

A CONGRESSIONAL HISTORY OF THE POPULISTS

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CHAPTER I

THE POPULISTS IN THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS

Populism arose as a party movement representing an agrarian economy to combat the rising force of industrialism in the United States. It represented the rural forces of unrest that had been agitating for relief from the evil conditions that had fallen upon agriculture. The depression and "hard times" were beginning to bear down with force upon the western debtor farmers by the approach of the congressional election of 1890.

The election of 1890 was held amid the storm and bustle of a great fight over the tariff and monetary issues. It was in that year that the movement which was to give rise to Populism took the form of a political organization. It had as its origin a group of organizations known as Alliances, which had been organizing farmers and educating them for a decade. These Alliance groups had held a convention at St. Louis in December, 1889, for the purpose of uniting the various groups into one supreme Alliance. Here their plans for union failed but they did succeed in framing demands which read like a party platform.¹

The Alliance organizations did not become political

1. Hicks, John D., Populist Revolt, 209.

parties in the 1890 election. They only recommended candidates favorable to farmers' success and Alliance demands. The success of the Alliance-indorsed candidates was enormous, even though they had not entered the field as a political party. The results of the election had found a large number of congressmen elected with Alliance support, especially southern Democrats. Should these congressmen, sent with Alliance support, work with the old major parties, or unite and form an independent political organization?

The supreme council of the Southern Alliance in a convention at Indianapolis, Indiana, requested all congressmen elected by the Alliance constituencies to support no one for speaker, unless they had declared for the Alliance platform.² Alliance demands, however, were not generally followed by party congressmen. Before the opening of the first session of the fifty-second Congress an unsuccessful attempt was made to weld the Alliance groups into an independent bloc. While twenty-five Democrats were put to the supreme task of determining allegiance to the Alliance or their party, the majority returned the verdict of party loyalty. The majority favored working within the Democratic party.

A small group of independent Alliance congressmen started plans for action in Congress as an independent party. Those who favored the formation of a third party were

2. Hicks, 222.

from the West and had been elected as Independents except T. E. Watson who was a southern Alliance-indorsed Democrat. The group met at Senator W. A. Peffer's apartment and selected Watson as their candidate for speaker,³ thereby setting up the organization which Watson declared was "the first distinctive political body known as the People's Party."⁴

Watson received the vote of eight congressmen from the West, all of whom had been elected as independents. Those voting for the bloc leader included the following:⁵ from Kansas, Jeremiah A. Simpson, Benjamin H. Clover, John G. Otis, John A. Davis and William A. Baker; those from Nebraska were Omer M. Kem and William A. McKeighan; Kittle Halvorsen from Minnesota and Watson who did not vote made up the group. This bloc formed a united group which aroused considerable comment over the entire nation. Hamlin Garland gave the bloc the name "Alliance Wedge"⁶ and pointed out, that "Unusual interest attaches to the Alliance men; not merely because they are men of radical ideas and directly from the farm, but because they form such a distinct and solid body."

3. Arnett, Alex, Populist Movement in Georgia, 131.
4. Quoted in Hicks, 222.
5. Congressional Record, Fifty-second Congress, Second Session, 8.
6. Garland, Hamlin, "The Alliance Wedge in Congress," Arena, Vol. V, 447-457.

Their position in the House was said to form a "break-water" between the old party groups. Baker, Davis, Halvorsen, and McKeighan secured seats adjoining each other on the right of the center aisle directly in front of the speaker. Directly to the front of Baker sat Otis who in turn was seated behind Simpson.⁷ This seating arrangement formed an L which Simpson believed to signify a token for luck. From this strategic position the group carried on their struggle for the Alliance measures. This did not include all the bloc, as three members had desks at the extreme right with the Republicans. Those with desks in this far off position were Clover, Kem, and Watson.

The bloc voted as a unit with almost no exceptions on all bills providing for free coinage of silver and practically all measures affecting farmer and labor interests. Upon measures of a strictly partisan nature, they often split or failed to vote.⁸

The most striking personality of the group was probably Jerry A. Simpson. It was once remarked regarding his birth place, "If he had shown a little better judgment about the matter and came into the world on this side of the Canadian line, we would have made a whoopin' ol' canvass with him for president."⁹ His education was limited

7. Congressional Directory, 52C., 25.

8. Cong. Rec., 52C., See Aye-nay Votes, both Sessions.

9. Garland, 451.

to elementary schools, and at the age of fourteen he began life as a sailor, which he followed for twenty-three years. His early political affiliation had been Republican, and he cast his first vote for Abraham Lincoln. Political and economic individualism had taken hold of the man before his election to Congress, and he had long been identified as a Greenbacker, a single taxer and a Union Laborite.¹⁰

Simpson in his congressional campaign had received the nickname, "Sockless Jerry." James K. Hallowell, the Republican opponent, had been accused by Simpson of wearing silk stockings. A young reporter, to make a story, wrote that Simpson "wore no socks at all."¹¹ His fighting mood and outspoken attitude soon gained for him the acknowledged leadership of the bloc. Simpson's appeal to the "underdog" element in society brought many letters from his home constituency. Among the most interesting bits of humor was one commending Simpson for his free silver fight, "Jerry, you stand by 16 to 1 until Hell freezes over and we will send you a pair of skates to come home on."¹²

John A. Davis was one of the older and more conservative members of the group. He represented a combination of the journalist and farmer. He had pursued farming up to about a decade previous to his congressional election, when

10. Hicks, 161-162.

11. Ibid.

12. Cong. Rec., 53C., 1S., 493.

he took over a rural paper. His newspaper career had made him well known as a serious and able writer on economic subjects. He was probably the most able man of the bloc. His keen sympathy for labor had been established as a result of his membership with the old Knights of Labor. Having never been actively engaged in politics before his election to Congress, his service in the House, nevertheless reminded one of a veteran politician. Garland, in a brief description of the congressman stated, "he impresses one as being a man of great moral conviction, serious, earnest, and able."¹³

John G. Otis, who was the oldest bloc member, was a dairy farmer. His contrast to a majority of the bloc lay in the fact that he had attended college, having spent a year at Harvard law school. From an ardent supporter of Lincoln, he had become an uncompromising Greenbacker. He had been identified with the Grange and other farmer organizations since 1873. The most outstanding speech of his whole congressional career was a vicious attack upon usury:

Interest is usury
Usury is robbery
Usury pays no taxes
Usury possesses no soul
Usury never works
Usury consumes everything
Usury pays no doctor's bills
Usury never gets on a battle field
Usury wears fine clothes that labor produces
Usury concentrates wealth
Usury undermines free government

13. Garland, 448.

Usury mocks at liberty 14
Usury makes the rich richer.

William A. Baker had long been an educator having been principal of public schools at Council Bluffs, Iowa, for a number of years. His education was received at Waynesboro College, Pennsylvania. Following his career as a teacher, he had settled down as a farmer in Kansas. Benjamin Clover like Baker, was a farmer, but in contrast he had been prominent in the Alliance movements. He had never held a political office before going to Congress. William A. McKeighan had been a Civil War veteran. His political affiliation had been with the Democratic party and in the campaign of 1890 was elected by Alliance and Democratic support. Halvorsen and Kem were both engaged in agricultural pursuits. Halvorsen had been elected as a Prohibition and Farmers' Alliance Fusionist. He had come to this country from Norway just in time to take part in the Civil War. Garland in a short description of this group stated, "There is a sort of smileless gravity about them that reflects the hard condition of the people from which they come. This is especially noticeable in the cases of Kem and Baker; their faces are heavily lined."

Watson, the bloc leader, had spent his early years in working on a farm and teaching school. His spare moments

14. Cong. Rec., 52C., 1S., 2530.

15. Cong. Directory, 52C., 2S.

16. Garland, 449.

were used to such an advantage that he was admitted to the bar at the age of nineteen. This made him unique in being the only lawyer of the bloc in the House. His early prominence in Democratic politics had resulted in his selection as a presidential elector at large for Cleveland in 1888. While his service in Congress, as a bloc member, was limited to one term, he was nominated by the People's party for vice president in 1896 and for president in 1904.¹⁷ He seems to have been the most outstanding orator of the group, but his temper often got beyond control in political debates. He published a magazine for several years and was later engaged in newspaper work. His district had once been represented by Alexander H. Stephens, Vice-president of the Confederacy, and the resemblance between the two southerners was often emphasized.

The bloc members were given places on the more unimportant committees. McKeighan was placed on committee of coins, weights and measures. Clover and Kem on Indian affairs; Davis on labor; Kem on expenditures for agriculture; Watson on militia; Otis on private land claims; Baker and Davis on the eleventh census, and Halvorsen and Davis on the committee on railways.¹⁸

The Alliance bloc was represented in the Senate by two

17. Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1927.

18. Cong. Directory, 52C., 2S.

members. William A. Peffer had been sent from Kansas, and James H. Kyle represented South Dakota. Senator Peffer had a long and varied career, ranging from a Union Civil War veteran to a lawyer in Tennessee. He had been a Republican presidential elector in the campaign of 1880. His burning desire for economic reforms had caused him to enter the newspaper field and become editor of the Kansas Farmer.¹⁹ He represented Populism in its most humorless phase. An excellent description of the senator stated, "His tall, well-rounded figure, his unusually long and heavy beard which he combed constantly with his fingers as he talked, his heavy, dry, excessively statistical speeches, his absence of humor and his deadly earnestness made him a conspicuous figure in the Senate, and one in which caricature²⁰ came to typify Populism."

Kyle, the other Alliance Senator, was the youngest member of the Senate. His extremely pious attitude had been brought about as a result of training in theology. His first college education consisted in the study of civil engineering at the University of Illinois, but later he gave up the course to study theology. He graduated from the Western Theological Seminary at Alleghany, Pennsylvania, in 1882. Following his academic training he had gone to

19. Biographical Directory of the American Congress; Cong. Directory for Congresses 52-55 inclusive.

20. McGrane, Reginald, C., "William Alfred Peffer", Dictionary of American Biography, Vol XIV, 393.

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Utah as pastor of Congregational churches. His nomination had been won as the result of a forceful Fourth of July oration. When the orator for a South Dakota Alliance Convention failed to arrive, Kyle was called upon to deliver the address. He accepted the offer, but having no time to prepare an address, read a speech that had been delivered in 1877 by Professor John M. Gregory of the University of Illinois. The text of the address was an extreme criticism of the tariff and financial policies of the federal government. The speech produced the necessary reaction in the group of farmers and the Alliance Convention nominated him for United States senator.

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The South Dakota Democrats joined the Populists in electing Kyle in 1890. And throughout his first term he voted more consistently with the Democrats than Republicans. But when the time came for his reelection in 1896 a fusion of Republicans and Populists reelected him, and thereafter he voted with the Republicans on issues of a strictly partisan nature. Garland, who met the senator in Washington, gave a brief description of him: "His personality is very winning, frank, manly and unaffected. He is the finest physique in the Congress..... His voice is powerful and exceedingly attractive, and his accent is of the Mississip-

21. Biographical Directory of the American Cong.; Cong. Directory, 52C., 2S.

22. Robinson, Doane, "James Henderson Kyle," Dictionary of American Biography, Vol. X, 515-516.

pi Valley, though it would not be noticeable except by contrast with his colleagues.²³"

The Alliance bloc held this small group together as an independent organization. The principal desire was to make their influence felt in order to secure additions to the bloc from the major party congressmen. The bloc also sought to keep the reform ideas burning in the national Congress for the new party that was to be launched in 1892.

Meanwhile an Alliance convention had been held at Cincinnati, Ohio. This convention following a heated debate had adopted a resolution stating, "That the time had come for the crystallization of the reform forces of the country, and the foundation of what should be known as the People's Party of the United States."²⁴ The launching of the party was left to the St. Louis meeting to be held on Washington's birthday 1892. This meeting drew up a platform typical of Alliance demands in condemning the existing order and arranging for a national convention to be held at Omaha, Nebraska, the following July. The Omaha Convention completed the task of party formation in that a national ticket was nominated and a party platform was set up.

The first Populist national campaign in 1892 resulted in a somewhat different lineup in Congress. Watson, the leader of the old group, had been defeated and the leader-

23. Garland, 456.

24. Arnett, 127.

ship of the House bloc fell upon Simpson. When the House proceeded to the election of a speaker, Kem placed the name of Simpson in nomination and he received the vote of eight²⁵ members. Those members were Baker, Davis and Kem of the old bloc and the five new members which included: William A. Harris and Thomas J. Hudson of Kansas; Haldor E. Boen of Minnesota; and John C. Bell and Lafe Pence of Colorado. McKeighan had been returned from Nebraska, but he arrived too late to vote on the contest for speaker. Francis G. Newlands, of Nevada, a former Democrat, was elected by the National Silver Party²⁶ and voted with the bloc only on silver legislation. The two additions to the bloc from Kansas were typical agrarian Populists. Harris had been born in Virginia, and he had served for three years in the Confederate army. Following the war he had moved to Kansas, where he was employed as a civil engineer in the construction of the Union Pacific Railroad. He had been connected with farming and the breeding of pure bred cattle since 1876. He was elected as a Populist with Democratic support. Hudson had a similar political background in having been a lifelong Democrat until 1890. Boen of Minnesota, was a typical Populist farmer being unique in that he was one of²⁷ the two People's party congressmen of foreign birth.

25. Cong. Rec., 53C., 1S., 201.

26. Cong. Directory, 53C., 2S.

27. Ibid.; Biographical Directory of the American Congress 1774-1927.

Bell and Pence brought a new economic interest into the bloc in representing silver miners as well as radical farmers. Bell had started his political career in Tennessee, where he had early taken up the legal profession. He, as well as Pence, had been in the legal profession all his life. Pence, had been a veteran politician as well as a lawyer. These two congressmen in contrast to the Kansas Populists were in the legal profession and not directly
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connected with farming.

The bloc was again seated almost directly in front of the speaker's desk where they tended to act as a dividing line between the old parties. Baker, Boen and Kem constituted the rear of the group being directly behind Davis and Harris. In the next row to the front were Pence and McKeighan. In the front of the group came their leader, Jerry Simpson. From this key position, the Populists made their most determined fight to enact their political, economic, and social ideas into legislation, and above all to prevent repeal of silver coinage. Hudson and Baker were seated as strays over to the right of the speaker's desk
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among the Republicans.

The one addition to the Populist bloc in the Senate was William V. Allen, of Nebraska. His election was com-

28. Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1927.

29. Cong. Directory, 53C., 2S.

mented on very favorable by the press often in opposition to Populist doctrines. Albert Shaw in Review of Reviews made the following comment on the senator:

We would seriously advise the people of Nebraska, regardless of party affiliations, not to apologize to anybody for William V. Allen. If Populism can produce men of Senator Allen's mold, and lift them into positions of the highest responsibility, one might be tempted to suggest that an epidemic of this western malady would prove beneficial to some eastern communities and have salutary results for the nation at large.³⁰

Allen got his early views of human liberty from his parents who had participated in "underground" railroad activities in Ohio. Young Allen had fought in the Civil War as a Union soldier at the age of fifteen. Allen followed his parents to Iowa shortly after the war where he took up the study of law.³¹ He was probably the most capable Populist who was sent to Washington. His ability to hold his own in Senate debates against the leaders of the major parties brought joy to the hearts of all Populists.

Allen's first year as senator was full of many duties and responsibilities. This was very significant as he had held no political office before reaching the Senate. His arrival at Washington had taken place at a very critical moment for the Populists--namely, the special session which repealed the Sherman Silver Purchase Act. Shaw commented

30. Shaw, Albert, "William Vincent Allen: Populist," Review of Reviews, Vol. X, 30-42.

31. Hicks, John Donald, "William Vincent Allen," Dictionary of American Biography, Vol. VI, 214.

that since the opening days of the government no new man had ever entered the Senate and gained such a wide respect of his colleagues strictly upon the grounds of merit, and representation of the wishes of his constituents.

The election of the fifty-fourth Congress was a complete disappointment for Populism. This was especially true in the West where fewer Populist congressmen were elected than in 1892. The largest increase in the vote came from the south and North Carolina sent the largest bloc of new members. The new bloc additions included: Alonzo C. Shuford, William F. Strowd, and Harry S. Skinner of North Carolina and Milton W. Howard of Alabama. The old bloc members who were reelected were: Kem of Nebraska, Baker of Kansas, and Bell of Colorado. The election had eliminated Simpson from the congressional arena, and the command of the bloc fell upon Bell who received six votes for speaker.³² Baker and Kem were the only surviving members of the first Alliance bloc.

The three Populist congressmen from North Carolina were all born in the state which they represented. Skinner was a lawyer having pursued legal studies at the University of Kentucky. He had been prominent in Democratic circles and was at one time a state central committeeman for that party. Both Strowd and Shuford were farmers. They had both been prominent as early Populists and Alliance leaders.

32. Cong. Rec., 54C., 1S., 4.

They were both elected as Populists over Democratic opponents, and no doubt received Republican support. Howard of Alabama, had managed to receive a legal education by his own support while working on a farm. He was also engaged in some free lance writing, which he seems to have pursued with vigor following his congressional career.³³

The only regular Populist addition in the Senate was Marion Butler of North Carolina. John L. Irby and Ben Tillman (South Carolina), elected as Democrats frequently voted with the Populists. John P. Jones (Nevada), long a Republican, but now elected as a National Silverite, could be counted with the bloc on finance. William M. Stewart of the same state had also began to call himself a National Silverite.

Butler, the Populist senator from North Carolina, was a graduate of the University of that state. He had early taken a stand with the Democratic party, but had withdrawn to become president of the National Farmers' Alliance and Industrial Union. He was a trustee and member of the executive board of the state university. He was editor of the Caucasian, which was said to have the largest and most influential newspaper circulation in the state.³⁴

The bloc in the House secured desks in the usual stra-

33. Cong. Directory, 52C, 23; Biographical Directory of the American Cong. 1774-1927.

34. Ibid.

tegic position with the exception that they were in the adjoining section just left of the center aisle. Formerly they had been to the right of the center aisle. In this section Shuford, Bell, Strowd, Kem and Skinner were seated. Only Bell and Strowd, however, had adjoining desks. As usual, two bloc members were seated by themselves and this time with the Democrats. Howard and Baker were the strays with desks over to the extreme left of the speaker. These congressmen were in a very difficult position to secure recognition from the chair.³⁵

The opening of the fifty-fifth Congress in 1897 found the Populists with their greatest numerical strength and when the time came for the election of speaker, Bell received 21 votes, the largest a Populist candidate ever received.³⁶ Newlands, elected to this Congress as a Silverite Democrat, received the vote of Charles S. Hartman, a Silver Republican from Montana. Three insurgents failed to vote including: Albert Todd, of Michigan, elected by a union of Democrats, Union Silver and National People's Party; W. C. Jones, a Silver Republican from Washington; and J. F. Shafroth,³⁷ a Silver Republican from Colorado.

The Populist bloc in this Congress represented a shift in make-up. Only one member of the old Alliance bloc was

35. Cong. Directory, 54C., 2S.

36. Cong. Rec., 55C., 1S., 15.

37. Cong. Directory, 55C., 1S.

left and this was Jerry Simpson, and he had been returned in 1896 following a defeat in the previous election. Baker and Kem, veteran Populist congressmen since 1890, were not candidates for reelection. The five Kansas members were: J. D. Botkin, Mason S. Peters, Edwin R. Ridgley, William D. Vincent and N. B. McCormick. None of these Kansans were engaged in agriculture directly as an occupation. Botkin was a minister; McCormick a lawyer and politician; Peters a live stock commission member, and Ridgely with Vincent were in the mercantile business.

The four Populists from Nebraska included William L. Stark, William L. Green, Roderick D. Sutherland and Samuel Maxwell. All four of these congressmen were actively engaged in the practice of law. Stark and Sutherland had held positions as judge and attorney of their counties. Greene had made a name for himself as a criminal lawyer. The dirt farming element of Populism seems to have given away to the law profession as far as congressmen were concerned.

The situation in North Carolina had resulted in the reelection of three members and also the addition of two newcomers. Old bloc members reelected were Shuford, Skinner and Strowd. The additions were Charles H. Martin and John E. Fowler. Martin had a very interesting background having served in such different fields as a college professor of Latin and a Baptist minister. In the meantime he

had also practiced law. His occupations could be designated under the terms lawyer, educator, and preacher. Fowler was a lawyer by profession and before coming to the ranks of Populism had been a free silver Democrat.³⁹

South Dakota sent two journalists in John E. Kelley and Freeman Knowles. The newspaper work of Knowles had been preceded by the study and practice of law. His newspaper The Independent was the recognized organ of the Federation of Miners and other labor organizations in the state. He had never held a political office before going to Congress. Kelley was both a journalist and farmer.

Populism in the election of 1896 had also reached California and resulted in the election of two bloc members from that state. Charles A. Barlow had for many years been engaged in the fruit farming in combination with wheat raising. His paper, the Reasoner was known as the leading Populist paper in southern California. Curtis A. Castle, the other member, was unique in being the only physician of the Populist bloc that ever went to Congress. He was elected⁴⁰ as a candidate of the Populists and Democratic Fusionists.

Idaho sent a Populist, James Gunn, as its single representative in the House. Most of his life had been spent as a prospector going from one mining camp to another. His

39. Cong. Directory, 55C., 1S.; Biographical Directory of the American Cong. 1774-1927.

40. Ibid.

election to Congress is interesting in that he defeated William E. Borah, his nearest opponent. Howard was also returned to Washington from Alabama.

The bloc secured desks as a group in front of the speaker's desk, and directly to the left of the center aisle. Nineteen members of the bloc were seated in this center section between the old parties.⁴¹ Skinner and Sutherland were placed over to the extreme left of the presiding officer. Peters and Gunn had adjoining desks about midway between the large bloc and those on the extreme left.

The bloc in the Senate is very difficult to classify in order to make a clean cut distinction between Populists, Silverites, and Silver Republicans. There was also a tendency for certain Populist senators to become Democrats and Silver Republicans to become regulars. The group which classed themselves as Populists were Allen, Butler, Harris, Heitfeld, Kyle, Turner, Jones and Stewart. Of this group only Allen, Butler, Harris, and Heitfeld were elected as regular Populists. Turner was elected by a fusion of Silver Republicans, Populists, and Democrats. Kyle was elected to this Congress as an independent with Populist and Republican support, while Jones and Stewart were elected as Silverites.⁴² But they were all classed with the Populists in this Congress. A bloc of Silver Republicans including

41. Cong. Directory, 55C., 2S.

42. Ibid.

Mantle, Teller, Cannon and Pettigrew could be counted to go the limit with the Populists as far as silver legislation was concerned.

One of the additions to the Populist bloc in the Senate included Henry Heitfeld of Idaho. He had been born in St. Louis and received his education in the schools of that city. He was an exception to all other Populist congressmen in having spent his early boyhood in a large city. He was engaged in farming and stock raising up to the time of his election to Congress. George Turner, the newly elected Populist senator from Washington, was born in Knox County, Missouri. He had been an associate judge for many years. His early prominence as a Republican is shown by having been a delegate to the Republican national conventions of 1876, 1880, and 1884. He seems to have been a Republican in politics until the campaign of 1896, when he supported W. J. Bryan for president. He was elected to the Senate in that year by a fusion of Silver Republicans, Democrats and Populists. Harris, who succeeded Peffer as senator from Kansas, had served as a Populist representative in the fifty-third⁴³ Congress.

The elections of 1898 almost destroyed Populism as far as its Congressional strength was concerned. The defeat of the Populists had a serious effect upon bloc discipline.

43. Cong. Directory, 52C., 2S; Biographical Directory of American Cong. 1774-1927.

When the time came for the election of speaker, Bell received only four votes.⁴⁴ The following of the old bloc voting for Bell were: Ridgely, Stark, and Sutherland. The only new bloc member was William Neville, Nebraska. William A. Neville had been a Union Civil War veteran, as was the case of many Populists. He had served in the Illinois legislature as a Democrat from 1872-1874. He had been a Democratic and Anti-Monopoly candidate for Congress in 1884⁴⁵ but was defeated. He was nominated by the Populists, Democrats, and Silver Republicans to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Representative W. L. Greene. The Populists in Congress now only represented the agrarians from Kansas and Nebraska. All their southern associates had been defeated.

In the Senate many old silver senators strayed back to the Republican fold and voted for the gold standard. Kyle, who had been identified with the Populists since their formation failed to vote on many measures so dear to the hearts of Populism. Republicans, as we have seen, had aided in his election in 1896 and he tended strongly to join that party.

Party solidarity was so weak in this Congress that the members were not even given desks in a group. Neville and Sutherland were given adjoining desks but they were over to

44. Cong. Rec., 56C., 1S., 5.

45. Cong. Directory, 56C., 1S.

the left of the speaker's stand and not in the regular center section. The other three members were scattered throughout the Democratic section with no attention to bloc solidarity.⁴⁶

The Populists, as a party bloc in Congress, were completely paralyzed when the fifty-seventh Congress met in 1901. Neville was the only member to keep the bloc tradition by voting for a Populist for speaker. Six members had been elected as Populists, Silver Republicans or Fusionists,⁴⁷ but they had all received Democratic support. Bell and Newlands were now returned as Democrats. The Senate group had dwindled and at the same time no additions to the bloc had been made. Allen and Butler were gone, while Heitfeld had gone over to the Democratic ranks. Harris, before the close of the session, also tended to drift back to the Democrats. Turner was the only bloc hold over from the last Congress. Thus the bloc was dead. The Populist party, as far as its congressmen were concerned, had passed into history.

46. Cong. Directory, 56C., 1S.

47. Cong. Directory, 57C., 1S.

CHAPTER II

STRUGGLE FOR REFORM OF CURRENCY AND BANKING

The monetary issue had become one of the most important questions for discussion before the American people by the time of the election of 1890. It was upon this question that the independent bloc in the Senate and the House of Representatives made its most enduring fight in the fifty-second Congress. The election of 1890, as we have seen, had resulted in the election of nine Alliance representatives who were willing to form an independent bloc. Also two senators had been elected belonging to this organization.

The demand for the reform of the monetary system took the form of various inflationary moves. The most common of these being the demand for the free and unlimited coinage of silver. This Alliance bloc, as we shall see, voted as a unit for all bills of an inflationary nature. The question of silver coinage went directly back to the Act of 1873. This Act made no provision for the coinage of silver dollars since the demand for them ceased previous to that time.

This demonetization of silver was made at the begin-

1. Hicks, John D., Populist Revolt, 302.

ning of a decline in the world's production of gold and at the same time of a boom in the production of silver. As the price of silver bullion began to decline, the silver miners demanded the restoration of silver to the coinage. At the same time the decreased availability of gold raised its value, and in combination with other factors, brought on a steady drop in prices that was to continue until 1895. This, of course, bore with special severity upon the debtor farmers, who began to demand that something be done to stop the deflation and to restore prices to their former levels. As the restoration of silver to the status of legal tender money seemed politically the most feasible, they united with silver miners behind that proposal.

Failing to secure free coinage Congress had enacted under pressure a compromise known as the Bland-Allison Act. The Act providing for the purchase of not less than two or more than four million dollars worth of silver monthly.² This had no appreciable effect upon the price level.

The demand for silver coinage had become more insistent by the time of the 1890 election. In that year the Sherman Silver Purchase Act had been passed by the Republican Congress as a party compromise. This measure permitted the secretary of the treasury to purchase with legal tender treasury notes from 2,000,000 to 4,500,000 ounces

2. Hicks, 305.

worth of silver per month at the market price.³ This Act absorbed the entire domestic product of silver but at the same time prices went down. It also placed a burden upon the gold reserve because the secretary of the treasury chose to redeem the new issues of silver certificates in⁴ gold.

The Republicans had suffered an overwhelming defeat in the Congressional elections of 1890. As this defeat had been administered following the passage of the Sherman Purchase Act, the inflationists interpreted it as indicating a growing movement for the free coinage of silver.

The bill, which came up for discussion in the House, was a free coinage bill introduced by Richard P. Bland of Missouri.⁵ Bland described the attitude of the parties on the bill by declaring that, "we are all independent on this⁶ question. It is not a party measure."

The Alliance members got their chance to speak upon this bill showing the enthusiasm of the group for free coinage of silver. Representative William Baker (Kansas) attempted to show how the demonetization of silver had decreased the value of farm products on one hand and at the

3. Buck, Solon J., Agrarian Crusade, 159.

4. Dewey, Davis R., Financial History of United States, 438.

5. Cong. Rec., 52C., 1S., 490.

6. Ibid., 2323, 2324.

same time quadrupled the wealth of the creditor. Representative Benjamin H. Clover (Kansas) summed up the attitude of the bloc

New Englanders always tell us how the free coinage of silver would put the orphans and widows in a disastrous state. Whenever questions of more money comes up that looks toward the relief of the debtor groups, the New England widow story is brought out and made to do duty over and over again, but behind her ample skirts you can always find a Wall Street gold bug concealed.⁷

The House came to a vote on the bill on March 24, 1892 when J. C. Burrows, Republican of Michigan, moved to lay the bill on the table.⁸ This resulted in a tie vote and Speaker Crisp was forced to save the bill by voting nay.⁹ All the Alliance bloc voted against tabling the bill as well as almost all the representatives from the South and the West. This close vote came as a surprise to all free silver advocates who thought they had a large majority for free silver. It now seemed clearly evident that on a direct vote free silver would be defeated. Following this vote various dilatory motions were made including motions to reconsider votes by which the House refused to lay the bill on the table. This procedure went on for some time and finally got the House into utter confusion. The Alliance bloc voted solidly against all schemes to table the bill. Finally the

7. Cong. Rec., 52C., 1S., Appendix, 30.

8. Cong. Rec., 52C., 1S., 2534.

9. Ibid., 2543.

House adjourned ending what Watson called, "The night free
silver was killed."¹⁰

A similar bill which the two Alliance senators in the
Senate had a chance to vote upon was introduced by Stewart
of Nevada.¹¹ This measure was reported back adversely by
the Senate committee on finance and was not taken up for
action until late in the session. The first test came when
Stewart moved to consider the bill. This motion carried by
a vote of 28 to 20.¹² Both Kyle and Peffer, the two inde-
pendents, voted for the motion.

A large number of amendments were offered for the pur-
pose of killing the free silver clause of the bill. One of
these amendments tended to modify the bill so as to permit
free coinage only by international agreement. Another¹³
would have provided for free coinage at its present value.
Both Kyle and Peffer as well as a bloc of western Republi-
cans voted against all of these amendments. This shows the
Senate Alliance bloc was in favor of nothing short of free
silver at sixteen to one. The bill passed the Senate by a
vote of 29 to 25 with Kyle and Peffer voting aye.¹⁴ Also

10. Arnett, Alex M., "Populist Movement in Georgia," 134.
Quoted in Watson's Jeffersonian Magazine, I, 1128.

11. Cong. Rec., 52C., 1S., 23.

12. Ibid., 4706.

13. Ibid., 5713-5717.

14. Ibid., 5719.

voting for this bill were other silver crusaders who were later to help carry the banner for free coinage including: Jones, Nevada; Teller and Wolcott, Colorado; Pettigrew, South Dakota; Dubois and Shoup, Idaho.

The House made quick work of the bill. The House committee on rules brought forth a resolution for immediate consideration of the bill. The measure was rejected by a vote of 154 to 136.¹⁵ All eight Alliance members voted for bill including (Baker, Clover, Davis, Kem, McKeighan, Simpson, Watson, and Halvorsen). The fact that the campaign was getting under way with Grover Cleveland as the Democratic nominee, would have placed the Democrats in a very peculiar position with the House having passed a free silver bill. Representative McKeighan probably well expressed the Populist disgust with the whole procedure: "I move that if Wall Street has no more business to do, that we now adjourn."

The Alliance bloc in both House and Senate voted for all measures for free coinage of silver and against all of those that tended toward a compromise. Senator Peffer introduced a bill which he did not get reported back from the committee for debate. It was a typical agrarian Populist measure. It proposed to increase the currency, to provide for its circulation, to reduce the rates of interest and to establish a bureau of loans. It proposed to issue addition-

15. Cong. Rec., 52C., 1S., 6133.

al treasury notes amounting to a dollar and a half for every dollar of coin and bullion belonging to the government. He estimated this issue would have added 675,000,000 dollars to the country. The bill provided for the setting up of a farm loan bureau to loan federal money upon land through the agency of a national bureau of loans. In no case were the loans to be made for speculative purposes.¹⁶

This proposal, as many others introduced by the Alliance bloc, contained in itself the demands and fond hopes of the debtor farmers. It also was intended to relieve the high interest rates which Senator Peffer had characterized as "the most persistent, relentless and remorseless destroyer that has ever come among men."¹⁷ The bill was passed over in the Senate without a vote. This was not unusual for most bills introduced in both Houses by the Alliance bloc were never reported from the committee to which they were referred.

One of the common types of bills introduced by the Alliance bloc was to provide for an increase in the currency and distribute this in the form of homestead loans upon land. They could see how this would benefit their debtor constituencies in two ways. The effect of the increase in the currency would be to bring about a rise in prices of farm products. The other consequence would be to help re-

16. Cong. Rec., 52C., 1S., 5232.

17. Ibid.

lieve the farmer in debt by loaning him money at cheap rates of interest.

Most of the bills introduced in this Congress by the Alliance bloc were either for the purpose of free coinage of silver or to increase the paper money of the country. Senator Peffer took the most vigorous slap at the gold standard when he introduced a bill to prohibit the coinage¹⁸ of gold. This was a step farther than most of the Alliance group cared to go because it might have made the deflation even more severe.

The Alliance bloc brought with it an interpretation of money that was the idea of the Greenbackers carried on into the 90's. It did not seem to favor the free coinage of silver for the purpose of the coin as such. They only favored it as a means for inflation or bringing more money into the country. To them a commodity was not good money because it subjected the people to the inconveniences and changes arising from the market value of the thing used as money. Representative John G. Otis (Kansas) said: "Money is purely a creation of law and can be made of any material whatever, and should be based not only upon gold and silver but also upon land, iron, copper, coal, or wheat and more upon the¹⁹ faith and credit of the nation." Senator Peffer expressed about the same idea in the following words: "Dollars and

18. Cong. Rec., 52C., 1S., 6139.

19. Ibid., 2530.

dimes are vehicles for use in exchanging and transporting values as much as wagons, cars, and ships are vehicles for use in exchanging commodities. We can supply the deficiency with paper and if we have not enough gold and silver to back it, we can use wheat, cotton, or other imperishable commodities.²⁰"

The chief criticism of the national banking system came from the fact that it was blamed to a large extent for²¹ the inelasticity as well as the inadequacy of the currency. Many of the Alliance representatives thought the government itself should issue its money direct to the people and not be hampered by national banks.

Closely connected with the currency was the question of national banking. The Populists were foes of the national banks because the National Banking Act enabled these banks to control the currency to a certain extent by purchase of United States bonds. The national bankers were able to buy these United States bonds and to issue notes up to ninety per cent of the face of their bonds. As bonds rose to such a high price following the Civil War, bankers saw they could make more profit by selling their bonds and taking their notes out of circulation. Also they objected to the banks getting interest on government bonds and at the same time loaning the national bank notes out to farmers at high

20. Cong. Rec., 52C., 1S., 4211.

21. Hicks, 92.

rates of interest.

The Alliance bloc introduced many provisions to require the national banks to increase the currency, but all of these died in the respective committees to which they were referred. Representative Watson went so far as to demand elimination of national banks and also all national banking laws.²² But they were never able to get their banking reforms up for discussion.

The fifty-third Congress met in a time of great financial distress, the panic of 1893. Hard times had reached the agricultural West before the year of the panic, but now with even the industries of the East involved the plight became very severe for the western farmer and southern cotton grower. In the West partial crop failures in 1893 were followed by an almost complete failure of crops in 1894.²³ Farm prices by the summer of 1893 had also hit record lows. This was the situation which the new party as well as the country faced when President Cleveland issued his call for a special session.

The Populist party had been launched as a party in 1892 and had entered the national campaign in that year. Results for the new Populist party in the congressional field were fairly successful. We have seen the party elected eleven members in the House, eight agrarian representa-

22. Cong. Rec., 52C., 1S., 1164.

23. Hicks, 309-310.

tives and three silverites. This bloc, as we have seen, voted for Simpson for speaker. William Allen from Nebraska represented the addition to the Populist bloc in the Senate. The districts returning Populists included Nevada, Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado and Minnesota. Other senators who had a strong Populist leaning were Pettigrew, Republican of South Dakota; Irby, Democrat of South Carolina. Also a group of silver Republicans could be counted with the bloc on finance.

President Cleveland called Congress into special session on August 7, 1893 asking for repeal of the Sherman Purchase Act. The gold reserve in the treasury had been on the decline because of a great many factors among them being the purchases of silver. In June, 1893 the British government closed the mints in India to the free coinage of silver. Silver at once began to decline even more in value. This led public opinion in the East as well as the president to the belief that the entire financial problem was associated with that of silver.

William Wilson, Democrat of West Virginia, introduced the bill for repeal of the purchase act that became the center of the fight. Bland at the beginning offered a series of amendments to be considered with the bill. He then offered a resolution that the votes be taken on his amend-

25
ments as follows: Free coinage of silver at 16 to 1 ratio; if this failed, then a vote was to be taken separately on coinage at 17 to 1, 18 to 1, 19 to 1, and 20 to 1. Then if all these amendments failed, the final vote before the passage of the bill would be to restore the Bland-Allison Act. Then final vote was to be taken on the passage of the bill. The Bland resolution providing for this procedure was carried with all the Populists voting against it.

The idea of the repeal of the Sherman Act struck terror into the hearts of the Populists. They considered the repeal as a complete triumph of the money power and a promise of continued falling prices. They firmly believed the panic to have been a result of the big business of the country in league with the bankers to destroy silver as money. Representative Thomas J. Hudson, a newcomer to the Populist ranks, expressed the Populist bitter hatred toward President Cleveland as follows: "This condition of revolt will not continue much longer. We must have relief and that speedily or the mutterings that you have heard from the South and West will break forth so loud that they cannot only be heard in Wall Street but also in Buzzard's Bay." ²⁶ Cleveland had a summer place at Buzzard's Bay. Simpson also made some very bitter statements in his attack on the bill. Speaking of the people of his large dis-

25. Cong. Rec., 53C., 1S., 242.

26. Ibid., 511.

trict: "I do not believe that the men who breathe the air that sweeps down from the Rocky Mountains over those vast plains, will ever become slaves to a money aristocracy."²⁷

Representative McKeighan (Nebraska) gave voice to threats and promises:

By this act are you not sowing the wind that will return to you in a cyclone of wrath? Do you not see what a precedent you are setting by using your power to shape the effective meaning of all commercial contracts in the world and that in the interest of creditors. It will go hard if our people, when they come into power, do not improve upon your instruction and legislate such attenuated import into that great word dollar as will make their heaven--kissing mountains of credit shrivel and waste away like an ice palace before a southern sun,.....²⁸

The first attempt at voting on the bill was on the first amendment of Bland making it a free coinage bill at 16 to 1. This amendment lost by 125 to 226. All the Populists including Bell, Baker, Boen, Davis, Harris, Hudson, Kem, McKeighan, Pence and Simpson voted for the amendment. Here even with a Democratic majority in the House, the supposed free silver majority was a hopeless minority. The panic plus the pressure of the administration had its effect in whipping many of the Democrats of the South into line.

The next amendment was the amendment making it a free coinage bill at 17 to 1. This was defeated 101 to 241. Here we find a split between the Populists and Newlands,

27. Cong. Rec., 53C., 1S., 493.

28. Ibid., 947.

the silverite. Bell was the only Populist to join Newlands in voting for the amendment. McKeighan and Harris voted against it. The rest of the bloc did not vote. On the next amendment at 18 to 1, Bell and Newlands again voted for amendment. McKeighan and Harris were joined by Kem in voting against. The rest of the bloc did not vote. The 19 to 1 amendment found the same bloc lineup as above except Kem who switched back and did not vote. The vote on the amendment making it a 20 to 1 ratio was the same with the exception of Kem who switched back and joined with McKeighan and Harris in voting against amendment. All of these amendments lost by about the same majority.²⁹

The final Bland amendment before the vote on the passage of the bill was the attempt to revive the Bland-Allison Act. This amendment was rejected 136 to 213. Here we find all the Populists voting for this amendment. Newlands, the silverite, did not vote. Finally with all the amendments defeated the time came for the final vote on the passage of the bill, and it went through successfully. The vote was 239 to 108. All the Populist and silverites voted against repeal.³⁰

The bill met with a very stubborn opposition in the Senate. In fact the debate began in the Senate on August 30, and it was October 30 before a vote could be taken on

29. Cong. Rec., 53C., 1S., 1004-1008.

30. Ibid., 1008.

the passage of the bill. This time was spent in debate. The debate in the Senate against the bill was led for the most part by Senator Allen (Nebraska) who was followed by the silver men of all parties. Senator Allen in fact established a record up to that time in filibustering by speaking at one time continuously for fifteen hours. ³¹ Senator Kyle of South Dakota early in the debate offered an amendment making it a free coinage bill, but this was soon laid on the table. A similar amendment by Senator Peffer was rejected.

Senator Stewart of Nevada introduced an amendment to bill providing for free coinage of silver at 16 to 1, but a person bringing his bullion to the mint would receive only eighty per cent of the value of his bullion with the remaining twenty per cent going into the treasury. While this was a slight compromise in relation to the former amendments, it was rejected 29 to 39. ³² Allen, Kyle, and Peffer voted aye.

The compromise Senators went even further in an amendment by Senator Perkins setting up the present ratio for silver coinage plus a charge of twenty cents for coinage at the mint. Allen and Kyle voted for amendment but Peffer voted against it. Even this amendment was rejected by 30 to 41. The Bland-Allison Act was then offered in the Sen-

31. Cong. Rec., 53C., 1S., Appendix, 289-340.

32. Cong. Rec., 53C., 1S., 2916.

ate, as in the House, but this was rejected 31 to 41. All the Populists voted for this amendment. Senator Allen offered an amendment to the bill providing for the coining of all uncoined silver in the treasury into standard silver dollars at 16 to 1 ratio. The Populists voted for this amendment. It was rejected 31 to 41.³³

Another interesting amendment which the Populists supported was the one providing for an international Pan-American Union to be held for the purpose of adopting a common coin to be issued by the various governments in Cuba, the United States, Mexico, and Haiti. The various countries were to open their mints to free coinage of this common coin. This amendment was rejected 32 to 41.³⁴

Senator Peffer, probably through anger at the repeal advocates and to arouse excitement, introduced an old greenback proposal as an amendment. It proposed to issue treasury notes to the amount of 250,000,000 dollars with nothing behind them except their lawful issue. This amendment aroused a storm in the debate, and it was rejected in a hurry by an overwhelming vote of 7 to 58. Allen, Kyle, and Peffer voted for the amendment, and they were joined by Call, Irby, Pettigrew and Stewart. Even Senator Teller, the silver Senator from Colorado, voted against this amendment. Senator Stewart in voting for amendment said some-

33. Cong. Rec., 53C., 1S., 2916-2920.

34. Ibid., 2921.

thing of this nature would be necessary as money, if silver
35
were destroyed.

The Populists voted against a compromise amendment. It provided for a commission appointed by the President to determine by the following January 1, a fair and just ratio between silver and gold. The Populists knew that this amendment would work to the detriment of silver because such a proposal would have given President Cleveland a free hand to appoint gold men to the commission. It would have probably set up a ratio based upon the one existing at the
36
time. It was rejected 20 to 47.

Senator Peffer just previous to the vote on the bill made a speech that would have paralleled Calhoun's views in slavery days. It was full of the bitterness of the West for the work of the gold forces in repealing the Sherman law. The following words probably were typical of the majority of the Populists: "If our trade is of no consequence to the south and east of us, we can shorten our distance to foreign markets by an outlet through the ports of the Gulf of Mexico."
37
They, at least, looked to this avenue as a possible means of revenge upon the entrenched wealth of the East. The repeal act finally passed the Senate on October 30, 1893 by a vote of 43 to 32. Thirteen

35. Cong. Rec., 53C., 1S., 2923.

36. Ibid., 2953.

37. Ibid., 2956.

Republicans, twenty-one Democrats, and three Populists voted nay.³⁸ This marked the doom of silver coinage.

The introduction of silver coinage bills reached their greatest number during this repeal session even though a measure had been passed to stop its coinage. Senator Puffer went so far as to bring forth a bill providing for the issue of treasury notes to be loaned to states, counties, townships, municipalities, villages and individual citizens.³⁹ None of these bills ever got as far as a discussion in committee of the whole.

The repeal of the Sherman Purchase Act failed completely to bring prosperity to the country. In fact it had even failed to prevent the withdrawal of gold from the treasury. By the spring of 1894 strikes and unemployment were general throughout the country. Also in 1894 the corn crop was a failure in the West due to a severe drought. And wheat sold at the lowest price on the record of the Department of Agriculture.⁴⁰

The second session of the fifty-third Congress, which did not get under way until 1894, found the Populists and soft money men in much more control than they had been during the repeal session. When Bland introduced a bill to

38. Cong. Rec., 53C., 1S., 2958.

39. Ibid., 3719.

40. Noyes, Alexander D., Thirty Years of American Finance, 220-222.

coin the silver bullion purchased by the Act of 1890, it passed the House by a vote of 172 to 94. All Populists, most western Republicans and southern Democrats, voted for the bill. It also passed the Senate by a vote of 44 to 31. President Cleveland vetoed the bill. The House then failed to override veto by 114 to 144.⁴¹ Thus Cleveland by the spring of 1894 had lost control of Congress and had split the Democratic party.

The treasury had been in the habit of redeeming all treasury notes issued by the Sherman Act of 1890 in gold. The gold reserve had been set up to back the greenbacks under the Resumption Act of 1875. The Treasury also undertook to redeem the Sherman silver certificates in gold also. These demands had forced the reserve to a dangerously low level. Cleveland was forced to sell bonds for gold to maintain this reserve fund.⁴²

The administration asked for the issue of gold bonds at a lower rate of interest, but the Populists and western silver senators united to prevent its passage. Such a bill was introduced in the House. Bland introduced an amendment making it a free coinage bill. This procedure was denounced by the sound money leaders and followers of the administration. This amendment was rejected. Finally the House by a vote of 135 to 162 refused to give the bill a

41. Cong. Rec., 53C., 2S., 3460.

42. Dewey, 447.

⁴³
third reading. All the Populists of course opposing the bill.

The House late in the short session in February, 1895, refused to pass a resolution authorizing the issue of three per cent gold bonds. The objection here was to strengthening the gold standard by gold bonds. The House again refused to order the resolution to a third reading by a vote

⁴⁴
of 120 to 167. Representative Leonidas F. Livingstone, Democrat, gave a selection from a poem by Thomas Hood that probably expressed the Populist idea of gold:

Gold! Gold! Gold! Gold!
Bright and yellow, hard and cold,
Molten, graven, hammered, and rolled,
Hard to get and light to hold;
Hoarded, bartered, bought, and sold,
Stolen, borrowed, squandered, doled!
Spurned by the young, but hugged by the old
To the very verge of the churchyard mold
Prince of many a crime untold;
Gold! Gold! Gold!
Good or bad a thousand fold!⁴⁵

The Populists looked forward with great expectations to the campaign of 1894. They felt that the low prices, hard times, and general unemployment would mean success for them over the entire Western section of the country as well as much of the South. They thought the great reaction that was certain to develop against the administration following the depression would benefit them. This anticipation of

43. Cong. Rec., 53C., 3S., 1923.

44. Ibid., 2201.

45. Ibid., 2188.

success was so great that in most of the western states the Populist refused fusion with the Democrats.

The gains by the Populists in the election were small. This was especially true in the number of Populists elected to Congress. The great increase in the Populist vote came from the South.

The election resulted in a bloc of seven members in the House. The Populist bloc now held the balance of power in the Senate. This Senate bloc included four members who were elected as Populists with three democrats who often voted with the group.

The new Congress assembled in December, 1895, at a time when the gold reserve in the treasury was at a low point. On December 3, 1895, the gold reserve stood at \$79,333,000 and after commercial apprehension caused by Cleveland's Venezuela message, the reserve went still lower.⁴⁶ President Cleveland asked for permission to issue gold bonds instead of coin bonds and also for the retirement of the legal tender notes that drew the gold from the treasury.

The House ways and means committee introduced such a bill the purpose of which was to maintain and protect the coin redemption fund.⁴⁷ The Populists made clear in their debate on this bill their stand upon the money question. Representative Bell (Colorado) spoke of the party: "The

46. Dewey, 453.

47. Cong. Rec., 54C., 1S., 343.

Populist party is not and never has been a believer in the principles of bimetallism. It does not believe in a metallic basis for money, that the government should issue irre-⁴⁸deemable paper money by the edict of the government alone."

The Populists probably had trouble in being heard on this bill. The speaker would often refuse to recognize their members for speeches. Representative Kem (Nebraska) in the debate on this coin redemption bill expressed the bitter attitude of the group:

I desire that Populists throughout the land, who have been wondering and are wondering why the little Populist group here have not and do not inaugurate some measures of reform, should know that we not only do not have the power to pass measures, but we do not even have a chance to be heard on the measures others inaugurate.⁴⁹

The bill finally passed the House on December 28, 1895⁵⁰ by a vote of 171 to 136. All the Populists opposed it. The Senate committee on finance reported the bill back as a⁵¹ free coinage bill at the old ratio of 16 to 1. Senator Ben Tillman, the newly elected Democratic Senator from South Carolina, expressed his Populist leaning in a bitter attack upon Cleveland: "I came up here as governor of my state and stood out in the cold on the east door of the capitol for four hours nearly frozen, to be present at the

48. Cong. Rec., 54C., 1S., 1365.

49. Cong. Rec., Appendix, 8.

50. Cong. Rec., 54C., 1S. 401.

51. Ibid., 484.

inauguration of a Democratic president, with a Democratic⁵² House and Senate, and God forgive me for being such a fool."

Senator Allen offered an amendment depriving the secretary of the treasury of the power to issue bonds without authority of Congress. This amendment was rejected 21 to 54. All Populists voted for the amendment. An amendment by J. S. Morrill of Vermont drew a fiery attack by the Populists. It proposed to put a seigniorage upon all silver coinage equal in amount to the difference between the coinage value and the commercial value of the silver. This amendment was rejected 34 to 43. This would tend to give away all there is in the silver question as Senator Peffer said. The bill with the free coinage amendment passed the⁵³ Senate on February 1, 1896 by a vote of 42 to 35. Twenty-three Democrats, eighteen Republicans and seven Populists including Tillman voted for bill. Fourteen Democrats and twenty-seven Republicans voted nay.

The bill as amended was returned to the House where it encountered a long debate. The work of the Senate was severely criticised by the sound money interests for its procedure in making the bill a free silver measure. Finally the House by a vote of 90 to 215 refused to concur on⁵⁴ the Senate amendment. Here twenty-five Republicans, sixty-

52. Cong. Rec., 54C., 1S., 1075.

53. Ibid., 1216.

54. Ibid., 1735.

four Democrats and eight Populists voted for free silver on the bill with the Senate amendment. Two hundred and seven Republicans and thirty-five Democrats voted against. Thus the Populist bloc in the Senate had been responsible to a considerable degree for the defeat of this bond bill and also in the making of a free silver bill measure of it in the Senate.

Senator Butler, Populist of North Carolina, introduced a bill to prohibit the issue of interest bearing bonds without consent of Congress. The Senate would fail to act upon the measure but Butler would keep calling up the bill constantly for discussion. It had been introduced in December, 1895, but it was in May of the following year before Butler could get a motion for taking up the bill. Finally the motion carried for considering the bill by a vote of 29 to 27.⁵⁵ All Populists voted for considering the bill with the exception of Irby of South Carolina who did not vote. Senator Butler in speaking in favor of his bill urged that the re-monetization of silver would benefit the farmers of the South and West much more than the mine owners. Senator Clark, Republican, (Wyoming) was drawn to the support of the bill through fear of the growing power of the executive over Congress. Speaking on the bill he expressed his attitude as follows: "There has never been a time in the history of our country when the nation has been so threatened by usur-

55. Cong. Rec., 54C., 1S., 5548.

pation of the executive power as it is at the present time." ⁵⁶

The bill finally came to a test in the Senate on June 2, 1896 and passed by a vote of 32 to 25. ⁵⁷ All Populists voted for the bill with the exception of Irby who was absent. It was reported to the House ways and means committee which reported the bill back adversely. ⁵⁸ The bill never came to a vote in the House. In fact, the House had defeated the Jones free silver bill and this probably accounts for the failure of this bill.

The Populists continued to introduce their free silver measures in large numbers although probably not as many as in the preceding session. Representative Howard (Alabama), a newcomer to the Populist ranks in the House, brought forth a proposal worded very appropriately to fit Populist demands. It proposed to make paper money of the United States ⁵⁹ receivable and not redeemable. This emphasized the legal tender quality of money and not its intrinsic value.

A number of bills were introduced to restore the bi-metallic system. Such bills were introduced by Bell, Shuford and Strowd in the House, and by Peffer and Allen in the Senate. None of these were reported back from their respective committees.

56. Cong. Rec., 54C., 1S., 5556.

57. Ibid., 6006.

58. Ibid., 6174.

59. Ibid., 5773.

Senator Allen in the early part of the session submitted a resolution relying upon the cloak of war to get through an inflationary proposal. This resolution read as follows: "Whereas the president's message regarding boundary dispute between British Empire and Venezuela contemplates war and money is the first essential in time of war, would it not be expedient and proper for the government to open its mints to the free coinage of silver." ⁶⁰ It directed the committee on finance to report on its expediency. It never came to a vote.

Representative Bell expressing the Populist dislike for the large bankers, who supplied the government with gold in return for the bonds, introduced a measure to require the secretary of the treasury to pay bonds, issued under its contract with Belmont and Company, both interest and principal, in not less than one-half standard silver ⁶¹ dollars. Bell was having his joke here. The bankers would have as much this way as the other--but it would make them take silver anyway. Some Populists went so far as to introduce measures to prohibit all issues of bonds by the United States Government.

The election of 1896 had resulted in the election of the largest bloc of Populist congressmen as far as numbers were concerned. There had been elected a bloc of twenty-

60. Cong. Rec., 54C., 1S., 254.

61. Ibid., 98.

three Populist representatives in the House. There were also a sufficient group of Populist senators, when allied with other silver leaders, could prevent discrimination against silver.

The currency issue by the time of the meeting of the fifty-fifth Congress had died down to a certain extent. The Populists failed to introduce such a large number of bills as had been attempted in previous sessions. Senator Teller introduced a concurrent resolution that became the center of the fight. It declared that the payment of all bonds issued by the federal government, both principal and interest in silver dollars of $412\frac{1}{2}$ grains of silver was a just payment. ⁶² An amendment was offered by Senator Lodge making all bonds issued by the United States payable in gold coin or its equivalent. This amendment was what the creditor groups has been fighting to secure, and it was promptly rejected 24 to 53. All Populists and silver Republicans voted nay on the amendment. Next, Senator M. S. Quay, Republican, offered the Lodge amendment with modifications, providing that all bonds principal and interest should be paid in money that is the highest money in the world. This amendment, on the motion of Senator G. G. Vest, Democrat, was laid on the table by a vote of 47 to 31. All Populists and silver Republicans voted for laying amendment on the table.

62. Cong. Rec., 55C., 2S., 311.

Senator G. F. Hoar, Republican, brought forth an amendment stating that under no circumstances would the principal and interest of the public debt be paid in depreciated currency or any money other than best money in the world. This amendment, of course, would have made payment in gold necessary for carrying it into effect. It was also laid on the table. The final amendment made the obligations of the United States payable in gold until an international agreement had been conducted to bring about the free coinage of silver.⁶³ All of these amendments were laid on the table. The Populists and silver Republicans provided the necessary majority to defeat them. The final vote on the resolution⁶⁴ found a vote of 47 to 32 in its favor. All Populists and silver Republicans voted aye. The aye vote included the eight Populists and three silver Republicans.

The bill reached the House and was reported back adversely. There remained five hours for debate on it before a vote could be taken. Bailey, the Democratic leader, moved that the Democrats have two hours, Republicans two and the Populists forty-five minutes for debate. Dingley objected saying that there were only two sides, one for those favoring the resolution and one for those against it. Simpson objected to all motions unless Populists had, at least, thirty minutes. Finally the debate became so in-

63. Cong. Rec., 55C., 2S., 1171-1173.

64. Ibid., 1173.

65
volved that the chair was forced to control the time. The
debate on the bill in the House was as bitter as the silver
discussions of former sessions.

Bailey gave the Populists fourteen minutes to speak on
the bill. Bell was given the floor to speak. He yielded
to McCormick (Kansas) for five minutes. Then Bell took the
remaining time for discussion. This was all the time the
Populists had for discussion of their views on the measure.
66
The House finally defeated the resolution 188 to 133. 67 The
vote for the resolution included twenty-four Populists, two
silverites, and most of the Democrats. The division in re-
ality was Republicans against Democrats and Populists.

The Populists had by this session almost ceased to in-
troduce bills for the free coinage of silver. They still
favored the movement but they could see how hopeless it was
to continue the agitation by introducing the bills. They
knew they were certain to be vetoed by the president. How-
ever, there were a few such measures introduced. One by
Representative Skinner intended to secure the free coinage
of silver by an international agreement. Another one by
Bell provided for the coining of the silver bullion in the
treasury. All of these bills died in their respective com-
mittees. Also the beginning of prosperity which seemed to

65. Cong. Rec., 55C., 2S., 1260.

66. Ibid., 1283.

67. Ibid., 1309.

be just "around the corner," helped to weaken the enthusiasm for inflation of the currency.

Ignatius Donnelly in his paper remarked sarcastically on the inauguration of McKinley: "There shall be no more mortgages nor taxes nor sheriff executions. And the Populists shall hang their burning cheeks with shame to think they opposed the great and good McKinley and the greater and gooder Mark Hanna." ⁶⁸ By 1898, this statement would not have held much weight because by that year it was seen that prosperity was returning. Also the argument that gold was too scarce to be suitable for use as the monetary standard was failing to carry conviction. The increased production of gold in combination with other factors was bringing about an inflation on the gold standard. Thus the long desire of Populism for a rising price level was at last beginning to become a reality.

Such was the condition of affairs when the fifty-sixth Congress met in December, 1899. The silver majority in the Senate of the fifty-fifth Congress had prevented the passage of a gold standard act. Now with the silver majority completely wiped out by the congressional elections of 1898, the gold money interests would get to work to make their majority effective. In fact this election almost wiped out Populist representatives in Congress. This was true es-

68. Quoted in Hicks, 388.

pecially in the House. The representation in the House had been reduced from twenty to five as there were only four who had voted for Bell (Colorado) for speaker.

The Republicans got their bill started on the first day of the session when Representative Jesse Overstreet, Republican, (Indiana) introduced House bill Number 1, "To define and fix the standard of value and maintain the parity of all money issued by the United States." ⁶⁹ The Republican majority made it a party measure and used all their influence to rush the bill through the House. The Republican sponsors of the bill said the whole purpose of the bill was to clear up all muddled thinking that existed on the currency. In fact, the gold standard was a reality before the introduction of this bill. It was merely to state the standard by terms of law.

The few Populists made their last determined fight to prevent the passage of the gold act. Representative Bell said, "The bankers, and bondholders of the world are now winning one of the greatest financial victories that has ever been achieved in the financial history of the world." ⁷⁰ The debate lacked the fire of earlier silver debates. In fact, the opposition saw how futile it was to put up much of a struggle against it. The Populist opposition to the bill can be well stated in the words of Representative

69. Cong. Rec., 56C., 1S., 9.

70. Ibid., 298.

Ridgely, of Kansas, elected as a Populist in 1898:

The title of this bill should read as follows:

1. A bill to lock up and finally destroy all our silver dollars, greenbacks, and other issues of government currency.
2. A bill to give national banks a complete monopoly of the nation's credit.
3. A bill to compel people to pay banks double interest on their capital.
4. To create and put in perpetual motion an endless chain to draw both gold and silver from the treasury at the will of the money trust.
5. To repudiate all existing money contracts by giving the creditor advantage by compelling all debtors to pay in money of double value.
6. To create and support at the expense of the federal government the most powerful money trust in the world.⁷¹

The Republicans staged their fight for the bill by stressing the prosperity issue. Representative Edward L. Hamilton, Republican, a leader in the fight for the bill stated: "They declare there could be no prosperity which did not result from the free coinage of silver at 16 to 1 ratio to gold; now here we are in a period of prosperity too great to be denied. Gentlemen, why put the clock back while the sun goes on."⁷² The House passed the bill on December 18, 1899, by a vote of 190 to 150. The five Popu-⁷³lists voted against the bill.

71. Cong. Rec., 56C., 1S., 423.

72. Ibid., 321.

73. Ibid., 572.

The bill in the Senate was debated for a much longer time. The Populists, silver Republicans, and a few southern Democrats carried the brunt of the debate against the gold standard. Senator Allen, who had figured so prominently in the old fight against repeal of the Sherman Act, came forth for his last big stand to save the country from the gold standard. Accepting the epithet agitator and wearing it as a decoration he declared: "I thank God I am an agitator. Agitation is life, motion, energy and success. If you point me to a man who is called conservative, I will point you to a man whose powers, mental, social, moral and physical are on the road to decay."⁷⁴

Stewart (Nevada) offered an amendment to make all bonds issued by the federal government, payable both principal and interest in gold or silver coin of the value of July 14, 1870. Butler, Jones, Stewart and Turner voted for the amendment. Allen, Heitfeld and Kyle did not vote. It was rejected 26 to 44. Senator Edmund W. Pettus offered an amendment providing that nothing should be held to affect the present legal tender quality of silver dollars coined by the United States. This amendment was rejected 26 to 44. Butler, Jones, Stewart, and Teller voted for the amendment. Kyle, Heitfeld and Allen did not vote. Even such silver senators as Wolcott, Shoup and Clark of Wyoming voted against the amendment as they were regular Republi-

74. Cong. Rec., 56C., 1S., 1619.

cans now.

The final amendment to the bill, designed to prevent the passage of the gold standard act, was offered by James K. Jones, Democrat of Arkansas. It would have made the bill a free coinage measure at 16 to 1 ratio to gold. This marks the last chance of the Populists to vote on the question of free silver. The amendment was buried under by a majority of 28 to ⁷⁵47. Butler, Harris, Heitfeld, Jones, Allen, Stewart, and Teller, the silver Republican, voted for the amendment. The bill finally passed the Senate by a vote of 46 to ⁷⁶29. All Republicans voted for the bill. Here again as on the amendments, we find such old silver men as Wolcott, Shoup and Clark voting for sound money. The Populists and Silver Republicans voting against the bill included: Allen, Butler, Harris, Heitfeld, Jones, Pettigrew, Stewart, Turner and Teller. Kyle did not vote. Thus the struggle ended by the passage of this single act. All the bills, speeches, motions and desires of the Populists for the past decade had been fought in vain as far as a reformed currency was concerned.

The currency issue by 1900 had become an outworn issue as far as practical politics was concerned. Prices were rising and inflation was already at work without the free coinage of silver. The Populists still, however, favored

75. Cong. Rec., 56C., 1S., 1829-1833.

76. Ibid., 1835.

an expansion of the currency. Senator Allen declared:
 "The money question is the most important before the American people today and will continue so. I am an advocate of coinage of silver at 16 to 1 ratio. If that doctrine was good in 1893, it is still good and will continue to be good throughout the ages." ⁷⁷ This was still the attitude of a majority of the Populists.

The appeal for an inflation of the currency had, however, lost the weight of the argument. The world's annual production of gold had almost tripled in its production in 1899 as compared to 1890:

World's Annual Production of Gold

1890.....\$118,848,700	1895.....\$198,763,600
1891..... 130,650,000	1896..... 202,251,600
1892..... 146,651,500	1897..... 236,073,700
1893..... 157,494,800	1898..... 286,879,700
1894..... 181,175,600	1899..... 306,724,100 ⁷⁸

The question has often been discussed as to the Populists idea on money. Were they a new party peculiar to the decade of the nineties or an extension of the old Greenback party? As far as the monetary issue is concerned, they did reveal an attitude on money that was similar to the Greenbackers. They were often identified as a silver party, but silver was regarded by them as only a step in currency reform.

The Populists above all were in favor of a tremendous

77. Cong. Rec., 56C., 1S., 1617.

78. Hicks, 389.

expansion of the currency. This expansion should be taken by the Federal Government in its power to issue more money. This increase in currency should be made through the printing of paper money. They were opposed to a metal basis for money, because it tended to cause a discrimination in favor of the metal used as money. So Senator Kyle expressed: "A metal basis for currency is a delusion calculated to blind the masses for the enrichment of the few."⁷⁹ They favored the free coinage of silver only as a step for bringing more money into the country. It was not for the purpose of silver as money as Representative Hudson stated: "While we do not believe that the free coinage of silver will give us immediate relief, we do believe that it will gradually give us more money."⁸⁰ Representative Bell in an attack on the Cleveland bond issues carried this still further: "The Populist party does not believe in the true principle of bimetallism..... And there is no necessity for the use of gold and silver as money."⁸¹

The Populists firmly believed that money was only a means of exchange for commerce. They were not interested in the intrinsic value of money, but only the legal tender quality that made it circulate. In fact, they preferred to have all money upon a paper basis. Senator Peffer in a

79. Cong. Rec., 53C., 1S., Appendix, 179.

80. Cong. Rec., 53C., 1S., 511.

81. Cong. Rec., 54C., 1S., 1365.

speech against repeal of Sherman Purchase Act expressed this view as follows: "So far as I am concerned I had rather see all of our coinage laws wiped out and place gold and silver on the markets the same as we do wheat, corn, and cotton, ... The time is soon coming when the people will need neither gold nor silver to base their paper up-

82
on." Representative Barlow in the debate on the Teller resolution, making bonds redeemable in silver, expressed the same idea. "Money is not valued for its material but for what it does."
83

The currency doctrine of the Populists, therefore, was in reality a Greenback scheme. They believed in a currency issued only by the national government, but in a large enough amount so as to cause no worry to debtor people. They thought of the currency as an article in exchange of goods just as railroads, wagons, and all other vehicles were used in transporting them. Therefore, any cause making for contraction of the currency was a drawback to all civilization.

The whole question of banking was tied up with the currency issue, and over the whole decade it played only a small part in Populist discussions in Congress. It is true that many bills were introduced by Populist congressmen for a radical change in the banking structure, but none of

82. Cong. Rec., 53C., 1S., Appendix, 44.

83. Cong. Rec., 55C., 2S., Appendix, 142.

these ever came to a vote in Congress. The fifty-second and fifty-third Congresses found many proposals introduced by the Populists reforming the banking situation, but as the silver issue went to the front the banking problem went to the background. A group of bills were introduced making for government postal savings banks but none of these were ever reported back from committees. The Populists were unable to get their banking ideas up for debate.

CHAPTER III

ATTEMPTS AT POLITICAL REFORM

The Populist group had early taken a stand for more popular control of the government. Even before the actual formation of the party, the Alliance conventions had pledged themselves to work for more democracy in government. Give the power over government to the people and reforms will follow. This represented the faith which the group had in the will of the masses. The party had taken the name People's party, and naturally, they would have supreme faith in the will of the people in government.

One of the reforms, which the group had advocated from the beginning, was the direct election of United States senators by the people. Alliance groups had held a convention at Ocala, Florida in December, 1890, and drawn up a program which included a demand for direct election of United States senators. The Alliance convention at St. Louis, ^{February} January, 1892, had endorsed a female suffrage amendment, but this was as far as the Alliance went.

The Alliance bloc made their demands felt in Congress by the introduction of a large group of proposals designed to bring about more democratic control over government. The first of these proposals were bills calling for direct election of United States senators. The state legislatures

were viewed as tools of the corrupt politicians for keeping senators from being controlled by the people. Representative Kem was one of the most enthusiastic supporters of popular election of senators, stating: "I am on the side of the people against the scheme which permits a few to cast the vote of the millions. While the direct election of senators is not a cure for all evils, it is a step in the direction of more popular government."¹ Peffer expressed his idea of the relation of government to citizens in the following expression: "Remove every barrier between the voter and the man who is to execute the laws."² None of the Populists' bills providing for popular election of senators were ever reported back from their respective committees.

Each subsequent Congress saw the Populists attempt to amend bills bringing about the desired reforms in the election of senators. Senator Peffer introduced such proposals in almost every Congress. Senator Butler, North Carolina, presenting a resolution providing for the direct election of senators called attention to the immediate problem.

The fact that a majority of states have taken the initiative in petitioning Congress indicates a strong trend in its favor. There are eight states today in a deadlock over the election of senators. This is not the worst, scandals are breaking out

1. Cong. Rec., 52C., 1S., 6072-6073.
2. Cong. Rec., 52C., 2S., 679.

and charges of bribery have been proven.³

It was not until the fifty-sixth Congress that the Populists had a chance to vote on their proposal. This vote came on a House resolution by J. B. Corliss, Republican (Michigan) providing an amendment to the constitution.⁴ This resolution provided for the election of senators by state legislatures unless the people of any state should provide for their election by direct vote of the people. W. W. Rucker, Democrat, called up the substitute which was the minority report of the committee. It provided for an expressed declaration of election of senators by the people.

The only Populist who had a chance to speak on the resolution was Ridgely, Kansas. The substitute providing for direct election in all the states was agreed to, and on the final vote it passed the House by a vote of 242 to 15.⁵ All the five Populists supported it. This overwhelming vote in favor of the scheme shows how far the reform proposal had advanced by 1899. The Senate committee on elections and privileges reported the bill back adversely. The Senate was very unlikely to pass such a reform proposal because it might write finis upon the political career of a large number of them. Thus the Populists had helped to lay the background for a proposal which was later to bloom

3. Cong. Rec. 55C., 3S., 1203.

4. Cong. Rec. 56C., 1S., 12.

5. Ibid., 4129.

as a phase of the progressive movement.

The Populists introduced many bills designed to undo the work of the constitutional fathers who had placed checks upon popular control over the government. One of these constitutional checks was the indirect method of electing the president and vice-president. They conceived of the electoral college as a means of suppressing the will of the majority. To give the people more control over the president, the Populists brought forth proposals abolishing the electoral college and providing for direct election. Senator Peffer introduced early in the fifty-second Congress a resolution to elect the president and vice-president by a direct vote of the people.⁶ In the same Congress he offered a bill to limit the office of president to one term. Such a proposal was a democratic one in that it would provide more rotation in the office, and tend to keep the president from assuming dictatorial powers. Senator Peffer in the following expression on the constitution probably stated the Populist attitude: "The provisions of the Constitution are not too sacred to be modified. Whenever any form of government fails to protect the rights of the people it may be abolished and a new government set up in its place that will satisfy the people."⁷ Peffer further commented, "The electoral college often defeats the

6. Cong. Rec., 52C., 1S., 359.

7. Cong. Rec., 52C., 2S., 623.

will of a majority of the voters. This has happened in nine of the eighteen presidential elections.⁸"

Staking their hopes in the decisions of the people, they brought forth a series of measures for submitting to a direct vote of the electorate certain questions. The Populist ideal was to remove as far as possible all barriers between the people and those who govern. One method of accomplishing this objective would be to submit various questions directly to the voters. The most common of these was introduced by Representative Skinner in the fifty-fourth Congress. It provided for submitting to a direct vote of the people the following: Free coinage of silver at 16 to 1; a graduated income tax; the election of president and vice-president by a direct vote of the people.⁹ Senator Peffer had introduced a similar proposal in the preceding Congress.

The electoral college system often tended to concentrate the political activities of the major parties upon the eastern states which had large blocs of electoral votes. Thus politicians would, as a means of political expediency, tend to ignore the western states where Populism was the strongest. Peffer introduced another proposal, while typical of the Populists demands in calling for direct election of president, and making him eligible for only one term,

8. Cong. Rec., 52C., 2S., 679.

9. Cong. Rec., 54C., 1S., 4245.

was not so true to form in providing for an extension of his term to six years and making vice-president ineligible¹⁰ for the office of president.

The Populists also strove to extend the suffrage to more people in the United States. This was shown in a resolution introduced in the House by Bell (Colorado) providing for an amendment to the constitution making woman suffrage legal.¹¹ It was reported back adversely and laid on the table. Corruption at the ballot box also received bitter rebuke from Populist bloc in Congress. Representative Maxwell (Kansas) in 1898 introduced proposals for restricting the use of money in the election of senators and representatives to Congress, and a measure was designed to punish the corruption, coercion, or intimidation of voters¹² in elections held in pursuance of laws of the United States.

The bloc proposals for more democracy in government represented ideas about two or three decades ahead of their time. Another practice, which a few of the Populists criticized, was the time for assembling of Congress. The fact that Congress did not meet for a year following an election was in itself a scheme to keep the will of the people from being put immediately into legislation. Howard (Alabama) introduced a bill for beginning the long session of Con-

10. Cong. Rec., 54C., 1S., 25.

11. Cong. Rec., 53C., 2S., 1756.

12. Cong. Rec., 55C., 2S., 103.

gress on March 4 rather than the first Monday in December.

The Populists' demand for a decrease in the salary of public officials got under way as the depression increased in severity in the early 1890's. They sought to increase pensions and bring in more groups who could receive them, but they desired at the same time to reduce the salaries of public officials. Senator Allen introduced a bill to reduce public expenditures. While they proposed measures to reduce the salaries of government officials, they sought at the same time to induce the federal government to engage in relief activities.

The bloc favored a wider distribution in the expenditures so as to include more people. Some of the bills proposed providing for federal government expenditures were as follows: To provide funds for immediate use in relieving distress throughout the country; to provide for improvement of public roads and for other purposes; to provide for public improvements and employment of citizens of the United States. Thus they favored reduction of public expenditures for the salaries of government officials, but an increase in expenditures when it was to be distributed to the common people for work relief or to be paid as pensions.

The actions of President Cleveland had furnished much material for Populist opposition to the chief executive. They retaliated with the introduction of bills designed to

check the executive power of the president over Congress. Typical of these measures was an amendment proposed by Senator Butler to limit the veto power of the president. Another was to take away the authority of the executive department to issue government bonds and vest that authority in Congress.

The Populist criticism of the president reached its height in 1895 when Howard went so far as to bring forth a resolution for impeachment of the president for high crimes and misdemeanors. This resolution was never taken up in the House, but it reflected the bitter hatred of Populist congressmen for Cleveland. Howard speaking on his resolution brought up the following charges:

1. He has sold bonds without the authority of law.
2. Sold or aided in sale of bonds at less than their market value.
3. Directed the Secretary of Treasury to disregard law that makes United States notes redeemable in coin.
4. Ignored and refused to have enforced the anti-trust laws.
5. Sent United States troops into Illinois without authority of law.
6. Corrupted politics through interference of federal office holders.
7. Used appointive power to influence legislation detrimental to welfare of people.¹⁴

Howard submitted a second resolution calling upon

14. Cong. Rec., 54C., 1S., 5650.

Cleveland to account for his distribution of patronage to induce members of Congress to vote for repeal of Sherman Silver Purchase Act. A third one proposed by him called upon the secretaries of war, navy, interior, states, treasury, agriculture, and commissioners on pensions for information as to number of old and infirm persons unable to perform official service and yet retained on the pay rolls. 15

The federal court system received a large part of the Populists' attack. They could see clearly how the supreme court could be used as a powerful check upon reform legislation. One of the most important stimulants for the Populist attack upon the courts had been the income tax decision. The income tax law, as we shall see, had been attached to the Wilson-Gorman tariff bill. The supreme court in May of the following year had declared the law unconstitutional by a 5 to 4 decision. This received bitter criticism from the Populist congressmen, and Bryan, Democrat, declared that the court had taken its stand with the wealthy and against the poor.

Senator Allen first retaliated by submitting a proposal to prevent the abuse of legal processes by the United States courts and judges. He introduced another measure restricting the jurisdiction of the federal courts. Another bill introduced by Allen was aimed at restricting the judicial review of the courts. It was termed as a bill de-

fining the jurisdiction of the supreme court in the determination of constitutional questions. It proposed to make the votes of the judges of the supreme court unanimous to declare acts of Congress unconstitutional. The resolution read as follows:

That from and after the passage of this act, no bill or joint resolution that has passed Congress and received the approval of the president, or has become law by not being returned by the president with his approval to Congress within the time prescribed by the Constitution of the United States, or has become law notwithstanding the presidential veto, shall be held to be unconstitutional by the supreme court except where all the judges concur in an opinion to that effect.¹⁶

The use of injunction in labor disputes by federal courts was also severely condemned by the Populists. The incident which started the Populist opposition to injunctions by the courts had been the Pullman strike in Chicago. An injunction had been issued against Debs and the American Railway Union which had been leading the strike against the railroads. This injunction was followed by the sending of troops into Chicago which helped to break the strike and make it a defeat for the railway workers. The Populists following this strike introduced in Congress a group of bills to abolish the power of the courts to issue injunctions. The Populists interpreted this device of the court as a complete check upon the liberty of the people. Therefore, they proposed legislation to abolish court injunctions.

16. Cong. Rec., 53C., 2S., 7603.

Senator Allen took the lead in an attack upon the practice of lobbying, by the introduction of two bills during the same Congress for prevention of the practice. Both had for their purpose the prevention of lobbying.¹⁷

The Populists supported all measures that were concerned with the admission of new states in the West. A bill came up providing for the admission of Arizona as a state in 1894. The proposal passed the House with the Populists supporting the bill. The bill never came to a vote in the Senate. Senator Peffer early in the fifty-third Congress introduced a bill to enable the people of the territory of Oklahoma to form a constitution and state government and to be admitted into the union as a state. The Populists would naturally favor the creation of new states from the West. It would add to Populist strength in Congress and especially in the Senate. The introduction of Oklahoma would also give more strength to the western section of the country in putting over their ideas of reform. They could support these measures on the ground of political expediency, as well as extension of democracy.

The chief objective of the Populists for reforming the electoral structure was probably a means of getting their financial demands put into operation. The Populists also seemed to be thoroughly convinced that a majority of the people favored Populistic reforms but the barriers between

17. Cong. Rec., 53C., 1S., 11.

the voters and the government administrators prevented the people from exercising this control. Therefore, remove all barriers between the government and the people, and Populist reforms will be immediately put into operation. Also they felt that Populism itself would be better able to get control of the government by their political reforms.

The question of more democracy in government also seemed to have its influence upon the Populist attitude toward the Cubans. This championship of the common man and his right to govern himself, were clearly shown in the Populist sympathy for the Cubans. The Populists had been among the earliest advocates of a speedy recognition of Cuba following the conflict between Cuba and the Spanish government. Senator Allen as early as December, 1895, had introduced a resolution providing for United States recognition of Cuba.¹⁸ His resolution also stated that all islands in close proximity to the mainland of the United States should be annexed as speedily as possible as essential to our safety in times of peace. In the same Congress Allen brought forth a resolution requesting the president of the United States to recognize the political independence of the republic of Cuba. Allen expressing his Cuban sympathy stated:

There comes a time in history of nations when the national hearts as well as the national judgment is appealed to. By our situation upon this hemisphere, by our stand at the head of republics, we owe a duty to those in

18. Cong. Rec., 54C., 1S., 25.

close proximity to us, at least to see that they shall receive humane and just treatment at the hands of their rulers.¹⁹

This resolution of Senator Allen was never officially acted upon.

The concurrent resolution that finally came up for debate resolved:

That in the opinion of Congress a state of war exists between the Spanish government and the government maintained by force of arms in Cuba. That the United States should maintain a strict neutrality and that the friendly offices of the United States government should be offered by the president to the Spanish government for the recognition of the independence of Cuba.²⁰

Allen offered an amendment to the concurrent resolution authorizing the president to issue a proclamation recognizing the independence of the republic of Cuba. This amendment was tabled with all the four regular Populists voting against laying it on the table. Irby and Tillman voted to table the amendment and not with the Populist bloc. Then the vote was taken on the original resolution and it passed 64 to ²¹6. All the Populists voted for the resolution and Irby joined them here. This resolution was swept through the House with little opposition by a vote of 262 to ²²17. All the Populists supported the resolution with

19. Cong. Rec. 54C., 1S., 2252.

20. Ibid., 2257.

21. Ibid., 2256-2257.

22. Ibid., 2359.

the exception of Howard who did not vote. The bloc in the House voting for included Baker, Bell, Shuford, Strowd, and Skinner. Skinner late in the session expressed these views on Cuba: "I would have our flag the emblem of liberty floating over Cuba and it ought to wave in triumph over her dominion and she ought to be made a state of the union."²³

Allen and Skinner seemed to have imperialistic sentiments at least as far as Cuba was concerned. Skinner went so far as to demand the annexation of Cuba as a state. Allen also introduced in the Senate a resolution annexing Cuba to the United States. The imperialism of these men, however, seemed to be connected with the question of liberty to the Cubans. They probably believed that the liberty of the oppressed Cubans would be more secure and better protected if she were made a state of the union. Senator Allen, at least, seems to have placed the question of liberty to the Cubans as the dominant factor in his resolution for Cuban annexation because, as we shall see in next Congress, he was one of the most bitter opponents of Hawaiian annexation.

The opening of the fifty-fifth Congress found the Populists again among the leaders for recognition of Cuba. Allen on December 8, 1897, speaking for Cuban independence said, "For the seventh or eighth time I stand at my desk and ask for the speedy and effectual congressional recogni-

23. Cong. Rec., 54C., 1S., 3555.

tion of the independence of Cuba. I am a believer in human freedom. I do not believe that God created any one man to be the bond slave of another."²⁴ This was followed by similar resolutions introduced in the House by such Populists as Bell, Castle, and Ridgely. Simpson (Kansas) expressed a belief somewhat different from a majority of the group in the following manner: "I am not lying awake at nights over the condition of Cuba..... Our own people at home need legislation to relieve them of suffering rather than legislation for a foreign people and not spend so much time on Cuba."²⁵

By the spring of 1898 affairs began to turn definitely toward a war with Spain over Cuba. McKinley held off from going to war until April 11, when he asked for the use of the army and navy to put down the revolt and set up a stable government in Cuba. This message drew the fire of the Populists in Congress because they interpreted it to mean that we would be fighting the Cubans. Simpson expressing his bitterness toward the message declared:

The message is a reflection of the man weak and vacillating. He says the insurgents have maintained themselves against Spain for three years and in the next breath he says there is no government to recognize...
... The message will go down in history as one that puts this great republic in a most humiliating attitude; that of having lost all our manhood and love of

24. Cong. Rec., 55C., 2S., 40.

25. Ibid., 803.

26
liberty.

The war message of President McKinley had said nothing about the independence of Cuba or what would be done with the island following the war. The question of Cuban independence soon came up in the House and a group offered the resolution to a vote with the minority report of the committee on foreign affairs attached to the resolution. This provision added that the United States recognize the independence of the Cuban republic. This was rejected by a vote of 148 to 191 as the House was under administration control to a considerable degree. All the Populists voted for the resolution with the recognition clause with the exception of Greene who did not vote. The resolution passed the House by a vote of 325 to 19 without the recognition

²⁷ clause. All of the Populists voted for the resolution in its final stage with the exception of Simpson and Greene who voted against. While they highly desired the recognition of Cuba, they did conceive of intervention as a possible means to free the Cubans.

The war resolution met with a much more bitter struggle in the Senate. Senator David Turpie (Indiana) early offered an amendment providing for the official recognition of Cuban independence. This was agreed to by 51 to 37. All of the Senate Populists including Allen, Butler, Harris,

26. St. Louis Globe-Democrat, April 12, 1898.

27. Cong. Rec., 55C., 2S., 3819-3820.

Kyle, Heitfeld, Turner, Jones and Stewart voted for the amendment. The "old guard" Republican group voted against the recognition clause including such senators as: Hoar, Platt, Lodge, Hale, Hanna, Aldrich and Proctor. Frye then moved to lay on the table the first section of the resolution which declared that Cubans are of right ought to be free. This was tabled by a vote of 55 to 33 with all Populists voting for tabling.

The resolution then passed the Senate containing both the Teller amendment and the recognition clause. It passed the Senate by a vote of 67 to 21 with all the Populists voting aye on resolution.²⁸ The war resolution then went through a long period of debate before the two houses could agree on the wording of the resolution. The House had passed the resolution only allowing the president to intervene. Now the Senate had placed two amendments in the resolution asking for recognition of the island and also a promise that we would withdraw from Cuba on the termination of peace.

The House finally refused definitely to concur on the Senate amendment asking for Cuban recognition by a 156 to 178 vote.²⁹ The Populist bloc voted to concur on the Senate amendment and in favor of retaining the section for recognition. The Senate finally broke down on April 19, 1898

28. Cong. Rec., 55C., 2S., 3988.

29. St. Louis Globe-Democrat, April 19, 1898.

and passed the war resolution with the Teller amendment but without the recognition. The vote was 42 to 35 in favor. The large vote against the resolution included about all the Populist bloc with the exception of Kyle who voted aye.³⁰ The Populists voting against included: Allen, Butler, Harris, Heitfeld, Jones, Stewart and Turner. They were joined by the silver Republican bloc of Mantle, Pettigrew, and Teller. As I have said the large anti-war vote in the Senate was due to the fact that the war resolution did not recognize the Cuban republic.

The Populists group which had taken such a vigorous stand to free the Cubans, became anti-expansionist for the most part following the war. The next Congress which met in December, 1899, had before it the question of treaty ratification. Simpson speaking on the Philippine question expressed his hostility to imperialism:

We fought in Cuba and liberated them. So we did in Manila, side by side with the inhabitants of the islands. We fought to drive the Spanish power from the islands in the interests of humanity, but after all the expenditure of money and glorious achievement, we have taken the place of Spain, we are now the oppressors.³¹

This statement of Simpson no doubt reflected the attitude of the Populists in regard to territorial expansion.

Senator Allen, who had been the foremost advocate of a free Cuba, expressed his opposition to the war in the Phil-

30. St. Louis Globe-Democrat, April 19, 1898.

31. Cong. Rec., 55C., 2S., 2408.

ippines in the following manner:

I am not prepared to say that we do not have the constitutional power to annex territory. I am inclined to believe that we have that power. But I do not believe we possess the power to unnecessarily wage war upon a harmless people for the purpose.³²

The Senate debated the treaty of peace throughout the whole month of January, 1899. The debate centered around a resolution by Vest, Democrat, Missouri, declaring that under the constitution the United States had no power to acquire territory as colonies. Simpson in an attack upon the acquisition of the Philippines and the Philippine war just previous to the end of his congressional career, said, "What they want is to place on the throne in this country William McKinley, President of the United States, emperor of the West Indies and Philippines and then get a standing army to enforce the power of this empire."³³

Before the final vote on the treaty had taken place two events occurred that had an influence upon the final vote. These events also helped to account for the Populist change of attitude and caused some of the bloc to change their votes. Bryan had come to Washington late in January to demand ratification of the treaty. The other factor that probably had greater weight in changing the Populist attitude toward the treaty was the outbreak of hostilities that occurred on February 4.

32. Cong. Rec., 55C., 3S., 562.

33. Ibid., 1317.

Senator Allen made a long speech in the Senate just previous to the ratification of the treaty explaining his reasons for voting aye on the treaty: "Mr. President, because I shall vote for the treaty it does not follow that I am in favor of annexation. I do it because in my opinion the government of the United States cannot afford to open up negotiations with the Spanish dynasty again." ³⁴ Jones (Nevada) stated that he changed in favor of treaty ratification because conditions in Manila for the past two or three days made ratification necessary. This was the fighting between the Filipinos and the American troops that had broken out on the previous Saturday. He went on to say how he would have opposed ratification if such a move meant imperialism.

There followed a series of amendments most of which were designed to get around annexation of territory. Senator Hoar offered an amendment providing that the United States was not to incorporate the Philippine inhabitants into citizenship; but only to set up a stable government on the island suitable to desires of said inhabitants. This amendment was tabled. All of the Populists voted against tabling the proposals with the exception of Kyle who did not vote. Kyle failed to vote on most of the imperialistic proposals. In fact, he had been elected as an independent in 1896, and did not vote with the bloc upon all meas-

34. Cong. Rec., 55C., 3S., 1484.

ures. Then Hoar offered a second amendment providing that by ratification of the treaty with Spain, the United States did not intend to incorporate the inhabitants of said islands into citizenship, or annex the islands, or force a government upon them against their will. This amendment would have weakened the entire annexation clause in the treaty. This proposal was tabled with Butler and Allen now³⁵ turning and voting for tabling. Stewart, Heitfeld, Jones, and Turner voted against laying the amendment on the table. Kyle, as usual, did not vote and was not paired.

The ratification of the treaty was finally put over on February 6, 1899 with but one vote more than the necessary³⁶ two-thirds majority. The vote stood 57 for and 27 against. Allen, Butler, Harris, Jones, Kyle, and Stewart voted against. Of this group Jones and Stewart were elected as silverites but were classed with the Populists in Congress.

The annexation of the Hawaiian Islands presented a situation in which the Populists were split as they had been on the Philippine question. The debate came about upon a House resolution providing for the annexation of the islands to the United States. The first vote came upon a substitute resolution which would have set up an independent Hawaiian state but at the same time it would have made it a protectorate of the United States. Ridgely (Kansas)

35. Cong. Rec., 55C., 3S., 1487-1488.

36. St. Louis Globe-Democrat, February 7, 1899.

was an advocate of the annexation of these islands. He seemed to have been opposed to the substitute measure and favored going to the extent of complete annexation. Speaking in an imperialist tone he said: "I do not believe it is possible for these islands to maintain themselves as an independent government. The United States is thereby forced to accept them or they may drift to some foreign govern-³⁷

ment." Knowles expressed about the same idea: "Suppose our country was at war with Germany, England, France, Russia, or Japan all of whom have powerful fleets in the orient. Then would Hawaii be an element of strength or weakness to the nation possessing it."³⁸

The substitute bill was rejected 96 to 204. Bell, Howard, Kelley, Knowles, Fowler, Martin, Maxwell, Shuford, Stark, Castle, Greene, Gunn, and Strowd voted for the substitute, which would have merely set up Hawaii as a protectorate of the United States. Peters, Simpson, McCormick, Skinner, Ridgely, Sutherland and Barlow voted against it. The final vote came on the measure providing for complete³⁹ annexation. It passed by a vote of 209 to 91. Botkin, Kelley, Knowles, McCormick, Peters, Ridgely, Simpson, and Skinner voted for annexation. Vincent was absent, but was said to favor annexation. Bell, Fowler, Howard, Shuford,

37. Cong. Rec., 55C., 2S., 5988.

38. Ibid., 5989.

39. Ibid., 6018-6019.

Strowd, and Stark voted nay. Gunn and Castle were paired for.

The fight against annexation in the Senate was led by Allen and Pettigrew, silver Republican (South Dakota). Allen who had once favored the annexation of Cuba was now the leading factor in the Senate in opposition to Hawaiian annexation. Speaking of his opposition to the policy of annexation in general he said:

I think the annexation of the Hawaiian Islands is but the first act in a drama of colonization that is to go on until we have made a portion of our country the Philippines, Porto Rico and every little dimple in the Pacific Ocean that may force its head above the surface of the water. Such a thing was not dreamed of in our sympathy with Cuba.⁴⁰

The joint resolution passed the Senate 42 to 21. Kyle, Turner, Harris, and Heitfeld voted in favor of annexation.⁴¹ Allen, Jones, and Stewart voted nay.

Senator Teller in the next Congress offered a resolution extending the friendly offices of the United States and at the same time extending the United States' sympathy for the South African republics. This referred to the famous Boer rebellion in which a group of republics of South Africa were struggling for freedom from Great Britain. This resolution might have strengthened their cause. Senator C. K. Davis, Republican, moved to refer the resolution to the committee on foreign relations. This move meant the

40. Cong. Rec., 55C., 2S., 6702.

41. Ibid., 6712.

death of the resolution if carried out. The senator was successful, and the measure was sent to the foreign relations committee. All of the Populists voted against sending the resolution to the committee with exception of Kyle who did not vote.

The Populists were badly divided upon the issue of imperialism. Their early imperialism in regard to Cuba was clothed in a desire to give liberty to the oppressed Cubans. The majority of the Populists were opposed to territorial expansion, but this did not hold true in all cases. The question was not a major Populist issue, however, and the bloc usually voted according to their own ideas.

The Populists in Congress met with little success in getting their political reforms up for discussion. But they had laid the background, and by the close of the century the demand for reform was in the air, which was to bloom about a decade later. They had made their political reforms felt but they were about a decade ahead of their time. They did lay the groundwork to a certain extent, for reforms that were to become a reality.

CHAPTER IV

TARIFF AND TAXATION

The tariff had again become an issue by the time of the 1890 election. The issue brought with it all the illogical arguments and loose thinking that accompanies tariff discussions in politics. Opponents of the protective system would condemn it as a scheme of highway robbery, while others would advocate it as the agent of prosperity and civilization itself.

The results of the election of 1890 seemed to indicate a crushing defeat for the protective system which had been applied in the McKinley tariff bill of that year. The country had turned and given the Republicans their most overwhelming defeat in the history of the party. These political observers interpreted this as a direct slap at the protective system.

This repudiation of the protective system had taken place at the same election in which the Alliance bloc had been sent to Congress. This small group, while having been sent to Congress on a different issue, was forced to take a stand upon the tariff question. The old parties forced the bloc to devote time to the discussion because they could constantly keep the tariff before Congress. Thus the burn-

ing desire of the Alliance bloc to reform the currency was held under control by the battle of the major parties over the tariff.

The opening of the fifty-second Congress soon found the new Democratic majority bringing in a bill placing wool on the free list, and a reduction in the duties on woolen goods. Watson (Georgia), the leader of the bloc, added a bit of humor to the discussion:

Mr. Chairman, my own regret about this tariff debate is that no master of satire has been here to describe it. Bill Nye and Mark Train have lost the opportunity of their life. The attraction has been so great, that we have almost ran from the galleries by this protracted fight over a mythical issue, the gentlemen who take their afternoon nap in the galleries.¹

The Alliance group took a stand in favor of free wool but their support for it came with no great vigor. Their ideal solution of the question seemed to be a closing of the tariff discussion by wiping from the statute books all tariff laws. Watson, poking his fun at the old party groups on the measure, declared:

One of the amazing things about it is this: The Republicans say they are in favor of protection as a principle, yet through reciprocity they are trying to escape it as a practice; while the Democrats say that free trade as a government principle is right, they do not dare to adopt it as a rule of action.²

Otis was the only member of the bloc to oppose the bill for he had wool growing constituents. His real stand on

1. Cong. Rec., 52C., 1S., 2838.

2. Ibid.

the tariff, however, was about identical with the rest of the bloc. He explained it in this way:

This bill in the first section insults the wool growers of the country and in the second section proposes to rob their pocketbooks. If they would bring in a bill to repeal the McKinley law or wipe from the statute books all tariff laws, I would heartily support it.³

As it appeared to Otis, the whole purpose of tariff laws was a discrimination against agriculture in favor of industry.

The most emphatic denunciation of the protective system was made by McKeighan. "Year by year this farce of protecting the American laborer goes on; year after year the jaded steed of protection is led into the Congressional circus ring, the band begins to play, and gentlemen in masks ride him in full view of an audience and would enjoy the show better if he cost them less."⁴ The bill was finally put through the House by a vote of 194 to 60. All the bloc voted for the measure with the exception of Otis who voted nay.⁵ The Republican controlled Senate committee on finance never reported the measure back for discussion.

The bill most dear to the Alliance bloc was a measure by William J. Bryan to put binding twine on the free list. Simpson speaking on this tariff probably reported an over-

3. Cong. Rec., 52C., 1S., 3004.

4. Ibid., 3009.

5. Ibid., 3057.

drawn situation in the following account. "It is an established fact that under this small duty on twine the farmers of the Northwest have been compelled to throw away their binders and resort to the old ways of binding grain in order to break up the cordage trust." This proposal passed the House being supported by all the Alliance bloc with the exception of Clover.⁶ He failed to vote and was probably absent. The measure died in the Senate committee on finance.

The measure which reflected the views of the southern Alliance was the one proposed to admit bagging for cotton, machinery for manufacture of cotton, cotton ties and gins, free of duty.⁷ Simpson, breaking into the realm of theory on this measure, attempted to explain the origin of tariffs as follows:

I want to say that the way we get protection is as follows: As one man gets protection on his article, the man that has to consume his article sees that the only way to balance himself with the other fellow is to have protection put on the product of his labor; thus we get into logrolling on the tariff until we get them all into the ring.⁸

This measure passed by about the same majority as the others, the only difference being, that all the Alliance bloc voted aye. It met the same fate as the other bills in the Senate. The bloc also voted in favor of placing ores, sil-

6. Cong. Rec., 52C., 1S., 3841-3843.

7. Ibid., 1164.

8. Ibid., 3107.

ver and lead on the free list.

The local interest of the Alliance bloc was shown in a group of bills they introduced to place lumber, wood, and salt on the free list. These articles constituted a necessity to the farmers of Kansas and Nebraska. It would be to their specific advantage to prevent the working of a monopoly in the price of these articles. None of these bloc measures were acted upon.

The election of 1892 made Democratic control of Congress and the presidency a reality. With a Democratic victory in two successive national elections, the declaration of the people seemed to be sufficient to warrant a tariff reduction. At least the popular will had declared itself against the policy of protection.⁹ The rejoicing of the democracy was dampened by the time of Cleveland's inauguration. The silver question had come to the front the following summer, and this tended to sweep aside the tariff issue. Thus, Cleveland was forced to wait for the second meeting of the fifty-third Congress before he could bring about his long desired policy of tariff reform.

The Populist party had been formally launched in 1892, and now the bloc was assuming the role of an independent party. The party platform that year had made only a brief mention of the tariff. They condemned the action of the major parties on the issue upon which they said: "They

9. Taussig, Frank W., Tariff History of the United States, 286.

propose to drown the outcries of a plundered people with the uproar of a sham battle over the tariff, so that capitalists, corporations, rings, trusts, demonetization of silver and the oppression of the usurers may be lost sight of."¹⁰

The House ways and means committee reported the administration bill which became the center of the debate. The bill as reported contained some considerable reductions of duties and represented Cleveland's long aspiration for tariff reform. The Populist debates on the proposal were similar to those of the Alliance bloc of the preceeding Congress. In comparing the eastern opposition to the tariff with Populist opposition to deflation, Davis (Kansas) declared: "Out in Kansas third party men are called calamity howlers but I have never heard so long and so persistent a calamity howler as a man who spoke here yesterday against the tariff."¹¹ It seemed to be a very pleasant moment for the old Kansas Populist to get to return the calamity howler term to easterners.

The Populists were far less optimistic over the effects of the bill than the Democrats. The Democratic members lauded the bill as a means for ending the depression. The Populists, however, considered the causes of the depression to be more deeply entrenched than the tariff. They firmly

10. Porter, Kirk H., National Party Platforms, 167.

11. Cong. Rec., 53C., 2S., 991.

believed that the old parties kept the tariff question before the people so as to blind the real causes for the distress of the nation. The tariff was criticised by many Populists as a breeder of trusts and monopolies. Hudson (Kansas) described protection as: "the hot-house wherein is bred and forced noxious weeds, monopolies, combines, trusts, stock gambling, each and all of which are unrep-
blian, undemocratic, unjust, un-American, and a thousand times more dangerous to the liberty of our people than all the anarchists and socialists in the world."¹²

The Populist support of the bill would have been a very drab affair had it not been for the inclusion of an income tax in the bill. This had been endorsed by the Populists as one of their important planks at the Omaha Convention. The House, late in January, 1894, began the discussion of the income tax amendment. The Democratic majority had recommended the inclusion of the amendment as a means of bringing in more revenue. Kem probably made one of the most impressive speeches of the bloc in favor of the tax in which he stated:

It involves principles of equality and justice in the collection of revenue that cannot be reached in any other way. I regret that we have not the power here to place this principle on the statute books of the nation and vigorously enforce it. We would demonstrate to those pets of class legislation as never before that justice in this fair land is not dead,

12. Cong. Rec., 53C., 2S., Appendix, 55.

though she has long been sleeping.¹³

The income tax was made a part of an internal revenue amendment. No vote was taken on the single proposition of the tax but only as a part of the whole internal revenue amendment. The House on February 1, 1894, came to the important question of attaching the amendment to the tariff bill. The House agreed to attach the whole amendment to the bill by a vote of 182 to 48. All the Populists voted for the amendment containing the income tax.¹⁴ Newlands, the silverite, as well as 122 others failed to vote on the amendment.

The House acted on the bill with considerable promptness and passed it by a 204 to 140 vote. All the Populists voted for the bill. Newlands voted against it. The bill went very slowly in the Senate and the committee on finance never reported it back until March 20.¹⁵ Here it was reported back with many amendments, all of which moderated the reduction in the House bill. It was debated in the Senate until July 3, and still further amendment moderating the reductions were added.

The three Populist senators voted against amendments that tended to raise prices. In strictly local matters, however, they did vote for somewhat higher tariff rates.

13. Cong. Rec., 53C., 2S., Appendix, 293.

14. Cong. Rec., 53C., 2S., 1795.

15. Taussig, 289.

On questions in which the rates would have made little difference to their constituences the group often divided. The bloc divided particularly upon the farm schedule. They could see how the tariff would tend to be ineffective on farm products. Senator Peffer expressed the party opinion: "It is not only utterly impractical and improbable, but utterly impossible that any sort of tariff duties, even though they may be prohibitory, can have any effect upon the home price of wheat, corn, rye, and oats."

First an amendment to raise the duty on butter from four to six cents per pound found the group divided with Peffer voting aye and Kyle nay. Allen did not vote. Another amendment putting a tariff on cattle of ten dollars per head was rejected 22 to 31. Peffer again voted aye but Kyle and Allen nay. On a similar amendment raising the duty on beans from twenty to thirty cents per bushel, we find Peffer voted aye but Allen and Kyle nay. Another amendment proposed to set up a system of free trade upon all farm products. It sought to admit free of duty all products from countries which had no import duty on like products when exported from the United States. This was rejected 1 to 54 with only Peffer voting for.

The question of the wool schedule also found the Populists divided. The bill, as passed by the House, placed

16. Cong. Rec., 53C., 2S., 5980.

17. Ibid., 5977.

wool on the free list. Thus an amendment was offered in the Senate placing a duty on wool at thirty per cent ad valorem. This was voted down 32 to 37. Peffer voted aye but Kyle and Allen did not vote. They all voted for an amendment that would have placed all goods manufactured from wool on the free list.¹⁸ It was rejected with only five senators voting in the affirmative.

Senator Allen offered an amendment putting a duty of twenty per cent ad valorem on all raw hides and skins. To tone down and soften his demand for protection for a local interest, Allen commented. "I offer it only for revenue. I had no thought of protection in it." The whole Populist bloc voted for this amendment. It lost, however, by a 14 to 27 vote.

Senator Peffer offered an amendment to the income tax phase of the law that provided for an increase in the tax rate in proportion to the size of the income. His amendment proposed to insert:

On each and all incomes exceeding \$1,000, the tax shall be one per cent of the excess; and all incomes exceeding \$10,000 shall pay an additional tax of one per cent of the excess; all incomes exceeding \$25,000 shall pay an additional tax of one per cent of the excess; all incomes exceeding \$50,000 shall pay an additional tax of one per cent of the excess; and all incomes exceeding \$100,000 shall pay an additional tax of one per cent of the excess.¹⁹

Peffer carried the brunt of the debate for his amend-

18. Cong. Rec., 53C., 2S., 7095-7098.

19. Ibid., 6578.

ment. The opposition was led by Senator David Hill, Democrat, New York. Hill made an attack upon Populism implying that the Populists represented people who were lazy and indolent. Peffer was quick to answer the Senator when he declared:

The point to be made is because wealth is accumulated in New York, and not because these men are more industrious than we are, not because they are wiser or better than we are, but because they trade, because they buy and sell, because they deal in usury, because they reap what they never earn, because they take in and live off what other men earn, they shall be exempt from taxation and that we who are hewing wood and carrying water shall continue to bear the burden of government.²⁰

The Peffer amendment was tabled by a vote of 45 to 5. Only Allen, Kyle, Peffer, Squires and Teller voted aye. The debate continued in opposition to the income tax amendment with Hill and Hoar leading the opposition. These senators brought in all manner of opposition even insinuating that the tax might force people to leave the United States. Senator Allen jumped to the defense of the amendment and remarked in the following words:

If there is any citizen in this country whose sense of obligation to his country is so small, who sees in its noble history nothing to challenge his admiration, who sees nothing in the story of the stars and stripes to inspire patriotism in his breast, and who prefers to flee the country rather than pay his honest taxes, then as one citizen of this country, I say, may his flight from this country be speedy and his stay perpetual.²¹

20. Cong. Rec., 53C., 2S., 6634.

21. Ibid., 6709.

The income tax amendment, providing for a tax of two per cent on all incomes of \$4,000 per year and over, was agreed to and retained in the bill.

The tariff bill finally came to a vote in the Senate, and it passed by a close margin of 39 to 34. Allen and Kyle voted for and Peffer against.²² The measure was sent to a conference committee of the two houses in which the House was forced to yield and accept the Senate amendments. The bill became known as the Wilson-Gorman Tariff Act of 1894.

Following the passage of the bill, the House toward the close of the session, retaliated by attempting to reduce the rates of the Wilson-Gorman Tariff. These were a group of bills introduced by the House Democratic leader, Wilson,²³ West Virginia. These bills received support among southern and western congressmen. The first of this group was a bill to place barbed wire fencing and wire rods upon the free list. This was swept through the House by a vote of 191 to 84 with all the Populists supporting it. It was referred to the Senate committee on finance but was never acted upon. The second of these measures provided for the placing of coal, shale, and coke upon the free list. This bill passed the House by 162 to 104. All of the Populists voted for free coal with exception of Bell who voted nay.

22. Cong. Rec., 53C., 2S., 7136.

23. Ibid., 8483-8496.

The Senate committee on finance modified the bill in restoring the old duty of forty cents per ton. This was never again acted upon. The same Populist line-up was found on the next bill providing for free iron ores with all Populists supporting except Bell who voted against. The House in completing its work rushed through a measure by a vote of 276 to 11 designed to place sugar on the free list, but again the Senate refused to follow suit.

The supreme court was quick to hand down its decision declaring the income-tax unconstitutional. This decision was handed down when the economic unrest over the nation had reached its height, and the following session saw a large group of bills brought forth by Populist members to legalize the income-tax. Many were in the form of amendment to the constitution making the tax constitutional.

The Populists also demanded taxes on inheritance. Davis introduced a proposal calling for the taxation of estates to provide revenue for the expenses of government. Howard brought forth another proposal to establish a more equitable distribution of wealth by discouraging accumulations in a few hands.

As we have seen, the Wilson-Gorman Act was far from a complete surrender to free trade, and with the exception of free wool, the changes in the tariff were very slight. The Republicans in the campaign of 1896 had attempted to take the offensive on the tariff question, but because of Bryan's



free silver stampede, the issue had been forced to the background. The election had resulted in such a make-up in the national Congress so as to insure the Republicans a free hand in establishing a party tariff. The need for more revenue could be easily brought forth as a need for reforming the tariff. Thus when President McKinley called Congress into special session in March, 1897, he could, with honest conviction ask for a tariff to provide more revenue for the government. Under such circumstances, the Dingley bill was introduced into Congress.

The Populists had elected what was to be their largest representation to this Congress. The total representation in the House included twenty-two members. The Senate bloc included about eight members who could be counted as Popu-
24
lists.

The Dingley measure was reported from House ways and means committee on March 18, only three days after the session began. The Populists were as indefinite on this bill as they had been in their early days. In fact their free trade enthusiasm was far less apparent than was present in the early Alliance bloc. Bell, the leader of the Populists in the House, explained their attitude on the tariff early in the debate: "The Populist party, of which I am a member, has taken no decided stand upon the tariff as a whole, because it has never considered the tariff as the seat of

our difficulties. It believes that no tariff bill is fair unless you incorporate with it an income tax.²⁵"

The Populists took very little interest in the debate on the bill. Howard, being the only member to vote for the bill, explained his support on following grounds: "I shall vote for this bill not because I am foolish as to believe that we can make the people rich and prosperous by taxing them, but because I believe in the broad patriotic principle of protection to American labor and industry."²⁶ Howard represented an exception to the rest of the bloc on this question. Castle probably emphasized the Populist state of mind to a much more appropriate degree in the words: "The proper title of this bill should be a bill to foster trusts and to pauperize and peonize the agricultural laborers of the United States."²⁷

Jerry Simpson, back in the House for his last term, offered a proposition closely akin to the export debenture of the 1920's in the form of an amendment to the Dingley bill. The section specified that bounties of a certain nature were to be paid for agricultural products when exported to foreign countries.²⁸ These were to be paid from the treasury. The amendment was not given serious considera-

25. Cong. Rec., 55C., 1S., 137.

26. Ibid., 202.

27. Ibid., 252.

28. Ibid., 447.

tion in the House. The House passed the bill after two weeks of discussion by a vote of 205 to 122. Howard was the only Populist to vote for bill.²⁹ Barlow and Simpson voted against it. The remaining bloc of nineteen Populists in addition to Newlands voted "present" on the bill. Thus the administration controlled bill was hurried through the House while only twenty-two of the one hundred and sixty-three pages had been taken up for discussion.³⁰

The progress in the Senate was much slower as is usually true of tariff bills in this body. An amendment was brought forth by Cannon, silver Republican (Utah) setting up an export debenture on farm products similar to the Simpson bill in the House.³¹ The plan proposed to pay ten cents per bushel on wheat, and a similar bounty on all farm products when exported from the United States. This proposal was rejected 10 to 59. Allen, Butler, Cannon, Harris, Heitfeld, Mantle, Pettigrew, Roach, Stewart, and Tillman voted for the measure. Kyle voted against it. Jones, Teller, and Turner did not vote. The purpose of the proposal was to make the tariff effective on farm products.

Among the Senate Populists who were in extreme opposition to the tariff bill was Allen (Nebraska). Speaking of the tariff in general: "It is only an issue thrown out to

29. Cong. Rec., 55C., 1S., 557.

30. Taussig, 326.

31. Cong. Rec., 55C., 1S., 1603.

catch and deceive ignorant voters and draw them from the real and only issue in this country today." Allen then offered an amendment to place the currency question before the Senate. This amendment proposed to take all surplus funds arising from the operation of the Dingley bill to be made a sinking fund to retire the interest bearing national debt. If there should be a deficit, it would be supplied, not by an issue of government bonds, but by the issue of legal tender notes and the coinage of the seigniorage in the treasury. This amendment was rejected 26 to 35. All the Populists and silver Republicans again united in a bloc for attaching the amendment to the bill.

Another interesting amendment by Allen proposed to insert the following to the bill:

That all contracts and combinations between companies, corporations, and individuals which have as their purpose the restriction of the production of articles manufactured in the United States, or to increase the price to consumers, and any conspiracy to restrain freedom of trade, shall be deemed unlawful. And there shall be levied, collected, and paid a tax of 15 per cent of the value of all such articles of property; manufactured, owned or controlled by any such trust during its existence.³⁴

This was voted down by 26 to 35. About the same group voted for this proposal as in the previous amendment with the exception of Kyle who did not vote. Kyle (South Dakota)

32. Cong. Rec., 55C., 1S., 2392.

33. Ibid., 2435.

34. Ibid.,

seemed to be voting independent of the bloc on many questions. He was now classed as an independent, but on the silver issue, however, he was still affiliated with the Populists.

The bloc with the exception of Jones and Butler who failed to vote, voted for an amendment to put the Bible on the free list. The amendment was rejected 21 to 25. The Populists had their final chance to make the currency a portion of the tariff in an amendment, providing, that only 80 per cent of the duties imposed by this act were to be applied on articles imported from countries where the mints were open to the free and unlimited coinage of silver.³⁵ This amendment failed as all others of this nature.

The Senate finally passed the Dingley bill on July 7³⁶ by a vote of 38 to 28. Harris and Turner voted against. Allen, Heitfeld, Kyle, Butler and Stewart did not vote. Pettigrew and Teller the silver Republicans also failed to vote. If the Populists bloc had united with the silver Republicans, they could have almost defeated the bill; at least there would have been a close vote. On the final Senate votes to concur on the conference reports of the two Houses, Jones and Stewart voted for the bill. Jones explained his stand in the following words: "Now we have got the best the Republican party can do. We have the word it will

35. Cong. Rec., 55C., 1S., 2302.

36. Ibid., 2447.

bring prosperity. I predict a failure for it."³⁷

The whole Populist stand on tariffs was probably most thoroughly stated in the remarks of Representative Kelley on the House final agreement to the Dingley bill:

I did not vote against this bill and I did not vote for it. I belong to a political school that does not believe the tariff to be the paramount issue.... However bad this bill may be, a majority of the people of this country voted the Republican ticket, knowing that some such measure would be the result. I know of no better way to prove to them the utter folly of expecting relief from such a measure than to give them all they want of it.³⁸

37. Cong. Rec., 55C., 1S., 2909.

38. Ibid., 2732.

CHAPTER V

SOCIAL LEGISLATION OF THE POPULISTS

Proposals for a Better Social and
Moral United States

The Populists carried their reform ideas from the political and financial field into the social and even moral realm. Their sympathy for the common man brought forth a desire to frame a better type of society and to eliminate many of its abuses.

Many of their social ideas represented a step ahead of their age as far as reform itself was concerned. Others, especially on moral questions, were an attempt to go back to an older age; or, at least, what they imagined had existed in the past.

One of the social institutions which the Alliance bloc of the fifty-second Congress sought to guard against further change was marriage and the family. Senator Kyle was the outstanding supporter for federal regulation of marriage and divorce. He attempted to get through the Senate an amendment granting to Congress the authority to regulate marriage and divorce. He succeeded in getting his resolution back to the Senate for debate, but it was never acted upon. Kyle in defending his resolution stated the

need for the adoption of a uniform system of marriage and divorce on the following grounds:

1. The people of this country want a uniform law which is difficult to get within the states.
2. Our numerous, varied, and conflicting laws should be reduced to one simple uniform law.
3. National laws crystallize the average sentiment of the country at large and not the local sentiment of a state.
4. Tend to decrease the number of divorces.
5. A national law would embody the best provisions of our state laws.
6. A national law would secure the stability of the marriage relation, preserve the family and home and lay a foundation for the perpetuity of the nation.¹

The resolution was finally referred to the committee on judiciary.

Benjamin H. Clover introduced in the House a measure providing for legislation of a peculiar nature. It would have abolished divorces in the District of Columbia.² This was probably a direct attack upon the whole system of divorce, and probably went farther than most of the Populists cared to go. Kyle in the next Congress again proposed his amendment regulating marriage and divorce. It was again referred to the committee on judiciary but was never voted upon.

Kyle was the most enthusiastic supporter of reform

1. Cong. Rec., 52C., 1S., 792.

2. Cong. Rec., 52C., 2S., 324.

legislation of a moral nature. His past profession as a minister had prepared him for the introduction into Congress of a group of bills of a pious nature. He attempted in two successive Congresses to get through legislation making Sunday a legal day of rest.³ Kyle also brought forth a measure to regulate labor and business on Sundays in the District of Columbia.⁴ Thus he sought to make Sundays a day of rest in order to keep the Sabbath holy.

The liquor traffic was also attacked by the pious Populist senators Kyle and Peffer. Peffer at the beginning attempted to regulate the traffic by more strict government control. He introduced in the last session of the fifty-second Congress a bill setting up a commission to study the liquor traffic. Peffer, the prohibitionist, spoke urgently upon the problem:

The effect of intoxicating liquor among the people is coming to be of great importance in all portions of the country. There can be no doubt but that at this time a large proportion of the people are viewing with alarm the incroachments of the liquor traffic upon our social, religious, and political life.⁵

The liquor traffic, as he viewed it, was working a disgrace upon society. He advocated regulation of it, both from a reform point of view and from a moral standpoint. Also the Kansas Populists represented a constituency that

3. Cong. Rec., 53C., 2S., 3688.

4. Cong. Rec., 54C., 1S., 5287.

5. Cong. Rec., 52C., 2S., 852.

was extremely dry and in which state laws prevented liquor from being sold. Also the manner of selling liquor in the eastern sections of the country seemed very immoral to the Populist senator.

A measure regulating the sale of liquor in the District of Columbia was brought up in the short session of the fifty-second Congress. Peffer supported the measure, but he also desired complete regulation of the traffic. He sought by an amendment to curb the liquor dealers in the District and place over the saloons almost complete government regulations. This amendment provided for the following to be added to the bill:

That no screens, tables, chairs, stands or other furniture of any description except the bar fixtures should be kept or used in any saloon or other place where liquors are sold under this act; and there shall be no painting, staining, curtaining, or other means used in said places for the purposes of obstructing the view from the outside. And no place where liquors are sold under this act shall be opened within one-fourth mile of a school house, place of religious worship or building occupied by any department or bureau of the public service.⁶

This amendment would have abolished saloons in all but name and made them only places where liquor would be sold. This amendment was tabled with only Peffer of the Alliance bloc voting nay. Even Kyle voted for laying this amendment on the table.

A resolution prohibiting the sale of intoxicating liquors in the Senate wing of the capitol during the recess

6. Cong. Rec., 52C., 2S., 2209.

of Congress was introduced by Kyle.⁷ This was referred to the committee on rules, and the motion carried by a vote of 30 to 14. The Populist bloc voted against sending the resolution to the committee because such procedure meant the death of the proposition. Kyle declaring his opposition to the practice of drinking in Congress: "If people want to drink they can at least go to the nearest saloon and that is only a very few hundred feet away." Senator Peffer went so far as to offer a proposal regulating the sale of intoxicating liquors on a national scale.⁸

Kyle seemed to be a mild prohibitionist, although he was far from being as radical on the question as Peffer. It is not clear from the Record as to how far he would go on the question. The bloc in the House never expressed itself on the liquor question.

The Populists expressed a striking sympathy for all labor. Their political support came from groups that worked for a living. The employer groups of the country were hostile to Populism. Naturally their sympathy for all people in the lower classes of society made them a special friend of all laborers. Being a group representing liberal tendencies in the nation, they would support all bills friendly to labor.

The Carnegie steel strike had taken place at Homestead,

7. Cong. Rec., 53C., 2S., 8561.

8. Ibid., 11.

Pennsylvania in the summer of 1892. This strike had been put down in an oppressive manner by the National Guard. The results of the strike had brought a complete victory to the employer groups. It had also resulted in a striking blow to union labor with a lower wage scale being forced upon the workers. The procedure in breaking the strike looked as if the whole force of the government was being used to protect the employer class.

Senator Peffer, revealing his bitter resentment toward the action of the industrial groups in the strike, introduced a resolution in the Senate to help remedy the condition. The resolution required the committee on judiciary to report:

1. Whether in the present state of the law as it concerns the relations between the employers and employees, the employer enjoys the privilege of determining and enforcing the rate or amount of wages to be paid to the employee for work.
2. Whether in case the first query is answered in the affirmative, the resulting condition is conducive to the good of society or tends to promote the general welfare.
3. Whether in case the second query is answered in the negative, Congress has jurisdiction over the subject to the extent of providing remedial legislation.
4. And if third query is answered in the affirmative, what legislation, if any, is necessary to afford proper relief.⁹

The Peffer resolution brought forth a very complicated

9. Cong. Rec., 52C., 1S., 6554.

problem before the nation. The legal control which Congress could exercise over the complicated relationship between laborer and employer was unknown.

A measure allowing the workers in the bureau of engraving and printing an annual thirty-day leave of absence came up for discussion in the Senate. Opponents of the measure attempted to kill the bill by tabling it, but they were unsuccessful. Kyle and Peffer voted to save the bill from being tabled.¹⁰ Peffer stating his sentiment for lightening the burden of labor said: "If I had the power or control of the government, I would within the next year, giving thirty-days notice, stop the wheels of every factory at the end of eight hours. At the end of the first year from that time, I would stop them at the end of six hours." The bill passed the Senate and was called up for discussion in the House where it was passed without a contest.

The Populist had a chance to press their support in favor of a bill providing for an eight-hour day upon all government projects in the District of Columbia. John A. Davis, who had been a veteran member of the old Knights of Labor, led the bloc support for the bill in the House. He was convinced that the eight-hour day would be a characteristic of a higher civilization. Speaking of the complete failure of labor to unite politically, he declared:

These donkeys have been organized, but strange to say,

10. Cong. Rec., 52C., 1S., 2606.

they have also permitted their enemies to do the organizing; and when they are attacked, instead of putting themselves in a circle with their heads together, they are placed in two lines with their heads facing in opposite directions and their dangerous ends toward each other. Then there comes a day called election day, and, when the word is given by the organizers, there is a conflict, but instead of repulsing their enemies, they simply knock the stuffing out of each other.¹¹

The debate closed after a short discussion, and the bill passed the House by a vote of 166 to 31. All the bloc supported the bill with the exception of Clover and McKeighan who did not vote. The measure passed the Senate, but no roll call was given in Record. It was approved by the president.

The labor situation had become more acute by the time of the meeting of fifty-third Congress in 1893. The panic of 1893 had resulted in a general unemployment by the spring of 1894. The special session of Congress which met in 1893 had been concerned only with currency, and the friends of labor had to wait for the regular session. Senator Allen, probably through a desire to get a little relief from Sherman repeal controversy and also to pay respect to labor, offered a resolution to compel Congress to adjourn on Labor Day as a mark of due respect to all labor organizations.

This resolution was promptly rejected 8 to 41.¹² Allen and Peffer voting for the resolution were joined by Irby, Pet-

11. Cong. Rec., 52C., 1S., 5730.

12. Cong. Rec., 53C., 1S., 1187.

tigrew, Powers, Shoup, Vance, and Vest. Kyle failed to vote.

The summer of 1894 was one of general discontent over the entire nation. The fifty-third Congress, which met in December of the previous year, was in session when large bodies of unemployed groups marched to Washington and demanded relief. The most notable of these so-called "armies of the commonweal" was led by Jacob Coxey. His band of followers demanded work for all people at good wages upon public enterprises, such as road building. Their motives aroused grave suspicions on the part of government officials. They were in reality not very different from all lobbyists going to Washington to demand favors from the government. But because they did represent an unemployed element in society, they were viewed as an extremely dangerous group.

The Populists in Congress revealed a deep and affectionate sympathy for these unemployed marchers. Coxey was arrested and thrown into jail for his work in rounding up his followers and leading them to Washington. Senator Allen promptly introduced a resolution extending his sympathy to Coxey. It provided:

That a committee of five senators be appointed by the president of the Senate, no two of whom was to be a member of the same political party, whose duty it would be to investigate and report to the Senate with speed, all the facts connected with the arrest of Coxey with such recommendations as to what could prevent such outrages in the future upon the rights of American citizens.¹³

13. Cong. Rec., 53C., 2S., 4511.

It can be at once ascertained that Allen believed Coxe had been arrested in the exercise of his rights as an American citizen. He offered his resolution in the midst of a discussion over the Wilson-Gorman tariff and speaking of the comparison of the two subjects he evaluated: "Important as the tariff really is, it is but a mere atom floating upon the ambient air as compared with the constitutional rights of American citizens to assemble and peacefully speak their minds with reference to the public policy of the nation."¹⁴

Allen introduced into the Senate a resolution stating specifically the rights of people to assemble in Washington to petition the government for redress of their grievances.

The resolution provided for the following:

1. That under Constitution of the United States, the citizens have an unquestionable right to peaceable assembly and petition the government for a redress of their grievances at any place within the United States where they do not create a breach of the peace or endanger property.
2. That such persons have as undoubted a right to visit and assemble in Washington for any peaceful purpose as in any territory of the United States.
3. That such persons have a right to enter upon the capitol grounds of the United States and into the capitol building to as great an extent as any other citizen or person so long as they do not restrict the transaction of public business or menace the rights of persons or property. And any threat of violence to such persons would be a clear violation of their constitutional and inalienable rights.¹⁵

14. Cong. Rec., 53C., 2S., 4511.

15. Ibid., 4060.

Representative Haldor E. Boen (Minnesota) urged legislation providing shelter for the bands of crusaders coming to Washington. His measure was in the form of a resolution ordering the secretary of war to provide within the District of Columbia, camping grounds and tents for all organized bodies of laboring people who may come within the boundaries of the District, and to see that their rights as citizens are respected.¹⁶ Peffer sought to provide work for the unemployed groups who came to Washington by a bill designed to dispose of idle labor and to discourage idle wealth in the District of Columbia.¹⁷ He attempted in another proposal to bring the demands of the unemployed elements visiting the capital before Congress for discussion. The resolution called for a select committee of nine members of the Senate to receive all written and printed communications from citizens or groups of citizens visiting the capital for purposes mentioned in the preamble and hear them orally on things in which they wish to communicate. This resolution was brought to a vote but was rejected 17 to 26. Allen, Kyle, and Peffer voted for this measure as did a number of southern and western Republicans and Democrats.

The Populists' solution for the labor problem, as well as the hard times and depression, is well shown by the in-

16. Cong. Rec., 53C., 2S., 3935.

17. Ibid., 3960.

roduction of two bills in the House. The first of these introduced by Bell (Colorado) provided for the appointment of a committee to devise means for the reemployment of the idle men of the country, restrict immigration, start up our mines, increase the currency, and prohibit the issue of interest bearing bonds without the authority of Congress.¹⁸

This bill was reported to the House committee on labor and a resolution was reported as a substitute. The substitute provided for the appointment of a committee to investigate the causes of the depression being far different in scope from the Populists' original proposal. The substitute was never taken up for discussion. The Populists' other proposal was designed to relieve the unemployment by the enlistment and maintenance of an industrial army and also for issuing a sufficient and equitable volume of currency.

These bills were never sent back to the House for debate.

A group of Populist bills went in the direction of more modern social welfare legislation. Kyle proposed a measure to prevent the manufacture and sale of clothing in unhealthy places.¹⁹ A resolution by Peffer called for government control and ownership of all coal beds of the country. Another measure sought to limit and regulate the labor of children in factories over the country.

A pure food and drug act had been introduced early in

18. Cong. Rec., 53C., 2S., 4361.

19. Ibid., 3463.

the fifty-second Congress. The chief objective of the bill had been the prevention of the transportation of adulterated foods and drugs in interstate commerce. Peffer offered an amendment making the act apply to individual cases in the various districts of the country. His amendment read as follows:

If complaint is made to secretary of agriculture by any citizen of the United States naming the place, person or persons, manufacturing or in any manner dealing in impure foods or drugs, it shall be the duty of the secretary to direct the chief officer of the chemistry department to examine such samples and report to the secretary of agriculture. If the secretary of agriculture shall have reason to believe that impure foods or drugs are being sold within the United States, he may report the matter to the proper United States district attorney.²⁰

This amendment was rejected by the overwhelming vote of 3 to 46. Peffer voted for the amendment, but Kyle failed to vote. The bill passed the Senate, but consideration was objected to in the House.

The Populist agitation for legislation to relieve labor conditions did not bring them to support general restriction of immigration. In 1892 the bill for renewal of the ban on Chinese immigration was taken up in the House. The bill was rushed through the House with little debate, and it passed 178 to 43. All of the Alliance bloc voted to exclude the Chinese with the exception of Otis who did not
²¹
vote. The debate continued in the Senate for a longer

20. Cong. Rec., 52C., 1S., 1854.

21. Ibid., 2916.

time, but it finally passed and was approved by the president.

The group divided, when the Senate in 1898 brought up a measure which provided for the exclusion from the United States of all persons, physically capable, and over 16 years of age, who could not read and write the English language. Senator Allen objected to the qualification standard for immigrants on the following ground:

I can readily conceive that an honest but possible illiterate men may come to this country who has all the qualifications for making a good citizen. . . . In such a case as that I am not prepared to say that an educated anarchist or criminal is preferable to such an individual or citizen.²²

Senator Allen admitted that he favored the exclusion of the Chinese but as to the Caucasian race he said:

But for the man or woman of the Caucasian race, wherever he or she may have been born, who looks to this country for aid. . . . I would open the gates until the millions of acres of our land now lying idle is occupied, brought into cultivation, and made²³ to yield to commerce of world their boundless wealth.

Senator Turner also made a bitter fight against the bill on the grounds that health and virtue were a far superior basis for admission of immigrants into the United States than an education test.

An amendment was offered to the bill and upon it the Populists divided. It proposed to strike out the word "sixteen" and insert "twenty-one years" so as to exclude only

22. Cong. Rec., 55C., 2S., 115-116.

23. Ibid., 311.

those twenty-one years and over. This amendment was rejected with Allen, Heitfeld, Kyle, and Stewart voting aye. Harris voted nay while Butler, Jones and Turner did not vote. The final question as to whether the immigration measure should pass was answered in the affirmative by a vote of 45 to 28. Harris and Kyle voted for the bill. Allen, Heitfeld, Stewart, and Turner voted against. Jones did not vote. The bill was not considered in the House.

Thus the Populists had early taken a stand for the exclusion of the Chinese from the United States, but they were certainly divided upon the problem of excluding other immigrants.

The pension system was raised by the Populists, and their congressmen introduced measures to make the system as liberal as possible. In most cases, they favored increasing pensions and also broadening their range to include more people. Representative Otis, in the fifty-second Congress, spoke of the pension system in the following manner: "Pension appropriations are the most advantageous appropriations we make in this country as a means of putting money into the hands of the common people without subjecting them to the exorbitant charges of the national bank for interest."

Senator Peffer introduced a proposal to increase the

24. Cong. Rec., 55C., 2S., 689.

25. Cong. Rec., 52C., 2S., 1602.

pensions of soldiers of the War of 1812 to twenty-five dol-
lars per month.²⁶ He also proposed to grant service pen-
sions to all soldiers, including Confederates, of the Civil
War, with additional amounts to prisoners of war.²⁷ Peffer
also introduced a bill to require payment of pension money
to wives in cases where male pensioners desert, abandon
their families, drink habitually, or for any reason fail to
support their families.

The pension system was viewed by the Populists as a
scheme for placing more money into the hands of the common
people without any profits going to the benefits of the na-
tional banks. This system also tended to put more money
into circulation and this worked in well with all Populist
doctrines.

The Populist group favored a more strict regulation of
social customs and institutions by the federal government.
They could anticipate the inability of the states to regu-
late social activities and problems of labor in an indus-
trial society. Senator Peffer sounded the keynote for fed-
eral government regulation: "There is a time coming, I be-
lieve, when for all purposes excepting state government,
the local autonomy of the states, state lines, as we have
been in the habit of regarding them, will vanish."²⁸

26. Cong. Rec., 52C., 1S., 1804.

27. Ibid., 29.

28. Ibid., 6556.

CHAPTER VI

PROPOSALS FOR REFORM OF MARKETING AND TRANSPORTATION

The problem of transportation was directly connected with that of marketing. The western sections of the country were dependent upon the railroads for getting their crops to market. Thus, the farmers in states where Populism flourished were immensely concerned with the problem of regulation of the transportation facilities in the interest of agriculture.

Also the western farmers had to sell their crops at harvest time each year to meet the interest on their indebtedness. The result was a tremendous amount of grain being thrown upon the market at one time. This tended to depress the price during the harvest season, but following this glut on the market the price would again rise. The first Alliance plan to solve this problem was the Sub-Treasury Plan. The sub-treasury measure had the following provisions:

1. There were to be established in each county of the United States that offered \$500,000 worth of farm products for sale each year a branch of the United States treasury known as the sub-treasury.
2. Any owner of imperishable farm products could deposit them in the nearest sub-treasury and receive treasury notes for them equal at day of deposit to eighty per cent of net value of products

at the market price, with interest at the rate of one per cent per year. The grower was to pay interest on the 80 per cent advanced on the crop deposited in the sub-treasury.

3. The owner of the crop deposited had to redeem the treasury certificate within twelve months from date of issue or the particular product held in storage could be sold to satisfy the loan.¹

The sub-treasury scheme was an Alliance measure, and the Populists in Congress never became tremendously concerned over it. It had been introduced in the fifty-first Congress by Senator Zebulon Vance, Democrat of North Carolina.² The initial enthusiasm for the measure seemed to evaporate, for later in the session, Vance, himself, decided not to support it.

The sub-treasury plan was one of the first measures offered by the Alliance bloc upon its entry into Congress. The bloc as a whole did not seem to be over enthusiastic for the proposal. Watson, who introduced the bill for a sub-treasury system,³ was the only member to keep up agitation for the proposal. The measure was sent to the committee on ways and means where it remained for most of the session. Watson, late in the session, introduced a resolution requiring the committee to report the bill back to the House. On several occasions he moved to take up the reso-

1. Cong. Rec., 52C., 1S., 613.

2. Hicks, 195.

3. Cong. Rec., 52C., 1S., 1578.

lution but each attempt was ruled out of order.⁴ Watson pleaded for a report in these words:

We send our bills before the committee on ways and means. That committee is charged with reporting these bills back either favorable or adversely... If they owe nothing to the People's party men, they owe it to the thirty or forty Alliance Democrats elected upon this issue and who favor it in their hearts as individuals.⁵

The House finally accepted Watson's resolution requiring the committee on ways and means to report the bill back to the House. This report, however, was not made until the close of the session when it was impossible to secure a vote on the measure.⁶

The only other bloc member to speak on the sub-treasury plan was Davis (Kansas). He favored the plan, and in an attack upon those groups who opposed it on constitutional grounds he expressed: "A constitution which permits sub-treasury plans with loans and gifts of money to bankers, bullionists, and whiskey men will surely not object to a similar plan for the common people."⁷

The strength of the Populist support for the proposal seemed to decline. Also the platform of the first Populist party convention at Omaha had called "for loans to produc-

4. Cong. Rec., 52C., 1S., 4432.

5. Ibid., 5455.

6. Ibid., 7081.

7. Ibid., 612.

ers under the sub-treasury or some better plan."⁸ In the short session of the fifty-second Congress Watson introduced a measure which modified the old plan considerably. It provided that only wheat and cotton be accepted for storage. Also, instead of government warehouses, suitable private elevators were to store the products. The bill was phrased as a measure to create an office of national inspection of cotton and grain.⁹ But the enthusiasm for sub-treasuries had waned, and the measure was dead as a political issue. None of the Populists with the exception of Watson ever introduced a sub-treasury bill. The decline in support of the measure was so marked that it was never again brought up in a Congress subsequent to the fifty-second. Thus the sub-treasury plan passed into history.

Another reform in marketing, which the Alliance bloc sought to bring about, was to prevent the dealing in options and futures in grain. Senator Peffer introduced such a bill early in the fifty-second Congress described as a bill to protect interstate commerce, to prevent dealing in "options" and "futures," to prohibit the formation of "trusts," combines, and other combinations which affect prices, and to punish conspiracies against freedom of trade among the people of the several states.¹⁰ This same idea

8. Porter, 169.

9. Cong. Rec., 52C., 2S., 1118.

10. Cong. Rec., 52C., 1S., 107.

was followed in a proposal by Kem for imposing special tax-¹¹
es on contracts for future delivery of farm products.

The measure which came up for discussion in the House provided for the imposition of special taxes on dealers in options and futures and requiring such dealers to obtain¹² licenses. The bill was hurried through the House by a vote of 167 to 46. All the Alliance bloc voted for the proposal, except Clover who failed to vote. The bill went through a long period of debate in the Senate, but it was never acted upon. The short session beginning in December, 1893, found the bill again being discussed in the Senate. A motion to displace it with another bill was rejected¹³ to 41. Kyle and Peffer voted to continue the discussion of the bill.¹³ Senator Peffer expressed his support of the measure on the following grounds:

The object of this bill is not to suppress the sale or purchase of articles to be exchanged in the future. ...but it is to suppress a fictitious commerce which affects the commercial industry in the country, or if you prefer the expression, to eliminate the element of gambling from commerce.¹⁴

Peffer doubted the success of the reform element of the bill and went on to state that options and futures were only one of the many evils present in society. The Senate

11. Cong. Rec., 52C., 1S., 4642.

12. Ibid., 5071.

13. Cong. Rec., 52C., 2S., 234.

14. Ibid., 299.

passed the bill by a 40 to 29 vote with the support of Kyle¹⁵ and Peffer. The House and Senate could not agree on the final wording of the proposal, and it failed to pass.

The first national convention of the Populists had declared for government regulation of transportation facilities. The plank read:

Transportation being a means of exchange and a public necessity, the government should own and operate the railroads in the interest of the people. The telegraph and telephone like the post-office system, being a necessity for the transmission of news, should be owned and operated¹⁶ by the government in the interest of the people.

The Populists in Congress were not unanimous in their desire for government ownership of railroads. The members of the group did favor much more drastic regulation of the railroads then existed at the time. They believed greater regulation of transportation facilities would result in lower passenger and freight rates and less discrimination among shippers. It was said that a writer in a Populist newspaper went so far as to state that government ownership of railroads would result in low passenger rates and free freight rates. Probably too much has been made of Populist agitation for government ownership of railroads, for it was by no means considered to be a first rate problem by the party's congressmen. They also conceived that no legislation going that far was possible and this also tended to

15. Cong. Rec., 52C., 2S., 995.

16. Porter, 169.

weaken their support of the proposal.

The Alliance bloc in the fifty-second Congress sought to solve the problem by a more thorough system of government regulation. Davis brought forth a proposal prohibiting the use of railroad passes and of the free use of the telegraph by members of Congress and the judiciary of the United States.¹⁷ This was designed to lessen the railroad and telegraph corporation influence over Congress. Another typical agrarian measure for railroad regulation was introduced by Halvorsen. It proposed to prevent interstate railways from being unjustly used to centralize business and wealth, and to provide for a uniform system of freight rates and also to fix freight rates on all interstate railways in the United States.¹⁸ A measure by Clover was designed to increase the facilities for transportation by railroads and waterways.

The bloc attempted to set up a department of transportation in the cabinet. This was planned to be a short step toward more government regulation of all the instruments of transportation. A measure proposed by Otis attempted to abolish the office of postmaster-general and to create the office of secretary of transportation.¹⁹ The proposal, however, was never given serious consideration.

17. Cong. Rec., 52C., 1S., 1164.

18. Ibid., 204.

19. Ibid., 5642.

Senator Peffer, during the fifty-third Congress, submitted a resolution calling for government regulation of all public agencies, ²⁰ such as: railroads, coal beds, and all public functions. The bill also proposed to set a uniform charge for all transportation of persons and property on all railroads in the United States.

Senator Allen was doubtful as to the consequences of government ownership of railroads. He did not favor the policy of government ownership as Peffer had attempted to bring about. Albert Shaw, quoting Allen, in an account in Review of Reviews, in July, 1894, stated:

I am not certain how it would work in this country. I am not very sanguine, nor especially eager for any large venture into the field of governmental railroading.... In view of the large financial interests which the government already holds in the transcontinental lines, it might seem feasible to take one of the Pacific roads, bring it under government operation and then make a study of the results.²¹

A few months after this article appeared, a resolution was introduced by Allen for carrying out an investigation into the problem. It provided that a committee of five senators, no more than two of whom would be members of the same political party, should be vested with authority to investigate and report into the necessity and authority for government ownership and control of railroads, telegraph, and telephone lines, and to find out what legislation was

20. Cong. Rec., 53C., 2S., 7199.

21. Shaw, 40.

22

necessary to prevent strikes and lockouts. Allen was a little more firm in his declaration for government ownership of telegraphs as is shown by his statement to Albert Shaw during a personal interview: "As to telegraph, I think the general view of the Populists is that telegraphy affords means of public communication that are analogous to those supplied by the post office department, it also ought to be in the hands of the government and for the same reason the public interest."²³

In the final session of this Congress, Peffer offered a proposal providing for government control of freight railways, to reduce the cost of transportation, to establish a just and uniform charge for carrying freight, to prevent interruptions of interstate traffic by strikes, and to secure reasonable compensation to railway employees.²⁴ Each Congress saw the Populist attempts to control the facilities for transportation fall by the wayside. The fifty-fourth Congress found only a few proposals for government control of railroads. Peffer again sought to provide for government regulation for freight railways,²⁵ but his measure was buried in committee. Another measure by him proposing to prevent unjust discrimination in freight rates

22. Cong. Rec., 53C., 2S., 7156.

23. Shaw, 40.

24. Cong. Rec., 53C., 3S., 16.

25. Cong. Rec., 54C., 1S., 1573.

on agricultural products met the same fate. Shuford, serving for his first term as a Populist, introduced a bill to secure the debt of the United States against the several Pacific Railroads, and also to provide for a fair and full test of government ownership of railroads.²⁶

Following the fifty-fourth Congress the transportation question seemed to be relegated to the background. The Populist proposals for government control of transportation facilities were significant by their absence in the fifty-fifty and fifty-sixth Congresses. This had become a dead issue having given way to more pressing problems. The growing interest in the silver question which culminated in the election of 1896, tended to turn Populist congressmen away from the regulation of transportation. Another factor was the decline in the reform-complex of party congressmen that was so apparent by the meeting of the fifty-fifth Congress. The Populist groups would go to Washington loaded with the intention of reforming the whole social and economic phases of society, but as their terms of congressional tenure became lengthened, this would tend to disappear and they would become discouraged.

26. Cong. Rec., 54C., 1S., 4647.

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DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

May 12, 1936

Dean W. J. Robbins
Dean of the Graduate Faculty
120 Jesse Hall

Dear Dean Robbins:

Herewith is the four hour Master's dissertation of Mr. Clarence Nelson Roberts. It is my opinion that this dissertation easily meets the general standard which has been established in this University for the Master's dissertation.

I think the thesis could have been greatly improved by the addition of another chapter giving a summary of the proposals and political methods of the populist party.

Very truly yours,

Wm L Bradshaw

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