlemen of "unblemished records and pure fame"; ex-Confederate Generals P. G. T. Beauregard and Jubal A. Early. These worthies supervised all lottery drawings, "really as representatives of the people," to see that all was honest.

Reformers within the Democratic party of Louisiana were dismayed when, during the crisis of 1877, the lottery contributed a sum of money estimated at from $34,000 to $250,000 for the purpose of undermining the loyalty of the Republican legislature. The lottery, so it was said, "purchased Packard's negroes like so many pigs," and thereby placed the real beneficiaries, the Nicholls government, under a distinct obligation to the company. It was, wrote one ashamed Democrat, a marvellous opportunity for the lottery, and "the buzzard nose and eye of Charlie Howard smelt and saw the prey and seized it." The lottery soon

100 Daily Picayune, December 11, 1878.
101 Ibid.
102 Berthold C. Alwes, 'The History of the Louisiana State Lottery Company,' Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XXVII (October, 1944), 996-98.
103 New Orleans Vindicator, June 11, 1878, clipping in Brickell Papers.
104 Ibid.
had its reward. A bill for repeal of its Carpetbagger charter was tabled in the legislative session of 1877, and again in 1878.105

The future of Negro suffrage in the state provided another area of discord within the Democratic party. Realistic whites could not agree with an editor who cheerfully opined that since Federal meddling had ceased "the negro question is ended at last. . . . He is lost in the great mass of other voters. . . ."106 How could this be? In thirty parishes Negro voters outnumbered whites.107 And even though the 20,000 majority which colored voters held in the last year of Reconstruction was cut severely by Nicholls officials, registration figures in 1878 revealed that Negroes continued to hold a slight majority in statewide registration.108 Thoughtful Democratic politicians viewed the Negro majority as a danger but also as a tempting opportunity. As early as the passage of the first Reconstruction Act of 1867, prominent ex-Confederates in Louisiana, such as Duncan F. Kenner and P. G. T. Beauregard,

106 Daily Picayune, May 1, 1877.
108 Louisiana, Report of the Secretary of State, 1902, 546-47. This report contains a handy compendium of registration and election figures from 1872 to 1900.
realized that Negro voters might be put to conservative use. "If the suffrage of the Negro," Beauregard said in 1867, "is properly handled and directed, we shall defeat our adversaries with their own weapons."^109

As Reconstruction ended the influential Daily Picayune became enthusiastic over the vision of Negroes accepting the advice of white Democratic patricians. "Shake off degrading prejudices," Negroes were told, "trust to honor, and we who bear the grand old name of gentlemen will show you how great a victory your defeat has been."^110 Conservative editors diligently reported any word about Negroes who cooperated with local whites, including the macabre example of bi-racial harmony in the town of Thibodaux, where a "mixed crowd of negro and white" lynched a colored man suspected of rape.

But events soon proved that the racial harmony and political forgiveness which Nicholls and his legislature proclaimed in April of 1877 was not underwritten by many state and local officials. Whites were naturally indignant over the innumerable raids on public funds, the vote stealing, and other high-handed activities which the alien


^110 Daily Picayune, April 28, 1877.

^111 Ibid., April 8, 1877.
Carpetbaggers and their Negro allies had engaged in during the Reconstruction years. Once the Democrats took over, retribution was not long in following. Apologists for the acts of vengeance which came in the summer and fall of 1877 explained that promises made to the Hayes commission should be narrowly defined: that immunity for "past political conduct" did not include peculation and vote fraud. Among those jailed for theft were two members of the Nicholls ("compromise") legislature, Senator David Young of Concordia, and Representative P. J. Watson of Madison Parish. Both were Negroes.

The fact that Nicholls appointed a few well-known Negro politicians to minor offices hurt him with ardent Democrats and did little to reassure the majority of Negroes; they claimed the Governor meant well but was actually powerless. A northern observer commented that "a large portion of the colored people desire to leave the State. They do not care where they go, but are puzzled to know how to get away." The major target of Democrats bent on vengeance was the unsavory returning board. On July 5, 1877, the Superior Criminal Court of New Orleans ordered

112 Nation, XXV (July 12, 1877), 17.
113 Daily Picayune, July 25, October 28, 1877.
115 Ibid.
the arrest of all four members of the board: J. Madison Wells, Thomas C. Anderson, Louis M. Kenner (rumored to be a mulatto nephew of Duncan F. Kenner), and Gadane Cassanave. Wells and Anderson were white men. "We don't care anything about the two niggers," wrote a New Orleanan, but the white men "ought to be in the penitentiary. . . . We presume Nicholls will pardon Wells and Anderson, of course."¹¹⁷

Without question, these arrests were instituted on the part of anti-Nicholls forces for the purpose of embarrassing the Governor and capitalizing on the growing discontent with his pacific attitude. The day before the returning board was arrested an unruly mob in Baton Rouge supposedly threw "100 rocks" at Nicholls while he visited the town. The New Orleans Times professed that the action against the returning board also meant serious trouble for President Hayes. Information produced at the trial might give Stalwart Republicans enough ammunition to impeach the President.¹¹⁸

The accused were released on bail and their trials delayed until early 1878, a time which, significantly, coincided with the next meeting of the Louisiana legislature.

¹¹⁶ New Orleans Democrat, July 6, 1877.
¹¹⁸ Ibid., July 13, 1877.
¹¹⁹ New Orleans Times, July 12, 1877.
Meanwhile, more blows fell upon the Hayes vision of a conservative Republican party in the South. Hayes had hoped to overcome a slim Democratic majority in Congress by inducing enough New Departure southerners to support James A. Garfield, a personal friend, for the speakership of the House of Representatives. Yet when Congress met in special session in October, all Louisiana and most southern Democratic members voted against Garfield. He was narrowly defeated. Shortly thereafter, the President expressed a "grave doubt" about the feasibility of federal aid to the Texas and Pacific Railroad, a project much beloved by New Orleans businessmen.

Late in November the United States Senate voted thirty to twenty-eight to seat William Pitt Kellogg as a member from Louisiana. Kellogg was sent to Washington by the defunct Packard Legislature. His rival, old Whig Henry M. Spofford, was the choice of the Nicholls government. The precarious majority which Republicans enjoyed in the Senate provided the practical reason for seating a Carpetbagger rather than taking chances with old Whigs; the

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120 Woodward, Origins of the New South, 42, 46.
121 Congressional Record, 45 Cong., 1 sess., 797.
122 Woodward, Reunion and Reaction, 234-35.
123 Congressional Record, 45 Cong., 1 sess., 797.
Republican Senators, it was said, "drew in Kellogg as a dry sponge draws in dirty water." The new Senator was an anathema to Louisiana conservatives, and the decision to seat him drove another nail in the coffin of the New Departure.

The trial of the returning board gave ample proof, if any be needed, that Louisiana was still hopelessly immeshed in the web of hatred spun during Reconstruction years. The fact that anti-Nicholls politicians were manipulating these emotions to have their way in the state was recognized by at least a few observers. President Hayes was informed of the situation through the letters of General Winfield S. Hancock, who arrived in New Orleans in February to look after the interests of the national government and act as "peacemaker." Hancock's messages were sent to General William T. Sherman, and from there forwarded to the White House.

Anderson, the first to go on trial, was found guilty of gross vote fraud in the Vernon parish returns of 1876; immediately thereafter, Hancock arranged a private meeting with Governor Nicholls. After this meeting, Hancock wrote Sherman:

The Governor will pardon such members of the Returning Board as may be tried and convicted. He

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124 Daily Picayune, December 13, 1877.
125 Winfield S. Hancock to William T. Sherman, February 14, 1878, copy in Hayes Papers.
fully recognized that there was a tacit understand-
ing that political matters of the past were not to
be revived. [ The reason for delay in pardoning
Anderson ] is the matter of the Constitutional
Convention now before the Legislature. Gov.
Nichols [ sic ] is opposed to that scheme, which
. . . embraces a proposition to legislate the
Governor . . . out of office.126

The Hancock letter shows that Governor Nicholls
understood, as early as February of 1878, what was behind
the move for a new constitution. But Nicholls's enemies were
temporarily thwarted; the Louisiana State Supreme Court re-
leased Anderson on March 18, 1878. 127 This action took the
burden off Nicholls. The legislature killed the move for a
convention and charges against Wells, Kenner, and Cassanave
were dropped.

Perhaps the most disturbing element in the imbroglio
was the aging but fierce ex-Governor, J. Madison Wells. The
old Scalawag planter from Rapides Parish had been scheduled
to appear for trial after Anderson. At the end of the Ander-
son trial, Wells dispatched a long and unbelievably vicious
account of Louisiana affairs and personalities to the New
York Times. Among other things, he said the presiding judge
at the Anderson trial had once embezzled $600,000 and was
"in a beastly state of intoxication" during the trial; that
the prosecuting attorney was a known murderer; and that E.

126 Ibid., February 15, 1878.
A. Burke was really "A. E. Burk" who had stolen money from his home town in the Midwest and had subsequently fled to the South. Then, as an afterthought, Wells added that Congressman Gibson's swarthy complexion was due to Negro ancestors in Adams County, Mississippi.

Governor Nicholls could scarcely be considered as an agrarian reformer. His messages indicate an inability or refusal to understand the needs of the poor of Louisiana of either race. As Dr. David Brickell so accurately observed at the time, Nicholls's "zeal for what is called 'state credit' and the welfare of the money power has blinded him. . . ."

Yet Brickell admitted that Nicholls was an honest gentleman who represented the best, and not the worst, of Louisiana's Democratic leadership. And those reformers who were critical of Nicholls soon had more deserving targets for their attacks. For the returning board affair of 1878, though it resulted in a Nicholls victory, only delayed the inevitable. A year later the "noble chiefest" would have his term cut short and the Burke-Wiltz Democratic machine could legislate in the name of home rule and white supremacy.

128Ibid., February 19, 1878.


130New Orleans Vindicator, July 20, 1878, clipping in Brickell Papers.
Slowly, Louisianians of both farm and city came to learn that the overthrow of Radicalism did not mean an end to the evils of the Reconstruction era. A close study of registration figures and election returns for the remainder of the century will indicate that the election of 1876, whether Republican or Democratic figures be taken, was the most honest the state would know for at least the next generation. In 1876 both sides balanced each other by stealing votes. Afterward, this prerogative would be solely the possession of white conservatives.

Civil war, followed by the social turmoil of Reconstruction, impoverished and demoralized Louisiana to a worse degree, perhaps, than in other southern states. Even Creole patricians such as seventy-two year old Charles Gayarre' found themselves asking for political sinecures. In 1877 Gayarre' mailed President Hayes a copy of his History of Louisiana along with an embarrassed request for a place at the New Orleans Customs House. He suggested that the President read certain pages in the book describing the difficulty President Jefferson and Governor Claiborne encountered in filling local offices in the Louisiana territory. Respectable inhabitants of that earlier day had

131Charles Gayarre' to Rutherford B. Hayes, May 15, 1877, Hayes Papers.
scorned the public payroll.

"Such," Gayarre' concluded, "was [ the Louisianians'] original and native dignity of character. If that character has since been modified, it is due to circumstances which they have not been able to control, and to influences which they could not resist." Thus did the aged recorder of Louisiana's past apologize for present failings in himself, his class, and his state.
CHAPTER II

LAND AND LABOR IN THE WAKE OF RECONSTRUCTION

The Civil War and Reconstruction disrupted and then depressed the economy of Louisiana. In 1860 the state's $602,118,568 of property ranked her first in the South and second in the nation in per capita wealth. Then followed a generation of disaster. The first Federal census after Reconstruction estimated the actual value of property at $422,000,000, a plunge to thirty-seventh in wealth among all states and territories.¹

One fact had not changed. Louisiana after Reconstruction, as before, was fundamentally rural. New Orleans, with 216,090 inhabitants in 1880, was the tenth largest community in the United States. But beyond this one urban center there was no city in Louisiana worthy of the name. The census listed Shreveport as second in size, with barely

¹U.S., Bureau of the Census, Tenth Census of the United States: 1880. Valuation, Taxation and Public In¬debtedness, VII, 5, 12. The decrease in wealth was com¬pounded by an increase in population. Louisiana had 939,436 inhabitants in 1880; an increase of 31.98 per cent since 1860. Some scholars have made the erroneous assumption that Negroes, being slaves, were not reckoned into the per capita wealth estimates for 1860. But they were, as a simple application of mathematics will show. For an example of this mistake, see Coulter, The South During Reconstruction, 192-93.
8,000 inhabitants; four other towns reported more than 2,500 inhabitants. 2 Seventy-four per cent of the population lived in a rural environment. Outside New Orleans and its immediate environs, the percentage for the state stood at an astonishing ninety-seven per cent rural. 3

The majority of Louisianians, of both races, returned to agricultural pursuits at the close of the Civil War. Lack of economic opportunities in New Orleans and other communities discouraged any mass movement from country to town. Emancipation had altered the legal status of plantation labor, but the Negro himself was still present. Some freedmen drifted into the towns, but the great majority remained in the bottomlands; their knowledge of agriculture, and lack of other skills, was in itself a form of perpetual bondage. Rural whites, for the most part, were similarly immobilized. Many old planters in the bottomlands were ruined by exorbitant credit, high Reconstruction taxes, and labor troubles; but with cotton and sugar selling for twice and over the 1860 prices, the

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2Ibid., Statistics of Population, I, 196-99. Besides the six towns above 2,500 there were only fourteen other communities which had over 1,000 inhabitants.

3The distinction between "rural" and "urban" used in this study follows the rule first adopted by the census bureau in 1910. That is, incorporated towns of over 2,500 population, plus densely settled fringe areas, are classified as urban; all else, rural. U.S., Bureau of the Census, Thirteenth Census of the United States: 1910. Population, I, 21, 53.
plantation system managed to survive. Ownership might change but, as much as possible, the old way of life was retained. And thirty cent cotton was a potent lure in the hill country, too. Small landowning whites in the northern and Florida parishes, after 1865, began reducing their garden crops and came increasingly to pin their hopes for a better life on the soft white fiber. Necessity also played a part in the yeoman and poor white shift to cotton. Immediately after the war, many of them lacked even the rude belongings they had possessed in 1860, and were on the verge of starvation. If only to restore their living standard of ante-bellum days, they needed store credit. And merchants would not usually grant advances unless the prospective debtor could pledge a money crop.

Despite high prices and fertile soil, prosperity seemed to elude Louisiana agriculture. Statistics of the census of 1880 starkly reveal the depths into which the rural economy had sunk during the previous generation. The following figures give some measure of the decline:

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<th>1860⁶</th>
<th>1880⁷</th>
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<td>Rural population:</td>
<td>526,038</td>
<td>688,556</td>
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<td>Cash value, farm land</td>
<td>$204,789,662</td>
<td>$58,989,117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and buildings:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of farms:</td>
<td>17,328</td>
<td>48,292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved acres:</td>
<td>2,707,108</td>
<td>2,739,972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash value,</td>
<td>$18,646,225</td>
<td>$5,435,525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>implements:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ginned Cotton (lbs.):</td>
<td>311,095,200</td>
<td>241,570,275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar (1,000 lb hhds.):</td>
<td>221,726</td>
<td>171,706</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molasses (gals.):</td>
<td>13,439,772</td>
<td>11,696,248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian corn (bu.):</td>
<td>16,853,745</td>
<td>9,889,689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweet potatoes (bu.):</td>
<td>2,060,981</td>
<td>1,318,310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice (lbs.):</td>
<td>6,311,367</td>
<td>23,118,311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livestock (except swine)</td>
<td>868,525</td>
<td>787,334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swine:</td>
<td>634,525</td>
<td>633,489</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value, all livestock:</td>
<td>$24,546,940</td>
<td>$12,345,905</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Visibly, Louisiana's agriculture emerged from

⁶U.S., Bureau of the Census, Eighth Census of the United States: 1860. Agriculture, II, 66-67. The census of 1860 reported Louisiana's cotton production at 777,738 bales of 400 pounds; the census of 1880 listed 508,569 bales of 475 pounds. For the sake of comparison and clarity the cotton figures in the above table are reduced to pounds.

⁷U.S., Tenth Census, Report on the Production of Agriculture, III, 3-9, 118-119. Estimates for the rural population in 1860 and 1880 are based on the measurement first used by the census bureau in 1910. Obviously, not all rural people can be thought of as engaged in agriculture. Yet, in the period discussed, practically all "rural non-farm" residents, such as merchants, lawyers, etc., had a direct interest in the economy of their farming neighbors.
Reconstruction with manifold ills. Although the rural population in 1880 showed an increase of thirty-one per cent since 1860, the production of cotton and sugar, the chief money crops, actually declined. Two major subsistence crops, corn and sweet potatoes, had shrunk to almost half their former bushel totals. Among the cereals only rice and oats showed any increase. The number of swine remained about equal to the ante-bellum figure, but all other livestock had a collective decrease of about ten per cent. Yet most alarming of all was the plummet of farm land values. The amount of tilled land and permanent pastures (improved acres) had increased by almost 33,000 acres since 1860; however, the value of farm land and buildings showed a decline of over seventy per cent. In 1880 all the improved land in the state was worth less than the land tilled in just eighteen sugar parishes before the war. Livestock valuation was down fifty per cent. Again, the decrepit condition of rural Louisiana can be illustrated by dividing the amount of improved acreage into the value of farm implements (machinery and tools) for both periods. The cash value of these assets averaged $6.88 per acre in 1860, and had shrunk to a trifling $1.98 by 1880.

Much of this financial loss could be traced to the shattered sugar plantations. Before the Civil War, Louisiana produced ninety-five per cent of the total sugar crop of
The introduction of expensive steam machinery in the 1820's had eliminated most of the small producers; dominating the region, by the 1840's, were the great planters who owned refining mills and possessed scores of slaves. The less than 1,500 planters who owned their own mills in 1860 were as much industrialists as they were agriculturists. But the war emancipated the planters' source of labor, and the expensive machinery was wrecked or confiscated.

Recovery in the sugar parishes was painfully slow. At the end of Reconstruction, in 1877, only 127,000 hogsheads of sugar were produced--less than one-third of the output of ante-bellum banner years. Agricultural reformers, led by Daniel Dennett of the *Daily Picayune*, believed that a division of the great estates into small farms would solve the sugar country's problems. Dennett did not suggest a confiscation or forced sale of the sugar lands; rather, he proposed that planters bring in white labor from northern and western states and set up a system

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of tenant farming. The thrifty among these white tenants, Dennett assumed, would eventually be able to purchase the tracts of land they worked. Then, the ex-planters would engage solely in refining. But most planters thought this impractical. Great estates continued to predominate, and as new refining mills were built the men who owned the mills also possessed the land upon which a majority of the cane was grown. Thus, by the 1880's, sugar factories and fields continued on in much the same way as the ante-bellum period, with poorly paid Negro gang labor as a substitute for slavery.

Land ownership did undergo profound changes in the sugar country after 1865, but by a process which kept the plantations intact. The fabulous profits of pre-war years lured northerners with capital to invest into buying up the old estates from impoverished planters. One ante-bellum owner who was able to hang on in the new era estimated that nine-tenths of the sugar estates changed hands in the period from 1865 to 1877. Some of the new owners bought land for purely speculative reasons; over thirty per cent of the

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13 Ibid., March 18, 1877.
14 Ibid., October 21, 1877.
16 Letter from "Rusticus" in Daily Picayune, September 23, 1877.
former cane fields remained fallow and weed-choked throughout Reconstruction. At least half the new proprietors were northern men, or men supported by northern banks. Prominent among them were Republican politicians. Ex-Governors Henry Clay Warmoth and William Pitt Kellogg used their ill-gotten fortunes to become members of the sugar aristocracy. Warmoth was particularly successful in achieving a status of respectability among his neighbors. Influential Democrats, whose conservative ideas on economic questions harmonized with Warmoth's beliefs, wished him luck "in everything--except his infernal politics."

In 1880 only eleven parishes returned sugar as their leading crop in acreage--Plaquemines and St. Bernard in the First Congressional District; Jefferson, St. Charles, St. James, and St. John the Baptist in the Second; Ascension, St. Martin, St. Mary, and Terrebonne in the Third; and West Baton Rouge in the Sixth District. These eleven parishes produced seventy-four per cent of the state's total sugar output. All eleven had Negro majorities. Sugar was also the chief money crop (though not the leader in actual

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17 Shugg, Origins of Class Struggle in Louisiana, 249.
18 James E. Richardson to J. M. Currie, August 1, 1882, Chandler Papers.
19 Daily Picayune, November 24, 1879.
20 U.S., Tenth Census, V, 3-5.
acreage) in four parishes of the Third Congressional District: Assumption, Iberia, Iberville, and Lafourche. Two of these, Assumption and Lafourche, had more white inhabitants than Negroes. Nowhere, however, could many whites be found at work on the great plantations as laborers or tenants. As before the war, the majority of whites in rural South Louisiana tilled their small acres, tended livestock, or engaged in fishing and trapping. Some raised sugar cane on little plots and sold the stalks to the planter-refiners. 21

King cotton, rather than sugar, retained first place among the money crops of the state. Cotton acreage in 1880 quadrupled the amount of land planted in cane. 22 In twenty-nine parishes, half the districts of the state, cotton exceeded any other crop in the number of acres planted. In addition, cotton led as a money crop in six other parishes where corn ranked first in the amount of tilled land.

The Fourth and Fifth Congressional Districts, situated north of the thirty-first degree of latitude, produced 78.5 per cent of the entire cotton crop of the state. 23 Every parish of Northeast Louisiana (the Fifth District) returned cotton first among all crops in acreage. Tensas

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21Daily Picayune, June 11, 1879.
22U.S. Tenth Census, V, 3-5.
23Ibid., 33.
parish, in that region, led the state in production with 41,859 bales in 1879. Concordia listed an astounding 91.8 per cent of her tilled land under cotton; East Carroll topped every parish, and every county, in the South in productivity: 451 lint pounds raised for each acre in cotton. In the land of Northwest Louisiana (the Fourth District), cotton was listed first in acreage in seven of the twelve parishes. There, cotton production exceeded 10,000 bales in Bossier, Caddo, DeSoto, Natchitoches, Rapides, and Red River Parishes.

Yet cotton was not entirely confined to North Louisiana. Cotton also ranked first in tilled acreage in the Sixth Congressional District, which sprawled westward from the Florida parishes, across the Mississippi River, and into the prairies of St. Landry Parish. With the exception of Avoyelles, all of the parishes of the Sixth lay below the thirty-first parallel of latitude. Avoyelles, East Feliciana, Pointe Coupee, St. Landry, and West Feliciana raised over 10,000 bales per year. Other parishes in the Sixth District raised considerably less. Farther to the South, cotton fields appeared at intervals in the Third Congressional District. Tiny Lafayette Parish led this region with 3,489 bales; only two others, Iberia and St. Martin, produced over 1,000 bales for the crop reported in the 1880

Ibid.
census. Overall, the geographic predominance of cotton may be noted by the fact that only seven parishes in the state reported no bales, whereas in twenty-five parishes absolutely no sugar was refined. However, in nearly every parish a number of farmers planted cane for home use as molasses.

In one respect cotton was akin to sugar. It, too, was most at home in the alluvial soils along the rivers. Parishes which bordered the great rivers of the state continued, after the war, to lead in the number of bales produced. The tier of six parishes adjoining the Mississippi River from the Arkansas border south to Baton Rouge contributed one-third of all Louisiana's cotton. These same six parishes, in 1860, boasted some of the wealthiest and most extensive landholdings in the South. A generation later, the plantations remained; but these plantations had become patchworks of tenant farms where Negro occupants rented or worked on "shares" for the few white landowners. In these six parishes, in 1880, lived 12,247 whites and

25 Ibid., 3-5.
26 Monroe Observer, quoted in Daily Picayune, October 29, 1877.
27 East Carroll, Madison, Tensas, Concordia, Pointe Coupee, and West Feliciana Parishes. These six grew 167,265 of the 508,569 bales raised in the state in 1879. U.S., Tenth Census, Ill, 118-19.
77,116 Negroes. 28

But the alluvial belt was not confined to the parishes along the Mississippi. Cotton culture was also predominant along the fertile banks of the Red, Black, and Ouachita Rivers--tributaries of the great stream. However, these bottoms were more narrow than the delta of the Mississippi. A few miles away, oak uplands or unfertile piney woods assumed command of the countryside. The hilly oak regions, covering most of ten parishes in the northwest and northcentral portions of the state, included many varieties of soils. Some portions of the oak uplands ranked second only to the alluvial bottoms in fertility. 29

Less esteemed were the longleaf pine hills and the pine flatlands which prevailed in the poverty-stricken parishes of Catahoula, Calcasieu, Grant, Vernon and Winn in North and West Louisiana; and in Livingston, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, and Washington Parishes of the Southeast. Along with these parishes, for the purposes of this study, should be included the coastal lands of Cameron and Vermilion. From the standpoint of economics and politics, these latter were similar to the piney woods areas. The eleven parishes listed above; nine of them pine and two of them marsh parishes, may be considered as the "backland" of post

28Ibid., V, 3-5.
29Ibid., 30.
Reconstruction Louisiana. In almost every respect this immense backland represented an antithesis to the alluvial, plantation districts along the Mississippi and its tributaries. But in all eleven backland parishes, after the war, numerous small farmers attempted to emulate the alluvial planters in the production of cotton as a money crop. Despite infertile soil, all ten, by 1880, listed cotton as the chief money crop. Only in Grant and Tangipahoa, however, did cotton exceed corn in total acreage. These pine and marsh parishes had an overwhelming proportion of whites: 55,009 to 23,025 Negroes in 1880.\(^{30}\)

The backland region, making up over thirty per cent of the total land area of the state, was also the most thinly populated and the most meagerly tilled. Some insight into the poverty of the backlands can be gained by a comparison of the value of farm and produce (sold, consumed, or on hand) with the same values in certain alluvial cotton parishes. Four examples will suffice:

\(^{30}\)Ibid., 3-5.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>White Population</th>
<th>Value of Products</th>
<th>Value of Land</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cameron</td>
<td>2,087</td>
<td>$60,601</td>
<td>$193,299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Carroll</td>
<td>1,023</td>
<td>1,268,136</td>
<td>1,299,209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Tammany</td>
<td>4,258</td>
<td>33,028</td>
<td>85,292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tensas</td>
<td>1,571</td>
<td>1,620,638</td>
<td>2,899,533</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vernon</td>
<td>4,783</td>
<td>150,969</td>
<td>153,602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madison</td>
<td>1,261</td>
<td>853,635</td>
<td>1,834,295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winn</td>
<td>4,797</td>
<td>240,803</td>
<td>241,836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concordia</td>
<td>1,320</td>
<td>1,262,772</td>
<td>980,743</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although many parishes fit neatly into blanket classifications as "alluvial," "oak upland," "piney woods," or "coastal marsh" regions, others defy such a simply description. For example, huge St. Landry Parish held practically every soil type known to the state.\footnote{Ibid.} Catahoula, Natchitoches, Ouachita, and Rapides offered other instances of a great diversity of soil and terrain inside parish borders. Along the western edge of the Florida Parishes the Mississippi River bluffs gave much the same appearance as the oak uplands of North Louisiana; yet the original fertility of the bluffs and certain historical and geographic factors

\footnote{Ibid.}

\footnote{Ibid.} The above figures exclude Negroes, who constituted the great majority in the alluvial parishes. However, almost all land, and most of the farm products, belonged to white planters in the alluvial parishes (Concordia, East Carroll, Madison, and Tensas) listed.

\footnote{St. Landry, in this period, included not only its present borders but also the later-created parishes of Acadia (1886) and Evangeline (1910).}
had prompted the growth of plantations and so gave the bluff region the same kind of population and economy as the black bottomlands. Louisiana never did yield easily to generalization. But, in this regard, it should be noted that parishes which contained marked variations in topography and soil, such as Natchitoches and St. Landry, traditionally had the most serious political difficulties of any in the state. And racial conflict was not usually the issue. It was a well known fact of Louisiana politics that the hill and bottomland whites "do not get along harmoniously." Especially was this true when abrupt changes in terrain threw them in juxtaposition.

As previously stated, the poorer class of whites came increasingly to participate in the raising of cotton after the Civil War. More was involved than the need for credit and the temporarily high prices commanded by cotton. The abysmal decline of land values everywhere in the South encouraged those who possessed even a few dollars to expand the size of their small farms. Many hoped to purchase

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35 Trinity Herald, July 6, 1889.
portions of old bottomland plantations. But, as was usually the case in the backlands, men without cash for new land saw no way to obtain the necessary funds except by first raising cotton for sale on their infertile hill acres. No other crop offered quick returns. It was the "only product upon which the farmer can depend for money." Louisiana's Commissioner of Immigration expressed his astonishment in 1867, at the great number of poor white farmers who had undertaken cotton growing. "In every part of the state," he wrote, "as soon as you leave the great plantations ... we find not only white men, but boys and girls laboring all hours in the fields." Cotton production in the hills was also stimulated by the relative decline of production in the bottomlands. Before the war the vast output of bales from the

37There is no universally accepted distinction between a "farm" and a "plantation." Agriculturists during the nineteenth century often used the terms interchangeably. Perhaps the best distinction for Louisiana is the one used by Roger Shugg. He broadly classified tilled holdings of less than 100 acres as "farms," and over 100 acres, as "plantations." Yet Shugg perceived that local variables would result in numerous exceptions. He concluded that the variants could be found in holdings between 50 and 500 acres. Anything less than the minimum figure, regardless of fertility, would almost always be a "farm" in which the owner and his family worked the soil; any holding over 500 acres, when tilled, would necessitate hired labor or tenants and would thus be a "plantation." Shugg, Origins of Class Struggle in Louisiana, 7, 239.


plantations had kept the price of the staple too low for poor whites and yeoman farmers to engage in serious competition. But after the war the plantation system groaned under innumerable handicaps. Military destruction, inefficient labor, and a host of other factors joined to keep plantation production somewhat below the 1860 level. As late as 1880, cotton shipments from such ante-bellum leaders as Concordia and Madison Parishes were only fifty-one per cent of the 1860 total. Though surviving, the plantations seemed crippled. It appeared that small farmers, for once, might be able to produce cotton and make a profit.

Slowly, the poor and yeoman whites came to realize how unfounded had been their hopes. Some of the blame lay with themselves. Those who deliberately neglected their food crops and livestock for the sake of cotton lost whatever economic independence they might have once enjoyed. Overproduction of cotton was serious enough in the ante-bellum South; after the war, small producers compounded the problem. For the great plantations were reviving, and cotton production, during the 1870's, began to climb back toward pre-war totals. A steady drop in cotton prices was


41Matthew Brown Hammond, "Cotton Production in the South," The South in the Building of the Nation, VI, 88, 96.
inevitable.

All too frequently, the small farmer made his situation worse by carrying over into commercial farming the same sloppy, haphazard methods of earlier and less ambitious days. From his column in the Daily Picayune, Daniel Dennett lashed out at the "ignorant, rough, unattractive farming" so prevalent in the backlands. He was most distressed by the brutal effects such a life imposed upon the farm children. He wrote of the life of a typical Louisiana farm boy:

He works all day in the field . . . with a half fed horse, a dull plow. . . . Often there are no books to read, no newspapers, and no schools, and the boy grows up in ignorance, his ignorant father his only teacher, and a poor old worn out farm his only school house. 42

Worse than the careless and slovenly farmers were those who became too engrossed in the pursuit of cotton profits, and attempted "to get rich too fast." 43 The Farmerville Home Advocate described a man of this type in Union Parish, who, "possessed with the insane idea that he must 'own all the land that joins him,' makes slaves of himself and family." 44 Men of such nature showed concern for their horses but worked their wives to death. 45

42 Daily Picayune, May 2, 1877.
43 Ibid., December 23, 1877.
44 Farmerville Home Advocate, May 22, 1885.
45 Ibid.
small landowners, aping the planters, tried to live in leisure by hiring one or two Negro families and expecting from them prodigious feats of labor. A Richland Parish farmer admitted: "Too many of us bait our hooks with a 'nigger' and set it [sic] out and expect to catch a crop." When results proved disappointing the upland employers tended to blame the Negro. But not all farmers took this attitude. One, in Grant Parish, felt that it was mistreatment, not congenital laziness, which caused Negro inefficiency. "Treat them as human beings," he pleaded. "Why should they not have justice and fair dealing?"

Although the shortcomings of Louisiana farmers were doubtless numerous, it is, nevertheless, unlikely that general prosperity would have ensued if all had been models of husbandry. Misery, like rainfall, fell upon the hard-working and honest as well as the lazy or avaricious. Unfriendly forces, mostly beyond the farmer's control, worked relentlessly against the rural producers of both races. The advantages of cheap land and high farm prices during Reconstruction were somewhat illusory, and were offset by hostile legislation, economic depression, transportation difficulties, and lack of credit facilities. Then, after 1877,


whatever advantages that had once existed were largely gone, and only the malign aspects of postwar agriculture remained. White and Negro farmers alike faced these burdens. Least able to meet the test was the rural Negro. He bore all the common ills, along with the added incubus of his race and background of slavery.

Thirty cent cotton in the early days of Reconstruction was as much a boon to Federal tax collectors as to Louisiana's farmers. The special levy which Congress placed on cotton at the end of the war wrung $9,642,535 from the state's producers. 48 This figure might be compared with the information that as late as 1889 the total amount of bank capital in the state was only $5,815,000. 49 The effect of this tax upon a region trying to pull out of the quagmire of military defeat was "disastrous and disheartening to the extreme," remarked the Secretary of Agriculture of the United States. 50 Wretched and costly transportation facilities further undermined the margin of profit. And, by the late 1870's, cotton prices had fallen below the figure commanded in 1860. 51 Yet Louisiana's cotton crop was still twenty-two

48 Watkins, King Cotton, 201-202.


50 Simkins, A History of the South, 251.

per cent under pre-war production. The future held bigger crops and lower prices.

In certain regions of the South a shift in population took place early in Reconstruction, as thousands of poor whites came down from the hills to purchase, or to work, the war-shattered plantations. However, little such migration occurred in Louisiana. Often the impoverished planters were too proud to sell. They still associated the ownership of alluvial soil with wealth and social position. And whenever plantations did change hands the result was usually the same as in the sugar country; that is, the land was sold as a unit and the new owners adopted the manner and outlook of their predecessors. Some planters who were willing to break up their land for sale advertised in vain. Even at the end of Reconstruction cotton plantations, whole or in fragments, practically went begging, and the demand for sugar land was "very limited." Hill families who wanted to possess farms in the bottoms simply did not have the necessary cash. Even so, planters welcomed impecunious whites to the bottomlands. They were desired as laborers or tenants, to replace the "trifling

53 Shugg, Origins of Class Struggle in Louisiana, 261.
54 Daily Picayune, April 5, 1877.
negroes, who go reluctantly through the forms of scratching the earth for a living. . . ." The planters of Louisiana might wish for white labor, but they got little. Especially in North Louisiana was white labor unenthusiastic about proposals to migrate to the lowlands. This refusal perplexed some planters. "It cannot be," said a spokesman for the landowners of Tensas Parish, "that these people will remain on those barren hillsides when in sight of them lie unlimited quantities of rich land." Nevertheless, few of the hill folk came.

Land in Louisiana was plentiful. Only 8.60 percent of the state's 30,000,000 acres was tilled at the end of Reconstruction. Observers believed that at least 16,000,000 acres were quite suitable for cultivating. Such optimism, however, left many questions unanswered. There was not only the problem of fertility and capability of the soil. There was the question of how much money settlers would need for implements and other necessities before the vacant land could be broken for cultivation. Accessibility to markets was another serious factor; lack of

55 Ibid., May 1, 1877.
56 St. Joseph North Louisiana Journal, October 30, 1880.
57 Ibid., Franklin St. Mary Banner, March 8, 1890.
58 U.S., Tenth Census, III, 3.
59 Daily Picayune, March 22, 1877.
transportation facilities could make even the most fertile land unprofitable to farm.

In 1866 Congress was told that 6,228,103 acres of surveyed but unsold federal land existed in Louisiana. 60 The Southern Homestead Act, passed that same year, was supposedly designed to give this land "to all the poor people" of both races. 61 Any citizen who was head of a family could apply for eighty acres (later raised to 160) of public land. The homestead was to be free of all charges except nominal service fees. After improving the land and residing on it for five years, the settler would receive his final deed. 62

Homestead offices in Louisiana were located at New Orleans and Monroe. 63 The federal lands were scattered throughout the state. Most of the available acres, however, were located in the "pine flatlands" of Calcasieu, St. Landry, Livingston, St. Tammany, and Tangipahoa Parishes. 64 By 1880 alleged homesteaders had applied for 958,627 of these acres. Yet just a fraction over 200,000 acres had

60 Congressional Globe, 39 Cong., 1 sess., 715.
61 Ibid., 717. Negroes and loyal whites were given first choice. Confederate veterans could apply after one year.
63 Daily Picayune, May 4, 1877.
64 Ibid.
received final proof of ownership. Unfortunately, most of the original applicants never intended to farm, and had never so much as lived on the land. Northern lumber companies had induced their employees to take advantage of the southern homestead privilege; a miserable shanty would be set up as proof of "improvement," the land then stripped of timber, and abandoned to the weeds. Vacant homesteads of this sort dotted the state. Worse yet, bona fide farmers who desired these denuded acres could not apply for a grant because of the difficulty of proving that the first homestead was fraudulent, or that it had actually been abandoned. Some lumber firms did not even bother to take out dummy homesteads but boldly cut timber wherever they found it. When the Department of the Interior tried to crack down on timber thieves in Southwest Louisiana in 1877, Congressman Joseph H. Acklen of the Third District zealously defended the prosecuted "Calcasieu sufferers."68

The monopolization of Louisiana land by lumber and


67 Ibid. Abuses of the Homestead Act in Louisiana were similar in character and degree to practices in other public land states. See Shannon, The Farmer's Last Frontier, 51-75.

68 Ibid., October 3, 1878.
other nonfarming interests accelerated in the years after 1876, when Congress opened public acreage in the South to cash buyers as well as homesteaders. The outcome was tragic. Between 1880 and 1888 the great majority of Louisiana land sold went to fifty individuals or firms who purchased over 5,000 acres each. Of these fifty, forty-one were northerners who obtained a total of 1,370,332 acres. Six were Louisiana natives. These latter purchased 99,278 acres.

Meanwhile, the state of Louisiana owned vast lands which remained almost untouched. Ten years before the Civil War, Congress gave the state possession of all swamplands or coastal marshes previously unsold, most of it inaccessible or covered with water. In 1888, over 5,000,000 of these acres were still in the hands of the state land office.

Without doubt the greatest deterrent to homesteading, on federal or state lands, was that prospective settlers lacked initial capital. Particularly were the Negroes unable to homestead. A claim itself was of no value unless the settler could purchase tools, fencing, plow animals, and other essentials. In St. Landry Parish, to

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70 Compiled from figures in *ibid*.

71 Baton Rouge *Daily Capitolian-Advocate*, April 15, 1888.
cite a typical example, a settler in 1881 would have to spend an estimated $655 before the first crop was raised. This figure included fencing for only ten acres. But it was a rare sharecropper or cane field worker who cleared, after necessary expenses, as much as $20 per year. A family—especially a Negro family—which cleared that much was considered quite fortunate. In theory, then, even a fortunate family of sharecroppers would have to scrimp for thirty-three years before accumulating the wherewithal to set up homesteading. Most tenants and laborers would require a period of double to triple their average life expectancy.

In North and Central Louisiana the problems of homesteading were entangled with the notorious "Backbone Railroad" land grant. Congress, in 1871, authorized the New Orleans, Baton Rouge, and Vicksburg Railway Company to build a line diagonally across the state from New Orleans, through Shreveport, to Marshall, Texas. The company was to receive ten sections of land for each mile of track it laid: a princely domain of over 2,000,000 acres. The railroad could select this land from a swath of territory eighty

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72 Daily Picayune, April 2, 1881.
73 Estimated from figures in the following: U.S., Tenth Census, V, 83-84; Daily Picayune, April 27, 1877; Baton Rouge Weekly Truth, May 28, 1886.
74 Congressional Globe, 41 Cong., 3 sess., 392-93.
miles wide, though it could not disturb any prior, legal landholdings. Managers of the Backbone Railroad were given five years, until 1876, to complete the line. One disgusted commentator observed that Congress evidently assumed "this railroad company had been since 1803 a joint owner . . . of the lands of Louisiana." The Backbone project, like other Carpetbagger-inspired schemes, issued copious stocks and bonds but laid not one foot of track. Its land grant was thereby forfeited in 1876.

Settlers, assuming the Backbone claim was beyond hope of resurrection, began moving into the territory. They were mistaken. In 1881 officials of the defunct company sold all their "rights" to the New Orleans Pacific-Texas Pacific combine of Jay Gould, Russell Sage, and others. The price paid was exactly one dollar. At the time of the transfer the New Orleans Pacific was actually constructing a road from New Orleans to Shreveport; it

75 Ibid.
76 Opelousas St. Landry Clarion, November 8, 1890.
77 North American Review, CXXXVI (March, 1883), 253.
78 Colfax Chronicle, January 27, 1883.
would eventually join the Texas Pacific and link Louisiana to San Francisco. The Gould-Sage combine made progress along another line as well; the entire Louisiana delegations in Congress between 1877 and 1881 signed pledges "to maintain the integrity of the grant and secure it for the [New Orleans Pacific] company." But the national government refused to act for several years, holding the old Backbone grant "in reservation." Suddenly, in 1885, the Secretary of the Interior approved patents for almost 1,000,000 acres of the controversial grant to the Gould-Sage group. The whole thing was "a fraud of the first magnitude," and the hill farmers were furious.

The census of 1880 gave a distorted picture of land ownership in Louisiana. According to agents' reports, the state contained 48,293 farms. Of these, 31,286 were listed as cultivated by owners, 10,337 were farmed on shares, and 6,669 were leased for a fixed money rental. These figures would indicate that 35.22 per cent of the agricultural families were sharecroppers and renters, and that

82 North American Review, CXXXVI (March, 1883), 253.
83 Winfield Southern Sentinel, March 27, June 5, 1885.
84 Colfax Chronicle, January 27, 1883.
the average size of farms in the state was 157 acres. Seemingly, the plantation system was on its way to fragmentation and oblivion. The 1860 census, showing almost the same amount of land under cultivation, gave only 17,328 land units with an average size of 537 acres. However, the 1880 report was conducted on an unreliable and misleading basis. Agents were instructed to enter each share-cropping section as a separate farm. Omitted was information as to who owned these section-farms. As Roger Shugg's valuable study pointed out, the disconnected tracts owned by a single planter were not registered as a unit. Shugg carefully examined local tax lists in nine representative parishes. He found, by grouping separate tenant plots according to actual ownership, that in those parishes nearly a threefold increase (290.1 per cent) in the number of plantations had taken place since 1860, while the number of independent small farms declined 17.2 per cent. But Shugg failed to mention another serious flaw in the 1880 census. Many large plantations, including some of over 1,000 acres, were listed as "cultivated by the owner." 

87Shugg, Origins of Class Struggle in Louisiana, 235-36.
88Ibid., 240-41.
This is a patent impossibility. Plantations of such size must have contained a number of Negro tenants not mentioned by the census enumerators. Four bales of cotton on eight acres of land was frequently the limit that a tenant family was able, or willing, to produce.

Freedmen in the cotton parishes were emancipated from slavery only to fall into the peonage of tenant farming. "Very few" Louisiana Negroes owned the land they tilled. Reports from the alluvial belt and the more fertile upland regions indicate that only two to five per cent of the Negro farm families possessed land. Negro proprietors were most numerous in the least productive regions; almost half the freedmen of St. Landry, Tangipahoa and Winn Parishes held their farms in fee simple ownership. These three parishes were the only exceptions in a bleak picture. Louisiana appeared to fall somewhat below the general estimate for the South that five per cent of the Negro farm families, at the end of Reconstruction, were

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90 Thomas P. Gill, writing in 1886, pointed to this distortion. In Gill's words: "Can the owner of a farm of 1,000 acres and over... be called a working cultivator?" North American Review, CXLII (January, 1886), 56.

91 U.S., Tenth Census, V, 84.

92 Ibid.

93 Ibid. Negroes were in a minority in each of the three parishes.
The tenant system that emerged after the war was a crude but practical method of reviving production with newly-freed Negro labor. In theory there were two types of tenants: the sharecroppers, who received a portion of the crop for their labor, and the tenant renters, who paid a fixed money fee to the landowner. This distinction might be important in some states, but apparently was not in Louisiana. Those who "paid" rent did so in the form of a stipulated amount of cotton per acre rather than with actual cash. Though most renters owned their implements and plow-animals, they differed from the sharecroppers in no other important respect. The sharecroppers, who had no fixed rental, gave from one-half to two-thirds of their crop to the landlord in compensation for land, cabins, teams, and

94 Hammond, *The South in the Building of the Nation*, VI, 90. The percentage of total acreage owned by Negroes was probably lower yet. In 1882 a Negro State Senator said his race owned less than one per cent of Louisiana's land. Baton Rouge *Daily Capitolian-Advocate*, March 28, 1882.


97 New Orleans *Weekly Louisianian*, April 5, 1879; *New York Times*, December 7, 1879; U.S., *Tenth Census*, V, 84. Usually the rental charge was a specified amount of cotton (e.g., ninety pounds for each acre rented). In 1879 Madison Parish planters reportedly charged renters $8.00 per bale for ginning the cotton. Together with the rent, this meant the Negroes were being charged $17.00 per acre for land which had a market value not in excess of $25.00.
implements provided. In some cases, where the landlord made prior arrangement to furnish food and other necessities, sharecroppers got as little as one-tenth of the crop. 98 But renters, if the crop was poor, might have nothing.

It is hazardous to generalize about the tenant systems. Individual circumstances made for infinite varieties. However, this much can be stated: by 1880 only two of the thirty and more cotton parishes used the wage system in preference to shares and rentals. 99 Also, the overwhelming majority of cotton land tenants were Negroes. In no more than five parishes did whites outnumber Negroes as non-landowning farmers. These five were Catahoula, Sabine, St. Tammany, Vernon, and Winn. 100 Overall, in Louisiana, most white agriculturists possessed the land they worked. Most Negroes did not. A few colored sharecroppers managed to become landowners, but the process was painfully slow. As late as 1928, Negro historian W. E. B. DuBois estimated his race owned approximately 10,000 of the 135,463 farms of Louisiana. 101

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98 Zeichner, Agricultural History, XIII, 32.

99 The wage system, as far as can be assessed from conflicting reports, predominated only in Catahoula and St. Tammany, among the cotton parishes. U.S., Tenth Census, V, 83.

100 Ibid.

In the late nineteenth century, the economic chasm between Negro tenant and small white landowner appeared to be closing. But it was the white man's fall that narrowed the gap, not the Negro's rise. The chief equalizing element was the crop-lien system, an incubus which pressed down upon both races with impartial severity. A crop-lien was simply a merchant's mortgage upon growing cotton—a legal guarantee that store credit extended for food, clothing, and other necessities furnished during the year would be paid for by a proportionate value in cotton when the crop was ready for shipment. The crop-lien is usually associated with the postwar era but in fact was much older. Early in the 1800's New Orleans commission merchants and factors were already sending cash advances and supplies to the cotton and sugar planters. This credit gratified the material wants of the planters and facilitated the cultivation, gathering, and shipping of their crops. In 1843 the city merchants obtained legislation permitting them a prior line, or "first privileges" on the crop. This act protected merchants against the misfortunes or bad faith of the planters.102

After 1865, over the South, the crop-lien took on new life, a shift in emphasis, and a broader base. Fundamental conditions in the post-war economy caused it to expand. First, the shortage of money and food made almost all

102 *Daily Picayune*, October 9, 1877.
rural people dependent upon store accounts until harvest time. Second, since rank-and-file white farmers as well as Negroes grew the staple, the number of these credit accounts throughout the state multiplied. This fragmentation of the lien system also shifted its retail aspect away from New Orleans; country stores in the hills and bottomlands took on a new importance. Some of the larger planters, such as the Bosley family of Red River Parish, continued to deal directly with New Orleans factors. These "factors and commission merchants" who dealt with planters performed for them essentially the same services that wholesale merchants did for the country storekeepers. And planters like the Bosleys, who distributed food supplies to their tenants, were acting the part of the rural storekeeper. On the other hand, country storekeepers in the crossroads villages had two broad classes of credit customers. First there were the little proprietors who worked their own land and were thus outside the tenant system, but whose need for equipment and provisions drove them to seek credit. Second, in cases where the landlord did not distribute food supplies or set up "plantation stores," the sharecroppers perforce had to deal

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103 New York Times, April 24, 1877.

with outside storekeepers.

The lien system put all its debtors in a hapless position. But by the nature of things, tenants suffered the worst. Having already signed away up to two-thirds of their crop to landlords, they had to pawn the third remaining to the merchants for the necessities of life. As stated before, landlords sometimes distributed food or set up plantation stores. In such event the tenant dealt with the one man who already owned most of the crop under the share system, and now would have a credit lien on the remainder. But for both tenants and small landowners, the crop-lien became a self-perpetuating fact of life. When the tenant's crop was handed over to the merchant in the fall, and the cost of supplies deducted, a deficit frequently resulted. By law, the laborer was then obliged to contract with the same merchant for the next year--and so the cycle began again. The same rule applied to small white landowners. And yet there appeared to be little alternative to the lien system. New Orleans bankers would not advance money for mortgages on rural land, and so the farmer had no collateral except the growing crop. What about

The nadir of the lien system was reached in cases where landlords bought supplies on credit from retail country stores and then distributed these goods to their sharecroppers. Thus, the already-inflated retail prices were hiked again. Daily Picayune, January 11, 1879; New York Times, December 7, 1879.

New Orleans City Item, quoted in Colfax Chronicle, March 17, 1888.
rural banks? As late as 1886 there were no state or national banks to be found outside of Orleans Parish. Even when small private banking institutions in Baton Rouge and Shreveport are counted, fifty-five of the fifty-eight parishes had no banking facilities whatsoever.

Credit merchants who kept books on an illiterate clientele had limitless chances to practice dishonesty. The system was, indeed, scarcely fair even under the most honest of storekeepers. But the cruelty of the crop-lien arrangement was seldom intentional. The country merchants were themselves victimized by the system. They, too, had to buy their wares on credit. Most rural storekeepers (and planter-merchants) dealt with New Orleans wholesale houses, commission merchants, and factors. After collecting the cotton, storekeepers often followed it by rail or river down to the metropolis and settled accounts with their creditors in the city. These wholesale men, in turn, were frequently in debt to northern or northern-controlled banks. Here, perhaps, was the key to the greatest evil of the lien system: the multiplication of middlemen which it encouraged. The banks lent money to wholesale merchants (or factors) at eight per cent per annum. These merchants

108Scribner's Monthly, VII (December, 1873), 133.
passed this interest along to the country retailers and added seven per cent more as a fee for endorsing notes, selling cotton, and other services. Then came all the shipping and handling charges on the cotton sent downriver, and charges on the supplies sent up the river. By the time the country storekeeper (or planter-merchant) placed the merchandise on his shelves he had already paid more than the retail price a cash customer might pay for the same goods in the city.

Next came the storekeeper's turn to gouge. Being no better or worse than most men, he assumed that his time and worry deserved a handsome profit. He also felt that a high rate of interest was due him for the great risk taken in advancing supplies all year long to often untrustworthy customers. The storekeeper did not compute his interest charge separately. The credit price took care of that. When debts were settled the farmer had paid anywhere from 20 to 200 per cent or more over the cash price in the city. One angry member of the Louisiana legislature estimated the range of merchant interest rates in some parts

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109 Chaffee and Powell to H. G. Bosley, May 11, 1877, Bosley Papers; National Economist, III (July 19, 1890), 288.

110 Daily Picayune, January 11, 1879; New Orleans Weekly Louisianian, April 5, 1879; Rayville Richland Beacon, June 11, 1881; Shannon, The Farmer's Last Frontier, 91.
of the state to run as high as 500 per cent!\footnote{111}

It was an exceptional farmer whose crop did much more than square his account at the store at the end of the year. Frequently the ledger showed a deficit. Human bondage before the war, observed a Catholic bishop of North Louisiana, was not so evil as the "more grinding slavery" of the crop-lien. The old form of servitude chained only half the population. This "new form," said the bishop, meant "slavery for both white and colored people."\footnote{112}

Tenantry and its twin, the crop-lien, held the cotton regions in a double vise. But the sugar parishes escaped their grip. There, another form of economic organization had evolved. During and immediately after the war the "share" system had been tried by numerous sugar planters.\footnote{113} The planters did not care for the system since it did not afford opportunities for close supervision. The tenant system did not catch on. By the 1880's most planters depended upon Negro laborers who were paid a stipulated wage.\footnote{114} Neither did the crop-lien have the same

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{111}{\textit{Baton Rouge Weekly Truth}, May 28, 1886.}
\footnote{112}{\textit{Natchitoches Enterprise}, March 2, 1899.}
\footnote{113}{\textit{Daily Picayune}, June 23, 1877.}
\footnote{114}{J. Carlyle Sitterson, "The Transition from Slave to Free Economy on the William J. Minor Plantation," \textit{Agricultural History}, XVII (October, 1943), 223.}
\end{footnotes}
importance in the sugar country. Many of the smaller planters weremeshed in it, but the larger sugar planters escaped because their personal fortunes permitted them to avoid heavy indebtedness.

Most sugar plantations paid wages by the month. A few paid by the week or day. Wages were naturally higher when Negroes purchased their own rations—lower when the employer supplied food. Planters who feared that laborers might wander off before the backbreaking harvest work commenced resorted to the effective device of withdrawing one-third of each month's wages and holding this money until the end of the year. With all its drawbacks, Negroes seem to have preferred the wage system to sharecropping. Evidence of this is the fact that many thousands emigrated from the cotton fields to the sugar lands during the Reconstruction years. Negroes were "more satisfied" when they could see money in their hands.

Nevertheless, labor troubles did come to the cane fields. Wages, which ran as high as forty-five dollars per month with rations at the end of the war, began to creep downward before the decade of the 1860's was over. Rates paid for labor took a more sudden plunge after the

115 Daily Picayune, December 21, 1877.
116 Ibid., April 28, 1877, June 15, 1879.
beginning of the nationwide depression in 1873. Sugar prices declined, and wages sank accordingly. The drop in wage rates was compounded by the oversupply of labor in some parishes, caused by Negroes who had drifted in from the cotton parishes. Planters such as Donelson Caffery, Sr., hoped to lower wages as far as possible, reasoning that "if labor is plentiful labor is cheap." In October of 1877 Caffery organized the cane growers of St. Mary, the leading sugar parish of the state, for the purpose of ending "the ruinous policy of competition" for labor. Wages in St. Mary, for the January-October growing season, were thereupon set at fifteen dollars per month with rations and eighteen dollars per month without rations. Only able-bodied Negro men were to be paid the specified rates. Women and children were used only during the grinding season, for fifty cents or less per day. "Infamous laborers or those engaged in strikes" were to be blacklisted. Sugar planters near the Mississippi river followed the example of the St. Mary landowners, and by late November of 1877 a statewide organization of large producers, the Louisiana Sugar Planters' Association, began to take shape under the

118 *Daily Picayune*, October 3, 1877.
119 Ibid.
120 Ibid., December 21, 1877.
leadership of Duncan F. Kenner. 121

By 1880, with the depression over, pay scales rose slightly. Along the Mississippi River laborers received, during the long growing season, $22.50 per month without rations; that is, seventy-five cents per day. 122 The Negroes complained, however, that rising prices in the plantation stores kept them close to starvation and destroyed any hope of accumulating savings. A laborer in St. John Parish spoke for many when he grumbled: "I begin de year wid nothin' and end wid nothin!." 123

Though the majority of Louisianians of both races remained close to the soil, other voices had the ear of state officials, voices which urged that the Pelican State join in the procession toward an industrialized "New South." But the advocates of industry had to tread carefully. Although the welcome mat was extended to northern capitalists it was deemed essential to somehow adjust this economic New Departure into the Procrustean bed of southern tradition. The New South Bourbons could not entirely forget the rank-and-file white voters who were depended upon to maintain the state Democratic party in power. Consequently, emotional appeals on behalf of industrialization became

121 Sitterson, Sugar Country, 253.
122 New Orleans Democrat, March 19-22, 1880.
123 Daily Picayune, March 29, 1880.
common. Industrialization was pictured as a sort of non-violent continuation of the Civil War; the idea was advanced that although "we have lost the victory in the field of fight, we can win it back in the workshop, in the factory." Practical arguments were also used. More factories, more railroads, were supposed to end unemployment and raise living standards. The benefits of industry might also extend to the countryside. Sawmills set up in the pine parishes would hire local men, and so bring the jingle of money and the hum of civilization to the backwoods and hills. One textile mill was already in operation in rural Claiborne Parish. More mills, it was hoped, would locate in the countryside if proper inducements were made. But of all lures to northern business, the one which was most stressed was the abundance of cheap labor.

Promoters of New South business could pridefully point out that with the exception of the sugar refineries, Louisiana's infant industries showed great vitality in recovering from the ravages of war. Though the number of manufacturing establishments decreased from 1,774 to 1,553 between 1860 and 1880, the actual value of products rose from $15,587,473 to $24,205,183. The amount of invested

124Columbus (Ga.) Register, quoted in ibid., March 24, 1881.

125Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Louisiana (Chicago, 1892), I, 17, 135.
capital showed similar growth. Fifteen hundred industrial plants, most of them small, produced fifty-six per cent as much wealth as all the crops raised on Louisiana's broad acres. Only 12,167 men, women, and children created the value of these manufactured items. Yet the hundreds of thousands of Louisianians who toiled in the wind and rain of the fields could not double this amount.

The moral, to many, was obvious. Since machinery produced more in value than did the soil, it followed that industry would regain for Louisiana her lost riches. Capital investment could "make the Pelican State more powerful than Holland, . . . build cities more beautiful than Venice." Textile mills were particularly desired. New Orleans was the world's chief cotton port. By the late 1870's one-third of all the nation's cotton passed through the city; yet the number of bales remaining in the state to be fashioned into textiles, was pitifully small. In 1876 Louisiana produced 560,000 bales of cotton. New Orleans wharves handled three times that figure. But only 889 bales remained in the state.

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126 U.S., Compendium of the Tenth Census, II, 975.
127 Ibid., 928, 975.
128 Scribner's Monthly, VII (December, 1873), 156.
129 Daily Picayune, May 12, 1877.
130 Watkins, King Cotton, 202.
asked, did Louisiana grow so much but create so little?

Trade in fiber and produce was the life blood of New Orleans. But despite the fact that her commerce relied upon goods from the plantations and farms, the Crescent City was the only spot in Louisiana not saturated with an agricultural environment. In 1880 two-thirds of all manufacturing plants in the state were inside the city. But the 9,504 industrial workers (7,666 of them adult males), made up only a fraction of the total labor force of the city. One year after Reconstruction's end it was estimated that the city contained at least 45,000 men over the age of eighteen who worked for wages. Occupations were as varied as the life of the city itself. Skilled workers—typographers, screwmen, mechanics—all had formed benevolent and protective labor societies long before secession; after the war, their societies or unions were clearly the strongest among the labor associations of New Orleans. Somewhat lower on the economic ladder, but still organized, were laborers in the tobacco manufacturing plants and cottonseed oil mills. But most urban workers had no skills and toiled for thirty-five cents or less per hour. These less fortunate workers

131 U.S., Compendium of the Tenth Census, II, 928, 975, 1068-71.
132 Daily Picayune, November 10, 1878.
occasionally grouped into ineffective associations. Longshoremen and the levee roustabouts formed a Laborers' Union Society and attempted to resist the hiring of degraded, poverty-stricken newcomers to the city who were willing to work for ten cents per hour.¹³⁴

Skilled or unskilled, wage earners in New Orleans were sinking into despair during the latter years of Reconstruction. The economic depression touched bottom between 1874 and 1878, during which time the cauldron of Louisiana's political troubles boiled over. Racial animosity among the workers was on the rise. Bitter competition for jobs combined with political issues to divide Negro and white laborers into hostile camps.¹³⁵ Benevolent and charitable associations seemed unable to provide food for the unemployed and helpless. Landlords and business leaders tended to blame hard times on Carpetbaggism, and few but the Carpetbaggers would disagree.

"Death is staring us in the face," a laborer wrote in the last days of Reconstruction. "How long! oh, how long! will these poor men and women and children . . . be kept in bondage and misery in our distracted city and state?"¹³⁶ Under the circumstances, white labor in New

¹³⁴Daily Picayune, November 4, 1877.
¹³⁵Shugg, Origins of Class Struggle in Louisiana, 303.
¹³⁶Daily Picayune, April 15, 1877.
Orleans and farmers in the upcountry, joined hands with the economic upper class of Louisiana during the dark days of 1876-77. Underprivileged whites generally accepted the conservative verdict that Radicalism and its social turmoil had caused the hard times. In truth, it did appear that Republican pilfering and the continued political chaos was halting any chance for economic recovery. Whites, rich and poor, united in a "common sympathy" of race and regional pride to fight for home rule under the Democratic banner. The victory was won, but white unity would one day be tested in the fire of class conflict.

137 New Orleans Issue, June 4, 1892. The Issue was an organ of the Populist-Socialist coalition in New Orleans during the 1890's.
CHAPTER III
THE AGRARIAN BETRAYAL

"Agrarianism" is often related to an American democratic ideal which took shape in the writings of Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and John Taylor of Caroline: a belief that "those who labor in the earth are the chosen people of God." Accordingly, agriculture was eulogized as the fundamental employment of man. Other callings were dependent. The agrarian myth extolled the moral primacy of hard working, self-sufficient rural folk: the yeoman middle class, who presumably represented the very apex of American civilization.

From the beginning, the agrarian myth commingled fiction with reality. Self-sufficiency was, more often than not, gladly abandoned whenever the farmer had access to transportation or markets. He seemed as anxious to get


rich as any other American. Gradations of property and sectional conflicts of interest precluded the development of a homogeneous national class of agriculturists based upon the yeoman stereotype. However, all types of landowning farmers in America had certain attitudes in common: a desire to own more and better land, an individualistic and pragmatic outlook on life, a suspicion of urban ways and especially urban politicians, and a tendency toward conservatism in times of prosperity. These rural feelings knew no special class, or time, or place.

True political solidarity among the major sections and classes of agriculturists in America was never attained. The much vaunted ante-bellum agrarian alliance of South and Northwest during the Jackson period was often vague and paradoxical. Moreover, conflicts of interest could be noted among agriculturists within each state or region. Although the Civil War tended to unify agrarian sentiment on a purely regional basis, at the same time it smothered the already feeble concept of national harmony among agricultural interests. The conflict of 1861-65 decided far

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5 An excellent discussion of conflicting interpretations of Jacksonian Democracy may be found in Charles Greer Sellers, Jr., "Andrew Jackson versus the Historians," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XLIV (March, 1958), 615-33.
more than the fate of the Confederacy. It ushered in a period of business and industrial expansion at a time when northern and southern farmers were politically and emotionally divided.

After the war the political dichotomy of agrarian America continued. Politicians North and South, of both major parties, tended to divert public attention from those economic issues which were of greatest importance to farmers, and instead rehashed the emotion-packed "bloody shirt" memories of the war. Meanwhile, agriculture's share of the national wealth declined as business power increased. Eastern banking interests, allied with monopolistic-minded railroads and industrial corporations, dominated Congress and dictated to most state legislatures. Currency contraction made the farmer's debt load more burdensome at the same time that farm prices were falling. Faced with this situation, the more aggressive rural people, North and South, began to organize for mutual defense. Associations such as the Grange, the Greenback party, the Farmers' Alliance, and the People's party were utilized to align the hosts of agriculture against enemies both real and imagined.

Two pathways of agrarian protest lay open. The more

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conservative farmers veered toward businesslike organization for specific goals; they wished to advance their economic position as commercial producers and were not otherwise interested in disturbing the status quo. As capitalists, they wished to modify the capitalist system only in so far as to allow larger profits for agriculture. Particularly in the South, the conservative agrarians balked at joining reform-minded third parties. But the agrarian left wing, drawing its support from smaller landowners and tenant farmers, eschewed the rural businessman philosophy and looked favorably upon political action along working class lines. The small landowner "was so poor and distressed that he forgot he was a capitalist..." Consequently, spokesmen for the agrarian left, reasoning that farmers and workers were being placed in the same underdog economic position, eventually sought to create a third party which would unite the disadvantaged of "shop and field" in a great crusade against special privilege. Nor was the Negro voter forgotten; third party agrarians in the South came to look upon the Negro as a partner in misery and thus a potential ally in protest.

Negro agrarianism in post-Reconstruction Louisiana

7Quoted in Woodward, Origins of the New South, 194.

had peculiarly futile and tragic overtones. The aspirations of poor whites and poor Negroes were similar, and in some localities, leaders of the two were moderately successful in arranging a united front against the Bourbon Democracy. But prior to the Populist uprising of the 1890's such efforts of biracial class unity in Louisiana were scattered and infrequent. Also, there were few parishes in the state where lower class Negroes and whites could be found in large numbers; the freedmen were concentrated in the alluvial districts and were subject to political intimidation by the conservative plantation owners, while the bulk of the poor white population lived in the backcountry or the towns. This degree of geographic separation, along with the tradition of racial antagonism common to both, hindered cooperation. Therefore, Negro agrarianism makes up a partially separate story, and when circumstances warrant will be discussed separately.

Louisiana agrarianism in the years after Reconstruction was obviously not one concerted movement but rather an amalgam of attempts by dissident out-groups to wrest control of local and state government away from the Bourbon oligarchy which dominated the economy as well as the politics of the state. The agrarian reformers came from essentially three groups: the producer-minded, middle class white landowners; the more radical-minded rural whites, most of whom owned infertile hill farms or worked
as tenants; and the mass of Negro tenant farmers and rural
wage earners, who were the most disadvantaged of the three.
The first group, although active in the Grange and the
Farmers' Alliance, generally refused to countenance third
party talk and would side with the great plantation owners
on questions pertaining to race or the Democratic party.
The second group, also active in the Grange and Alliance,
provided the bulk of support for the Populist party of the
1890's; through that party they came to advocate a united
front with urban labor elements as well as the Negroes.⁹
The Negroes, for their part, appeared anxious to join hands
with the radical white agrarians whenever and wherever the
opportunity came.

The role of urban radicalism must also be considered.
Although not, properly speaking, an integral part of the
agrarian crusade in Louisiana, a politically militant labor-
ite element did exist in New Orleans as early as the Recon-
struction era. In 1891 the People's Municipal party was
organized as an urban affiliate of the Populist party for
New Orleans.¹⁰ Louisiana, however, was overwhelmingly rural,
and any serious statewide reform program would necessarily
be agrarian in nature. Although the New Orleans laborites

⁹Cf. Daily Picayune, October 3, 1891; New Orleans
Times-Democrat, February 18, 1892.
¹⁰New Orleans Issue, August 1, 1891.
were instrumental in helping found the state Populist party. Urban Populism itself soon proved disappointing.\textsuperscript{\textdaggerdbl} For the purposes of this study, the New Orleans radicals should be thought of as rather ineffective urban allies of Louisiana's left wing agrarians. But the fact that political fusion between the poor of town and country was seriously proposed is in itself significant. Their traditional antipathies ran deep; their attempt at fusion would have been undertaken only under extreme provocation.

Louisiana posed special and exasperating problems for any reform movement. In addition to the Negro-white division common to all southern states, the ethnic, religious, and the unique language barrier between the poor of the northern and southern parishes presented a formidable obstacle to any statewide organization of protest. Louisiana's rate of illiteracy, being the highest in the nation, also hampered attempts at communication among the poor. But the most formidable hurdle of all was the Bourbon-controlled ballot box. In the years after Reconstruction, Louisiana more than "lived up to its reputation of being the only southern state perpetually corrupt."\textsuperscript{12} Senator Kellogg's grim jest that "after the polls are closed the election

\textsuperscript{\textdaggerdbl}Daily Picayune, October 3-4, 1891; Melvin J. White, "Populism in Louisiana During the Nineties," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, V (June, 1918), 15.

\textsuperscript{12}Simkins, A History of the South, 320.
really begins," held much unhappy truth, because with
election laws and registration procedure under the control
of the conservative Democracy, candidates opposed to the
status quo were counted out with dismal regularity. Perhaps
in no other American state did reformers wage such an uphill
fight.

Toward the end of the 1890's, looking back on
Louisiana's agrarian reform efforts, a critic remarked that
they all "tried to rally the nondescript mass of people who
have everything to gain and nothing to lose." This was
ture. But the man who made the observation was a spokesman
for the ultra-Bourbon element, and seemed unable or un-
willing to understand why the "nondescript" should be weary
of the role in society assigned to them, or why they should
be angry at the vote frauds which perpetuated the system.
Spokesmen for the disadvantaged majority, on the other hand,
believed that the powers of government should, and could, be
used to ameliorate economic problems. This was not in the
context of classic Jeffersonian agrarianism, but the state
and nation had changed considerably since the early days of
the century. Left wing agrarianism in Louisiana, in the
years from the end of Reconstruction to the end of the
century, amounted to a futile series of attempts to

13Congressional Record, 47 Cong., Special Sess.
Senate, 120.

14Natchitoches Enterprise, March 2, 1899.
overthrow the state's corrupt Bourbon oligarchy and inaugu­rate a government which would truly represent farmers and laborers, in place of the old system which permitted a privileged few to run the state in the manner of a private plantation.

In Louisiana, as well as other states, the fore­runner of post-Reconstruction agrarianism was the Patrons of Husbandry, better known as the Grange. First organized in Washington, D.C., in 1867, the Grange soon became a nation­wide fraternity of farmers. Oliver H. Kelley, founder of the Grange, believed its purposes should be educational and social in nature. He hoped the order would eradicate sectional hatreds. Through a union of northern and southern agriculturists, Kelley assumed, the emotional wounds of the Civil War might be healed.

The early Grange leaders did not appeal to any special class of agriculturists. They intended the order to be a general union of all. Kelley and his associates avoided militant agrarianism; individual Granger units were admonished to refrain from using the order for partisan political purposes, and even political discussions at Grange


meetings were forbidden. Inevitably, many Grangers chose to ignore the ban on politics. Railroads and special interests pressured legislators and congressmen, why should not the tillers of the soil protect themselves in the same fashion? The Grange also undertook numerous cooperative enterprises. The heavy profits made by middlemen who bought and sold to farmers induced Grangers in many states to set up cooperative stores, business agencies, and even farm implement factories. The original social and educational aims of the Grange were shoved into the background.

The turmoil of Reconstruction delayed the entrance of the Grange into Louisiana. Not until March of 1872 was a Grange unit established in the state. Expansion was slow; almost two years elapsed before a state organization was effected. Then, however, came a remarkable surge forward. In 1873 only 26 units with a total of 853 members were reported. But by 1875 there were 315 subordinate units with a membership of 10,078. Credit for the spread of the Grange in Louisiana belongs chiefly to two men: H. W. L.


Lewis of Tangipahoa Parish, Master of the state Grange, who joined hands with Daniel Dennett, then a resident of St. Mary Parish, to stump the hill and bayou country in the interests of the organization. Lewis and Dennett did their work well. By the time their two year tour was over, Granges were established in almost every parish of the state. Even urban Orleans had an active unit.

The social features of the Grange were exceedingly important to rural white Louisianians during the unhappy Reconstruction years. Dennett wrote that the Grange "broke the monotony of farm life . . . carried light into neighborhoods and to homes which would never have been enlightened from any other source." The elaborate ritual of Grange meetings added color to ordinarily drab lives, and instilled in rural folk a sense of the importance of their labor. "Agriculture was the first calling of man," the Patrons were informed. "No order or association can rank with the tillers of the soil." Farmers' wives were welcomed into Grange membership. Sometimes more women than men showed up at

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20Daily Picayune, March 23, 1877.

21Ibid.

meetings. 23

Inevitably, the Grange became involved in Louisiana's partisan politics. 24 Most Grange members were native whites and, therefore, almost without exception, foes of the Carpetbagger government. Some Granges crossed the color line and admitted Negroes, but the real purpose on such occasions seems to have been to woo colored people away from Republican Union Leagues and kindred organizations. 25 Biracial Granges, in Louisiana, appear to have been the exception and not the rule. Also, no evidence exists of any Republican-dominated Grange units within the state. Grange petitions denounced the "system of studied plunder" of the Radical state administration and bitterly protested the forced sale of farm land for taxation. 26 Dennett himself, the Grange's state Deputy, admitted to being a member of the Knights of the White Camellia. 27

The Grange in Louisiana recruited its membership almost entirely from the middle-sized to small landowners who raised cotton, corn, and livestock. The uplands of

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24As one writer in the late nineteenth century expressed it, Louisianians have a tendency "to drag all things, all issues, into politics." Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Louisiana, I, 138.


26Ibid., 37-38.

27Highsmith, "Louisiana During Reconstruction," 249.
North Louisiana and the Florida parishes were Grange strongholds. The organization was also quite active in the southern parishes of St. Landry and Lafayette, for these latter, like the uplands, were dominated by white landowners of modest means. Exceptions may be found; there were patrons affluent enough to offer rent-free cabins and half the crop to any "starving whites" of New Orleans interested in moving to the country and becoming tenants. Yet the great landlords, the sugar barons especially, avoided the Grange. Dr. E. K. Branch of Avoyelles Parish, who became Master of the Louisiana Grange in 1877, reported that large planters in the southern portion of the state "have never taken any interest in our organization." 

Economic activities of the Grange in Louisiana followed the same path pursued by the Patrons in other states. Cooperative stores, owned by farmers, were set up at two points in St. Helena Parish, at Clinton in East Feliciana Parish, at Washington and Big Cane in St. Landry Parish, and at Winnfield in Winn Parish. A state wholesale agency, with headquarters in New Orleans, was organized

28 *Daily Picayune*, March 18, April 10, 1877.

29 *Ibid.*, May 1, 4, 1877.

to serve the Grange stores. \textsuperscript{31} But poor management, plus depressed business conditions, caused the demise of the state agency in 1877. \textsuperscript{32} Thus the cooperative movement accomplished little. Usually, local Grangers were too poor to set up stores of their own. The usual tactic was to confer with a sympathetic local merchant and make group purchases at reduced prices. The few genuine cooperative stores soon met the fate of the state agency. The only survivor was the Grange store at Winnfield, which was still doing business in 1885 under the management of George P. Long. \textsuperscript{33} By that time, Long had to deal with the regular New Orleans wholesalers who sold to the private stores. \textsuperscript{34}

Unlike the Grange in many states Louisiana Patrons did not engage in the bitter fight with the railroads. The reason was simple. There were few railroads to denounce. As late as 1875 there were just 539 miles of track in the whole state; within the next six years only 93 more miles

\textsuperscript{31} \textit{Daily Picayune}, April 19, May 30, 1877; Winnfield Southern Sentinel, December 11, 1885; Willis, "The Grange Movement," 60-63.

\textsuperscript{32} Buck, \textit{The Granger Movement}, 254; Willis, "The Grange Movement," 60-62.


\textsuperscript{34} Winnfield Southern Sentinel, August 28, September 25, December 11, 1885.
were added. Louisiana ranked tenth among the eleven former Confederate states in mileage by the latter date. Only Florida, with one-third Louisiana's population, had less track. Instead of hating railroads, the majority of Louisiana's farmers eagerly looked forward to the day when rail lines might relieve them of the onerous rates charged by steamship lines on the Mississippi and its tributaries. Railroad hostility, it is true, existed to some degree in parishes where tracks had already been laid, but deep-rooted criticism was delayed until trouble over the Backbone land grant developed in the 1880's. In the meantime it was assumed that railroads would provide competition for the river boats; competition was assumed to mean lower charges. Those who might point with alarm to the railroad troubles in other states were assured that when new lines were developed in Louisiana they would "always be held in check by the healthy competition of water transportation." And so, while waiting for the railroads to come, Grangers attempted to fight steamboat monopolies by contracting with shipowners who offered lower rates for group shipments.

36 Ibid., 415.
None of these "Grange Boats," so called, appear to have been cooperative enterprises.

The Grange displayed a laudable interest in education. Adult Grangers were encouraged to read agricultural journals and discuss scientific farm methods at the regular meetings. Attempts were made to secure better schools for rural children. Dissatisfaction with public facilities prompted the creation of "Grange schools" for white children in Lafayette and St. Helena Parishes. The Grange also attempted to control Louisiana State Agricultural and Mechanical College, as Grange leaders desired that the college not be merged with Louisiana State University at Baton Rouge. Some wanted direct Granger management of the school. North Louisiana Grangers felt the agricultural school should be located at a more "interior point" where poor students might receive practical instruction without "being brought in contact with the vices and extravagances of the city [sic]." The Nicholls legislature ignored


41Saloutos, *Farmer Movements in the South*, 41.

42*Daily Picayune*, March 13, 1877. The Louisiana Grangers took a remarkably provincial view of what constituted a "city." Baton Rouge, at the time, was a sleepy country town of less than 8,000 inhabitants. Even after it became the state capital in 1882, hogs still ran wild in the muddy streets and "formidably attacked" fruit peddlers. Baton Rouge *Daily Capitolian-Advocate*, July 27, 1882.
the clamor. In 1877 the two state institutions were merged at Baton Rouge.

By 1877 the Grange was visibly dying in Louisiana. Even in such a stronghold as De Soto Parish the order was reportedly "played out." That year marked the nadir of the great depression of the decade and saw the failure of the state agency. Politics proved distracting to Grange members; tempers heated to the boiling point in the campaign of 1876 and its aftermath; upcountry white farmers even neglected their crops as they waited for news of the Nicholls-Packard struggle in New Orleans. Grange members became "discouraged and careless," failed to pay their dues, and by 1879 the state Grange was dormant.

Some few subordinate Grange units maintained a flickering existence; however, outside of East Baton Rouge, St. Helena, and Winn Parishes, little activity can be noted after 1879. Even there it was feeble. Dennett, writing in 1881, complained that every other state in the South retained some kind of statewide organization. He and a handful of others continued to agitate for a revival of "our Louisiana Lazarus." Their efforts had little result. The

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43 *Daily Picayune*, November 23, 1877.
44 *Natchitoches People's Vindicator*, quoted in *ibid.*, March 26, 1877.
45 *Daily Picayune*, February 18, 1881.
day of the Grange was over. However, the next decade would see new and more dynamic agrarian organizations which bore the markings of a Granger heritage. The Grange had introduced the concept of united action, the belief that farmers must raise their voices in harmony to achieve economic and political rights. It was "the great pioneer" of agrarian reform in Louisiana. 47 The Farmers' Alliance, the Populist party, would list among their leaders men who joined the Grange in the 1870's. They, especially, tried to avoid the shoals which shipwrecked the parent order. 48

The moribund Grange played little part in the exciting state and congressional elections of 1878. Nevertheless, the campaigns of that year mark a critical milestone in the history of Louisiana agrarianism and, therefore, deserve examination. All six United States Representatives, the State Treasurer, a majority of seats in the legislature, and all municipal officials in New Orleans were to be named on November 5, 1878. 49 Conservative Democrats excitedly pointed out that the work of redeeming the state from Radicalism was yet unfinished—nearly half the legislative seats and one congressional district remained in Republican

47 Leesville People's Friend, March 21, 1889.
48 Colfax Chronicle, March 5, 1887.
Despite the slashing of registration lists, Negro voters still held a slim statewide majority over the whites. Conservatives revived the spectre of Republican rule, extolled the virtues of white (Democratic) unity, and scoffed at the proposition that any issue could possibly divide the "harmonious and powerful combination" of rich and poor whites.

Nevertheless, some Democratic leaders professed uneasiness. Although the Negro Republican majority might be reduced to a minority by intimidation, economic coercion, and vote fraud, such tactics had a limit. A wholesale disfranchisement of the Negro was, for the time being, too dangerous. Northern public opinion had to be considered. Absolute removal of the freedman from politics might goad the national government into reviving the Reconstruction measures; even the troops might be returned. In addition, black belt plantation owners already envisioned how their laborer's vote could be used as a lever to dictate policy to the state Democratic party. In the ante-bellum years slaves were counted for the purposes of giving planters disproportionate representation in the state legislature.


51 Daily Picayune, January 11, 1877.

52 Louisiana, Constitution of 1852, Arts. 8, 15; Lewinson, Race, Class, and Party, 9-10.
The Negro vote, if properly applied, would be of even greater value. Planters wanted an expanded voice in the state government. The Negro had given it to them once. He could again.

The real fear was the white vote. There was little concern over the possibility of a shift of white voters toward the Republicans. Nevertheless, there was one bothersome possibility: the fragmenting of Democratic votes through independent candidates, or by the emergence of a third political party. Other southern states, redeemed from Radicalism in the early 1870's, had already experienced such outbreaks of rural white insurgency. The Louisiana Bourbons read these warning signals and made preparations to meet the approaching storm. They tried to herd off any agrarian movement by repeatedly warning that independency would lend "indirect aid" to the Republicans by dividing the white vote. 53 Dissension among "ourselves," it was stressed, would balloon the importance of the Negro vote and return Kellogg, Wells, and their friends to power. Of course, the truth of the matter was that Democratic leaders realized the great advantages of a two party political division along racial lines. They wanted nothing to disturb such a simple way of getting and holding office.

The working farmers and city artisans who helped

53 Daily Picayune, January 14, 1877.
place the Nicholls government in power expected much of it. Somehow, it was naively assumed, the restoration of home rule would bring back "peace, plenty and prosperity . . . that with Nicholls for ruler nickels will be plenty." But by the fall of 1878 the Democratic redeemers had been in power a year and a half and the millennium showed no signs of coming. The Bourbon-dominated legislature had further restricted the meagre flow of money by slashing state, city, and parish expenditures by $2,748,000 in its first year. Local government suffered a blow when the legislature authorized the executive to add appointed members of the previously elected police juries; this was done at the request of black belt planters who wished to blunt the power of Negro officials in their districts. But police jury packing was not confined to parishes with a heavy Negro majority. The act applied to all. Hill whites also had to accept the governor's appointments.

Election laws placed on the statute books in 1877-78 were marvels of ingenuity but were hardly designed for reform. Police juries, appointed by the state administration, were empowered to select polling places and name the election commissioners. These commissioners, in turn, supervised

54*Daily Picayune*, January 11, 1877.
56*Congressional Record*, 47 Cong., Special Sess. Senate, 120; *New York Times*, November 24, 1879.
the elections, counted the ballots, and signed the official tally sheets. Ominously, the act of making false returns was not declared a crime.\(^57\)

And the Bourbon program of reform through "rigid economy" was beginning to take devious paths. Large property holders were favored by a reduction of tax rates and a slashing of assessments. Planters whose crops sold for $30,000 or $40,000 a year were assessed about half the value of their mules and equipment; it was claimed that the taxes of such wealthy men amounted to less than $250 per year. Even then they were not pressed to pay.\(^58\) Governor Nicholls, to his credit, spoke against these tax abuses. Once he complained that people of small property usually paid their taxes, but "men of large means and property" deliberately abstained and nothing was done.\(^59\) But the governor was powerless to force changes, and his outspokenness must have strengthened the resolve of the more conservative Democrats to be rid of him.

Rumblings of discontent against the Bourbon government began to grow louder. One farmer, in what must have

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\(^57\) *Daily Picayune*, January 8, 1879; *New York Times*, November 24, 1879.


been a typical complaint, noted that the "worthy gentlemen" talked endlessly about improving the state's credit among businessmen but made no attempt to help the depressed farmers of the state. "It seems," the rural man grumbled, that "the rulers" looked upon the earth of Louisiana and the people who work it as part of "the same mass, and beneath . . . respect or relief." Thus it was that a growing number of farmers began to decide that the Democratic party had no real interest in them. Some turned attentive ears elsewhere.

The Greenback party had already become well known in the North and West by the time it entered Louisiana in 1878. Proposing to lift the burden of agricultural indebtedness and halt the decline of farm prices through a program of currency inflation, the Greenbackers also appealed to urban labor: to the latter group they claimed that the national depression and unemployment were caused by the deliberate congressional policy of currency contraction. Especially denounced were the national banking system and the Resumption Act of 1875. But the Greenback movement was primarily agrarian in its leadership and appeal, even though a significant number of working class people in the Northeast did join the party.61 The

60Daily Picayune, January 1, 1878.
61John R. Commons and Others, History of Labour in the United States (New York, 1918), II, 244.
Greenbackers ran their first presidential candidate in 1876. The South offered him little support. Louisiana, absorbed in the death-throes of Reconstruction, did not give the Greenback ticket a single vote.

Greenbackers continued to gain strength in the North, and in February of 1878 held an important convention at Toledo, Ohio. There, they attempted a closer union with labor elements and renamed their party the "National party." Meanwhile, inflationist sentiment in the South was on the rise. By May of 1878 the National party began taking shape in Louisiana, with its eye on the autumn congressional and state elections. Native white men, who had heretofore been the most ardent of Democrats, were among the first to join. The editor of the Indianapolis Sun, a Greenback paper, confided that an attempt would be made to carry Louisiana by a coalition with Negro voters. North and South, the Greenbackers hoped to bury sectional differences by agitating national economic reform. Instead of "bloody shirt" oratory they chose the "ragged shirt."

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64 *Shreveport Evening Standard*, May 10, 1878.

65 *St. Louis Evening Post*, September 28, 1878.

As a bona fide third party, Greenbackism took strongest root in the Fourth Congressional District of Northwest Louisiana. There, the Shreveport *Evening Standard* was horrified to discover, some of those same white men who had battled for home rule in the Reconstruction riots at Colfax and Coushatta were advocating the new movement.  

Robert P. Webb of Claiborne Parish, Jesse Moore Tilly of Bienville Parish, and Rev. Benjamin Franklin Brian of Grant Parish were among the more prominent Greenbackers of the region. All three were Confederate veterans and upland agriculturists.

Webb, who was also a lawyer, owned 2,000 acres and was the wealthiest of the trio. Brian was the poorest. Born in East Feliciana Parish in 1833, he worked as a blacksmith until the beginning of the Civil War, and then served four years in the Confederate cavalry. After the close of hostilities he homesteaded near the village of Pollock, in what was soon to become Grant Parish. Having "hewed his farm out of the forest," Brian then divided his

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67 *Shreveport Evening Standard*, May 10, 1878.
68 *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Northwest Louisiana* (Nashville, 1890), 457-58.
70 *Colfax Chronicle*, October 19, 1878.
71 *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Northwest Louisiana*, 204-205.
energies among farming, preaching, and politics. He was active as an ordained minister in the Missionary Baptist Church, and his political career began in 1876, when he made an unsuccessful race for the State Senate on an Independent-Republican coalition ticket. Benjamin Brian was destined to become one of Louisiana's outstanding agrarian reformers. His career spanned every rural movement from the rise of the Grange to the decline of the Populist party.

Lack of funds and means of organization hampered the growth of the National party in Louisiana. One feeble newspaper, the Haynesville Greenback Dollar, propagandized to a limited number of subscribers along the northernmost tier of parishes. In Alexandria, an organ called We, the People emerged in 1878 as an alleged affiliate of the Greenback movement, but its chief purpose lay in promoting the congressional candidacy of that indefatigable Scalawag Republican, J. Madison Wells. In Northeast Louisiana a series of fragmentary independent movements were organized by native whites on the local level, notably in Tensas and Morehouse Parishes.

72 See Benjamin Brian's obituary in Louisiana Populist, November 6, 1896.
73 Colfax Chronicle, September 30, 1876.
74 Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Louisiana, I, 169; Colfax Chronicle, November 15, 1879.
75 Colfax Chronicle, August 31, 1878.
The situation in Tensas offered a classic example of why outsiders looked upon Louisiana politics in such amusement and contempt. A "Country People's ticket" was organized in Tensas in 1878 by Confederate veterans and Negroes, in opposition to the regular Democratic candidates for parish offices. The political boss of the parish, Judge Charles C. Cordill, was a Scalawag Republican who had shifted with the winds in 1876 to assume control of the local Democratic organization. Cordill and his friends were large planters. They had used the Republican label during Reconstruction for the most palpable of reasons: Tensas Parish was over ninety per cent Negro. When, in 1878, local Negro Republicans found they could no longer do business with Cordill, they turned to the yeoman white farmers of the parish. The first proposal for this biracial combination came from Arthur Fairfax, one of the few colored landowners of the parish. The result was the Country People's ticket, with Confederate veterans for all the local offices and the Negro, Fairfax, for Congress. This interesting coalition was thus opposed by the large planter (ex-Republican) Democrats of the Cordill machine! Greenbackism seems to have played no part in the Tensas struggle, and little wonder. Local issues would have

77 Daily Picayune, November 1, 1878.
78 Ibid., January 8-9, 1878.
plagued the wisdom of Solomon.

Greenback sentiment existed in South Louisiana; however, a bona fide third party crusade failed to materialize. In its place were a number of independent political disturbances which soon caught the attention of professional politicians. For example, around New Orleans a revival of the old Native American, or Know-Nothing, party was being voiced about.  

In New Orleans the Native Americans managed an uneasy fusion with the Republican party and ran Robert S. Howe for Mayor as an opponent of the Democratic candidate, Isaac W. Patton. At this moment two other political fragments, the Citizen's Conservative Association (Made up of merchants), and the Tax Payers' Union (mostly landlords) broke away from the Democracy to run a slate of candidates for parish and municipal offices in New Orleans. These two parties of the extreme right wing condemned the city machine of Patton, Burke and Wiltz for its corruption, and agitated for a more drastic reduction in taxation, even to the point of abolishing state taxes entirely. The regular Democrats in New Orleans thus faced three opponents even more conservative than themselves.

A fifth political movement then began among the unrepresented working class people. It should be noted that

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80 *Daily Picayune*, October 30-31, 1878.
during the summer of 1878, prior to the elections, New Orleans suffered one of its worst yellow fever epidemics. A number of angry workingmen blamed the inefficient and careless Democratic administration for the unsanitary conditions which spread the plague. In October these laborers formed the Workingmen's party, and denounced the Democratic as well as the other conservative parties. John C. Fleming, a self-styled "humble mechanic," headed the ticket as a mayoralty candidate. The Workingmen's ticket issued a blistering manifesto which urged the poor of both races to desert the old party banner. Negroes were reminded that President Hayes and his Republicans had deserted them, and that "the Brigadier General, so-called Democracy, refused to recognize the manhood of their race." The city and state administrations were denounced as "imbecile," and as "the vilest government that ever disgraced a civilized community." Moreover, the laborites raised the ghosts of the epidemic victims, who "are crying aloud for retributive justice upon those who by their neglect forced them to untimely graves." But Fleming added that his party was non-violent. "God knows," he said, "we have misfortunes enough without bringing about others by . . . conflict." He warned,  

82 *Daily Picayune*, October 30, November 1, 1878.
though, that the patience of the "oppressed and neglected" was wearing thin; that Louisiana could never prosper as long as its working people continued to be "little better than mendicants and slaves." The *Daily Picayune* sneered at the Workingmen's party and called it "a half hearted communism," and opined it would not make much headway with the hard-headed, practical population of New Orleans.

Conservative Democrats watched apprehensively as the Greenbacker, laborite, and other splinter groups began to take shape in the summer and fall of 1878. At the state Democratic convention in August, conservative leaders moved swiftly to blunt the liberal-inflationist uprising. For what came out of the Democratic conclave was a classic Greenback party document. The platform implored Congress to repeal the Resumption Act, which placed existing paper money on par with gold; demanded repeal of the restrictive national banking system; and advocated the issuance of "treasury notes, commonly known as greenbacks." These greenbacks, said the Louisiana Democracy, should be used for all legal tender purposes, including the redemption of United States bonds. Republicans were condemned for the "ruinous financial policy" which oppressed working people. And

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"warmest sympathy" was tenderly expressed for all laboring classes.  

After this outburst of pseudo-liberalism the party delved into more practical matters: Major Burke was nominated for state treasurer and Louisiana's need for a new constitution was proclaimed. However, to ease the fears of Nicholls supporters, "it [was] not proposed to displace or interfere with the incumbent officials of the state government."  

But the inflationary part of the platform had considerable practical value. The demand for monetary reform was put to excellent use by those Democrats who were forced to run against Greenbackers. In Grant Parish, a hot-bed of inflationism, voters were told that "the Democratic platform is as good a document as any Greenback man could wish."

By their endorsement of Greenbackism Louisiana's new rulers drove yet another nail in the coffin of President Hayes's hopes for a political New Departure. Everywhere in the South, in 1878, the dominant Democratic party attempted to placate the agrarian agitation. But only the Louisiana Democracy, "more reckless than the rest," expressed

86New Orleans Democrat, August 7, 1878.  
87Ibid.  
88Colfax Chronicle, October 12, 1878.  
89New York Times, August 8, 1878.
inflationary doctrines with such uncompromising boldness. The New York Times, a mirror of northern Republican conservatism, was aghast at the platform which emerged from the Baton Rouge convention. It "contains about as mischievous a series of demands as the most rabid of the Labor-Greenback conventions," the Times fumed. But Edwin L. Godkin's Nation probed deeper. This magazine denounced the document as "vicious and unprincipled," but understood why it had been issued. The "fine gentlemen of Louisiana," said the Nation, merely wished to conciliate "the mob," and are "hoping that the platform will pass for buncombe outside their own state, and that no mischief will result in Congress." Future events proved Godkin's analysis to be correct. And something near the nadir of hypocrisy was plumbed by the Daily Picayune, which condoned the platform but hoped that the huge Democratic majority would not be misunderstood by outsiders as an endorsement of Greenbackism.

Not to be left out when crafty politics was afoot, the state's Republicans eagerly joined in the betrayal of agrarian demands. The wounds suffered by Louisiana Republicans in 1876-77 were grievous but not necessarily fatal.

90 Ibid.
91 Nation, XXVII (August 15, 1878), 89.
92 Daily Picayune, November 1, 1878.
Patronage from the national administration, after 1877, gave party leaders a livelihood, and the presence of a Negro voting majority allowed the more naive Republicans to hope that the state government might someday be recaptured. A state Republican convention was held in September of 1878, but the meeting broke up after the "Customs House faction" shoved through a resolution which maintained that a quorum was not present. The purpose of this maneuver was soon clear. The dominant wing of the party, the Customs House men, wished to fuse with the state convention of the National party which was scheduled to meet in Baton Rouge on September 18. The Nationals, when they met, nominated Dr. John S. Gardiner for State Treasurer and approved of the following slate in the congressional races: Henry C. Castellanos, First District; E. North Cullom, Second District; Robert O. Hebert, Third District; J. Madison Wells, Fourth District; John T. Ludeling, Fifth District; Arthur Fairfax (short term) Fifth District; and W. L. Larimore, Sixth District. Only Gardiner, a Baton Rouge physician, was listed on the ticket as a straight-out "Greenbacker." Castellanos and Cullom appeared on the ticket as "Greenbacker-Republicans," Larimore as an

93 W. W. Marks to Rutherford B. Hayes, December 10, 1878, Hayes Papers.
"Independent," and the others were listed as "Republican." Yet all had the endorsement of the so-called National party, and, except for Larimore, the candidates were all ante-bellum residents of Louisiana. Fairfax was the only Negro. Even partisan Democrats admitted that the National Republican combination was under the "exclusive control of white men."

Thus constituted, the National party of Louisiana was hardly a bona fide Greenbacker movement. What had transpired was rather obvious. Genuine inflationists, headed toward a state organization, were thrown into confusion by the Democratic platform issued in August. Into this vacuum stepped the sharp-eyed Customs House Republicans who organized the National convention for the sake of sailing Republicans under a false flag. E. North Cullom, an old Whig turned Republican, had dreamed up the project. He did it "for no other ultimate purpose" than to make inroads into the solid white vote. As Cullom told President Hayes, in confidence, "the Republicans knew perfectly well they had nothing to gain by taking the field under a square Republican banner." White solidarity must be broken. Otherwise, "the colored man may just as well not vote," for

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96 *Daily Picayune*, November 10, 1878.
97 E. North Cullom to Rutherford B. Hayes, February 6, 1878, Hayes Papers.
his ballots would not be counted as cast. Cullom assured Hayes that all the National congressional candidates were simon-pure Republicans. 98

Despite its name, the National party of Louisiana was absolutely mute on the question of monetary reform. Its "Address to the People" blasted Burke and the "flock of cormorants" of the Bourbon Democracy and compared them—correctly but hypocritically—to the Republicans "who wallowed in the corruptions of the Warmoth and Kellogg administrations." 99 Special attention was devoted to the old Know-Nothing element. National candidates, some of them at least, lashed out at the foreign-born voters in New Orleans. Poor whites and blacks were informed that foreigners should henceforth be kept out of the state; otherwise, native labor would be deprived of its chance to make a living. Upstate, the Nationals added anti-Catholic propaganda to the election broth. 100 Bourbon Democratic spokesmen, seemingly jealous of this competition in the use of prejudice, angrily reacted to the anti-Catholic propaganda. They chided the National party for its

98 Ibid.

99 *Daily Picayune*, November 3, 1878. Obviously the two ex-governors were not at the moment in control of the Republican state party machinery, even though Kellogg still held a seat in the United States Senate. But neither Warmoth or Kellogg publicly denounced the "National" maneuver.

100 *New Orleans Democrat*, October 21, 1878; Shreveport *Evening Standard*, October 22, 1878.
True Greenbackers and labor reformers were baffled by the turn of events. The Democrats took their platform. The Republicans took their name. In no other state was the monetary issue so confused, for only in Louisiana did the Democrats come out so strongly for inflation, and only in Louisiana was the National party mute on the subject. Adding to the muddle was the fact that quarantines against districts infected with yellow fever halted the ordinary means of communication between the hills and low country. Some northern parishes were without mail service from early August to late November. Meanwhile the conventions and the election had taken place.

While the campaign was underway the Democratic and National candidates for Congress, as if by common consent, avoided the monetary issue. Nationals tried to stir up religious and anti-foreign sentiment while the Democrats stuck by their old reliable, the race issue. However, both parties tried to eat into each other's bastion of strength. Just as the so-called Nationals courted dissident whites, so did Democrats ask for Negro support. But the Democrats seldom pleaded with the colored man--they insisted. Appearing before a Negro rally in North Louisiana, a

101 *Daily Picayune*, November 1, 1878.

102 *Coushatta Citizen*, quoted in *ibid.*, November 29, 1878.
Democratic candidate bluntly told his audience that conservative whites had "all the intelligence," and "negroes are ignorant."\textsuperscript{103} He said he was doing them a favor by telling them to vote Democratic, since "we are going to carry the election anyhow. . . . We can get along without you." And the Shreveport \textit{Evening Standard} warned: "If they [the Negroes] do not appreciate these efforts and still join the enemies of the State . . . they must take the consequences."\textsuperscript{104} Hill country Greenbackers who allied with the Republicans were roughly handled. Benjamin Brian, running for the legislature on a coalition ticket, was informed that he "was a good dog gone astray. He was in the company of sheep killing dogs and had to be killed."\textsuperscript{105}

The clever shifts of both Democrats and Nationals made discussion of the currency question meaningless. Consequently, some local agrarian candidates took a different tack and lashed out at the planters and merchants for encouraging the spread of the crop-lien system. Democratic leaders were horrified. In Caddo Parish, Independents who criticized the crop-lien to Negro audiences were denounced as incendiary radicals.\textsuperscript{106} A Democratic judge warned that

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{103} \textit{Colfax Chronicle}, October 12, 1878.
\item \textsuperscript{104} \textit{Shreveport Evening Standard}, October 15, 1878.
\item \textsuperscript{105} \textit{Colfax Chronicle}, October 5, 1878.
\item \textsuperscript{106} \textit{New York Times}, January 20, 1878.
\end{itemize}
if these malcontents won, "Grant and the troops" would soon
march through the streets of Shreveport, and "the place
would be made so desolate the bats and owls would roost on
our wharves." 107

Violence increased as election day of 1878
approached. 108 All Louisiana campaigns in the generation
following Reconstruction would draw blood, and 1878 set the
post-Reconstruction pattern. Threats of murder were suf­
ficient to persuade Republican campaigners to flee Natchit­
oches Parish and to convince the entire slate of Independent
candidates in Morehouse Parish that healthier climates must
be sought posthaste. 109 More stringent measures were taken
in troubled Tensas, where eleven men were killed, and in
Caddo, where "up to twelve" Negroes, by Democratic count,
met death. 110 These outrages supplied convenient propaganda
for northern Republican journals. The New York Times head­
lined one Tensas story "KILLING REPUBLICAN VOTERS," which
neatly summarized the limit of the Times's solicitude for the

107 Daily Picayune, January 11, 1879.

108 Fatalities were anticipated. In September a
leading Democratic newspaper in North Louisiana predicted
"the deluded Negroes" would "provoke their white neighbors
to violence." Shreveport Evening Standard, September 28,
1878.

109 Daily Picayune, January 8, 1878; New York Times,
November 4, 1878, January 8, 1879.

110 Natchez (Miss.) Democrat, quoted in New York
Times, October 18, 1878; Shreveport Times, quoted in Daily
Picayune, November 14, 1878; New York Times, January 8,
1879.
freedmen of Louisiana. 111 For the state as a whole, at least forty persons died in election disturbances. 112 Most of the dead were Negroes. Republican claims ran as high as seventy-five murdered Negroes in Caddo Parish alone. 113

Most dramatic were the events in Tensas Parish. Fighting broke out when an armed band of planters tried to capture Arthur Fairfax, the Negro leader who set the fusion effort there in motion. Judge Cordill claimed the fusionists were "trying to excite the Negroes to violence," and called in white militia from the surrounding parishes. 114 The leader of the rescue mission was General J. Floyd King of Concordia Parish, who had a personal interest in the affray since he was a Democratic candidate for Congress. Nearby Mississippian.., hearing that private property and "the lives and honor of women and children were involved," reacted instinctively and came across the river by the scores. 115 After being told by white supporters of the Country People's ticket that it was "not a nigger's war,"

111 New York Times, October 14, 1878.
112 Woodward, Origins of the New South, 57.
113 Nation, XXVII (December 12, 1878), 358.
114 New York Times, October 26, 1878; January 8, 1879. It is interesting to note that Governor Nicholls blamed the Cordill group for starting the trouble. This fact was used against Nicholls by the ultra-Bourbons. Cf. New Orleans Weekly Pelican, May 11, 1889.
115 New York Times, October 18, 1878. One hundred armed Mississippian.. reportedly crossed the river.
the Mississippi volunteers went home. Indeed, they had profaned the Holy of Holies--States' Rights.

Election returns from over the state gave mute evidence of intimidation and fraud. The entire slate of Democratic congressmen was elected, and Burke beat Gardiner for the treasury post. Rankest of all the frauds were those occurring in certain parishes where Negroes constituted over sixty per cent of the total population, but where Democrats won with votes in excess of the white registration. Returns from these parishes, when compared with registration figures, make interesting reading:

Congressional Election of November 5, 1878
(select parishes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>Democratic vote</th>
<th>National Repub. vote</th>
<th>White Registration</th>
<th>Negro Registration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bossier</td>
<td>1,401</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>2,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caddo</td>
<td>1,815</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>1,476</td>
<td>3,732</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concordia</td>
<td>1,037</td>
<td>955</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>2,637</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Feliciana</td>
<td>964</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>743</td>
<td>1,005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morehouse</td>
<td>1,102</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>646</td>
<td>1,337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natchitoches</td>
<td>2,811</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1,830</td>
<td>1,963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richland</td>
<td>1,008</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>643</td>
<td>1,232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tensas</td>
<td>2,795</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>2,931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. Feliciana</td>
<td>1,796</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>1,540</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

116 Ibid.

117 Louisiana, Report of Secretary of State, 1902, 546-49, 570-72; Daily Picayune, November 3, 1878. Since registration figures in Bossier parish were not submitted in 1878, the figures for 1880 are used.
Close behind in the suspicious category were eight other parishes listing a total Negro registration of 4,319, but in which the National Republicans received the total of one vote. As the awesome returns poured in, even the staunch New Orleans Democrat admitted that the "immense majorities . . . are confusing--almost incomprehensible." But, mused the Daily Picayune, since "frauds in Louisiana elections are . . . things of the . . . past," the only logical explanation was that Negroes had suddenly and sagaciously deserted their old Republican leaders. Thus, the harmonious returns of 1878, according to the latter newspaper, offered convincing proof that race antagonism was dying out.

Such a schizophrenic explanation was contrary to truth and common sense. Ample evidence exists that the overwhelming majority of Negro voters in the state would have supported the National ticket if given the opportunity. Many endured incredible hardships in attempting to do so.

118 Louisiana, Report of Secretary of State, 1902, 546-48, 570-72.
120 Daily Picayune, November 9-10, 1878.
The Negro masses were illiterate and their political acumen rather weak, but even the most ignorant of them knew full well which of the two parties stood uncompromisingly for White Supremacy. Some Democratic candidates admitted the obvious. General King, the newly elected Congressman from the Fifth District, was quoted as saying: "I consider a negro if he votes the Democratic ticket to be either a fool or a hypocrite."\(^{122}\) Probably a handful of Negroes did mark ballots for the Bourbon Democrats of their own free will. Probably in Ireland there were some Catholic peasants who loved their English landlords and supported the Tory ticket.\(^{123}\)

On the local level Democratic opponents in 1878 met with only meagre success. Republicans, Nationals, and Independents obtained twenty-six legislative seats.\(^{124}\) Probably just one of the Nationals, C. H. Watson of St. Helena, was a bona fide Greenbacker. The Democrats elected the municipal slate in New Orleans, but failed to gain a clear majority.\(^{125}\) John Fleming's laborite ticket was denied representation at the polls and recorded a mere 209

\(^{122}\) *Daily Picayune*, January 9, 1879.

\(^{123}\) *North American Review*, CLI (November, 1890), 594.

\(^{124}\) Uzee, "Republican Politics in Louisiana," 205-207.

\(^{125}\) *New Orleans Democrat*, November 9, 1878.
votes. Before the election, a Democratic paper estimated Fleming's strength at 2,000. North of the Red River, Republicans managed to salvage East Carroll and Madison, but their Independent and Greenback allies in other parishes went down to defeat.

Even so, the election of 1878 blazed a trail for the more ambitious and relatively more successful Populist-Republican combination of later years. The New York Times, looking over the 1878 returns, prophesied that "the experiment . . . probably will not be without its fruits in Louisiana. . . . The ice is broken, and white Democrats have led negro Republicans in a conflict with the 'regular' machine." But if the pattern for future agrarian protest was set in Louisiana in 1878, so was the autocratic Bourbon method for perverting or repressing such protest.

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126New Orleans L'Union, quoted in Daily Picayune, November 1, 1878.

CHAPTER IV

"EXODUSTERS" AND THE CONSTITUTION OF 1879

Among Louisiana's Negro population, dissatisfaction with Bourbon rule entered an acute phase in the early months of 1879. An emotionally charged movement known as "the Exodus," or "the Kansas Fever," suddenly seized the imagination of the colored population of the lower Mississippi River valley. Some who observed it compared the Exodus of 1879 to the hegira of the Hebrew peoples from Egypt.¹ In Louisiana, at least 10,000 Negroes departed the state that year, and perhaps 50,000 made futile efforts to leave.²

Since 1874 there had been vague talk of a Negro migration. At that time Benjamin "Pap" Singleton, a

¹International Review, VII (October, 1879), 373.

²This estimate is based upon an evaluation of Exodus reports in the following newspapers: Daily Picayune, March 1-December 30, 1879; New Orleans Weekly Louisianian, March 15-December 15, 1879; St. Joseph North Louisiana Journal, January 18-May 24, 1879; Shreveport Evening Standard, April 22, 1879-January 4, 1880. It is possible that the number of Louisiana Negroes who attempted to join the Exodus exceeded 50,000, for all of the above sources tended to minimize the migration.
Tennessee Negro, began sending promotional literature to colored preachers throughout the South which advertised a freedman's colony he was planning to create in the state of Kansas. Even more distant was the journey proposed by a Shreveport Negro group in 1877. The latter tried unsuccessfully to arouse enthusiasm for a mass migration to Liberia. In 1878 a report from Pointe Coupee Parish told of a Negro plot "to kill the leading white men of the region and establish a nation of their own." No whites died but five Pointe Coupee Negroes were lynched. Rumors of a great migration, or other drastic action by the colored population, persisted.

The Kansas Exodus of 1879 was born of confusion and despair. The reasons why it burst forth at that particular time, and in Louisiana, are fairly clear. The two years which had gone by since the end of Reconstruction witnessed an increase in economic oppression; landlords and merchants were squeezing Negro sharecroppers and renters, now that home rule had been restored, with greater impunity. The deaths and vote frauds which resulted from the congressional election of 1878 boded ill for the colored people of

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4 New York Times, June 9, 1877; Shreveport Herald, quoted in Daily Picayune, January 5, 1878.

5 New Orleans Democrat, June 7, 1878.
Louisiana. As the Negroes themselves realized, 1878 had provided a foretaste of "the wrongs to come."  

The fraud and bloodshed of 1878 prompted the meeting of a subcommittee of the United States Senate in New Orleans, under the chairmanship of Republican Senator Henry M. Teller of Colorado, beginning January 7, 1879. Hundreds of Negroes flocked into the city to pour their tales of woe into the willing ears of the Republican Senators. Once having testified, the Negroes feared the trip home might terminate in the Great Beyond. These disconsolate and homeless people became the tinder for a flashfire movement destined to sweep across plantations from Louisiana to the Carolinas.

While the Teller sub-committee met in New Orleans, Republican Senator William Windom of Minnesota arose in Congress to inquire into the possibility of "promoting and encouraging" a migration of maltreated southern Negroes to the western states, where they might take out homestead privileges. Word of Windom's resolution quickly reached

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6 Daily Picayune, April 22, 1879.
7 New Orleans Democrat, January 8, 1879.
8 New Orleans Times, January 20, 1879. The Negroes' fear of reprisals was justified. The Democratic press admitted that two Shreveport Negroes who were on their way downriver were taken by a mob, and "nothing more has been heard of them." Daily Picayune, quoted in New York Times, December 22, 1878.
9 Congressional Record, 45 Cong., 3 sess., 483.
the freedmen of Louisiana, who did not seem to share the white verdict that the proposal was "stupid and idiotic."\textsuperscript{10} Within two weeks, thousands of Negroes in the alluvial cotton districts of Louisiana and Mississippi were packing their belongings for the journey to the West. The first group departed Madison Parish in February, to debark at St. Louis, shivering, barefooted, and half-starved.\textsuperscript{11}

Later "Exodusters," as they were called, followed the route taken by the Madison Parish vanguard: north by steamboat to St. Louis, then west by rail to the plains. Most selected Kansas as the final destination. "Pap" Singleton's earlier agitation could have had something to do with this choice; but more important, the very name of Kansas had a special connotation for southern Negroes. "Kansas," said one Exodus promoter, "with her freedom and broad prairies, with the memories of John Brown and his heroic struggle, seems naturally the state to seek."\textsuperscript{12}

The Exodus excitement might have cooled had it not been for the action of the Louisiana legislature in setting up the machinery for a constitutional convention in 1879.\textsuperscript{13}

Ever since the triumph of Nicholls, unreconstructed

\textsuperscript{10}\textit{Daily Picayune}, March 17, 1879.

\textsuperscript{11}Van Deusen, \textit{Journal of Negro History}, XXI, 119-21.

\textsuperscript{12}\textit{Daily Picayune}, April 22, 1879.

\textsuperscript{13}\textit{New Orleans Weekly Louisianian}, March 15, 1879.
Democrats had clamored for an overturn of the Radicals' constitution of 1868. Organic law, it was said, must now be written by "real people." The constitutional convention began its work in April of 1879; it was dominated, of course, by Democrats. Exodus leaders perceived that the "real people" meant to tamper with universal manhood suffrage. Among the Negro masses the fear was less well defined, but it was generally understood that the convention would produce nothing of benefit for dark-complexioned citizens. River roads in the cotton parishes soon were choked with creaking sharecropper wagons. Some sold their meager possessions for boat fare to St. Louis. Others, without funds, struck out on foot for "somewhar." Kansas people were advised by Louisiana's Bourbons to keep their hogs penned up.

On April 18, 1879, as delegates to the constitutional convention were arriving in New Orleans, a less formal assembly convened at the Free Mission Baptist Church on Common Street. This "Exodus convention," as it was

14 *Daily Picayune*, November 9, 1877.
16 *St. Joseph North Louisiana Journal*, April 12, 1879.
17 *Daily Picayune*, April 30, 1879.
called, had been organized by George T. Ruby, T. Morris Chester, the Rev. Emperor Williams, and others. Ruby claimed the movement began as a secret organization in Caddo Parish in 1874. A Negro named Henry Adams was the chief instigator. He wandered from one plantation to the next, quickening the pulse of resentment by asking the field hands to tell him of their grievances against the white landlords. Now, said Ruby, this association had grown to a membership of 92,800. He claimed that above two-thirds, 69,000, were Louisiana Negroes, the others being from Texas, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Alabama. Ruby attributed the growth and potency of the exodus idea to the fact that "representative political leaders [Negro and white Republican politicians] were neither intrusted [sic] with nor informed of its existence."

Negroes were cautioned that the Exodus needed better organization. Ruby suggested that "head men" be appointed to go to Kansas and search out the best locations for homesteads. "Meanwhile," he said, "pending the formation of colonies, ... we advise an abandonment by the colored people of all the turbulent, bulldozed [cotton] parishes of this State." He added that in the sugar lands of South

19Daily Picayune, April 22, 1879.
21Daily Picayune, April 22, 1879.
Louisiana "life and personal liberty are comparatively secure," and that the wage system prevalent there would give Negroes a better chance of accumulating the wherewithal for the trip to Kansas and the purchase of farm equipment.\(^\text{22}\)

In effect, this was a proposal to the Negroes to wait—to temporarily halt the Exodus to Kansas. Ruby's advice about the sugar parishes as an intermediate stop for the western journey did have some merit. But the suspicion arises that some of the Exodus leaders might have been in the pay of sugar planters who were willing to depopulate the cotton parishes in order to build up a bigger labor surplus for themselves. A convention of cotton growers of Louisiana and Mississippi, meeting at Vicksburg on May 2, evidently believed the sugar barons to have had something to do with the exodus excitement.\(^\text{23}\) State Senator Theophile T. Allain of Iberville Parish denounced the "Exodusters" but said if they simply could not remain in the cotton parishes, "let them remove to the sugar belt."\(^\text{24}\) Allain was a Negro. He was also a sugar planter.

Worried Negro politicians, with few exceptions, tried to break up the Exodus meeting. Pinckney B. S. Pinchback and James D. Kennedy, editors of the Weekly...

\(^{22}\text{Ibid.}\)

\(^{23}\text{Ibid., May 3, 1879.}\)

\(^{24}\text{Ibid., April 24, 1879.}\)
Louisianian, endeavored to convince the assembly of its error. Pinchback called the Exodus a "wild goose chase," and blamed it on the "influence of an illiterate and misguided clergy." Even Arthur Fairfax, who approved of the Kansas migration, remarked that there were too many unworthy Negro ministers in it. Fairfax said the editor of the Donaldsonville Chief told him that this one newspaper shop printed and sold over 500 licenses to preach in one month alone.

But preachers rather than politicians had the ear of Louisiana's colored people in 1879. Illiterate or not, the Exodus agitators showed an awareness of economic issues, and a realization that politicians of both parties and both races were insincere in their expressions of sympathy for working people. One example of this was the reception accorded David Young at the Exodus rally. Young was a State Senator and one of the least reliable of Negro officeholders. His appearance almost caused a riot. He was denounced as a "bloated capitalist" when he urged the blacks to work out their differences with the land owners.

25 New Orleans Weekly Louisianian, April 5, 1879.
26 Daily Picayune, July 10, 1879. Fairfax, in addition to being an unsuccessful aspirant to Congress in 1878, was also President of the Negro Baptist Convention of Louisiana. During the Exodus excitement of 1879, Rev. Fairfax's actions were somewhat hampered due to the fact that he was awaiting trial for murder. St. Joseph North Louisiana Journal, April 26, 1879.
After Young was hooted down, the assembly listened to a message sent from Frederick Douglass, a noted Negro leader on the national scene. Douglass asked that the Exodus cease, "because it is an untimely concession to the idea that colored people and white people cannot live together in peace and prosperity." The gathering was unimpressed. Someone in the crowd perspicaciously asked "why Fred Douglass had left the South, where he now advises his race to stay?" It seems there was no answer.

The New Orleans Exodus convention served to publicize the movement but did little more. Money was supposed to be raised for organizational purposes but the finance committee reported a total collection of just $11.05. On the last day the audience listened to an address by a certain Mr. Turcke, an agent for the Honduras Immigration Society. Apparently he praised the virtues of Honduras over Kansas, but his speech was delivered in such a thick German accent that his listeners were unable to ascertain what it was all about.

Proceedings were closed by T. Morris Chester, an ex-member of the Louisiana State Board of Education. Chester sounded a note of despair but urged that the Exodus

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29 Daily Picayune, April 19, 1879.
30 Ibid., April 22, 1879.
continue. "We have been systematically cheated and plundered by planters and country merchants until starvation stares us in the face," he exclaimed. "If we are illiterate, it is because white men made it a crime to teach us to read. . . . If we are poor, it is because we have been denied the right of property, life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Our past in the South has been an existence of sorrow, tears and blood, and under the unchristian and despotic public sentiment, the future is without a ray of hope."

Shortly after the disbanding of the New Orleans gathering the Exodus excitement reached its peak in North Louisiana. Dispatches from harassed planters revealed that besides the 5,000 and more already departed, 3,000 others were now assembled along the Mississippi between the towns of Vidalia and St. Joseph. Influential whites again pressed Senator Young into service. Young was from Concordia Parish and presumably he would have more influence there than he had shown at the New Orleans rally. And so Young left his seat at the constitutional convention to go to Vidalia and persuade his fellow blacks to abandon their journey. He exhorted to the crowds along the levee; he needed them as constituents just as planters needed them as laborers. This Negro Republican had hitherto been a favorite target for the

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid., April 27, 1879.
Bourbon press. But as a reward for helping to stem the Exodus tide, the *Daily Picayune* ceased calling him names and used the appellation "Mr. Young." When his work was done and the Exodus fever had subsided, Senator Young's value to the Democrats was ended. In 1880 some old charges concerning misuse of public funds were revived and Young was expelled from the legislature. Re-elected in 1882, he was again expelled.

Whatever Young's influence, the Exodus excitement began subsiding in the cotton parishes by late May. Colored sharecroppers who earlier spoke of moving were now involved in bringing their cotton crops to maturity. Perversely, however, the excitement had begun to spread to the sugar parishes and hundreds of colored families from South Louisiana started for "the promised land" of Kansas. Ripples

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35 Baton Rouge *Daily Capitolian-Advocate*, June 15, 1882. Young eventually became *persona non grata* to Republicans as well as Democrats. Probably his most grotesque action came at the state Republican nominating convention in 1884, when he arose to move that Samuel D. McEnery, the Negro-baiting Governor of Louisiana, be endorsed by that convention for reelection. "Dave Young," a Republican newspaper commented, "is cheeky enough to look Gabriel in the face and demand his trumpet." *New Orleans Weekly Pelican*, November 12, 1887.

36 *St. Joseph North Louisiana Journal*, May 24, 1879.

were now spreading far over the South; Kansas fever was being felt as far away as North Carolina and Virginia. However, Louisiana and Mississippi continued to supply the majority of ragged migrants. Figures vary, but throughout the South perhaps 200,000 made efforts to go on the journey. How many actually reached the Sunflower State is unknown, but about 40,000 were reported there at the end of the year.

As late as January of 1880, "GWINE TO KANSAS" reports appeared in North Louisiana newspapers. The Shreveport Evening Standard remarked that these latter unfortunates would reach their destination "in time to get the cream of the winter." Truly, the climate and people of the Great Plains were not proving to be entirely hospitable. Some who reached Kansas immediately became dissatisfied and made a footsore journey back to the cotton land; others, at intervals during the following decade, moved out of Kansas to seek greener pastures in Oklahoma.

Louisiana's planters were very fond of complaining about the general worthlessness of Negro labor.

38 Simkins, A History of the South, 515.
40 Shreveport Evening Standard, January 4, 1880
41 Shreveport Weekly Caucasian, January 7, February 6, 1890.
Traditionally, this topic ranked alongside the weather and politics as a favorite topic of genteel conversation. Yet the conduct of landowning Louisianians during the Exodus excitement indicates that the Negro as an agricultural worker was not so despised, after all. "What are our lands worth without labor?," cried an anguished East Carroll planter. "Would we not be senseless idiots to drive away our sole dependence...?" A delta editor urged his readers to "let no means remain untried" to stem the flight of colored labor. In Morehouse Parish these means included a resolution to tar and feather anyone soliciting or advising colored people to emigrate. Planters inveigled certain steamboat companies into refusing passage for migrant Negroes, whether the latter had funds or not. Boat captains on the Red River let it be known that emigrants to Kansas "must walk, as they don't intend to transport a single one of them." Negroes met this same obstacle along the Mississippi River. At the latter stream, however, hundreds obtained passage by pretending they were only going as far as Vicksburg or Memphis. Once there, they

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42 Letter from T. L. Van Fossen, an East Carroll planter, published in St. Louis Republican, quoted in Daily Picayune, April 12, 1879.
43 St. Joseph North Louisiana Journal, April 12, 1879.
44 Bastrop Morehouse Enterprise, quoted in Daily Picayune, May 2, 1879.
45 Daily Picayune, April 15, 1879.
would wait a day or two, then continued their journey northward.46

Various horror stories were circulated among the blacks. Some Kansas towns, it was rumored, threatened to shoot all colored people on sight;47 other Kansas communities supposedly refused to let any of "Uncle Abe's misguided children" inside the corporation limits.48 An alarm was spread that Negroes who did manage to get to St. Louis were dying of smallpox.49 Vivid pictures were painted of the "wailing winds and drifted snowbanks" of the Kansas winter.50 And shame was heaped upon those who planned to depart. Even if they were mistreated, wasn't fleeing the state a poor way of asserting one's manhood?51 It was not unknown for planters to journey to Kansas, pleading with their ex-laborers to return home.52

In the end, a few measures were taken to halt the Exodus which showed wisdom and moderation. In Concordia

46 International Review, VII (October, 1879), 378.
47 St. Joseph North Louisiana Journal, April 12, 1879.
48 Lake Providence Carroll Conservative, quoted in ibid., May 10, 1879.
50 Shreveport Evening Standard, January 4, 1880
51 Daily Picayune, April 19, 1879.
52 Ibid., May 16, 1879.
Parish, for example, planters stemmed the tide not only with Senator Young's oratory but also by equitably adjusting the sharecroppers' contracts and striking off all the back debts at plantation stores. Eventually, even the dreaded constitutional convention worked to placate the unhappy colored voters. In mid-July a coalition of rural Democrats and Republican delegates beat down an attempt by the ultra-Bourbons to restrict manhood suffrage. Such economic and political concessions were grudgingly given, but had beneficial results from the planter point of view. Exodus excitement began to fade.

Events of 1878 and 1879 showed something of the potential strength of white and Negro agrarianism. But at the same time, the congressional elections and the constitutional convention which followed also proved that farming and labor interests had little voice in the presiding councils of the state government. Generally, the constitution of 1879 was a triumph for the conservative planters and businessmen. Though the convention did not restrict the right of suffrage, the fight to preserve it had been a bitter one.

Delegates from the hill parishes joined with

53 Ibid., May 3, 1879.
54 New Orleans Times, July 16, 1879; Shreveport Evening Standard, November 27, 1879.
55 Daily Picayune, July 10-12, 1879.
Republicans in the convention to defeat suffrage restriction. A grim warning influenced the final vote. If the planters and businessmen tampered with the franchise, delegates were cautioned, not only would the Kansas Exodus be intensified, but a coalition would develop (at the general election to ratify the constitution) "between the poor whites and colored people, which would . . . inaugurate a reign of communism and secret societies."\(^56\) This kind of talk was not all idle vapor. Marxist ideas were not unknown to Louisiana. New Orleans was one of seven cities in the United States where a branch of the International Workingmen's Association (or "Red International") had taken root between 1867 and 1872.\(^57\) Shortly before the constitutional convention met, "the Socialists of New Orleans" celebrated the anniversary of the Paris Commune, hoisted a red flag, and exhorted working people "to liberate themselves from the oppression of a small minority."\(^58\)

After much debate, the constitutional convention voted down suffrage restriction eighty-five to thirty-four.\(^59\)

\(^{56}\)Ibid., July 10, 1879.


\(^{58}\)*Daily Picayune*, March 20, 1879.

\(^{59}\)*New Orleans Democrat*, July 11, 1879.
The extreme Bourbons were also forced to compromise their demand that bondholders be permitted to retain the high interest rate of seven per cent on the state debts which had been piled up during Reconstruction. Conservative spokesmen admitted that much of the debt was fraudulent in origin. Yet this fact was not important, they argued. It was the "honor" of the state which mattered. The original virtue of the bonds was of no significance, so the argument ran; these bonds were now private property, and therefore, sacred. Specious appeals were made about the "widows and orphans" who would suffer if debts were repudiated or the interest rate scaled down. The truth was that wealthy Louisianians of the Democratic faith as well as Republicans and foreign capitalists now possessed these bonds; consequently, businessmen in New Orleans joined with English investors to urge the convention not to tamper with the debt. When the debt issue came up in the convention, Republicans stood squarely with the business Bourbons to oppose a scaling of the principal or the interest rate. Republican unanimity was accounted for with the remark that

60Caldwell, A Banking History of Louisiana, 105. During the Kellogg administration, in 1874, Louisiana's state debt was cut almost in half, in principal. But the seven per cent per annum interest on the remainder was retained. See also Benjamin U. Ratchford, American State Debts (Durham, 1941), 183-92.

61Daily Picayune, May 14, 1879.

"the party loved honesty." But perhaps the secretary of the convention came closer to the truth when he related the story that a $200,000 slush fund had been distributed to make sure the thirty-two Republican delegates saw things the bondholders' way.63

Country Democrats, joined by delegates from the poorer wards of New Orleans, fought for a scaling down of the interest rates and even hoped to slash the principal down to $4,000,000.64 Leader of the repudiationists was delegate E. E. Kidd of poverty-stricken Jackson Parish. "Captain" Kidd, as the Bourbons called him, threw a fright into New Orleans businessmen with his slashing attacks upon the bonded debt.65 Finally, a compromise was arranged. Although the principal of the debt was not molested, the interest rates on the bonds were severely reduced. Thus, what the New Orleans Times called the "communistic spirit" of the pine hills had won a partial victory.66

Outside of the suffrage and debt issues, the Bourbon program emerged from the convention triumphant and intact. The state property tax was reduced to a paltry six

63Daily Picayune, July 1-2, 1879.
64New Orleans Times, March 13, 1879; Nation, XXVIII (June 5, 1879), 212.
65Daily Picayune, July 4, 1879; Congressional Record, 47 Cong., Special Sess. Senate, 145.
66New Orleans Times, quoted in Woodward, Origins of the New South, 91
mills on the dollar; parish and local taxes were limited to ten mills. All but the smallest manufacturing establishments were exempted from any taxation whatsoever for a period of ten years, despite the cry of one country delegate that "this effort to overturn the agricultural character of the state, and make it a manufacturing center, must fail." In other action, the convention decided to vest inordinate power in the office of governor, while the authority of the legislature was so narrowed that its functions became "almost mechanical."

The increase in gubernatorial power, especially in the appointment of local officials, was politically the most significant work of the convention. The Bourbon delegates were looking toward the future. They had in mind the domination of the entire state by the simple method of virtually turning local government over to the executive office. Therefore, in future elections, their task was greatly simplified; they merely had to see to it that the proper sort of man was nominated for this one office. The

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69 *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Louisiana*, I, 46.
70 *Chambers, A History of Louisiana*, I, 46.
incumbent governor, Nicholls, was rapidly proving himself to be recalcitrant and undesirable; and through some fast work on the part of Major Burke and Louis Wiltz in the closing days of the convention, a provision was inserted into the document which cut Nicholls's term short by one year. Theoretically, the Governor was eligible for re-election, but it was common knowledge that he stood no chance at all of being nominated at the next party convention. All elected state and legislative officials, except Treasurer Burke, had their terms cut short along with the Governor's. Burke, by the way, was presumed to be the mastermind of the fight to halt outright repudiation of the state debt at the constitutional convention. "Verily," snapped the Colfax Chronicle, "merit hath its reward, and the Major deserves something for his service in the interest of the bondholders."

The country Democracy also lost its fight against the Louisiana State Lottery Company. Charles Howard's powerful gambling concern had been greatly displeased when the legislature, prior to the convention, voted to repeal the lottery's charter; Governor Nicholls, after some vacillation, signed the reform measure in March of 1879.

71 Louisiana, Constitution of 1879, Art. 264.
72 Colfax Chronicle, August 2, 1879.
73 New Orleans Democrat, March 28, 1879.
Howard's next move had been to train his guns on the upcoming convention.

The lottery question consumed eight days of debate in the convention. All the Republican delegates voted to give the lottery legal status in the new organic law. But backland Democrats, as on the debt issue, parted company with the business element of their party. When Democratic delegates caucused, mention of the lottery had an effect similar to "tossing a firebrand into a powder magazine." William A. Robertson of St. Landry Parish led the pro-lottery Democratic forces at the convention. Harking back to the crisis of 1877, he reminded Democrats of something many of them preferred to forget—that the lottery had given much financial aid in the fight to overthrow Radical rule. In fact, he said, the present Democratic government "would never have been established" without lottery money. The alignment of planter-merchant Democrats with the Republican delegates was clearly too much for the hill delegates, but they fought on nonetheless. Their churchgoing constituents in North Louisiana hated the

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74 Since the lottery had financed the Democratic coup of 1877, the Louisiana Republicans' ability to forgive is truly touching. Or perhaps some other consideration was involved.

75 *Daily Picayune*, July 10, 1879.

lottery and expected their representatives to fight on to the bitter end.

Both sides in the lottery dispute agreed that public sentiment was generally against Howard's company; but, as Robertson suggested, the people's anger was directed primarily at the monopoly features of the old charter. He then introduced a proposal to continue the charter until January 1, 1894, for which the lottery would pay the state $40,000 per year, as provided by the original legislative act of 1868. As a sop to public opinion the prior monopoly was repealed. Theoretically, future legislative sessions could charter all the lotteries they wished. But the Howard lottery was the only one specifically named in the constitution. And subsequent legislatures never chartered a rival; lottery influence saw to that. Curiously, another article in the constitution declared gambling to be a vice. As soon as the new organic law was ratified, company advertisements could boast: "This is the Only Lottery Ever Voted on and Endorsed by the People of Any State!"

On December 8, 1879, election-satiated Louisiana went to the polls for its third election in thirteen months.

77Louisiana, Constitution of 1879, Art. 167.
78Robert Cinnamond Tucker, "The Life and Public Service of E. John Ellis," Louisiana Historical Quarterly XXX (July, 1946), 746; Forum, XII (January, 1892), 570.
79Baton Rouge Daily Capitolian-Advocate, April 5, 1882.
Ratification of the new constitution was a foregone conclusion, and public interest in the state and local races was at low ebb. In truth, there was not much choice. Louis A. Wiltz, Democratic gubernatorial nominee, was a staunch conservative. So was his Republican opponent, Taylor Beattie. Wiltz, a banker, a New Orleanian and a Catholic, was not likely to arouse much enthusiasm among upstate Democrats. Judge Beattie was a large planter, an ex-slaveholder, an ex-Confederate, and an ex-member of the Knights of the White Camellia. Colored voters were understandably "disgusted" with Beattie's candidacy. Some Republicans expressed a preference for Wiltz. When the votes were counted, Wiltz had won the governorship by a vote of 74,098 to 42,555. The actual number of votes cast was probably not sixty per cent of the total returned.

Never before this election was there "such a coldness and apathy" in Louisiana politics, wrote a Democratic voter. "The people do not know where to look for relief." Feeble attempts were made to arouse third party enthusiasm, but without notable success. The "National party" title

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81 J. R. G. Pitkin to John Tyler, Jr., August 15, 1879, copy in Hayes Papers.

82 Louisiana, Report of Secretary of State, 1902, 561.

83 Daily Picayune, November 15, 1879.
had fallen into disgrace in Louisiana, and only in Natchitoches Parish was there a full ticket of Greenback Labor party candidates in the field. They were all defeated.\(^{84}\)

The Workingmen's party in New Orleans, which ran Fleming for Mayor the year before, met, grumbled, and refused to endorse anybody.\(^{85}\) A "Temperance Alliance of Louisiana," centered around New Orleans, decided shortly before the election to run a state ticket dedicated to a platform of government aid to agriculture and restriction on the sale of alcoholic beverages.\(^{86}\) Their candidate for governor was the old Grange leader, Daniel Dennett. At the time, Dennett was residing in Mississippi and did not hear of his candidacy until shortly before the election. When he learned that he had been placed in the field by the Temperance Alliance, against Wiltz and Beattie, he accepted the challenge--but only because "my defeat is certain."\(^{87}\) Dennett did not campaign. Neither party paid any attention to his candidacy. Exactly twenty-seven votes were recorded for Dennett in New Orleans, and if he obtained any ballots in the rural parishes, they were not reported.

The only noteworthy agrarian victory anywhere in

\(^{84}\) *Colfax Chronicle*, November 15, 1879.

\(^{85}\) *Daily Picayune*, December 1, 1879.


the state came from the hill country, in the Twenty-Fourth Senatorial District of Catahoula, Grant, and Winn Parishes. There, in his third try in three years, Benjamin Brian combined Negro and Greenbacker support to win a seat in the upper house of the state legislature. Brian's election indicated that the agrarian cause was not entirely dead in Louisiana's backcountry.

88 Colfax Chronicle, November 22, December 6, 1879. Brian ran for the State Senate unsuccessfully in 1876 and 1878, and won in 1879. He was endorsed by the local Republican organization all three times. Charles J. Boatner of Catahoula Parish, who defeated Brian in 1876, moved out of the Twenty-Fourth Senatorial District in 1878, which necessitated the special election of that year.
CHAPTER V

BOURBON DEMOCRACY

Charles Gayarre', interviewed by a northern reporter in 1873, remarked that Reconstruction had subjected the white citizens of the state to such terror and misery that they would gladly embrace any change in government, submit to "any other species of despotism."¹ This invitation was accepted. Bourbon misrule soon replaced Radical misrule. An inner clique of professional politicians, taking credit for steering the ship of state from under the black clouds of Radicalism, soon claimed perpetuation in office as their reward. They declared the social stagnation around them to be the only alternative to turbulence, and were quick to hoist storm warnings against even the faintest wind of change.

The heavy anchor of the new order was the constitution of 1879. Under its provisions the Louisiana Democracy stripped off its Nicholls facade, and revealed the governing circle to be a closed corporation consisting of Louis Wiltz, Edward A. Burke, and a few businessmen and

planters whose social concepts had been fundamentally un-
changed by the Civil War and the Emancipation Proclamation.
The victory of the Bourbon extremists received formal
consecration on January 14, 1880, when Wiltz took the oath
of office as Governor. But it was Burke, the State
Treasurer, who emerged as the dominant figure, despite the
vast appointive powers of the Governor. Wiltz, it appeared,
suffered from acute tuberculosis. He failed to respond to
treatment, and died on October 16, 1881.  
Henceforth, Burke's new partner, the state's chief executive, was
Wiltz's Lieutenant-Governor, Samuel Douglas McEnery of
Monroe.

From 1881 until 1888 McEnery occupied the Governor's
chair. He served out Wiltz's term and was elected in his
own right, for a full four years, in 1884. McEnery, by all
evidence, seems to have been a weak, affable man, possessing
most of the faults common to American politicians of the
day; unfortunately, he was called upon to preside over a
peculiarly corrupt and demoralized segment of the nation.
It has been said that the 1880's marks the ebb tide of
statesmanship in American political history.  

\(^2\)New York Times, October 17, 1881.

\(^3\)Henry Steele Commager, The American Mind: An
Interpretation of American Thought and Character Since the
Eighteen-Eighties (New Haven, Conn., 1950), 346.
Louisiana, under McEnery, the political water was low enough to reveal the predatory activities of a variety of offensive crustacea.

McEnery leaned heavily upon his friends for advice. And chief among his political cronies was State Treasurer E. A. Burke. During the McEnery years Burke achieved greater power in Louisiana than any other politician of his day. His control over McEnery was scarcely concealed. Even in public, speaking in defense of McEnery, Major Burke could not refrain from relishing the fact that Louisianans really understood who ran the State House. "I hear it stated from one end of the state to the other," Burke remarked, "that this poor weakling of a governor . . . is under the control and domination of Burke and some others." The "some others" included three powerful businessmen: Charles T. Howard and John A. Morris of the Louisiana State Lottery Company, and S. L. James, chief lessee of the state penitentiary, who was, in effect, the largest slaveholder of post-bellum Louisiana.

Those who sought favors of McEnery showered him with fulsome praise. He was called "the levee Governor," the farmer's friend," and "the executive Greatheart." But not

4 New Orleans Times-Democrat, October 15, 1887.
5 Ibid., August 6, 1882; Baton Rouge Daily Capitolian-Advocate, December 7, 1887; Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Louisiana, II, 62.
all citizens joined in the chorus of adulation. McEnery's numerous critics used yet another, and more appropriate title for him—"McLottery."⁶ Even staunch Democratic newspapers grew restive under the mounting evidence of fraud and favoritism in McEnery's administration; when someone suggested a raise in salary for the Governor, because the state's first family could scarcely get by on the doleful pittance of $4,000 per year, the Daily Picayune snapped that the "quality of the article paid for" should take first consideration. Viewed in this light, Louisiana's $4,000 Governor was "the most expensive in existence."⁷ But official poverty, however, did not restrain McEnery from entertaining, or being entertained by, the more important families of the state. And there were legions of farmers in Louisiana to whom $4,000 represented unattainable wealth.

Vulpine individuals of the Burke, Howard, and James type clustered around McEnery but they were by no means his only confidants. Men of personal courage and presumed integrity also endorsed him. In fact, there lay the supreme tragedy of McEnery Bourbonism: that gentlemen who possessed the intelligence and capacity to give Louisiana enlightened government, were so blinded by bitter memories of the Civil War and Reconstruction, as to give unthinking allegiance to

⁶Bayou Sara True Democrat, February 21, 1892.
⁷Daily Picayune, April 19, 1886.
whoever bellowed loudest the shibboleths of southern conservatism. A case in point was Leon Jastremski. A "warm personal friend" of McEnery's, Jastremski was Mayor of Baton Rouge, editor of the official journal of the state, and a leader in Confederate veterans organizations. For a time, at least, Jastremski fought the lottery and tried to pull McEnery away from its influence. The Mayor-editor urged a cleansing of the corruption which had crept into the party of white supremacy. But, he insisted, "all reform has to be within the Democratic party. Where else do you have to go?" His position had one fatal weakness. If the party was not purified, if venal elements still dominated, Jastremski was nevertheless willing to stay with the party. To do otherwise would be, he said, "like burning down the house to destroy the bedbugs."

Jastremski, despite his un-southern name, became an articulate spokesman for the group without whose support the McEnery-style Democracy could never have survived. His virtues and faults would seem to be those of most

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8Baton Rouge Daily Capitolian Advocate, May 9-12, 1882; Daily Picayune, October 4, 1887.


10Baton Rouge Daily Capitolian-Advocate, November 7, 1882.

11Ibid.
Louisianians of the upper class and upper-middle class in both city and country. His social philosophy consisted of equal parts Old South plantation tradition and New South business opportunism. Jastremski gloried in the epithet "Bourbon." But he felt "Stuart" was perhaps more appropriate; that McEnery's administration should be compared to the restoration of that jolly monarch, Charles II. Louisiana, like England of the 1660's, was "sick of profligate excess, of rampant pseudo liberalism, and ... prefer [s] the safer conservative path." 12 He admitted the "reactionary tendencies of the Democratic party" but insisted that its apparent backwardness was justified by "the injustice of the Civil War and Reconstruction."

Business enterprise, said Jastremski's newspaper, was what Louisiana needed most. He was annoyed at bills introduced by legislators from the "big woods" 13 designed to regulate railroad and riverboat companies; for common sense dictated that "capital shall always have in Louisiana all the remuneration it can earn." 14 Jastremski, and those who applauded his sentiments, extolled the virtues of the constitution of 1879. As the Lake Providence Carroll Democrat proclaimed: "all manufacturers in Louisiana are exempt

12 Ibid., March 30, November 7, 1882.
13 Ibid., May 20, 1882.
14 Ibid.
from . . . taxation until 1899. Come to Louisiana!" Northern millionaires were to be admired and emulated, not denounced. When Jay Gould, an object of national loathing, visited Louisiana in 1887, the leading citizens of Shreveport prepared an elaborate reception and seemed anxious to make his stay in their city a pleasant one. They wanted Gould to build another railroad to their city. But the wily Gould disappointed his Shreveport admirers by demanding a $50,000 subsidy, free depot grounds, and a free right-of-way in and out of the city for a small branch line he proposed. But Gould's interest in Louisiana was not confined to getting subsidies for railroads; between January and April of 1887 he added 250,000 more acres to his timber empire in North Louisiana. His popularity did not extend to Grant, Vernon, or Winn Parishes, where he was the largest landowner. However, according to Mayor Jastremski, the actions of men like Gould simply illustrated the wonderful natural law of "survival of the fittest," and his newspaper quoted scripture to prove it. In Louisiana, as in ancient Israel, God's providence dictated "that the fathers shall

15Lake Providence Carroll Democrat, August 11, 1888.
16Galveston (Tex.) Daily News, January 24, 26, 1887.
17Ibid., January 28, 1887; Colfax Chronicle, April 2, 1887.
18Leesville Condenser, quoted in Winnfield Southern Sentinel, March 20, 1885; Winnfield Southern Sentinel, July 3, 1885; Colfax Chronicle, April 2, 1887.
eat the grapes, and the children's teeth shall be set on edge." Grumbling by the poor was futile, infantile, and impudent.

Translated into Bourbon political terminology, "survival of the fittest" meant that all whites, regardless of economic status, must cooperate in repressing the Negro voting majority. Registration books in 1880 showed 88,024 colored voters, a majority of 2,573 over the whites. By 1888 there were 128,150 Negroes registered; their majority had increased to 3,743 over the whites. Yet as Negro registration increased, Republican voting strength mysteriously declined. The Democrats ran into trouble only in the Second Congressional District, where a Republican representative was elected in 1884 and 1888, and in the Third District, which sent a Republican to Congress in 1880 and 1882. Some of the wealthiest men in these two regions, sugar planters and manufacturers, voted Republican because of the party's national program of high tariffs and fiscal conservatism. These men were powerful enough to

19Baton Rouge Daily Capitolian-Advocate, February 18, 1882.


prevent the local Democratic machinery from perpetrating the gross frauds prevalent in other districts. But elsewhere in the state, Democratic opponents stood little chance.

The cotton raising Fifth District was denounced as the most consistently dishonest region in the entire South. "If you don't vote right we'll count you right," Negro voters were told, in 1880, by the District's Congressman. By the latter part of the decade vote stealing in the Fifth had become a fine art, particularly in the four plantation parishes along the Mississippi River, where colored voters outnumbered whites, 13,956 to 2,005 in 1888. A comparison of these figures with the election returns of that year illustrates the thoroughness of Bourbon methods. When statistics from the following census are added the evidence of fraud is compounded:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gubernatorial Voter Vote in 1888</th>
<th>Voter Registration in 1888</th>
<th>Voter Population According to Census of 1890</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democratic</td>
<td>15,056</td>
<td>2,005 (white)</td>
<td>1,665 (white)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>13,956 (Negro)</td>
<td>12,454 (Negro)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

23New York Times, November 2, 1880

24Louisiana, Report of the Secretary of State, 1902, 552-61; U.S., Bureau of the Census, Compendium of the Eleventh Census of the United States; 1890. Population, I 782-83. There is no evidence that any decline in population occurred between 1888 and 1890; in all probability, the reverse was true.
For that matter, a similar breakdown for the entire state indicates that the cotton parishes listed above were merely the darkest stains on a panoply of falsehood:  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Gubernatorial Vote in 1888</th>
<th>Voter Registration in 1888</th>
<th>Voter Population According to Census of 1890</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democratic</td>
<td>136,746</td>
<td>125,407 (white)</td>
<td>130,748 (white)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>51,993</td>
<td>128,150 (Negro)</td>
<td>119,815 (Negro)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bourbon leaders made little effort to conceal the vote frauds, and they explained the situation with disarming frankness. Vote theft was absolutely necessary. The elections of 1876-78 had only "strangled, and not killed" the "monster" of Negro domination;  to permit a free ballot would admit "a mongrel government made up of the worst elements of both races." Governor McEnery thoroughly agreed. "It is time," His Excellency said, "that the law shall be silent and [we shall] uphold our liberty at all hazards."  

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25 Ibid.
26 St. Joseph North Louisiana Journal, October 30, 1880.
27 Lake Providence Carroll Democrat, October 20, 1888.
the black belt parishes were equated to the chastity of white women, the memory of the Confederate dead, and the Divine Wisdom of Heaven. "What recreant," thundered the New Orleans Daily States, could possibly, remembering Reconstruction, "stand up before almighty God and accuse the wisdom or integrity or beneficence of the Democratic party. . . ?" The fact that election frauds were undisguised perhaps added to the enormity of the crime. Men who participated in vote stealing unquestionably did great harm to their own standards of moral conduct, and the effect upon children taught to believe that cheating was "patriotic and right" can only be imagined.

But the Bourbon rationale for vote fraud in state and congressional elections scarcely told the whole story. Why, it might be asked, if Negro majorities were so menacing, were Democratic registrars so liberal in adding colored men to the voting lists? The statewide totals showed white registration as decently under the actual number of males over the age of twenty-one; however, there were 8,335 more colored men on the rolls in 1888 than showed up for the census taker two years later. Many who departed with the Kansas Exodus remained on the voting list for the next


30 Forum, XX (January, 1892), 597-98.
generation, and colored cemeteries were bastions of strength for the party of white supremacy. The remark that "a dead darkey always makes a good Democrat" was a truism of state politics. Yet the supreme irony could be found in the census returns of 1890, which proved the hue and cry over the supposed "black menace" to be a Machiavellian sham. Louisiana's white males of voting age outnumbered colored by 10,933. A white majority had been transformed into a Negro majority of almost 4,000, through the counting of 8,335 fictitious Negroes, and the failure of about 5,000 whites to register.

But returns from the cotton plantation parishes were not doctored for the mere purpose of insuring the election of Democratic officials. Most local officials were either appointed, or could be easily removed. And Republicans--Negroes, at that--were sometimes permitted to hold office in such parishes as East Carroll and Madison. More important matters than mere elections were involved. Under the convention system for nominating state and congressional candidates, each parish was permitted to send a delegation in proportion to the number of Democratic votes cast in that parish at the previous election. A parish might choose its own method of election convention delegates, but the size of

31Louisiana Populist, October 22, 1897. Parish assessors acted as registrars of voters. Assessors were appointed by the Governor. Hence, all registrars were Democrats.
the delegation depended upon the previous Democratic vote. The swollen, false returns from the black belt, based on Negro registration, allowed planters to throng into these Democratic nominating conventions in commanding numbers.

The worst offenders in the packing of conventions, as in ballot box stuffing, could be found in the Fifth Congressional District of Northeast Louisiana. The four parishes along the Mississippi River, where lived only 11.3 per cent of the adult male whites of the District, were able to go into the congressional nominating convention of 1888 with seventy-five delegates. The other eleven parishes of the District, with 88.7 per cent of the whites of voting age, sent seventy-nine delegates. And some of the disadvantaged parishes had pockets of planter strength; these latter would send a handful of delegates to the convention, permitting plantation interests to have an absolute majority in the naming of candidates and in the writing of the platform. Much the same was true in Northwest Louisiana's Fourth District. There, Caddo, Bossier, and Rapides parish manipulated Negro majorities so as to dominate the other nine parishes of the District, where the vast majority of whites lived. Though the Sixth District suffered less from Bourbon rule, even so, East and West Feliciana, Pointe

32Lake Providence Carroll Democrat, August 4, 1888; Ruston Caligraph, quoted in ibid., October 20, 1888; U.S., Compendium of the Eleventh Census, I, 782-83.
Coupee, and West Baton Rouge parishes carried much greater weight in Democratic conventions than their white population justified. The First, Second, and Third Congressional Districts were comparatively free from the rampant vote stealing for convention purposes so common to other areas of the state; however, none of the latter three was entirely free from frauds at the ballot box.

Local politics, more often than not, reflected the undemocratic aspects of the state and congressional campaigns. Few parishes, even where the Democratic and Republican parties were closely matched, used the primary system in selecting party nominees. Local politicians were fond of the "mass rally" technique. When time came for making nominations to the legislature, the sheriff's office, or other court house positions, the local ring called for the party faithful to assemble and make their wishes known. What could be more democratic? The theory was fine, but, grumbled the Crowley Signal, sometimes the call was poorly advertised or held in an obscure place; the result was "a sort of confidential limited mass

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33Baton Rouge Daily Capitolian-Advocate, November 1, 1887. In the Sixth District parish of West Feliciana, in 1882, the Democratic white minority apparently lost control of the Negro vote. By some "strange misunderstanding," as the Bourbon press termed it, the parish returned a Republican majority—for the candidate of that party in the Third District! The Secretary of State's office had simply sent up ballots for the wrong district. Ibid., January 25, 1882.
McEnery partisans had a special trademark. They perpetuated themselves in certain North Louisiana courthouses by proclaiming open-air, free-for-all parish nominating rallies, but farmers up in the hills were given a notice as short as that which the hawk gives the chicken. Local self-expression was also stifled by the executive appointment of police jurors. Begun on a partial basis under Nicholls, it was made universal during the Wiltz-McEnery administrations. Beginning in 1880, every police juror in the state received appointment from the Governor. The class of men appointed were certain to squelch any proposal to raise local taxes, a fact which, to wealthy planters and merchants, proved the wisdom of this mode of selection.

Republican leaders packed their "mass meetings" also, but the evil was most pronounced in the Democratic party, and most harmful, since the great majority of state

34 Crowley Signal, quoted in ibid., March 6, 1888.
35 Shreveport Democrat, quoted in Baton Rouge Daily Capitolian-Advocate, November 10, 1887.
36 Daily Picayune, February 29, April 12, 1880; Police Jury Code of the Parish of East Feliciana: Containing a Digest of the State Laws Relative to Police Juries (Clinton, 1883), 8-9.
37 H. Thompson Brown, Ascension Parish Louisiana, Her Resources, Advantages and Attractions: A Description of the Parish and the Inducements Offered to Those Seeking New Homes (Donaldsonville, 1888), II.
and parochial officials would be selected at meetings of the latter. Drunken rowdies were often on hand at Democratic ward and parochial meetings, so as to discourage decent folk from attending; and whosoever raised his voice in protest at the high-handed proceedings would be denounced as "a crank, and . . . howled down accordingly." 38

Once the nominees were chosen and the party label applied, a voter had this alternative: support the ticket or suffer denunciation as a traitor to the white race. Even barnyard language was used. A white man who presumably cast a Republican ballot was described as "sleeping with the hogs." 39

One student of southern politics has suggested that the condition of public education may be the best criterion by which to evaluate a governing oligarchy. 40 If this be true, then the people of Louisiana suffered under the South's least enlightened, and harshest, Bourbon regime. No other southern state, in the late nineteenth century, allowed its public institutions to fall so low, or permitted its children to undergo a worse degree of educational neglect. The oligarchy used certain standard arguments

38Arabi St. Bernard Voice, quoted in Colfax Chronicle, October 22, 1887.
39National Economist, III (July 19, 1890), 279.
to justify its niggardly school appropriations. Louisiana was poor. Taxpayers needed a breathing spell. The state must encourage manufacturing, railroads, and capital investment; these would not come without the sort of assurances embodied in the constitution of 1879. The Bourbon Democrats were fond of calling their regime "a taxpayer's government." But apparently what they strove for was quite the opposite; a government of should-be taxpayers who paid no taxes. By some occult process, adherence to a laissez faire businessman's philosophy had become the test of loyalty to the traditions of an agricultural past.

The plea of poverty was grossly exaggerated. Most Louisianians were poor, but by no means all. Individuals and corporations of great wealth could be found within the borders of the state, and these privileged few used the poverty of the majority as a specious excuse for avoiding taxation upon themselves. By 1892, according to the Times-Democrat, thirty-five millionaires lived in New Orleans alone. Other immensely wealthy persons could be found in the rural parishes, particularly in the sugar country. Governor Nicholls, a rather benign conservative, denounced those who made persistent efforts "to present Louisiana as a pauper, unable to . . . carry out the duties of her

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\(^{41}\) New Orleans Times-Democrat, May 11, 1892, quoted in Shugg, Origins of Class Struggle in Louisiana, 291.
statehood. Such claims, he said, were "utterly without foundation."

Mendacity, however, knew no limits; even the opulent lottery company claimed to be "almost entirely profitless." Howard and his associated were not inclined to discuss company books with the public, except to say that only seven per cent of the receipts in the monthly drawings came from inside the state. By 1890 the lottery grossed from $15,000,000 to $60,000,000 a year, according to various estimates. One angry lottery foe, writing in Forum magazine, said the company kept at least forty-seven per cent of its gross take; the remainder went out in prizes, advertisement, and bribes to public officials.

The charge of excessive profit making was corroborated by evidence that, from 1868 to 1890, company stock soared from a par value of $100 to $1,200 per share. Since the lottery reported 50,000 shares by the latter year, this represented a capital value of $60,000,000. And the net annual profit, by minimum estimate, was at least double the

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42 Louisiana, Official Journal of the Senate, 1890, 414.
43 Daily Picayune, January 1, 1877.
44 Forum, XII (January, 1892), 570.
45 Cf. ibid., 561; Alwes, Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XXVII, 1021-24; Ezell, Fortune's Merry Wheel, 250-54; Chambers, A History of Louisiana, I, 705.
total amount of revenue taken in by the state government. By comparison, all nineteen national banks in Louisiana in 1890 listed total resources of $14,359,000, and total deposits in the six state banks stood at $7,486,000.47

A look at state institutional and other official reports in the 1880-1900 period reveals a melancholy pattern of social neglect. The six mill ceiling on state taxation, and the ten mill limitation on local taxes effectively stifled social legislation. Indifference in high places made the picture even darker. Chief of sufferers was public education. Only 1.25 mills went to the current school fund, whereas 2.75 mills went to pay interest on the state debt; and the latter excluded interest on educational bonds, which had to be paid out of the 1.25 mill school fund.48

Ironically, ante-bellum Louisiana had shown more interest in a free school system than had any of the neighboring states. At one time, in the early 1850's, half of the white children of educable age managed to obtain rudimentary instruction.49 After the war Louisiana's school

47Caldwell, A Banking History of Louisiana, 128-29.
49Fortier (ed.), Louisiana, II, 428-29. Among all adult whites (age twenty and above), illiteracy shot up from 10.15 per cent in 1860 to 19.28 in 1890! In 1860, out of 175,238 adult whites, there were 17,808 illiterates. In 1890, out of 269,556 adult whites, 51,989 could not read or write. Cf. U.S., Eighth Census, I, 188-89, IV, 506; U.S., Compendium of the Eleventh Census, III, 316.
system was revived under the hands of Carpetbaggers, and Negro children were counted among those eligible for public education. Reconstruction schools were, by law, racially integrated, and from 1872 to 1876 a Negro served as superintendent of the state's educational system. But, as with everything else during the Reconstruction era, school money was "squandered or misappropriated." Expenses quickly outran revenue; teachers were forced to hawk pay warrants at a fraction of their face value; but even the Daily Picayune agreed with the Radicals that New Orleans "brokers and money lenders were the real recipients of the greater part of the money appropriated for . . . education in Louisiana for many years."

If judged alone by the results of their handiwork, it would seem the Democratic party, after it came to power in 1877, held Negro and poor white children personally responsible for the failings of Reconstruction era schools. Education funds were pruned immediately. The constitution of 1879 allowed further emasculation. A similar program of Bourbon retrenchment took place in other southern states, but what happened to education in Louisiana after

50 Louisiana, Annual Report of the State Superintendent of Public Education to the General Assembly of Louisiana for the Year 1875 (New Orleans, 1876), 95.
51 Ibid.
52 Daily Picayune, April 23, 1877.
Reconstruction was fortunately without parallel elsewhere.

The following figures reveal the outlines of a social disaster of the first magnitude:

**Louisiana Public Schools in 1890**\(^{53}\)**Compared with Education in Poorer Southern States**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>True value of property</th>
<th>State and local taxes for schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>$495,301,000</td>
<td>$388,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>455,147,000</td>
<td>786,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>454,242,000</td>
<td>613,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>400,911,000</td>
<td>428,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>389,489,000</td>
<td>531,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Educable white children per teacher</th>
<th>Educable colored children per teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{53}\)U.S., Bureau of the Census, *Abstract of the Eleventh Census: 1890*, pp. 205, 228-29; U.S., *Compendium of the Eleventh Census*, I, 748. The educable child-teacher ratio was found by dividing the number of public school teachers into the number of inhabitants of the five-through-twenty year age group, which the Bureau of the Census considered "educable." It is true that Louisiana had more parochial school teachers than the other states listed, but even if they were added, the Pelican State would still retain bottom ranking in all categories. Especially would this be true of Negro education. Counting public, parochial, and private schools in 1890, there were only 828 teachers for over 200,000 Negroes of school age. U.S., *Compendium of the Eleventh Census, Miscellaneous Statistics*, II, 221, 223.
States with Illiteracy Rate Above Forty Per cent
(age ten and over)

1880: Seven States:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States</th>
<th>Percentage of Native white Illiterates</th>
<th>Percentage of Colored Illiterates</th>
<th>Average Percentage All Races</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>22.39</td>
<td>78.55</td>
<td>55.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>25.05</td>
<td>80.61</td>
<td>50.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>23.18</td>
<td>81.58</td>
<td>49.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>16.57</td>
<td>75.17</td>
<td>49.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>19.83</td>
<td>79.06</td>
<td>49.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>31.71</td>
<td>77.44</td>
<td>48.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>20.73</td>
<td>70.66</td>
<td>43.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(national average)</td>
<td>(8.75)</td>
<td>(70.00)</td>
<td>(16.97)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1890: Three States:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States</th>
<th>Percentage of Native white Illiterates</th>
<th>Percentage of Colored Illiterates</th>
<th>Average Percentage All Races</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>20.33</td>
<td>72.14</td>
<td>45.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>18.11</td>
<td>64.07</td>
<td>44.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>18.44</td>
<td>69.08</td>
<td>41.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(national average)</td>
<td>(6.23)</td>
<td>(56.76)</td>
<td>(13.34)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Louisiana "rose" from fifth to first place in ignorance among all states in the nation between 1880 and 1890. She was the only state, North or South, to show an absolute rise in the percentage of native whites who could not read or write, and the one state in the nation where
Negro illiteracy continued above seventy per cent. At the end of the Reconstruction era, Louisiana's Bourbons had vowed to promote and encourage education for black and white; but Governor Nicholls paid little attention to public schools, and Wiltz and McEnery even less. Those who shouted loudly for white supremacy might well have pondered the following statistics: in 1890, Louisiana's white children, of native parentage, in the ten to fourteen year age group, were 27.74 per cent illiterate. By contrast, colored children of the same age group were 19.69 per cent illiterate in Missouri, 26.18 per cent illiterate in Texas, and 26.18 per cent illiterate in Florida.

The youth of post Reconstruction Louisiana came close to having no state school system at all. "When the intelligent classes . . . secured possession of the government," one official said, "there were many who said of the public school, 'cut it away. Why cumbereth it the ground?'" At the constitutional convention of 1879 a serious attempt was made to abolish the office of state

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54 New Orleans Democrat, April 17, 1877; Nation, XXIV (April 19, 1877), 227.


56 Ibid.

57 Louisiana State Public School Teachers' Association, Proceedings and Papers of Second Annual Convention (Baton Rouge, 1894), 18.
superintendent of public education; this backward step failed to win approval, but other constitutional provisions were almost as malign. For instance, parish superintendents were limited to a salary of $200 per year.

The Bourbon Democracy scorned Federal aid to public education. The proposed Blair bill, debated in Congress from 1883 to 1888, would have poured, over a period of ten years, an estimated $4,000,000 into Louisiana schools. No state needed the money more. But the same men who perpetually clamored for Federal aid to Louisiana's levees "raise [d] their hands in holy horror" at the Blair bill, and denounced it as an infringement on States' Rights. Most of the newspapers in the state agreed with the Shreveport Times: Federal handouts to education would be "humiliating" and "squinting too much in the direction of centralization." Perhaps it was true, as the Populists alleged in the 1890's, that the Bourbon Democracy

59 Louisiana, Constitution of 1879, Art. 224.
62 Shreveport Times, quoted in New Iberia Enterprise, September 23, 1885.
deliberately sabotaged Louisiana's school system, not so much for the sake of economy, but in order to hold public intelligence down to the lowest common denominator and so keep rural people of both races docile. In fact, there was one miserable Louisiana school which epitomized the system. Its classes met inside a sheep barn.

The Bourbon fist fell hardest upon Negro education. In 1890, colored children from nine to nineteen years of age numbered 137,287; of these, only 51,645 were literate. Even in Mississippi the blacks of this age group were twenty percentage points ahead in literacy. Negro poverty depressed education for the race as much as did the penurious policies of the Bourbon government. School books cost more than Negro parents were usually able or willing to spend; consequently, they sent their offspring to school "with almanacs in their hands, and old almanacs at that." But governmental attitudes hurt the most. The Superintendent of Public Education in St. Mary Parish bluntly remarked that school funds in his district went to white education only. The Negroes, he said, "must work out their own

63 Montgomery Mail, quoted in Colfax Chronicle, September 9, 1893; Louisiana Populist, June 5, 1896.
64 Louisiana State Agricultural Society, Proceedings of Ninth Annual Meeting (Baton Rouge, 1895), 28.
66 Daily Picayune, March 27, 1881.
salvation...

Few Negro teachers had adequate training; in East Feliciana, for example, at the end of Reconstruction, white inspectors found all teaching applicants for Negro schools in the parish to be totally unqualified.68 Southern University, by grace of the constitution of 1879, was established "for the education of persons of color."69 The legislature appropriated a small fund but failed to provide for one detail—construction.70 Subsequently, the Board of Trustees paid for a building by reducing faculty salaries and borrowing additional funds by putting up future salaries for collateral. The faculty's money was still being used in the twentieth century to pay off this mortgage, at eight per cent per annum.71 The neglected university did not turn out a single graduate until 1887,72 and as late as 1898, had only ten students taking college-level courses.73 There was unconscious irony in the statement made by

67Quoted in Betty Porter, "The History of Negro Education in Louisiana," Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XXV (July, 1942), 805.
68Daily Picayune, November 20, 1877.
69Louisiana, Constitution of 1879, Art. 231.
70Louisiana, Report of Secretary of State, 1902, 464-66.
71Ibid.
72Ibid.
73Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, July 1, 1898.
Governor Murphy J. Foster, in 1896, that "this institution is a fair index to what is being done throughout the state for the education of colored people."\(^{74}\) The failure of Negro higher education naturally hurt the quality of instruction at lower levels. By 1893 there were 62,654 Negro children (out of approximately 200,000 eligibles) enrolled in Louisiana's public school system.\(^{75}\) Forty-six of their teachers had college training. Exactly fourteen had college degrees.\(^{76}\)

Hostility against Negro education per se was always present. But it seldom reached print during the brief period of the alleged "New Departure" immediately following the end of Reconstruction. Later, however, toward the close of the 1880's, the frankest sort of criticism of the very idea of Negro education began to appear in editorials and public speeches. Colored people were out of place in a schoolhouse, or so it seemed to a Catahoula Parish newspaper. With divine insight, the Trinity Herald commented: "God never intended the negro to be educated. Like the horse, he was destined to work for what he eats."\(^{77}\)

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\(^{74}\)Ibid., May 14, 1896.

\(^{75}\)Louisiana, Biennial Report of the State Superintendent of Public Education to the General Assembly, 1892-1893, 19, 22.

\(^{76}\)Ibid.

\(^{77}\)Trinity Herald, quoted in New Orleans Weekly Pelican, September 21, 1889.
Furthermore, the Negro should be "put where he properly belongs, and to which the whites purchased him for--in the field and the wood pile." The aptly-named Shreveport Weekly Caucasian agreed. Ignorant Negroes, it concluded, were a pesky problem, but "education is the most dangerous remedy for the evil yet proposed. That education is a long stride toward social equality no sane man can doubt." On the other hand, the foes of white education were not so impolitic as to publicize their views. Besides, legislative inaction, whether by accident or design, did quite enough. Louisiana's white children were already beneath the literacy level of Negro youths in other states of the late Confederacy.

A decaying school system was the most far-reaching of Bourbon failings, but it was by no means the only stain on their social record. Another pernicious ill concerned the state's method of disbursing money to public institutions and employees. Under McEnery, the general assembly failed to provide for the order and priority of payments; this had the effect of placing in the hands of the State Treasurer, Major Burke, an arbitrary control over public funds and over the payment of all warrants. It was

78Trinity Herald, June 13, 1889.
79Shreveport Weekly Caucasian, February 6, 1890.
charged, and repeated without denial in the official journal of Louisiana's state government, that Burke consistently gave priority to bondholders, and by 1882 had deposited to their credit over $1,000,000 in a New Orleans bank. At the same time he refused to redeem on demand the state warrants issued to mere public institutions and employees, using the excuse of an empty treasury. Warrants sent to the insane asylum at Jackson, according to the Superintendent, were cashed by New Orleans brokers at thirty-five cents on the dollar. Later, these same brokers bundled up the paper, sent it to Burke, who would suddenly discover that the treasury had revenue for redemption. 81

Conditions in the Jackson asylum were deplorable. In 1882 the Superintendent threatened to open the gate and turn the starving inmates "loose on the highway" if he received any more thirty-five-cent-on-the-dollar warrants. 82 This prospect seems to have stirred the legislature into action; henceforth, the commercial value of the warrants was increased slightly by making them receivable for taxes due the state. 83 But the most tragic examples of state neglect

81Baton Rouge Daily Capitolian-Advocate, May 11, 1882. According to this source, Burke gave the brokers sixty-five cents on the dollar.

82Ibid.

83Ibid., July 7, 1882. A questionable reform, since it had the effect of devaluing the already inadequate tax payments.
of the insane were not to be found at the Jackson institution; inmates, there it appeared, were considered fortunate by comparison. More miserable were the mentally ill from poor families in New Orleans. These urban insane were locked away in what the Louisiana Asylum Board blandly called a "city prison for crazy people." There was no room for them at Jackson. In 1881, out of 170 in the Orleans compound, 69 died. And 1881 was considered a healthy year for New Orleans, since no epidemics were reported.

A group of legislators, visiting the Jackson institution in 1888, were plainly shaken by what they found. Most wards had no furniture whatsoever, not even beds. No medical supplies of any sort could be discovered on the premises. Inmates went about in filthy rags; some were almost nude, and practically none had shoes. Inquisitively, the legislators entered a cellar dining hall, but came up again hurriedly—the stench was overpowering. Their blistering report to the General Assembly brought some improvements; by 1890, steam heat was installed at Jackson, whereas in earlier years attendants had to walk the inmates

84 Ibid., June 20, 1882.
85 Ibid.
86 Louisiana, Official Journal of the Senate, 1888, 330-33. The solons were also dismayed to observe racial integration among the Jackson inmates.
about during cold weather to keep them from freezing to death. But the insane were by no means the only unfortunates whom the state neglected, a fact which could be attested to by the deaf, dumb, and blind, confined at Baton Rouge. Since all these latter were victims of serious handicaps the legislature of 1888 logically concluded to crowd them all under one roof. Instead of two dilapidated buildings, the deaf, dumb, and blind, after 1888, had one dilapidated building. Governor McEnery, by the way, disliked the idea of throwing all the handicapped together, for the reason that "centralizing them" would "propagate a race of deaf mutes." But economy won out over McEnery's theories of genetics.

While the insane and physically helpless suffered through indifference and parsimony, one other segment of the bottom rung of society received considerable legislative attention. The convicted criminals, unlike the others, were capable of yielding a profit and thus came up for frequent discussion in the General Assembly. It was decided that lawbreakers should pay for their crimes in a literal sense; therefore, by renting penitentiary inmates to

87Daily Picayune, January 14, 1877.
89Ibid., 15.
private contractors, the state was not only relieved of the financial burden of convict upkeep, but obtained a stipulated sum of money from businessmen who were willing to lease, and work, the criminal population.

Louisiana pioneered the convict lease system in the South. In 1844 the state prison, which had earlier been equipped for government-sponsored manufacture of cotton bagging, was turned over to the management of a private company. For a fee, the state leased out both convicts and machinery. During Reconstruction Louisiana continued the lease system, but instead of working inside the penitentiary walls, all able-bodied prisoners were shipped over the state for levee and other construction work. Carpetbagger governments in other parts of the South also accepted the idea that convicts should earn a profit for private contractors as well as the state. In 1870, the Warmoth government in Louisiana made a long-term convict lease agreement; S. L. James and two other contractors were granted permission to utilize the labor of all state prisoners for a period of twenty-one years.

91 Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Louisiana, I, 43.
James emerged as the dominant lessee, and when the contract was renewed in 1890, no other name but his appeared on the agreement. James, in turn, sub-let a number of convicts to smaller contractors. A state "Board of Control" was empowered to inspect and report on the treatment of prisoners. But the effectiveness of the board was somewhat hampered by the fact that its members received their salaries, not from the state, but from Mr. James. Thus, for thirty years, James and his lesser partners, in exchange for payments into the treasury ranging from $5,000 to $50,000 per year, were given custody of the many thousands of individuals who fell into Louisiana's penal system. This lease agreement was designed entirely for profit, but it did have incidental corrective value, of a grim sort. A high percentage of those under the care of Mr. James did not live to commit other crimes.

According to Louisiana-born George Washington Cable, the penitentiary lease in his home state was about the most brutal and corrupt example of the system to be found anywhere.

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93 Louisiana, Senate Calendar: Thursday, July 10, 1890, 11-12.


in the South. So completely did the state neglect its duties, Cable noted, that no official report on the lessees and their charges was published. But any traveller who happened to observe convicts at work needed no document to substantiate the evils of the lease system. A Clinton newspaper described what was common knowledge:

The men on the [James] works are brutally treated and everybody knows it. They are worked, mostly in the swamps and plantations, from daylight to dark. Corporeal [sic] punishment is inflicted on the slightest provocation. . . . Any one who has travelled along the lines of railroads that run through Louisiana's swamps . . . in which the levees are built, have seen these poor devils almost to their waists, delving in the black and noxious mud. . . . Theirs is a grievous lot; a thousand times more grievous than the law ever contemplated they should endure in expiation of their sins.97

Occasionally, information on the convict death rate was released. Fourteen per cent of all prisoners were known to have died in 1881, and the annual death rate seldom appeared much lower.98 Worst of all, in 1882, the death rate climbed above twenty per cent; that year, 149 of 700 prisoners expired while under the care of James and the sub-contractors.99 In 1884, 118 of 850 prisoners died.100

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96 Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine, XXVII (February, 1884), 582-99.
97 Clinton East Feliciana Patriot-Democrat, quoted in Daily Picayune, March 22, 1886.
98 Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine, XXVII (February, 1884), 596.
99 Daily Picayune, June 11, 1882.
100 Baton Rouge Weekly Truth, June 4, 1886.
Later, it was apparently thought to be a wise policy to conceal convict mortality statistics; Governor McEnery, with customary aplomb, merely noted in his annual message of 1888 that the convicts "are well taken care of, humanely treated, well fed and clothed, and not overtasked in their labor." This cheerful news appears rather at variance with testimony given a legislative committee which investigated charges of "brutality and inhumanity" in the James work camps. For example, a Negro convict named Theophile Chevalier attracted the committee's attention because he had no feet. During the winter of 1884-85 Chevalier labored outdoors, without shoes, in a North Louisiana construction camp. He soon developed a severe case of frostbite, but was forced to continue work. Then gangrene set in, and one of his feet rotted off. After some delay, the camp superintendent called in a local "physician" who removed the other foot with a penknife. Chevalier was serving a five year sentence. He had been convicted of stealing $5.00.

Three-fourths of James's convicts, as a rule, were Negroes. Before the Civil War the statistics were reversed; whites outnumbered Negroes in the Louisiana

101Louisiana, Official Journal of the Senate, 1888, 23.
103Ibid.
penitentiary about three to one. By a specimen piece of Bourbon logic, this proved "very conclusively the improved moral condition of the blacks during the slave regime." Under the James lease, prisoners were sometimes used, in violation of the lease agreement, for plantation labor as well as construction work. Rural newspapers bitterly denounced the practice of putting white men to work, virtually as slaves, in the sugar fields. Lagona plantation, in St. Mary Parish, was owned by S. L. James and used both white and black prisoners. Some of the most conservative papers in the state—even the Shreveport Times—criticized the convict lease system, since it tended to undermine the idea of the dignity of labor. Bringing the criminal class into direct competition with free labor, said the Times, was causing "intense dissatisfaction" among the working people of Louisiana and was "hurtful to their pride." Particularly did farm people resent the competition of James's charges. But whenever the lease system was criticized, its inexcusably high death rate was almost always underscored. Cable went so far as to say: "the year's death rate of the convict camps of Louisiana must exceed that of any

104 Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Louisiana, I, 150.
105 Marksville Bulletin, quoted in Daily Picayune, April 28, 1886.
106 Shreveport Times, quoted in Winnfield Southern Sentinel, July 24, 1885.
pestilence that ever fell upon Europe in the Middle Ages.

The state, he charged, had been seduced "into the committal of murder for money." 107

All things considered, the state lost money under the lease system. Business arrangements between the state and the lessee were highly favorable to the latter. The "penitentiary ring" was a power in Louisiana politics second only to the lottery; humorists, noting the influence of S. L. James and his friends, sometimes referred to them as the "James Gang." 108 By special dispensation, charged the Daily Picayune, James was allowed to pay his annual dues to the state in depreciated back warrants rather than cash, and was also permitted to make lavish deductions for so-called "repairs" to the old penitentiary at Baton Rouge, where convicts unsuited for hard work were kept. 109 In 1884 the Legislature gave the James firm a monopoly on levee construction in Louisiana, at a fixed price. James and his partners sub-let much of this work, at a neat profit, to small contractors; moreover, he was doubly protected by being allowed to turn down any levee work which he

107 Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine, XXVII (February, 1884), 597.
108 Farmerville Gazette, February 19, 1896.
109 Daily Picayune, November 2, 1887.
deemed unprofitable. It would seem that the legislature of the most water-logged state along the Mississippi believed that a guaranteed profit for a private firm took precedence over the need for adequate levee protection.

The nearest thing to a progressive idea endorsed by Louisiana's Bourbons was the cause of immigration. Not only northern capital, but northern settlers as well, were encouraged to come and share in the potential eden of the "New South." This kind of talk dated back to 1865. It was one point upon which Democrats and Republicans could agree, during Reconstruction and after. In particular did the younger Bourbons of the 1880's, such as Joseph E. Ransdell of Lake Providence, extoll the burning need for Yankee "pluck, energy, and money." Immigration promoters could be heard in every southern state during and after Reconstruction; but Louisiana's tub-thumpers, it would seem, felt compelled to bang the loudest. They realized only too well that most northerners regarded Louisiana


112Lake Providence Carroll Democrat, August 18, 1888. Ransdell, in the 1880's, was a young lawyer and real estate promoter in Northeast Louisiana. He entered politics in the 1890's, entered Congress by defeating a Populist opponent in a special election in 1899, and finally lost a seat in the United States Senate to Huey P. Long in 1930.
"as an extensive burying-ground, where mosquitoes, alligators and 'niggers' might thrive, but where 'white folks' inevitably passed in their checks after a brief sojourn."

The state's violent political system received extensive space in leading northern newspapers. And when the Chicago Times remarked that Louisiana's people were "different from . . . any other state in the Union," no compliment was intended. Prospective immigrants, reading these "slanders," feared to come.

Louisiana's boosters tried to parry unfavorable publicity with fabulous accounts of its potential wealth, healthy climate and congenial citizenry. The Mephitic odor which clung to the state's reputation had to be cleansed. The perfume was applied with a heavy hand. Northern farmers were invited to "come and till where the south wind blows softly," and were informed that "the small farmer . . . in a few years . . . will grow rich, and with but little severe labor." And the climate! For it, no praise was too

113Daily Picayune, May 2, 1886.
114From 1877 to 1880, a day-by-day check of the New York Times reveals that news from Louisiana, most of it unflattering to the extreme, appeared on the front page with a frequency second only to the states of the Middle Atlantic and New England area.
115Chicago Times, quoted in Baton Rouge Daily Capitolian-Advocate, August 8, 1882.
116Lake Providence Carroll Democrat, August 4, 1888.
117Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, March 5, 1890.
extravagant. Louisiana's weather was "deliciously delightful,"\textsuperscript{118} since, by an imaginative reversal of seasons, the winter was "warm" while summers were always "cool."\textsuperscript{119} Even epidemic-ridden New Orleans told the world that he health and sanitation was "badly misunderstood."\textsuperscript{120} Northern skeptics who wondered about "old scores connected with the war" received assurances from Tangipahoa Parish that southern people "rejoice that slavery is wiped out" and were sorry that the Civil War had occurred.\textsuperscript{121}

Yet Louisiana's welcome mat was not out to all. The General Assembly in 1880 resolved: "That the needs of the State of Louisiana don't require Mongolian immigration at this time."\textsuperscript{122} And Negro immigrants, except to the large planters, were generally considered personae non grata. There were "too many colored people" as it was, believed the Rayville Beacon: "Louisiana Needs Whitening."\textsuperscript{123} Some went so

\textsuperscript{118}Louisiana State Agricultural Society, Proceedings of Ninth Annual Meeting, 77.
\textsuperscript{119}Southern Homeseekers' Guide and Winter Resorts on the Southern Division of the Illinois Central Railroad (Chicago, 1887), passim; Brown, Ascension Parish, 2.
\textsuperscript{120}Official Souvenir and Program of the Louisiana Industrial Exposition and Jubilee: May 8 to 31st, 1899 (New Orleans, 1899), 69.
\textsuperscript{121}Southern Homeseekers' Guide, . . . Illinois Central Railroad, 57.
\textsuperscript{122}Daily Picayune, March 18, 1880.
\textsuperscript{123}Rayville Richland Beacon, May 26, 1888.
to criticize the Negro for occupying space which might be put to better use by industrious Yankees. As the Hammond Leader suggested: "All that is needed down here to make the country a veritable 'gateway' to paradise is the elimination [sic] of the colored population." The warning of George W. Cable, who said that the only way to make the South a good place for white men to come in, was to first make it a good place for black men to stay in, failed to be heeded in his native state.125

By 1886 the immigration societies, associations, and conventions, on both the state and parish level, had been engaged in fitful activity for a generation. But for all the windy resolutions and brightly colored pamphlets, there was little proof of accomplishment. Industrious northerners were not much in evidence. True, thousands of men had moved into Louisiana since the Civil War, but most of them were restless poor whites from the southeastern states, or Negro laborers of similar origin. These latter had been lured in by the agents of large planters. It was high time, asserted the Baton Rouge Weekly Truth, to face facts:

For twenty years we have been crying for immigration. We have been descanting upon the richness of our soil and the luxuriance of our climate, the vastness of our material resources and our own inability to

124 Hammond Leader, quoted in Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, February 5, 1890.

develop them; forgetting, all the time, that the very arguments we use are suggestive of some hidden and inherent defect in our situation. . . .

Who would desire to settle in a State where trade is affected with a palsy and the people are poor and growing poorer. . . .? We are living under a mercantile system that corrodes and eats at the vitals of our agriculture. . . .

Suddenly, however, immigration prospects began to brighten. In 1886, the first trainloads of homeseekers from northern and midwestern America arrived in Lake Charles to investigate agricultural possibilities in the watery wilderness of Southwest Louisiana. They had been lured down by the promotional activities of the Walkins Syndicate, an association of northern and English investment corporations whose Louisiana holdings were managed by a Kansas banker, Jabez B. Watkins. The Watkins syndicate had earlier purchased 1,500,000 acres of marsh and prairie land from Louisiana, paying from 12½ cents to $1.25 per acre. With the help of the Southern Pacific railroad, tons of pamphlets were scattered among the northern states, informing agriculturists of the great potentialities of this new "Garden of Eden." Watkins induced the President of

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126 Baton Rouge Weekly Truth, November 26, 1886.
128 Ibid.
Iowa Agricultural College, Seaman A. Knapp, to come to Lake Charles and take charge of prairie land development and sales. A phenomenal land boom was soon underway. By 1890, thousands of farmers had come down from Iowa, Illinois, Michigan, and other states to buy acreage from the Watkins Syndicate. Some of the earlier arrivals, noting that rice crops flourished even under the primitive methods used by native Acadian farmers, decided to apply midwestern methods and machinery to the local crop. Their success was so impressive that the later immigrants arrived with the specific intention of planting rice; by 1892, Southwest Louisiana was rightly regarded as "the great rice center of America." Land values within the next few years increased 1,000 per cent and over in the prairie country.

State politics also took a more promising direction as the decade of the 1880's neared an end. In January of 1888, Governor McEnery was defeated for renomination by a coalition of reform elements, working inside the Democratic party. The reformers rallied behind the maimed war hero,

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131 Ibid., 116-21.
132 Louisiana State Agricultural Society, Proceedings of Sixth Annual Meeting (Baton Rouge, 1892), 18.
133 Phillips, Agricultural History, XXV, 94.
Francis T. Nicholls. The change from McEnery to Nicholls was a decided improvement; yet, unfortunately, this was due not to any special virtue of Nicholls's, but because of the extraordinary failings of McEnery. To replace McEnery was per se betterment.

Those who directed the Nicholls wing of the party were often referred to as "the more respectable Democrats of the State." The Burke-Wiltz-McEnery machine, financed by the lottery and the penitentiary lease interests, had cast a number of respectable gentlemen out of the inner circle of power when Nicholls's term was cut short by the constitutional convention of 1879. McEnery, for a brief period after he succeeded to the governorship in 1881, made vague gestures of conciliation to the old patrician class. But his actions belied his words. In 1884, efforts to stop McEnery's bid for the Democratic nomination to a full term came to naught. Later, as it became evident that McEnery and Burke would seek yet another term in 1888, the grumbling which had been heard from large portions of the gentry turned into wrathful clamor. "McLottery" was surrounded by

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134 New York Times, April 22, 1884. Chief among the pro-Nicholls, anti-McEnery Democrats were: Edward Douglas White, Randall Lee Gibson, Newton C. Blanchard, and Robert N. Ogden. The venerable Daily Picayune, and about half the rural press, expoused the pro-Nicholls cause.

"buzzards and parasites." He and his clique could no longer be endured.

Unseating McEnery from the gubernatorial chair could only be accomplished at the quadrennial party convention to nominate state officials. Both the McEnery "Regulars" and the Nicholls "Reformers" devoted most of 1887, the year preceding the convention, to the business of lining up parish delegations. It was a prolonged, bitter struggle. In Union Parish, to cite one instance of bloodshed, the two campaign managers of the rival Democratic factions died in the streets of Farmerville after a gun duel. Nicholls was strongest in the small farm districts and among the Democratically-inclined portion of sugar planter interests. McEnery's support came from the parishes of great cotton plantations. New Orleans held the balance of power.

This campaign offers some revealing, though hardly edifying, information as to the moral tone of Louisiana politics of the period. McEnery partisans dwelt upon the "imbecility and disastrous failure" of the Nicholls

136 Daily Picayune, October 26, 1887; Homer Claiborne Guardian, quoted in Opelousas St. Landry Democrat, January 15, 1887.

137 New York Times, December 21, 1887.

administration of 1877-80. Burke took the lion's share of credit for ending military Reconstruction. Governor McEnery, a Negro-baiter par excellence, equated the opposition to Republicanism, softness toward Negroes, and sundry other un-southern activities. He solemnly pronounced Nicholls to be "unsound on the race question." The powerful Times-Democrat, Burke's newspaper, kept up an editorial barrage on the theme that white supremacy and status quo in the State House were indivisible. McEnery knew how to handle "bad and dangerous negroes." Nicholls, on the other hand, had proven himself in the Tensas troubles of 1878 to be "too honest [sic]" about such matters as vote fraud and intimidation.

Nicholls partisans dragged out an awesome array of skeletons from the McEnery closet. A dying school system, wretched conditions in the state institutions, the convict lease-lease contract scandals, fraud in state lands involving brother John McEnery, the ignoring of local sentiment in appointments to parish officers—a list of evils

139 Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Louisiana, II, 62.
140 New Orleans Times-Democrat, October 15-16, 1887.
141 Daily Picayune, November 4, 1887.
142 New Orleans Times-Democrat, October 14, 1887, January 6, 1888.
143 Daily Picayune, October 14, 1887; St. Martinville Messenger, quoted in ibid., October 3, 1887.
which enraged the hill farmers and embarrassed "the best people of the state." The *Daily Picayune* wondered what dark secrets Burke might be hiding in the books of the treasury office; a change in administration would at least give the public an examination of these records for the first time in a decade. But one subject of mutual embarrassment was not discussed. The Louisiana State Lottery Company, always a watchful fisher in political waters, had contributed money to both factions.

The "Reform" effort to oust McEnery was something less than an immaculate crusade. Although speakers at Nicholls rallies rehashed the scandals of the incumbent administration, it must be noted that they considered other matters more significant. They replied to Negro-baiting with Negro-baiting. Stung by the assertion that Nicholls was "unsound on the race question," his friends were proud to relate how their one-armed hero had once slapped a

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144 *Opelousas St. Landry Democrat*, January 1, 1887.

145 *Daily Picayune*, October 16, 1887. This newspaper's hostility to Burke might be attributed to the fact that it had been engaged in a circulation war with Burke's *Times-Democrat* since 1881. In June of 1882, a duel between State Treasurer Burke and C. H. Parker, editor of the *Daily Picayune*, was fought behind the New Orleans Slaughter House, which resulted in Burke being shot in both legs. Baton Rouge *Daily Capitolian-Advocate*, June 8, 1882.

146 *Opelousas St. Landry Clarion*, December 27, 1890; Baton Rouge *Daily Advocate*, December 3, 1890. Nicholls's supporters admitted later that their side accepted lottery money in 1888.
Nicholls, for his part, did not propose to end the mediaeval penitentiary lease, nor suggest that local officials should be elected rather than appointed; he criticized the harsh methods, rather than the underlying principles, of Louisiana Bourbonism. According to politicians in the Nicholls movement, the only mortal sin committed by the McEnery clique was that the clique was trying to perpetuate itself in office. This attitude was strikingly revealed in a pro-Nicholls speech by Robert N. Ogden. Colonel Ogden told his audience:

When it is said that the McEnery officials are corrupt and all that, it does not amount to much of an argument, for you find corrupt officials everywhere; but when it is said that Governor McEnery’s officials intent to perpetuate themselves in office . . . it is the truth, for that is their intention.  

On January 5, 1888, one week before the gubernatorial nominating convention, Orleans Parish elected its delegation. The city gave Nicholls a majority; the stand-off between the uplands and the cotton black belt was broken. Even McEnery’s old friend Jastremski then conceded defeat.

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147 Arcadia Record, quoted in Daily Picayune, October 29, 1887. In spite of the animosity which both Democratic factions displayed toward colored people, a few Negroes expressed interest in the Nicholls campaign. A Republican newspaper complained that these colored people "even have the cheek to call themselves 'Reform Nigger Democrats.'" New Orleans Weekly Pelican, September 10, 1887.

148 Daily Picayune, October 4, 1887.

Major Burke, who saw his hold on state politics slipping away, worked desperately to block Nicholls's nomination, but to no avail. The convention stampeded to Nicholls and made a clean sweep of the incumbent administration. Next, of course, came the presumably minor hurdle of the April general election. Nicholls's opponent was none other than "The Prince of Carpetbaggers," Henry Clay Warmoth. But there seemed to be no cause for Democratic alarm. Among other portents, Nicholls's revived popularity among rank-and-file whites was attested by the news that a patent medicine called "the Francis T. Nicholls Stomach Bitters" was "the sensation of the hour."

Suddenly, Governor McEnery tossed out a bombshell by announcing that a "fair count" of ballots would take place in the general election. This, thought the Nicholls "Reformers," was a dastardly thing for McEnery to say. If the Governor's planter friends took him at his word, they might permit their Negro peons to vote, for once unmolested. And Louisiana's colored people adored

\[150\] New Orleans Evening Truth, quoted in Bayou Sara True Democrat, March 19, 1892.

\[151\] Baton Rouge Daily Capitolian-Advocate, April 5, 1888.

\[152\] Ibid., March 30, 1888.

\[153\] Uzee, "Republican Politics in Louisiana," 82; New Orleans Evening Truth, quoted in Bayou Sara True Democrat, March 19, 1892.
Warmoth. Alarmed Nicholls supporters worked quickly to placate the aggrieved McEnery, and a compromise was reached. Nicholls promised the outgoing Governor a position on the State Supreme Court. The crisis was over. The fair count was called off. On election day, the Democratic commissioners in the bottomlands worked with customary zeal; Nicholls swamped Warmoth, 136,746 to 51,993.

Nicholls's first inauguration, in 1877, expelled from Louisiana what one historian has called "a reign of irresponsible lawlessness unequalled in the history of civilized peoples." Time proved it to be a hollow victory. Eleven years afterward, the benign old Brigadier was delegated to rescue this still unhappy commonwealth from the depths of Bourbon misrule. As Nicholls took the oath of office in May of 1888, his second administration began with one advantage which the first had lacked. Major Burke was no longer a power in the party. Burke soon left

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154 Baton Rouge Daily Capitolian-Advocate, April 5, 1888. According to this source, the Negroes of Baton Rouge tended to confuse Warmoth with the Messiah.

155 Fortier (ed.), Louisiana, II, 115; New Orleans Evening Truth, quoted in Bayou Sara True Democrat, March 19, 1892. Warmoth, in later years, claimed that he was personally encouraged by McEnery to try and beat Nicholls in the 1888 general election. See Warmoth, War, Politics and Reconstruction, 251-52.

156 Louisiana, Report of the Secretary of State, 1902, 561.

157 Coulter, The South During Reconstruction, 352; Shugg, Origins of Class Struggle in Louisiana, 225-29.
the United States to attend to Central American mining stock, and his continued departure was assured by an investigation which revealed irregularities in the state treasury totalling $1,267,905. The intrepid Major preferred to stay in Honduras, out of reach of Nicholls and S. L. James's deadly penal system. Besides, Tegucigalpa bore a political resemblance to Baton Rouge. For Burke had discovered, in the person of President Louis Bogran, another McEnery.

158. Louisiana, Official Journal of the House of Representatives, 1890, 20-21. According to Warmoth, McEnery, after being promised a place on the Louisiana Supreme Court, pledged to see that "every ballot box should be stuffed to the limit in favor of General Nicholls." Warmoth, War, Politics and Reconstruction, 253.
CHAPTER VI

THE LOUISIANA FARMERS' UNION

Every spring, after plowing and planting was over, the upland farmers of North Louisiana had a few days for relaxation and neighborhood visits. One day might be spent in the local cemetery. By custom, on a designated morning, family groups would assemble where their dead were buried for a "cemetery working:" an annual task of tidying up the churchyard and the grave plots within.¹ At noon, picnic baskets would be unpacked beneath the shade of nearby trees. Along with the food came a swapping of news and a discussion of mutual problems. If times were hard the faces would be grim, and the talk would be bitter.

Near Bayou D'Arbonne, in Lincoln Parish, stood a frame church and a cluster of weathered gravestones. There, the usual group of neighbors assembled in the spring of 1881. A skimpy year was in prospect; credit in the stores was tight because last year's cotton crop had proved to be a

¹A personal observation. The custom of a neighborhood "cemetery working" survived, in portions of North Louisiana, long into the twentieth century. This writer, as a child, was present at several such events at a village churchyard in Franklin Parish.
Conversation shifted to the need for an effective organization of farmers. Most of those present, remembering the disappointment of the Grange, shrugged off all suggestions. But ten or twelve of the men agreed to meet later. They planned to create a new, secret society for the promotion of agricultural interests. Their minuscule society was first called the Lincoln Parish Farmers' Club. By 1886 it had been transformed into the Louisiana Farmers' Union. Under the latter name, in January of 1887, it merged with an organization of like purpose in Texas, to form the National Farmers' Alliance and Cooperative Union—better known as the Southern Alliance. This largest agricultural body of nineteenth century America, the Southern Alliance, rose out of many sources, fed by countless wellsprings of discontent. The ultimate origins of the Southern Alliance were often disputed by contemporary leaders of the movement. Obscure men at obscure places were involved in its genesis. But part of its mainstream can be traced back to a rustic churchyard in North Louisiana, in the early spring of the

2Watkins, King Cotton, 204. Louisiana's 1880 cotton crop was the smallest (359,147 bales) since the late 1860's. Yet the price farmers received for the 1880 crop remained on a level with the 1879 crop of over 500,000 bales. See Boyle, Cotton and the New Orleans Cotton Exchange, 182.
Lincoln was only one of several parishes to witness the creation of a farmers club in the early months of 1881. But the little society at Bayou D'Arbonne seemed more ambitious than the others. Especially did one of its original members, J. A. Tetts, hope that the club might be expanded into a statewide organization of dirt farmers. Louisiana's small agriculturists, Tetts surmised, were, in their disunited condition, "the natural prey of all kinds of speculation, and the subject of every class of fraud, from paper sole shoes to adulterated fertilizers, and from lying

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3 A mistake has been made concerning the date of origin of the Louisiana Farmers' Union. All recent agricultural historians (John D. Hicks, Theodore Saloutos, Carl C. Taylor and others) who mention the Union begin it one year earlier, in 1880. Their source is the same in each case: J. A. Tetts, one of the founders of the Farmers' Union, was quoted in Nelson A. Dunning, The Farmers' Alliance History and Agricultural Digest (Washington, 1891), 218-21, as giving the spring of 1880 as the date of organization. However, it can be verified that all other dates mentioned by Tetts, in the information he gave Dunning, are erroneously dated one year ahead of the actual event. For example, Tetts cites January, 1886, as the date of the merger of the Farmers' Union and the Texas State Alliance; however, newspapers carried the story in January of 1887. Another contemporary account, W. Scott Morgan's History of the Wheel and Alliance and the Impending Revolution (Hardy, Arkansas, 1889), 370, records the date 1861 [sic] for the founding of the Louisiana Farmers' Union. Morgan's date, or course, is a typographical error; it should have read 1881. Unfortunately, a close search of available Louisiana newspapers for 1880-81 yields no information as to the formation of the Union in Lincoln Parish. At the time, only one newspaper was published in that parish: the Vienna Sentinel. Copies of it have not survived.

4 Daily Picayune, February 14, 17, 1881.
advertisements to false market reports. 

The constitution and by-laws of the Lincoln Parish Farmers' Club stressed the need for political action on the part of "the real farmers." Members were urged to work for the defeat of "all political rings and . . . machine candidates." Better representation "in the halls of legislation" was called for, so that laws friendly to agriculture might be passed, and unfriendly measures defeated. Clubs in other parishes were requested "to write us and . . . make permanent the organization throughout the State." But only "practical farmers . . . of good moral character" need apply. In what may have been an oversight, Negroes were not specifically excluded from membership.

The club soon ran into trouble over the question of secrecy. In the neighborhood lived a number of prospective members who belonged to the Primitive Baptist Church, which did not permit its adherents to join covert organizations. Consequently, the original idea of secrecy was discarded. The club met twice each month. By the end of 1881 about forty men, all from Lincoln Parish, had joined. Apparently, the feelers sent out to similar clubs in other parishes elicited little or no response. The proposed statewide organization simply failed to materialize, and attendance

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5 Morgan, History of the Wheel and Alliance, 369-70.
6 Dunning, The Farmers' Alliance History, 223.
at the meetings in Lincoln Parish began to dwindle. By the summer of 1882, the club had virtually disbanded.7

Three years later, in the fall of 1885, Tetts, who was secretary of the original club, happened to strike up a conversation with Samuel Skinner, another bewiskered farmer, on the streets of Ruston. "He had just sold his short crop of cotton for a short price," Tetts recalled later. "I had also disposed of my crop, and found that my receipts did not meet my expenses."8 The two men decided that the time had come to resurrect the defunct society.

Tetts and Skinner were, in many respects, typical of the small landowner class of upland Louisiana. Skinner, fifty-eight years old in 1885, was a "hard-working farmer" who lived only four miles from his place of birth. He lacked formal education, but laid claim to "a rich fund of useful information."9 During the 1870's he had been active in the Grange. Disgusted by state and national politics, Skinner considered himself an independent; he denied allegiance to any political party. Tetts was thirty-eight. He had come to Louisiana, a decade earlier, from his birthplace in the unprosperous "sand hill" region of South

7Ibid., 219.
8Ibid.
9Morgan, History of the Wheel and Alliance, 371-72, Portraits of Tetts and Skinner, rather crudely drawn, appear in this work.
Carolina. Tetts had some education, though he was pulled out of school at fifteen and put to work in a grocery store owned by a relative. In 1864, at seventeen, he enlisted in the Confederate army. Tetts was destined for a long life of chronic poverty and disappointment; the Confederacy was merely the first of many lost causes he would espouse. After the war he went back to South Carolina and spent four years trying to learn the mechanics of building cotton gins. Then he turned to farming. In 1872 Tetts emigrated to Louisiana, and selected a homestead in the red soil of Lincoln Parish. Like Skinner, he was an ex-Granger.  

Early in March, 1886, the two men conferred again; this time at Tetts's farmhouse. After making some changes in the old club's constitution and by-laws, Tetts and Skinner sent word to their acquaintances that an organization meeting would, on March 10, be held in Antioch Church; the place was located about fifteen miles from Tetts's home. Only nine farmers attended. Tetts and Skinner went ahead with the meeting, however. They insisted upon a secret ritual, and their motion carried. The Lincoln Parish Farmers' Club had come to life again.

During the next three months, news of the order began to spread throughout the hills of Lincoln, and a

10Ibid., 369-70.

11Dunning, The Farmers' Alliance History, 220.
number of subordinate unions were formed; then, in July, a mass meeting was held at the village of Vienna, and a "central parish organization" created.\footnote{Ibid., 221.} John M. Stallings, a well-to-do farmer with political ambitions, took office as President. Tetts was assigned his usual role, that of Secretary. Just as the Lincoln Parish club of 1881 had hoped to spread the organization into neighboring parishes, so did the revived order of 1886. The second effort, unlike the first, had the spirit of perseverance.

The formation of the Louisiana State Farmers' Union was proclaimed in August, 1886, one month after the mass meeting at Vienna. Stallings, and other officials of the parish club, now made up the hierarchy of the state union. A new constitution was soon drawn up, and 1,000 copies printed for distribution. Somehow, a copy of the Texas State Alliance constitution had found its way into Lincoln Parish, and many of its features were incorporated into the organic law of the Louisiana order. An abbreviated version of the Grange ritual was adopted. The impecunious J. A. Tetts asked to be relieved of duty as Secretary, since he was a working farmer "and had a large family to support," but the other officials of the Farmers' Union persuaded him to stay on in the new position of Corresponding Secretary.\footnote{Ibid.} Backwoods farmer though he was, Tetts could write with a certain
picturesque vigor. The chore of spreading word of the order became his primary task. Beginning in August, 1886, Tetts made good use of his pen. He composed and mailed out several hundred letters, and described the Union in a series of articles published in an agricultural magazine which had considerable circulation in the lower Mississippi valley.\textsuperscript{14} Tetts labored without salary. But he had earned the right to be pointed to, in later years, as "the founder of the Union in Louisiana."\textsuperscript{15}

The Farmers' Union met again in October, 1886. Four parishes of Northwest Louisiana provided all the delegates.\textsuperscript{16} Greenbacker influence was already beginning to show up in the agrarian order; Jesse Moore Tilley, who figured in the inflationist clamor of 1878-79, headed the Bienville Parish Union.\textsuperscript{17} Oddly, the nascent Farmers' Union had not yet taken root in the Northcentral parishes of Catahoula, Grant,

\textsuperscript{14}Tetts's articles appeared in \textit{Home and Farm}, published at Louisville, Kentucky. The only known copies of \textit{Home and Farm} for the year 1886 are located in the Duke University Library, and even these are in fragments. Upon request, a Duke librarian searched for the Tetts articles but found no trace of them.

\textsuperscript{15}\textit{Louisiana Populist}, September 25, 1896.

\textsuperscript{16}By October, 1886, parish Unions were operating in Lincoln, Bienville, Webster, and perhaps Union Parish. Information on the initial spread of the Farmers' Union is of a vague and conflicting nature. Cf. \textit{Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Northwest Louisiana}, 205, 690; \textit{Colfax Chronicle}, October 4, 1886 - April 30, 1887.

\textsuperscript{17}\textit{Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Northwest Louisiana}, 205, 662.
and Winn, the area where agrarian radicalism would, in succeeding years, prove strongest in Louisiana. By January of 1887 the Louisiana Farmers' Union claimed 10,000 members—a gross exaggeration. Not more than six, or at best seven, parishes had been organized by that time; the future heartland of the order was still virgin territory. Probably the actual membership did not exceed 3,000 by the first month of 1887, when the merger with the Texas State Alliance took place. Apparently, only white farmers were admitted.

Meanwhile, two farm organizations of greater membership were spreading across the neighboring states of Arkansas and Texas. And up in the Midwest, the National Farmers' Alliance, with headquarters in Chicago, claimed to be organized in at least eight states. The Arkansas order titled itself the "Agricultural Wheel." It arose from origins similar to those of the Louisiana Union, beginning as a discussion society in a Prairie County schoolhouse in 1882. By 1885 the Wheel boasted of units in twenty Arkansas counties, and had begun to spread into all neighboring states except Louisiana. In 1886, under President Isaac McCracken, the Wheel listed 50,000 members; the following year, by some fanciful arithmetic, it claimed 500,000 in

18 National Economist, III (March 22, 1890), 15.

19 Roy V. Scott, "Milton George and the Farmers' Alliance Movement," Mississippi Valley Historical Review XLV (June, 1958), 102-104.
eight states.20

The Texas Alliance dated back to the middle 1870's. Its economic concepts and internal arrangement borrowed much from the Grange, and a good portion of the original membership came from that fading fraternity. According to Charles W. Macune's unpublished history of the Alliance, it first emerged near Fort Worth, in 1876; stock raisers who were having trouble with horse thieves founded the order.21 The Texas Alliance languished from 1878 until 1885 because of political and personal differences among the leadership. Some Alliancemen preferred to keep the order aloof from politics; others, however, tried to tie it to the Texas Democratic party, while a smaller number leaned toward independency and Greenbackism.22

In 1885 the Texas Alliance began to make rapid strides in membership by harping on the need for economic unity. "Business purpose" became, for the moment, uppermost; Texas farmers, acting through the Alliance, concentrated


21C. W. Macune, "The Farmers Alliance" (unpublished typewritten MS, 1920, deposited in University of Texas Library), 3. Cited hereafter as Macune MS.

22Commons and Others, History of Labour in the United States, II, 462; Saloutos, Farmer Movements in the South, 71-72.
their trade on one merchant in each locality who would offer them the best terms. Inevitably, politics again reared its head. Rumors spread that a strong faction of the Texas Alliance hoped to reach an understanding with the urban Knights of Labor, so as to create a proletarian block vote which could force concessions from the Texas Democratic party. Word of this plan reached Louisiana. The Weekly Truth, in May of 1886, prophesied that the small farmers and city wage earners of Louisiana would make a similar coalition.

Eighteen eighty-seven marks a dramatic turning point in the history of American agrarian movements. Early that year the Southern Alliance came to life at Waco, Texas. From 1887 until 1890 it swept across the cotton states and into the Great Plains with cyclonic fury; in fact, two historians have suggested that "one must go back to Medieval Europe, on the eve of the First Crusade, for an emotional situation comparable. . . ." Unquestionably, the man most responsible for the initial success of the Southern Alliance was Dr. Macune, of Texas. But Macune has also been given credit for initiating the fusion of Louisiana and

23 Macune, MS, 11.


Texas farmers which marked the formal beginning of the Southern Alliance. This point needs some clarification. For it was the obscure J. A. Tetts, and not Macune, who made the first overtures.

At the October, 1886 meeting of the Louisiana Farmers' Union, Tetts, at his own suggestion, was authorized to correspond with the President of the Texas Farmers' Alliance to "try to bring about a consolidation." The copy of the Texas Alliance constitution in Lincoln Parish carried the names of its officials, and Tetts wrote to the man whose name appeared first, President Andrew Dunlap. But Dunlap did not answer Tetts's letter; the political schism in the Texas order had forced his resignation in November. The powers of President had fallen to Dr. Macune, formerly the Chairman of the executive committee. Toward the end of the year, Tetts received a note from Texas. It was from Macune. He had discovered the Tetts letter in Dunlap's files and, in Tetts's words: "He saw no reason why the two bodies should not unite and form a National as I had proposed." The Louisianian wrote back, asking Macune


27Dunning, The Farmers' Alliance History, 221; Morgan, History of the Wheel and Alliance, 370.

28Macune MS, 16.

29Dunning, The Farmers' Alliance History, 221.
to send a Texas representative to the next meeting of the Farmers' Union, scheduled for January 11, 1887, in Ruston. Macune sent Evan Jones to Ruston, with the news that the Texans were anxious to have the Louisiana Farmers' Union join them and begin the work of proselytizing the rest of the South. At the Ruston assembly, Tetts was selected as "a committee of one" to visit the Texas State Alliance, meeting at Waco on January 18, with plenary powers to act for the Union in completing the amalgamation.  

Macune had two motives for expansion. Not only would spreading the order be a good thing in itself, but also, he hoped, the vision of expansion would serve to get the Texans' minds off their internal squabbles which were threatening to dissolve the order. From Tetts's standpoint, aside from the obvious need for interstate unity, there was good reason for merging with the Texans. Late in 1886 the Texas Alliance had infiltrated Louisiana territory. About fifteen lodges in De Soto Parish had joined their western neighbors rather than the Louisiana Union. Moreover, the Agricultural Wheel appeared to be considering a move into Louisiana; President McCracken of Arkansas had

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30Bryan, *The Farmers' Alliance*, 12-13; Macune MS, 17.


32Mansfield Democrat, quoted in Opelousas St. Landry Clarion, January 22, 1887; Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Northwest Louisiana, 244.
written to Tetts and made inquiries about the Union.\(^{33}\) Both these organizations were larger than the Louisiana order; all three inflated their figures, but the Texas boast of 100,000 members was probably closer to accuracy than Tetts's claim of one-tenth that number for his organization.\(^{34}\) Tetts seemed to realize that the little Union was destined, sooner or later, to be absorbed by one of the more powerful orders. To approach one of them first, as he did, must have seemed the best course of action.

Attending the Waco meeting were 500 Texans and J. A. Tetts.\(^{35}\) At the closing session on January 21, the two state orders merged into the National Farmers Alliance and Cooperative Union of America—the Southern Alliance. Macune assumed the post of President; Tetts became First Vice-President.\(^{36}\) The formidable task of extending the order across the South now lay ahead. Macune mapped out a plan of action which would send organizers into every southern state; also, he hoped to induce McCracken's Wheel into the new order. Prior to the merger with Louisiana, Macune gave some thought to affiliation with Milton George's National

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\(^{33}\)Dunning, *The Farmers' Alliance History*, 221.


\(^{35}\)Macune MS, 16-17; *National Economist*, I (April 13, 1889), 56.

\(^{36}\)Galveston (Tex.) *Daily News*, January 22, 1887.
Farmers' Alliance. But both the Texas and Louisiana agrarians disliked certain features of the midwestern order, particularly its lack of secrecy, loose organization, and policy of admitting Negroes. 37

Before the Waco group adjourned, an announcement was made that the next meeting would be held in Shreveport, in October of 1887. Despite its significance, the creation of the Southern Alliance aroused little attention in the press. Louisiana dailies mentioned it not at all, and to the Galveston Daily News, the only important information from Waco on January 21 concerned one Jay Gould, who had, that day, taken a forty minute tour of the town, escorted by a group of prominent citizens. The last paragraph of the same story noted, laconically, that some Texas farmers had met with J. A. Fitts [sic] of Louisiana to form a national association of farmers. 38

Between January and October, 1887, the Southern Alliance took root in eight states. Delegates to the Shreveport meeting included the distinguished North Carolina agriculturist, Leonidas L. Polk. 39 Since it was the first

38 Galveston (Tex.) Daily News, January 22, 1887.
39 New Orleans Times-Democrat, October 13, 1887.
meeting to include several states, an Alliance handbook called the Shreveport gathering "the first national meeting" of the Southern Alliance. The Agricultural Wheel, impressed by the Alliance's growth, sent a delegation to discuss consolidation. Overtures were made by, and to, industrial labor. Tetts introduced the following resolution at Shreveport:

The National Farmers Alliance . . . extends its fraternal good wishes to all labor organizations . . . and ask them to assist us in our battle for the rights of producers, and that each work to bring about a harmony of sentiment, and unity of action between the different organizations of labor.

The resolution passed. But its vague phraseology gave evidence of the growing rift within the Southern Alliance in regard to combining with urban laborers. A fundamental question was involved: if the Alliance went headlong into "unity of action" with city labor, such unity would doubtless be expressed by political pressures on political parties, perhaps even by independent political action. At least half the Southern Alliancemen were small landowners, and most were relatively loyal.

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40 F. G. Blood, Handbook and History of the National Farmers' Alliance and Industrial Union (Washington, 1893), 37.

41 Daily Picayune, October 13-14, 1887; National Economist, I (April 13, 1889), 57.

42 National Economist, I (April 13, 1889), 57.
Democrats. The more conservative elements, which included Macune, were willing to act with urban labor up to a point; but they were adamantly opposed to the formation of a proletarian third party. The Knights of Labor was the only significant order of wage earners in the South. The fact that Knights membership included not only urban workers but wage earners in the small towns and countryside, gave it a partially rural cast and seemed to encourage the idea of Alliance-Knights cooperation; on the other hand, the Knights' membership rolls took in rural Negro laborers, which disturbed the more conservative Alliancemen. But a good percentage of the Alliance was too poor to employ laborers—many were tenants or worked for wages themselves—and this substrata of the Alliance anticipated, rather than feared, the economic and political possibilities of close accord with the Knights. Tetts spoke for the left wing of the Alliance when he wrote: "The labor in the field ought to be a friend to the labor in the factory and the mine. . . . They ought to unite to crush off the leeches that are

43 Cf. Forum, X (September, 1890), 35; Woodward, Origins of the New South, 192-93; Saloutos, Farmer Movements in the South, 76; Macune MS, 11-14, 18-30.

44 Frederick Meyers, "The Knights of Labor in the South," Southern Economic Journal VI (April, 1940), 479, 482.

45 Commons and Others, History of Labour in the United States, II, 492.
sucking the life blood of all."  

In Louisiana, by the time of the Shreveport meeting, the Alliance had entrenched itself in all the upland parishes north of the Red River. Over 300 chapters were meeting weekly; total membership was now probably close to 10,000, though claims ran much higher.  

Earlier, in February of 1887, a newspaper which purported to be the state organ of the association, the Choudrant Farmers' Union, began weekly publication. Choudrant, a tiny hamlet in Lincoln Parish, did not even have a post office. As a mark of provincial pride, the name "Farmers' Union," rather than "Alliance," continued in popular usage within Louisiana; all state meetings into the 1890's took the former designation.  

However, the allegiance of Farmers' Union members to the Southern Alliance was understood by all. In the following year, 1888, the Farmers' Union spread among the white farmers of Southcentral Louisiana, and crossed the Mississippi into the old Grange strongholds of the Florida...
parishes. By 1889 no less than 15,000, perhaps 20,000, Louisiana farmers in thirty-five parishes were enrolled in local chapters; promotional literature in French had also begun to be distributed among the Acadian farmers near the Gulf coast. A decade earlier the state Grange, at its height, had numbered no more than 10,000. The old centers of Grange strength were now doubly organized in the Union.

Surviving pockets of Grange activity were quickly swallowed up into the new order. In 1881, after two years of inactivity, the state organization of the Patrons of Husbandry took on a flickering second life through the efforts of its old leaders, including Daniel Dennett of the Daily Picayune. From 1882 through 1886, a prosperous planter of East Baton Rouge Parish, Daniel Morgan, assumed charge of what passed for the state Grange. Morgan's political affinity for the McEnery wing of the Democratic party was common knowledge, and this must have crippled

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50 Crowley Signal, quoted in Baton Rouge Daily Capitolian-Advocate, March 30, 1888; Colfax Chronicle, September 29, 1888.

51 National Economist, I (May 25, 1889), 155-56; III (August 30, 1890), 383.

52 Daily Picayune, February 17-19, 1881.


54 Baton Rouge Daily Capitolian-Advocate, December 7, 1887.
chances for a Grange revival among rank-and-file farmers. After 1883, a good majority of the active Patrons in Louisiana were to be found inside the borders of backwoods Winn Parish. In 1884, 1885, and 1886, Morgan came up from Baton Rouge to preside over the annual "state" conventions of the Grange in Winn. By 1885, nine of the sixteen persons elected to official positions in the Louisiana Grange lived in Winn Parish. But when the Farmers' Union entered Winn in February of 1887, Grange activity, even there, virtually ceased. Morgan then forsook the Grange to play a minor role in the Farmers' Union, and at last Dennett was forced to admit that the Grange "has had its day."

The business program of the Farmers' Union-Alliance in Louisiana followed, in the main, the path staked out by the old Grange. Between 1887 and 1890, about a score of retail stores, owned by farmer-stockholders, operated under the auspices of the Union. But often used was a simpler

55 Winnfield Southern Sentinel, December 18, 1885.
56 Colfax Chronicle, September 29, 1888, January 4, 1890.
57 Daily Picayune, quoted in Leesville People's Friend, March 21, 1889.
58 Grant and Winn had three cooperative stores each; Sabine, two; Acadia, Caldwell, Claiborne, De Soto, Lincoln, Livingston, Rapides, and Webster, one each. List compiled from the files of the National Economist; Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Northwest Louisiana, passim; Colfax Chronicle, April 30, 1887-April 9, 1892; Daily Picayune, June 30, 1887-April 12, 1890. Most of the Alliance stores, and the state agency, had failed by the winter of 1892-93.
device known as the "Farmers' Trade Committee," made up of
delegates from a local Union or group of Unions within a
parish, which would meet with local merchants and agree to
throw all the order's trade to the merchant giving the best
terms. A typical arrangement of this type could be found
in Grant Parish, where C. C. Nash, a merchant in the town
of Colfax, obtained the exclusive trade of six nearby Union
on his pledge to limit his net profit to ten per cent on
cash sales, and twenty per cent per annum on credit
accounts. The fact that the farmers seemed satisfied
with this compact offers striking evidence of the severe
credit terms that most of them had endured up to that time.

Most important of all the cooperative activities
within the state was the creation of a Farmers' Union
Commercial Association of Louisiana; it was set up in 1888,
and its headquarters were located in New Orleans. Dif­
fering little from the old state agency of the Grange in
the 1870's, the Association had both wholesale and retail
functions. Louisiana products were sold to the outside
world, and Farmers' Union retail outlets were supplied with
provisions, along with individual farmers who managed to
ship their crops direct to the New Orleans office. G. L.
P. Wren, formerly the publisher of the Minden Eagle-Eye.

59 Colfax Chronicle, March 17, 1888.
60 National Economist, I (April 13, 1889), 59;
Colfax Chronicle, October 6, 1888.
presided over the Board of Directors. But actual control of the Association's New Orleans office fell to State Agent Thomas A. Clayton. Clayton, a Scottish immigrant who had settled near Opelousas in the 1880's, had been instrumental in spreading the Farmers' Union into St. Landry Parish. Beginning in 1888, he divided his time between the New Orleans office and his farm.

Inherent in the Alliance economic program, in Louisiana and elsewhere, was the farmer's conviction that he was being deliberately victimized by the profit-mad business interests--the "money power." Monopolistic businesses, according to the agrarian dialectic, grew rich off the sweat and agony of the "producers;" that is, the plain folk who labored with their hands. Despite the fact that most Alliancemen were landowners, engaged in commercial agriculture, their distress was such, in the late nineteenth century, that many viewed themselves not as rural capitalists, but as part of the downtrodden mass which capital exploited. Mounting debts and declining cotton prices formed the basis of their complaints. A system of government

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61Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Northwest Louisiana, 663; Colfax Chronicle, October 6, 1888.

62For a brief biography of Clayton, see Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Louisiana, I, 351.


64Hofstadter, The Age of Reform, 47.
(particularly in Louisiana), which catered to the desires of the more predatory interests of the business world, added to the farmer's woes and intensified his belief that a gigantic conspiracy was afoot against the common man. The conspiracy theory was, of course, an oversimplification. But it had some validity. And Pelican State farmers were a provincial lot; they did not travel much; it was natural for them to believe that Wall Street was as selfish and immoral as the Carondolet Street brokers of New Orleans who joined Major Burke in robbing the state; that the national Congress was simply an enlarged version of the cesspool of corruption to be found at Baton Rouge. Under the circumstances, it is not surprising that some of the more radical voices in the Southern Alliance were heard in Louisiana. J. A. Tetts was one such voice. But most disturbing to conservative elements was the State Lecturer of the Farmers' Union, Thomas J. Guice of De Soto Parish.

Guice's origins were as obscure as his circumstances were humble. He had drifted into Louisiana from Texas, where he was supposedly active in the Greenback party during the 1870's.\textsuperscript{65} His poverty, and shabby clothes, furnished much amusement for his Bourbon critics.\textsuperscript{66} But

\textsuperscript{65}Baton Rouge \textit{Daily Advocate}, October 23, 1890.

\textsuperscript{66}Mansfield \textit{Journal}, quoted in Colfax \textit{Chronicle}, November 5, 1892.
Guice's utterances provoked some of the choicest of Bourbon expletives. Guice was characterized as a "dirty . . . greasy . . . ignorant . . ." demagogue, possessing a "wide expanse of tobacco stained bosom." Pointed inquiries were made in regard to his bathing habits. Yet all admitted his ability to inflame rural audiences. Guice carried the conspiracy theory to extreme lengths. Once, while haranguing a crowd at Natchitoches, he argued that the Civil War itself had been a plot to enslave the poor white man under the pretense of freeing the Negro. "The farmers and laborers should be the rulers," Guice insisted; otherwise, the "moneyed aristocracy" would increase its power until "we will be reduced to the condition of the English and Irish peasantry."

Rural anger often exploded into violence. To a debt ridden farmer, the village merchant might be looked upon as a local manifestation of the Satanic Baron Rothschild described in Guice's orations. The fact that so

67Ibid., October 3, 1891.
68Colfax Chronicle, October 22, 1892.
69Bastrop Clarion, quoted in Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, June 17, 1891.
70Daily Picayune, August 7, 1891; Bastrop Clarion-Appeal, quoted in Shreveport Evening Judge, February 11, 1896.
71National Economist, I (June 15, 1889), 198-99.
72Ibid.
many of Louisiana's rural merchants were Jewish made the parallel even more plausible. Beginning in 1879, years before the spread of the Farmers' Union, attacks on the lives and property of Jewish tradesmen became almost commonplace in Louisiana. That year, in St. Landry Parish, the stores of Carl Wolff and P. Jacobs were destroyed by arsonists, as was the residence of another merchant, Sam Kaufman. In 1881, Lazarus Meyer, a prominent Catahoula Parish merchant was murdered—presumably by an irate customer. 73 Five years later, to cite another example, Simon Witkowski, a so-called "renegade Jew" who owned 60,000 acres and a number of stores in the Carroll parishes, was forced to flee the region after his white tenants burned one of his stores. Two people were cremated in the fire: a clerk and a Negro woman who worked for Witkowski. 74

Toward the end of the 1880's the number of reprisals by rural debtors against their Jewish creditors increased. The gun vied with the torch as a favored weapon. During the spring of 1887, rifles were discharged into the homes of Jewish tradesmen in Avoyelles Parish, and arsonists in

73 Daily Picayune, May 22, 1879; Rayville Richland Beacon, October 8, 1881.

74 Floyd Messenger, quoted in Daily Picayune, October 12, 1887; New Orleans Weekly Pelican, December 4, 1886. Witkowski was regarded as the political boss of West Carroll, as well as its largest landholder. He represented the parish in the state legislature, and, according to the Floyd Messenger, was "one of Governor McEnery's satraps."
Baton Rouge destroyed a gentile was well as a Jewish house of business.75 In 1889, during broad daylight, a "large band" of white farmers rode into Delhi, in Richland Parish, and shot up every mercantile establishment in town. All but one of Delhi's stores were owned by Jews.76 The farmers had taken this action, it was said, "to clear off old debts." Two months later the same Delhi merchants received a number of anonymous, threatening messages to leave town posthaste.77

A spectacular plan of agrarian violence was plotted by Bienville Parish debtors during the spring of 1888. They tried, unsuccessfully, to burn the entire business section of the town of Arcadia.78 It is instructive to note that during the harvest season preceeding the fire, 16,116 bales of cotton were shipped from Arcadia and 15,000

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75Colfax Chronicle, March 19, 1887; Daily Picayune November 12, 1887.

76Vicksburg (Miss.) Commercial Herald, quoted in Rayville Richland Beacon, November 2, 1889.

77Shreveport Daily Caucasian, January 4, 1890.

78Arcadia Record, quoted in Baton Rouge Daily Capitolian-Advocate, March 30, 1888.
of these had passed through the hands of local merchants.\textsuperscript{79} The Farmers' Union did not endorse such destructive outbursts. Even the staunchest Bourbon papers seemed hesitant to accuse the order of instigating the attacks. But it is more than probable that many of the rifles and torches used against Jewish credit merchants were held in the hands of members of the Farmers' Union.

The Southern Alliance did score one victory over the "money power." In 1888-89, the Alliance undertook a boycott against the companies of the jute bagging trust. This industry, which manufactured the covering for all cotton bales, aroused the ire of southern farmers by raising the price of the article, in 1888, to allegedly "unreasonable" heights.\textsuperscript{80} A Farmers' Union convention held at Opelousas in August of 1888, condemned the jute bagging industry and proposed "to take measures for the introduction of cotton bagging to be used in wrapping bales.

\textsuperscript{79}Arcadia Advance, quoted in Baton Rouge Daily Capitolian-Advocate, February 1, 1888. The extent to which anti-Semitic feelings prompted Louisiana farmers into their attacks upon Jewish merchants is difficult to assess. Gentile tradesmen were also subjected to bullets and store-burnings, but not as frequently. Newspaper files of the 1879-90 period show that the great majority of merchants whose person or property was harmed had Jewish names. But this in itself is not positive proof of anti-Semitism, since Jewish merchants often outnumbered those of other faiths in Louisiana communities.

\textsuperscript{80}New York Times, quoted in Lake Providence Carroll Democrat, July 28, 1888.
... instead of jute." This proposed covering would obviously serve a dual purpose; it would create yet another use for cotton fiber, and provide cheaper covering for the bales. Farmers were jubilant when the Lane Company of New Orleans responded with the news that their firm had succeeded in manufacturing a cotton article which would meet all the requirements for bale covering, yet would sell at a cheaper price than jute. Other state Alliances were equally interested in cotton bagging. Some established cooperative mills. At Birmingham, in May of 1889, Alliance leaders from all over the South voted unanimously to substitute cotton bagging for jute. And even though a number of important cotton exchanges refused to accept bales wrapped in cotton bagging, the jute trust had been thoroughly frightened. By 1890 the price of jute bagging had dropped from thirteen to five cents. The triumph over the jute monopoly, important in itself, also gave Alliancemen a new feeling of power.

81Colfax Chronicle, August 11, 1888.
82Ibid., September 15, 29, 1888; National Economist, (June 15, 1889), 208.
85Ibid., 287.
As the decade of the 1890's began, the more extravagant claims of the Southern Alliance ran as high as 3,000,000 members. However, an official census of the order, compiled in 1890, listed 1,269,500 in twenty-two states. Louisiana's membership was officially reported at 40,000. Though still popularly known as the "Southern Alliance," the proper title of the National Farmers' Alliance and Cooperative Union (NFACU), adopted at Waco in 1887, had been changed to the Farmers' and Laborers' Union of America (FLUA) in September of 1889, when consolidation with the Agricultural Wheel was achieved. Finally, at the third annual convention of the order, held at St. Louis in December of 1889, the title was once again revised. The formal designation thereafter was: National Farmers' Alliance and Industrial Union (NFAIU).

Efforts to unite the Southern Alliance with the National, or Northern Alliance of Milton George, made at

86 Woodward, Origins of the New South, 192.
87 Haynes, Third Party Movements, 234-35.
88 Shreveport Weekly Caucasian, January 8, 1890. In all probability not more than 25,000 of Louisiana's white farmers had joined the order by 1890. Smaller still would be the number who regularly paid dues. But the number of white farmers who sympathized with the work of the Farmers' Union must have been double or more the actual membership.
90 Ibid., N. B. Ashby, The Riddle of the Sphinx (Des Moines, 1890), 437-39.
St. Louis in 1889, failed for essentially the same reasons that had prevented a fusion of the Texas Alliance with the latter three years before. The Southern Alliance, however, had grown considerably more powerful than the northern order. And at St. Louis, the state Alliances of Kansas and the Dakotas bolted George's association to join the stronger Southern Alliance. The year 1889 was also the end of Macune's two year career as President of the southern order; Leonidas L. Polk, from 1889 until his death in 1892, served as chief executive. Macune turned to editing the official organ of the Southern Alliance, the National Economist, which had begun publication in Washington, D.C. some months before the St. Louis convention. But Macune still had a large voice in the inner circle of Alliance leaders. His evangelical zeal continued undiminished. The Alliance, he insisted, "is a living, active . . . embodiment of the cause of Jesus Christ."

Just as the Alliance claimed affinity with Jesus, so did a more worldly agency than either, the Democratic party

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91Herman C. Nixon, "The Cleavage Within the Farmers' Alliance Movement," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XV (June, 1928), 22-33; Hicks, The Populist Revolt, 119-27.

92Taylor, The Farmers' Movement, 255.

93Stuart Noblin, Leonidas La Fayette Polk: Agrarian Crusader (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1949), 212.

94National Economist, I (March 14, 1889), 1-12.

95Dunning, The Farmers' Alliance, 260.
of the South, assert that it was in communion with the cause of the farmer. Beyond question, most white Alliancemen in the South—at least, before 1890—were dutiful Democrats. But from the beginning, the Alliance had attracted political heretics. A significant minority of the Louisiana Farmers' Union membership had a record of Independent, Greenbacker, and even Republican activities in the decade between Reconstruction and the Waco conference. The old Greenbacker-Republican coalition in Grant and Winn parishes, led by Benjamin Brian, wasted no time in joining the Union. The fact that Parson Brian, and a number of others like him throughout the South, had gone into the Alliance movement disturbed conservative elements both within and without the order.

In the beginning, Bourbon chieftans scoffed at suggestions that the dirt farmers of the Southern Alliance might someday rebel against the party of home rule and white supremacy. The real problem, as the more complacent conservatives saw it, was to deftly forestall the efforts of the Alliance to liberalize the Democratic party from within. Benign platitudes and sympathy for the woes of the agriculturist were expressed by Bourbon leaders in practically

96 Colfax Chronicle, November 19, 1887, May 5, 1888; Daily Picayune, August 7, 1891.

97 Forum, X (September, 1890), 35.
every part of the South as the Alliance grew to formidable size. Yet the entrenched officeholders, with few exceptions, had no intention of acceding to Alliance economic demands. Nor were they willing to give dirt farmers a larger voice in party councils. Typical of the conservative Democratic attitude was the following from the Daily Picayune: That northern agrarians, in Republican states, had ample reason for political independency, but the Dixie farmer already had "a party which, while devoted to no special cause, nevertheless afford[s] the farmers every protection."98

Not surprisingly, the ultra-Bourbon regime in Louisiana felt compelled to take notice of the growing spirit of agrarian unrest. Before 1886, statewide agricultural organizations had lacked either the inclination or the strength to disturb the Louisiana status quo. The Louisiana Sugar Planters' Association, formed in 1887, took into its ranks the great land barons of the southern parishes, and its President, Duncan F. Kenner, was an "old line Whig" presumed to be worth about $2,000,000.99 In the cotton parishes, the National Cotton Planters' Association

98Daily Picayune, December 8, 1890.

(first known as the Mississippi Valley Cotton Planters' Association) was founded in 1879. Membership in the latter order was also confined to great landlords, together with bottomland merchants in the cotton parishes.\textsuperscript{100} The Grange was too weak to disturb professional politicians.

Late in 1886 the flickering attempts to establish a Louisiana Farmers' Union began to merit Bourbon attention. As the renascent order started taking shape in the northwestern parishes, an announcement was made in Baton Rouge to the effect that His Excellency Samuel D. McEnery had become interested in the subject of agricultural organization. On December 2, 1886, Governor McEnery issued a proclamation, which read, in part:

As Governor of Louisiana [I] do hereby request the planters and farmers of Louisiana to meet at the city of Baton Rouge, in the agricultural hall of the State University [on January 26, 1887] for the purpose of organizing a State Agricultural Society.\textsuperscript{101}

McEnery was urged by a Baton Rouge "Farmers' and Planters' Club" to issue this call.\textsuperscript{102} It may be significant that Daniel Morgan, a supporter of the Governor, was a leading member of the Club.\textsuperscript{103} Morgan, who was also Master

\textsuperscript{100}St. Joseph North Louisiana Journal, May 10, 1879; Saloutos, Farmer Movements in the South, 57-59.

\textsuperscript{101}Louisiana State Agricultural Society, Proceedings of First Annual Meeting (Baton Rouge, 1887), 3.

\textsuperscript{102}Baton Rouge Weekly Truth, December 17, 1886.

\textsuperscript{103}Ibid., April 16, 1886.
of the mordant state Grange, was in a position to have knowledge of the upcountry Farmers' Union, which up to that time had failed to be reported in the New Orleans or Baton Rouge newspapers. Governor McEnery made no public mention of the Farmers' Union. But suspicion attaches to the date of McEnery's proclamation, and to the date for which he set the organization meeting of the Louisiana Agricultural Society. The former came during the time that Tetts and his friends were discussing amalgamation with the Texas Alliance; the latter missed by five days the birth of the Southern Alliance at Waco.

An oration by Governor McEnery opened the first session of the Louisiana State Agricultural Society. "Labor has organized," said McEnery, "and it is opportune, yea even a necessity, for agriculture to combine." But the nature of the association which the Governor visualized may be gauged by the names of those who were subsequently chosen to fill the Society's offices. General Joseph L. Brent, a conservative sugar planter and Democratic legislator from Ascension Parish, served as President from 1887 until 1890. Brent was succeeded by Dr. W. S. Frierson of De Soto parish in 1890. John Dymond, a wealthy sugar planter from Plaquemines parish, headed the order from 1891 to 1896.


105Brent was succeeded by Dr. W. S. Frierson of De Soto parish in 1890. John Dymond, a wealthy sugar planter from Plaquemines parish, headed the order from 1891 to 1896. Louisiana State Agricultural Society, Proceedings of Fourth Annual Meeting (Baton Rouge, 1890), passim; Ibid., Proceedings of Ninth Annual Meeting, passim.
Brent was also president of his parish branch of the state Sugar Planters' Association. Other sugar planters, also active Democratic politicians, served under General Brent as district vice-presidents or members of the Society's executive committee; the more notable of these were John Dymond, Emile Rost, and Donelson Caffery, Sr. None of the Farmers' Union leaders were listed on the State Society's committees. Indeed, none of them were reported as attending the organization meeting which McEnery had called. McEnery expressed keen disappointment that "every parish in the state was not present." He obviously hoped to persuade farmers into accepting the leadership of the large planters who headed the Society; even more, in all probability, he hoped to use the Society as a fulcrum to lift the farmers of the state away from Nicholls and toward himself.

The Shreveport Times, temporarily at odds with McEnery, made the snide observation that "such sturdy farmers as Governor McEnery and Editor Jastremski" were at the State Society's first convention, along with Mayor Burke and other "horny handed sons of toil." The paper added that these gentlemen were interested in cultivation, to be sure--

106 Brown, Ascension Parish, 28.
108 Ibid., 6.
they wished to cultivate the farm vote for the incumbent regime. More frank was the Homer Claiborne Guardian, which denounced the State Society as a "sinister" maneuver by McEnery—"another contemptible rope-in." And an Opelousas editor prophesied that "the great mass of farmers" would shun it. However, none of the Farmers' Union leaders publicly denounced the State Society. While McEnery was Governor, they simply kept away from its meetings.

After Nicholls's return to the State House in 1888, a number of small farmers began participating in the Louisiana State Agricultural Society. North Louisiana received special attention from the State Society; in 1888 its annual convention was held at Shreveport, in 1889 at Monroe, in 1890 at Arcadia, and in 1891, at Alexandria. But sugar planters remained at the helm. Once in a while, though, a radical slipped into the Society's sessions. At the third annual session, Charles V. Soniat was scheduled to read a paper with the innocuous title: "Review of the Rice Industry of Louisiana." But he must have shocked staid Society officials with his closing, off-the-subject tirade:

Arise, ye agriculturists... The legislators are against us. The speculators are against us. The

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109 Shreveport Times, quoted in Daily Picayune, January 24, 1887.
110 Homer Claiborne Guardian, quoted in Opelousas St. Landry Democrat, January 15, 1887.
111 Opelousas St. Landry Democrat, February 5, 1887.
agriculturist is about turned beggar in the land of plenty; the sweat of his brow is turned into pearls by that grinding despot, monopoly... The time is now ripe for a leader to call us together and beckon us to enter one grand association or party of agriculturists, to control the destinies of this nation. 112

Conservatism, however, continued to be the watchword of the State Society. President Brent expressed horror at any proposal to form a "new party." 113 He also defended that bane of the small farmer, the credit system. "Credit," said Brent, "is the flower and blossom of good government," and he argued that farmers who were hurt by the system should blame their "individual frailty." 114 Brent assumed a friendly but cautious pose toward the Farmers' Union. In 1888 he "expressed a desire to hear an explanation of [its] objects and purposes," and invited "all Alliances, Unions, and Granges" to attend the next state convention of the Society. 115 By 1889, Brent had reached the conclusion that the Farmers' Union was a "beneficent organization" and implied that it was in partnership with the State Society. "We," Brent proclaimed, "are so

115 Ibid.
numerous that if we organize in politic[s] ... all the powers and functions of the State would pass under our control." Of course, he added, Louisiana's farmers should not take advantage of their electoral majority. Such a course would be, he said, "inexpedient." 116

In the end, the Nicholls, or "Reform" wing of the Democratic party proved more adroit than the McEneryites in dealing with agrarian unrest. The State Society accomplished little in that direction for either McEnery or Nicholls; however, beginning in 1890, a determined effort was made by the gentry of the Nicholls faction to capture the Farmers' Union. To achieve their goal the Reform Democrats needed a stalking horse within the Union. They found him in the person of Thomas Scott Adams.

Adams, a prosperous cattleman and planter of East Feliciana Parish, came to Louisiana at the age of thirteen, in 1853. 117 His South Carolina birthplace was not far from that of J. A. Tetts. A college graduate and an ex-Confederate officer, Adams was raised in the genteel tradition of Noblesse Oblige. He entered Louisiana politics in 1884. Elected to the state legislature that year, Adams quickly became "disgusted with the corruption" he found at Baton

116 Louisiana State Agricultural Society, Proceedings of Third Annual Meeting (Baton Rouge, 1889), 4-8.

117 Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Louisiana, I, 246-47.
When Alliance organizers visited the Florida parishes, Adams was one of a number of substantial farmers who joined. He was elected President of the Louisiana Farmers' Union in 1888, and was reelected at each of the next three annual meetings. By the end of his fourth term in 1892 the Farmers' Union was all but dead. Through ineptness and political naivetee, and perhaps a touch of mendacity, Adams was largely responsible for its decline. The Feliciana planter gave enthusiastic support to most of the economic panaceas urged by the Southern Alliance. But in the all-important field of politics he remained an unswerving Democrat. More conservative than most state leaders of the Alliance, Adams did not even demand a change of personnel within the Democratic party: "We ask for a change of measures, not of men," he told his fellow Louisianians. Adams was most anxious to put down third party talk among the rank-and-file. He spoke the Bourbon language. Gratefully, the Nicholls administration sought him out.

In August of 1890, shortly before his second re-election as President of the Farmers' Union, Adams was appointed state Commissioner of Agriculture by Governor

118 Ibid.
119 New Orleans Times-Democrat, August 2, 1892; Colfax Chronicle, August 13, 1892.
120 National Economist, III (August 30, 1890), 381.
Nicholls. Ominously, the Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, which steadfastly opposed almost any conceivable sort of reform, agrarian or otherwise, thought Adams's appointment "an excellent one."\(^{121}\) But the Bourbon campaign to capture the Farmers' Union had only begun. By invitation, the Union held its 1890 convention in the State Capitol. Simultaneously, a few blocks away, a number of "the leading citizens of Louisiana" sat together in the first convention of the Anti-Lottery League.\(^{122}\) Edgar Farrar, Charles Parlange, Donelson Caffery, Sr., Murphy J. Foster, and other wealthy gentlemen from New Orleans and the sugar parishes had organized the League for the announced purpose of fighting the Louisiana State Lottery's bid for constitutional re-charter in the forthcoming state election of 1892. Anti-Lottery Leaguers implored the Farmers' Union to join forces with them.\(^{123}\)

Essentially, the Anti-Lottery League crusade of 1890-92 was a continuation of the Reform Democracy campaign of 1888 which ousted McEnery from the State House. It was expected that the lottery, in addition to seeking recharter in 1892, would attempt to return its favorite, McEnery, to

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\(^{121}\) Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, August 3, 1890.

\(^{122}\) Ibid., August 7, 1890.

\(^{123}\) Sidney James Romero, "The Political Career of Murphy James Foster," Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XXVIII (October, 1945), 1150-52; Daily Picayune, August 5-6, 1891.
the executive chair. Respectable conservatives despised the lottery. It demoralized labor. It "was indubitably a nuisance." Besides, the Farmers' Union had already announced its firm opposition to the lottery. If patricians in the Democratic party did not come forth to lead the fight against the gigantic gambling syndicate, then the farmers might either capture the Democratic party on an anti-lottery platform, or build a powerful third party out of public hostility to the lottery. These latter possibilities may have distressed the gentry more than did the lottery itself.

Anti-lottery leaders proposed that the agrarian order work with them to seize control of the approaching Democratic state nominating convention. The League made all the overtures. Many Unionmen were suspicious of League motives and so were "far from friendly" to its proposals. But when the League pledged the offices of Governor, Treasurer, and Superintendent of Public Education to the

125 Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, August 8, 1890.
126 Cf. Winnfield Comrade, quoted in Colfax Chronicle, August 20, 1892; Shreveport Progress, November 20, 1897.
127 Daily Picayune, August 13, 1891.
128 Ibid., August 6, 1891.
Farmers' Union, the agrarians voted, at their annual meeting in August of 1891, to join hands with the League. By mutual agreement, their candidate for Governor was announced as Thomas Scott Adams. Thus was born the "Lafayette Compact," named after the town where the Farmers' Union held its 1891 convention.\(^{129}\)

One Farmers' Union leader who was present at Lafayette denounced the compact as an attempt to herd the farmers "back into the old party to be robbed and enslaved as yore."\(^{130}\) Subsequent events gave weight to this statement. Late in December, 1891, the Democratic nominating convention at Baton Rouge split in half. "Pro-lottery" and "Anti-lottery" Democratic sessions were held in separate buildings; each faction denounced the other as being a rump convention.\(^{131}\) The Pro-lottery nominee was, as expected, McEnery. And, as the farmers had been promised, Adams was nominated for Governor by the Anti-Lottery League-Farmers' Union Democratic convention. But after being selected Adams arose to make an announcement. He wished to decline the honor. "For the sake of the great cause," he said, another man should be chosen. At the top of his list

\(^{129}\text{Lafayette Advertiser, quoted in Opelousas St. Landry Clarion, August 15, 1891.}\)

\(^{130}\text{Daily Picayune, September 19, 1891.}\)

\(^{131}\text{New Orleans Times-Democrat, December 17-20, 1891; Romero, Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XXVIII, 1156-58.}\)
of suggestions was the name of Murphy J. Foster.\textsuperscript{132}

As revealed later, the Anti-lottery League men had held a number of "harmonizing conferences" with Adams just prior to and during the convention.\textsuperscript{133} They informed him that he could not possibly beat McEnery in the general election. Governor Nicholls also reportedly brought political weight to bear against Adams and urged instead the nomination of Foster.\textsuperscript{134} Pointed questions were asked about the ability of Adams's agrarian supporters to provide campaign funds.\textsuperscript{135} Reluctantly, Adams capitulated. He insisted, however, on a sham nomination. Also, as part of the bargain, the Farmers' Union President obtained a lower place on the ticket: that of Secretary of State.\textsuperscript{136} Foster, known derisively as "the Saint from St. Mary,"\textsuperscript{137} thereupon received the convention's gubernatorial nomination. Foster went on to defeat McEnery in the April, 1892 general election.\textsuperscript{138}

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\textsuperscript{132}Opelousas \textit{St. Landry Clarion}, December 26, 1891.\\
\textsuperscript{133}Chambers, \textit{A History of Louisiana}, I, 709.\\
\textsuperscript{134}Romero, \textit{Louisiana Historical Quarterly}, XXVIII, 1154.\\
\textsuperscript{135}Chambers, \textit{A History of Louisiana}, I, 709.\\
\textsuperscript{136}Baton Rouge \textit{Capital Item}, quoted in \textit{New Orleans Louisiana Review}, February 3, 1892.\\
\textsuperscript{137}Romero, \textit{Louisiana Historical Quarterly}, XXVIII, 1159.\\
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CHAPTER VII

NEGRO AGRARIANISM

The Kansas Exodus of 1879 took away only a small fraction of Louisiana's colored population. Probably not more than 10,000 managed to leave the state that year, though a considerably higher number made efforts to do so. By 1880 the "Kansas fever" had subsided.¹ For the remainder of the century, the freedmen of Louisiana displayed little interest in emigration, but their protests against economic and political conditions within the state by no means ceased.

In 1880, and again in 1887, colored wage earners in the sugar parishes engaged in strikes which brought down upon them the wrath of their employers and the state government. Negroes upstate seemed more docile. The tenant and share crop systems prevalent in the cotton parishes held out even less hope for economic advancement than did the small wages paid cane field workers; however, the decentralized environment of the cotton plantations restrained the possibility of unified protest by Negro tenant families. Sugar field workers, on the other hand, ordinarily worked under

¹Daily Picayune, April 14, 1880, March 25, 1881.
the gang labor system. Also, the sugar parishes had at least a semblance of a two party system up through the 1890's; a significant number of sugar planters voted Republican, and Negroes in the region were often allowed a modicum of selection in politics as well as in place of employment. Black labor in the cotton parishes generally had no choice in politics or anything else.

The 1880 strikes began in the cane fields of St. Charles Parish on March 17. Plantation owners immediately accused the Negro ringleaders of trespassing upon private property "and inciting the laborers to stop work in the fields." According to the parish judge, the ringleaders were armed with sticks, bludgeons and pistols, and were "forcing [laborers] to join their band by assaults and threats." Judge James D'Augustin admitted, however, that most of the population of St. Charles was in sympathy with the "rioters." For that reason, the judge insisted that the disturbance could not be handled by local authorities, and he called upon the state government for militia.

Richard Gooseberry, colored spokesman for the St. Charles strikers, denied the allegations of violence. The

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2 Sitterson, Sugar Country, 261.


4 New Orleans Democrat, March 19, 1880; Daily Picayune, March 19, 1880.
colored people, he said, "had simply struck for one dollar a day, as they could no longer work for seventy-five cents." The planters, on the other hand, insisted that Gooseberry's mob threatened to kill white people, burn dwellings, and seize control of the entire parish. However, no specific act of violence against the white minority of St. Charles was actually reported. And the Negro strikers displayed great forbearance when they gathered, on March 19, to listen to speeches by Judge D'Augustin and others who "exponded the law to them." One local official passed this compliment on to the black audience: "The great arm of the great wheel of agriculture is the nigger. Next is the mule. . . ."

A battalion of state militia soon arrived in St. Charles. No resistance was met. Twelve strikers were arrested, sent to New Orleans, and each sentenced to serve thirty days in jail on charges of trespass. Up to that date, March 21, no trouble had been reported in other parishes and the strike in St. Charles appeared to be over.7

But labor discontent soon extended to other parishes along the lower delta. By March 29, the situation in St.

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5New Orleans Democrat, March 18-21, 1880.
6Daily Picayune, March 20, 1880.
7Ibid., March 21-22, 1880.
John the Baptist Parish looked more serious than the previous disturbance in neighboring St. Charles. The same demand was voiced: Negroes refused to continue working for seventy-five cents. But the St. John strikers took a more militant attitude. They proclaimed that "the colored people are a nation and must stand together." To emphasize this idea, the ringleaders set up a provisional government of their own, complete with a constitution. All strikers in the parish reportedly took an oath to obey the constitution, which declared that none would work for less than one dollar a day, and any who violated the oath "shall be punished with a severe thrashing." The correspondent for the Daily Picayune, though hostile to the strike, was impressed by the earnestness of the Negroes. "Strange to say," he wrote, they have kept sober."

Governor Wiltz responded to the pleas of St. John landowners by a proclamation which warned "these evil doers and mischievous persons to desist from their evil doings," He also sent in the state militia. The troops, it was explained, were to be used to "protect the laborers" from harm. Despite a number of arrests, the disturbance in St. John continued several days. Negroes paraded along the parish roads, carrying banners which read: "A DOLLAR A DAY

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8Ibid., March 29, 1880.

9Ibid., March 31, 1880.
OR KANSAS," and "PEACE--ONE DOLLAR A DAY." But no violence, outside of the whipping of Negroes by Negroes, was reported. One of the ringleaders, when arrested, said that he was "glad to go to jail," for at least there he would get "enough to eat."

The St. John strike took place the same week that ex-President Ulysses S. Grant paid a visit to Louisiana. Strike leaders knew of it, and apparently timed their activities accordingly. Grant arrived in New Orleans at the peak of the trouble in nearby St. John. "The deluded laborers," one report noted, anticipate that "Grant will come up and make the planters pay the extra wages." It soon developed that Grant was, in one sense, concerned with Negro affairs in Louisiana. Remaining in New Orleans, he attended a reception at the home of P. B. S. Pinchback, where he met "the cream of Negro society." Pinchback and a number of his guests were scheduled to be delegates to the forthcoming Republican national convention. And Grant hoped to return to the White House in 1881.

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10 New Orleans Democrat, March 27-April 2, 1880; Daily Picayune, March 29-April 4, 1880.
11 Daily Picayune, March 31, 1880.
12 Ibid., April 1, 1880.
13 Uzee, "Republican Politics in Louisiana," 97.
14 When James A. Garfield, rather than Grant, was nominated by the Republicans in 1880, Louisiana's Negro population expressed marked disappointment. Rank-and-file colored voters had heard of Garfield and asked "who Garfish' was." Ibid., 100.
Shortly after Grant's departure from New Orleans, the strike in St. John was broken. Later in the month of April, however, dispersed strikes by cane field laborers were reported in Ascension, St. James, St. Bernard, Jefferson, and Plaquemines parishes, respectively. But in these districts the militia was not needed. Local authorities broke up the strikes by quick arrests of the ring-leaders. Wages remained at seventy to seventy-five cents for "first class" adult males, during the growing season for the next few years. The busy harvest and grinding season (from mid-October or early November to the end of the year) usually brought wages of ninety cents to one dollar per day.\(^5\)

Localized labor disturbances, poorly organized and barren of results for the laborers, continued to crop up in the sugar country in the years from 1881 through 1886. Until the latter year, Negro workers were affiliated with no recognizable labor organization. Even in the relatively serious strikes of 1880, there seemed to be no effort to unify the Negro workers of the several parishes. Workers in one parish might have taken their cue from events in another parish, but no attempt at interparish coordination was observed by correspondents on the scene of the 1880

\[^{15}\text{Sitterson, }\textit{Sugar Country}, 248, 319.\]
In April of 1886 white men representing the Noble Order of the Knights of Labor came into the sugar parishes and began organizing the Negro workers of the countryside. The Knights, as a national order, dated back to 1878. Their doctrine of interracial solidarity, along with their drive to combine all skilled and unskilled wage earners, male and female, into one national order, identifies the Knights as one of the most ambitious organizations in American labor history. In 1883 came the first report of Knights membership in Louisiana. For the next three years the Knights were confined to the city of New Orleans. There, they were overshadowed by the Central Trades and Labor Assembly. The latter organization, born in 1880, rather loosely federated the multitude of skilled and semi-skilled labor societies of the city. Local knights in New Orleans had their own district assembly.

17 Daily Picayune, April 17, 1886.
21 Daily Picayune, March 26, 1886.
By the summer of 1886 the Knights' nationwide membership stood at 700,000. Never again would the order be so strong. Yet, contrary to the national trend, the Knights developed new strength in the rural South during the late 1880's. Membership losses in northern cities were partially offset by fresh adherents from the southern small towns and countryside. Especially did the order grow in North Carolina and Louisiana. New Orleans provided most of the leadership for the Knights' program of expansion in Louisiana. At least 5,000 New Orleanians were in the order by mid-1887, and a Knights newspaper, Southern Industry, had begun weekly publication. It was from this urban center that Knights organizers fanned out into the lower delta parishes in 1886, to impress upon cane field Negroes the need for unity in obtaining concessions from their employers. Higher wages and payment in "United States money instead of commissary past board" were the major rallying points. The Knights also recruited white and Negro

22 By 1888, national membership in the Knights of Labor had declined to 210,000. Forum, VII (July, 1889), 556.


24 New Orleans Southern Industry was edited by William I. O'Donnell. It was one of Twenty-one Knights of Labor newspapers published at that time in the United States. Philadelphia Journal of United Labor, April 9, 1887; New Orleans Weekly Pelican, July 9, 1887.

artisans in the South Louisiana towns. Early in 1887 the
Knights were strong enough in Morgan City to run a slate of
candidates in the municipal election, and every man on the
labor ticket won office. 26

Louisiana's sugar planters, after experiencing a
poor crop in 1886, reduced wages for the following growing
season to sixty-five cents per day, without rations. 27
Most workers averaged twenty days out of every month in the
fields. The large planters paid wages in commissary notes,
redeemable in marked up goods at the plantation stores.
Thus, a Negro family with one employed member received what
amounted to six or seven dollars in real wages for every
month of the ten-month growing season. 28 Although no rent,
as a rule, was charged for the tiny living quarters, those
workers without rations had to feed and clothe their fami­
lies out of this meagre pay. Wages for the grinding season
of 1887 were set by the planters at rates varying from
seventy-five cents to $1.15 per day for "first class" adult
males; for six hours of overtime night work, called a watch,
the planters offered fifty cents. 29

26 Daily Picayune, January 4, 1887.
27 Cf. Philadelphia Journal of United Labor, September
17, 1887; Sitterson, Sugar Country, 319. Some planters
hired only adult males. But a number also hired "first
class" females for about fifty cents per day.
28 New Orleans Weekly Pelican, November 19, 1887.
29 Cf. New Orleans Times Democrat, November 6, 1887;
New Orleans Weekly Pelican, November 19, 1887; Sitterson,
Sugar Country, 319-20.
In August of 1887, ten weeks before harvest, the Knights leaders requested a conference with local branches of the Louisiana Sugar Planters' Association. They wished to discuss wages for the approaching busy season. Association officials sent no reply. On October 24, the Knights District Assembly addressed a circular letter to planters in Iberia, Lafourche, St. Martin, St. Mary, and Terrebonne parishes, insisting that wages be raised for the two months of harvesting and grinding. The scale drawn by the Knights listed $1.25 per day without rations, or $1.00 per day with rations. For a night watch, no less than sixty cents would be accepted. Further, instead of monthly payments of wages, the Knights insisted that payment for day work must be received every two weeks, and "watch" money each week. The District Assembly which issued these demands comprised about forty locals in the five parishes. Planters were informed that they must meet the terms by November 1, or face a general strike.

An estimated 6,000 to 10,000 male laborers went on strike when the deadline date arrived with no sign of acquiescence from the planters. Nine-tenths of the strikers were Negroes. All were said to be members of the Knights of

30 Daily Picayune, October 29, 1887.
The planters, though refusing to negotiate, were visibly disturbed by the strike. The growing season for 1887 had been one of near-perfect weather, and a large crop yield was in prospect. \(^3\) Conservative newspapers portrayed the strikers' demands as "reprehensible," and insisted that the current low market price of sugar precluded any advance in wages. \(^4\) Weekly paydays, said the planters, "would demoralize labor." It was "a well known fact that as long as the average laborer has money he will not work." \(^5\)

Local officials of the Knights, white men and a number of "fairly well educated blacks," \(^6\) received the brunt of landowner wrath. Particular bitterness was expressed toward the white agitators in Lafourche Parish; J. R. H. Foote and D. Monnier, "two of the prime movers in this uncalled for strike," \(^7\) were common laborers in

\(^3\) Hall MS, 32; New Orleans Weekly Pelican, November 5, 1887.

\(^4\) William C. Stubbs, Sugar Cane: A Treatise on the History, Botany and Agriculture of Sugar Cane and the Chemistry and Manufacture of Its Juices Into Sugar, and Other Products (Baton Rouge, 1897), I, 37-38; Daily Picayune, October 29, 1887.

\(^5\) Baton Rouge Daily Capitolian-Advocate, November 4, 1887; New Orleans Times-Democrat, November 3-6, 1887.

\(^6\) Daily Picayune, October 29, 1887.

\(^7\) Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Louisiana, I, 133.

\(^7\) Ibid., November 9, 1887; New Orleans Weekly Pelican, November 26, 1887.
Thibodaux, the parish seat. Other leaders among the La­fourche Knights included Henry Cox, George Cox, and P. O. Rousseau. The Cox brothers were Negro artisans; Rousseau, a white man, had formerly been a planter but "times [ had ] changed" for him. As a group, the ringleaders in La­fourche were depicted as "the most worthless set of men" in the parish. In Terrebonne, a "griffe" named Jim Brown led the strike. In St. Mary, colored men took the helm of labor agitation in 1887. They, together with Negroes who encouraged the strike in other parishes, were categorized by Major Burke's Times-Democrat as "bad and dangerous . . . relic [ s ] of Radical days."

Planters also expressed anger toward the New Orleans Knights who had first organized the lower sugar country. These urban "communists," as the Daily States termed them, were blamed for arousing "passions" among the usually tractable Negroes. As for the attitude of rank-and-file laborers, it was obvious that they placed great faith in

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38Ibid., November 9, 1887; New Orleans Weekly Pel­i­can, November 26, 1887.
39Daily Picayune, November 9, 1887.
40Hall MS, 32. A "griffe" being a person of one-fourth Negro blood.
41New Orleans Times-Democrat, November 6, 1887.
42New Orleans Daily States, quoted in Baton Rouge Daily Capitolian-Advocate, November 24, 1887.
the Knights of Labor. One wealthy planter, W. W. Pugh, used the word "veneration" to describe Negro attitudes toward the labor society. When directives came down from Knights headquarters, said Pugh, the workers "generally obey at whatever sacrifice it may prove to their own welfare. . . ."43 One ringleader remarked, as the strike began, that the white employers "had never met the negroes united before," and he prophesied that every one of the 400 laborers in his group would die before conceding anything to the planters.44

On the morning of the first day of the strike a battery of state militia arrived in Lafourche Parish. Members of the Sugar Planters' Association--not the local government--had requested these troops.45 The landowners perceived that "serious trouble" would result from their announcement that all laborers who refused to work must vacate the plantation cabins. By the 10th of November Governor McEnery had ordered ten companies and two batteries of state militia into action. At least one unit brought

43 Letter from W. W. Pugh, published in Daily Picayune, November 20, 1887.

44 Daily Picayune, November 2, 1887.

45 New Orleans Mascot, quoted in New Orleans Weekly Pelican, November 12, 1887; Philadelphia Journal of United Labor, November 19, 1887.
These militiamen were assigned the work of eviction. White critics of Governor McEnery claimed that he "had acted hastily" in sending out the militia; the New Orleans *Mascot* suggested that His Excellency's action "was caused by his eagerness to curry favor with the ... wealthy sugar planters in the hopes that he can transfer their allegiance from Nicholls to himself." Major Burke's newspaper, on the other hand, dwelt upon McEnery's alleged knowledge "of the negro character," which allowed the Governor "to appreciate the danger." This trouble in the sugar country, philosophized the administration organ, was not a labor dispute. It was a race problem.

The first report of bloodshed came on November 2 from Terrebonne Parish. According to pro-planter sources, the Negroes shot down four laborers who refused to join in the strike. More serious was the disturbance which followed in St. Mary Parish; near the town of Berwick, on the night of November 4, Negroes fired upon and wounded four unidentified white men; the next day, militiamen killed

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47 *New Orleans Mascot*, quoted in *New Orleans Pelican*, November 12, 1887.

48 *New Orleans Times-Democrat*, November 6, 1887.

"four or five" Negro strikers outside of Pattersonville community. Each side had its own version of the St. Mary shootings. Spokesmen for the Knights claimed the troops shot without provocation; other reports from the scene said the troops were forced to act in self-defense. A St. Mary newspaper accused "leading colored men" in the Pattersonville area of making "incendiary speeches . . . that would put the Chicago anarchists to shame." The same source quoted one colored Knight as saying: "If the planters do not come to our terms we will burn the d-n sugar houses." Elsewhere, by November 20, at least one Negro laborer was killed and several wounded in Lafourche Parish.

The sugar strike reached its violent climax during the fourth week of November. Predictably, the worst bloodshed occurred in the town of Thibodaux. For Thibodaux had taken on the appearance of a refugee center as hundreds of Negro families, evicted from the plantations where they refused to work, crowded into its dingy backstreets. A

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52 Morgan City Free Press, quoted in Baton Rouge Daily Capitolian-Advocate, November 12, 1887.

53 Daily Picayune, November 21, 1887.
Daily Picayune correspondent thus described the scene:

Every vacant room in town tonight is filled with penniless and ragged negroes. All day long a stream of black humanity poured in, some on foot and others in wagons, bringing all of their earthly possessions which never amounted to more than a frontyard full of babies, dogs and ragged bed clothing. . . . On many of the plantations old gray-headed negroes, who were born and have lived continually upon them, left today.54

Knights of Labor leaders in Thibodaux attempted to provide shelter and food for the homeless Negroes. One observer, sympathetic to the refugees, said they behaved peaceably and tried to avoid incidents with local whites. But a critic of the strike wrote that a number of the male refugees were armed and that the women "made threats to burn the town down."55 The atmosphere grew more tense each day. Judge Taylor Beattie, a quondam defender of Negro rights who had been the Republican candidate for Governor in 1879, took the lead in organizing a committee of local planters and Thibodaux property owners for the purpose of keeping the town's new inhabitants under control. Beattie described the black refugees as "ignorant and degraded barbarians."56

On November 21 Judge Beattie declared martial law in Thibodaux. The militia had recently been withdrawn. In their place were armed bands of white vigilantes, composed

54Ibid., November 3, 1887.
55Cf. New Orleans Weekly Pelican, November 26, 1887; Daily Picayune, November 25, 1887.
56Hall MS, 42; Letter from Taylor Beattie, published in Daily Picayune, December 3, 1887.
of local "organized citizens" together with a number of grim-visaged strangers to the community. These newly arrived men were alleged to be "Shreveport guerrillas, well versed in killing niggers." Reports of what then transpired are conflicting. All dispatches from the scene agreed that shooting began on the night of the 22nd; but the pro-planter account, that the trouble commenced when two "white visitors" to a Negro barroom were beaten and shot, should be placed alongside the more explicit pro-Knights version. The latter report would have it that the Shreveport mercenaries, having failed to provoke the blacks to violence inflicted superficial wounds on two of their own men. Then the cry went forth: "To arms! To arms! The negroes are killing the whites!"

When the firing ended at noon the next day at least thirty colored people were dead or dying in Thibodaux. The Weekly Pelican, a New Orleans Republican paper, claimed thirty-five refugees were killed outright, including lame men and blind women. Conservative journals, for the most

57 Daily Picayune, November 25, 1887.
58 New Orleans Weekly Pelican, November 26, 1887.
59 Daily Picayune, November 25, 1887.
60 New Orleans Weekly Pelican, November 26, 1887; Philadelphia Journal of United Labor, December 3, 1887.
61 New Orleans Weekly Pelican, November 26, 1887.
part, tended to minimize the casualty list. But the ultra-Bourbon Daily States listed twenty-five dead Negroes and called the encounter "one of the most bloody battles in the history of the State." The Times Democrat agreed that the final death total at Thibodaux might reach thirty. Another conservative source told of more bodies being found, the next day, in nearby swamps, and carried the ugly story about a large dark-haired canine which one vigilante was supposed to have shot by mistake, because "[it] looked like a negro lying down."

The Thibodaux massacre virtually ended the sugar strike of 1887. No less than thirty-six Negroes had been killed in the troubled parishes during the month of November; this total includes the four killed near Pattersonville, the thirty in the Thibodaux shooting, and the two Cox brothers, who were taken from jail on November 24 and shot by the vigilantes. Possibly, the total Negro dead reached forty-five. An unpublished history of Louisiana labor disputes estimates the total number of casualties in the sugar

62 New Orleans Daily States, quoted in Baton Rouge Daily Capitolian Advocate, November 24, 1887.
63 New Orleans Times-Democrat, November 24-26, 1887.
64 Daily Picayune, November 24-26, 1887.
65 New Orleans Weekly Pelican, November 26, 1887.
parishes, killed and wounded, was "500 to 600." But even if half that number be taken (and the total could hardly have been less), the sugar strike of 1887 would still rate as one of the bloodiest labor conflicts in American history. All the dead were Negroes. So were almost all those injured. The violent repression of the strike stimulated a short-lived revival of Exodus talk among Louisiana's colored population. A few actually did leave the state late in November, seeking, as they said, more humane surroundings. Their destination was the state of Mississippi.

Most sugar workers returned to the fields by the early months of 1888. Planers now attacked what they considered the root of trouble by zealously eradicating the Knights of Labor organization from the region. As the

66 Hall MS, 40.

67 The Louisiana sugar strike of 1887 receives no mention in the standard work on American labor history, Commons and Others, History of Labour in the United States, II, passim. In fact, the Philadelphia Journal of United Labor, the national organ of Terence V. Powderly's Knights of Labor organization, had little to say concerning the bloodshed in the sugar strike. But the Journal of United Labor, on December 3, 1887, did congratulate the white Knights of New Orleans for "using their influence to protect the rights as well as the lives of the colored brethren." The Knights District Assembly in New Orleans angrily denounced the actions of Governor McEnery and the planters. The New Orleans Knights resolved, even before the trouble at Thibodaux, that the shootings earlier in November amounted to "assasination, . . . AND WE WILL AT ONCE APPEAL TO OUR MILLIONS OF WORKINGMEN TO ASK AT THE HANDS OF CONGRESS THE REPEAL OF THE DUTIES ON SUGAR." Daily Picayune, November 13, 1887.

68 New Orleans Weekly Pelican, November 26, 1887.
Jeanerette Teche Pilot pointed out: "The darkey who steers clear of that organization will always find himself better off in this section." Those who held membership in the Knights were likely to find their household goods uncere­moniously dumped on the levees and themselves blacklistet. Minor strikes broke out in four sugar parishes in 1888 but were quickly put down. Whites in these parishes, and elsewhere, had meantime put in motion a "Regulating Movement" which discouraged economic or political assertiveness on the part of Negroes. And so failed the attempt to unionize the field hands of rural South Louisiana. By 1891, state membership in the Knights of Labor was not significant outside of its original base in New Orleans.

Viewed in perspective, the sugar country bloodletting of 1887 was merely a deadlier-than-usual example of a much deeper phenomenon. The lot of the Louisiana Negro, never really good, was growing harder. Throughout the South, during the late 1880's and early 1890's, contempt for and hostility toward the colored race was on the rise.

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70Jeanerette Teche Pilot, May 5, 1888.
71New Roads Pointe Coupee Banner, quoted in ibid.
73Daily Picayune, August 7, 1891.
Nor was this trend confined to the states of the late Confederacy. As the American nation took up imperialistic adventures in the Pacific and the Caribbean, the doctrines of Anglo-Saxon superiority were seconded by northern public opinion. No doubt the expatriate Louisianian George W. Cable was grieved to discover that his pleadings on behalf of the freedman, which had fallen upon deaf ears in his native state, now received little better attention in the North.

Editorial diatribes and mob outrages against the black population grew to such proportions, by 1890, that a few whites thought that the time for a moratorium had arrived. "Heavens," exclaimed the Welsh Crescent, "how we would enjoy a rest on the 'nigger' question!" Authorities on the subject have written that the poor white class of southerners tended to be the colored man's worst enemy; patricians, on the other hand, were credited with a more benign attitude on matters of race. Though believing the Negro to be inherently inferior, the white gentry supposedly felt that colored people should be treated more

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76 "It seems, grumbled the Crescent, "that four-fifths of the State press can't come out without a long-winded article . . . with the negro as their target; and what's more, they've been at it for the Lord only knows how long." Welsh Crescent, quoted in Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, March 4, 1890.
humanely and not be hurt or degraded for the mere sake of inflicting pain. However, the above generalization, whatever its value elsewhere, was hardly valid in Louisiana in the late nineteenth century. A mass of evidence points to the conclusion that the ruling class of the Pelican State took an extraordinarily circumscribed view of Negro human rights. For the most rabid Negrophobes in the state were as consistently rabid in defense of upper class white privilege. Some of Louisiana's white elite did, of course, truly uphold the ideals of Noblesse Oblige. But, as Daniel Dennett once remarked about honest politicians in the state, "they [were] lonesome."

Lynching in Louisiana, according to a Chicago Tribune survey, accounted for 285 deaths between 1882 and

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77 Cf. Woodward, The Strange Career of Jim Crow, 29; Simkins, A History of the South, 509-11; Coulter, The South During Reconstruction, 162-64. However, a twentieth century sociological study of a presumably typical southern community presents evidence that Negroes themselves believe that middle class whites were the "real antagonists" of the colored people in the South. John Dollard, Caste and Class in a Southern Town (3d ed.; Garden City, New York, 1957), 57.

78 The following daily journals claimed to speak for the landowning and business elite of Louisiana. And the ferocity these papers exhibited toward the Negro, in the late nineteenth century, far outdistanced the Negrophobia visible in any other body of public opinion in the state; Baton Rouge Daily Capitalian-Advocate (Daily Advocate after 1889); New Orleans Daily States; Shreveport Evening (and Sunday) Judge.

79 Daily Picayune, February 19, 1881.
the year 1903. Of this number, 232 victims were Negroes.80 Records kept by Tuskegee Institute corroborate the Tribune figures.81 Not included are the numerous deaths resulting from the sugar country trouble of 1887, but even without these Louisiana ranked third in the nation in total lynchings for the period. Also, the suspicion arises that the above statistics fail to include many cases which could not be classified as anything but lynch-killings. For example, the Tuskegee records for 1888 show seven lynchings in the state.82 But a contemporary report that year from just one parish, Iberia, told of no less than ten colored men murdered by vigilantes. The Negroes were described as "vagrant and lewd."83 Some lynchings were simply not reported. The Monroe Bulletin refused to print lynch stories in Ouachita Parish because white citizens in the area regarded such matters "not only with indifference but with levity."84


82Ibid.

83Lake Providence Carroll Democrat, August 25, 1888.

Lower class whites, in particular the "shiftless . . . Acadians"\textsuperscript{85} of South Louisiana, were clearly responsible for a substantial percentage of the acts of violence committed upon Negroes. But contemporary accounts of lynching episodes indicate that poor whites were not involved in a majority of the cases. Middle class landowners or merchants, or younger members of the elite families, more often than not, instigated and participated in the outrages. For instance, in 1890 a reign of terror was conducted against "industrious, reliable" Negroes near Baton Rouge by white landowners; only colored people who had managed to accumulate property were shot, whipped, or otherwise molested.\textsuperscript{86} Their persecutors claimed that possession of land by Negroes "was tending toward negro equality." The colored farmers were told to sell their property cheaply or be killed.\textsuperscript{87}

On another occasion "hundreds of the most prominent

\textsuperscript{85}New Orleans \textit{Weekly Pelican}, September 28, 1889.
\textsuperscript{86}Letter from Anna M. Harris, published in Opelousas St. Landry Clarion, February 14, 1891.
\textsuperscript{87}\textit{Ibid.}; Baton Rouge \textit{Daily Advocate}, November 26-27, 1890. The latter newspaper was, as it said, "always conservative" on racial matters, but thought the attacks upon Baton Rouge Negro landowners to be "a disgrace . . . a reproach to our manhood." The Farmers' Union in East Baton Rouge Parish expressed great indignation over the outrages inflicted upon local Negroes, and resolved "that the Union would do all it could to bring the villains before the bar of justice, whether they be members of the Union or not." However, the authorities made no arrests.
citizens in Bossier Parish" conducted a dual lynching near
the town of Benton.88 Worse yet, a New Orleans report told
of "three nigger boys" who were whipped to death because
"they refused to make targets of their heads for [sport-
ing] gentlemen..."89 A Tangipahoa Parish group known
as the "Phantom Riders" molested colored families without
fear of punishment because, it was claimed, "good" citizens
rode with the band.90 When eleven Italians were lynched in
New Orleans in 1891, the press reported that "the better
element" of the city had done the killing.91 Also worthy
of attention was the suggestion in one of Louisiana's most
aristocratically inclined journals, the Bastrop Clarion,
that more "little 'neck tie' parties" were needed by the
colored people around that town.92 But it took a Shreveport
paper to describe a lynching as "beautiful." This was "the
right way," the Evening Judge concluded, "to deal with every
such black brute. Before the war they kept their places
like other beasts of the field."93

88Natchitoches Enterprise, December 8, 1898.
89Quoted in New Orleans Weekly Pelican, July 2, 1887.
90Ibid., July 16, 1887.
91Quoted in Philadelphia Journal of the Knights of Labor, March 14, 1891. (formerly the Journal of United Labor.)
92Bastrop Clarion, quoted in Daily Picayune, August 10, 1891.
93Shreveport Evening Judge, March 23, 1896.
Shreveport was unequivocally a city of New South "energy, push, and vim." At the same time, its businessman elite supported or condoned the most pitiless forms of social injustice to be found anywhere in the state. The "Shreveport plan" was an archetype specimen. Conceived in 1889 by a local publication, the Daily Caucasian, the proposal revolved around the old concept that the Negro was a sub-human species and should be treated accordingly. Specifically, Negroes were not to hold "easy jobs." Under this heading were listed the occupations of bootblacks, waiters, porters, cooks, clerks, and teachers. But the plan also implied intimidation of whites. For "no white man" was to "be permitted to employ a colored man ... in any other manner than at the hardest and most degrading tasks." Apparently an exception was made for the staff of Shreveport's Negro newspaper, Bailey's Free South. They were conservative Democrats.

One spokesman for Louisiana's Negroes, hearing of the plan, described it as "an old mummy" exhumed from "the Shreveport pyramids." He added:

The pernicious idea must be limited to the mean locality in which it had its origin. It would not live

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94 Shreveport Times, quoted in Daily Picayune, March 21, 1887.

95 Shreveport Daily Caucasian, quoted in New Orleans Weekly Pelican, July 27, August 17, 1889.

96 Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, February 18, 1892.
in more generous soil, and there are few places in
this wide world so sterile in noble sentiments as
that which immediately surrounds the publication
office of the [Shreveport] Caucasian. The proposi-
tion is only useful as showing the depths to which
uncurbed selfishness will... go.

"White supremacy, first, last and all the time," was
the proud motto of Shreveport, an approving commentator
wrote in 1896. "And they prove their faith by their
works." Nevertheless, claims were made that Shreveporters
generally acted out of Christian charity. Whites in the
North Louisiana city were said to be generous "to a fault;"
"if St. Paul were [here] today he would positively turn
green with envy." But evidence warrants the assumption
that the local gentry often acted in a barbarous fashion
toward helpless whites as well as Negroes. This fact was
impressed upon two white men who appeared in municipal court
on a charge of vagrancy. Both were one-legged. The Judge,

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97 New Orleans Weekly Pelican, July 27, 1889. The
extent to which the "Shreveport plan" was actually practiced
in the area is problematical. Obviously, however, many
Shreveport businessmen continued to hire Negroes for tasks
which were proscribed by the Daily Caucasian. See Shreve-
port Sunday Judge, February 2, 1896.

98 Shreveport Evening Judge, February 24, 1896.
White supremacy was seldom questioned in the Shreveport area,
even during Reconstruction. Henry Clay Warmoth described a
group of local Negroes who turned out to hear him, when, as
governor of Louisiana, he visited the city in 1870: They
"did not seem to have spirit enough to declare that their
souls were their own," he observed. Warmoth, War, Politics
and Reconstruction, 98. In 1879, a baseball club in Shreve-
port named itself "the Caddo Bulldozers." Daily Picayune,
May 29, 1879.

99 Shreveport Sunday Judge, February 23, 1896.
who was also Mayor of Shreveport, enjoyed a grotesque sense of humor. He gave the crippled derelicts a sporting chance. If they could hop outside the city limits within twenty-five minutes they would not have to serve one hundred days in jail.¹⁰⁰

Elsewhere in Louisiana, well-to-do conservatives, such as Henry G. Goodwyn of Colfax, occasionally complained that Negroes "were shamefully and needlessly bulldozed, and could hope for no legal redress."¹⁰¹ But the more explicit pleas for biracial justice were voiced by men who represented lower class whites. Among the latter was Aurel Arnaud. In 1886, as a legislator from St. Landry Parish, Arnaud stood up in the State House to deliver a speech regarding the Louisiana public road system. The speaker was a political independent and of poor Acadian ancestry.¹⁰² His opening remarks were aimed at a law of 1880 which instructed parochial officials to assess twelve days of road work, or a stipulated cash assessment, upon all adult males. He pointed out that this law worked a special hardship upon Negro tenants and laborers, since most colored families seldom had as much as forty dollars a year to spend on clothes, medicine, and fresh meat. Arnaud expanded upon his

¹⁰⁰Shreveport Evening Judge, March 4, 1896.
¹⁰¹Colfax Chronicle, January 9, 1892.
¹⁰²Baton Rouge Weekly Truth, May 21, 1886.
theme with blunt language:

Can you not see that this amount is not sufficient to support the laborer? And every day you divest him of from a chance of earning something is a robbery of his daily bread? Should any one . . . be surprised to hear that negroes steal? I am only surprised that they do not steal more.103

Arnaud raised the possibility of another, more successful, Kansas Exodus of Louisiana's colored population if their sufferings continued. What would happen then? "These very men," he predicted, "who have been clamoring so loudly against the negroes . . . would pack up and follow in their tracks--play carpetbagger in . . . turn-- [or] would soon have to steal or starve themselves." Arnaud hastened to add that he was not a "leveller"; he offered no radical proposals. He merely felt that Negroes "must be treated with as much consideration as we treat our mules." He indicated that this would be a vast improvement over present conditions. Finally, in what must stand as among the most candid words every uttered in Louisiana legislative halls, Arnaud said:

I have treated the subject entirely as from a negro standpoint . . . but are there only negroes involved. . . .? And if there were only negroes involved, would I be here defending their cause? That is a question I have often asked myself, but I have never dared to probe my heart sufficiently to answer it, for fear I would perhaps find myself selfish enough to answer: No, because they are negroes. . . . But in what way is the white laborer treated with more consideration? Does the law give him any more

103 Ibid., May 28, 1886.
protection? Is he paid better wages? Does he get more or better goods for his money? Do his children get more schooling? Yes, there is an immense difference between the two [races], but this difference exists only in the fancy of unscrupulous and rascally politicians: in every respect the white laborer stands exactly on the same footing as the negro.

I cannot deny that it is with the saddest feelings I have seen myself forced into this tirade, and I can draw but one consolation for it. The hope that the sad facts I have had to submit to you today will save me the trouble of submitting sadder ones in the future. 104

Not so frankly phrased, but to the same point, were statements made by certain men in the Louisiana Farmers' Union. Notably, J. A. Tetts and Thomas J. Guice spoke up for the Negro. "What we want distributed to all men," Tetts wrote, "regardless of race, color, or previous condition of servitude, is the opportunity for the pursuit of happiness." Tetts believed that the Alliance movement was doing what "the sword, the press and the pulpit" had failed to do; that is, forcing the "half Ku Klux and half desperado" cotton farmer of the South out of his provincial shell, and into an awareness of class interest which transcended racial or regional boundaries. "The horns of the Ku Klux [are] knocked off," Tetts assumed. In typically quaint language, he went on to write: "The shirt that has been waved so

104Ibid. Rep. Arnaud's outspoken conduct naturally irritated the defenders of the status quo. The alternative for Arnaud, a conservative paper in his home parish believed, was either "prison garb," or "a straight jacket." Washington (La.) Argus, quoted in Shreveport Times, May 29, 1887.
faithfully has been torn up . . . and cast into the Missis­
sippi, and by this time no doubt [ is ] in the maw of some
cat fish, or making a nest for some mud turtle of a politi-
can who will have to crawl into his shell when he seems the
result of the next election.\textsuperscript{105} Guice took a similar view
of class protest. According to this rustic orator, the
"spirit of fairness" required that poor whites include poor
blacks in their efforts to ameliorate economic and politi-
cal evils. Guice believed that working people, "be they
white or black," must act together.\textsuperscript{106}

The Louisiana Farmers' Union, however, was exclusive-
ly a white man's organization. Neither were Negroes ad-
mitted to the Southern Alliance proper.\textsuperscript{107} However, a
subsidiary association, the Colored Farmers' Alliance,
extpired in the late 1880's as a means of bringing the dark-
skinned agriculturists of the South into the Alliance move-
ment. As early as 1882, a Negro "Alliance" was chartered in
Arkansas under the aegis of Milton George's ambitious

\textsuperscript{105} \textit{National Economist}, III (April 12, 1890), 64.

\textsuperscript{106} \textit{Daily Picayune}, October 3, 1891.

\textsuperscript{107} Dunning, The Farmers' Alliance History, 109;
\textit{National Economist}, IV (December 27, 1890), 234-35. How-
ever, the Southern Alliance permitted individual state
orders to determine just how tightly the color line would be
drawn within each state. Negroes were specifically barred
from membership in the Supreme Council of the Southern
Alliance. See Saloutos, \textit{Farmer Movements in the South}, 82.
northern order. Kindred groups may have been established elsewhere. However, a large organization was slow to emerge. According to the most authoritative source, the origins of the Colored Farmers' Alliance can best be traced back to the Negroes of Houston County, Texas, who inaugurated a state order in the winter of 1886-87. A white man, Robert M. Humphrey, became General Superintendent. Within a year, the Colored Alliance was rooted in a number of southern states; by 1890, the order claimed 1,200,000 as its total membership. Humphrey reported that "colored people everywhere welcomed . . . the Alliance as a sort of second emancipation." Though separate, the white and colored Alliances of the South pledged "fraternal regard" for each other. Both orders held their annual meetings at the same date and in the same city, beginning at St. Louis in December of 1889. The following December, both met at Ocala, Florida.

Fifty thousand Louisiana Negroes were reported in the membership rolls of the Colored Farmers' Alliance by the time of the Ocala convention. In 1891, at their peak of

108 Scott, Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XLV, 107 n.
110 Ibid., 291-92.
111 Western Rural and American Stockman, XXVIII (December 13, 1890), 789, quoted in Saloutos, Farmer Movements in the South, 81.
activity, the state's Negro Alliance claimed to be organized in twenty-seven parishes.\textsuperscript{112} Detailed information regarding the Louisiana branch of the Colored Alliance is lacking, but it is safe to conclude that the reported 50,000 membership was far above the actual number. Possibly, the Colored Alliance entered the state as early as 1887; however, the first report yet found tells of a Grant Parish lodge which was set up in October of 1889.\textsuperscript{113} Colored Alliancemen were most numerous in cotton parishes along the Red River. Apparently the white landowners of the Mississippi River delta of northwest Louisiana managed to keep their laborers out of the order.\textsuperscript{114} Few Negroes in the sugar parishes joined. The suppression of the Knights of Labor in 1887-88, plus the absence of white Alliancemen who might be sympathetic to a similar Negro organization, precluded the entrance of the Colored Alliance into most sugar parishes. South of the Red River, it was strongest in St. Landry Parish, and did not take root there until the summer of 1891.\textsuperscript{115}

\textsuperscript{112}Opelousas St. Landry Clarion, October 10, 1891.

\textsuperscript{113}Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Northwest Louisiana, 503.

\textsuperscript{114}The two leading journals of the northeastern delta parishes, the Lake Providence Carroll Democrat and the St. Joseph Tensas Gazette, have no account of Negro Alliance activity between 1888 and 1892. These two papers were not in the habit of ignoring signs of unrest or organization among local Negroes.

\textsuperscript{115}Opelousas St. Landry Clarion, June 27, 1891.
L. D. Laurent, an Alexandria Negro, was the first state Superintendent of the Colored Alliance. He held the post until succeeded by Isaac Keys of Catahoula Parish in 1891. Another significant Negro Allianceman was J. B. Lafargue, the state Secretary. These men were rather circumspect in their activities; the Bourbon press seldom noticed their existence. The mass of Louisiana Negroes, in or out of the Alliance, gave indications of increasing caution in their dealings with local whites, and Laurent, Keys, and Lafargue were probably no exceptions. The race troubles of the late 1880's hampered efforts at biracial agrarian protest. White Alliancemen who came to offer advice at Negro farmers' meetings were received "with great courtesy," but likely with suspicion as well. Many Negroes in St. Landry refused to participate in Alliance activities because they feared white "regulators" were involved. Of course, Louisiana's Bourbon element did what it could to sow racial ill feelings within the Alliance movement. And the Farmers' Union President, Thomas S. Adams, did not help the situation when, in 1889, he selected

116 Ibid., June 27, October 10, 1891.
117 Ibid., August 15, 1891.
118 Ibid., August 8, 1891.
119 Cf. Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, December 11, 1890; Daily Picayune, September 10, 1891.
the Shreveport Weekly Caucasian as the official organ of the white agrarians.  

Yet the possibility of poor white-poor Negro unity was by no means dead. Before the year 1890 was over, a third party revolt against the conservative leadership of both the state Democratic party and the Farmers' Union had begun to reverberate among the hills of North Louisiana; the upland whites who led the revolt immediately sought the help of the Colored Alliance. And officials of the Colored Alliance did more than merely follow. At Ocala, in December, three of the seven Louisianans present signed the call for a national third party convention which would meet the next year in Cincinnati: L. D. Laurent, J. B. Lafargue, C. F. Brown of Jefferson parish, a Negro Republican, denounced the move to legalize segregation, feeling that it would help perpetuate Jim Crowism and was, in any case, an added "humiliation." Representative C. F. Brown of Jefferson parish, a Negro Republican, denounced the upper class Democrats as being the prime movers for the introduction of the bill. Louisiana, Official Journal of the House of Representatives, 1890, 200-204. For a discussion of segregation in the Pelican State during the early 1880's, see Baton Rouge Daily Capitolian-Advocate, May 19, 1882.

120 Shreveport Weekly Caucasian, January 24, 1890. In the 1890 session of the Louisiana legislature, most of the solons who were members of the Farmers' Union (including ex-President Stallings and G. L. P. Wren) voted for a bill which made racial segregation compulsory on all railroad coaches within the state. Actually, segregation in public facilities had, with certain exceptions in New Orleans and along the lower river towns, always been the custom in the state. The law of 1890 merely legalized what was already a fact in most of Louisiana. However, Negro legislators denounced the move to legalize segregation, feeling that it would help perpetuate Jim Crowism and was, in any case, an added "humiliation." Representative C. F. Brown of Jefferson parish, a Negro Republican, denounced the upper class Democrats as being the prime movers for the introduction of the bill. Louisiana, Official Journal of the House of Representatives, 1890, 200-204. For a discussion of segregation in the Pelican State during the early 1880's, see Baton Rouge Daily Capitolian-Advocate, May 19, 1882.

121 Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, October 5, November 18, 1890; Daily Picayune, November 8, 1890.
and L. D. Miller. All were officials of the Negro order. Louisiana's white delegation at Ocala, dominated by President Adams, refused to sign this birth certificate of the Populist party.122

122Alexandria Farmers' Vidette, quoted in Colfax Chronicle, January 10, 1891. The white delegation to the Southern Farmers' Alliance convention at Ocala included Thomas S. Adams, A. D. Lafargue, J. M. Hancock, and Thomas J. Guice. None of them signed the Cincinnati call, and only Guice, of the four, later became a Populist. A. D. Lafargue was sometimes confused with the Negro Allianceman J. B. Lafargue.
CHAPTER VIII

THE POPULISTS

During the twelve years which followed the abortive Greenback uprising of 1878, Louisiana's Bourbon officeholders faced no serious third party challenge. The decline of the Greenback Labor party in the state was rapid; in the presidential election of 1880 their candidate, James B. Weaver, was credited with less than 500 votes out of 100,000 in the official returns. But the crowning blow came in 1884. Benjamin F. "Spoons" Butler, whose very name had Satanic connotations in Louisiana, headed the Greenbacker national ticket that year; even such a confirmed third party man as Robert P. Webb of Claiborne Parish could not stomach the nominee. Butler received just 120 votes in the Pelican State. Finally, in 1888, after a decade of feeble life, the Greenback Labor party of Louisiana held a final meeting.
in New Orleans and announced its own demise.⁴

Replacing the Greenback organization was the equally ineffective Union Labor party. Nationally, the Greenbackers had merged with the newly established latter group in 1887. That same year a Union Labor party committee took shape in New Orleans under the chairmanship of J. E. Sweeney, a Knights of Labor leader.⁵ Talk of running state and congressional candidates by the Union Laborites in 1888 came to naught in Louisiana. The presidential candidate of the party received a mere 39 votes out of 115,000 in the official returns.⁶ Probably the Union Laborites did have a thousand or more supporters in New Orleans whose votes were simply not counted. At any rate, Louisiana was an exception to the general third party pattern in 1888; in most states, the Union Laborites drew what strength they had from rural areas, for third party politics in northern cities had reached a state of near-collapse.⁷

The apparent lack of third party interest in rural

⁴New Orleans Times-Democrat, September 20, 1888.
⁵Daily Picayune, November 13, 1887.
⁷Commons and Others, History of Labour in the United States, II, 469; Haynes, Third Party Movements, 211.
Louisiana during the decade of the 1880's afforded much comfort to Bourbon Democratic leaders. But agrarian unrest was, in fact, seldom far below the surface. Hill country whites frequently demonstrated their anger against Democratic officeholders by voting with the Republicans, either directly or through the medium of Independent candidates for local offices. Governor McEnery's Republican opponent carried four upland white parishes in 1884, and greatly exceeded the total of Negro registration in a number of others. On the local level, Catahoula, Grant, St. Helena, St. Landry, St. Tammany, Washington, and Winn Parishes—all with white majorities—elected Republicans or pro-Republican Independents to legislative or parochial offices on more than one occasion between 1879 and 1888. By the latter date, the Farmers' Alliance movement was well underway.

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9 Louisiana, Report of Secretary of State, 1902, 546-53, 561. In 1884, a northern correspondent described the gubernatorial anti-Democratic vote in backwoods parishes as "astonishingly large." McEnery lost Grant, Livingston, St. Helena, and St. Tammany parishes to the Republican candidate John Stevenson. The Republicans came near carrying other white parishes that year. See New York Times, April 23, 1884.

Politically, the Farmers' Union-Alliance had a dual nature. At first, it provided a safety valve for agrarian discontent and held out to farmers the prospect of taking over the reins of the state Democratic party; at the same time, it constructed a framework for a potential third party revolt in case the Bourbon officeholders refused to make room for agrarian demands and candidates.

"A New Party, or Not?," J. A. Tetts questioningly wrote in the summer of 1890. Tetts, like many others, had come to recognize the dilemma facing the Farmers' Alliance. He pondered the alternatives:

The question can easily be settled by both or either of the two existing parties. . . . The mouthpieces of both these old organizations give us to understand that it is our duty to . . . redress our grievances in our present parties, but in every case discourage the hope of relief through the methods proposed. . . . In this dilemma what shall we do?

The Alliance was not organized as a new party, but . . . our principles should be paramount. . . . Conditions, for which both parties are responsible, are fast driving us into serfdom, and the only heritage we can promise our children is a lifelong struggle with powers they can never conquer without bloodshed and anarchy.\footnote{Quoted in National Economist, III (June 28, 1890), 237-38.}

During the months of 1890-91 the Louisiana version of the People's party came to life. The circumstances which led to the founding of this newest party in the Pelican State rose out of a generation of mass frustration and poverty, but three proximate reasons can be given for its
emergence at that particular time. One was the refusal of Louisiana's Democratic congressmen, with one exception, to endorse the favorite panacea of the Alliance—the sub-treasury plan. Introduced by Dr. C. W. Macune in 1889, the plan in brief called for the establishment of a government warehouse for non-perishable farm products in each county of the United States which annually offered for sale at least $500,000 worth of such products. With the storage facilities would be a sub-treasury office where the farmer could obtain, through a negotiable certificate of deposit, a loan bearing one per cent interest per year. The farmer would have until the next harvest to sell his crop on the open market; he would thus be free from merchant or bank credit, and free from speculators who depressed market prices at critical times. Moreover, the plan would put more money in circulation. An estimated 817 counties in the United States sold enough produce to qualify for a sub-treasury. Twenty-nine of these would be in Louisiana.

Conservatives throughout the United States deprecated the

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12 Only Congressman Samuel M. Robertson of the Sixth District endorsed the Alliance sub-treasury plan. Cf. Baton Rouge Daily Capitolian-Advocate, October 1-3, 1890; Colfax Chronicle, August 16, 23, 1890; National Economist, III (June 14, 1890), 204.

13 Bryan, The Farmers' Alliance, 94-99; Hicks, The Populist Revolt, 186-204; Saloutos, Farmer Movements in the South, 119-121.

14 National Economist, III (April 19, 1890), 72.
plan as paternalistic class legislation—"hayseed socialism." The official journal of Louisiana's state government lashed itself into near-apoplexy over the "crack-brained" sub-treasury "monstrosity," and then fumed that all "the complaints of the downtrodden are simply bosh and nonsense. . . ."16

A second proximate contributor to the birth of Louisiana Populism was the gradual capture of the Farmers' Union by the Nicholls administration and its extra-official arm, the Anti-Lottery League. The appointment of Union President Adams as State Commissioner of Agriculture, and the subsequent Farmers' Union-Anti-Lottery League compact at Lafayette, baited the trap which was sprung at Baton Rouge in December of 1891, when Murphy J. Foster, rather than Adams, emerged as the gubernatorial nominee of the reform wing of the Democratic party. As early as the fall of 1890 a number of hill country Farmers' Union lodges were ignoring Adams's conservative political dicta. But the rupture within the Farmers' Union was most clearly revealed during its Lafayette meeting in August, 1891. As mentioned previously, a minority of the order angrily refused the proffered political partnership with the Anti-Lottery, or Reform Democrats. Seventy-three delegates voted to accept

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15 *New York Sun*, quoted in *ibid.* (March 22, 1890), 1.
16 *Baton Rouge Daily Advocate*, September 30, November 11, 1890.
the offer; the dissenting minority cast twenty-two votes. Nearly all the twenty-two were, or would soon be, active in the People's party.  

The third catalytic agent for Louisiana Populism arrived in Baton Rouge one midsummer day in 1890. Charles Vincent, roving reporter and subscription agent for the Winfield (Kan.) American Non-Conformist, came to deliver a speech before the annual convention of the state Farmers' Union. Conservative Democrats knew of the man and feared him. For though Vincent "disclaimed that he was the agent for any political party," the American Non-Conformist, published by his two brothers, was recognized far and wide as a potent vehicle for left wing agrarian ideas. The Vincents' paper was the principal Union Labor organ in Kansas. More important, Union Labor strength in Kansas surpassed that of any other state. But in the months of

17Colfax Chronicle, August 15, 1891; New Orleans Times-Democrat, February 19, 1892; Louisiana Populist, January 24, 1896. Farmers' Union delegates from Acadia, Calcasieu, Catahoula, Grant, Natchitoches, Vernon, and Winn voted against the League-Union compact at Lafayette.  


19Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, August 7, 1890.  

20Hicks, The Populist Revolt, 154-55.  

21Haynes, Third Party Movements, 211.
1889-90, the Kansas third party men jettisoned the laborite name in favor of one more attractive to rural voters. While Charles Vincent spoke in Louisiana, his brothers in Winfield, Kansas, were placing the new name in print: "The People's party."\(^2\)

Charles Vincent soon confirmed the worst of Bourbon suspicions. After the farmers' convention in Baton Rouge closed on August 8, 1890, the Kansas man spent several weeks visiting and lecturing among Farmers' Union leaders in the Fourth and Fifth Congressional Districts of North Louisiana. The *Daily Advocate*, having warily observed him at the recent convention, wondered if it was possible that the "conservative spirit" of the sturdy Anglo-Saxon yeomanry was being perverted by "the rantings of lecturer Vincent. . . ."\(^3\)

But Vincent's exhortations were falling upon eager ears. In a number of upland parishes, particularly Catahoula, Grant, and Winn, conservatism had already become a rather scarce commodity. Winfield, Kansas and Winnfield, Louisiana were akin in more than name.

Thomas J. Guice and Benjamin Brian were among those

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\(^2\)Winfield (Kan.) *American Non-Conformist*, quoted in *National Economist*, III (August 16, 1890), 355. Union Laborites (the Vincents and others), furnished the leadership for the emerging People's party in Kansas during the months of 1889-90. Union Labor headquarters in Kansas were at Winfield.

\(^3\)Baton Rouge *Daily Advocate*, September 3, 1890.
who eagerly discussed Populism with Charles Vincent in the late summer and early fall of 1890.\textsuperscript{24} Another participant was one of Reverend Brian's sons, Hardy Lee Brian. Born in 1865, Hardy Brian had seen his father challenge Democratic candidates in every state senatorial election since Reconstruction; the youth had been "rocked in an 'Independent' cradle."\textsuperscript{25} After a rude education in the public schools of Grant Parish, Hardy Brian moved to neighboring Winn in 1885, married, and set about farming and schoolteaching near the town of Winnfield.\textsuperscript{26} In 1888, following the family

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{24}Cf. Colfax Chronicle, September 20, October 4, 11, 25, 1890; Winnfield Comrade, quoted in ibid., October 11, 1890; Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, October 30, 1890.
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\textsuperscript{25}Colfax Chronicle, September 12, 1891. Hardy Lee Brian was one of nine children. Born near Pollock (in what later became Grant Parish) in 1865, he died in Shreveport in 1949. Hardy Brian became the outstanding Populist leader in Louisiana. His writings, chiefly newspaper articles, reveal him as an intelligent young man who was rather hampered by his provincial background. For Louisiana of the 1890's, however, Brian had serious faults as a third party leader. Though quick to anger at injustice, Brian was, essentially, a gentle natured man; he was unequal to the task of organizing a truly statewide political organization, or of fighting the Bourbon regime with the sort of vigor and ruthlessness that Huey Long later employed. Those who met Hardy Brian late in life found him a cheerful old man with no apparent regrets or bitterness about his futile venture into Louisiana politics. Biographical data on him is scanty, although some useful information may be found in the following sources: Louisiana Populist, October 14, 1898; Josephine Harris, "H. L. Brian Looks Back on Life of Stormy Politics," published in Shreveport Times, March 13, 1939.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{26}See Winnfield Southern Sentinel, February 19, 1886; Winnfield Comrade, quoted in Louisiana Populist, October 14, 1898.
\end{quote}
tradition, twenty-three year old Hardy Brian ran for State Representative as an Independent. The elder Brian was then making his fifth campaign for the State Senate in a district which included Winn. The father and son ticket lost to Democratic candidates; out of about 1,250 votes cast in Winn, Benjamin Brian received 409 and Hardy 270. But within two years, a distinct leftward shift in sentiment among the rank-and-file farmers of the region could be observed. According to Hardy Brian, the 1890 visit of the Kansas spellbinder, Charles Vincent, did much to stir the farmers to action. He "was the first to break the ice for a new party," Brian later wrote.

In particular were farmers in the Fourth and Fifth Congressional Districts angry over the stand taken by Congressmen Newton C. Blanchard and Charles J. Boatner against the Alliance sub-treasury plan. In August of 1890, Blanchard in the Fourth District and Boatner in the Fifth, won out over strong Farmers' Union opposition in the Democratic party nominating conventions. Thereupon, the Winn Parish Union called for delegates, representing the agrarian order in each parish of the Fourth District, to meet in Natchitoches on October 1 for the purpose of nominating a

27Baton Rouge Daily Capitolian-Advocate, May 7-9, 1888; Colfax Chronicle, May 5, 1888.
28Louisiana Populist, September 28, 1894.
man to oppose Blanchard in the general election. This hostility toward Blanchard involved more than the sub-treasury plan. In Congress since 1881, Blanchard had scarcely overworked himself to defend the claims of upland homesteaders against the notorious "Backbone" land grant of Jay Gould's New Orleans Pacific Railroad. Blanchard was a wealthy Shreveport lawyer. The fact that he could, and did, sojourn in Europe "for his health" excited angry feelings among "those of his constituents who have to scuffle around peartly to get a quarter to buy a box of Wright's pills to work the malaria out of their systems."  

Seven of the twelve parish Unions of northwestern Louisiana sent delegates to the Natchitoches assembly. Five parish delegations then voted in favor of independent political action. Frantically, State Union President Adams wired them:

Do not, under any circumstances, nominate an independent candidate for Congress. Your honor... is pledged to the support of the Democratic nominee... Go forth like men and rally your entire forces to the flag of the Democracy. Stand by the colors of the party, and bide your time with patience.

T. S. Adams, President

29Colfax Chronicle, September 20, 1890.


31Baton Rouge Capitol Item, quoted in Louisiana Populist, September 14, 1894.

32Quoted in Colfax Chronicle, October 4, 1890.
Delegates from Grant, Rapides, Sabine, Vernon, and Winn ignored Adams's plea and selected a Farmers' Union-Independent candidate for Congress. Thomas J. Guice was their nominee.\footnote{The term "People's party" was not used by Louisiana third party men until after the Cincinnati convention of May 19-21, 1891. Cf. Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, October 5, 17, 1890; Colfax Chronicle, June 27, 1891.}

Immediately, Guice was hit by a flood of conservative bile; the Democratic organ in Grant Parish described him as "afflicted with a diarrhoea of words and a constipation of ideas," and opined that the "bolting farmers" who selected him were influenced by that meddlesome outsider, Vincent of Kansas.\footnote{Colfax Chronicle, October 11, 1890. Editor Howard G. Goodwyn of the Chronicle was also chairman of the Grant Parish Democratic party organization. As editor of the Chronicle from 1877 until his death in 1920, Goodwyn closely observed and caustically criticized all left wing political movements in Grant and neighboring parishes--the heartland of rural radicalism in Louisiana. The microfilmed files of the Chronicle, fortunately complete, provides one of the best single sources for Pelican State agrarianism in the late nineteenth century. For a short biography of Goodwyn, see Chambers, A History of Louisiana, III, 102.} But Guice, after some vacillation, declined the nomination. He still held the position of State Lecturer in the Farmers' Union. President Adams put heavy pressure on Guice, and the fact that only four parish Unions--the Rapides group having changed its mind--were endorsing him, sobered Guice's obvious desire to make the race.\footnote{Lake Providence Carroll Democrat, October 11, 1890; Opelousas St. Landry Clarion, October 18, 1890.} The Daily Picayune had previously referred
to him as plain "Guice," but after he declined styled him "Colonel Guice." Not to be outdone, the official journal of the state offered the title "General Guice." On election day, November 4, Blanchard received 8,307 votes. Guice was credited with 277 protest ballots. But discontent was, nonetheless, apparent in the 1890 returns; two years before, Blanchard had garnered 16,302 votes against a very weak Republican opponent. The returns from Winn Parish merited special comment. There, in 1890, exactly ninety-five per cent of the electorate agreed with the suggestion in the Winnfield Comrade and stayed away from the polls.

In northeastern Louisiana, attempts to run a strong Farmers' Union man against the ultra-conservative Congressman Boatner met with similar disappointment in 1890. A wealthy lawyer and planter, and a staunch McEnery man, Boatner occupied his seat by courtesy of the disproportionate strength given the plantation parishes in Fifth District Democratic conventions. Hill people were haughtily told

36Daily Picayune, quoted in Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, October 14, 1890.
37Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, October 14, 1890.
38Louisiana, Report of Secretary of State, 1902, 573-74; Winnfield Comrade, quoted in Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, October 31, November 18, 1890.
39Winnsboro Franklin Sun, March 2, 1884; Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Louisiana, I, 301. Boatner began his political career in Catahoula parish in 1876, when he defeated Benjamin Brian for the state Senate. Boatner moved to Quachita Parish in 1878.
to "quit grumbling" at Boatner and the system which managed to foist him upon the region. At least Blanchard spoke kindly of the Farmers' Union; Boatner scored it as a "secret political organization" which no true Democrat should join. A convention of "dissatisfied farmers" of the Fifth District met in Monroe in October of 1890 but failed to name an opposition candidate. Yet Boatner's path was not entirely clear. The President of the Lincoln Parish Union urged members to "ignore Mr. Boatner" in the coming election, and throughout the District Boatner's strength declined from his 1888 level by about 10,000 votes. The Union in Catahoula Parish, dominated by "the poorer class of farmers," felt that negative protest was not enough and brought out T. E. Pritchard as a candidate. Pritchard carried Catahoula, 587 to 435 for Boatner. The local Colored Farmers' Alliance ignored the Republican congressional candidate and voted for Pritchard. Thus, in the

40 Lake Providence Carroll Democrat, October 27, 1888.
41 Daily Picayune, September 4, 1891.
42 Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, October 3, 1890.
43 Ruston Progressive Age, quoted in Lake Providence Carroll Democrat, September 4, 1890.
44 Louisiana, Report of Secretary of State, 1902, 573-74.
45 Trinity Herald, quoted in Colfax Chronicle, August 1, 1891; Louisiana, Report of Secretary of State, 1902, 574.
46 Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, October 30, 1890; Daily Picayune, November 8, 1890.
only parish in the state where a Democratic Congressman faced an active agrarian opponent in 1890, the Democrat lost.

Third party sentiment in Louisiana, as expressed in the congressional races of 1890, seemed almost nonexistent outside the northern hill parishes and, as has been seen, was quite disorganized even there; small farmers in South Louisiana districts put up no opposition to the Democratic candidates. In New Orleans, Union Labor candidate Carson Mudge drew less than one per cent of the recorded vote in the First Congressional District.47

Nevertheless, the more astute Bourbons soon manifested uneasiness. The tide of political agrarianism seemed to be rising, as was indicated by the growing attention throughout the state paid to a third party newspaper in Winn Parish. The Winnfield Comrade had begun publication on October 3, 1890, and soon had readers in distant parishes.48 Hardy Brian was the editor. Brian claimed that the Comrade was the first Populist newspaper in the South.49

47Daily Picayune, November 16, 1890.
48Colfax Chronicle, November 8, 1890, July 11, 1891; Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, December 30, 1890; New Orleans Times-Democrat, August 16, 1891.
49Louisiana Populist, December 7, 1894. Brian's Winnfield Comrade may well have been the first People's party newspaper in the South. But the evidence is inconclusive. The Comrade did not, apparently, use the People's party label until after Brian returned from the Cincinnati convention in May of 1891, though the paper had been an avowed third party organ since its first issue on October 3, 1890. The Comrade was published until 1911. Regretably, no copies are extant prior to 1910; by that time the paper was in Democratic hands.
The Comrade was owned by the Winn Parish Farmers' Union. Special circumstances had led to its unique name. Prior to purchase by the Union, the battered old press and type cases had been used by the Winn Parish Democrat, which, after the sale, ceased publication. The new management was now plagued with the problem of renaming the paper. The old title simply would not do. But an order for new nameplate-size type might take weeks to arrive, and besides, money was scarce. Recalling the situation a half century later, Brian quoted himself as saying, his first day on the job: "We'll see how we can change the title we already have." Fortunately, all the letters in "Democrat" were upper case. By shuffling these letters, and discarding the "t," Brian discovered a combination which at least was not jibberish: "Comrade."^50

The Ocala conventions of the Southern Farmers' Alliance and the Colored Farmers' Alliance met one month after the elections of 1890. Many states in the South had gone through gubernatorial as well as congressional campaigns. The Alliance, it seemed at the time, was well underway in its plan to take over the Democratic party of the

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^50See Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Louisiana, II, 168; Colfax Chronicle, October 11, 1890; Shreveport Times, March 13, 1939, quoted in James S. Penny, "The People's Party Press During the Louisiana Political Upheaval of the Eighteen-Nineties" (Unpublished Master's thesis, Louisiana State University, 1942), 64-65.
South. Four new governors (in Georgia, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas) had won with Alliance backing. Eight southern legislatures were said to be under Alliance control. About forty-four congressmen in the South endorsed the sub-treasury plan. By comparison, Louisiana seemed woefully behind her sister states in Alliance political victories, but President Adams, who took the chastened Guice along with him to Ocala, was still pinning his hopes on the 1892 state election.

Conservative Alliancemen at Ocala hailed the supposed victories of 1890 as proof of the efficacy of remaining in old party lines. But the Kansas delegation, the Negro Alliance, and a handful of southern white Alliancemen took a contrary view. The new People's party in Kansas was booming. Less than six months old as a state organization, it had elected a majority to the legislature, five congressmen, and a United States senator. Prominent among the Kansas delegation at Ocala were the three Vincent brothers. They were

51 Faulkner, Politics, Reform, and Expansion, 144; Hicks, The Populist Revolt, 178; Saloutos, Farmer Movements in the South, 116; Roscoe C. Martin, The People's Party in Texas: A Study in Third Party Politics (University of Texas Bulletin No. 3308: Austin, 1933), 36.

52 Alexandria Farmers' Vidette, quoted in Colfax Chronicle, November 29, 1890.


54 Haynes, Third Party Movements, 240, 251.
credited with drawing up and circulating among the assembled farmers the call for a subsequent "National Union Conference" at Cincinnati, destined, in 1891, to set in motion the national People's party. About 75 of the 500 or more individuals present at Ocala signed the call--mostly Kansas men and members of the Colored Farmers' Alliance. Dr. Macune and Southern Alliance President Polk tried to arrange a compromise which would delay any decision on a third party until February of 1892. But the militant minority refused to wait.

The National Union Conference brought 1,412 delegates from over thirty states and territories to Cincinnati in May of 1891. Naturally, the three Vincents were on hand. So were such inveterate reformers as Ignatius Donnelly of Minnesota, James B. Weaver of Iowa, and Anson J. Streeter of Illinois, together with a number of labor leaders who were there as interested spectators. Among the latter were Terence V. Powderly and Samuel Gompers. But the attendance

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55 New York Times, December 5, 1890; Barr, A Standard History of Kansas and Kansans, II, 1159.

56 Philadelphia Journal of the Knights of Labor, December 11, 1890.


58 Cincinnati Enquirer, May 19-21, 1891; Noblin, Leonidas LaFayette Polk, 269.
at Cincinnati was geographically lopsided. Midwestern and Plains states made up the overwhelming majority--Kansas alone sent 411--and only 36 were on hand from the entire South.\textsuperscript{59} Two of the southerners were from Louisiana: Hardy Brian of Winnfield and I. J. Mills of Lake Charles.\textsuperscript{60}

Young Brian was described by one correspondent as "the temporary lion of the hour" on the opening day of the Cincinnati convention.\textsuperscript{61} The \textit{Comrade} editor seemed to be a more outspoken third party man than any other southerner interviewed; in fact, most of those who had come up from the South followed the lead of Congressman Leonidas F. Livingston of Georgia, who said he was present "to fight this third party move."\textsuperscript{62} Brian's credentials also attracted comment. The Winn Parish agrarians, in authorizing Brian as their representative, had attached 1,200 signatures, a number just 131 shy of the total adult male population of the parish!\textsuperscript{63} Around Winn Parish, Brian told reporters at

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{59}Cincinnati \textit{Enquirer}, May 21, 1891; Saloutos, \textit{Farmer Movements in the South}, 122-23.
\item \textsuperscript{60}Cincinnati \textit{Enquirer}, May 18, 1891.
\item \textsuperscript{61}Philadelphia \textit{Journal of the Knights of Labor}, May 21, 1891. For one thing, Brian entertained the more urbane delegates to the Cincinnati convention by telling of his departure; he left Winnfield riding on a pony, and rode it fifty miles to catch the nearest train which would make connections to Cincinnati.
\item \textsuperscript{62}Cincinnati \textit{Enquirer}, May 19, 1891.
\item \textsuperscript{63}Philadelphia \textit{Journal of the Knights of Labor}, May 21, 1891; U.S., \textit{Compendium of the Eleventh Census}, I, 782-83.
\end{itemize}
Cincinnati, the people would not be intimidated by Bourbon outcries over "the negro menace" and the need for white solidarity inside the Democratic party. "The race cry doesn't scare us," he said.\(^{64}\)

After officially proclaiming the birth of the national People's party, the Cincinnati convention adjourned on May 21. The Populist platform was not an original document. It embodied the Farmers' Alliance program as stated in the "Ocala Demands" of 1890, the major planks being the sub-treasury plan, free and unlimited coinage of silver at a ratio of 16 to 1 to gold, abolition of the national banking system, prohibition of alien ownership of land, a graduated income tax, government control (or ownership) of communications and transportation facilities, an eight hour day for labor, and the direct election of United States Senators.\(^{65}\) The Cincinnati convention was cleverly managed. It permitted professional third party warhorses such as Donnelly to be "in on the ground floor\(^{66}\) as the People's party emerged. And the majority element of the Southern Farmers' Alliance, which had wished to delay the third party decision, was quickly and carefully placated. The managers at Cincinnati set up a national committee to smooth the way

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\(^{64}\)Cincinnati Enquirer, May 19, 1891.

\(^{65}\)Ibid., May 21, 1891.

\(^{66}\)Hicks, The Populist Revolt, 217.
for a union of midwestern and southern agrarian forces at
the proposed St. Louis convention in February of 1892. By that later date President Polk and many other Southern
Alliance leaders were ready for Populism. The Demo-
cratic party of the South had not been and was not likely
to be, captured by the agrarians. The victories of 1890
were proving hollow. The sub-treasury plan had been sabo-
taged in Congress by southern Democrats. Henceforth, the
fight would be between Bourbon Democracy and the People's
party.

Within a month after Brian's return from Cincinnati,
by July 1, 1891, the majority of Farmers' Union members in
Catahoula, Grant, and Winn Parishes had formally renounced
all ties to the Democratic party, and, while assembled at
Union meetings, pledged their support to the People's
party. Soon, Populist stirrings were noticeable among the
Unions of Calcasieu, Natchitoches, Rapides, Sabine, and
Vernon Parishes. Bourbon spokesmen grew increasingly

67 Ibid., 214-17; Philadelphia Journal of the Knights
of Labor, May 28, 1891.

68 Noblin, Leonidas LaFayette Polk, 270-73.


70 Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, June 21-23, 1891; Colfax
Chronicle, June 20, 27, 1891.

71 Winnfield Comrade, quoted in Colfax Chronicle, July
11, 1891; Lake Charles Echo, quoted in Colfax Chronicle,
August 1, 1891; Daily Picayune, October 3, 1891.
disturbed and angry over these mass defections, and the choler of the *Daily Caucasian* was raised several degrees by the news, in late July, that "Professor Vincent" of Kansas had returned "to preach his third party heresy to Louisiana farmers." 72

The Populist groundswell attracted a number of shabby, pathetic misfits. L. A. Traylor, a small, almost dwarfish man whose political history was said to include Radical Republicanism and Greenbackism, was one such individual. 73 Traylor was an ordained Baptist minister. He had also taught school in a number of hill parishes, and, at various times, sold insurance for the Famous Life Association or peddled "some sort of patent medicine." 74 During the summer of 1891 Traylor took to the road as an organizer for the People's party in North and Central Louisiana. He seemed to be quite effective in swaying Negroes from Republicanism to Populism. 75 Accused by the Colfax Chronicle of preaching "communistic ideas," Traylor replied:

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73 For information on L. A. Traylor, see Baton Rouge *Daily Advocate*, October 5, 1890; Homer Guardian-Journal, quoted in Colfax Chronicle, August 1, 1891; Colfax Chronicle, January 30, 1892.

74 Homer Guardian-Journal, quoted in Colfax Chronicle, August 1, 1891.

75 For Traylor's activities among Negroes, see Colfax Chronicle, August 8, 1891.
Educational institutions . . . open their doors to the rich. Magnificent church buildings with splendid embellishments are being erected . . . and the wealth of the country, like the oil from the Standard Oil Trust, flows through a thousand pipes into the vaults of capitalists, making the rich richer and the poor poorer. . . . It is unnatural, unrighteous and damnable, and if I must preach the doctrine of communists to arouse the people from their lethargy, then make the most of it.76

Traylor's Populist activities made him an object of attention, probably for the first time in his life. He was appointed President of a so-called "college" in Grant Parish.77 He was elected Chairman of the Committee of Organization of the Louisiana People's party.78 Even the Daily Picayune took note of him and described him as "prominent."79 In September of 1891, when Grant Parish Populists raised money to start a party organ at Colfax, Traylor became the editor. This paper was christened The Ocala Demand [sic].80 Traylor then had the opportunity to use his acid pen on what he called the "vindictive, villainous and arrogant . . . Louisiana aristocrats," and he cited the editor of the Colfax Chronicle as a prime local example.81

76Letter from L. A. Traylor, published in ibid., August 1, 1891.
77Colfax Chronicle, August 1, 8, 1891.
78Daily Picayune, October 4, 1891.
79Ibid., October 3, 1891.
80Colfax Chronicle, September 19, 1891.
81Colfax The Ocala Demand, quoted in ibid., October 17, 1891.
Traylor portrayed the Chronicle, which often reprinted anti-Populist diatribes from other papers, as a chamberpot into which was emptied "the filth and slush" of the state's Bourbon press. But Traylor's days as a crusader were numbered. Late in 1891 money from the Louisiana State Lottery Company began to trickle into Colfax, and The Ocala Demand suddenly underwent a reversal of policy; Traylor implored his Populist readers to "enlist under the banner" of Samuel D. McEnery in the current gubernatorial campaign. On this sour note did Traylor close his third party career. Obscurity again claimed him.

From the summer of 1891 until April of 1892, political activity in Louisiana, Populist or otherwise, revolved around the question of who would succeed Francis T. Nicholls in the governor's mansion at Baton Rouge. The Populists at first offered qualified support to Thomas Adams. As Hardy

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82 Ibid.

83 Hardy Brian confirmed reports that the lottery was at work among Populist leaders in Grant Parish, and he angrily denounced those who accepted lottery money. Brian later called Traylor "the arch traitor and cats-paw." Winnfield Comrade, quoted in Colfax Chronicle, February 6, 1892; Louisiana Populist, August 2, 1895.

84 Colfax The Ocala Demand, quoted in Colfax Chronicle, January 9, 1892.

85 Colfax Chronicle, January 30, 1892. Goodwyn observed that Reverend Traylor was "but a fraction physically and morally."
Brian explained it in the *Comrade*, the Louisiana Populists desired most of all a governor and state legislature sympathetic to the Southern Alliance program; if Adams would stand by the Ocala Demands and not become a mere tool of the Anti-Lottery League patricians, then the third party men would vote for an Adams-headed state Democratic ticket in 1892. But Adams fulfilled none of these Populist provisions. He even expressed doubts about the sub-treasury plan. It was at the Lafayette convention of the Farmers' Union, in August of 1891, that the break between Adams and the left wing agrarians became irrevocable. Not only did they foresee the outcome of the Adams-Anti-Lottery compact, but they also resented the fact that Adams's speech before the Lafayette gathering made no mention of the Ocala Demands, but rather was confined to two main topics: the lottery evil and the unwisdom of straying from the Democratic party. A number of hitherto faithful Adams men (including Thomas J. Guice) then proclaimed themselves Populists.

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87 *New Orleans Times-Democrat*, quoted in Colfax *Chronicle*, October 31, 1891.


89 Opelousas *St. Landry Clarion*, August 15, 1891.
One angry upland farmer wrote about Adams and the state Democratic party in such quaint style that the Colfax Chronicle published it verbatim. The agrarian's letter concluded with the following (spelling and grammar unchanged) words:

I dislike to be called a chronic grumbler but I would like to know what kind of gall a man can have within him that will advocate a party that has formed a body simular to that of a crockadile and equally as dangerous with a thousand tubes extending from its eyes nose mouth and ears between its ribs and from under its tail that can at any time squirt the Dye . . . into the eyes of the industrial masses and while they are in their blinded condition rob them of the fruits of their toil then return home singing hymns of Joy for the Success they have had upon their pilfering tour Oh if Thomas Jefferson could rise from the grave and take only a side look at the Present sistems of the democratic party he would no doubt regret bitterly that . . . he was the Founder of democracy.90

The first state convention of the Louisiana People's party was slated for October 2, 1891, at Alexandria. Populist organizers were meanwhile busy. Hardy Brian, Guice, and Traylor spent much of September conversing with working-men's organizations in New Orleans; the Daily Picayune, observing their progress, reported that the Knights of Labor "are in hearty sympathy with the movement."91 The People's Municipal party, as Populism's New Orleans affiliate was designated, had been holding meetings since midsummer.

90Letter from S. W. LaCroix, published in Colfax Chronicle, September 12, 1891.

91Daily Picayune, September 16-20, October 3, 1891.
Moreover, the New Orleans *Issue*, a laborite weekly founded in the spring of 1891, was now endorsing the Populist cause. Thomas A. Clayton, manager of the Farmers' Union Commercial Association of Louisiana, supposedly provided the funds for the party in the New Orleans area.

Seventy-eight delegates from seventeen parishes were present at the Alexandria convention. Most surprising was the size of the urban delegation. No less than thirty-five of the total seventy-eight Populists assembled had come up from New Orleans. Winn Parish, by comparison, occupied five seats. All those present at the morning session were white men; however, President Isaac Keys of the Colored Alliance, along with another Negro Allianceman, arrived late in the day and the two were admitted to the speaker's platform. Presiding over the convention preliminaries was Benjamin Brian. The elder Brian, looking over the assembled farmers and laborers, expressed "great satisfaction" at seeing the movement he had worked "for the last fifteen

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92 *New Orleans Issue*, August 1, 1891. The *Issue* was owned and edited by J. B. Cameron and J. R. Hoening, Jr. Both were active third party workers in the city and at state Populist conventions.

93 *Colfax Chronicle*, October 31, 1891; *Amite Florida Parishes*, quoted in *ibid.*, November 7, 1891.

94 *Daily Picayune*, October 2-4, 1891; *Opelousas St. Landry Clarion*, October 10, 1891.

95 *Daily Picayune*, October 3, 1891.
years" to create finally organize on a statewide basis. He also spoke of the rising Populist sentiment among Negro people. The big planters, Reverend Brian prophesied, would try to stop their colored tenants from joining this mass movement; yet he felt confident that this obstacle "would be attended to at the proper time." His curious statement of confidence was not well rooted in reality.

The convention adjourned without making nominations for state office. That would be done later, in February of 1892. A state organization, however, was set up: Thomas Clayton was named as chairman of the state executive committee; Hardy Brian was named secretary of the party. Also, on October 3, the public could read the potent "Address to the People of the State of Louisiana ... Irrespective of Class, Color, or Past Political Affiliation." This first platform of the state People's party read, in part:

None can yet tell whether this revolution shall be accomplished by peaceable means, by appeals to the reason of the dominant element of our population . . . or whether a deaf ear will still be turned . . . until . . . the people rise in their mighty wrath, and with swift retributive strokes, beat down the

96Colfax Chronicle, October 10, 1891; Daily Picayune, October 3, 1891.

97Daily Picayune, October 4, 1891. Thomas J. Guice was absent from the first Populist party convention in Louisiana; he claimed illness in the family as his excuse, but it may be that he could not afford to travel. A newspaper in Guice's home parish said the tax rolls did not report him as owning as much as one dollar's worth of property. Mansfield Journal, quoted in Colfax Chronicle, November 5, 1892.
gates of . . . monopoly . . . and corruption. . . .

You colored men . . . you must now realize that there is no hope of any further material benefit to you in the Republican party, and that if you remain in it you will continue to be hewers of wood and drawers of water in the future as you have been in the past.

Democrats . . . . Have you not the experience of uninterrupted Democratic rule in this state? What has it done for you? Are your children growing up better equipped for the battle of life than you were? Are your institutions equal to the demands made upon them? Have your public finances been honestly administered? The spectre of negro supremacy has been used to keep you in the toils of the scheming machine politicians as effectively as the voudou is employed to terrify the credulous negroes themselves.

But now the machine politicians have put a new slide in the magic lantern . . . and show you on their screen the hideous figure of lottery rule, to intimidate you and prevent you from grasping the hand held out to help you escape from your political dungeon. Must a man be bound hand and foot in Democratic fetters before he can be trusted to vote against the lottery. . . .? Cast your ballot against this lottery and all . . . gambling on the product of your labor.

Will you still remain the willing serfs of machine politicians? Shall Louisiana not join in that ringing shout for liberty and reform that started in Kansas. . . .?98

After studying this platform and examining the signatures suffixed thereto, the *Daily Picayune*, headlined: "IT MAY BE RIDICULOUS, BUT IT IS REVOLUTION."99 Nothing like the Populist convention, said the old New Orleans daily, had ever been witnessed in Louisiana before; "it is a

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98 *Daily Picayune*, October 4, 1891.
gathering of all the discontented, dissatisfied and un-
prosperous elements of the population. . . . It is easy to
laugh at, but . . . there is nothing absurd in the fact that
half the delegates at the Alexandria conference were from
this city. When the city and country unite, results may be
serious." Said an upstate Bourbon paper, in noting the
Populist platform: "For unabashed impudence and unblushing
demagogism [it] has no parallel in the history of revo-
lationary manifestos."100

But the Alexandria conference lacked one bewhiskered
face that had been present at almost every significant
agrarian gathering in the state for the past decade, in-
cluding the dismal little gathering near D'Arbonne Church in
1881. J. A. Tetts was in Alexandria in October of 1891.
But he stayed away from the Populist convention. Tetts,
since 1889, had steadily fallen under the conservative in-
fluence of Thomas Adams; late that year President Adams ap-
pointed Tetts editor of the "Union department" of the news-
paper selected as the official journal of the Farmers'
Union, the Shreveport Weekly Caucasian.101 Shortly

100 Harrisonburg Catahoula News, quoted in Colfax
Chronicle, October 31, 1891.

101 Shreveport Daily Caucasian, January 8, 1890;
Shreveport Weekly Caucasian, January 30, 1890. The Choud-
rant Farmers' Union, the first organ of the Louisiana order,
moved its offices to Monroe in 1888 and had ceased publi-
cation by 1891. In fact, the Farmers' Union had ceased
being the state organ of the Union as early as 1888.
thereafter, Adams and Tetts decided that a journal "wholly owned and controlled by the Order" was an imperative need. This decision led to the founding of the Alexandria Farmers' Vidette; its first issue came off the press on October 22, 1890. Tetts was at first co-editor, then editor-in-chief.

The Farmers' Vidette evidently boomed Adams for the governorship and praised the Anti-Lottery League more than it dwelt upon the problems of small farmers. Tetts also denounced the third party movement, as it spread out of Winn Parish, in unmeasured terms. The Populists returned his fire; Tetts was even accused of being the prime fulorum behind the Farmers' Union-Anti-Lottery League compact; L. A. Traylor referred to the Farmers' Vidette as "Tetts, Adams & Co.," and vowed to "eat up Tetts . . . bloddy raw." But Tetts, whatever his designs might have been, was not equipped to hold his own in the Machiavellian atmosphere of Louisiana Democratic politics. On April 21, 1892,

102 National Economist, III (August 30, 1890), 382.
103 Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Northwest Louisiana, 533; New Orleans Louisiana Review, January 27, 1892.
104 Alexandria Farmers' Vidette, quoted in Colfax Chronicle, November 7, 14, 1891.
105 Mansfield De Soto Democrat, quoted in New Orleans Louisiana Review, January 27, 1892. It was alleged that Tetts believed the state printing contract would be thrown to the Farmers' Vidette if Foster became Governor.
106 Daily Picayune, October 3, 1891; Colfax The Ocala Demand, quoted in Colfax Chronicle, November 14, 1891.
three days after the state election, Tetts resigned as editor of the fading Farmers' Vidette. His usefulness to Adams and to the Anti-Lottery League had terminated. Tetts, along with his wife and three unmarried daughters, prepared to move to the village of Robeline, in Natchitoches Parish. He had saved enough money to buy some newspaper equipment, probably second hand. One month later the Robeline Battle Flag appeared. Tetts had become a Populist.

If a Louisiana voter did not wish to support a particular ticket in the April, 1892, state election, he had (in theory at least) four other choices. The fragmentation of state parties that year confused the most seasoned political veterans. The pro-lottery Regular Democrats were running a ticket headed by ex-Governor McEnery; the Anti-Lottery Democrats had Murphy J. Foster at the top of their slate; the Republicans also put out two state tickets, with Albert H. Leonard as the pro-lottery and John E. Breaux as the anti-lottery Republican candidates for Governor. Finally, on February 18, the People's party placed Robert L. Tannehill of Winn Parish, in the gubernatorial race, along with a full slate of candidates for the lesser state


108 Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, December 16-20, 1891; New Orleans Times-Democrat, January 20, February 18, 1892. Leonard was allied with ex-Senator William P. Kellogg; Breaux was a member of ex-Governor Henry Clay Warmoth's faction of the Louisiana Republican party.
"Political nomenclature," observed the St. Landry Clarion, "is becoming numerous and complex." Also complex were the postures taken by the various nominees. The McEnery Democrats, heretofore exponents of the rawest sort of Bourbonism, were now wringing their hands in pious dismay over the wretched condition of state schools and institutions. For this same election would decide upon the lottery recharter amendment. The McEneryites, supporting the lottery offer to pour $1,250,000 per year into the state coffers in exchange for a twenty-five year constitutional renewal of life, denounced the Foster Democrats as cruel "rich men" who cared nothing for the poor school children who would gain from the proffered lottery largess. Yet the fact that the Foster ticket included three members of the Farmers' Union prompted one McEnery enthusiast to categorize the entire slate, including Foster, as "red revolutionists."

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109 The Populist state ticket in 1892 offered: Governor, Robert L. Tannehill of Winn; Lt. Governor, I. J. Mills of Calcasieu; Secretary of State, D. McStravick of Orleans; Treasurer, John Mahoney of Orleans; Auditor, John Hendricks of Caddo; Superintendent of Education, J. D. Patton of Grant; Attorney General, Wade Hough of Concordia, New Orleans Times-Democrat, February 19-21, 1892.


111 Daily Picayune, August 24, 1891; New Orleans Louisiana Review, January 6, 1892.

112 Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, February 12, 1892.
hammered away on the moral evil of the lottery and its Carpetbagger origins; they suggested that a McEnery victory might bring Major Burke back from Honduras. Meanwhile, the Leonard and Breaux Republican tickets were much too absorbed in their intercine squabble to bother the Democrats.

"This newborn babe," as Hardy Brian termed the Louisiana People's party, hoped to benefit from the family fights going on in the Democratic and Republican houses. The Populist state platform in 1892 made a special bid for the Negro vote. "We declare emphatically," said the document, "that the interests of the white and colored races of the South are identical. . . . Equal justice and fairness must be accorded to each. . . ." Of the 171 delegates present at the Populist nominating convention in February of 1892, at least 24 were colored men. Two of the Negroes present were placed in nomination for a position on the state ticket. C. A. Roxborough of New Iberia and L. D. Laurent of Alexandria were both candidates for the Populist

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113Bayou Sara True Democrat, March 9, 1892; Ope­lousas St. Landry Clarion, January 2, 23, 1892.
114Winnfield Comrade, quoted in Lucia Elizabeth Daniel, "The Louisiana People's Party" (Master's thesis, Louisiana State University, 1942), 32. The Daniel thesis was published in the Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XXVI (October, 1943), 1055-1149.
115New Orleans Times-Democrat, February 19, 1892.
116Ibid.
nomination to the office of State Treasurer. Other colored
delegates, however, urged them to withdraw their names; "it
was not the proper time," the more cautious Negroes ex­
plained, for colored Populists to run for office.117 The
Times-Democrat correspondent indicated that the white Popu­
lists did not take part in the argument, preferring to let
the Negroes settle it themselves. Shortly before the con­
vention was due to ballot, both Negroes withdrew their
candidacy. But Laurent and Roxborough did receive organi­
zational positions within the party; they became members of
the Populist state executive committee.118

Robert L. Tannehill, the only bona fide Populist the
party ever nominated for Governor of Louisiana, was a rela­
tively prosperous resident of Winnfield. He owned a saw mill
and a cotton gin. Forty-four years of age in 1892, Tannehill
had previously held one public office: sheriff of Winn
Parish. He served as treasurer of the Louisiana Farmers'
Union and presided over the parish Union from 1887 to

117 Ibid. Laurent was state President of the Colored
Farmers' Alliance of Louisiana in 1890-91. Roxborough had
been expelled from the Republican party in 1887 after he had
been accused of stealing votes for the Democrats. In fact,
a mob of Negroes in the town of Plaquamine once tried to
lynch Roxborough. New Orleans Weekly Pelican, April 23, May
28, 1887.

118 Laurent, immediately after the Alexandria con­
vention, joined a number of white Louisiana Populists at
the national third party conference which opened at St. Louis
on February 22, 1892. Jack Abramowitz, "The Negro in the
Agrarian Revolt," Agricultural History, XXIV (April, 1950) 94.
Yet Tannehill was virtually unknown outside of Winn. The other members of the ticket were equally obscure.

McEnery and his followers tended to ignore the Populist candidates, assuming correctly that the little agrarian party would draw most of its votes from men who would have otherwise supported Foster. The Fosterites understood this also. Consequently, the Populist ticket was treated most hostilely by the Foster Democracy; claims were made that lottery money financed the Populist campaign, and that the third party was making the race "in order to help the lottery as much as possible." However, the Fosterite charge that the Populist platform failed to condemn the lottery was patently untrue. Tannehill's supporters took the view that the gambling syndicate was a great evil, but not the only one which plagued the unhappy state. The New Orleans Issue, Populism's urban advocate, suggested that the Foster Democrats had taken up the anti-lottery crusade merely to herd working people away from other fields of reform. In other words, the lottery was a sacrificial wolf being thrown to the lambs.

That Foster would be the next Governor became

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119 Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Northwest Louisiana, 492; Winnfield Southern Sentinel, August 28, 1885, September 16, 1887.
120 Alexandria Town Talk, quoted in Opelousas St. Landry Clarion, October 3, 1891.
121 New Orleans Issue, June 4, 1892.
evident weeks before the election. The Federal government, by February of 1892, had forced the lottery to discontinue its use of the United States mail.\textsuperscript{122} McEnery’s obvious lack of popularity convinced lottery officials that their cause within the state was also hopeless. The company withdrew its request for recharter.\textsuperscript{123} Foster obtained 79,388 votes against 47,037 for McEnery in the general election on April 19. The two Republicans divided 41,818 votes. Populist Tannehill brought up the rear with 9,804.\textsuperscript{124} Naturally, official returns from any Louisiana election were subject to question; everyone but the Fosterites claimed that gross frauds had occurred. One fact, though was clear: Populist sentiment had not yet made much headway either in the rural parishes or the city. Six per cent of the state vote was not an encouraging beginning.

Tannehill ran ahead of his Democratic and Republican opponents in just four parishes: Catahoula, Grant, Vernon, and Winn. These four gave the Populist ticket 2,903 votes. One-tenth of Tannehill’s total state vote came from his home parish, where he received 1,001 against 305 for all four opponents; but, as one Bourbon observer jokingly noted, when all fifty-nine parishes were added up it became quite clear

\textsuperscript{122}Ezell, \textit{Fortune's Merry Wheel}, 266-67.
\textsuperscript{123}Romero, \textit{Louisiana Historical Quarterly}, XXVIII, 1160.
\textsuperscript{124}Louisiana, \textit{Official Journal of the Senate}, 1892.
that "Tannehill didn't Winn."\footnote{Lake Providence \textit{Carroll Democrat}, April 30, 1892.} The Populist candidate made a respectable showing in nine other parishes; Bienville, Calcasieu, Caldwell, De Soto, Jackson, Natchitoches, Rapides, Red River, and Sabine. But the urban returns were discouraging to the extreme. Out of almost 40,000 ballots counted in New Orleans, Tannehill received 71.\footnote{Louisiana, \textit{Official Journal of the Senate}, 1892, 21. The Populist vote in New Orleans in 1892 was, in all probability, considerably higher than the official returns would indicate. The city administration was notorious for counting third party votes in the Democratic column; in no New Orleans precinct were the Populists permitted to have commissioners in 1892. Cf. \textit{New Orleans Times-Democrat}, April 18-22, 1892; George M. Reynolds, \textit{Machine Politics in New Orleans: 1897-1926} (New York, 1936), 24-25.}

Four People's party men were elected to the state legislature in 1892. Benjamin F. Brian was the sole Populist member of the upper house; the seat he had once held (1879-84) as an Independent, and had run for a total of six times, would now be his for the remaining years of his life.\footnote{Benjamin Brian died in 1896, at the age of 63. \textit{Louisiana Populist}, November 6, 1896.} Hardy Brian, his son, represented Winn Parish in the lower house. Albert Shelby of Grant, an ex-Republican, and John Franklin of Vernon were the other Populist representatives.\footnote{The Official journal erroneously listed all but Senator Brian as Democrats. Cf. Louisiana, \textit{Official Journal of the House of Representatives}, 1892, 698-700; Colfax \textit{Chronicle}, April 23, August 6, 1892.} Their legislative record was undistinguished.
However, it was clearly the strategy of the four Populist legislators to support bills introduced by Democratic members of the Farmers' Union; measures introduced by non-Democratic members had little chance of ever reaching the floor for a vote. But at best, the agrarian coalition of Populists and Farmers' Union Democrats could count on a mere four senators out of thirty-six in the upper house, and twenty-two out of one hundred members in the house. The session was notably lacking in reform legislation.

During the summer and fall of 1892, as the presidential and congressional races drew near, the People's party of Louisiana came to realize the enormity of the task which confronted them. Factionalism within the Democratic party was fading. The lottery question was settled, and Governor Foster's conservatism on matters of economics and race began to win plaudits among the old McEnery clique. United, the Bourbon Democracy of Louisiana scrutinized their agrarian challengers and found them puny but potentially dangerous; as one of McEnery's friends phrased it: "A spirit of political insubordination" was abroad in the land.

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129 Shreveport Times, March 13, 1939.
130 Romero, Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XXVIII, 1164-66; Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, October 7, 1892.
131 Lake Providence Banner Democrat, September 10, 1892.
strike in November of 1892 increased his popularity among upper class Louisianians. Luckily for the new Governor, the 25,000 or more striking laborers confined their protests to matters of hours and wages and, with few exceptions, were apathetic toward the notion of political union with the rural Populists.132

A meeting of the People's party executive committee, on October 1, 1892, resolved to set up permanent state headquarters in New Orleans, and Andrew B. Booth of that city was named chairman of the executive committee. A young and rather nondescript man, Booth served more as a clerk and errand-boy for the party than as a moulder of policy.133 Booth continued on as chairman until 1896. His work in the shabby New Orleans office was hampered by an almost total lack of money; often, he was unable to mail out Populist literature because the office could not buy the postage stamps.134 Booth earned his living, not as a professional

132 For a discussion of the New Orleans general strike of 1892, see Roger W. Shugg, "The New Orleans General Strike of 1892," Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XXI (April, 1938), 547. The effect of the strike upon urban Populism appears to have been virtually nil. The third party ran no candidates in New Orleans in 1892, and obtained less than 500 votes (officially, at least) in 1894. The New Orleans Issue, by 1894, was more Socialist than Populist. See Pearce, "The Rise and Decline of Labor in New Orleans," 30; Hall MS, 10-29; New Orleans Issue, December 10, 17, 31, 1892.

133 Colfax Chronicle, October 15, 1892; Louisiana Populist, July 12, 1895.

134 Louisiana Populist, July 12, 1895.
Populist, but rather as a lecturer for an organization known as the Knights of Honor, which had no political affiliation but appeared to be an insurance company disguised as a benevolent and fraternal lodge.\textsuperscript{135} Hardy Brian, who served as state secretary of the agrarian party, resided in Winnfield until 1894, when he moved to Natchitoches.\textsuperscript{136} The chairman and the secretary seldom had the chance to meet and plan strategy. An effective statewide organization did not exist.

Shortly before the national election of November, 1892, Populist candidates announced for Congress in four Louisiana districts. The news provoked a torrent of Bourbon abuse which surpassed all previous expletives used against the agrarian rebels. The \textit{Daily Advocate} and the \textit{Daily States} led the attack. Populists, according to the former, were "political hermaphrodites," and their party "a bastard organization. . . . We appeal to the patriots of Louisiana to shun this monstrous political gangrene as they would a leper at the gates."\textsuperscript{137} Moreover, the \textit{Daily Advocate} was "quite tired" of the Populist "mouthings and whinings" about vote fraud; "if . . . they . . . can't protect themselves from being 'counted out,' they should move out . . . and go

\textsuperscript{135}Lake Providence \textit{Banner Democrat}, February 1, 1896.
\textsuperscript{136}\textit{Louisiana Populist}, December 28, 1894.
\textsuperscript{137}Baton Rouge \textit{Daily Advocate}, October 5, November 1, 1892.
to some place where people don't 'count out.'"\(^{138}\) Henry J. Hearsey, editor of the *Daily States*, whose adoration of the status quo was perhaps surpassed only by his love for whiskey,\(^{139}\) felt that Brian, Guice, and their ragged followers were "sore heads, demagogues, agitators, ... rainbow chasers"; in sum, "miserable excrescence of the Democratic and Republican parties."\(^{140}\) Hearsey advocated dictatorship as the most suitable form of government for Louisiana.\(^{141}\) He was otherwise known for his lachrymose eulogies to the memory of General Robert E. Lee.\(^{142}\)

Open Populist-Republican cooperation in Louisiana was inaugurated in October of 1892. One month prior to the election, Thomas J. Guice journeyed to New Orleans to open political negotiations with both the Warmoth-Breaux and the Kellogg-Leonard factions of the G.O.P.\(^{143}\) By October 20 the

\(^{138}\)Ibid., October 6, 1892.

\(^{139}\)See Homer Claiborne Guardian, quoted in New Orleans Weekly Pelican, July 16, 1887.

\(^{140}\)New Orleans Daily States, quoted in Colfax Chronicle, August 13, 1892.

\(^{141}\)For Hearsey's espousal of dictatorship, see New Orleans Daily States, quoted in Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, August 27, 1897.

\(^{142}\)Shreveport Sunday Judge, January 26, 1896. Major Hearsey was originally from Shreveport, and conservatives of that city were proud to claim him as a native son. In fact, a more fitting place of origin for Hearsey could not be imagined.

\(^{143}\)Colfax Chronicle, October 22, 29, 1892; Uzee, "Republican Politics in Louisiana," 125-26.
bargain was sealed. Populists would nominate candidates in the Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Congressional Districts; the Republicans would run their men in the Second and Third; an Independent in the First District would be supported by both parties. Where the Republicans had no candidate they would endorse the Populist nominee; the Populists were to return the favor in the Republican districts. Also, an agreement was reached on presidential electors. A fusion ticket would be issued; four Populist electors pledges to James G. Weaver and four Republican electors pledged to Benjamin Harrison were to be listed on the ballot.144

Apparently, national leaders of the Republican party were much in favor of the Louisiana fusion arrangements,145 though some Republicans inside the state had misgivings; the national Populist party, on the other hand, criticized the arrangement. People's party National Committee Chairman H. E. Taubeneck said the Louisiana fusion was made "against my protest."146

Elsewhere in the South in 1892, the Populists and Republicans tended toward informal agreements in local, state, and sometimes congressional races; but only in

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144 White, Mississippi Valley Historical Review, V, 9-11; New Orleans Times-Democrat, October 21-23, 1892.

145 Robert Lowrey [?] to J. Ernest Breda, October 14, 1892, in Breda Papers (Louisiana State University Archives).

146 Quoted in New Orleans Issue, December 10, 1892.
Louisiana were the presidential electors joined and the congressional agreement so positive. The fact that the first statewide Populist-Republican fusion in the South occurred in Louisiana was another indication that the Pelican State had an unusually oppressive Bourbon Democratic regime. As one Republican grimly observed, the state's rulers had devised a cunning substitute for government. It was, he said, "an oligarchy by arithmetic."

The fusion agreement of 1892 was, of course, not without precedent in Louisiana. The National party movement of 1878 had attempted a combination of yeoman white and Negro Republican voters under a similar organization; however, that effort, falling as it did under conservative white Republican control, was a standing lesson to the Populists of the 1890's. Warmoth, Kellogg, and the other remnants of Carpetbaggism were not the most trustworthy of allies. Many Populists displayed a lack of enthusiasm for the 1892 fusion. Hardy Brian, though he accepted it, revealed a sense of shame when he asked his upland neighbors


148 Professor Key suspects that "the ruling oligarchy of Louisiana really pressed down harder than did the governing groups of other [southern] states." Key, Southern Politics, 160.

149 Quoted in New Orleans Weekly Pelican, January 5, 1889.
to share their votes for a "plutocrat" like President Harrison. But however different their aims and economic philosophy might be, Louisiana's Populist and Republican leaders had one thing in common: a mutual enemy. As long as the Democrats denied all opponents the right to a free and fair election, cooperation among the out-groups offered the only hope, thin though it might be, for success.

Thomas J. Guice obtained the Populist nomination in the Fourth District. He now made the race against Congressman Blanchard which the Farmers' Union-Independent party had invited him to make two years before. Guice's stature among the Populists had risen sharply since midsummer of 1892. Then, at the Farmers' Union annual state convention, held in Monroe, he captained the third party forces in a takeover of the Union organization. President Adams, who recently had been sworn in as Secretary of State under Governor Foster, resigned his leadership of the Farmers' Union and walked out of the Monroe convention. Populists thereupon took over four of the six state offices in the agrarian order.151

150 Winnfield Comrade, quoted in Colfax Chronicle, October 29, 1892.

151 John Pickett, a recent Populist convert, was elected President of the Farmers' Union in August, 1892. Pickett was a member of Governor Foster's official family; he had been elected Treasurer of Louisiana on the Foster Democratic ticket in 1892. However, he had broken with the administration by the time of the Farmers' Union convention in 1892. Daniel, "The Louisiana People's Party," 42-43; Colfax Chronicle, August 13, 1892.
As expected, Guice's congressional candidacy aroused Democratic ire: "Greasy Guice," "Garrolous Guice," "the igno­ramus candidate," "veritable scum," were a few of the epi­thets applied. Hardy Brian, who was no stranger to Bourbon invective himself, once remarked that no other agrarian reformer of his acquaintance was ever subjected to as much slander and personal abuse as fell upon Guice.

Robert P. Webb, the veteran Greenbacker from Claiborne Parish, ran as a Populist against Congressman Boatner in the Fifth District. Also in that race was an Independent candidate with a Populistic program: Andrew Augustus Gunby, publisher of the Monroe Bulletin. In the Sixth District, Josiah Kleinpeter, East Baton Rouge planter, accepted the Populist congressional nomination but did not wage an active campaign. The Republicans having decided not to make the Third District race against Democratic Congressman Andrew Price, Populist I. J. Mills announced his candidacy. In the metropolitan First and Second Districts, Populists pledged their support to Independent James

152 Colfax Chronicle, July 30, September 3, November 5, 1892; Lake Providence Banner Democrat, September 10, 1892.
153 Louisiana Populist, September 2, 1898.
154 Mer Rouge Vidette, quoted in Lake Providence Banner Democrat, October 29, 1892.
155 Bayou Sara True Democrat, October 22, 1892; New Orleans Issue, December 10, 1892.
156 New Orleans Issue, December 10, 1892.
Wilkinson and Republican Morris Marks, respectively.\textsuperscript{157}

Shortly before the election Populist presidential candidate James B. Weaver toured Louisiana and several other southern states. The fact that Weaver had been a Union general during the Civil War was dragged out by the Bourbon press; his anti-southern activities were described as "merciless . . . brutal . . . cruel."\textsuperscript{158} After this theme was exhausted, the \textit{Daily Advocate} went on to call Weaver an anarchist and a "prostitute."\textsuperscript{159} Meanwhile, the state's Democratic spokesmen flayed away at the already-dead "force bill." A Republican measure which had been placed before Congress during the 1890-91 session, it would have provided for Federal supervision of elections and Federal control of registration of voters.\textsuperscript{160} The bill had failed to pass. But it had summoned up the spectre of military Reconstruction. Though defeated in Congress, the force bill performed a valuable function for southern Democratic leaders; "force

\textsuperscript{157}\textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{158}\textit{Colfax Chronicle}, August 13, 1892.

\textsuperscript{159}\textit{Baton Rouge Daily Advocate}, October 7, 1892. Forty-eight Louisiana Populists attended their party's national nominating convention at Omaha, Nebraska, in July of 1892. The Pelican State delegation cast a unanimous vote for the men nominated, James B. Weaver of Iowa and James G. Field of Virginia. \textit{Colfax Chronicle}, July 23, 1892; Daniel, "The Louisiana People's Party," 42.

\textsuperscript{160}\textit{Forum}, X (September, 1890), 23-26.
bill and nigger domination" became a potent shibboleth in coming elections. Louisiana's Populists were accused of supporting a revival of the measure in Congress. Guice was quoted as saying: "Bourbonism is doomed. If they don't give us a fair count, they'll get the force bill or hell."  

None of the four Populist congressional candidates managed to unseat a Democratic incumbent in the November 8 election; in fact, the official returns showed a topheavy Democratic victory in all six districts of the state. But the Populist leaders discovered a few bright signs. Tannehill's vote in April had been less than 10,000 for the entire state; seven months later, the party, though it listed no candidate in two congressional districts, amassed 17,752. Little of this gain could be attributed to

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161 Louisiana Populist, December 20, 1895.
162 Lake Providence Banner Democrat, November 5, 1892.
163 Populist candidates for Congress carried seven parishes in 1892; Grant, Jackson, Lincoln, Sabine, Union, Vernon, and Winn. Guice received 5,167 votes in the Fourth District, Webb received 4,301 in the Fifth, Mills 3,123 in the Third, and Kleinpeter 2,043 in the Sixth. The total credited the party for the congressional races of 1892 also includes the 3,119 cast for the Independent, Gunby, in the Fifth District. Gunby's program was Populistic and he soon joined the party. Louisiana, Report of Secretary of State, 1902, 575-76. In the presidential election, Cleveland electors polled 87,922 against 26,132 for the Harrison-Weaver electors in the state. No equitable division of this vote is possible, as Burnham points out; how much of the Harrison-Weaver vote was Populist and how much Republican can only be guessed at. W. Dean Burnham, Presidential Ballots: 1836-1892 (Baltimore, 1955), 487, 918.
Republican support. The Republican sugar planters in the Third District supported the protectionist-minded Democratic Congressman rather than Populist I. J. Mills;\textsuperscript{164} and elsewhere, in the Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Districts, the Democratic machine refused to relax its grip on the ballot box in the Negro parishes. The Republican organization in these latter regions, though apparently willing to aid the Populists, had little help to offer. Especially was this true in North Louisiana. No Republican Congressional candidate had exceeded 1,756 votes in the Fourth District since Reconstruction; in the Fifth, 1,151 had been the highest G.O.P. total in recent years.\textsuperscript{165} Said the New Orleans Issue, with only slight misstatement: "We owe nothing to the Republicans."\textsuperscript{166}

Populism in the Pelican State next awaited the congressional races of 1894, and the gubernatorial election of 1896. In the meantime, the lot of the ordinary man, white or black, grew worse as the effects of a disastrous national depression were felt with increasing severity; Foster's Bourbon administration drifted deeper into reaction; and widening political and economic schisms within the upper

\textsuperscript{164}Uzee, "Republican Politics in Louisiana," 125.

\textsuperscript{165}New Orleans Issue, December 10, 1892; Louisiana, Report of Secretary of State, 1902, 572-76.

\textsuperscript{166}New Orleans Issue, December 10, 1892.
class began to shake the self-assurance of the governing oligarchy. It was then that the Bourbons of Louisiana would face their most serious challenge in the half century between Reconstruction and Huey Long.
CHAPTER IX

BOURBONISM TRIUMPHANT

During the early summer of 1894, Governor Foster's regime made a crucial decision: the time had come to put down, once and for all, the bothersome agrarian menace. Foster himself launched the Bourbon offensive. The Governor's message to the 1894 session of the legislature urged fundamental changes in Louisiana's suffrage and election laws; it was imperative, he explained later, to disfranchise "the mass of ignorance, vice and venality without any proprietary interest in the State." The proposed legislation was plainly aimed at the poor of both races. But until such time as these laws could be enacted, the attempted coalition of poor white and poor black under the People's party banner must be held in check at all costs; therefore, the usual methods of vote fraud and intimidation were intensified during the elections of 1894 and 1896. Populism in Louisiana was repressed with a violence

1Louisiana, Official Journal of the Senate, 1894, 28.

unparalleled in the South.\textsuperscript{3}

The constitution of 1879 had placed no unusual restrictions on manhood suffrage. In many parishes its liberal provisions were grossly perverted from the beginning; however, to change the organic law itself meant either a constitutional amendment or a new constitution. The legislature of 1894 decided upon the former course. Following Foster's recommendations, a bill was passed which placed before the electorate, at the next state election in 1896, a proposed constitutional amendment which would restrict the franchise to adult males who "shall be able to read the Constitution of the State in his mother tongue, or shall be a bona fide owner of property . . . assessed to him at a cash valuation of not less than $200."\textsuperscript{4} An ominous proviso was attached. The subsequent legislature, in 1896, would be specially empowered to rewrite the suffrage amendment; after the solons made whatever changes they saw fit, the amendment would then become a part of the constitution, without resubmission to the people. Hardy Brian denounced the whole proposal as "infamous, damnable and hell born."\textsuperscript{5} Though young Brian exaggerated when he predicted that the legislature might

\textsuperscript{3}Key, Southern Politics, 160.

\textsuperscript{4}Louisiana, Official Journal of the House of Representatives, 1894, 835-36.

\textsuperscript{5}Louisiana Populist, May 17, 1895.
raise property requirements up to $10,000, some degree of upward revision was, without doubt, the end in view. *Nation* magazine believed the clause for legislative rewriting in the suffrage amendment to be "the most extraordinary way of changing a constitution ever proposed."\(^6\)

The suffrage amendment passed the House of Representatives 74 to 9, and was approved by the Senate 27 to 0 (Populist Senator Brian was absent). Only two Democrats in the House opposed the measure.\(^7\) The People's party representatives supported instead a change in the state's election laws, based upon an Australian ballot; their bill was bandied about from committee to committee, and finally tabled without action.\(^8\) Ballot reform, Governor Foster insisted, should wait until the "standing menace" of ignorance was relieved of the privilege of voting.\(^9\) Important segments of the Democratic press, however, agreed with the Populists in urging ballot reform and condemning suffrage restriction. The Alexandria *Louisiana Democrat* called the assembly which passed the suffrage proposal "the worst

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\(^6\) *Nation*, LXII (April 30, 1896), 334.


\(^8\) *Louisiana, Calendar of the House of Representatives*, 1894, Bill No. 133.

legislature" in the state's history, Warmoth's and Kellogg's regime notwithstanding. The paper warned:

There must be a change and speedily, or the people, so long defrauded, will reassert their political rights even if it entails revolution and bloodshed. They have long been suppliants, on bended knees, at the throne of power. Their just demands have been periodically scorned with the utmost contumely. Patience and forbearance will cease to be virtues, and more stringent measures will be resorted to. A word to the wise ought to be sufficient.10

Even Goodwyn of the Chronicle, one of the staunchest conservatives in the state, attacked the suffrage measure as "bristling with injustice and harshness." Louisiana, he felt, should at least have provided school houses before she set about punishing ignorance and poverty.11 But angriest of all were the Populist leaders. Hardy Brian described the suffrage amendment as a "stepping stone to perpetually place this government in the hands of the rich, depriving the poor of any rights except to eke out their lives in hovels."12 But the proposal received unmeasured praise from Hearsey of the Daily States. He, along with most of the ultra Bourbons, favored anything which would keep "ignorant negroes and whites" from the ballot box.13 In the words of

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12Louisiana Populist, May 17, 1895.

Governor Foster, the time had come to eliminate "this force of brute numbers" from representative government.  

Significantly, nearly all of the journals which catered to the cotton planters endorsed the proposal. The Negro vote had been used to advantage by these planters ever since Reconstruction. In promoting restriction, it would seem, the cotton barons would be minimizing their own influence in state politics; the huge Democratic majorities turned in from such parishes as East Carroll and Tensas were based almost entirely upon illiterate and propertyless (and often nonexistent) Negro registrants. But the planters were realistic men. They apparently had reached the conclusion that the potential danger of the Negro vote outweighed its temporary advantages. Hearsey's bland explanation, that vote stealing "has become tiresome" to the planters, did not accurately state the case. Fictitious or real, the Negro voter was never a boring subject in Louisiana politics.

Populist influence, by 1894-96, was working its way into the black belt; colored men who had not voted in a dozen years began to make inquiries as to the location of the registrar's office.  

14 Quoted in Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, May 19, 1896.  
15 New Orleans Daily States, quoted in Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, December 5, 1897.  
16 Bastrop Clarion-Appeal, quoted in Lake Providence Banner Democrat, March 7, 1896.
were reportedly making the night "hideous" with their "yells and howls."\textsuperscript{17} The registrar in Opelousas locked himself in jail to avoid the crowds of Negroes who clamored to be added to the rolls.\textsuperscript{18} In Grant and Natchitoches Parishes, a peculiar fusion of Democrats and white Republicans\textsuperscript{19} was effected in hopes of stopping the rush of Negroes into the Populist camp, but to little avail; the "colored Populists" of Grant even committed outrages upon members of their race who attended an anti-Populist rally.\textsuperscript{20} Conservatives poked fun at the sight of white Populists in the uplands holding picnics and inviting their Negro neighbors to come and eat with them, but such un-southern events surely frightened the Bourbons.\textsuperscript{21} Racial animosity seemed to be losing its grip upon numerous poor whites; class consciousness was taking its place. "We can no longer depend upon the solidarity of the white race," grumbled the \textit{Tensas Gazette}. The alternative, therefore, was "either a limitation of suffrage, or a continuation of the present methods, which [will] mean strife, bloody riots, and the degradation of society.

\textsuperscript{17}Baton Rouge \textit{Daily Advocate}, March 4, 1896
\textsuperscript{18}\textit{Ibid.}, February 28, 1896.
\textsuperscript{19}Colfax \textit{Chronicle}, May 4, 1895; \textit{Louisiana Populist}, November 1, 1895.
\textsuperscript{21}Colfax \textit{Chronicle}, October 17, 1891, August 5, 1893.
...22 A diminished voice in Democratic affairs, to the planter mind, was infinitely preferable to class war.

The People's party made a serious effort to capture two Louisiana congressional districts in 1894. The silver issue had, meanwhile, replaced the sub-treasury plan as a favored agrarian panacea for economic ills. Macune's plan had failed to win many adherents outside of the cotton belt, and its defeats in Congress finally discouraged Southern Alliancemen. The depression, beginning in 1893, focused agrarian attention on the need for an expanded currency. By promoting the "free and unlimited" coinage of silver, Populist leaders hoped to lure inflationist-minded Democrats into the third party camp, and also expected to obtain increased campaign contributions from the wealthy silver mine owners of the West. But the Democratic party of the South and West, by 1894-95, also began to hop on the silver bandwagon. In Louisiana, as in other agricultural states, a Democratic free silver movement commenced. However, Governor Foster and most of the inner circle of state Democratic leaders, in 1894, still adhered to President Cleveland's conservative gold standard policies.23 The Populist congressional candidates of the Fourth and Fifth Districts harped upon the


23Romero, Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XXVIII, 1167. See Also Hicks, The Populist Revolt, 198-204, 301-20.
silver issue: Alexis Benoit, a Ouachita Parish businessman and legislator who had recently joined the third party, ran against gold standard Congressman Boatner in the latter District; Bryant W. Bailey, who campaigned for the seat of Fourth District Democratic Congressman Henry W. Ogden, was limited by the fact that Ogden had yielded to popular sentiment and "hoped and prayed" for the cause of free silver.24

Bailey, an earnest young man of twenty-eight, was "strict member of the Baptist Church" at Winnfield.25 His education amounted to a few months spent in the inadequate Winn Parish schools. He had been a third party man since 1890, when he began working under Hardy Brian as associate editor of the Comrade. During the summer of 1894, when Brian moved from Winnfield to nearby Natchitoches Parish, Bailey became the editor of the Comrade.26 Bailey also owned a moderate sized farm. He was able to purchase the paper from the Farmers' Union stockholders; Brian, on the other hand, had been editor but not publisher. Goodwyn of the Chronicle at first scoffed at Bailey, calling him a "simpering dolt."27

24West Monroe Alliance Forum, quoted in Louisiana Populist, September 21, 1894; Louisiana Populist, October 5, 1894; Chambers, A History of Louisiana, II, 204. Former Congressman Blanchard of the Fourth District went to the U. S. Senate in 1893.

25Louisiana Populist, September 7, 1894; Shreveport Sunday Judge, January 5, 1896.

26Colfax Chronicle, September 8, 15, 1894.

27Ibid., October 27, 1894.
but it soon appeared that the youthful Populist was a powerful stump speaker. "Bellowing Bailey" became the Democratic nickname for him; Bailey invited local Democrats at each place he visited to come up and engage him in open debate. At Coushatta, according to a Populist account, Bailey's invitation was accepted by an elderly Bourbon who refused to believe that any post-1877 issue had relevancy. The old gentleman "foamed and stewed over the 'wah,' ... and ... tore his shirt over the old twaddle of 'negro domination.'" Indeed, Bourbon memories of the past became increasingly vivid whenever economic issues were discussed.

Bailey and Benoit also challenged their Democratic opponents to submit to a white primary. The two Populists agreed to withdraw from the race if they were beaten by a vote of the white adult males of their respective districts; the Democrats, of course, were supposed to make the same

28 Bastrop Morehouse Clarion, quoted in Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, February 27, 1898.
29 Bastrop Clarion-Appeal, quoted in Shreveport Evening Judge, April 6, 1896.
30 Louisiana Populist, October 19, 1894.
31 Some Bourbon leaders seemed to fear above all else the possibility that younger voters might be getting bored with the old shibboleths. Major Hearsey expressed himself on the problem in this fashion: "Accursed by the generation that grows up in ignorance of the significance of these old war-whoops and cries. Better that such boys should have died in their infancy." New Orleans Daily States, quoted in Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, December 5, 1897.
pledge. This Populist proposal was logically inconsistent with their stated adherence to the principle of universal manhood suffrage, and no one realized it better than the Populists themselves. As Hardy Brian wrote, they were "compelled by the intolerant course of the party in power to adopt the same narrow policy."³² The Populists were confident that they had a majority of the white voters of North Louisiana on their side; they were equally certain that the Democratic planters along the Mississippi, Red, and Ouachita Rivers would stop at nothing to prevent Negro tenants from voting the People's party ticket. However, the third party stood firm against constitutional suffrage restriction. And, more important, nearly all the Louisiana People's party leaders stood up for the right of the Negro to vote as long as that vote would be freely cast and honestly counted. Many Populists put free elections above the cause of free silver.³³ In retrospect, the efforts made by southern Populists to obtain legal justice and political rights for the Negro were unequalled by any other native white political movement in the region's history.³⁴

³² *Louisiana Populist*, June 21, 1895.

³³ J.A. Tetts to Marion Butler, October 3, 1986, in Marion Butler Papers (Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library), Cited hereafter as Butler Papers.

People's party," one of its Alabama leaders wrote in later years, "brought to the South ... the only democracy the South has ever known."  

Bailey, in 1894, received 5,932 votes against 12,257 for Ogden. The Comrade editor carried six of the twelve parishes of the District, and despite the wide margin, a study of the returns--and Democratic admissions, for that matter--justifies the Populist contention that the election was stolen for Congressman Ogden. In five of the six parishes carried by Ogden, no Populist commissioners were allowed at the polls; these parishes gave Ogden 9,621 of his total. In Caddo, where Bailey was beaten 2,097 to 66, a northern visitor asked a Democratic official to estimate the number of votes which would be polled at a certain precinct. "Just as many ... as we need," was the laconic reply. In Rapides Parish, nearly one third of Ogden's 3,097 votes came from a single Negro precinct; De Soto Parish Negroes reportedly were told that midnight visits would be paid their cabins if they persisted in trying to vote for Bailey.  

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36 Louisiana, Report of the Secretary of State, 1902, 557.  
37 Indianapolis Daily Journal, quoted in Shreveport Progress, November 24, 1894.  
38 Louisiana Populist, November 23, 1894.
Ogden's total "outrageous," and admitted that Bailey "was honestly and fairly elected." But another Democratic organ of the city treated the lopsided returns with levity: "B. W. Bailey; where is he, up a pine tree?" chortled the Daily Caucasian.

Benoit, in the Fifth District, received 4,549 against Boatner's 14,755 vote total. Only three parishes reported a Populist majority. As did Bailey, Benoit insisted that an honest count would show the incumbent Democrat the loser. Relatively speaking, Benoit had the weaker of the two Populist claims to victory. But he had one advantage which Bailey lacked; he possessed the necessary funds to contest the Democrat's election. When Boatner returned to Washington in 1895, Benoit was at his heels to lay the case before the House of Representatives. Benoit charged gross frauds in ten of the fifteen parishes; in four of these, he received a mere 81 votes against Boatner's 7,124. In one parish Boatner's vote exceeded the whole registration (which was padded to begin with) by about

39Shreveport Progress, November 10, 17, 1894.

40Shreveport Daily Caucasian, quoted in Louisiana Populist, November 16, 1894.

41Louisiana, Report of the Secretary of State, 1902, 577.

The congressional committee which examined the returns found the Populist's charges sustained, but instead of seating the contestant, the majority of the committee decided that "no valid election had taken place," and the seat was declared vacant. Boatner had to return and face a new election. Benoit was again the opponent. Typical of conservative reaction in the Fifth District was that of the Richland Beacon, which thought that Boatner was entitled to the remainder of the term because "to oppose him would be tacitly admitting that the election was a fraud, which we cannot afford to do." Predictably, the special election of June 10, 1896, sent Boatner back to Congress. Benoit contested again, but had to be content with seeing the investigating committee cut the Bourbon's legal majority down from above 6,000 to 802.

Elsewhere in the state, the People's party obtained a majority in two southeastern parishes in 1894; its candidate in the Sixth District, M. R. Wilson, carried poor white Livingston and Washington Parishes over incumbent

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44 Ibid.

45 Rayville Richland Beacon, May 9, 1896.

46 Rowell, A History and Legal Digest of All the Contested Election Cases . . ., 1789-1901, 526.
Congressman Robinson. But the Sixth District went 7,981 to 2,230 against the Populist. Wilson's largest vote came from his home parish of St. Landry; his supporters claimed they would have carried the parish except for the fact that their three strongest precincts were closed on election day through Democratic machinations. In Southwest Louisiana's Third District, Populist John Lightner posed only feeble opposition to the Democratic incumbent, whose real antagonist was Republican candidate Taylor Beattie. "John Lighting," as amused Democrats called him, polled most of his 641 votes from Calcasieu and Vermillion Parishes. Independent workingmen's tickets in New Orleans, Populist endorsed, ran James Leonard in the First and J. M. Callaghan in the Second Congressional District. Neither was given representation at the polls. Leonard came out with 370 votes out of 20,000 cast; Callaghan did even worse, with 166 out of 22,000 in the Second District.

Thus the Populists of Louisiana emerged from the 1894 campaign frustrated but not entirely discouraged. They were positive that they had elected two congressmen in North

47 Louisiana, Report of the Secretary of State, 1902, 578.
48 Louisiana Populist, July 12, 1895.
49 Morgan City Review, quoted in ibid., November 16, 1894.
Louisiana, and the rank frauds perpetrated by the cotton parish oligarchy was beginning to repulse middle-class Democrats; a number of the latter were expressing an interest in Populism. But the picture was quite dark in South Louisiana. Seemingly, almost no impression had been made upon the French Catholic voters; Lafayette and St. Martin Parishes, for example, reported not one Populist ballot in 1894. The fact that Bailey, the Brians, and most People's party men were Baptist in religion was a serious drawback to the third party cause among rural Acadians, and Catholics around Baton Rouge were informed that Parson Brian and son were "driving Catholics" out of Grant and Winn Parishes; this news, said the Weekly Truth, should be "highly gratifying" to those members of the Mother Church who were sympathetic to Populist ideas.

In the North Louisiana Catholic outpost of Natchitoches Parish, John Scopini, an active Populist and a Catholic, felt it his duty to warn his fellow parishioners about the lies which "low down, thieving Democrats" were telling on the Protestant Populist leaders.

Despite the fact that they had failed thus far to create a workable statewide organization, the Pelican State

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51 *Louisiana Populist*, October 19, 1894-April 19, 1895.

52 *Baton Rouge Weekly Truth*, August 4, 1894.

Populists had solid reasons for hoping, by 1895, that they were on the threshold of success. For one thing, other southern states were in formidable revolt. North Carolina's Populist-Republican fusionists had taken over all branches of the government in 1894, and their legislature elected Marion Butler to the United States Senate; fusion tickets in Alabama and Georgia had obtained more than forty per cent of the vote. Nationally, third party statisticians could add up almost 1,500,000 ballots in 1894--forty-two per cent above Weaver's presidential total two years before. The success of the party elsewhere, it was assumed, would encourage membership in Louisiana.

Worsening economic conditions also fanned the flames of agrarian radicalism. The great depression of the 1890's dropped cotton and sugar prices ever lower. Middling cotton prices, which hovered around ten cents per pound at the beginning of the decade, dropped to seven and then six cents by late 1893. Mid-November of 1894 brought the lowest price recorded by the New Orleans Cotton Exchange in a half century--four and seven-eighths cents. The tenants and

54Hicks, The Populist Revolt, 333-39.
55Haynes, Third Party Movements, 281; Louisiana Populist, January 18, 1895.
56Boyle, Cotton and the New Orleans Cotton Exchange, 183; New Orleans Times-Democrat, quoted in Colfax Chronicle, November 17, 1894.
small farmers of North Louisiana began to experience privation as severe as that suffered during the depression of the 1870's. "None can tell if we have reached rock bottom," one agriculturist wrote in 1895. "I fear if there is nothing done to alleviate the suffering among the people, that we will have a revolution. . . . The people are restless. . . ." 57 In the hill country, by the next year, a Democratic newspaper admitted that Democrats were "as scarce as dollars." 58

The sugar planters of South Louisiana were also feeling the sting of depression. Domestic prices of raw sugar fell from almost six cents per pound in 1889 to an average of three cents by 1894. From 1890 until 1894, however, the price decline was cushioned by a two cents per pound bounty provided by the Republican-sponsored McKinley tariff; the Louisiana planters received, in four years, a total of $30,000,000 from the Federal government. 59 But President Cleveland's return to office in 1893 meant trouble for the bounty. Cleveland's low tariff views, embodied in the Wilson-Gorman tariff of 1894, repealed the two cent

57 *Louisiana Populist*, January 18, 1895.


bounty and substituted instead an ad valorem duty on foreign sugar which, because of current low prices, was deemed insufficient protection by the planters. A sizeable number of the Louisiana planters had always voted Republican in national elections. But reaction to the Wilson-Gorman tariff caused a majority of the state's larger sugar planters to announce their intention "of voting the Republican ticket in all national matters in the future." On September 17, 1894, at Washington Artillery Hall in New Orleans, the planters organized the National Republican party.

A serious division within the ranks of Louisiana's economic elite had taken place. The newly organized National Republicans (better known as the "Lily Whites") were willing to cooperate with the Kellogg and Warmoth factions of the Regular Republicans; at least, the planters were interested in cooperation for the purpose of electing protectionists to Congress from the First, Second, and especially the Third Districts. There was little indication that the planters intended, at first, to meddle with the Democratic status quo.

60 The Louisiana Planters: A Formidable Revolt Against the Free Trade Democracy (Boston, 1894), 11-13.
61 Ibid., 9.
62 Ibid., 14-17; New Orleans Times-Democrat, October 18, 1894.
on local and state matters. But this step was not long in coming. The National Republican's three congressional candidates were all beaten in the November, 1894 election. Vote frauds in New Orleans helped account for two of these defeats, and Democratic Congressman Andrew Price's protectionist views helped keep National Republican Taylor Beattie's record of political losses unbroken in the Third District.

Heresy against the Democratic party did not usually go unpunished in Louisiana. This fact was soon impressed upon a number of planters in the southern parishes. Governor Foster, though himself a sugar planter, was plainly shocked by the conduct of those of his wealthy neighbors who had drifted away from the true Democratic faith. The hitherto lenient tax assessment rates on certain sugar lands were revised upward. John N. Pharr, of Foster's home parish of St. Mary, complained, in 1896, that his taxes had shot up about twenty per cent within the last two years.

Mutual grievances drew the Populists and sugar planters together as the state election of 1896 approached.

63Uzee, "Republican Politics in Louisiana," 149-50.
64Louisiana, Report of the Secretary of State, 1902, 557.
65Romero, Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XXVIII, 1169-70.
Both relished the prospect of unseating Governor Foster.
Both deplored the suffrage amendment: the Populists, because it would wreak havoc among the poor white registration; the National Republicans, because their Negro laborers were generally amenable to voting any ticket not labeled Democratic. Both Populists and Republicans felt that honest election laws would enhance their political power. And, not least important, each was strongest where the other was weakest. "The little one to five bale farmers" who were said to make up the body of North Louisiana Populism would not ordinarily support wealthy sugar planters for office; the Populists, on the other hand, had failed to make the slightest impression upon sugar parish voters in previous elections. And the South Louisiana Republican planters possessed one commodity which made fusion more tempting to the eyes of the upcountry agrarians. As one cynical Bourbon accurately remarked, "the Populist wampum was distressingly short. . . ."68

Three-way negotiations, involving the Warmoth wing of the Regular Republicans, the "Lily White" National Republican planters, and the Populists, commenced in the late summer of 1895.69 Both Regular and National Republican

67Shreveport Evening Judge, February 12, 1896.
68Ibid.
emissaries were dispatched to the People's party state meeting at Alexandria in August of 1895. The Populists made no public commitments on fusion at that time, but merely issued a manifesto urging "the good people of Louisiana to proceed at once in forming such a compact organization as will prevent . . . outrages of their rights of suffrage." 70 A Democratic organ in Shreveport expressed horror at the Populist manifesto: "They even go so far as to say that they are in favor of voting the negro honestly. . . . Think of this, Louisianians! Are you willing to go this far with them?" 71

On November 26, 1895, the People's party executive committeemen again met with National and Regular Republicans; this time, however, a public statement regarding their plans for cooperation in the forthcoming state election was announced. Both Republican groups agreed that if the People's party nominating convention, scheduled for January 8, 1896, would nominate a state ticket which would be "representative," and be made up of men who opposed the suffrage amendment, then the Republicans would support it. The Populists sealed the bargain by affirming their opposition to said amendment, and promising a ticket "liberal

70 Daniel, "The Louisiana People's Party," 67-68; Louisiana Populist, August 16, 1895.
71 Shreveport Evening Judge, August 9, 1895.
and broad gauged"; moreover, the agrarian leaders added that free silver and honest election demands would be major planks in the platform. Louisiana, as a prominent New Orleans Republican predicted, would see "pretty lively times" as the April election approached.

Andrew Augustus Gunby, Monroe attorney and newspaper publisher, was considered the most likely Populist nominee for Governor. Gunby had been a "fretful porcupine" in the Democratic party for a number of years; he endorsed the third party platform as early as 1892; his increasing affinity for Populism eventually caused the "one hundred planters" who controlled the Democratic party, and the election returns, in Ouachita Parish to formally denounce him as "unworthy of the notice of decent people." Nor did the Republican sugar planters care for Gunby's liberal notions. On January 2, 1896, four days before the Populist nominating convention, the National Republicans violated the spirit of their pledge with the upcountry agrarians by assembling at the Hotel Royal in New Orleans and nominating E. N. Pugh, a conservative Ascension Parish planter, for

72 *Louisiana Populist*, December 6, 1895, January 17, 1896.

73 H. Dudley Coleman to William E. Chandler, November 2, 1895, Chandler Papers.

74 *Shreveport Evening Judge*, September 22, 1895; *Louisiana Populist*, January 17, 1896.

75 *Lake Providence Banner Democrat*, April 25, 1896.
Governor. The planters' intentions were clear. They planned to stage a coup by presenting the Populist convention with a ready-made candidate. But, as the Daily Advocate observed, the Populists had no taste for this proffered "sugar teat."  

The People's party nominating convention, meeting at Alexandria, opened and closed on notes of mingled anger and confusion. Almost none of the delegates were willing to accept Pugh. But preparations to nominate Gunby stopped when the Monroe publisher, though pledging himself to support the third party ticket, asked that his name not be presented before the convention. This Populist gathering, according to a cruel but probably accurate Bourbon commentator, included among the delegates "many old hacks [such as Guice] with lightning rods up praying to get struck" with the nomination; but none of the hopefuls had either the money to help finance a state campaign or a statewide reputation upon which to draw contributions and votes. Out of desperation, party leaders put the name of State Chairman Andrew Booth before the convention. Booth himself instigated

76 Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, January 7, 1896.
77 Ibid., January 8-9, 1896.
78 Louisiana Populist, January 17, 1896.
79 Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, January 10, 1896.
the move.\textsuperscript{80} The "hayseed from New Orleans," as Booth was sometimes called,\textsuperscript{81} received the gubernatorial nomination without opposition. Candidates for other state offices were also selected; no sugar planter was included. Later that day, to the "utter mortification and surprise" of Brian, Benoit, and other convention managers, the nominee privately asked their help in "preparing the convention" to accept his resignation as head of the ticket so that Pugh, the Republican, might take his place.\textsuperscript{82} Booth's proposal infuriated the third party chiefs. They immediately placed the story of the New Orleanian's apparent treachery before the convention, and it was soon impressed upon Booth that his unconditional resignation as the nominee and as state Chairman would be eagerly accepted. However, Booth refused to comply. He insisted that, until such time as Pugh was nominated, he was the legally designated Populist candidate. Faced with this wretched situation, the convention adopted a resolution empowering the fifty-three members of the Central Executive Committee of the Louisiana People's party to fill any vacancy which might occur on the state ticket through resignations "or otherwise [sic]."\textsuperscript{83}

\textsuperscript{80}\textit{Louisiana Populist}, January 17, 1896.
\textsuperscript{81}\textit{Shreveport Evening Judge}, February 12, 1896.
\textsuperscript{82}\textit{Louisiana Populist}, January 17, 1896.
\textsuperscript{83}\textit{Ibid}.
The Populist state committee met on January 23 and replaced Booth and almost every other member of the improvised Alexandria ticket. Shortly before, a compromise with the sugar planters had been reached. Though none revealed the details, it is clear that the mutually awkward situation was resolved by an arrangement in which the People's party would select all the nominees, but the positions of Governor, Auditor, and Attorney General must be filled from the ranks of Republican sugar planters. In return, the planters whom the Populists selected for these positions would espouse all planks in the agrarians' platform and, with the help of other wealthy National Republicans, would furnish the bulk of campaign funds for the crusade to unseat Foster and kill the suffrage amendment. The gubernatorial candidate selected by the Populist committee was John Newton Pharr of St. Mary Parish.84

Pharr, whose political past included ventures into the Whig, Democratic, Prohibition, and Republican parties was one of the largest sugar planters of St. Mary and one

84Besides Pharr, the sugar planters on the ticket were: H. P. Kernochan, for Auditor; L. F. Southon, for Attorney General. The other four positions went to Populists: J. B. Kleinpeter, for Lt. Governor; J. W. McFarland, for Secretary of State; John Pickett, for Treasurer (incumbent); G. A. M. Cook, for Superintendent of Education. New Orleans Times-Democrat, January 22-25, 1896.
of Louisiana's wealthiest man. Sixty-seven years of age in 1896, his real estate and manufacturing equipment was valued at over $700,000; bank accounts probably ran Pharr's total worth to well above $1,000,000. But his espousal of free silver and other Populistic demands—temporary though it was—met enthusiastic reception in the North Louisiana hills. In fact, some Republicans thought of him as more of a Populist than anything else. And a sudden blossoming of Populist newspapers indicated that Pharr's ample purse had come to the aid of the state's struggling third party journalists.

No political movement in the South ever produced a more colorful press than did the People's party. Louisiana was no exception. Beginning with the Winnfield Comrade in 1890, no less than fifty Populist weekly newspapers were

85 Chambers, A History of Louisiana, II, 15; Daily Picayune, April 26, 1886.

86 "Recapitulation and Valuation of the Properties of John N. Pharr, April 5, 1898," in John N. Pharr Papers (Louisiana State University Archives). Cited hereafter as Pharr Papers. Unfortunately, the Pharr Papers contain little of a political nature.

87 By the fall of 1896, Pharr had returned to his gold standard views and was supporting the McKinley ticket. Marshall J. Gasquet to John N. Pharr, September 10, 1896, Pharr Papers; James C. Murphy to John N. Pharr, August 22, 1896, Pharr Papers.


89 Woodward, Origins of the New South, 247.
published in twenty-five or more parishes, at one time or the other, by 1900. Many of them were ephemeral journals, cropping up during a campaign and then dying for want of advertisers and subscribers. Grant Parish led the list with seven Populist newspapers during the decade, followed by St. Landry with five, Calcasieu with four, and Catahoula and Natchitoches parishes with three each. Two People's party papers appeared in each of the following parishes:

Lincoln, Ouachita, Rapides, Sabine, Webster, and Winn.

In Grant: Colfax The Ocala Demand (1891-92); Colfax New Era (1892-93); Colfax People's Demands (1895-98); Montgomery Mail (1892-93); Pollock News (1896-97); Pollock People's Demands (1898-99); Pollock The People's Voice (1899-1900). Information on these and other Louisiana Populist newspapers was obtained from the following sources: Penny, "The People's Party Press," passim; Colfax Chronicle, 1890-1900; Louisiana Populist, 1894-99; Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, May 27, 1896; Shreveport Evening Judge, August 18, 1895. Dates given for the Populist newspapers refer to the known years of publication under Populist affiliation.

In St. Landry: Opelousas St. Landry Clarion (1892); Opelousas People's Tribune (1896-98); Washington People's Party Tribune (1895-96); Washington Post (1896); Washington Advocate (1896).

In Calcasieu: Lake Charles Patriot (1894-95); Lake Charles New Road (1895-98); Oberlin Calcasieu Reformer (1895-97); Jennings Record (1896-98).

In Catahoula: Trinity Farmers' Advocate (1895-96); Olla Signal (1895-97); Olla Free Silver Advocate (1898-99); In Natchitoches, Robeline Battle Flag (1892-96); Robeline New Era (1895); Natchitoches Louisiana Populist (1894-99).

In Lincoln: Ruston Caligraph (1892); Ruston Progressive Age (1892-99). In Ouachita: West Monroe Alliance Forum (1894); Monroe Bulletin (1896-1900). In Rapides: Alexandria Age of Reason (1896); Alexandria Louisiana Reformer (1896). In Sabine: Many Sabine Banner
Parishes with one Populist newspaper were: Bienville, Caddo, Caldwell, Cameron, Claiborne, De Soto, East Baton Rouge, Iberia, Jackson, Livingston, Orleans, Tangipahoa, Union, and Vernon. Vague references were found regarding two Populist journals which had a brief existence, though no specific place of publication was mentioned, Acadia and Vermilion parishes would be the most likely locations.

This list of fifty includes only those newspapers which were avowed Populist organs. Not included are pro-Republican papers which happened to support Pharr or other fusionist candidates from time to time. In almost every case, the men listed as editors were also politically active in the third party. Most of them either ran for local

(1896); Many Sabine Free State (1898). In Webster: Minden New Forum (1896); Minden Banner of Liberty (1896-97). In Winn: Winnfield Comrade (1890-1900); Winnfield Southern Sentinel (1898).


The Louisiana Mentor (1893-94) was a Populist paper which was probably published at Crowley, in Acadia Parish; the Southern Record, published somewhere in the Tenth Senatorial District, was probably located at Abbeville, in Vermilion Parish.
offices or served on state party committees. In all probability, an exhaustive research into Louisiana Populist journalism would turn up at least three or four more papers not mentioned in this study; Hardy Brian, who regularly published a list of third party organs in the state, noted that "several" which he did not cite by name had "gone down for want of support" by 1895. No more than twenty, however, were ever published at any one time. This maximum number was reached during the spring of 1896. By 1899 no more than five or six Populist papers were being published in the state. All, apparently, had expired or become Democratic by 1901.

Hardy Brian stood at the forefront of Louisiana's third party journalists. He edited the Comrade from 1890 until 1894, and then moved to the town of Natchitoches, to take charge of the Louisiana Populist. The latter paper, published until 1899 (the name was shortened to Populist in

97 Louisiana Populist, April 5, 1895.

98 Ibid., March 27, 1896. Two of the papers listed as Populistic were with the third party for a very brief period only: the Opelousas St. Landry Clarion and the Shreveport Progress. Both were normally Democratic. The New Iberia Enterprise, on the other hand, was a journalistic curiosity; it was jointly owned by Democrats and Populists and had two editorial pages of widely divergent viewpoints.

99 Louisiana Populist, August 24, December 28, 1894. Brian did not own the Natchitoches paper at first, but did possess it when he sold the plant in 1899.
1898), attempted for a time to act as the official state organ of the party. Its approximately 1,200 subscribers must have exceeded in number any other Populist paper in the state. However, as early as August of 1895 Brian was forced to admit that he had failed to attract statewide readership. Brian was able to retort in kind to Bourbon attacks upon himself and his party; at one election, he compared Democratic voters to "a sow returning to her wallow, a dog to his vomit." He described President Cleveland as "bovine necked, big bellied Grover, our most excellent majesty and tub of fat who reigneth in Washington. . . ." On occasion, Brian urged his fellow partymen to go to the polls armed, and if Democrats were caught stealing votes: "Kill them on the Spot!"

J. A. Tetts's Robeline Battle Flag was another often quoted Populist organ. Democrats sometimes called it the Bloody Flag. In the same shop was published the Robeline New Era, a children's weekly made up by Tetts's three daughters: Eunice, Lillian, and Ollie. The New Era was supposed to entertain, give moral instruction, and

100 Ibid., March 29, August 23, 1895.
101 Ibid., September 4, 1896.
102 Ibid., September 28, 1894.
103 Ibid., December 20, 1895.
104 Shreveport Evening Judge, August 19, 1895.
incidentally sow Populistic doctrines among young people. As had always been his lot, Tetts continued to meet with one failure and frustration after the other. He became secretary of the state Populist party in 1896, ran for the legislature in Natchitoches Parish, and lost by four votes after the Democrats threw out the returns from his home precinct. Pressed by creditors he was unable to pay, Tetts had to close his newspaper office later that year. For a time, in 1896-97, he wandered about the state attempting to arouse interest in reviving the nearly deceased Farmers' Union; his efforts were in vain, the Union held its last state meeting in August of 1897. Now past fifty, Tetts tried to make a new beginning as a Populist editor in 1898. He moved to Sabine Parish and began issuing the Many Sabine Free State in February of the latter year. As the twentieth century began, and Populism died, Tetts joined the Republican party.

105 Ibid., October 22, 1895.
106 Ibid., September 4, 1896.
107 J.A. Tetts to Chaplin, Breazeale, and Chaplin, April 8, 1896, in Chaplin, Breazeale, and Chaplin Papers (Louisiana State University Archives). See also Louisiana Populist, September 4, 1896.
108 Louisiana Populist, September 25, 1896, July 30, 1897.
109 Ibid., February 4, 1898.
110 Louisiana, Report of the Secretary of State, 1902, 542.
The most radical of third party voices in Louisiana was that of the New Orleans Issue. Unlike the rural Populist press, the Issue expressed disdain for any farmer who hired tenants or laborers, and urged Populists to investigate the doctrines of socialism and "aye, even communism." Vulgarity, too, was no stranger to the New Orleans weekly. Commenting upon the Populist notion that the Democratic and Republican parties would someday merge, the Issue suggested that they were "already snoozing in the same bed. . . . What we object to is the fornicabuggery [sic] part of it. They ought to get married and save themselves . . . the disgrace." The paper also suggested that Louisiana's working people seemed not as intelligent as bees, for bees were smart enough to kill the parasitic drones in their hives.

Pharr, the "Old Swamper," as his supporters affectionately called him, received the National Republican and the Regular Republican nominations shortly after the Populists approved of him on January 23. However, Warmoth had to fight hard to obtain the Regular's endorsement for Pharr; and even then, William P. Kellogg and Negro legislator Thomas A. Cage refused to go along with the fusion ticket

111 New Orleans Issue, October 4, 13, 1894, July 13, 1895.
112 Ibid., October 13, 1894.
113 Ibid.
and worked openly for Governor Foster during the campaign.\footnote{Warmoth to Chandler, February 4, 1896, Chandler Papers; Uzee, "Republican Politics in Louisiana," 154-55.}

Democrats were eager to create dissension among Republican ranks by reminding Negroes that Pharr was one of the sugar planters who ejected laborers from the plantation cabins in 1887. However, the charge that Pharr was the champion Negro-flogger of South Louisiana, that "scores of old gray-headed negroes . . . can testify to the terrors of a bull-whip wielded by his lusty arms,"\footnote{Colfax Chronicle, March 14, 1896.} that "several have went [sic] to their happy hunting ground through Pharr's manipulations,"\footnote{Lake Providence Banner Democrat, April 18, 1896.} was not backed up by references to time or place. Pharr was unquestionably a white supremacist, though not of the rabid Bourbon variety. His present position, if nothing else, led him to give absolute endorsement of the Negroes' right to vote and to secure justice in the courts.\footnote{Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, March 1, 1896; Louisiana Populist, February 14, April 10, 1896. "I was reared with the negro and worked side by side with him for twenty odd years," said Pharr. "I never have found him other than a good laborer and as honest as most other men. If he has cut a bad figure in politics, we are to blame for it." Quoted in Perry H. Howard, Political Tendencies in Louisiana (Louisiana State University Studies, Social Science Series, No. 5, Baton Rouge, 1957), 98-99.}

This was enough to prompt Democrats into calling Pharr and his allies the "Populist-negro social equality ticket."\footnote{Shreveport Evening Judge, February 16, 1896.}
Another Bourbon analysis of the fusion party described its component parts as: "The wild-eyed bilious pop, the odoriferous coon and the pampered and succulent sugar teat."  

For once, the Bourbon oligarchy of Louisiana was confronted with the distinct possibility of defeat. Discontent over Foster's platform, which evaded the currency question and supported the suffrage amendment as a means to "insure the control of affairs to the intelligence and virtue of the state," was not confined to Populist and Republican ranks. As one suspicious Democrat wrote, Foster's next legislature might take a sweeping and arbitrary view of who should be disfranchised as "poor white trash." The seriousness of the crisis prompted one concession from Foster. Shortly before the election, Democratic leaders began soft peddling the suffrage amendment and finally dropped it from the platform entirely.

Fosterites were also worried over the situation in New Orleans. The recently organized Citizens' League, headed by a number of prominent businessmen and social leaders of

120Shreveport Evening Judge, December 20, 1895.
121Many Sabine Banner, quoted in ibid., December 30, 1895. Shortly thereafter, the Sabine Banner renounced the Democratic party and joined the Populists.
122Shreveport Progress, April 25, 1896. The suffrage amendment was defeated in the April 19 election, 34,671 to 3,534.
of the city, were placing an Independent ticket in the municipal election; this contest would be held the same day (April 21) as the state election, and the Citizens' League was powerful enough to prevent the customary ballot box stuffing in at least half the city's precincts.  

The urban League announced its neutrality in the Foster-Pharr state campaign. But Mayor John Fitzpatrick, the prime target of the Citizens' League, was openly supported by Governor Foster; when Fitzpatrick's city Democratic machine insisted upon naming most of the poll commissioners for the election a number of the "best people" in the League made "intemperate threats" to support Pharr.

The Democratic cotton planters seemed to be experiencing an unusual amount of difficulty in discouraging Negro participation in the approaching election. "The poor ignorant, deluded negro has gone into spasms over the name of Pharr," grumbled a Morehouse Parish Democrat.  

And in East Carroll, where the colored population made up over ninety per cent of the total, the Banner Democrat listed the names of Negroes who were "brewing up trouble" by talking for the fusion ticket, and advised them to "leave politics

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123 Reynolds, Machine Politics in New Orleans, 27.  
124 New Orleans Times-Democrat, March 31, 1896.  
125 Bastrop Clarion-Appeal, quoted in Lake Providence Banner Democrat, March 7, 1896.
severely alone . . . if they want to live. . . .”;\textsuperscript{126} then, in the next issue, observed that "you might as well talk to a brick wall as to try and make the nigger believe who his best friend is."\textsuperscript{127} The colored people, however, understood which of the two candidates had sponsored the "sufferings amendment," as they called it.\textsuperscript{128} Meanwhile, in the New Orleans area, a recently established Negro paper called the \textbf{Daily Crusader} promoted the Pharr cause with noticeable effect.\textsuperscript{129}

At least, the Democrats were not furtive about their election day plans. A grass roots rebellion against the Bourbon regime and its methods had cost Foster the support of thousands of white farmers who voted for him in 1892; New Orleans could no longer be considered safely Democratic; the depression, combined with Foster's known predelictions for the gold standard, increased the governor's unpopularity; nevertheless, the incumbent administration still held absolute control of the election machinery in about a dozen black belt parishes, and intended to make the most of it. The following statement, from a leading North Louisiana

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{126}Lake Providence \textit{Banner Democrat}, March 28, 1896.
  \item \textsuperscript{127}Ibid., April 4, 1896.
  \item \textsuperscript{128}Farmerville \textit{Gazette}, April 22, 1896.
  \item \textsuperscript{129}New Orleans \textit{Daily Crusader}, quoted in \textit{Louisiana Populist}, March 6, 1896.
\end{itemize}
Democratic daily, was not intended for humor. It was simply frank:

It is the religious duty of Democrats to rob Populists and Republicans of their votes whenever and wherever the opportunity presents itself and any failure to do so will be a violation of true Louisiana Democratic teaching. The Populists and Republicans are our legitimate political prey. Rob them! You bet! What are we here for!130

Hearsey of the Daily States, whose maledictions against the "carpetbag, scalawag and nigger buzzards" helped keep up the fighting spirit among his planter-subscribers,131 prophesied that even if Pharr did come through with a majority the "better element" of Louisiana would be likely to inaugurate a "bloody revolution" to keep him out of office.132 The Daily Advocate also endorsed the idea of a right wing revolt; but if war should come, the official journal of the state government added, John Pharr would be wholly responsible: "This ignorant and low bred boor proceeds from place to place scattering his fire-brands among the rabble and inciting the baser passions of the populace. . . ."133 But at least the fusion ticket was permitted to speak at New Orleans, Baton Rouge, and most communities in

130 Shreveport Evening Judge, December 15, 1895.
131 New Orleans Daily States, quoted in Lake Providence Banner Democrat, February 1, 1896.
132 New Orleans Daily States, quoted in Bayou Sara True Democrat, April 18, 1896.
the state. Shreveport, on the other hand, was such a bastion of reaction that John Pharr cancelled a speaking engagement there, fearing that the Board of Health planned to throw him and his "political menagerie" into the Municipal Pest House. 134

In the meantime, individual acts of reprisal were carried out against the fusionists. One Populist candidate in Baton Rouge was shot and another had his barn burned; the printing shop of a third party newspaper in Minden was wrecked by Democrats; and economic pressure was applied against white and Negro Populists alike. 135 When trouble arose in St. Landry Parish over Populist attempts to register Negroes, Governor Foster dispatched state troops, equipped with a gatling gun, to the scene. 136 The bitter passions unleashed by the Foster-Pharr campaign helped give the state one more unenviable niche in the record book of violence. In 1896 Louisiana recorded twenty-one lynchings. This figure exceeded the combined total for every other state and territory west of the Mississippi River for 1896, and also accounted for twenty per cent of all lynchings in the United States that year. 137

134 Shreveport Sunday Judge, March 15, 1896.
135 Louisiana Populist, February 28, 1896; Farmer-ville Gazette, April 16, 1896.
136 Shreveport Evening Judge, April 6, 1896.
137 Work (ed.), Negro Year Book . . . 1918-19, 374.
Official returns following the April 21 election showed Governor Foster as the victor over Pharr, 116,116 to 87,798. Excluding the thirteen river parishes which Democratic planters firmly controlled, and where the fusionists were denied representation at the polls, Foster obtained 81,589 to Pharr's 83,538.\textsuperscript{138} Hardy Brian predicted shortly before the election that it would take "a gigantic piece of stealing" to count Pharr out,\textsuperscript{139} and the Democrats proved equal to the task. Of the thirteen parishes where the grossest frauds occurred, six in particular aroused the ire of the Pharr people:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>Foster</th>
<th>Pharr</th>
<th>Census of 1890</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bossier</td>
<td>3,464</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>1,005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concordia</td>
<td>3,013</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>609</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Carroll</td>
<td>2,635</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madison</td>
<td>1,803</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tensas</td>
<td>1,968</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Feliciana</td>
<td>3,093</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>613</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td>15,976</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>3,278</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{139}Louisiana Populist, March 20, 1896.  
 Though the thirteen plantation parishes had provided Foster with his margin of victory, they did not have a monopoly on fraudulent returns. In the four coastal parishes of Cameron, Jefferson, Plaquemine, and St. Bernard, which the fusionists had expected to carry, Foster won by a vote of 6,337 to 3,050; the total adult male population of these four parishes (native white, foreign, and Negro) was 1,240 less than the number of votes returned. Frauds occurred in New Orleans, too, though not on previous levels of intensity. A number of cases were reported throughout the state of supervisors of elections who refused to count precincts in which the fusion ticket was known to have a majority. In Rapides, where Foster's 4,373 votes came almost entirely from Negro precincts, a disgusted Populist thought that the Governor might demand a recount: "He should have carried this parish by at least 500,000."  

White registrants were in a majority in thirty-two of Louisiana's parishes. Pharr carried twenty-five of these, and also obtained a majority in four predeminately Negro parishes in South Louisiana. Governor Foster won a majority in only seven white parishes, and carried twenty-three where Negro voters predominated.  

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141 Ibid.
142 Louisiana Populist, July 17, 1896.
143 Louisiana, Official Journal of the Senate, 1896, 22; Louisiana, Report of the Secretary of State, 1902, 554.
urban centers in Louisiana, Foster narrowly won New Orleans, 26,330 to 21,683, and obtained a runaway majority in Shreveport (Caddo Parish), 3,210 to 277. Pharr took the parish which included the city of Baton Rouge, 4,859 to 1,470. Since East Baton Rouge Parish was heavily Negro, and factional fights among the Democrats permitted colored men to vote freely there in 1896, this latter figure indicates what the fusion ticket might have accomplished had honest elections been permitted in other Negro parishes. Also, it is interesting to note that in parishes where the fusion ticket won handily, local Democratic leaders did not accuse the agrarians of fraud. The major accusation hurled at the Populists was that they were trying to let Negroes cast a free ballot.

Not since Reconstruction, and perhaps not since the Civil War, had the people of Louisiana been confronted with a crisis as grave as that which developed between April 21 and the convening of the new legislature on May 14. Immediately after the election, Governor Foster ordered state troops to Natchitoches and St. John the Baptist Parishes. In Natchitoches, 500 armed and angry white Populists were

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144 Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, February 27, March 4, 1896.
145 Ibid., April 26, 1896.
146 White, Mississippi Valley Historical Review, V, 14-15.
threatening to assault the parish seat of government, where Democratic election supervisors had refused to count the ballots from Negro Populist precincts; news of the militia's approach scattered the farmers.\footnote{147}{\textit{Louisiana Populist}, May 1, 1896.} The trouble in St. John began when Negro fusionists seized a ballot box which they believed had been stuffed by white Democrats. The militia unit which Foster hurried to the scene used field artillery to disperse the Negroes.\footnote{148}{\textit{Uzée, "Republican Politics in Louisiana,"} 160.} These events, thought a number of citizens, were only the beginnings of trouble. Even the staid \textit{Daily Picayune} envisioned "war and rapine, and \ldots blood from the Arkansas line to the Gulf of Mexico," if the Populists and Republicans did not submit to the announced returns.\footnote{149}{\textit{Daily Picayune}, quoted in Shreveport \textit{Evening Judge}, May 8, 1896.}

The fusionists claimed that Pharr had beaten Foster in actual votes cast by at least 20,000.\footnote{150}{\textit{Monroe Bulletin}, May 16, 1896, clipping in Pharr Papers.} Democratic spokesmen, some of them rather proud of their work in overcoming majority opinion, did not deny that fraud had occurred; their justification for stealing the election was perhaps most succinctly expressed by a Bastrop Democrat who proclaimed that "a vast majority of the very best people"
stood behind the "brave young Governor." As another Bourbon explained: the opinion of property, intelligence and virtue must take precedence over the desires of the "corrupt mass."

Both the fusionists and the Democrats issued bloodthirsty manifestos shortly after election day. Hardy Brian, who had succeeded Booth as party chairman, called upon "the white men of the state" to assemble in Baton Rouge and use force, if legal methods failed, to see that Pharr received legislative recognition of the governorship. The Democratic proclamation bore the imprint of Henry J. Hearsey; it described the "monster, horrid, formless and crowned with darkness" which was threatening to overthrow orderly Democratic government and place in power the "great horde of ignorant blacks who yearn for social equality." And "woe betide" those who might try to prevent Foster's second inaugural; cost what it must, "this land shall not be a Hayti or San Domingo." Indeed, it did seem for a time as if a civil war within a state was building up. Nine thousand Populists from North Louisiana were said to be preparing to

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152Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, July 1, 1896.
153Louisiana Populist, May 8, 1896.
154Shreveport Evening Judge, May 6, 1896.
march upon the state capitol; and what the *Daily Advocate* described as "a boat load of sugar-teats," equipped with provisions and munitions of war "sufficient to accomplish the successful bombardment and siege of Baton Rouge" lay at anchor in the Mississippi. Democratic stalwarts in Baton Rouge and the Florida parishes organized into militaristic units and made preparations to defend the Foster government.

The fusionists had some hope of unseating Foster through a legislative investigation of the returns. Fifty-five members of the General Assembly had been elected in opposition to the Foster Democracy: the Populists numbered nineteen, the Republicans thirteen, the Citizens' League nineteen, and Independents, four. Although this still

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156 Baton Rouge *Daily Advocate*, May 12, 1896.


158 *Louisiana Populist*, July 10, 1896; Reynolds, *Machine Politics in New Orleans*, 28-29. There were two Populists in the Senate and seventeen in the House of Representatives. The Senators were: J. P. Patton, of Winn; M. R. Wilson, of St. Landry. The Representatives were: J. W. Bailey, Jr., of St. Landry; Henry Breithaupt, of Catahoula; J. M. Brown, of Natchitoches; J. E. Bullard, of Sabine; Patrick Donahay, of St. Landry; C. L. Gunby, of Union; I. D. Hogan, of Jackson; D. E. James, of Winn; Josiah Kleinpeter, of East Baton Rouge; R. P. LeBlanc, of Vermilion; S. J. Meadows, of Claiborne; T. W. Pipes, of Lincoln; A. W. Stewart, of Grant; W. L. Truman, of St. Landry; J. W. Williams, of Vernon; J. W. Young, of Acadia.
left the Democrats with a majority of twenty-six, the chance for enough defections among them to swing the balance of power to Pharr seemed, for a time, to be good. Even a representative from East Carroll, who along with Foster had benefitted from the 2,635 to 0 vote in that parish, decided as a matter of conscience to vote with the Populists and Republicans.  

On May 14, a joint session of the legislature refused, by a vote of 86 to 48, to go behind the returns. Nor did the rumored Populist army from the uplands arrive. Heavily armed Democrats, however, were visible all around the State House. The "Pharr Man-of-War" in the river weighed anchor and departed, and only a fistfight or two on the streets of Baton Rouge marred the restoration of quiet to the city. Before the end of the week, Governor Foster delivered his second inaugural address, in which he spoke of the need for "some action" in the direction of suffrage restriction, and promised that "the rich man in his palace and the poor man in his humble home shall be protected," as far as it was within the power of the state to grant such protection.  

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161 Ibid.
162 Ibid., May 19, 1896.
grand ball was held in the Governor's mansion, where a "vast concourse of the elite from every parish" gathered. The first set was danced by Governor Foster and Mrs. Samuel D. McEnery.163

The state election of 1896 and the legislative session which followed broke the back of Louisiana Populism. The General Assembly, during the month of June, compensated for the failure of the suffrage amendment by approving a strict registration and election law; both were designed, as the official journal of the government freely admitted, to eradicate the votes of the illiterate of both races as well as reduce the electoral participation of timid folk of moderate learning who might hesitate to register or cast their ballots because of the confusing provisions.164 These measures were to go into effect by 1897. Significantly, the same session which passed the restrictive laws declined to increase the state's appropriations to public schools.165

The General Assembly also passed an administration bill which would place before the reduced electorate, early in 1898, the question of holding a constitutional convention. By that time at least ninety per cent of the Negro vote would be off the rolls, along with a good portion of

163Ibid.
164Ibid., August 19, 1896, December 26, 1897.
165Ibid., July 3, 1896.
the poor white vote. The convention bill, passed over Populist protests, stated that if the voters agreed to the calling of a convention then the work done by the delegates chosen would be final—the new constitution would not be submitted to the people for ratification.166 Earlier, in the first month of 1896 session of the legislature, a new United States Senator for Louisiana had been chosen. With Governor Foster's approval, "that noblest Roman of them all, . . . that peerless . . . champion of the plain people,"167 Samuel D. McEnery, was selected by the General Assembly. In July the legislature adjourned. Governor Foster, wearied by the events of the past few months, departed for an extended vacation into the Dakotas. The Louisiana Populist remarked, hopefully: "If the Indians will only scalp him they will be gratefully remembered by our people."168

The Presidential election and congressional races of 1896 aroused little enthusiasm among the dwindling ranks of the Louisiana agrarians. The state Democratic regime, realizing the inevitability of the free silver tide in the


168 Louisiana Populist, July 29, 1896.
national party, sent a silverite delegation to the Chicago
convention which helped nominate William Jennings Bryan.\footnote{Baton Rouge \textit{Daily Advocate}, June 16, 1896; \textit{Daily
Picayune}, August 5, 1896.} After the People's party convention at St. Louis had also
endorsed the Democratic nominee, Hardy Brian, urged on by
North Carolina Populist Senator Marion Butler, approached
the Louisiana Democracy with the proposal to issue a joint
ticket in the national campaign.\footnote{Marion Butler to H. L. Brian, September 26, 1896,
Butler Papers.} As in other states, the Louisiana Populists hoped to get their vice-presidential
nominee, Tom Watson, on the Democratic ticket in place of
the conservative who had been selected at Chicago to run
with Bryan. To the surprise of many, Louisiana's Democratic
leaders agreed to let the Populists have half the electors
for the second place on the national ticket.\footnote{H. L. Brian to Marion Butler, September 25, 1896,
Butler Papers.} Senator
Butler complimented the \textit{Louisiana Populist} editor by writing
that "there is no State in the Union where we have done as
well as you have done."\footnote{Marion Butler to H. L. Brian, September 30, 1896,
Butler Papers.} Yet, in fact, nothing of value
from the third party standpoint had been accomplished in
Louisiana. The Watson fusion was the only concession the
Bourbon Democracy ever made to Hardy Brian's party, and it
was made for the obvious purpose of enticing them back into
the Democratic fold. Many diehard Populists disliked doing
business with the Bourbons under any conditions. From
Monroe, A. A. Gunby warned his fellow party members: "When
you dance with a bear watch your partner. . . ."^73

Though fusion was arranged at the national level,
Populist congressional candidates ran against Democratic in­
cumbents in four of the state's districts. All four Popu­
lists were thoroughly beaten. The new registration and
election laws had not yet taken effect; the black belt sent
in the customary overwhelming Democratic returns. Bailey,
in the Fourth, received 4,726 out of approximately 15,000
votes cast; Benoit, in the Fifth, obtained 4,670 out of
about 15,000. The Third District Populist obtained a mere
195 ballots, and the Sixth District sent in only 924 Popu­
list votes.174

The registration law went into effect January 1,
1897. It required no property qualifications and, strictly
speaking, no literacy qualifications; however, certain
information had to be recorded on the registrar's rolls.
If the prospective voter could not give this information to
the satisfaction of the registrar, then that person was not

173 Monroe Bulletin, quoted in Louisiana Populist,
October 9, 1896; Tetts to Butler, October 3, 1896, Butler
Papers.

174 Louisiana, Report of the Secretary of State,
1902, 580.
entitled to vote. One Lincoln Parish Populist sadly announced that his party's vote was being cut "at least two thirds" by the Democratic registrars. The Daily Advocate noted that the new registration was "death on niggers and the kind of Pops who will be inclined to vote [with Negroes]." Many small farmers who could have registered refused to make the effort. As one of them explained, their candidates had been counted out so often and so thoroughly that they were tired of "going to the election and losing valuable time without any valuable result."

Late in 1897 the Populists held a state "mass meeting" at Monroe, and issued a platform which declared for universal manhood suffrage and denounced the call for a constitutional convention. Though the Populist platform drawn up at Monroe called for a poll tax as a prerequisite for voting, this, in the manner it was proposed, would not have restricted the electorate. The state already had a compulsory poll tax on all male adults, dating from the constitution of 1879. If such a tax were collected by law,

175 Monroe Bulletin, quoted in Louisiana Populist, January 8, 1897; Louisiana Populist, January 7, 1898; Colfax Journal, quoted in Shreveport Progress, January 1, 1898.

176 Ruston Progressive Age, quoted in Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, December 12, 1897.

177 Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, December 12, 1897.

178 Louisiana Populist, May 15, 1896.
as the Populists urged, it would disfranchise no one and would add much needed money into the state's educational system. The Populists, said Hardy Brian, were "in favor of manhood suffrage as against $ $ suffrage." 179

Though opposing the holding of a constitutional convention, the third party felt that it must offer a slate of delegates for the election which would decide upon the holding of the convention as well as selecting its personnel. Included on the Populist ticket were a number of Republicans. These latter were not sugar planters, who had meantime generally endorsed the idea of Negro disfranchisement, but rather the white leaders of the Regular, or so-called "Negro wing" of the Republican party. Democrats laughed at the slate but were puzzled by it. What had the Populists to gain by drawing closer to the Negro, at this late date? 180 Colored voters had been hurt worst of all by the new registration.

Even the most active of Populists, such as Gunby, admitted the obvious. With or without the Negro, they


180 Monroe Bulletin, quoted in Louisiana Populist, January 8, 1897.
could not stop the convention or dominate its personnel.\textsuperscript{181} Therein, perhaps, lay the key to the puzzle. As Populist ranks thinned, those who remained, realizing the hopelessness of the struggle and finding the Bourbon hand more oppressive than ever, were simply making a last, extreme protest. State Party Chairman Hardy Brian even went so far as to say that the "better than thou" Louisiana aristocracy would not rest content until it owned slaves again. "The whole effort to qualify suffrage," he said, was aimed toward that goal.\textsuperscript{182}

The election for the constitutional convention, on January 11, 1898, proceeded according to Democratic plans. The official ballot was almost four feet long, 252 candidates were listed, and voters were allowed only three minutes in the booth.\textsuperscript{183} Among those too befuddled to finish voting was an associate justice of the Louisiana Supreme Court.\textsuperscript{184} Less than 50,000 votes were counted:

\textsuperscript{181}Monroe Bulletin, quoted in Louisiana Populist, January 8, 1897.

\textsuperscript{182}Louisiana Populist, August 27, 1897.

\textsuperscript{183}Louisiana, Official Journal of the Constitutional Convention, 1898, 3-6; Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, January 8, 1898. The 252 names included the 92 listed as candidates for "delegates at large," and the remainder ran from individual parishes. Thus, no single ballot would list over 100 names. To add to the confusion, many of the candidates were listed two and three times.

\textsuperscript{184}New Orleans Daily Item, quoted in Louisiana Populist, January 14, 1898. The Judge was Joseph A. Breaux of New Iberia.
36,178 for the convention, 7,578 against. Bryant W. Bailey, editor of the *Comrade*, was the only Populist to gain a seat.\(^{185}\) He did little at the sessions but vote "no" and refused to sign the completed document.

Not without reason did the President of the convention call it "little more than a family meeting of the Democratic party of the State of Louisiana."\(^ {186}\) This presiding officer was Ernest B. Kruttschnitt. His more famous uncle, Judah P. Benjamin, had personified the Whiggish coalition of planters and urban conservatives in ante bellum Louisiana.\(^ {187}\) Kruttschnitt continued the family tradition into the Bourbon period. Especially did Kruttschnitt glory in the fact that the convention, by legislative provision, was not to be submitted to the people for ratification. "We have absolute and despotic power," he told the assembled delegates. "The people [ have ] protected themselves against

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\(^{185}\) *Louisiana, Official Journal of the Constitutional Convention, 1898*, 4. Seven parishes: Bienville, Jackson, Lincoln, St. James, Vernon, and Winn, voted against the calling of the constitutional convention of 1898. St. James, despite recent legislative restrictions, still listed a majority of Negro voters at the time. The other anti-convention parishes were in the North Louisiana hill country. See official returns in Baton Rouge *Daily Advocate*, January 27, 1898.


themselves. Fittingly, the man who was perhaps Louisiana's most venomous and implacable bigot, Henry J. Hearsey of the *Daily States*, was awarded the lucrative printing contract for the convention.

What emerged from the convention of 1898 was virtually the constitution of 1879 drawn up anew, with the exception of suffrage restriction. Even the six mill limit on state taxation was retained. As to suffrage, voters had to demonstrate the ability to read and write in their native language, or, as an alternative, show a property assessment of not less than $300. Supposedly, the "grandfather clause," as it was called, allowed a loophole for poor whites. Those who had voted before 1867, or whose ancestors had so voted, were exempt from the above restrictions. But the intent of this proviso may be questioned. Only three and a half months were allowed for qualification. Many prominent Democrats took the view that the clause was merely an "evasion," and, at any rate, the

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191 *Ibid.,* Art. 197. Besides the "grandfather clause" exception, naturalized citizens were also permitted to vote without literacy or property qualifications. See J. L. Warren Woodville, "Suffrage Limitation in Louisiana," *Political Science Quarterly*, XXI (June, 1906), 177.
United States Supreme Court would declare it invalid. Both of Louisiana's national senators put themselves on record to this effect. However, about 40,000 individuals did register under the "grandfather clause." One hundred and eleven of them were Negroes.

The demoralized remnants of the Louisiana People's party entered candidates in both the congressional races of 1898 and the gubernatorial election of 1900. In 1898, their candidate who polled the highest vote was Hardy Brian in the Fourth District. Yet he obtained a mere 1,476, and carried only Grant and Winn. With the Negro vote removed, the Democratic total in the Fourth and other Districts had fallen below the level that Populist candidates had attained four and even two years before; even so, the Bourbon party still won by a margin of four to one or better. "The great bulk" of what once had been the People's party, said Hardy Brian, "stayed at home in sullen despair."

They felt that "it was no use, the Democrats would count them out. . . ."
In 1900, Donelson Caffery, Jr., a conservative, gold standard Democrat who was at odds with Governor Foster, accepted the nomination of both the People's party and the "Republican-Fusion ticket," the latter made up of G. O. P. remnants within the state. On the Populist ticket Caffery obtained 4,938 votes and failed to carry a single parish. On the fusion ticket, Caffery's state total was 9,277, and he carried only St. James Parish. The state total for W. W. Heard, the Democratic gubernatorial candidate, was 60,206. Thus the Democratic vote in 1900 was almost 30,000 less than John Pharr received four years earlier. A. A. Gunby, surveying the ruins of Populism, attributed his party's decline to a deadening of political spirit as well as the restrictions on suffrage. "Apathy," he wrote, "seized the majority and they are willing that the minority should rule." Never again did the People's party run candidates in Louisiana.

Bourbonism once again ruled serenely. A few planters, perhaps, missed the old excitement of stuffing

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196Uzee, "Republican Politics in Louisiana," 179-83; Franklin St. Mary Banner, March 10, 1900; Shreveport Evening Journal, April 16, 1900; Nation, LXX (January 18, 1900), 42-43.

197Louisiana, Report of the Secretary of State, 1902, 564.

ballot boxes; Negro registration, by 1900, was down to four per cent of its 1896 figure.\(^{199}\) And, though white registration slowly climbed back toward previous levels, the agrarian spirit had seemingly been crushed. "The people are thoroughly cowed," observed one man who had been associated with the third party movement in the northern parishes; the people "are under complete subjection. They will bow the knee, receive the yoke and pass on, hewers of wood, drawers of water, beasts of burden; without spirit, without complaint."\(^{200}\) But the most fitting epitaph for Louisiana Populism was written by Hardy Brian. In March of 1899, in the last issue of his newspaper, he wrote: "We refused to take up the gun [and] so we lost. . . . The fight will be won some day, but by [unchristian] methods. . . ."\(^{201}\)

Brian's parting words attracted little attention. Neither was much notice given, later that year, to the futile efforts of a Winn Parish man to be elected as an

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\(^{200}\)Shreveport Progress, April 2, 1898.

\(^{201}\)Natchitoches Populist, March 10, 1899. Brian left Natchitoches after the March 3, 1899 issue of his paper was destroyed by C. V. Porter, who worked for the rival Democratic newspaper in town, the Enterprise. The affair was kept out of the city papers, "owing to Mr. Porter having lately been appointed District Attorney." See Colfax Chronicle, March 11, 1899.
Independent to the state legislature. His name was H. P. Long. Huey, and Earl, were the names of two of his small children.\textsuperscript{202}
LOUISIANA PARISHES
1877-1900

(1) Acadia Parish
added in 1888

(2) Part of St. Martin Parish
The Congressional Districts of Louisiana
1877-1900
The Population of Louisiana in 1880

Source:
U.S. Tenth Census: 1880

Legend:
- Over 80 percent white
- 50 to 80 percent white
- 50 to 80 percent negro
- Over 80 percent negro
The Agricultural Products of Louisiana 1880

Showing which crop ranked first in acreage in each parish. "Livestock" is indicated for parishes where the total value of animals exceeded the value of all tilled crops.

Source: U.S. Treasury 1880
THE HILL REGIONS
OF LOUISIANA

SOURCE:
G. D. Harris and others,
Parishes returning a Populist plurality in the gubernatorial election of April 19, 1892.

Source:
Louisiana, Report of the Secretary of State, 1902.
Populist Vote in Congressional Elections of November 8, 1892

- Over 50 Percent
- 40-50 Percent

Populist Vote in Congressional Elections of November 6, 1894

- Over 50%
- 40-50%
Populist-Republican (Fusion) Vote
in the Gubernatorial Election of
April 21, 1896

- OVER 50 PERCENT
- 40-50 PER CENT
Elections of November 3, 1896
Populist vote in Congressional

1942, Louisiana

40-50 PER CENT

OVER 50 PER CENT

John E.
Populist Vote in Congressional Elections of November 8, 1898

Over 50 Per Cent

40-50 Per Cent

Source:
Louisiana,
Populist-Republican (fusion) vote in the gubernatorial election of April 17, 1900

- OVER 50 PER CENT
- 40-50 PER CENT

Source: Louisiana, Report to the Secretary of State, 1902.
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BIBLIOGRAPHY

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VITA

William Ivy Hair was born November 19, 1930 at Monroe, Louisiana. He graduated from Winnsboro High School, in Franklin Parish, in June of 1948. From 1948 until 1950 he attended Northeast Junior College of Louisiana State University at Monroe, and in the latter year enrolled at the Louisiana State University main campus at Baton Rouge. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Journalism from Louisiana State in June of 1952, and a Master of Arts degree in Journalism in August of 1953. In the fall of the latter year he began work toward the Doctor of Philosophy degree in History from Louisiana State; after one semester he was called into military service, and was on active duty in the United States Army from March of 1954 until February of 1956. He resumed his graduate work at Louisiana State immediately thereafter. In February of 1957 he became a member of the Department of History faculty at Florida State University in Tallahassee, Florida. His graduate studies at Louisiana State were continued during the summer months. His doctoral dissertation was approved by the Department of History of Louisiana State University on January 18, 1962.
EXAMINATION AND THESIS REPORT

Candidate: WILLIAM I HAIR

Major Field: History

Title of Thesis: The Agrarian Protest in Louisiana

Approved:

[Signatures]

Major Professor and Chairman

[Signatures]

Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

[Signatures]

Date of Examination:

18 January 1962