

THOMAS W. PALMER:  
A POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY

Thesis for the Degree of Ph. D.  
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY  
LAWRENCE EDWARD ZIEWACZ  
1971





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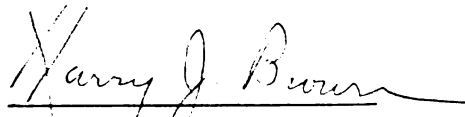
THOMAS W. PALMER:  
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presented by

Lawrence Edward Ziewacz

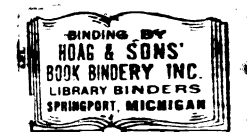
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THOMAS W. PALMER

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examination of pertinent  
historical contemporaries



## ABSTRACT

THOMAS W. PALMER: A POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY

By

Lawrence Edward Ziewacz

Political historians of the "Gilded Age" have traditionally emphasized the excessive influence that corporations and corporate wealth exerted upon the politicians of the day. The purpose of this study is to examine the political career of a wealthy Michigan lumberman, Thomas W. Palmer, state senator, United States senator, and minister to Spain to determine the impact that his personal wealth and business interests had upon his political career and to gain an insight into the political process in that era.

The extensive Palmer family papers in the Burton Historical Collection of the Detroit Public Library have provided the bulk of the research material. These include over 35,000 pieces of correspondence, thirteen personal scrapbooks, and a large number of letterbooks. An examination of pertinent state newspapers, papers of political contemporaries, both in Michigan and in the



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United States Senate, the Congressional Record, and relevant secondary works provided additional source materials.

Thomas Witherell Palmer was born on January 25, 1830, in St. Clair, a suburb of Detroit, to parents of New England stock. His father dabbled in a number of business enterprises without achieving financial success. Palmer joined his father as a partner in an insurance business in 1853 but his economic fortunes did not improve until 1855 when he married Lizzie Merrill, daughter of wealthy Michigan lumberman, Charles Merrill. Palmer became manager of Merrill's lumber company and inherited the business upon his father-in-law's death. He parlayed his inheritance into a fortune through expansion of the lumber business and through a shrewd policy of investments.

Palmer began his career in Michigan politics in 1873. In that year he was elected as an independent to the Detroit Board of Estimates. In 1876 he was unsuccessful in his attempt to win the Republican nomination for Congress but in 1878 he was elected to the Michigan Senate. As a state senator he was responsible for a bill establishing a girls' reform school and the passage of bills that aided the lumber industry. He was also the chairman of the Republican caucus responsible for securing Zachariah Chandler's election to the United States Senate in 1879. His support of Chandler aroused the ire of anti-Chandler



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Republican elements in Detroit, who never forgave him for his friendship with "old Zach."

In 1880 Palmer sought the Republican nomination for governor but was defeated by the efforts of the "anti-Chandler Republicans" in Detroit. In 1883, with the aid of a dedicated group of supporters, he engineered a stunning upset of the incumbent, Thomas W. Ferry, and emerged as a United States senator after eighty-one ballots of the state legislature.

Most, but not all, of Palmer's actions during his term in the Senate were predictable. He steadfastly supported bills aimed at aiding his state and stanchly fought any attempt to achieve trade reciprocity with Canada. He supported such party stands as the protective tariff and the annual rivers and harbors' appropriations and advocated an end to the nation's lenient immigration policies. He helped elevate the Department of Agriculture to cabinet status. He gave major addresses in support of the Interstate Commerce Bill and the Oleomargarine Bill, legislation that extended the federal government's influence over private sectors of the economy. On the other hand, he also supported the causes of women's suffrage and prohibition, which were not popular with the party.

Although his record in the national legislature appeared to be satisfactory to most Michigan Republicans, he refused to follow the advice of his political supporters



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to seize control of the party machinery in Michigan. His stated reluctance to become a party boss in the Chandler tradition allowed his enemies within the party to gain control. At the end of his Senate term--although personally popular with the people of Michigan--he was an outcast in the eyes of the party hierarchy. Reluctant to face their opposition, Palmer declined to run for a second term, much to the disappointment of his political friends and supporters, who were convinced that he could be successful in a determined re-election bid.

In national politics he opposed James Blaine in 1884 and in 1888 nominally supported Alger of Michigan although he secretly favored Harrison. With Harrison's election Palmer hoped for an appointment as Secretary of Agriculture but did not receive it because of the pressure exerted upon the President-elect by an anti-Palmer Michigan faction headed by Russell Alger. He subsequently accepted an appointment as minister to Spain, expecting to return to Michigan in 1890 to run for governor. His stay in Spain was of such short duration and his duties of such a routine nature that he did not become an outstanding diplomat. The death of his niece in 1890 caused him such grief that he ended his political career at that time.

Palmer's political career demonstrated that above all things he could not be stereotyped. The highlight of his political life was the surprise senatorial victory



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that had been carefully planned by him and a few loyal supporters. Thereafter he grew increasingly reluctant to engage in the backgroom dealings and maneuvering necessary to curry the favor of the state legislators whose support he must have for re-election. His refusal to become the party boss in the image of Zach Chandler out of fear of alienating already hostile Republicans served only to encourage those elements to seize control of the party in a manner rejected by Palmer. As Palmer's term in the Senate drew to a close he became more philosophical and apolitical, longing for his "Log Cabin" home in Detroit and the companionship and camaraderie of his Michigan friends and acquaintances.

Palmer's public career demonstrated the overwhelming importance of local and state politics and issues. His political work revealed the same meticulous attention to detail that characterized his business transactions. His business interests undoubtedly had some influence in determining his political positions (e.g., in respect to Canadian reciprocity), but his political career cannot be interpreted as merely a means of self-protection.

The remaining twenty-two years of his life were spent in raising pure-bred farm animals and in making philanthropic donations, activities which he seems to have enjoyed more in the end than his career as a United States senator.



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A THESIS

Submitted to  
Michigan State University  
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for the degree of

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Department of History

1971



I am indebted  
Express, the National  
Michigan, the Michigan  
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this thesis. I owe  
Michigan of the Burton  
Edward Hathaway of the  
Michigan State Library  
myself.

I would like  
Messrs Harry Bro  
their contributions  
special thanks is ex  
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I would like to thank the members of my committee: Professors Harry Brown, Madison Kuhn, and A. C. Gluek for their contributions to my educational development. A special thanks is extended to Professor Harry Brown for his patient counsel and understanding which made this thesis possible. I would also like to express my appreciation to Professor Marjorie Gesner who served on my committee.



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## PREFACE

The American political scene in the post-Civil War period has frequently been described by historians as being dominated by corrupt individuals who were easily manipulated tools of "big business." They were so busy providing for their own welfare that they had little time or desire left to deal with the crucial issues of the era.

The purpose of this study is to analyze and evaluate the political career of Thomas W. Palmer, state senator, United States senator, and envoy to Spain in order to discover how one political figure responded or did not respond to the issues of his day. To accomplish this goal it is necessary to ask the following questions. What effect did Palmer's personal wealth have on his political life? What tactics and methods did he utilize to gain political power? What effect did local and state politics have on his national political career? What major influences helped shape his political decisions? By answering such questions, it is hoped that a thorough understanding of his public life will be achieved, thus enabling us to determine if he fits the stereotype of the Post-Civil War politician.



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A virtually unmined collection provided the basic sources for this thesis. The Palmer Family Papers in the Burton Collection in the Detroit Public Library consist of more than thirty-five thousand pieces. They include the personal, business, and political papers of Thomas Palmer and Thomas Witherell Palmer. Also included in the collection are thirteen personal scrapbooks and a number of letterbooks. An examination of the major Michigan newspapers, federal and state documents, the correspondence of political contemporaries, and relevant secondary works completed the research for this study.



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## CHAPTER I

### THE EARLY YEARS

In the early years of the nineteenth century, Michigan Territory was a relatively unexplored and unexploited frontier land. Protected on its flanks by the stormy and uncertain waters of the Great Lakes, Michigan remained a remote and inaccessible land, far out of the mainstream of western expansion. It was the "Golden Age" of the Michigan fur trade, when voyageurs and woodrunners were more numerous than pioneer farm families. Michigan's reputation as a land of swamps and sickness whose very name meant "ague, fever, and chills" served as a further deterrent to economic expansion and population growth in Michigan.

Two developments in the transportation industry revolutionized the American mode of travel and had a profound impact on Michigan. The first of these was the invention of the steamboat by Robert Fulton in 1811. By 1818 the Walk-In-The-Water was plying the waters between Buffalo and Detroit. This first Great Lakes steamboat was wrecked in a storm near Buffalo three years after its



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launching. Among the passengers (all of whom were rescued), were the parents of Thomas W. Palmer, who were returning from the East, where they had been honeymooning. The introduction of steamboat travel on the Great Lakes ushered in a new era for Michigan.<sup>1</sup>

The second development was the completion of the Erie Canal in 1825, a project begun in 1817. The Canal stretched from Albany on the Hudson River to Buffalo on Lake Erie, a distance of over 350 miles. This meant that potential Michigan settlers who lived in New England or New York could make much of their journey by water, and that Michigan products had access to a wider market.

An examination of Michigan's population statistics from 1820 to 1840 reveals the impetus that these two developments provided for the Territory's growth and expansion. In 1820 the Territory had a population of just over 8,500. By 1830, its numbers had expanded to over 31,000. With the passage of another decade, the new state (1837) boasted a population of 212,267. In a period of twenty years, Michigan had increased her population by an average of just over ten thousand people per year--an increase of about 2,400 per cent for the two decades.<sup>2</sup>

Thomas W. Palmer was descended from hardy Easterners, some of whom had traveled West to seek their fortunes. His father's family traced its lineage from Walter Palmer, one of the original incorporators of Cambridge, Massachusetts. His mother's family, the Witherells, could



trace their descent  
from England with  
Thomas W. Palmer's great  
grandfather, served  
in the Revolutionary War.<sup>3</sup>

His father, Thomas  
Palmer, was born in  
Windsor, Vermont. At  
the age of twenty-one years he  
came to New York as a merchant.  
He remained in Canada until they  
opened a general store  
there. At the close of the  
war the British prisoners were imprisoned  
in the city of New York. He took an oath of allegiance  
and left Canada with the other  
prisoners when they were  
released on parole for a  
year in Connecticut, no doubt  
to return again. In New York  
he was engaged in trade goods  
and in 1790, a commercial  
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The Palmer brothers  
opened many lucrative  
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the war the store shelves were  
filled. Thomas Palmer took a



trace their descent from the Witherell family that came over from England with Governor John Winthrop. Both of Thomas W. Palmer's grandfathers, James Witherell and Benjamin Palmer, served the Continental cause in the Revolutionary War.<sup>3</sup>

His father, Thomas Palmer, was born in 1789, in Ashford, Vermont. At the age of nineteen, accompanied by his twenty-one year old brother Friend, he embarked on a career as a merchant. The Palmers traveled through Western Canada until they reached the town of Malden, where they opened a general store. There they prospered for four years. At the outbreak of the War of 1812 the brothers were imprisoned for two weeks for refusing to take an oath of allegiance to the king. They were then paroled and left Canada for Detroit, only to be again made prisoners when the British captured that town. Released on parole for a second time, they promptly left for Connecticut, no doubt determined not to be made prisoners again. In Connecticut they resupplied themselves with trade goods and made their way to Canandaigua, New York, a commercial center for western New York.<sup>4</sup>

The Palmer brothers' enterprise boomed as the war provided many lucrative opportunities for business success. With the end of the war, business declined and their store shelves were overflowing with unsold goods. Thomas Palmer took a load of the merchandise to western



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Canada, where he sold it. He then proceeded to Detroit, arriving there in June, 1815, to become the western representative of the firm of F. and T. Palmer, a partnership that was to endure until 1824.<sup>5</sup>

In 1821, Thomas Palmer married Mary Amy Witherell, daughter of Judge James Witherell, a native of Mansfield, Massachusetts, who had settled in Fairhaven, Vermont. His wife was Amy Hawkins, a direct descendent of Roger Williams. President Thomas Jefferson appointed Judge Witherell one of the justices of the Supreme Court of the Territory of Michigan. In 1810 Judge Witherell was joined by his wife and family. Within a year his wife had taken the Witherell children back to Vermont where they remained until 1817. This move was prompted by Mrs. Witherell's fear of Indians and her desire to give the Witherell children a better education than could be obtained in frontier Detroit. Judge Witherell, along with his oldest son James and a son-in-law, Joseph Watson, were made prisoners when Hull surrendered Detroit to the British. They were eventually paroled and returned to Vermont where they remained until the war was over. Judge Witherell then resumed his office in Michigan and served the territory and the state until his death in 1838.<sup>6</sup>

Detroit in 1830 was a raw pioneer town with a population of slightly over 2,200 whose military garrison had been removed and its fort razed only four years



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earlier. It had been founded on the site of the old Indian town of Teuchsa Gondie and the river banks were still covered with Indian mounds. The seine fisheries on the Detroit River were one of the town's chief industries. The river Savoyard ran through the city; there was no stone pavement until 1850. Between 1840 and 1850 street paving was done with pine blocks. Streets were often muddy quagmires, particularly in the spring and fall when they developed into beds of "clay of a plastic character which would mire a horse or pull a boy's boot off if he happened to strike it right." The usual method of conveyance was by two-wheel carts. There were no railroads or plank roads.<sup>7</sup>

Many decades later while recalling his boyhood days, Thomas W. Palmer would vividly remember that early Detroit "had no furnaces, hot water heaters, nor steam only some crude stoves, open fireplaces, and the Franklin, no gas, only tallow candles and lamps, and sperm candles for company." The city's sanitation and sewer facilities were crude or nonexistent. In 1832, troops from the steamship Henry Clay on their way to aid in the Blackhawk War brought a cholera epidemic that ravaged Detroit. Elections were wild affairs as intoxicated immigrants often attempted to intimidate voters. (Thomas W. Palmer maintained that the state capitol was moved from Detroit to Lansing because of the "orgies" that were held on the



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capitol grounds.) Early Detroit was clearly no place for the timid or the weak.<sup>8</sup>

Thomas Palmer, Senior, was a man of diverse business interests. In 1823 he and two associates were awarded by the city of Detroit the contract to build a courthouse. In return, Palmer was given a generous portion of land on a tract located on the outskirts of Detroit. Evidently city officials were pleased with the results of Palmer's labors.<sup>9</sup> An investigative committee of two reported in these words: "We would remark that in our opinion the whole of the work is substantial, looks well, the building is an ornament to the place. . . . We are satisfied with the manner in which Mr. Palmer has executed his contract."<sup>10</sup>

The elder Palmer also constructed a business building in Detroit and helped to build at least one bridge. He invested in river wharves and bought valuable pine lands in St. Clair County. He founded the settlement of St. Clair, originally known as the village of Palmer. He also owned a lumber mill in Detroit and at various times had investments in steamships plying the Detroit River. He was also active in civic and social affairs. He helped in the construction of the First Baptist Church, was an active participant in the Association for Promoting Female Education in Detroit, participated in church activities, and served several terms as an alderman.<sup>11</sup>



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Despite Thomas Palmer's lucrative investments he was frequently in debt. His appetite for business ventures often exceeded his ability to meet his obligations. A year after the birth of his son, he was so pressed by debts that he hired an agent, who attempted to consolidate the debts and arrive at a settlement with his creditors.<sup>12</sup>

Thomas W. Palmer was born in Detroit on January 25, 1830, the third of four children (and the only male) who grew to maturity. Young Thomas began his schooling in Detroit. At the age of twelve after having completed his elementary studies he was sent to a private coeducational academy located in St. Clair, whose headmaster was the Reverend O. C. Thompson. Thomas was enrolled in the college preparatory course and studied Latin, Greek, algebra, English literature, and grammar. Included among his schoolboy friends was David Jerome, who would later defeat him for the Republican nomination for the governorship of Michigan.<sup>13</sup>

Thomas W. Palmer's great ambition was to become a lawyer in order to prepare himself for a political career. He planned to enter the University of Michigan in the fall of 1847. About this time, however, he began to suffer from an eye affliction that threatened his sight. To rest his eyes Tom accompanied his father on one of the latter's exploration trips to the Porcupine Mountains in the Upper Peninsula during the early summer



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of 1847. The trip seemed to have a therapeutic effect upon him. He wrote exuberantly to his mother that his eyes were improving from the inflammation and that he was "getting as tough as a bear." In his letter he stated his grim determination to improve his physical condition. "You would laugh," he wrote, "to see me going through the woods with a pack on my back--fighting the mosquitoes, the sweat pouring down in large globules. . . . I am determined to get rough and hard."<sup>15</sup>

The Palmers returned from their Upper Peninsula excursion at the end of July, 1847. Refreshed by his vacation in the "wilderness," Tom eagerly awaited the approach of the fall term at the university.<sup>16</sup>

Once at the university he was to discover that his newly restored health was of a very impermanent nature. The long hours of study began to take their toll. His eyes became increasingly inflamed and sore. At times the affliction was so bad that he could not find his clothes, and he had to have his lessons read to him by some of his companions. Even with this aid Tom could only study about an hour each day. A friend, David James, had been in New York in the summer of 1847 and had conferred with a Dr. Francis about the condition of Palmer's eyes. The doctor had assured James that if Tom could visit New York for five or six months, he would "entirely cure them or pay all expenses." Tom was so exhilarated by the doctor's



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reply that he wrote thus to his mother: "You may think me chimerical, but sore eyes are such an evil that I would willingly seal my lot and let him try his skill."<sup>17</sup>

By February of 1848 Tom was more distressed and melancholy. At Ann Arbor he had consulted a doctor who told him that he was not afflicted with any particular eye disease but was instead suffering from a debilitation of his general health.<sup>18</sup>

With the approach of spring he thought of dropping out of school. He could no longer afford the student aid without whose help it was impossible to complete his lessons. From New York Dr. Francis had written that for thirty dollars he would send the cure for Tom's eyes. Tom began to think that a trip to the West, perhaps to the Rocky Mountains or the Pacific coast, and a visit to New York to see Dr. Francis, would be the proper restorative. If he could not attempt this trip, he confided to his cousin Friend, he might take a job as a warehouse clerk if there was an opening.<sup>19</sup>

Spring came and Tom Palmer left the University of Michigan. Although he regarded it as a temporary departure, he would never again enter the institution's portals as a student. Following the plan that he had outlined in the letter to his cousin, he set out for the West with a number of companions; they traveled west and then south, eventually reaching Baton Rouge. Palmer was surprised to



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capital to invest.

September, 18

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discover that a large number of wealthy northerners resided in that southern city. It was his observation that one could amass a fortune quite quickly there if he had the capital to invest.<sup>20</sup>

September, 1848 found him in New York rooming with a "decent family" and visiting Dr. Francis for treatment of his eyes. He wrote his parents that the doctor seemed honest but "his partner and wife are sharks in appearance."<sup>21</sup>

After a month he began to feel restless. He wrote his sister Sarah that he and five companions (including his cousin James Witherell) were planning to sail to Spain where they would visit Cadiz, Cordova, and Seville. From Spain they planned to go to Rio de Janiero and then back to the United States. He anticipated that the voyage might take as long as three years--or as long as his eyes held out. In preparation for his trip, he was going to grow some "mustachios" to impress the nations he would visit.<sup>22</sup>

Two days after writing this letter he set sail with his friends for Spain. They left in late October and arrived thirty-four days later after a stormy passage. After three weeks in Spain, they sailed for Rio de Janiero.<sup>23</sup>

The young Palmer did not return to the United States until May 1, 1849 when he debarked at New Orleans.



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He was in debt and lacked even the funds necessary to return to Detroit. Although at first determined to pay off his debts before leaving New Orleans, homesickness overcame his pride and he wrote home for funds. These were promptly forwarded to him and he arrived in Detroit early in June.<sup>24</sup>

Despite his trans-Atlantic voyages and subsequent adventures, the condition of Tom's eyes remained about the same. A return to the University of Michigan was therefore an impossibility. After pondering his future for some time, he decided to leave Detroit and seek his fortune elsewhere.<sup>25</sup>

In the spring of 1850 he boarded a steamer bound for Green Bay, Wisconsin. In Wisconsin he obtained work as an agent for a firm of forwarding and commission agents. He worked long hours on his new job and continued to be plagued with headaches and sore eyes. He remained alert, however, for any business venture that might present itself, for Wisconsin was even more raw and unexploited than Michigan. He wrote his parents in reference to Wisconsin that "everything is in its transition state from barbarism to civilization and we cannot affect much." It was his opinion that a resourceful man who possessed a sharp eye for business could rapidly make his fortune there.<sup>26</sup>



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It was in Wisconsin that Palmer received his first taste of practical politics. In the fall of 1850 he was delegate to a Whig convention. He was appointed secretary of the convention and was asked to be a delegate to the senatorial convention to be held at Manitowoc. Prior business commitments prevented his accepting the invitation. At the convention he helped to procure the nomination of a friend as a candidate for the legislature. His candidate was almost elected--running nearly 100 votes ahead of the rest of the Whig ticket.

The winter of 1850-51 found young Tom in a reflective mood. He was doing well at his job and his employers wanted him to remain with them, but the young Detroitier felt adrift in the world. His future goals and aims were hazy and uncertain. The many profitable business schemes generated by his fertile brain required a substantial amount of capital. He himself lacked both money and credit. He had already written his father for advice and for funds. His father wrote back warning him of the dangers of speculating without sufficient funds, and he did not enclose any money. This stern letter was followed by one more kindly and sympathetic in tone. He wrote with some embarrassment that he would have sent funds to Tom but that he himself was under an "immense load of debts" as a result of his own "expensive habits." This did not comfort his son for he admitted to his



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mother that he was "externally comfortable but internally troubled." Disconsolately he wrote her that "my pride, my health, my mind, and my own inclinations demand that I must have a profession."<sup>28</sup>

The advent of spring brought bluer skies and brighter days. Somehow young Palmer scraped together enough money to enable him to open a general store. He also speculated in land warrants and in flour. He proved to be an astute merchant and the business quickly showed a profit. He was soon thinking of taking a partner.<sup>29</sup>

Disaster struck unexpectedly on a night in January, 1852. A flash fire destroyed his store and stock of goods. Merchandise worth about \$2,000 was insured for about a quarter of that amount and the insurance company defaulted on that. Tom wrote his father that the fire had left him "burnt out and worn out." His attempts to re-establish himself proved futile. By late fall of 1852 he was back in Detroit.<sup>30</sup>

His father, who had just been appointed an agent for the Monarch Fire and Life Insurance Company, offered him a partnership. Tom accepted and the firm of Palmer and Son was born. They soon became agents for other insurance companies and also extended their operations to real estate--buying, selling, and investigating land titles in Michigan, Wisconsin, and Illinois.<sup>31</sup>



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Business did not occupy all of the younger Palmer's time. He avidly attended parties and other social events. Once he expressed to his sister Julia his disappointment that he had been invited to only one party in a month's time.<sup>32</sup>

Several young ladies caught his eye. A particular favorite, Cora Farnsworth, deeply disappointed him by leaving Detroit to spend the winter of 1854-55 in New York. He was not daunted by this minor frustration. He quickly turned his attention to a pert little miss named Lizzie Merrill. He escorted her to numerous concerts and to several Unitarian church socials. Rumors soon spread that Tom and Lizzie were engaged. Tom confided to his sister Julia that they were not engaged "although she might like it well enough. . . . She is a pretty smart girl but independent beyond measure." He thought that it would be sheer "folly" to marry before he was thirty because he was "having too much fun, making too much money and not growing old very fast." He reckoned without Miss Merrill.<sup>33</sup>

The summer of 1855 found Tom visiting Lizzie at the Merrill summer residence in Portland, Maine, determined to make her his wife. He seems to have been on extremely good terms with her parents from the first. Merrill had even tried to reimburse the suitor for the cost of his trip East. Tom told his father that he



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he thought Lizzie's father was "one of the greatest."<sup>34</sup> He believed that Mrs. Merrill approved of him also. In July he informed his mother that he was engaged. He said that he had wanted to tell her sooner but waited to make sure that Lizzie would stick to the engagement for a reasonable length of time.<sup>35</sup> Despite the good relations between Lizzie's parents and the prospective bridegroom it was not until the end of September that Palmer was able to persuade them to "consent to the nuptials." The Merrills had thought Lizzie too young. According to Tom, Lizzie was eighteen but looked twenty. They were married on October 16, 1856.<sup>36</sup>

Palmer quickly discovered that he had married a very determined woman. He could not persuade her to end their honeymoon. January, 1856, found them in Boston where he attempted unsuccessfully to get her to return to Detroit. The months passed and they remained in the East--at the Merrills' expense.<sup>37</sup>

Lizzie pleaded illness when Tom talked of going home or cried "like anything" when he threatened to leave her.<sup>38</sup> They continued to live on the largesse of the Merrills, who did not seem to begrudge the added expense as long as their daughter was near them. Merrill could afford to be generous as he was engaged in a number of successful business ventures in the East and in the lumber business in Michigan. Tom wrote his mother that



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his wife's father "was for anything in the way of business." He generously lent Tom money when it became known to him that the elder Palmer needed loans to keep the firm of Palmer and Son solvent. These loans were for sums ranging from four hundred to one thousand dollars.<sup>40</sup> Despite the kindness of the Merrills and their willingness to share their wealth with him, Tom was dissatisfied with his nomadic existence; Lizzie still wanted to stay in the East.<sup>41</sup>

The highlight of the summer of 1856 for Tom occurred when he attended a Republican meeting at Portland and was called upon to make a speech. He spoke for about twenty-five minutes and "gave it to them right and left." He ended the speech with "three cheers for Detroit." This was his first stump speech and he felt quite pleased with his efforts as the local newspapers lavishly complimented him.<sup>42</sup>

By the end of 1856 Palmer was back in Detroit working for the family firm. To placate his wife he allowed her to visit her parents each summer. Much of the summer and fall of 1858 was spent in the East because Lizzie was ill and refused to return to Detroit.<sup>43</sup>

In 1860 Tom formally joined the firm of Charles Merrill, which carried on a lumbering business in Michigan. His life was still not very stable as Lizzie continually wanted to go East to visit her parents. Tom wrote his



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sister Julia that they planned on "going back to the old people this spring. She is going ostensibly to take care of her mother. . . . If the old people behave themselves I may stay there a year." Mrs. Merrill's condition improved considerably during the summer and by fall the Palmers were back in Detroit.<sup>44</sup>

The tumultuous political campaign of 1860 saw Tom favoring "Old Abe" but doubting his chances of success. He also ran unsuccessfully as candidate for alderman in the first ward. He told Julia that at the Republican caucus meeting he had received all the "decent vote" but that his rival, N. P. Jacobs, "ran in so many Irishmen and locofocos" that he was swamped. Although Jacobs won the Republican nomination he was defeated in city elections. Tom thought that he himself would have been elected by seventy votes if he had been the Republican candidate because the rest of the Republican ticket won by that margin. He was not too disappointed, however, because he thought that if he had been elected the job would have been too time-consuming and would either have cost him \$2,000 from lost fees or his reputation as an alderman.<sup>45</sup>

In 1861, Palmer was engaged in the business of expanding the Charles Merrill Company's pine holdings in northern lower Michigan and in the Upper Peninsula. Although the beginning of the Civil War and particularly the defeat of the Union forces at Bull Run temporarily



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suspended business activities, he was not unduly disturbed. He wrote to his mother with respect to Bull Run, that he imagined that "the effect upon the country will be good. There seems to be no lack of confidence in the government." A month later, after returning from a moderately successful lumber selling trip to Dayton, he was less hopeful. He wrote to his father that "times are perfectly awful here as to money matters, worse I think than 1857. Lumber is a drag."<sup>47</sup>

The slowdown in business activity proved to be only temporary. As the war progressed, the demand for lumber increased and business "was very brisk." There abounded many opportunities for profitable investments and Tom was able to take advantage of them on the strength of his father-in-law's purse. According to Tom, Merrill was willing to finance any venture he cared to engage in. Among his money-making enterprises were included a piano store, a produce and commission store, and a lumber business at Muskegon. He believed that the Muskegon business was an especially good one and would grow "better in time as the old gentleman will furnish money to pick up lots of which there are many." He also speculated in the bonds sold by Jay Cooke and associates on behalf of the government.<sup>48</sup>

Lizzie's attitude was the one flaw in Tom's happiness. She constantly complained about her health and his patience was sorely tried. He wrote his sister



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that "she is certainly hypochondrical and that I think worse than heart disease." Tom avoided visiting his mother because he feared that Lizzie would trouble him more than he could stand. But Merrill's unflagging generosity (his gifts included a large sum of money that Tom used to buy five acres on Woodward Avenue for a future home) made it much easier for him to bear with his wife's idiosyncracies.<sup>49</sup>

The years immediately following the Civil War saw an expansion of the Merrill Company's lumber activities and a concomitant increase in Tom's power and responsibilities in the company. He was frequently in the field, personally checking logging operations and the condition of the company's lumber camps. When he was not in the woods, he was in constant correspondence with the company's chief land scout, Asa Bither. It was Bither's job to investigate the quality of pine lands offered for sale and to advise Palmer and Merrill on purchases. The main holdings of the Merrill Company were located above their Saginaw mill, chiefly in the region of the Titabawassee River. The prime timber located there soon became exhausted and as the secondary growth was generally not worth cutting, it was necessary to acquire new land constantly. The main lumber operations of the company spread to the Pine River and Mount Pleasant areas.<sup>50</sup> This new land was obtained in a number of ways. It was bought



from private owners, from the state of Michigan, and with federal military bounty warrants. Eventually the Merrill Company would own large tracts of pine land on all tributaries of the Saginaw River and would cut their timber from over 70,000 acres.<sup>51</sup>

The results of this aggressive program of expansion were reflected in the logging records of the Merrill Company. One timber camp manager alone reported for the years 1864-68 a five-fold increase in the number of logs cut and sent to the mill from his camp.<sup>52</sup>

The Merrill mill at Saginaw averaged between twenty and thirty million board feet per year during the peak years of its operation and produced a grand total of slightly over three hundred million board feet during forty-four years of existence from 1854 to 1898. In addition the sawmill operated at Muskegon produced from five to six million board feet annually during its twenty years of operation from 1863 to 1883. (In 1870 slightly over 575 million board feet of lumber were milled in the Saginaw Valley and a total of slightly over 2.1 billion board feet produced in the state as a whole. The production of the Saginaw Valley from 1851 to 1895 totaled over twenty-three billion board feet.) Although the Merrill Company's lumber production percentage may not seem large, it was one of the leading mill operations in the state and owned one of the largest amounts of pine stumpage land.<sup>53</sup>



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As the chief administrator for the Merrill Company, Palmer could look with pride upon the company's field operations, the burden of success or failure of which lay upon his shoulders. The company's prosperity testified to his managerial skills and business acumen.

The elder Palmer died in 1868 and Tom was now shouldered with the additional duties of managing the estate for his mother. The estate included lands located on Jefferson Avenue and a farm on Woodward Avenue.<sup>54</sup>

The dawn of a new decade did not diminish the Merrill Company's prosperity. On the contrary, it heralded a period of expansion. Logging figures for the fall and winter of 1869-70 showed that over 8.7 million feet had been cut at the logging camps and sent down to the Saginaw mill. Palmer's own mill at Muskegon was also doing considerable business. The Merrill Company's land agents continued to be as aggressive as always in their constant pursuit of virgin pine lands.<sup>55</sup>

In the summer of 1871 the Merrill Company's chief field camp manager urged Palmer to increase the number of crews in the woods. Prices were rising and sales were increasing. The high lumber prices were the result in part of a number of forest fires that swept the Michigan pine lands in the summer and fall of 1871. Remarkably, the Merrill Company's lumber lands were hardly damaged by the fires.<sup>56</sup>



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In December, 1872, Charles Merrill died. He left his estate to his daughter and son-in-law. Palmer's duties did not change significantly with Merrill's death as he had been for years the active member of the firm, initiating policy and carrying it out with some direction from Merrill. Palmer had enjoyed Merrill's complete trust and confidence. The only alteration in his routine was that his trips to the lumber camps grew more infrequent as he preferred to manage the company from his Detroit offices, relying on accurate reports from his logging camp managers and sawmill operators to keep himself informed of operations in the field.<sup>57</sup>

The Panic of 1873, initiated by the failure of several prominent banking houses, caused a general cessation of normal business operations. The lumber business was no exception. By May of 1873 the Muskegon mill was "standing still" because of lack of business. Prices were dropping rapidly at Palmer's Saginaw lumber yard. Many lumbermen were suspending all operations although the normal fall and winter logging season was nearly at hand. An upswing in business early in October gave hope that the depression would soon subside. But as the weeks passed it became evident that the flurry of business activity had only been a temporary upsurge. Palmer's customers were having difficulty in paying their bills. Banks were calling in their notes but their customers could not produce any cash either, and many of



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them failed in the Saginaw area, including a bank of Palmer's friend, Thomas Sheldon. Palmer was able to weather the financial storm by calling up his customers' notes and aggressively pursuing sales in the Midwest. November's outlook was no better and rumors of failure and bankruptcies were prevalent in the Saginaw area.<sup>58</sup>

Although the financial crisis of 1873 brought a brief halt to Thomas Palmer's expanding commercial empire, it did mark the beginning of his political career--a career that he would pursue intermittently for the next nineteen years. In March, 1873, a law creating a Board of Estimates for the city of Detroit was enacted by the state legislature. The board was to have the final determining power in regard to all city taxes not definitely fixed by law and was to acquire the power that had been previously conferred upon the city's annual freemen's meeting. It was to consist of two members from each city voting ward and five members elected from the city at large. Half of the original members would serve for a one-year term and half for a two-year term.<sup>59</sup>

The Detroit Advertiser and Tribune initiated the campaign by declaring its support for a non-partisan board. It declared that what was needed were men of "unquestionable integrity, of established judgment and of general public spirit." To have a successful Board of Estimates it was necessary that the majority should "be



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composed of representative and upright men, and not of Republicans or Democrats or Liberals as such."<sup>60</sup>

One day after enunciating these lofty convictions, the Republican-oriented Advertiser and Tribune announced with embarrassment that Detroit Republicans had decided to present a full slate of Republican candidates for the Board. The paper admonished the Republican caucuses not to select schemers and those with an ax to grind but to put their best men forward. The Republicans, in the opinion of the Advertiser and Tribune, followed the paper's advice, for several days later it reported that the "Democratic ward nominees for the Board of Estimates cannot as a rule compare in the point of personal qualification with the gentlemen selected for the same purpose by the Republican ward caucuses."<sup>61</sup>

Thomas Palmer, although a Republican, was not one of the Republican candidates nominated by the Republican caucuses. The Republicans themselves were divided in their support of the Republican nominees. Many Republicans and other Detroiters feared that the official Republican slate represented a faction in the Republican party that wanted to push through an appropriation for a public park. This faction owned a great deal of land in Detroit and it was thought that they would try to sell their land to the city at exorbitant prices if a park project was approved. This could be better



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accomplished if they had their men on the Board of Estimates. To prevent such action, a non-partisan slate was nominated by a citizens' group for the at-large positions on the board. Among the nominees was Thomas W. Palmer.<sup>62</sup>

Voting on election day was light but those citizens casting a ballot voted overwhelmingly for the citizens' ticket. Thomas W. Palmer led the citizens' slate with 4,438 votes. The highest vote garnered by a Republican was 2,435. The Advertiser and Tribune blamed the tactics of the "manipulators" in the Republican party for the crushing Republican defeat. It said that although Detroit was a Republican city, the Republican policy makers should be aware that Republican voters would not approve "selfish schemes" and that no "cracking of the party whip" would force the dissidents into line. In the newspaper's opinion the people had taken a stand on the park project. It put the matter in these words: "The majority by which the citizens' ticket for members-at-large for the Board of Estimates was chosen cannot be construed as anything but an emphatic popular verdict on the anti-park bill side." Thus Palmer's election was clearly identified with the efforts for reform in Detroit's city government.<sup>63</sup>

The first meeting of the Board of Estimates was held in April, 1873. There were two main items of business to be considered. The first matter concerned the members' committee assignments. Palmer was appointed to



the Public Sewers, Sewer Bonds, Interest, Sinking Fund, and Metropolitan Police committees. It was the duty of a committee to evaluate the financial requirements of that particular item of public business to which it had been assigned. The second matter was to consider the Common Council's recommendation that a total of slightly over a million dollars be allocated for the city's expenses for the new fiscal year. It was the job of the Board of Estimates to determine whether this was a reasonable amount to spend.<sup>64</sup>

The Board met again in May to hear the committees' reports. The most controversial issue before the Board was a proposal to reduce the sewer tax submitted by Palmer as chairman of the Committee on Sewers. Palmer stated that sufficient funds remained in the city's treasury to warrant such a reduction. After some spirited discussion his committee report passed by a vote of 23-1.<sup>65</sup>

The Board met a week later to make its final decision in regard to the committees' proposals. A member persuaded the Board to reconsider the sewer fund tax and another vote was taken. The original sewer tax won approval by a vote of 17-7. Palmer's attempt to save the citizens of Detroit money was thus defeated. The total appropriation approved by the Board was about \$863,000, an increase of about \$90,000 over the funds appropriated for 1872, but almost \$150,000 less than what the City Council had asked for.<sup>66</sup>



The Detroit Free Press evaluated the work of the Board and found its work on the whole satisfactory. It was particularly pleased with the Board's economy measure and declared that the new system was an improvement over the annual citizens' meetings.<sup>67</sup>

Thus ended Thomas Palmer's first experience as an elected representative of the people but it would not be his last. His appetite for political office had been whetted. Although his debut had been less than sensational, he had proved to be a popular vote getter and had shown that he had the citizens' interests at heart. He would learn by experience that these were not all of the ingredients necessary for a successful political career.



<sup>1</sup>Letter  
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<sup>5</sup>M. A  
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<sup>6</sup>Rev.  
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## FOOTNOTES--CHAPTER I

<sup>1</sup>Letter of the Rev. E. H. Pilcher to Thomas W. Palmer, July 7, 1877, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library, Detroit, Michigan. Hereinafter cited as the Palmer Papers.

<sup>2</sup>The Statistical History of the United States (Stamford: Fairfield Publishing Co., 1965), p. 13.

<sup>3</sup>William Livingstone, Livingstone's History of the Republican Party, Vol. II (Detroit: William Livingstone, Publisher, 1900), p. 305.

<sup>4</sup>History and Biography of Detroit and Wayne County (Chicago: Henry Taylor and Co., 1909), p. 291; "T. W. Palmer," in Illustrated American Biography, Pt 2 (New York: The Lewis Publishing Co., 1895); M. Agnes Burton, "Thomas Witherell Palmer," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection, XXXIX (1915), 207 (hereinafter cited as MPHC).

<sup>5</sup>M. Agnes Burton, "Thomas Witherell Palmer," MPHC, p. 208.

<sup>6</sup>Rev. E. H. Pilcher to Palmer, July 7, 1877, Palmer Papers.

<sup>7</sup>C. M. Burton, "Detroit in the Year 1832," MPHC, XXVIII (1900), 163; Thomas W. Palmer, "Detroit Sixty Years Ago," MPHC, XXX (1902), 490, 506-07; Thomas W. Palmer, "Sixty Years of Michigan--Address Before the Ninth Annual Pioneer Picnic of Cass County," MPHC, XXIX (1901), 209-10.

<sup>8</sup>Thomas W. Palmer, "Detroit Sixty Years Ago," p. 509; C. M. Burton, "Detroit Sixty Years Ago," pp. 504, 507.



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<sup>10</sup> Copy of  
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<sup>12</sup> James  
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<sup>13</sup> M. Ag  
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<sup>14</sup> Unsie  
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<sup>9</sup>Governor and Judges of the Territory of Michigan to Thomas Palmer, July 29, 1829, in the Thomas Palmer Papers, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library, Detroit, Michigan. Hereinafter cited as T. Palmer Papers (Thomas Palmer was T. W. Palmer's father).

<sup>10</sup>Copy of certificate from H. Cole and John Palmer to Boyd Linydam(?), August 7, 1829, Palmer Papers; M. Agnes Burton, "Thomas Witherell Palmer," MPHC, p. 207.

<sup>11</sup>Agreement signed by Job C. Smith and Thomas Palmer on May 30, 1829, T. Palmer Papers; M. Agnes Burton, "Thomas Witherell Palmer," MPHC, p. 208; History and Biography of Detroit and Wayne County, p. 291; Articles of Agreement Between T. Palmer and Alonzo Merrill, January 20, 1831, T. Palmer Papers.

<sup>12</sup>James Everson to T. Palmer, July 14, 1831; Susan Marriott to T. Palmer, June 18, 1831; L. Stanislaus to T. Palmer, March 17, August 9, 1831. T. Palmer Papers.

<sup>13</sup>M. Agnes Burton, "Thomas Witherell Palmer," MPHC, p. 209.

<sup>14</sup>Unsigned letter to Thomas Palmer, March 11, 1847; Thomas W. Palmer to his mother, June 27, 1847. T. Palmer Papers.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Thomas Palmer to his wife, July 25, 1847, T. Palmer Papers.

<sup>17</sup>Palmer to his mother, January 25, 1848, T. Palmer Papers.

<sup>18</sup>Palmer to his mother, February 5, 1848, T. Palmer Papers.

<sup>19</sup>Palmer to his cousin Friend, February 25, 1848; Dr. Francis to Palmer, March 29, 1848, T. Palmer Papers.

<sup>20</sup>Palmer to his parents, June 6, 1848, T. Palmer Papers.



<sup>21</sup>Palmer to his parents, September 13, 29, 1848, T. Palmer Papers.

<sup>22</sup>Palmer to sister Sarah, October 22, 1848, T. Palmer Papers.

<sup>23</sup>M. Agnes Burton, "Thomas Witherell Palmer," pp. 210-11.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 210.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>H. M. Roby to Palmer, September 20, 1850; Palmer to his parents, July 15, 1850. T. Palmer Papers.

<sup>27</sup>Palmer to his father, November 3, 1850, Palmer Papers; M. Agnes Burton, "Thomas Witherell Palmer," p. 211.

<sup>28</sup>Palmer to Henry Roby, December 8, 1850; Thomas Palmer to his son, January 15, 1851, February 28, 1851; Palmer to his mother, February 25, 1851. T. Palmer Papers.

<sup>29</sup>Palmer to his father, January 1, 24, 1852. T. Palmer Papers.

<sup>30</sup>Palmer to his father, January 24, 1852; Frank Packard to Palmer, May 18, 1852. T. Palmer Papers.

<sup>31</sup>George Adlard to Thomas Palmer, December 24, 1852; Palmer to his sister Julia, February 24, 28, 1854. T. Palmer Papers.

<sup>32</sup>Palmer to his sister Julia, February 30, 1854, T. Palmer Papers.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>Palmer to his father, July 24, 1855, T. Palmer Papers.

<sup>35</sup>Palmer to his mother, July 11, 1855, T. Palmer Papers.



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<sup>36</sup>Palmer to his sister Julia, September 25, 1855, T. Palmer Papers.

<sup>37</sup>Palmer to his mother, January 6, 1856, T. Palmer Papers.

<sup>38</sup>Palmer to his mother, August 3, 21, 1856, T. Palmer Papers.

<sup>39</sup>Palmer to his mother, August 21, 1856, T. Palmer Papers.

<sup>40</sup>Palmer to his father, June 11, 1856, T. Palmer Papers. The elder Palmer was constantly in debt to Charles Merrill.

<sup>41</sup>Palmer to his mother, August 21, 1856, T. Palmer Papers.

<sup>42</sup>Palmer to his parents, August 10, 21, T. Palmer Papers.

<sup>43</sup>Palmer to his mother, September 7, 1857, August 19, October 1, 1858, T. Palmer Papers.

<sup>44</sup>Palmer to his sister Julia, April 14, 1860; Palmer to his mother, July 19, 1860, T. Palmer Papers.

<sup>45</sup>Palmer to his sister Julia, November 7, 1860, T. Palmer Papers.

<sup>46</sup>E. A. Lansing to George W. Markham, February 15, 1861; E. A. Lansing to George Conant, February 5, 1861; Wm. C. Colburn to Thomas Palmer, July 18, 1861, T. Palmer Papers.

<sup>47</sup>Palmer to his mother, July 24, 1861; Palmer to his father, August 10, 1861, T. Palmer Papers.

<sup>48</sup>Palmer to his sister Julia, January 11, 1863, T. Palmer Papers.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid.; Palmer to his sister Julia, March 25, 1864, T. Palmer Papers.



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<sup>51</sup>Asa Bither to Palmer, November 12, 1868, T. Palmer Papers; Bill for land in St. Clair County dated July 8, 1869, T. Palmer Papers. Contract drawn by John Larkin, Land Agent--for the Commissioner of the State Land Office, dated May 29, 1868, Palmer Papers; A. C. Maxwell to Palmer, September 28, 1868, Palmer Papers; George W. Hotchkiss, History of the Lumber and Forest Industry (Chicago: George W. Hotchkiss and Co., 1898), p. 71.

<sup>52</sup>1867 statement of logs sent out by Martin Perley for the Charles Merrill Company, Palmer Papers; J. A. Whittier to Charles Merrill, September 8, 1868, Palmer Papers.

<sup>53</sup>Hotchkiss, pp. 71, 97, 105; Statistical History of the United States, p. 313; Statistics of Michigan, 1870 (Lansing: W. S. George & Co., 1873), pp. 416-17.

<sup>54</sup>J. A. Whittier to Palmer, August 9, 1868, Palmer Papers; M. Agnes Burton, "Thomas Witherell Palmer," MPHC, p. 212.

<sup>55</sup>Saginaw log account dated October, 1870; lumber statements of Muskegon mill--dated December, 1873; Asa Bither to Palmer, November 10, 1873, Palmer Papers.

<sup>56</sup>J. A. Whittier to Palmer, October 26, 1871, Palmer Papers.

<sup>57</sup>J. A. Whittier to Palmer, August 21, 1873, Palmer Papers.

<sup>58</sup>N. McGraft to Palmer, May 14, 1873; J. A. Whittier to Palmer, September 29, October 5, 7, 19, 23, November 4, 1873, Palmer Papers.

<sup>59</sup>Detroit Advertiser and Tribune, March 29, 1873.

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- <sup>61</sup>Detroit Advertiser and Tribune, April 1, 5, 1873.
- <sup>62</sup>Detroit Advertiser and Tribune, April 4, 5, 8,  
1873.
- <sup>63</sup>Detroit Advertiser and Tribune, April 8, 1873.
- <sup>64</sup>Detroit Free Press, April 25, 29, 1873.
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- <sup>66</sup>Detroit Free Press, May 9, 1873; Detroit Advertiser and Tribune, May 9, 1873.
- <sup>67</sup>Detroit Free Press, May 10, 1873.



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## CHAPTER II

### FROM LUMBERMAN TO POLITICIAN

New Year's day 1874 brought renewed hope for beleaguered businessmen as they eagerly anticipated a revival of normal business and financial operations. Their buoyant optimism soon changed to anxiety, dismay, and frequently to despair as they came to realize that the nation's recovery from the financial crisis of 1873 would not be immediate. Instead, business activities were marked by wild fluctuations as prices and sales rose and plummeted with all the consistency of a runaway roller coaster. Confidence in the nation's financial institutions had been so shaken with the collapse of the leading banking houses that almost six years would pass before the recessions and business failures that were triggered by the events of 1873 would be halted.

Palmer's business operations reflected the uncertainty of the times. Early in 1874 the market for Michigan lumber was good. His mill managers at Saginaw and at Muskegon reported in March that logs were in demand and that prices were rising. Palmer's logs were being



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shipped to Milwaukee, where the market for lumber was exceptionally strong. By May, however, the bottom had fallen out of the lumber market.<sup>1</sup> Joseph Whittier, Palmer's partner and manager of the mill at Saginaw, wrote to Palmer as follows:

Our lumber sales are nothing--there are so many ambitious sellers that they are running around the country and offering lumber at ruinous prices, taking any price so that they can get some money. We cannot compete with these distressed individuals but I think I see some indications of a speedy let up.<sup>2</sup>

At the end of the summer, after having prepared the financial statement for fall, Whittier was less confident of a business revival. He could see no evidence that prices in the autumn would be any better. He theorized that they might be a little higher in the winter "due to the fact that small streams will be filled to the overflowing with timber beyond their capacity." Thus mills would not be processing as many logs and the ensuing scarcity of milled lumber might tend to drive the market higher. This would only be a temporary solution at best. As soon as the streams cleared, the logs would pour into the mills and the market again would be glutted.<sup>3</sup>

Meeting the next pay roll was not the only problem that beset Tom Palmer in 1874. His wife remained ill but possessed sufficient strength to maintain a constant verbal barrage aimed at persuading Palmer to abandon his business affairs for a vacation trip to the East. Lizzie detested winter and particularly winter in Michigan. The







combination of her illness and winter made her so ill-tempered that her husband wrote to his sister that Lizzie's illness "took all the enjoyment of life away."<sup>4</sup>

Palmer's personal life was further disturbed by the death of his mother. He had been deeply attached to her and in her memory gave \$5,000 to the Superannuated Preacher Aid Society of the Detroit Annual Conference. Later he would also endow a church in her name. She had been sympathetic with the movement for women's rights. Undoubtedly her attitude in respect to that issue had a lasting influence on her son.<sup>5</sup>

Business did not return to normal in 1875. Whittier still reported to Palmer that lumber was "slow." In the fall of that year he predicted that business would not improve until after the presidential election. Time proved he was correct, but it was considerably after 1876 before the lumber market fully recovered from the effects of the depression.<sup>6</sup>

From 1876 to 1878 Whittier could report no brighter outlook in market conditions. In 1878 Palmer decided to build some salt works as the lumber market remained inactive. Whittier advised him to "go a little slow in salt" as they needed the money to pay off their bills. Palmer's papers do not reveal whether or not he heeded Whittier's advice.<sup>7</sup>

Palmer did not have to worry long about his financial problems because his wife provided a solution



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to them. By an agreement between him and Lizzie, Palmer was released from indebtedness to the Charles Merrill estate amounting to more than sixty thousand dollars. In addition, his lumber firms at Saginaw and at Muskegon were released from debts to Merrill's estate totaling over ninety-one thousand dollars. Then in 1879 Lizzie agreed to withdraw from the Merrill and Palmer Company for the sum of one dollar, thus giving Palmer complete control of his father-in-law's business.<sup>8</sup>

The unpredictability of the lumber business was responsible for Palmer's continued involvement in politics in 1874. In that year Canadian representatives met in Washington to discuss with the Grant administration the possibility of a fisheries treaty which would supplement the Treaty of Washington made in 1871. Secretary of State Hamilton Fish had also been informed that the British government would look favorably toward a renewal of the reciprocity treaty of 1854. At the same time, Democratic free trade organs such as the Detroit Free Press were loudly trumpeting the advantages of free trade.<sup>9</sup>

The impact of these proceedings on Michigan lumbermen was predictable. With the lumber industry in a depressed state and extremely vulnerable to outside influences that could cause prices to fall even lower, they immediately conjured up visions of cheap Canadian timber flowing south, glutting an already over-supplied market.



Such an influx, they were sure, would spell certain doom for Michigan lumbermen who had not gone bankrupt already. Thus they rallied to the cause of anti-reciprocity. None were more vociferous in their opposition than the lumbermen of the Saginaw area led by Thomas W. Palmer.

One of Palmer's first actions was to send off a long letter to Michigan's staunch symbol of Republicanism and long time foe of free trade, Zachariah Chandler. In his letter Palmer attacked the secrecy of the negotiations and expressed his fears of any reciprocity treaty. He said that such negotiations were "too grave a matter for hasty legislation" and that they represented "unjust oppression for lumber." Palmer argued that Michigan lumbermen had a flourishing trade until 1854 when the Reciprocity Treaty between Canada and the United States was signed. The flow of tax free logs from the north, he maintained, had spelled disaster. He explained that Canadians had lower production costs because United States lumbermen paid higher wages and the cost of living in the United States was higher: Canadians, therefore, could easily undersell Americans in head to head competition. Furthermore, he contended that the United States in the long run would be doing itself a disfavor by allowing Canadians to use up their forests. He argued that it would be an "act of criminal carelessness on our part to prompt this destruction by throwing aside the incidental



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protection of our laws. British America is the timber reserve of the United States. These forests will stand if high duties are enforced by the government."<sup>10</sup>

As the reciprocity negotiations dragged on, Palmer continued to rally anti-reciprocity support. On December 1, 1874, he wrote a letter to the chairman of the Michigan Lumber Commission, J. S. Estabrook, and urged him to write to President Grant and describe the "injustice of discrimination against our great industry which Reciprocity certainly does." He also suggested that Estabrook drum up support for Chandler in the coming senatorial election. Palmer maintained that Chandler was the "best man for the lumbermen that can be returned senator" and would do more to defeat reciprocity "than any new man."<sup>11</sup>

Estabrook wrote back that he was aware of the strong reciprocity interest in Washington. He suggested that a lobby be sent to Washington to remonstrate against the movement. He wished that Palmer would be a member of this lobby. At any rate he wanted him to "spill lots of ink" in his effort to rally lumbermen to the cause.<sup>12</sup>

Palmer was soon busy stirring up his fellows with his pen. Most of his efforts were directed at lumbermen in the Grand Rapids area. In his letters he outlined the Lumber Association's activities on behalf of Michigan lumbermen. He told them that the Association had hired a man in Washington to fight reciprocity. He explained that a delegation was being sent to Washington on behalf



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of the lumber interests and he hoped that Grand Rapids would be strongly represented in it.<sup>13</sup>

Meanwhile Estabrook was busy soliciting funds with which to finance the lumber association's anti-reciprocity campaign. He had telegraphed Senator Chandler and G. B. Stebbins (the Michigan lumbermen's lobbyist) for information on the treaty negotiations. On the same day the Michigan Lumber Manufacturers Association met and agreed to send a delegation. They also signed a petition condemning reciprocity. The next day Chandler telegraphed the Michigan lumbermen that they need not act in haste as nothing would be done before the Christmas holidays. He suggested that Palmer and one or two others go in the near future to Washington and meet with the wool, iron, and steel men to prepare plans for "future operations." If Palmer still felt it necessary to bring down a lobby then a "rousing delegation could go down after the holidays." With these words of advice the Michigan lumbermen abandoned some of their frenetic anti-reciprocity activities and settled down to enjoy the holidays.<sup>14</sup>

There were some Michiganders, however, who did not let the festivities of the yuletide season deter them from engaging in political activities. They were busy organizing a coalition with which to oppose Zach Chandler's re-election as United States Senator by the state legislature in January. The election results of 1874 had



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given Chandler's opponents confidence that they could triumph over wily "old Zach." The Republicans had elected John J. Bagley governor by a margin of 3,000 votes. Two years earlier he had been elected to the same position in a landslide--a margin of over 57,000 votes. Prior to the election of 1874 the Republicans had 31 seats in the Senate and 94 in the House. After the fall elections the political balance in the state legislature was:

Senate	17 Republicans	15 Democrats
House	54 Republicans	46 Democrats

The Republicans had lost 54 of their seats as a result of the election.<sup>15</sup>

The Detroit Free Press (a Democratic paper) had immediately interpreted the elections as a "revolt against Grantism, with its attendant evils of Butlerism, Chandlerism, third termism, Credit Mobilierism, and centralization." So confident was the paper of the change in public opinion that it declared that the best thing that could happen was for Chandler to be re-elected by the Republican party. The Free Press thought that no other act would do more to shatter the Republican party and strengthen the Democratic party.<sup>16</sup>

The anti-Chandler forces led by the Detroit Advertiser and Tribune were made up of anti-prohibition Republicans and Democrats, the Granger elements, and Chandler's



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personal enemies. Their hope for victory rested on the expectation that anti-Chandler Republicans would boycott the Republican caucus, thus not being bound by its decisions. They could then, it was hoped, unite with the rest of Chandler's enemies and help elect a suitable compromise candidate.<sup>17</sup>

Chandler supporters began to arrive in Lansing on January 5, 1878, preparatory to the Republican caucus scheduled for the following day. There were strong delegations of Chandler men from Saginaw, northern and western Michigan, and the Upper Peninsula. (Palmer did not join the Saginaw delegation in Lansing until January 8.) Since Chandler did not arrive until the evening of the 6th, the caucus was postponed for a day. At the caucus Chandler was selected as the Republican nominee, but the meeting had been boycotted by fourteen anti-Chandler Republicans. The election was to be held on January 19. In the intervening days, Chandler and his supporters made desperate attempts to undermine the anti-Chandler faction but to no avail.<sup>18</sup>

The balloting on the 19th saw the voting distributed among a number of candidates with Chandler receiving the high total of 53. On the following day Chandler received 64 votes to the Democratic candidate's 60. Chandler needed only 3 additional votes to win. Seven of the Republicans originally opposed to him still remained obdurate. They met with the Democrats and an agreement was



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made that all anti-Chandler men would support Isaac P. Christiancy. On the third ballot, on January 21, Christiancy defeated Chandler by a vote of 67-40. The Detroit Free Press declared that this defeat had "consigned Zachariah Chandler to his political grave."<sup>20</sup>

Although Thomas Palmer had not taken a prominent part in the electoral proceedings he had been a watchful observer. He had carefully noted the political strategy used to defeat Chandler. Four years later he would utilize the political knowledge gained at this election to help resurrect Zach Chandler from his "political grave."

Disheartened by Chandler's defeat, Palmer undoubtedly felt somewhat cheered when it was reported that reciprocity negotiations had been abandoned. With Michigan's staunchest and most powerful anti-reciprocity representative in Washington sidelined, it would have been most difficult to find another champion of his stature to represent their views.<sup>20</sup>

Palmer's next venture into politics was in 1876 when he sought the Republican nomination for Congress from the First District. He was opposed for the nomination by two other prominent Detroiters, John Newberry and Henry Duffield. It was thought that Palmer might have a slight edge because he had the backing of the Republicans who controlled the Detroit Custom House patronage. He had



also received an endorsement from the colored voters of the 6th ward. The campaign generated much heat. According to the Detroit Evening News the "parties hung out the black flag and threw the laws of civilized warfare to the dogs."<sup>21</sup>

Palmer's chief support was in the outlying areas while Duffield's strength was in the city. The Evening News reported that Duffield and Palmer had an "offensive and defensive" alliance against Newberry. If a Newberry victory seemed probable, most of Palmer's votes were to go to Duffield because the Palmer-Duffield forces wanted to defeat Newberry at all costs. Newberry had supported a plan to build a bridge across the Detroit River and the "vessel interests" vehemently opposed this scheme on the grounds that a bridge would seriously hinder navigation on the river.<sup>22</sup>

The Republican Congressional Convention was held on August 24, 1876. Considerable pressure was exerted by supporters of the opposing candidates in the hope of making last minute conversions. Palmer's adherents were quite active in this respect. The atmosphere of the convention was charged with tension and the crowd was boisterous and unruly. A drunken Wyandotte delegate provided some amusement when he periodically punctuated the noisy din with loud and irreverent soliloquies. Then he would slump back into his seat in a sodden slumber.<sup>23</sup>



The convention was finally brought to order and two informal ballots were taken with the following results:

	<u>First Ballot</u>	<u>Second Ballot</u>
Newberry	34	35
Duffield	32	34
Palmer	35	35

There followed ten formal ballots, with the first eight being standoffs and none of the three candidates receiving fewer than 31 ballots nor more than 37. On the ninth ballot Newberry received 35 ballots, Duffield 36, and Palmer 30. When the results of the ninth ballot were announced the convention broke into an uproar, "Duffield men swung their hats and screamed themselves hoarse." A delegate stood up and announced that although he had voted for Palmer every time he was now going to throw his support to Newberry. Other Palmer supporters then rose and declared themselves for Duffield. Pandemonium reigned for ten minutes. The tenth and final vote was taken with Duffield receiving 54 votes, Newberry 45, and Palmer 2. Duffield was declared the winner.<sup>24</sup>

The defeated candidates were asked to make a speech. Newberry could not be found but Palmer came forward and gave a short address. He told the convention in reference to its selection of a candidate that "you could not possibly have made a better one with one exception"--a statement that evoked a great deal of



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laughter. He concluded by saying that his one consolation would be that he could work in the election campaigning free from responsibility.<sup>25</sup>

Although Palmer had humourously accepted his defeat at the Congressional Convention, rumors persisted that he was bitter about it. Newberry and W. G. Thompson (Newberry's campaign manager) were also reported restive after their defeat at the hands of Duffield. These three men had sufficient power to insure Duffield's defeat in the general election if they chose not to support him. Since the Democrats had nominated a powerful opponent in General A. S. Williams, Duffield could not afford to have a split in the party ranks.<sup>26</sup> According to the Detroit Evening News the Republicans planned to have a "pow-wow of the big sachems to smoke the peace pipe at the Wig-Wam," Detroit's Republican meeting hall.<sup>27</sup>

When the meeting was held, Newberry, Thompson, and Duffield attended but Palmer did not. He sent a note expressing his disappointment at not being able to be present. He declared that he would "take the earliest opportunity to blow my bugle blast on the walls of Zion" and was ready to "smite with the sword of the Lord and of Gideon."<sup>28</sup>

The dissension in Republican ranks was too deep-rooted to be smoothed over by mere protestations of allegiance. On election day, the Democrats swept Wayne



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County and Duffield was defeated by Williams by a vote of 14,349 to 12,435. The state of Michigan as a whole, however, went Republican, electing Charles Croswell, the party's nominee for governor, and placing the state in Hayes' electoral column.<sup>29</sup>

Although undoubtedly dissatisfied with his political fortune, Palmer had some consolation in his moment of discouragement. In July he had been notified by President James B. Angell of the University of Michigan that at a meeting of the Board of Regents he had been awarded his degree as a member of the class of '49. This was certainly an unusual honor considering that he had attended the institution for scarcely a year. (Possibly Palmer had made financial contributions to the university but his papers do not contain evidence of it at this time.)<sup>30</sup>

1877 was an off-political year for the state of Michigan and for Tom Palmer. He occupied himself with his business and church. Among his new endeavors was the erection of a grist mill and a saw mill at Falmouth, a profitable enterprise greatly appreciated by the area settlers. The same year the Unitarian Society appointed him chairman of its Social Life Committee, and he also taught Sunday School as this was required of committee members. At no time during the year did he give a hint as to his future political plans or goals.<sup>31</sup>

The following year saw Palmer involved in political activities from the outset. The renewed threat of a



reciprocity treaty with Canada galvanized Saginaw lumbermen--with Palmer at their head--into action. He began to make addresses on behalf of the anti-reciprocity forces at lumbermen's trade meeting and exchanges.<sup>32</sup> On February 2, 1878, he and Giles B. Stebbins, the lumbermen's lobbyist in Washington, addressed a meeting at E. Saginaw. In their speeches they accused the British delegation in Washington of conducting secret negotiations for the purpose of renegotiating the Reciprocity Treaty. They urged the lumber and salt manufacturers to "respectfully protest and remonstrate against any legislation which would tend to reduce the duties upon lumber and salt and open our markets to foreigners without any reciprocal advantages." It was decided at the meeting to send a Saginaw delegation to Washington for the February 19 meeting of the Board of Trade to make known their grievances.<sup>33</sup>

The Michigan lumbermen received aid from the American Iron and Steel Association. James M. Swank, Secretary of that organization, sent Palmer a bulletin outlying his association's response to reciprocity and the proposed Wood Tariff Bill. He suggested that protected interests increase their cooperation to combat assaults upon protective tariffs.<sup>34</sup>

In April Stebbins wrote Palmer from Washington that wool interests were working with the lumbermen and that the Iron and Steel Association of Philadelphia was



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opposed to all tariff legislation at the current session. Stebbins also reported that he was clandestinely slipping House members facts and information for their daily speeches against reciprocity and low tariffs. The efforts of Palmer, Stebbins, and their co-workers in behalf of lumber protection were successful as reciprocity was forestalled and the Wood Bill was defeated in the House.<sup>35</sup>

With the end of spring, Palmer shifted his interest from national to state politics. The state Republican convention held on June 13, 1878, was significant because it saw Zach Chandler become again the leader of Michigan Republicans. Although many Republicans wanted Chandler to run for governor he refused to consider this proposal. He was aware of the popularity of the incumbent Charles Croswell. It would not do to splinter anew the recently healed segments of the party. Croswell won renomination while Chandler was elected Chairman of the Republican State Central Committee. He now had the power to advance his own political fortunes. His address to the convention revealed that he had lost none of his "radical" vigor as he keyed his speech with a blast against the "rebels" whom he accused of capturing Washington. The Detroit Free Press remarked that Chandler was again "flaunting the Bloody Shirt . . . before the gaze of Michigan radicals."<sup>36</sup>



Although Palmer was not prominent in the state convention, he played a much more active role in the First District congressional convention. He was a delegate from the sixth ward and served on the committee on resolutions. He also gave a short address in support of John S. Newberry, one of his opponents in 1876. Palmer himself had declined to be a candidate again. Although Newberry won the nomination over John J. Bagley, he was not the overwhelming choice of the convention. A large number of Republicans thought him too aristocratic and austere for the rank and file to accept.<sup>37</sup>

Palmer's political reputation must have been enhanced by his activities at the congressional convention. At the Republican Second District senatorial convention held in October his name was placed in nomination for state senator. No other names were proposed and Palmer won the nomination by acclamation. He accepted the convention's decision, saying that "under the circumstances he could not decline the nomination so heartily tendered to him."<sup>38</sup>

The Democrats campaigned on the issue of economy and thrift in government, attacking the Republicans as a "party of extravagance and corruption." The Detroit Free Press maintained that the "question of economy, not the financial question, the rebels claim question, or Tilden bribery question," was the real issue of the day.<sup>39</sup>



Palmer argued in his campaign that he should be elected because of his extensive business experience in Detroit and in the state as a whole. Because of this business background he held that he was more than adequately prepared to deal with the pressing financial questions of the day. The leading Republican paper in Detroit, the Post and Tribune, strongly lauded him.

(Chandler had started the Detroit Post in 1866 but his financial backers withdrew in 1877--two years after his senatorial defeat--and the Post merged with the Advertiser and Tribune. In 1879 the Post and Tribune office burned, and in March, 1880, a Detroit syndicate led by James McMillan, James Joy, and Russell Alger purchased the paper, which then became the Detroit Tribune.)<sup>40</sup>

The Democratic Detroit Free Press, on the other hand, roundly attacked Palmer, declaring that it was well that he based his campaign on his being born in the city as many people would be otherwise unaware of his presence. It further said that there was no evidence of Palmer's having rendered public service. "He has never," it said, "been active in any public work or given the people the benefit of his valuable advice, counsel or labor in any capacity." This latter indictment was clearly an ill-researched partisan bias: Palmer's record showed that he had been a member of the Board of Estimates and had been active in local church and political activities. The



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Free Press concluded that Palmer was a "good fellow" but thought that Michigan wanted "something else in the state senate besides good fellowship and good nature." As for Palmer's love of Detroit, the Free Press believed that he would be happier there than in Lansing. It offered its advice in these words:

Don't you go, Tommy, don't go  
Stay at home, Tommy, stay home.<sup>41</sup>

Palmer emerged victorious by a plurality of 602 over his Democratic rival. The votes were distributed in this way:

Palmer (Republican)	4,320
Hinchman (Democrat)	3,718
Gruesel (Greenback)	1,338

In the other two senatorial districts in Wayne County the Democrats were triumphant. Statewide returns, however, showed the Republicans victorious, re-electing Croswell governor and posting sweeping majorities in both houses of the legislature.

The Republican papers reported that it had been a "glorious day" and said that there was no mistaking the meaning of the people at the polls. They had clearly voted for "honest money" and against the Democratic confederates and their policies. But Palmer's victory in Detroit was not the result of the Republican platform or Republican newspaper support. His personality and the



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support of a number of Democratic friends had helped him to triumph over a strong Democratic opponent.<sup>43</sup>

Palmer began his career as a state senator in January, 1879. The state legislature heard a short address by Governor Croswell and then the Houses retired to their respective chambers to begin the work of the new legislative session. One of the most important questions facing the legislature was whether the state or the counties should be responsible for the collection and settlement of delinquent taxes. Under the existing system the state--through the Auditor General's office--kept a tax account with each county and charged the counties for the amount of the annual tax assessed each county. When a county made its tax returns, it was credited with payment by the state. When a county failed to collect taxes on property, it turned over to the state the tax delinquent property. The state then attempted to auction the property, but frequently there were no bidders. Opponents of the system argued that counties should be given the responsibility of obtaining revenue from such property because they would be more assiduous in their efforts to obtain revenue from it. The northern half of the state favored the county system while the southern half desired to retain the existing manner of collection. A joint committee was assigned the task of studying the pros and cons of the issue for the purpose of making



recommendations. No positive action on the tax reform was taken in 1879. Other important bills before the legislature included proposals for a higher liquor tax, a reform school for girls, regulation of railroads, improving the city of Detroit, and the navigability of Michigan rivers.<sup>44</sup>

Palmer was to play an important role in the determination of the success or failure of many of the significant proposals before the legislature of 1879. There were several reasons why he was able to exert considerable influence during this session. First of all, his committee assignments and the support he received from Michigan lumbermen greatly enhanced his influence. He was appointed to five committees--those on banks and corporations, lumber interests, appropriations, religious and benevolent societies, and rivers and harbors. His position on the lumber committee enabled him to look out for the interests of his own industry. Furthermore, his presence on the two main financial committees meant that no tax or revenue bill affecting the lumber industry could be passed without undergoing his scrutiny.<sup>45</sup>

Another reason for Palmer's influence was the prestige he earned as the chairman of the Republican senatorial caucus that paved the way for Zachariah Chandler's return to the United States Senate. The resignation of Senator Isaac P. Christiancy to take a post as minister to Peru presented Chandler with the



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opportunity to return to power. During the last two weeks in January many rumors had been spread forecasting Christiancy's resignation because of poor health. When the resignation became fact, there was much speculation that Chandler had put political pressure on him and forced his resignation. Although Christiancy publicly denied this, many remained firm in their conviction that this was another one of Chandler's Machiavellian political maneuvers.<sup>46</sup>

There were two men other than Chandler who were considered to have a chance to succeed Christiancy: Omar Conger and John J. Bagley. Conger lacked significant support but Bagley was a real threat to Chandler. Around Bagley had coalesced the new breed of Michigan Republicans. They were opposed to reverting to the "old radical fire eating" politics because they believed that it was not in keeping with the progressive elements of the party. This group of young Republicans felt that although they had been doing all the hard party work they had not been recognized by Chandler. Thus they were bitter and resentful toward him and were not ready to aid him in his struggle to regain power. They believed that his election would only insure a Democratic victory in the next election.<sup>47</sup>

Bagley's political friends knew that Chandler's support throughout the state, particularly in Detroit, was



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strong. They believed that he could be beaten if the Bagley Republicans refused to caucus and then joined with sympathetic Democrats for a "determined defeat of Chandler at any cost fight." They were convinced that to go into caucus would guarantee defeat and that only by this revolt against the caucus could Bagley be elected. Since this was the strategy used to defeat Chandler four years earlier, there was considerable hope for success among Bagley men.<sup>48</sup>

The Chandler supporters were also active, publishing petitions and letters in support of "old Zach." The major Detroit Republican newspaper, the Detroit Post and Tribune, lavishly praised Chandler's accomplishments and heavily stressed his contributions to the Republican party and the Union. Palmer, as chairman of the Republican caucus was busy evaluating and analyzing the sentiments of his fellow senators, attempting to discern the nature of Chandler's support in the Senate.<sup>49</sup>

As the time for the caucus approached, the state capitol was crowded with the supporters of the senatorial candidates. Chandler was favored to win. Bagley's slim hopes of victory rested on his ability to persuade a strong minority of Republicans to resist the caucus call. He was given a good chance of winning if no caucus was held.<sup>50</sup>



On February 12, 1879, a petition calling for a joint Republican caucus signed by seventy-five Republicans was given to Palmer. To counteract this move, the Bagley supporters presented a petition signed by over twenty Republicans calling for an adjournment or postponement of the caucus. Palmer told the Bagley people that as chairman he could do nothing and that the caucus would be held. A staunch Chandler man, he was not prepared to agree to a procedure that might deprive his candidate of the prize as it had in 1875.<sup>51</sup>

Two days later Palmer called the Republican caucus to order. An informal ballot was held, with the following results:

Zachariah Chandler	69
John J. Bagley	19
Thomas W. Palmer	1

This approval of the majority of the Republicans virtually guaranteed the position for Chandler. On February 18, the state legislature cast 88 votes for Chandler and 22 for Orlando M. Barnes, his Democratic opponent. Old Zach had made a triumphant comeback.<sup>52</sup>

The Republican newspapers throughout Michigan were ecstatic over his re-election. Michigan's political sentiment, in their opinion, was perfectly reflected by Chandler's success.<sup>53</sup>

Palmer was pleased with the role that he had played. He had been instrumental in Chandler's election,







standing firm under pressure, thereby thwarting the opposition's strategy. Hundreds of people had heard him give speeches on behalf of Chandler. He himself had even garnered one vote for senator; this, however, did not please him because a person unknown to him had attempted to start a Palmer boom in an effort to split the Republican vote. Yet even this was significant, for if his political enemies considered him strong enough to challenge Chandler, it meant that he was growing in political stature.<sup>54</sup>

Palmer's most important legislative work was the successful sponsorship of a bill authorizing the state to establish a reform school for girls. His bill provided for a Board of Control composed of a number of ladies appointed by the governor. The school was to be organized as a graded school on what was known as the cottage plan (many small housing units in contrast to one large barracks or dormitory building). The proposed maximum age for confinement was to be twenty-one.<sup>55</sup>

There were no less than five other bills before the legislature proposing some sort of detention home for wayward girls. One of the bills provided for a home for girls wherein they would be educated and taught trades. The other four bills provided for penal institutions whose aim was "reformation of the vicious."<sup>56</sup>

The state Senate, obviously confused by the proliferation of bills, convened its Committee on State



Affairs to hear testimony from various ladies groups. As a result of these hearings the committee recommended that the proposed institution be penal in nature. The committee recommended Palmer's bill because it best reflected the ideas of the reform school supporters--that the school be penal in nature and be managed in part by women. Palmer's bill was passed in the Senate by a vote of 18-2. The House Committee on Education, which had charge of the Senate bill, favored Palmer's bill for the same reasons as the Senate. The committee also took the view that an institution with women as administrators was a worthy social experiment. The bill passed the House by a 61-17 vote on the last day of the session.<sup>57</sup>

Palmer's successful guidance of his bill testified to his skill as a legislator. It also revealed his astuteness in formulating a measure that achieved success because it represented the consensus of the reform school backers.

As a Detroiter, Palmer was particularly sensitive to legislation relating to his native city. Several bills of importance came before the legislature in 1879 that dealt directly with Detroit. The first of these was Senator Duffield's proposal that Detroit be separated from Wayne County. According to his plan, Detroit, Grosse Point, Hamtramck, Greenfield, and Springville would become the County of Detroit while the rest of the



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present county would remain Wayne County. Palmer, aided by his friend and fellow senator, James Shepard, led the opposition to Duffield. He declared unequivocally in a newspaper interview that Wayne County should not be divided. He said that he had lived in Detroit for forty-eight years and had never heard of any public demand for the county's division. In his opinion, the plan to make the city of Wayne the county seat of the proposed new Wayne County was a scheme of a "few designing men" to secure more offices to go around and to make the city of Wayne dominant over other towns in the outlying areas. He further implied that Duffield had been perhaps unwittingly made the tool of "these designing men." Although Duffield's proposal passed the committee of the whole it was eventually defeated by the Senate.<sup>58</sup>

A bill proposed by Palmer's good friend, Senator Cottrell of Wayne, was enthusiastically supported by Palmer. Cottrell's bill provided for a boulevard in Springwell, Greenfield, and Hamtramck, consisting of rows of shade trees, grassy lawns, footwalks, carriage drives, and a park. A Board of Commissioners was to be established, made up of representatives from the areas to be included in the boulevard plan and the mayor and the Board of Works of Detroit. The Detroit Evening News reported that Palmer thought that the proposed boulevard would prove to "be a sanitary and pecuniary advantage to



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Detroit" and nothing would persuade him to oppose it except overwhelming opposition from the people.<sup>59</sup>

The Boulevard Bill stirred much debate in the legislature. The measure remained stalled in the House until after the spring elections when it was passed and sent to the Senate. In the Senate Palmer vigorously defended it and once again met opposition from Duffield, who wanted to add amendments that would throw the bill back to the House and thus virtually kill the measure for that session of the legislature. Once more Palmer was successful over Duffield as the Boulevard Bill passed the Senate without amendments and was approved by the governor.<sup>60</sup>

One of the most vexing problems to come before the legislature involved the regulation of liquor. There was strong prohibition faction in both houses but there was also opposition to any further changes in the liquor laws. Senator James Shepard (who was later to become Palmer's personal secretary) was one of the most aggressive of the prohibitionists, doing everything in his power to arouse the people in favor of further restrictions on the liquor traffic.<sup>61</sup>

Many Republicans, Palmer among them, were hesitant about advocating any drastic change in the liquor laws out of fear of alienating Michigan's substantial German element, which resented any tax on liquor. Palmer received



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letters declaring that any change in the laws would work against the cause of temperance because it would "throw many of the foreign born who are Republican into the ranks of the opposite party." One letter predicted that the Germans would not stand for it and that the Republicans would lose 2,000 votes in Detroit alone if a strong prohibition measure was passed by the legislature.<sup>62</sup>

The moderates were able to prevail and prohibition was voted down in the House, 59-34. An increased tax on liquor and the sale of liquor sponsored by Senator Shepard did pass the Senate. The bill originally passed by a 20-8 margin with Palmer voting with the majority. Senator Duffield, however, attempted to reduce the severity of the tax by seeking to amend the bill so that no person paying a tax on spirits would pay a tax on beer and wine. Undoubtedly this was aimed at immigrants who mostly drank beer and wine. Palmer voted for Duffield's amendment but it was defeated 18-10. The bill was then approved by a 22-6 margin with Palmer again voting with the majority. (Since the bill had been resubmitted with the amendment, it was necessary to vote again for the original measure.)<sup>63</sup>

Palmer's most important role in the state Senate was that of chief protector of the lumber industry. As a prominent lumberman and as chairman of the prestigious lumber interests committee, he had both knowledge and power. Lumbermen were quick to keep him informed of their needs and wishes.<sup>64</sup>



Much of the legislation affecting the lumber industry was aimed at keeping the rivers and streams clear from the refuse of mills and logging camps and thus making it possible for log drives to continue. Palmer's vigilance in lumber matters is illustrated by his success in getting a bill passed to prevent the obstruction of navigable streams. The bill won approval in the committee on lumber interests but was at first defeated on the floor. Palmer, however, obtained a reconsideration. This time the Senate passed the bill by a vote of 18-8 and it was later approved by the House.<sup>65</sup>

Other bills aimed at aiding logging and lumbering operations, including a measure approving the establishment of a lumber exchange won legislative approval. The high percentage of such bills meeting success can be explained by the cooperation between Palmer and close friend and fellow lumberman, J. S. Estabrook, who was chairman of the House Committee on Lumber and Salt.

Palmer enjoyed his work as a legislator even though it entailed a great deal of time and effort. He wrote his sister Julia that there seemed to be no end to the toil and that it was the hardest work he had done in years. He added that he led a "full life" and liked his work. His cheerful attitude was undoubtedly helped by his wife's social activities. Lizzie gave occasional parties, which she graced in her "Paris finery."<sup>66</sup>



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Detroit Evening

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Near the end of the legislative session the Detroit Evening News published a glowing editorial on Palmer as a legislator and as a man. The paper called him the "most marked and individualized character in the Michigan legislature." It lauded his warm personality and good natured humor. The editorial read in part as follows:

A millionaire with a social democracy that places the humblest and poorest man on his own level, a lumberman with high classical and literary attainments, a man of unblemished public and private character whose worse fault is an unlimited toleration of everybody. In the Senate he is a pet and a leader.<sup>67</sup>

The paper continued in its tribute to Palmer by praising his work as a senator. It described him as extremely hard working and suggested that he was gubernatorial material. In the judgment of the paper, he would make a first-class governor and "the annals of Michigan for all time to come would teem with the reminiscences of its warm hearted, mirth loving, clear hearted and popular executive."<sup>68</sup>

This was certainly heady praise for a relatively inexperienced legislator and politician. The flattery of the paper, however, cannot be written off as the adulation of a Republican newspaper for one of its favorite sons. The Evening News, although leaning toward the Republican point of view, maintained that it was an independent newspaper. The News had been too lavish in its praise of



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Palmer, but the resultant publicity could certainly do him no harm.

After the legislative session ended in June, Palmer returned to Detroit to consider his political future. Whatever plans he may have made were altered by the unexpected death of Zachariah Chandler on November 1, 1879. Chandler's death further fractionalized an already demoralized and divided Michigan Republican party. As Chandler had not groomed a successor, a leadership struggle was certain to ensue.<sup>69</sup>

Among those urged to step forward as Chandler's successor was Thomas W. Palmer. Letters sent to him following the news of Chandler's death indicated wide support for him for either senator or governor. A printer in Lansing, however, suggested that he become candidate for the chairmanship of the Republican State Central Committee to succeed Chandler. Since there was an unwritten law that the man in this position would not be a candidate for any political office, the printer thought that it would be the ideal position for Palmer. He would be in a place of importance and power in the Republican party but could remain aloof from party squabbles that would leave indelible scars on the participants.<sup>70</sup>

Despite all the advice to enter the struggle for Chandler's legacy, Palmer followed the cautious counsel of an attorney, G. A. Farr of Grand Haven. Farr warned







him not to be "seduced into any schemes for the senatorship" and thus be "killed by the mistaken kindness of your friends." Farr said that he "smelled a rat" and thought perhaps someone was setting Palmer up, i.e., pushing Palmer for the United States Senate, knowing that if he was defeated, his political career would come to a premature end. Palmer followed Farr's advice and did not present himself as a senatorial candidate.<sup>71</sup>

While Palmer was debating his political future, Governor Croswell was coming under considerable pressure because of his failure to appoint Chandler's successor to finish the unexpired senatorial term. His dilatory tactics gave rise to speculation that the governor was thinking of taking the post himself. The pressure on him increased as the Chandler faction exerted a maximum effort to persuade him to appoint a man who would meet their approval. The Democratic Detroit Free Press sardonically remarked that Croswell could cut the "Gordian Knot" and escape the Republican pressure by appointing a Democrat. The troubled governor retired to his home in Adrian and then returned to announce his decision.<sup>72</sup>

The man selected was Judge Fernando C. Beaman, a political nonentity. Political strategists believed that by this appointment, Croswell had avoided alienating the major contenders and their supporters. They believed that because Beaman was so politically weak, he stood no



chance to be elected by the next legislature and thus the way would be open for Governor Croswell to emerge as a prime candidate for the Senate seat.<sup>73</sup>

Croswell's plans--whatever they might have been--were altered by the sudden and unexpected declination of the appointment by Judge Beaman. The governor then appointed the sixty-five year old former governor, Henry Baldwin. Although the other contenders and their supporters were disappointed, most Michigan Republicans were relieved to have the matter settled. When Palmer was interviewed by the Detroit Free Press for his opinion on Croswell's action, he reiterated his neutral stand. He said that he had "signed no papers and took no part in this matter."<sup>74</sup>

Despite his protestations of indifference, Palmer was secretly pleased with Baldwin's appointment. In the first place, Baldwin was a potential gubernatorial rival and his appointment as a United States senator had effectively removed him from contention. Secondly, Bagley, a rabidly anti-Chandler Republican, had been defeated, thus preventing his use of the influence of the senatorial office to dictate the choice of the Republican nominee for governor. It did not remove the possibility of Bagley himself running for governor. The elevation of Bagley to the governor's seat would be a political threat to Palmer. Bagley had been bitterly nursing the wounds inflicted on



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him by the Chandlerites. Given a position of power he would be eager to purge the party of the Chandler faction, particularly of those men such as Palmer who were strong enough to challenge him politically.<sup>75</sup>

The first victory in the campaign being waged for control of the Michigan Republican party was won by the anti-Chandlerites. In December, James McMillan was elected chairman of the Republican State Central Committee. McMillan was an anti-Chandlerite and his elevation meant that a foe of Palmer controlled the official party machinery in the state.<sup>76</sup>

During the early months of 1880 Palmer worked hard at consolidating his strength. At the urging of some of his prominent supporters he began visiting Republican leaders throughout the state. His purpose was to gain support among the delegates to the gubernatorial convention.<sup>77</sup>

The results of the Republican State Convention held in May were encouraging to Palmer. Henry P. Baldwin was elected chairman of the State Central Committee. McMillan's removal from this office was welcomed by Palmer. He was also happy when McMillan was defeated by James F. Joy as a delegate to the Republican National Convention. His supporters interpreted the defeat of McMillan by Joy and the victory of Baldwin over Bagley's candidate, Henry Duffield, as indicative of the dimensions of the "Palmer boom" for governor. The convention was



fairly harmonious with only the sporadic internecine bickering of the Detroit representatives disturbing its tranquility.<sup>78</sup>

The atmosphere of the Wayne County Republican Convention held in the first week of August just two days prior to the Republican gubernatorial convention in Jackson, was anything but harmonious. It was in the hands of anti-Palmer men from the start. Palmer's old political rival, Henry Duffield, was elected temporary chairman. A caucus of anti-Palmer Republicans composed of 70 of 102 delegates met to plan the convention proceedings before the official meeting. When the time arrived to present the slate of candidates for the state convention, Duffield read from a list prepared by the caucus. The Palmer men were astounded by this turn of events and were too discouraged to make much more than token resistance. Of the 49 delegates selected for the state convention, over 30 were anti-Palmer men.<sup>79</sup>

The Detroit Free Press reported that the anti-Palmer men--that is the group led by McMillan and Duffield--were bitter over McMillan's defeat by Joy in May. One delegate was quoted as saying that "Tom Palmer is knocked on the head and you can say so--that is if Wayne County has anything to say in the state convention." The Detroit Evening News said that Palmer was personally popular in the city and in the county but that he faced stiff opposition



because of his affiliation with the Chandler faction. This Wayne County opposition virtually ruined Palmer's chances for governor before the state nominating convention had even met.<sup>80</sup>

Despite the odds facing them, Palmer and his supporters made a spirited attempt to win at the convention. William Livingstone, a personal friend of Palmer, nominated the Detroiter for governor. There were five other men nominated, with David Jerome, John Rich, and Francis Stockbridge being Palmer's most formidable opponents. Jerome, a former schoolmate of Palmer in Detroit, had settled in Saginaw, where he was engaged in business. He had served in the state Senate from 1862-1868. Rich, a farmer in Lapeer, had served in both branches of the legislature. Five informal ballots were taken with the only result being a slight shift of Stockbridge's strength to John Rich.<sup>81</sup>

	Informal Ballots				
	1	2	3	4	5
Jerome	102	107	107	119	135
Rich	115	133	135	122	125
Beal	107	103	106	105	109
Palmer	105	104	107	112	105
Stockbridge	103	100	92	85	77
Gorham	16	13	12	13	13

The first formal balloting began with Palmer supporters still hopeful of electing their candidate. They counted on Rich's strength going to him. The results of



the first ballot, however, indicated a substantial increase in Rich's vote and a decrease in Palmer's. Palmer's strength continued to erode on the second ballot. After this ballot a representative of David Jerome came over and asked the Palmer men to unite on Jerome. (Jerome's support came from Detroit Republicans not affiliated with Palmer or the anti-Palmer faction and from the Saginaw area, where Palmer also had strong support.) The Palmer men decided to cast their ballots for him once more and then, if the outlook appeared hopeless, go over to Jerome. That is what happened. Palmer received only 26 votes and on the fourth ballot the Wayne delegation united and gave their support to Jerome, who won the nomination.<sup>82</sup>

	Formal Ballots			
	1	2	3	4
Jerome	138	187	261	318
Rich	152	174	218	238
Beal	103	81	46	4
Palmer	97	87	26	
Stockbridge	55	17	1	
Gorham	10	6		

Palmer seemed to accept his defeat with good grace. He made a conciliatory speech to the convention that was well received by the delegates. He alluded to the defeated candidates as martyrs and said that they passed before the convention "not with the spirit of martyrs, but rather with the spirit of apostles--apostles



of liberty and the great Republican party." Reminding the convention of Napoleon's soldiers, who, in their frozen retreat from Moscow, could still salute Napoleon, Palmer said that the candidates who had been "frozen out" could still cry "long live the Republican Party." He concluded his address by pledging his support to David Jerome.<sup>83</sup>

The protracted struggle at the convention did not have a disastrous effect on the party's fortune in November. The Greenbackers helped the Republicans by splitting the Democratic vote. Jerome received a total of 76,684 votes and a plurality of over 27,000. For President, Garfield rolled up 87,071 votes to 38,496 for Hancock. Newspapers called it a "clean sweep for the Republicans, a victory by 'an old time majority.'"<sup>84</sup>

Palmer did not brood about his defeat, but kept himself active and in the public spotlight. Governor Jerome appointed him to represent the state at a convention held in Davenport, Iowa, in May, 1881. The purpose of the meeting was to promote a water connection of the Upper Mississippi with Lake Michigan by the construction of a canal from Hennepin on the Illinois River to Rock Island on the Mississippi. Palmer also maintained political contacts with key political leaders throughout the state as he kept striving for his political goal, the governorship in 1882.<sup>85</sup>



During the fall Palmer attempted to discover whether Jerome was going to run again for governor. He received reports that many Republicans were dissatisfied with Jerome and that Palmer would receive considerable support if he put himself forward as a candidate. A close friend, James Shepard, told him that "Jerome would die a yearling," and that Palmer would "come into his kingdom two years in advance of expectations." Shepard warned him, however, not to make a premature move that would harm him.<sup>86</sup>

Palmer apparently followed Shepard's advice: a letter from one of his most avid supporters, Don Henderson of Allegan, complained that he had been cold toward his efforts to "boom" him. He told Palmer that "Zach Chandler never had such fears, neither has Senator Ferry and others I might name."<sup>87</sup>

In May, Shepard again advised Palmer not to make any rash moves. He told him to be sure of his ground before taking any action. He said that the best thing that could happen was for Jerome to retire, but thought that was out of the question. He insisted that the only way Palmer could accept the nomination was if it was offered "without a scramble," for he could not "afford to be defeated again for anything, anywhere."<sup>88</sup>

After carefully analyzing the information he had received, Palmer decided not to make himself a candidate



for any post at the Republican convention. It had become apparent by August that Jerome would be renominated without a struggle in spite of the dissatisfaction of many Republicans. The tradition of supporting the incumbent was too strong.<sup>89</sup>

At the Republican convention held on August 30, 1882, Palmer was elected permanent chairman. He exhorted the Republicans to be vigilant in their campaign, for he warned them that there was "no national issue at stake, no great principle involved." He concluded by reminding his audience of the Republicans who had gone before them-- "Let it not be said that we were faithless to our trusts."<sup>90</sup>

As expected, Jerome won the nomination with 561 votes. Palmer, despite his declaration of non-candidacy, received 97 votes while 27 votes were scattered. In November, however, Jerome lost in his re-election bid, being defeated by some 8,000 votes by the fusionist candidate of Democrats and Greenbackers. The Prohibition party also ran a candidate who cut into the Republican temperance vote. This strong opposition combined with the disaffection of many Republicans spelled political doom for Jerome.<sup>91</sup>

The Republican defeat in the fall of 1882 marked the low water mark of Palmer's political career. He had made a great deal of progress since serving in his first public capacity in 1873. Yet, despite his public



popularity and considerable influence throughout the state, he had been constantly frustrated in his quest of a political office since having served his term as state senator in 1879. His affiliation with Senator Chandler had proved to be a liability rather than an asset as anti-Chandler factions in Wayne County had been responsible for inflicting on him a series of political defeats. The stage had been set for a fateful decision. As Shepard had warned, he could not afford another defeat; whatever action he embarked on had to result in victory.



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## FOOTNOTES--CHAPTER II

<sup>1</sup>Newcomb McGraft to Palmer, March 28, 1872; J. A. Whittier to Palmer, March 29, 1874. Palmer Papers.

<sup>2</sup>J. A. Whittier to Palmer, May 17, 1874, Palmer Papers.

<sup>3</sup>J. A. Whittier to Palmer, August 13, 18, 1874, Palmer Papers.

<sup>4</sup>Palmer to his sister, Julia, May 20, 1875, T. Palmer Papers.

<sup>5</sup>S. Reed to Palmer, October 1, 1874; Rev. E. H. Pilcher to Palmer, July 7, 1877. Palmer Papers.

<sup>6</sup>J. A. Whittier to Palmer, June 9, 1875, July 28, 1875, September 5, 1875, Palmer Papers.

<sup>7</sup>J. A. Whittier to Palmer, May 21, 1876, July 24, 1878, April 1, 1878, Palmer Papers.

<sup>8</sup>Agreement between T. W. Palmer and Lizzie Merrill dated March 16, 1878; Agreement between T. W. Palmer and Lizzie Merrill dated 1879. Palmer Papers.

<sup>9</sup>Detroit Free Press, June 1, 1874.

<sup>10</sup>Palmer to Zachariah Chandler, June 15, 1874, T. W. Palmer Letterbooks, Palmer Papers.

<sup>11</sup>Palmer to J. S. Estabrook, November 18, 1874, T. W. Palmer Letterbooks, Palmer Papers.

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<sup>13</sup>Palmer to unknown person dated December 1, 1874; Palmer to Moore and Co., Muskegon. T. W. Palmer Letterbooks, Palmer Papers.

<sup>14</sup>J. A. Whittier to Palmer, December 9, 1874; Thomas Granage to Palmer, December 10, 1874. Palmer Papers.

<sup>15</sup>Lansing State Republican, November 6, 1874. Another result of the elections was the crushing defeat of a women's suffrage amendment. See Detroit Free Press, November 6, 1874.

<sup>16</sup>Detroit Free Press, November 5, 1874.

<sup>17</sup>Lansing State Republican, November 6, 1874. See also the following: Harriette M. Dila, The Politics of Michigan, 1865-78, Vol. XLVII, No. 1, Columbia Studies in History, Economics and Public Law (New York: Columbia University Press, 1912); Detroit Free Press, November 6, 1874.

<sup>18</sup>Detroit Free Press, January 5, 1875; Palmer to J. A. Whittier, January 8, 1875, Palmer Papers; Detroit Advertiser and Tribune, January 5, 6, 7, 1875.

<sup>19</sup>Detroit Free Press, January 20, 21, 22, 1875; Detroit Advertiser and Tribune, January 22, 1875.

<sup>20</sup>Lansing State Republican, February 5, 1875.

<sup>21</sup>Lansing State Republican, August 16, 1876.

<sup>22</sup>Detroit Evening News, August 22-23, 1876.

<sup>23</sup>Detroit Free Press, August 25, 1876.

<sup>24</sup>Detroit Evening News, August 24, 1876; Detroit Free Press, August 25, 1876.

<sup>25</sup>Detroit Evening News, August 25, 1876.

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid.



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<sup>28</sup>Detroit Evening News, September 18, 1876.

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<sup>30</sup>J. B. Angell to Palmer, July 20, 1876, Palmer Papers.

<sup>31</sup>Maurice White to Palmer, March 11, 1877; A. W. Pierce to Palmer, January 23, 1877. Palmer Papers.

<sup>32</sup>C. Emerson to Palmer, February 1, 1878, Palmer Papers.

<sup>33</sup>Detroit Post and Tribune, February 4, 1879.

<sup>34</sup>James M. Swank to Palmer, February 7, 1878, Palmer Papers.

<sup>35</sup>G. B. Stebbins to Palmer, April 6, 1878, Palmer Papers.

<sup>36</sup>Detroit Evening News, June 12, 1878; Detroit Post and Tribune, June 14, 1878; Detroit Free Press, June 12, 14, 1878.

<sup>37</sup>Detroit Evening News, August 31, 1878; Detroit Post and Tribune.

<sup>38</sup>Detroit Post and Tribune, October 21, 1878.

<sup>39</sup>Detroit Free Press, October 21, 1878.

<sup>40</sup>Detroit Post and Tribune, October 31, November 1, 1878; George G. Catlin, "Adventures in Journalism," Michigan History, XXIX (July-Sept., 1945), 361.

<sup>41</sup>Detroit Free Press, November 2, 5, 1878.

<sup>42</sup>Detroit Free Press, November 6, 1878; Detroit Post and Tribune, November 6, 1878; Grace Swihart, "Thomas W. Palmer" (unpublished Master's thesis, Wayne State University, 1940), pp. 40-41.



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<sup>43</sup>Lansing Weekly Republican, November 13, 20, 1878; J. A. Whittier to Palmer, November 10, 1878, Palmer Papers.

<sup>44</sup>Lansing Weekly Republican, January 8, 1879; Detroit Free Press, January 11, 1879; Detroit Post and Tribune, January 13, 1879; Michigan, Legislature, Senate, Journal, 1879, pp. 145, 234, 251, 275, 309, 321, 323.

<sup>45</sup>Lansing Weekly Republican, January 8, 1879.

<sup>46</sup>Lansing Republican, February 5, 1879.

<sup>47</sup>Elliot Slocum to O. Spaulding, January 29, 1878, in John J. Bagley Papers (University of Michigan Historical Collections, Ann Arbor, Michigan). Hereinafter cited as the Bagley Papers.

<sup>48</sup>J. S. Crosby to John J. Bagley, February 6, 1879. Detroit Post and Tribune, February 19, 1879.

<sup>49</sup>Lansing Weekly Republican, February 19, 1879; Detroit Post and Tribune, February 12, 1879; George Fowler to Palmer, February 3, 1879, Palmer Papers.

<sup>50</sup>Detroit Evening News, February 12, 1879.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Lansing Weekly Republican, February 19, 1879; Detroit Post and Tribune, February 18, 1879.

<sup>53</sup>Lansing Weekly Republican, February 19, 1879; Detroit Post and Tribune, February 19, 1879.

<sup>54</sup>Palmer to his sister Julia, February 25, 1879, Palmer Papers.

<sup>55</sup>Detroit Post and Tribune, January 27, 1879; Detroit Free Press, February 15, 1879.

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<sup>57</sup>Detroit Free Press, January 10, 13, February 27, March 13, 30, April 17, May 3, 23, 1879; Detroit Evening News, March 13, 1879; Michigan, Legislature, Senate, Journal, 1879, p. 937.

<sup>58</sup>Detroit Free Press, January 10, February 27, 1879.

<sup>59</sup>Detroit Post and Tribune, January 17, 1879; Detroit Evening News, January 24, 1879; Detroit Free Press, January 25, 1879.

<sup>60</sup>Detroit Free Press, February 26, March 26, May 1, 2, 1879; Michigan Local Acts, 1879, pp. 177-83.

<sup>61</sup>Detroit Post and Tribune, January 22, 1879; Detroit Free Press, February 26, March 8, 1879.

<sup>62</sup>J. B. Bloss to Palmer, April 17, 1879; J. H. Carstens to Palmer, April 22, 1879. Palmer Papers.

<sup>63</sup>Detroit Evening News, April 24, 1879; Detroit Free Press, May 23, 1879; Michigan, Legislature, Senate, Journal, 1879, pp. 917, 918, 1155, 1320.

<sup>64</sup>S. Gillet (agent for Titabawassee Boom Co.) to Palmer, March 20, 1879, Palmer Papers, is a typical example of letters to Palmer on this subject.

<sup>65</sup>Michigan, Legislature, Senate, Journal, 1879, pp. 321, 329, 375, 876-77, 921.

<sup>66</sup>Palmer to his sister Julia, March 13, 1879, Palmer Papers.

<sup>67</sup>Detroit Evening News, May 19, 1879.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid.

<sup>69</sup>Detroit Post and Tribune, November 3, 1879; Lansing Weekly Republican, November 5, 1879.

<sup>70</sup>D. McLaughlin to Palmer, November 1, 1879; C. M. Jones to Palmer, November 10, 1879; W. S. George to Palmer, November 10, 1879. Palmer Papers.



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<sup>71</sup>George Farr to Palmer, November 3, 1879, Palmer Papers.

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<sup>73</sup>Detroit Evening News, Detroit Free Press, November 4, 1879; Henry F. May to Palmer, November 14, 1879, Palmer Papers.

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<sup>75</sup>J. P. Thompson to Palmer, December 10, 1879, Palmer Papers.

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<sup>77</sup>Thomas McDaniel to Palmer, February (?), 1880, Palmer Papers.

<sup>78</sup>Detroit Free Press, May 13, 1880; Detroit Evening News, May 13, 1880.

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<sup>81</sup>Detroit Post and Tribune, August 5, 1880.

<sup>82</sup>Detroit Evening News, August 6, 1880; Detroit Post and Tribune, August 6, 1880; Swihart, "Thomas W. Palmer," pp. 55-56.

<sup>83</sup>Detroit Post and Tribune, August 7, 1880.

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<sup>85</sup>E. W. Cottrell to Palmer, February 19, 1881; David H. Jerome to Palmer, May 6, 1881; D. Henderson to Palmer, October 1, 1881; A. H. Harrison to Palmer, November 19, 1881. Palmer Papers.

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<sup>87</sup>Don Henderson to Palmer, January 3, 1882, Palmer Papers.

<sup>88</sup>J. Shepard to Palmer, May 22, 1882, Palmer Papers.

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### CHAPTER III

#### THE 81ST BALLOT: THE SENATORIAL STRUGGLE OF 1883

The yoke placed upon the shoulders of Michigan Republicans by their defeat at the polls in the election of 1882 was an onerous and uncomfortable burden to bear, particularly for a proud political party that had grown accustomed to victory. The magnitude of the defeat stunned Republican leaders and the rank and file alike. The confused Republican press lashed out with bitter attacks upon the fusionists, the prohibitionists, and the "traitors" in the Republican party in an effort to fix the blame for defeat. Gloom and despair enveloped Michigan Republicans in the aftermath of their sudden and unexpected political reversal.<sup>1</sup>

One of the few Michigan Republicans in that bleak November who could look to the future with an optimistic spirit was Thomas W. Palmer. He believed that although the defeat was by a "landslide," he had confidence that the Republican party possessed enough vitality to survive a "good drubbing" and he had "hope for better things in the future."<sup>2</sup>



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The reason for his optimism may have been the letter written to him by J. B. Whittier on November 5, 1882. Whittier reported that at a clandestine meeting some thirty office holders had decided to run a candidate for the United States Senate to oppose the incumbent Thomas W. Ferry. The group had also decided that they would attempt to persuade Ferry's Republican opponents in the legislature to boycott the caucus call. Whittier indicated that he believed, despite Palmer's protestations to the contrary, that Palmer wanted to be a United States senator. Whittier thought that Palmer could achieve that goal by accepting the draft offered him although it might mean having "to tread on somebody's toes."<sup>3</sup>

Palmer's immediate reaction to Whittier's proposal is not known. However a letter from a J. W. French dated December 6, 1882, inquiring about Palmer's chances in the "political field" indicates that Palmer must have been giving some thought to his prospects for the senatorship. Undoubtedly he had discussed with some of the "thirty" the extent of his backing and the risks involved.<sup>4</sup>

Palmer received even more food for thought when James Shepard, his trusted political advisor, wrote him a confidential letter from Washington. Shepard informed him that he had obtained certain information concerning Senator Ferry that should cause him to be tabooed by all Republicans. Shepard thought that the evidence was



sufficiently damning to justify Ferry's enemies in any action that they might undertake. He was confident that Ferry could be beaten although it might require a bitter battle to defeat him. Shepard advised Palmer to become a candidate for senator but cautioned him to remain friendly with Ferry and his supporters since it was from their ranks that Palmer would have to draw his margin of victory. Shepard, did not, however, give specific details in regard to the information against Ferry.<sup>5</sup>

After receiving this letter Palmer began to work secretly for the Republican nomination for senator. His strategy as it developed was based on the information and ideas provided by Shepard. Palmer was aware that certain Republicans would boycott the Republican caucus and thus prevent an immediate Ferry victory whether he participated or not. Therefore he would remain aloof from the proceedings but, if asked, would indicate that he supported Ferry. As Ferry's position grew weaker, trusted Palmer agents would attempt to persuade Ferry supporters to select Palmer as their second choice. When the damning information against Ferry was revealed and the senator's support faded, Palmer could step into the breach. Since he would refrain from conducting any personal campaign against Ferry, he would not be the object of Ferry's rage and vengeance when he was faced with defeat. It was a shrewdly devised plan but also a big gamble. Palmer's



ally was time. The more protracted the struggle became, the better would be his chances of victory. Palmer's position was strengthened by an unexpected and an inadvertent ally. Congressman Jay Hubbeel from the Upper Peninsula disliked Ferry intensely. His personal animosity drove him to make a bitter and vindictive public attack on the senator. The Detroit Free Press thought that although Hubbell's remarks would not guarantee Ferry's defeat, the resulting controversy would reveal to the public the characters of Hubbell and Ferry as well as the inner machinations of the Republican party. Time would prove the Free Press to be highly prophetic.<sup>6</sup>

As the time for the choice of a senator drew closer, leading Republican newspapers such as the Lansing Republican became apprehensive. Rumors of Republican dissension and the "caucus bolt" were widespread throughout the state. The advocacy of the candidacy of James F. Joy by the Detroit Post and Tribune, Chandler's former paper, caused further dismay in the Republican ranks.<sup>7</sup>

The Lansing Republican warned Republicans of the need of unity. It pointed out that the united opposition was ready to take advantage of any dissension in Republican ranks to elect Orlando M. Barnes, the chairman of the Democratic Central Committee. The Lansing paper did not underrate Barnes, declaring that he had "the faculty of facing north, south, east and west at a moment's warning to take advantage of any passing political breeze which



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gives promises of carrying his party into power." Although the Republican believed that it would be impossible for the Democrats to succeed in such a venture, it conceded that the opposition would exert a maximum effort for victory regardless of the odds against them. Despite the calls for harmony, the Michigan Republicans remained divided, as declared and undeclared opponents of Ferry prepared for battle as the election drew near.<sup>8</sup>

On December 29, 1882, the Detroit Free Press set the pattern for the Democratic campaign against Ferry's re-election. The paper had conceded that it was impossible for a Democrat to defeat Ferry. Therefore it issued a bipartisan appeal for Ferry's removal. It pointed out that a senator represented his state and that a state was judged by its senators. Senators, it said, such as "Mahone and Platt and Conger--and shall we add Ferry--convey a poor impression of the state they profess to represent and all the people of those states without distinction of party suffer thereby." Thus the Free Press attempted to depict Ferry as a strict party politician who should be replaced by a man who--regardless of party affiliation--would be sensitive to the needs of the state as a whole.<sup>9</sup>

Two days later, the Detroit Post and Tribune began a series of attacks following the lead of the Free Press, calling upon all members of the legislature to



reject Ferry. The paper made a particular appeal to Republican friends of Ferry, exhorting them to rise above personal friendship and to act on behalf of the "Republican party and the nation." The Post and Tribune accused Ferry of being a tool of the political machine and declared that the Republican party was ripe for a change, demanding new men, purer methods, and a leader. The paper further called upon Ferry to do the honorable thing and withdraw from the contest to avoid a bitter split in the party. Of course the Post and Tribune did not "honorably" admit that the real reason that it opposed Ferry was because it had its own candidate, James Joy.<sup>10</sup>

Ferry was not unaware of the opposition that was developing to his renomination for he sent out letters both personally and by his agents requesting aid and support from key legislators. He not only asked for their votes but also requested them to use their influence in his behalf. As the incumbent, he had control of the official party machinery and the party patronage, both assets which he did not intend to overlook. He was also aware of the great conflict over the geographical representation of the senatorship. As the Republican majorities were generally furnished by the western portion of the state, which he represented, Ferry could count on its firm loyalty. Both northern and eastern parts of the state feared the domination of the south, and particularly



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the Detroit area, too much to settle readily on a Detroit candidate. With the opposition divided and with a loyal group of followers behind him, it appeared that Ferry's position was fairly secure because as the incumbent he stood the best chance of acquiring the votes of the northern and eastern delegates.<sup>11</sup>

Although members began to gather during the first week of January for the opening of the 1883 session of the state legislature, the crucial balloting for the United States senator was not to begin until January 16. There was ample time and opportunity for the various interest groups and factions to engage in campaigning for their favorites. The newspapers were also busy, issuing declarations of support for candidates, denouncing their opponents, and generally providing more grist for the rumor mills that were already active.

The newspapers were confused as to the actual state of affairs because no one was quite sure how effective Ferry's control over his supporters was and how united in its efforts was the opposition. On January 1, the Detroit Evening News reported that Ferry's chances for re-election appeared dim. On January 2, however, it admitted that the expected opposition had not as yet materialized in any considerable strength. On January 3, the Detroit Post and Tribune agreed that the Ferry opposition did not seem to be solidly organized. The



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papers did report that scattered support had developed for Judge Solomon Withey of Grand Rapids and James McMillan of Detroit.<sup>12</sup>

The strategy of the Ferry forces was to dominate the Republican party caucus and win the party's endorsement of Ferry, thus virtually assuring his victory since the Republicans held a clear majority in the legislature. To prevent this, a coalition of anti-Ferry Republicans held a meeting on January 3 at Jay Hubbell's Lansing headquarters. They agreed that they would recognize no petition for a caucus as binding upon them unless at least sixty-seven of the eighty-one Republican legislators signed it. Since over twenty Republicans opposed Ferry's re-election, it was believed that he could never muster the required number of signatures. One of the dissidents explained to the press that they were not party "bolters" but were only seeking "to control the nomination of a man who will represent the views and wishes of the people of this state and not merely of the machine politicians."<sup>13</sup>

Ferry and his supporters did not let the actions of the dissatisfied minority disrupt their plans. They held a caucus which fifty-six Republicans attended. As expected Ferry won their backing. Twenty-five of the eighty-one Republican legislature remained unpledged.<sup>14</sup>

The days following the Republican caucus were filled with tension and anxiety as the various factions



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attempted to solidify their strength. One veteran legislator, Brackley Shaw of Adrian, wrote his wife that he thought that the "senatorial question" might end in a rupture of the party and reported that both Ferry and anti-Ferry forces were exerting maximum efforts to influence legislators to vote for their respective candidate.<sup>15</sup>

Palmer in the meantime was following his plan of being ostensibly for Ferry while secretly working for his own nomination. Two of his letters illustrate his delicate position. He wrote the following to Sam H. Row:

I want to say I am a friend of Senator Ferry's and hope to see him nominated despite the vituperation heaped upon him. If he can't get it and the party can harmonize on me better than on another my friends are at liberty to use my name. I will not scramble for the place.

In a slightly different vein he wrote these words to George Hopkins:

I have not yet got the senatorial bee in the bonnet. I am friendly to Senator Ferry and hope he is re-elected. The unification of the party is the first thing--after that--selfish interest.

In the first letter Palmer called attention to his availability while he maintained his pose of being a loyal Ferry supporter. In the second letter his aim was to allay the fears of a Ferry follower who had heard that Palmer was secretly undermining Ferry's support. It was a dangerous game that Palmer played but the stakes were high and victory could only be achieved by disguising



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his true intentions until the proper time came to reveal them.<sup>16</sup>

There was one factor that undoubtedly caused Palmer and the other anti-Ferry men a great deal of concern. That was the reaction of the Greenbackers and Democrats to the maneuvering going on in the Republican camp. Although not numerically strong enough to elect their own candidate, they could decide the election by supporting Ferry. There had been rumors that Ferry had made overtures to the political opposition for support. If such an alliance was made, then Ferry would win. Whether actual negotiations between Ferry and the Greenbackers took place is not known, but no such support was immediately forthcoming. On January 12, the Greenbackers and Democrats met in joint caucus to choose their candidate. On the seventh ballot they selected Byron G. Stout, a former speaker of the Michigan House from Pontiac. The anti-Ferry men breathed a sigh of relief.<sup>17</sup>

As the day for the election drew closer, evidence of increased anti-Ferry strength appeared. Several Republican names were being brought forward as possible candidates. The rabidly anti-Ferry Detroit Post and Tribune reported that popular opinion was rising against the senator. More significantly the most representative party organ in the state, the Lansing Republican, unleashed a torrent of abuse against the anti-Ferry Republicans who



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insisted on avoiding a party caucus. It declared that it was "poor Republicanism where personal spite would allow the United States Senate to be turned into the hands of the democracy."<sup>18</sup>

On Tuesday, January 16, the first of eighty-one ballots for United States Senator was taken by the Michigan legislature. On this ballot sixteen men received support. The four leading candidates and their totals are as follows:<sup>19</sup>

Thomas W. Ferry	59
Byron G. Stout	50
Byron M. Cutcheon	4
Benton Hanchett	4

The Ferry forces did not expect that they would win on the first ballot but did expect to garner 62 votes and were slightly disheartened when they discovered that they had fallen short of that number. Both Ferry and anti-Ferry forces prophesied victory although there were newspaper reports that some Ferry supporters were looking for an alternate candidate. The Post and Tribune declared that the bitter and intense feeling exhibited by the opponents of Ferry was so great that the only solution would be the "election of some inoffensive man, a compromise candidate between the warring factions." The Detroit News was of the opinion that no Detroit man could be elected unless he had Ferry's blessing. It also believed,



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however, that any Detroiter selected by Ferry would face opposition from the "coterie" in Detroit who opposed Ferry. Such a candidate would be defeated no matter which camp he favored.<sup>20</sup>

Palmer, meanwhile, was keeping himself posted on the senatorial situation by correspondence and telegrams with friends who were in Lansing for the contest. He learned that his enemies in Detroit were pushing a candidate from the western portion of the state to attract some of Ferry's supporters. If this information disturbed him, he did not indicate it in his letters. More vital to Palmer was the report made to him by Thomas Smurthwaite in a letter written three days after the first ballot had been taken. Smurthwaite predicted that Ferry would be beaten and confirmed the newspaper reports that a compromise candidate seemed to be in the offing. He urged Palmer to be at Lansing when the "breakdown" occurred. He also advised him not to subvert the candidacy of Byron Cutcheon a well-liked mid-Michigan Republican. He argued that if Cutcheon was removed from contention, a dozen candidates would spring up in his place. It would be easier, he advised, to leave Cutcheon where he was for the present as he could easily be defeated when the time came.<sup>21</sup>

On January 18 the voting resumed. Three ballots were taken and the day ended with Ferry losing three more



votes. On the 19th, Ferry received 52 votes while on the 20th his support had dwindled to 40. Even the pro-Ferry Lansing Republican called the situation "complicated" and urged the minority factions to remember that in the majority rested the future of party organization. It also reminded Republicans that the "eyes of the country" were on Michigan, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nebraska, and Illinois, where incumbent Republicans were striving for re-election to the United States Senate. The Republican's attempt to elevate the conflict to the status of a national issue fell upon deaf ears and the fruitless balloting continued.<sup>22</sup>

The Democratic Detroit Free Press thoroughly enjoyed the discomfiture of the Republican party as it went about its business of destroying itself at Lansing. In a concise analysis of the senatorial struggle it pointed out the seemingly impossible solution to the Republican dilemma:

What the Republican opponents of Ferry want is a candidate who will not only unite their scattered force in a solid phalanx but by personal magnetism or in some other effective way collect recruits and build up a majority vote. They want the darkest kind of dark horse.<sup>23</sup>

As the voting progressed in the succeeding days it became apparent that the Ferry vote was going to remain in the 40's. The Democrats stood stolidly behind their candidate while the anti-Ferry Republican votes were scattered among a number of candidates. Ferry was unable



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to win but unwilling to allow anyone else to win. The Detroit Evening News attributed the stubbornness of the senator and his supporters to a reluctance to relinquish "their grip upon the spoils of office."<sup>24</sup>

Palmer had refrained from overtly participating in the contest. On January 22, he received word that a Colonel Ward had been sent to Lansing on his behalf. Five days later he himself became more active. He wrote to a Muskegon business partner, Newcomb McGraft, and gave him the following instructions:

Please organize your force and be in readiness to go to Lansing on receipt of the telegraph from Livingstone. Get some men who can influence Read if possible so that when the break up comes as it is likely to at any time, you can bring him over to me.<sup>25</sup>

That same day he wrote the following to a Paul Blackman:

You are stirring the thing up as it should be. Keep me posted when you leave home so that I can telegraph the time to bring the friendly cohorts to the aid of the righteous if the Ferry men cannot get through. Bring down 3 or 4 influential men from each locality.<sup>26</sup>

These letters indicate that Palmer's plans were well laid and called for a concentration of backers arriving in Lansing to "boom" him when the break in the Ferry ranks came. As Palmer apparently had prior knowledge as to the time of the "break," it may indicate that he or his supporters were responsible for it.

January drew to a close with the contest still undecided. Each day brought new rumors of new combinations developing for one candidate or another. The



most sensational story going around was that the Democrats and the Greenbackers were working on a plan to throw their support behind Judge Thomas Cooley--an eminent and respected jurist--who could attract Republican support. The success of such a plan would be a severe defeat for the Republican party. The Lansing Republican again warned Republicans of their dangerous position by declaring that "the Republican party of Michigan stands today on the brink of a political Niagara--one more step will bring the final plunge."<sup>27</sup>

A significant development in the contest occurred on January 30. On that day the Detroit Free Press noted that a number of Palmer's friends were in Lansing drumming up support for him. The paper reported that "if the football of fortune should come in their direction they are prepared to lay hold of it." On that same day three ballots were taken in the legislature and Palmer received three votes on the first, nine on the second, and eight on the third. This was the first evidence of his strength and it took many political observers by surprise. It appeared that Palmer's strategy had begun to work.<sup>28</sup>

Coinciding with Palmer's surprising emergence as a senatorial candidate was the Detroit Evening News' "bombshell," dropped on January 30. The paper accused Senator Ferry of resorting to bribery to secure his reelection. Specifically it charged him with offering his arch-enemy Hubbell a foreign mission and control of



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federal patronage in Michigan in return for support. The following day the paper announced that a joint legislative committee was to be established to investigate the charge. Ferry did not issue an immediate statement.<sup>29</sup>

Meanwhile, the voting continued. On February 2, the Republican minority handed a proposition to Henry W. Seymour, the chairman of the Republican caucus. The group declared that they were loyal Republicans but were unalterably opposed to Ferry. They desired to settle the contest by the choice of a compromise candidate. This move may have been prompted by the fear that Ferry might align himself with the Greenbackers and Democrats. If so, this fear was justified. On the following day the "fusionists" began voting for Ferry. This movement was halted by subsequent defections of half-hearted Ferry supporters to other candidates.<sup>30</sup>

On February 3 the legislature adjourned for ten days amid rumors that Ferry had met financial disaster and the news that Senator William Windom, the Republican incumbent in Minnesota, had been defeated in his bid for re-election. Many people expected Ferry to be the next in line. Ferry, however, remained outwardly optimistic, and newspapers backing him continued to defend him with undiminished volume.<sup>31</sup>

Palmer in the meantime was busy answering accusations that he was acting in bad faith by working for



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his own nomination while pretending to be for Ferry. He repeatedly declared that he was not a "dark horse candidate" while Ferry was in the field but that in the event the senator should withdraw from the race, he might possibly allow his name to be presented. The following excerpt from a letter of a Palmer supporter is probably the best example of Palmer's tactics. He wrote:

We are trying to elect Senator Ferry. If we cannot do it we must look for a second choice. See Loring your representative to make Palmer second choice. Palmer will not allow his name to be used until Mr. Ferry's name is withdrawn.

During the legislative recess the rumors of Ferry's financial insolvency proved to be true. Ferry had been involved in numerous business enterprises, of which the most important was a lumber company in Grand Haven. The failure of a silver company in Utah precipitated his bankruptcy. According to newspaper reports Ferry had used almost every penny he could lay his hands on to maintain the mine's solvency. Unpaid bills included one for his room and board in Lansing. To make matters worse, it was claimed that he had obtained money by illegal means. Among other things he was accused of having pocketed an advance he had received to pay the bills of the Ottawa Iron Works, a company in which he owned stock. This news of Ferry's financial failures and transactions reportedly had a deep effect on even the staunchest of his supporters.<sup>34</sup>



The legislature resumed its balloting on February 13 with Ferry leading the pack with 44 votes. The rest of the Republican ballots, however, were scattered over a number of candidates, making a Ferry victory highly improbable. In the meantime a joint legislative committee was assigned to investigate the allegations of bribery and corruption leveled against Ferry and began to hold hearings. The most damning testimony against the senator was that of Detroit's mayor to the effect that Ferry had promised that he "could have the Detroit Custom House" if he supported him. The mayor said that he had agreed to Ferry's proposition. He also said that Ferry had revealed a list of legislators who had been paid to support him. The Evening News reported that despite rigorous cross-examination, the attempts to "shake" Mayor W. G. Thompson's testimony were "ineffectual."<sup>35</sup>

On February 16, the day after this startling revelation, a hurried consultation was held by Ferry supporters. It was decided to release the members from their caucus obligation. The Post and Tribune reported that as "soon as the news was heard, a Palmer boom broke out and its pent-up logs ruled the city. Livingstone, who holds the ends of the Palmer wires, was chirpy and as a cricket in the lobby of the Lansing House." Despite the Post and Tribune's report the Evening News could only state three days later that there was still



"no gleam of light in Lansing." The contest had broken into a free-for-all with "every man for himself and devil take the hindmost."<sup>36</sup>

The voting reflected the unexpected turn of events. On February 16 Ferry received only 13 votes. On February 17 and 20 he received 11 and 12 votes while Palmer on those days received 12 and 13 votes.<sup>37</sup>

By February 19 Palmer was in Lansing reportedly "working like a beaver" to advance his cause. The success of his efforts was reflected in the increased number of votes cast for him. On February 23, the Evening News reported that his prospects looked good.<sup>38</sup>

On February 22 Palmer attended a meeting of Ferry supporters at which it was decided to try one more "Ferry boom." The next day Ferry received only 29 votes while Palmer had increased his total to 27. It was clear that Ferry could not win.<sup>39</sup>

Legislators were resentful of the pressures by the various factions and exhausted by the long continued balloting. Still the pressure upon them increased as the people of Michigan grew weary of the unresolved contest whose end seemed not in sight. The Lansing Republican did report on February 27 that there seemed to be a growing feeling that a senator from the western part of the state would be elected. If this was true, Francis Stockbridge would be the man most likely to win the nomination.<sup>40</sup>



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Although the Lansing Republican and most other political observers did not know it, Palmer had already blocked this threat. He had persuaded Henry Seymour, the chairman of the Republican caucus, to declare for him when time for the break came. It was believed by Palmer and his supporters that Seymour would carry the majority of the Ferry vote with him. They had also infiltrated Stockbridge's supporters and had promises from a number of them to switch to Palmer after it became apparent that Stockbridge could not win.<sup>41</sup>

The last days of February witnessed a gradual polarization toward two candidates, Palmer and Stockbridge. The beginning of March brought hopes that the new senator would be selected at last. Two ballots were taken on March 1, but no decision was reached and the legislature was recessed until 7:30 in the evening. The first two ballots in the evening session were not significant. On the next ballot (the fifth ballot of the day) a movement began to strip votes from Palmer. Stockbridge's campaign manager, however, suddenly and dramatically withdrew Stockbridge's name. A change of 1 vote from Lt. Governor Crosby to Palmer gave the latter 41 votes and a majority of the 81 Republican votes in the legislature. Then Ferry supporters began to switch to Palmer and "soon it was only a question with the rest of the boys to see how quick they could get in out of



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the wet," as one Palmer supporter later remarked. The final vote totals were as follows:<sup>42</sup>

Palmer	75
Ferry	2
Stout	42

In his acceptance address Palmer said that he did not regard his election as a personal triumph. He said that he had had no idea that he would be elected, having thought, rather, that his contribution to the "conclusion of the conflict" would be his withdrawal as a candidate. He ended his speech with an appeal for harmony, not only in the Republican party but throughout the state as well.

My first duty [he said] I consider to be the flag of my country--that flag which has been baptized in blood and consecrated by prayers. My second duty will be to my state. It will be no eastern district; it will be no western district with me. I shall not be confined to southern or northern lines. The question of location shall have nothing to do with my preference or my acts. My aim will be to serve the people of Michigan faithfully.<sup>43</sup>

The reaction of the press to Palmer's election was generally favorable. The Post and Tribune--the newspaper which now represented his Detroit enemies--declared that if Palmer "lived on the west side of the state he might have been elected immediately after Ferry disappeared." The partisan Saginaw Weekly Courier called his election "Tom's Triumph" and said that although he might "not be as brilliant a senator as has graced the halls of the



United States Senate" he would "look after the interests of his state loyally and intelligently." The Detroit Free Press called Palmer's victory a "personal triumph" because he had had to overcome the opposition of his Republican enemies in Detroit. The paper went on to say that if they "regarded the senator-elect solely with reference to his personal qualities the people of the state of Michigan could not have a more agreeable representative in Senate."<sup>44</sup>

The best analysis of Palmer's victory was made by the Detroit Evening News. It commented on the confusion surrounding the election and remarked that the "lack of discipline" had been so great that it was "impossible at any time to draw a visible line between contending hosts and difficult to tell what any particular faction was struggling for." It called Palmer's success "a matter of survival . . . a selection of wind and bottom rather than speed." The paper particularly noted the "consummate skill" with which Palmer's campaign had been handled. Palmer's key to victory, it said, was the unity possessed by his followers: from the first there had been "entirely cohesive."<sup>45</sup>

The Evening News was perhaps more accurate than it knew in its analysis of Palmer's success. The key to Palmer's victory was indeed organization. The newspaper could not have known the extent of the planning and



organization that lay behind his triumph. Backed by a dedicated group of supporters, Palmer had been able to plot his strategy down to the last detail. Professing outward loyalty to the incumbent Ferry, he had cleverly subverted and undermined Ferry's support in order to pave the way for his own candidacy when Ferry inevitably faltered. Palmer--who had been forewarned that there was information that would destroy Ferry--had gambled his political future upon exploiting the "break" to the fullest when it occurred. It was a plan that required patience, steady nerves, and a certain amount of ruthlessness. Palmer's actions revealed that he possessed these qualities in abundance. Aided by his loyal and close-mouthed supporters and the charm of his "genial" personality, Palmer had emerged from political limbo to win in one of the most controversial and bitter political contests ever to be waged in Michigan.

Three days after his election, Palmer's nephew, Henry Roby, expressed his surprise at his uncle's victory --he had thought the cause was hopeless. Roby commented in his letter that "it would be an interesting piece of political wire working to know the inside history of how it was brought about." Perhaps Palmer satisfied his nephew's curiosity.<sup>46</sup>

Now a United States Senator, Palmer was faced with the delicate task of binding the wounds created by



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the lengthy senatorial contest. Many people expected him to be the Republican leader who would finally fill the shoes of Zach Chandler. Others expected him to live up to the words of his acceptance address when he stated that he would represent his state first and the Republican party second. Thus the people of Michigan would be closely watching and weighing his actions. Only by hard work and distinguished service could he hope to win their approval.



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FOOTNOTES--CHAPTER III

<sup>1</sup>Lansing Republican, November 15, 1882.

<sup>2</sup>Palmer to E. F. Guild, November 16, 1882, T. W. Palmer Letterbooks, Palmer Papers.

<sup>3</sup>J. B. Whittier to Palmer, November 5, 1882, Palmer Papers.

<sup>4</sup>J. W. French to Palmer, December 6, 1882, Palmer Papers.

<sup>5</sup>James Shepard to Palmer, December 7, 1882, Palmer Papers.

<sup>6</sup>Detroit Free Press, December 15, 1882.

<sup>7</sup>Lansing Republican, December 20, 1882; Detroit Free Press, January 2, 1882.

<sup>8</sup>Lansing Republican, December 20, 27, 1882.

<sup>9</sup>Detroit Free Press, December 29, 1882.

<sup>10</sup>Detroit Post and Tribune, January 1, 4, 1883.

<sup>11</sup>Thomas W. Ferry to Byron M. Cutcheon, December 21, 1882, Byron M. Cutcheon Papers (Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library, Detroit, Michigan). Hereinafter cited as Cutcheon Papers. Charles Bowerfind to Brackley Shaw, January 8, 1883, Brackley Shaw Papers (University of Michigan Historical Collections, Ann Arbor, Michigan). Hereinafter cited as Shaw Papers.

<sup>12</sup>Detroit Evening News, January 1, 2, 1883; Detroit Post and Tribune, January 3, 1883.



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<sup>13</sup>Detroit Evening News, January 3, 1883; Detroit Post and Tribune, January 4, 1883.

<sup>14</sup>Detroit Post and Tribune, January 5, 1883; Detroit Evening News, January 5, 1883.

<sup>15</sup>Brackley Shaw to his wife, January 9, 1883, Shaw Papers.

<sup>16</sup>Palmer to Sam H. Row, January 9, 1883; Palmer to George Hopkins, January 9, 1883, T. W. Palmer Letterbooks. Palmer Papers.

<sup>17</sup>Detroit Evening News, January 4, 12, 1883.

<sup>18</sup>Lansing Republican, January 10, 16, 1883; Detroit Post and Tribune, January 13, 1883.

<sup>19</sup>Detroit Evening News, January 16, 1883.

<sup>20</sup>Detroit Post and Tribune, January 17, 1883; Saginaw Weekly Courier, January 18, 1883; Detroit Post and Tribune, January 18, 1883; January 16, 1883.

<sup>21</sup>A. H. Morrison to Palmer, January 12, 1883; Thomas Smurthwaite to Palmer, January 19, 1883. Palmer Papers.

<sup>22</sup>Detroit Evening News, January 18, 19, 20, 1883; Lansing Republican, January 19, 1883; Detroit Post and Tribune, January 20, 1883.

<sup>23</sup>Detroit Free Press, January 21, 1883.

<sup>24</sup>Detroit Evening News, January 25, 30, 24, 1883.

<sup>25</sup>A. H. Morrison to Palmer, January 22, 1883, Palmer Papers; Palmer to Newcomb McGraft, January 27, 1883, T. W. Palmer Letterbooks, Palmer Papers.

<sup>26</sup>Palmer to Paul Blackman, January 27, 1883, T. W. Palmer Letterbooks, Palmer Papers; Swihart, "Thomas W. Palmer," p. 76.

<sup>27</sup>Lansing Republican, January 31, February 1, 1883.



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<sup>28</sup>Detroit Free Press, January 30, 1883; Detroit Evening News, January 30, 1883; Detroit Post and Tribune, January 31, 1883.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Detroit Evening News, February 2, 1883; Detroit Post and Tribune, February 5, 1883.

<sup>31</sup>Detroit Evening News, February 3, 5, 1883; Detroit Post and Tribune, February 8, 1883.

<sup>32</sup>Palmer to La Du, February 7, 1883, T. W. Palmer Letterbooks, Palmer Papers.

<sup>33</sup>E. Cottrell to J. Boynton, February 10, 1883, Palmer Papers.

<sup>34</sup>Lansing Republican, February 7, 10, 15, 1883; Detroit Post and Tribune, February 13, 1883; Detroit Evening News, February 12, 1883; Saginaw Weekly Courier, February 15, 1883.

<sup>35</sup>Detroit Evening News, February 13, 15-16, 1883.

<sup>36</sup>Detroit Post and Tribune, February 16, 1883; Detroit Evening News, February 16, 1883.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.; Lansing Republican, February 20, 1883; Saginaw Weekly Courier, February 21, 1883.

<sup>38</sup>G. Wring to Byron Cutcheon, February 19, 1883, Cutcheon Papers; Detroit Evening News, February 23, 1883.

<sup>39</sup>Detroit Evening News, February 22, 1883; Lansing Republican, February 24, 1883.

<sup>40</sup>A. O. Hyde to Palmer, February 26, 1883, Palmer Papers; Lansing Republican, February 27, 1883; Swihart, "Thomas W. Palmer," pp. 77, 78.

<sup>41</sup>George (?) to brother Joe, February 24, 1883; (?) to Wm. Livingstone, February 26, 1883. Palmer Papers.



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<sup>42</sup>Lansing Republican, March 1, 3, 1883; Detroit Evening News, March 2, 1883; Detroit Free Press, March 2, 1883; Detroit Post and Tribune, March 2, 1883; New York Times, March 2, 1883.

<sup>43</sup>Detroit Free Press, March 2, 1883.

<sup>44</sup>Detroit Post and Tribune, March 2, 1883; Saginaw Weekly Courier, March 8, 1883; Detroit Free Press, March 2, 1883.

<sup>45</sup>Detroit Evening News, March 2, 1883.

<sup>46</sup>H. M. Roby to Palmer, March 4, 1883, Palmer Papers.



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## CHAPTER IV

### FRESHMAN SENATOR IN THE 48TH CONGRESS

The national political scene in the post-reconstruction era has been frequently described by historians as a time of political impotence when neither political parties nor presidents chose to respond to the real issues of the day. To understand this period of political equilibrium it must be remembered that most Americans, as well as their politicians, adhered to a policy of laissez-faire in regard to social welfare as well as in economic affairs. Thus the federal government was not expected by most of the American people to respond to the social and economic problems of the day.

It must be remembered also that the nation's voters gave no overwhelming majorities to either presidential candidates or political parties. Although the Republicans won four of the six presidential elections held during the period, 1876-1896, in only one (1896) did they receive a majority of the popular vote. In none of these elections was the victorious party's popular vote greater than 51 per cent. On two occasions, in 1876



and 1888, the Democratic loser had more popular votes than the Republican winner.<sup>1</sup>

Although losing the presidency most of the time, the Democrats managed to match the Republicans' strength in Congress. Between 1870 and 1894 they possessed majorities in the House during nine Congresses, which enabled them to check any attempt of the Republicans to dominate the legislature.<sup>2</sup>

The Republicans controlled the Senate during this time except for a two-year period (1879-81), but between 1876 and 1890 they could muster a majority of more than three for only two years. Neither political party controlled both Congress and the Presidency at the same time. Thus, with the absence of a clear cut consensus and an effective majority, it is no wonder that the political process appeared stalemated. With the two major political parties dependent upon slender voting majorities, they were very hesitant to undertake a radical change in policy for fear that it would shift the precarious balance of power in the opposite direction.<sup>3</sup>

Party discipline in both houses of Congress was extremely lax so that legislators frequently crossed party lines, particularly on bills which dealt with such key issues as the tariff or sound money. The House lacked strong speakers and was hampered by archaic rules such as its quorum rule, which required that no bill



could be approved unless a quorum was present and voting; thus a minority could impede legislation by not responding to roll call. In the Senate, individual senators prided themselves on their independence and no group was able to control the Senate's action on many critical pieces of legislation. Thus a party's numerical majority in the Senate or the House would often be a misleading statistic since voting coalitions rapidly changed, depending upon the issue under discussion.<sup>4</sup>

At this time the executive office was dominated by Congress. The President was not expected to initiate legislation since most people, including a majority of the presidents, believed that the Chief Executive's role was to execute legislation and that it was the job of Congress to produce the legislation. Even if a President attempted to assert himself as a leader, a politically hostile Congress or a divided party prevented him from assuming this position of leadership.<sup>5</sup>

Such was the state of national politics in 1883 when Palmer entered the United States Senate. It was a time when political parties straddled major issues, when party discipline was virtually nonexistent, and when legislative discussion often avoided the crucial issues of the period.







TABLE 1.--Political strength of the parties in Congress,  
1883-1889

First Session Congress	House of Representatives			Senate		
	Demo- crats	Repub- licans	Others	Demo- crats	Repub- licans	Others
48	197	118	10	36	38	2
49	183	140	2	34	43	
50	169	152	4	37	39	6

One of the most difficult tasks that initially confronted the new senator was the distribution of the spoils. The spoils in this case were the federal appointments for the positions as customs and internal revenue collectors for the Michigan districts. These positions were by Republican tradition the patronage plums allotted to the Michigan senators to be distributed to their faithful followers as rewards for their services. Palmer's dilemma was that he had to satisfy not only his own supporters, who were often competing for the same posts, but he also had to placate the dissidents in the party who were actively supporting their own candidates for the positions.<sup>7</sup>

Palmer's most perplexing patronage problem concerned the removal of General Luther Trowbridge from his position as Internal Revenue Collector for Detroit and the appointment of James H. Stone as his replacement.



Stone's appointment had been approved by both Senators Conger and Ferry during the previous year but Trowbridge's reluctance to remove himself from office and the support he received from the Republican faction in Detroit that had opposed Palmer's election, had made his dislodgement difficult. President Arthur had complicated Palmer's position by indicating that he would not make a decision on the appointment until Palmer had arrived in Washington for a conference. Palmer was caught in the middle as both sides pressured him to make a decision favorable to their candidate.<sup>8</sup>

The Trowbridge forces were particularly aggressive in their campaign to persuade Palmer to retain the current Collector. To demonstrate his popularity, Trowbridge solicited the signature of almost every major firm in Detroit that dealt with him in an official capacity on petitions that endorsed him as a capable collector and expressed dissatisfaction with his proposed removal. Influential friends including Henry Baldwin and Russell Alger sent a mildly threatening telegram to Palmer indicating that the "removal of Trowbridge would be unfortunate politically and otherwise." They also sent a telegram to the President expressing their disapproval. The anti-Palmer Detroit Post and Tribune initiated a campaign against Palmer, hinting strongly that he was unqualified for his office. In the paper's view, Palmer would have to prove himself--undoubtedly by retaining Trowbridge--and



if he happened to "fail in his duty," the Post and Tribune would be forced to criticize his actions "however unpleasant" it might be. At the same time the paper lavishly praised the work of General Trowbridge as Collector of Internal Revenue and as a faithful Republican worker who was "always ready on the stump for Republicanism."

Further, the paper portentously declared that the "modest caution of a man new to his place will no doubt incline Senator Palmer to hesitate before offending the common sentiment of his party at home and running counter to its declared policy in the national Congress by seeking to accomplish the removal of General Trowbridge."<sup>9</sup>

Two of Palmer's close Republican friends, William Livingstone of Detroit and Alexander Hamilton Morrison of St. Joseph, both prominent men who had played an important role in engineering Palmer's dramatic election to the senatorship, opposed Trowbridge's reappointment. They took this position not because they were in favor of James Stone but because they regarded Trowbridge as a tool of the anti-Palmer Detroit faction. They advised the new Senator to fill the patronage positions with loyal followers in order to build the foundations of a strong Palmer organization in Michigan. Morrison urged Palmer to stand by his friends and they would form the "fulcrum" to put him in the White House. He then warned him that it would be useless to "conciliate" any of his enemies because



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the people expected him to act independently. Morrison concluded that if Palmer properly rewarded his loyal followers, then he was sure to be "nominated for president in 1884 and be elected."<sup>10</sup>

Livingstone gave Palmer similar advice and came to an identical conclusion. According to him, Palmer had to "make up his mind to train with his friends or his enemies and it ought not to take him long to make up his mind which." Michigan was to be made "Palmer country" and "those that aren't Palmer men will wish they were in H---." Livingstone advised that the next chairman of the Republican State Central Committee be a Palmer man to insure control of the party by the Palmer faction. By following this counsel and by keeping his "head cool," Livingstone believed that the new Senator would have a "wrestle for the presidency yet."<sup>11</sup>

To explain his position, James Stone wrote Palmer a long letter in which he narrated the latest developments in regard to his appointment as Trowbridge's successor. According to him, he and Senator Conger had had a favorable interview with the President. He asserted that if Palmer's last dispatch to the President had arrived earlier, he would have already been appointed. In the time between the interview and Palmer's letter, however, the opposing faction had telegraphed the President, calling Stone's appointment an "outrage." The



President had reacted by telling Stone that "all the customary formalities should be observed with more than usual punctiliousness" in order to avoid charges of favoritism. By this time Trowbridge had been informed of the President's "delicacy of feeling" and was attempting to flood Palmer with telegrams and "letters of remonstrances." Stone, however, implored Palmer not to "let the crowd who have pursued me for a year with such ferocity and bitterness destroy me. You owe them nothing and I am at least entitled to fair play and Senator Conger to senatorial courtesy."<sup>12</sup>

To extricate himself from the precarious position in which he found himself, Palmer set out for Washington to have a conference with Senator Conger and President Arthur. He arrived in Washington on March 9, 1883, and on that same day endorsed Stone for the position. Stone's appointment followed Palmer's declaration of support. His friends and supporters were jubilant when they learned of his action. They were sure that Stone's appointment was a bitter pill for the Post and Tribune clique to swallow.<sup>13</sup>

Palmer's friends were correct. The Post and Tribune was disturbed by his action and blamed him entirely for Trowbridge's removal. According to the paper, Palmer had stood a good chance of uniting the Republican party, but it declared that he would never do it "by using public offices to reward his followers."<sup>14</sup>



Trowbridge received the news of his removal with disbelief as he had been confident that the efforts of his friends in his behalf would be successful. So downhearted was he, that one of his relatives wrote to Palmer, urging him to obtain a reconsideration for the General. Palmer wrote in return a politely formal letter in which he related his conversation with the President. He stated that in the beginning of the discussion he had expressed a preference for neither candidate and told the President that he "could not be aggressive either way in the matter for personal and family reasons--but when forced to an expression . . . finally concurred in the previous action of Senator Conger and the delegation in the last House." This answer apparently did not comfort General Trowbridge when it was related to him for he was soon reported drinking heavily in Detroit saloons and blaming Palmer for his downfall. The furor, however, over Trowbridge's removal quickly died down.<sup>15</sup>

After having disposed of the initial crisis of his young senatorial career, Palmer left Michigan for a short vacation, no doubt relieved to escape the hordes of office seekers who beset him. His political friends were not eager to see him depart because they believed that he should be devoting his time and energy to consolidating his position in the Michigan Republican party. They pointed out that the Detroit Post and Tribune had



maintained a constant barrage of criticism against him, blaming him "for all dire calamities--political, social and commercial and even the cold weather." They advised him to strike while his chances were good, before his enemies could generate enough support in their campaign against him. They argued that as Ferry's supporters were now split, Palmer could easily assume the leadership of the party.<sup>16</sup>

Palmer's supporters were quite certain as to the course of action that the Senator would follow. An excerpt taken from a letter to him from one of his most rabid followers clearly illustrates their position. It reads as follows:

In short, steps must be taken to put you where Chandler was when the Lord to help the Locofocos took him up in the skies. If you hesitate we are lost. People against you must be subordinates. There can be but one general commanding and with a little more grape we shall carry the day.<sup>17</sup>

Despite the earnest entreaties of his devoted supporters Palmer left on his trip, traveling first to Washington and then on to New York, not returning to Michigan until the last week of April.<sup>18</sup>

On his return, Palmer devoted himself to other problems of patronage. Although he diligently rewarded his faithful followers, his close advisers did not think that he was aggressive enough in his appointment procedures. They were particularly disturbed that Senator Conger had secured appointments for several office holders



to positions that they believed Palmer was entitled to distribute. Palmer did not allow their concern in this matter to disturb him. It did not seem to be his intention to establish a political machine built upon patronage despite the urgings of his political advisers.<sup>19</sup>

One of Palmer's chief political activities during the summer of 1883 was the promotion of pro-tariff propaganda throughout the state. In an outline presented to the Republican State Central Committee, he called for trained agents to organize protection clubs throughout Michigan. He suggested that the Michigan Republican party provide financial support for these clubs. In addition, he proposed that the Republican party supply editorial material for Republican newspapers and speakers who would discuss the tariff question upon call. He had evidently foreseen that the tariff would be an important matter of discussion in the 48th Congress and hoped by a comprehensive program of indoctrination to have Michigan standing squarely behind the standard of protection.<sup>20</sup>

The fall of 1883 found Senator Palmer busily engaged in attending to a number of matters--both political and business--that crowded his agenda. He delivered addresses to organizations such as the Isabella County Soldiers' Convention and the Allegan Agricultural Society. He held discussions with his political advisers to plot future strategy and to decide on political appointees.



In general he attempted to mend his political fences in preparation for his departure for Washington to attend the opening session of the 48th Congress.

Early in December the Palmers left for Washington to settle in the house that the Senator had purchased during his spring trip. Thus he did not have to undergo the frantic search for lodgings that often was the experience of first term legislators.<sup>22</sup>

The Congress that Palmer entered in 1883 was not destined to go down in history as the most dramatic and productive meeting of the national legislature ever to be held. Shelby Cullom, who also entered the 48th Congress as a freshman senator, makes the following statement in his memoirs:

I entered the Senate at a very uninteresting period in our history. The excitement and bitterness caused by the Civil War and Reconstruction had subsided. It was what I would term a period of industrial development and there were no great measures before Congress. The men who then composed the membership of the Senate were honest and patriotic, trying to do their duty as best they could, but there was no great commanding figure. The days of Webster, Clay and Calhoun had passed; Stevens, Sumner, Chase of the Reconstruction era had all passed.<sup>23</sup>

Great measures and excitement there may not have been in Congress in the 1880's. There were, however, significant issues and measures of importance enacted. Although they primarily involved fiscal problems and matters of business regulation and often required more arithmetic than rhetoric, they were of vital importance



to a nation that was expanding geographically and industrially.

The House of Representatives produced the most excitement in the opening session. Much of the House's attention was directed toward the tariff as it was generally anticipated that a tariff bill would be formulated by a group of Democratic tariff reformers. The Democrats were numerically in control of the house but were split on the tariff issue. This division of the Democrats had been precipitated by the so-called Mongrel Tariff of 1883 that had raised the duty on many items. It was expected that this division would be increased by the renewal of tariff reform efforts.<sup>24</sup>

The first skirmish of the tariff reform war was fought over the selection of a Speaker for the House. The Democratic protectionists in the House favored former Speaker Samuel J. Randall, a Democrat from Pennsylvania, while the anti-tariff forces were united behind John G. Carlisle of Kentucky. The election of Carlisle opened the way for tariff legislation.<sup>25</sup>

The opening of the Senate was a much more subdued affair, devoted chiefly to committee appointments. Palmer was named to five committees--those on post offices and post roads, the District of Columbia, transportation routes to the seaboard, fish and fisheries, and woman suffrage. In evaluating the distribution of



committee assignments of the Michigan delegation in Washington, the Detroit News commented that Palmer had "poor luck" because he did not draw a very "large plum." The News was correct in its statement for Palmer did not receive responsibilities that were highly prized by the average senator. The Transportation Routes to the Seaboard Committee performed negligible tasks. The Committee on Fish and Fisheries was a new committee with little prestige attached to it. Assignment to the District of Columbia Committee was regarded as an onerous burden because its work involved acting as a city commission for the district, a task most senators attempted to avoid. As far as the Woman's Suffrage Committee was concerned, the majority of the Senate regarded the issue as a huge joke and would not have considered seriously such a lowly assignment. The Committee on Post Offices and Post Roads was regarded as having some merit because of the patronage involved in distributing postmasterships. Palmer, however, did not hold a high position in that committee.<sup>26</sup>

Undaunted by the undistinguished character of his assignments, Palmer plunged into his work with considerable fervor. On the Committee for the District of Columbia he actively promoted social and civil reforms. He advocated an industrial home school bill, a subject with which he was familiar as he had successfully promoted



a similar bill as a state senator in Michigan. He voted for two bills relating to the District. The first was a bill designed to protect servants and other workers in the District of Columbia. It died on the floor when a proposal to set aside the rules for discussion of the measure was defeated by a 35-17 vote. The second proposed an increase in salaries of District judges. This measure was approved by a vote of 42-13. Also in relation to his work on the District of Columbia Committee, Palmer wrote a report on the petition of a District resident who desired that a woman deputy warden be appointed to the District's jail. He indicated that the power of such an appointment was vested in the Chief Justice of the District's Supreme Court and the warden of the jail. He did, however, recommend that such an appointment be made.<sup>27</sup>

Since Palmer was a supporter of votes for women he undoubtedly was pleased with his seat on the Woman Suffrage Committee. A month before his departure for Washington he had received a letter from the Michigan Woman's Suffrage Association in which he was urged to do all in his power to promote the cause of women's rights. His action on the Woman Suffrage Committee must have pleased the Michigan suffragists. The committee's main concern for the session was an evaluation of Senate Resolution No. 19, which proposed an amendment to the Constitution to provide for women's suffrage. In a special sub-committee report, Palmer and the two other



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members of the sub-committee, Senators Henry Blair (N.H.) and Elbridge Lapham (N.Y.), heartily recommended its passage. They reported that their recommendation was based on the fact that women were being denied a "fundamental privilege" in most of the states of the Union-- "the right of a citizen to vote." Palmer's stand on women's rights made him a member of a select group of senators. Most of his colleagues were hostile or indifferent to the demands of the suffragists.<sup>28</sup>

The Committee on Post Offices and Post Roads took more of Palmer's time than his other committees. Several items of importance came before that committee. These included discussions with representatives of veterans and an investigation into the postal telegraph system to determine whether it was an unregulated monopoly.<sup>29</sup>

The most important item before the committee, however, was an appropriation bill for the Post Office Department. A proposal for a 5 per cent annual reduction in compensation for railroads carrying the federal mails --in the case of land grant railroads the reduction was to be 50 per cent of the current rate--provoked considerable discussion. A number of senators believed that the railroads, particularly the land grant railroads, had received sufficient government aid. Defenders of the railroad rate adjustment presented a report of the Acting Second Assistant Post Master General estimating that the



new rates would save the government over a million dollars. Palmer defended the proposal made by the committee. The amendment was passed and the Post Office Appropriation Bill won Senate approval by a vote of 52-0. It did not, however, pass Congress until the second session of the 49th Congress after conference committees from both houses had met and worked out a compromise measure.<sup>30</sup>

The public bill introduced by Senator Palmer on which he spent the most time in his first session was a measure designed to increase the appropriations for a new federal building in Detroit to house the Post Office and other federal offices. Before introducing the bill, Palmer had asked an old political ally in Detroit, William Livingstone, to ascertain public opinion on: (1) increasing the appropriation from \$400,000 to \$1,500,000, and (2) reopening the question of a building site change. After receiving Livingstone's reply and other reports from Detroit, Palmer prepared a bill that called for an increased appropriation while leaving the matter of the selection of a new site in the hands of the people of Detroit. Since the selection of a building site was a highly partisan issue, the senator wanted to refrain from taking sides to avoid alienating any of the conflicting interest groups. He wrote to his cousin that in regard to the choice of a site "the people must fight it out among themselves. My preference will never be known."



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Congressman Maybury of Detroit introduced a duplicate bill in the House at the same time.<sup>31</sup>

Armed with maps and statistics, Palmer argued his case before the Senate Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds. Despite his efforts he was pessimistic as to the outcome. Undaunted he again came before the committee to argue for the increased appropriations. He compared Detroit with other municipalities and declared that, according to his figures, Detroit should be entitled to a building costing \$1,800,000 instead of the \$300,000 that had been appropriated. Although the committee did not act immediately, it eventually approved the bill. On May 20, 1884, the Detroit Public Building Bill passed the Senate. It appropriated \$9,000,000 for the construction of a new federal building and left the question of changing the site to the Treasury Department. It was then sent to the House where it would not be brought up for consideration until the second session of the 48th Congress.<sup>32</sup>

Palmer did not take an active role in any of the other bills before the Senate. He was absent for the vote on the Blair Common School Bill, which called for a fund of \$120,000,000 to be distributed by the federal government to the states according to the rate of illiteracy in each state. He was paired with Senator Zeb Vance (N.C.) and had it announced that if he were present he would have voted for the bill. The bill passed the Senate by a vote of 33-11.<sup>33</sup>



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On other legislative matters, he voted with the majority for a bill aimed at further restricting polygamy in Utah. The purpose of the bill was to strengthen the anti-polygamy act of 1882 that provided a fine of \$500 or a prison sentence of five years for bigamy. Bigamists were also stripped of their right to vote and hold office. The principle changes in the previous anti-polygamy law were the following: (1) the penalty for adultery was set at three years in prison, (2) the five commissioners for Utah were empowered to act as justices of the peace, (3) the United States marshal and his deputies were made the territory's law enforcement body, and (4) penalties for fornication between unmarried persons was set at six months in prison or \$100 fine. The act, however, failed to pass the House.<sup>34</sup>

He also voted for a measure designed to place restrictions on Chinese labor that was approved by a vote of 43-12. Since the 1870's Congressmen from the West Coast had been demanding a cessation to Chinese immigration. In 1880 an American commission to China obtained an agreement with China that gave the American government the authority to determine the entry qualifications for Chinese laborers. Congress, however, was not amicable to the new agreement. The new legislation provided for a ten-year ban on the importation of Chinese laborers and penalties against any vessel captain who brought in such



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workers. The bill was also approved by the House and signed by the President.<sup>35</sup>

Although his activities as a senator kept him busy, Palmer did find time to keep abreast of tariff activities in the House. Despite Carlisle's election as Speaker and the prevalence of rumors that William Morrison of Illinois, chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means, was preparing a Tariff Reform Bill, Palmer did not expect much in the way of tariff legislation because he doubted that the Democrats were in earnest in their reform efforts. It became apparent, however, that some of the Democrats were more serious than he thought. On February 4, 1884, Morrison introduced a bill calling for a general horizontal reduction of 20 per cent on all import duties and placing some items on the free list. These items included lumber, coal, iron, copper and salt--all important staples in Michigan's economy. The bill was immediately sent to the Ways and Means Committee.<sup>36</sup>

When Palmer realized that the Democrats were in earnest he took action. Roswell G. Horr was the chief Michigan spokesman against the tariff in the House. On March 3, 1884, the Detroit Evening News reported that when Horr argued before the House Ways and Means Committee in favor of maintaining the duties on lumber, Senator Palmer was present, helping him with charts, statistics and other materials.<sup>37</sup>



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The Morrison Bill was also opposed by the wool and iron industries. This opposition managed for a time to tie up the bill in the Ways and Means Committee. Finally Morrison moved to have the bill taken up in the Committee of the Whole on April 15, 1884. The committee approved it by an extremely close vote of 140-138. Since it won approval by only two votes there was little prospect of the bill's final success. After a debate that continued for weeks, the bill was defeated 159-155. The defeat of Morrison's bill came as a result of defection by members of his own party. The Democratic protectionist leader, Samuel Randall of Pennsylvania, led thirty-nine bolting Democrats to vote with the Republicans. This ended efforts for tariff reform in that session of Congress.<sup>38</sup>

One of Palmer's outstanding traits was his loyalty to his friends, especially if they had proved to be faithful to him during times of political crisis. He demonstrated this loyalty by the diligence with which he sought a judicial appointment for Sumner Howard, a friend who had been instrumental in securing his election. Howard desired an appointment as a judge in the Territory of Utah. He faced considerable opposition from many residents of Utah because he had been the attorney responsible for prosecuting John D. Lee, a Mormon who had been condemned and shot for his part in the infamous "Mountain Meadow Massacre." The Detroit News objected



to Howard's appointment on the grounds that it was a political reward. "If Mr. Howard must be paid for his work at Lansing," it editorialized, "it should be in some other coin than judicial ermine."<sup>39</sup> Despite the opposition, Palmer called upon the President several times to present Howard's case. The President delayed for almost three months before he made a decision. On March 19, 1884, the Detroit Post and Tribune announced that Howard had been appointed to a judgeship in Arizona as a result of Senator Palmer's efforts.<sup>40</sup>

Palmer did not lose contact with political affairs in Michigan; a steady stream of correspondence from his trusted political friends kept him informed of the latest developments. His Michigan followers were at this time busy seeking ways by which they could control the Republican spring convention. Palmer's Detroit enemies led by Mayor Thompson and Henry Duffield were attempting to gain control of the party. His advisers urged him to take the chairmanship of the State Central Committee because the party was "still floundering for a Moses." He declined to do so, declaring that "the people of Michigan will resent any suspicion of bossism." He also maintained that he could not attend to his duties in Washington and also direct Republican activities in Michigan.<sup>41</sup>

Even without Palmer's participation, his supporters, according to one of the senator's friends, controlled the Republican State Convention by the "nape of



the neck and the seat of the trousers" and were able to fill the State Central Committee with Palmer men. Thus, although Palmer declined to make himself political boss of Michigan after the Chandler example, his followers were actively preparing to take over the Republican party in the state.<sup>42</sup>

The Republican meeting was generally harmonious despite the conflict over control. One of its main tasks was the selection of delegates-at-large for the Republican National Convention. (District delegates were selected at district caucuses held just prior to the opening of the general convention.) Most of the delegates-at-large selected were Palmer men. There was no consensus among the delegates concerning the Republican presidential nominee. They seemed almost evenly divided between Senator George Edmunds of Vermont and James G. Blaine of Maine, with perhaps an edge to Edmunds. Since the delegates were not committed by a caucus vote to any one candidate, any estimate as to their favorites was bound to be inaccurate.<sup>43</sup>

Palmer's days were not entirely occupied with his senatorial duties although he complained that he was being "worked to death." He frequently entertained at dinners and receptions in his large home. His enjoyment of Washington's social life was tempered by the poverty and misery that existed in the city in sharp contrast to



the glamorous swirl of political life. He found the nation's capital a city of "collective splendor and indescribable misery--the daily presentation of the latter shading the enjoyment of all in official life."<sup>44</sup>

Three months after the opening of the 48th Congress, the Detroit Evening News made an evaluation of the Michigan delegation in Washington. The paper pronounced Senator Conger to be an ineffective speaker because his voice was "too harsh." It was puzzled, however, as to how it should judge Palmer since he had maintained a "policy of silence" since entering the Senate. It found his silence surprising since he had had a reputation as a "good talker." It concluded that perhaps he had "adopted the surest road to popularity--he has purchased a large house and entertained handsomely."<sup>45</sup>

Two days after the Detroit Evening News' evaluation, the Detroit Free Press facetiously called for a "Palmer boom" for President. Pointing out Palmer's reluctance to enter into Congressional debate, the Free Press said that his inexperience would not hamper him as he possessed other eminent qualifications:

It is true he hasn't much of a record: but that is one of his strong points. . . . To the negative qualification of having no record Palmer holds the positive one of having a bar'l. This as the Republicans understand is a qualification not to be despised in the coming campaign.<sup>46</sup>

As the first session of the 48th Congress drew to a close the minds of many Republicans on Capitol Hill



were not on their legislative tasks but on the Republican National Convention that was to begin in Chicago on June 3, 1884. Since there was no clear-cut favorite in the Republican ranks for the presidential nomination, there were many factions organizing behind various candidates. Political speculators regarded James G. Blaine, John Logan, George Edmunds, John Sherman, and Benjamin Harrison as the leading contenders for the nomination.<sup>47</sup>

William Livingstone reported to Palmer that in Michigan President Arthur was the "businessman's choice" but that most of the Republican rank and file appeared to favor Blaine. He thought that Arthur would receive at least 13 of the 26 votes of the Michigan delegates.<sup>48</sup>

Despite his political activities Palmer found time to attend to his business interests. In his correspondence with his business subordinates he revealed a side of his personality rarely shown to the public. Instead of the gracious, genial gentleman that was his usual public image, Palmer proved to be a stern and penurious taskmaster when his finances were at stake. The following passage from Palmer to Ford Starring, a business manager responsible for collecting property rents, illustrates this less attractive side of Palmer's character. It reads as follows:

You don't seem to comprehend the gravity of having fourteen (14) cents out of the way in your cash account. The cash is the key of your bookkeeping and the fourteen (14) cents may lead to the



detection of an error of thousands of dollars. Please remember that if you get the reputation of being the most exacting and closest agent I have, I will raise your salary. . . . Your business is to see that no rents fall behind. Give them notice if they have not paid up.<sup>49</sup>

As the day for the Republican National Convention drew near, it became increasingly clear that the presidential sweepstakes had been narrowed down to a bitterly contested race between President Arthur and James G. Blaine. Favorite son candidates such as Benjamin Harrison and John Sherman had hopes of an outside chance to carry off the prize. They based their optimism on the possibility that a stalemate might develop between the Blaine and Arthur forces, thus allowing a third person to emerge as a compromise candidate.<sup>50</sup>

Although not a delegate, Senator Palmer attended the Chicago Convention, sitting with the Michigan delegation. According to the Detroit News the wealthy "Mugwumps" of the Michigan Republican party who opposed Blaine were located chiefly in Detroit. The "Mugwumps" opposed Blaine because of his weak record in regard to civil service reform and because of the support he received from the anti-Palmer Republican clique led by Russell Alger and James Joy. At the convention Palmer led the Michigan Republicans opposed to Blaine, willing to support anyone who stood a chance of winning against the "Plumed Knight."<sup>51</sup>



On the first two ballots, Michigan's votes were split among Arthur, Blaine, Edmunds, and Sherman. On the third ballot a shift to Blaine was made and on the fourth and final ballot, all 26 ballots went for Blaine who won the nomination.<sup>52</sup>

TABLE 2.--Total votes--26 (number of Michigan votes in 1884 Republican National Convention).

	Ballots			
	1	2	3	4
Arthur	2	4	4	
Blaine	15	15	18	
Edmunds	7	5	3	
Sherman	2	2	1	

The Detroit Evening News in commenting on the results of the convention said that those "who attempted to manipulate Michigan for anybody but Blaine were disappointed." The paper added that the "good natured Senator Palmer is not apt to grow thin over it but there are some aching hearts in the bosoms of Collector Stone, Jay Hubbell and Joe Chandler and there is scarcely a heart left in the Conger family."<sup>53</sup>

After the convention, Palmer returned to Washington to finish the first session of Congress. Not much was accomplished as most legislators were eager to return home to begin the campaign. The session ended in July.<sup>54</sup>

Many newspapers and journals found little to praise in the accomplishments of Congress. For example,



the Detroit Post and Tribune made the following comment: "The session of Congress just closed was a failure from every standpoint one may regard it. The national legislature never sat so long and did so little." The liberal journal, the Nation, came to a similar conclusion, declaring that the "late session of Congress was almost entirely barren of legislation." The journal did point out that there were some pleasant things that could be said about Congress: "If it did not have the courage for enacting some much needed legislation, it refrained from enacting any that can be called injurious and it stood manfully in the way of some which was positively bad."<sup>55</sup>

After returning home, Palmer did not play a very active role in the Michigan political campaign. His campaign inactivity is readily explained. First, he had vigorously opposed Blaine at the national convention. Secondly, the Michigan State Republican Convention held in August was controlled by his political enemies. They were led by Henry Duffield and worked to secure the gubernatorial nomination for Russell Alger. Alger's nomination had been opposed by many Republicans as popular support, particularly in rural areas, was for Cyrus Luce, a farmer himself. One Republican delegate had declared "that if the convention nominates any man except Luce (especially one from Detroit which has obtained so much) there will be great soreness and



indignation and a great many farmers will refuse to support the ticket." Alger gained 371 votes to Luce's 243. The victor attempted to placate Luce's supporters by offering Luce the nomination for lieutenant governor but he refused.<sup>56</sup>

The Republican campaign in Michigan was hampered because the Prohibitionists had decided to run a candidate for governor also. Any votes gained by a Prohibition candidate would be at the expense of the Republicans. To prevent large scale defections from Republican ranks, a plank was added to the party platform recommending that the question of prohibition be submitted to the people. This action, however, influenced many German-Americans who were staunch Republicans but against prohibition to defect to the Democrats.<sup>57</sup>

Meanwhile, the Democrats and Greenbackers joined to form a fusion ticket, renominating Governor Begole as their candidate. The Republican party thus faced formidable opposition in the election of 1884.<sup>58</sup>

Cleveland defeated Blaine in an extremely close race that was decided by a narrow Democratic victory in New York. Much emphasis has been given to the Reverend Burchard's famous "rum, romanism, and rebellion" address and the presence of Blaine at an extravagant banquet at Delmonico's as the reasons for Blaine's defeat. It is true that the Democratic press thoroughly publicized



both episodes but they probably came too late to affect the election results significantly. The Nation attributed Cleveland's victory to the bolt of the independent Republicans. It is perhaps more accurate to say that the Prohibitionist candidate from Kansas, John St. John, bears the most responsibility for Cleveland's victory. In New York State St. John made forty speeches and garnered 40,000 votes.<sup>59</sup>

In Michigan, the Republicans emerged victorious, although somewhat battered. Statistics are as follows:<sup>60</sup>

Michigan Vote for Governor--1884:

Alger, Republican	190,840
Begole, Fusionist	186,887
Preston, Prohibition	22,207
Other	364

Michigan Vote for President--1884

Blaine, Republican	192,669 (48%)
Cleveland, Democrat	189,361 (47.2%)
St. John, Prohibition	18,403 (4.6%)
Butler, Independent	753 (.2%)

The statistics reveal that Blaine barely squeaked through in Michigan. If St. John had gained as many votes as Preston, the Prohibition candidate for governor, Michigan would have been in the Cleveland victory column.<sup>61</sup>

It was in this unsettling political atmosphere that Senator Palmer returned to his seat in the Senate for the second session of the 48th Congress. As in the first session, the House provided the initial excitement. John H. Reagan, chairman of the House committee on



Commerce, again presented a bill aimed at regulating railroad rates. His bill reflected the strong sentiments of many groups, particularly the farm interests, for federal regulation of interstate commerce. After a month's debate, the House passed the Reagan Bill by a vote of 161-75.<sup>62</sup>

In the Senate opposition to the Reagan Bill was led by Senator Shelby Cullom of Illinois, chairman of the select committee on Interstate Commerce, who proposed to strike out all of the House bill after the enacting clause and insert a Senate substitute that included a provision for the establishment of a regulatory commission whose function would be to rule on alleged violations of the act. Cullom and his supporters took this action in order to dilute the portion of the Reagan Bill that made a violation of the interstate commerce law a penal offence, thereby giving the federal courts jurisdiction over such offenders. (Reagan and his supporters believed that unless the interstate commerce cases were tried before United States judges, justice would not be done since a regulatory commission's decision would not carry the same weight as a judicial decision and there was uncertainty also as to who would enforce the commission's rulings.) Palmer favored the Senate's version of the bill, although he did not take an active part in its defense.<sup>63</sup>



Although the Senate in the first session had passed his bill increasing the sum to be allocated for the Detroit Public Building, it was not passed by the House by a vote of 107-52 until February 12, 1885. Congressman Maybury of Detroit successfully defeated attempts to reduce the appropriation to \$750,000. The House, however, did attach a single amendment to the measure. The Senate unexpectedly asked for another conference on the bill because it objected to the amendment--much to the displeasure of Palmer and Maybury who had not anticipated that the amendment, which provided that the Secretary of the Treasury could approve of no plan whose cost exceeded the sum remaining after the building site had been paid for, would create any Senate opposition. Both Palmer and Maybury defended the measure and through their efforts it passed the conference committee as amended. Finally, on February 27, the President signed into law the Detroit Public Building Bill.<sup>64</sup>

Palmer developed misgivings about the wisdom of the House amendment after Congress had approved the bill. He therefore sought to amend the Sundry Civil Appropriation Bill to provide a \$200,000 appropriation for the purchase of a new building site--if needed. It was his opinion that because \$900,000 had been appropriated originally for building construction and now the building site purchase was to be deducted from that amount, another sum of money should be allocated for a building



site purchase. Senator Morrill objected because he thought that Palmer was now taking sides in the matter of changing the site. Palmer denied this. Senator Conger then entered the discussion in support of Palmer. Senator Allison objected to Palmer's amendment, however, on the ground that Palmer was out of order to offer an amendment to an appropriation bill without having previously submitted the proposal as a formal estimate. Senator Conger, in response to Allison, reported that the \$200,000 public site addition was listed in the Book of Estimates. Allison thereupon withdrew his objection and the amended Civil Sundry Appropriation Bill was approved.<sup>65</sup>

By the 1880's many midwesterners had become disenchanted with the amount of land that had been granted to the railroads as an incentive to span the nation. As a result, in each session of Congress during that decade, their legislative representatives introduced bills aimed at forcing railroads to forfeit lands that had not been earned according to the terms of their grants. Despite midwestern agitation, no general railroad land forfeiture bill was passed by Congress until 1890.<sup>66</sup>

Senator Palmer was not interested in railroad land forfeiture as a general principle but in the second session of the 48th Congress he found himself attempting to amend the general railroad land forfeiture bill that



was before the Senate. His involvement in this issue resulted from demands by settlers in Michigan's Upper Peninsula for a reversal of the General Land Office's decision to enforce a public land act passed in 1880. In 1856 nine railroads had been granted lands in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. A large amount of land had been reserved for their selection. After they had selected the land allotted to them by their land grant contracts, there was still land left in the reserve set aside for them. When those extra reserve lands had been restored to federal ownership, federal land agents had allowed homesteaders to file private entry claims at a \$1.25 per acre. There were also homesteaders who had purchased from the railroads lands later declared forfeited. In 1880 Congress passed an act that required lands restored to the public domain to be offered at a public sale before being opened to private entry claims. This legislation was retroactive and had no provision exempting from its provisions people who had bought from the railroads or who had made entry after forfeiture. It thus invalidated many land titles in the Upper Peninsula since subsequent court decisions had upheld the act's provision that forfeited lands had to be first offered at public auction. Palmer sought in the Committee of the Whole to validate those private claims made in good faith by "honest settlers and homesteaders" on forfeited



railroad lands. He argued that the land titles of these settlers should be validated since the mistake had been made by land office officials.<sup>67</sup>

Senator Joseph Dolph, chairman of the Committee on Public Lands, commented that Palmer's amendment was a "good thing" but not important enough to take up their time. He maintained that the general forfeiture bill should be reported without any further amendments. Palmer withdrew his amendment but only to change its wording. He then presented a revised version that was defeated by a vote of 29-38.<sup>68</sup>

Undaunted, Palmer on the following day, renewed his efforts to protect the land titles of the Upper Peninsula's private entrymen. Senator George Vest, a Democrat from Missouri, objected to the amendment, saying that Palmer had neglected to emphasize the profits that land speculators could receive as a result of its passage. He asserted that it was the speculators that had obtained large sections of land and not ordinary citizens as Palmer had claimed. Palmer answered him by stating that his amendment was not "intended to benefit such men alone" for it would benefit "more poor men than rich men." Senator Conger then entered the debate in support of his colleague. He denied that he and Palmer were following the dictates of pine land speculators as Vest had charged.<sup>69</sup>



Apparently Palmer's stand on this issue resulted from his honest conviction that this particular group of settlers was being illegally cheated of their land titles. At this time he seems not to have been connected with any of the so-called "pine speculators." If he was, and had there existed any trace of his involvement, the Detroit Free Press or the Detroit News would have been quick to exploit any such conflict of interest. That the amendment also received the approval of the General Land Office and the Acting Secretary of the Interior seems to substantiate the evidence that Palmer was acting solely in the settlers' interests.<sup>70</sup>

Eventually Palmer's persistence won the day and his amendment was passed by a vote of 25-22. The House bill to which it was attached also passed the Senate. The amended Senate version of the bill, however, was rejected by the House and a compromise was not reached during the session. The conflict over Upper Peninsula land titles was a problem that would continue to plague Palmer for the rest of his days in Congress.<sup>71</sup>

The highlight of this session for Palmer was the occasion of his first major address before the Senate. He spoke in behalf of women's suffrage at the prompting of many suffrage supporters who were aware of his sympathy with the women's rights movement. This speech was the first major address advocating women's suffrage



ever given in the Senate. In 1900 Susan B. Anthony wrote in her History of Woman's Suffrage that Palmer had made "a masterly argument which has not been surpassed in the fifteen years that have since elapsed."<sup>72</sup>

Palmer's remarks were made in defense of the joint resolution calling for an amendment to the Constitution establishing women's suffrage in the United States. This was the resolution that had been approved in the first session of the 48th Congress by the Committee on Woman Suffrage. Present in the gallery to hear the senator's speech were a number of ladies prominent in the women's rights movement, the most noteworthy being Susan B. Anthony.<sup>73</sup>

Palmer began by describing the movement for women's suffrage as another step in the struggle of mankind to attain human liberty. He asserted that failure to pass the resolution would "delay or cripple" the nation's advance as a whole. Referring to such important documents of freedom as the Magna Carta, the Declaration of Independence, and the Emancipation Proclamation, he declared that although the emancipation of four million slaves was a great step, "the political emancipation of 26,000,000 of our citizens equal to us in most essential respects and superior to us in many, seems to me to translate our nation, almost at a bound to the broad plateau of universal equality and cooperation to which



all these bloodstained and prayer worn steps have surely led."<sup>74</sup>

He then proceeded to attack the arguments raised against women's suffrage. He pointed out that those who refused women the vote because they could not fight were fallacious in their argument because the vote was not denied to old men, Quakers, or to those "civil officials who like mothers are regarded as of more use to the state at home." As for those who argued that many women did not want the vote, he said that many slaves did not want emancipation in 1863 and that many men did not vote at election time "but we hear of no freedman today who asks re-enslavement and no proposition is offered to disfranchise all men because some neglect their duty."<sup>75</sup>

Palmer also called attention to the battle cry of the American Revolution--"taxation without representation is tyranny." He declared that it would be impossible to "endorse the principles proclaimed by the patriots of 1776 and deny their application to women."<sup>76</sup>

In answer to those who held the view that women did not possess the minds for politics and government, Palmer gave examples of women in history who had demonstrated by their lives that women were capable of participating in civil affairs. He made particular reference to such contemporary women as Clara Barton and Dorothea Dix who engaged in tasks previously assigned to men. He also



referred to the success of women's suffrage in Wyoming Territory, which proved that women could vote "intelligently and safely."<sup>77</sup>

Palmer emphasized that the greatest reason for the franchisement of women was that it would provide a bulwark of voters to counteract the flood of immigrants, who, without restrictions as to "intelligence, character or patriotism," were allowed to vote. Since American women had been raised and educated under the "American system" they would be an effective counter-balance to this foreign element. "No valid reason," he said, "seems assignable for longer neglect to avail ourselves of their association." Despite Palmer's oratory, no immediate action was taken on the resolution and it was returned to the calendar.<sup>78</sup>

His speech received considerable attention and publicity. All the major Detroit newspapers carried comments and evaluations of his remarks. The Detroit News said that the speech had "made a good impression." The Detroit Post reported that "expressions of praise were heard on every hand for the pleasing language and sentiments of the address."<sup>79</sup>

Palmer received many notes and letters of congratulations from suffrage supporters. Clara Barton, the president of the American Red Cross, wrote him that his address was "masterly, unanswerable and faultless."



Susan Anthony wrote that she and other suffrage supporters were ordering thousands of copies of his speech to distribute throughout the nation. She even asked Palmer for the printing plates so that she could "strike off copies" whenever she needed them.<sup>80</sup>

To honor those senators who had supported the cause of women's suffrage, the ladies of the Woman's Suffrage Organization held a meeting in the vestibule of the Senate late in the session. Senator Palmer received most of the attention and was given an ovation for his endeavors on their behalf.<sup>81</sup>

Thus Palmer's first major Congressional speech had been a tactical success. He had spoken on a controversial subject in a manner that had won him acclaim from both supporters and opponents of women's suffrage. More important, he had received nationwide publicity, a factor that no politically ambitious senator could afford to overlook. Even if he lacked presidential ambitions, his political supporters were determined to press such ambitions upon him.

Palmer was more conventional in his reaction to several treaties that came before the Senate for approval. The first of these sought to provide commercial reciprocity with the Spanish territories of Cuba and Puerto Rico. The Treaty was vigorously opposed by the tobacco and sugar interests in the United States. Michigan businessmen, including wealthy industrialists and lumbermen of



the anti-Palmer Detroit faction, wrote Palmer to declare their opposition to the treaty with Spain. They feared that if the precedent of reciprocity was established then it would be doubly difficult to exclude Canada from such a commercial arrangement, a circumstance that the lumbermen in particular wanted to avoid since they did not want duty free Canadian lumber competing with their own timber products in the domestic markets. The Michigan Cigar Makers Union also opposed the Spanish treaty. Palmer, already an avowed protectionist, undoubtedly needed no urging from his constituents to oppose it. In an interview in the Detroit Evening News he stoutly declared his position on the treaty: "I am opposed to it. Its good features are altogether overshadowed by the bad." The Spanish treaty became bogged down in the Senate because of protectionist opposition and eventually President Cleveland withdrew it.<sup>82</sup>

Palmer also took a strong stand on a treaty with Nicaragua. This treaty had been prompted by the action of a French company under the direction of Suez Canal engineer DeLesseps, who had conducted negotiations with Columbia to secure the right to build a canal across the Isthmus of Panama. Since there was strong support for the view that the United States should build an



inter-oceanic canal before the French, the Arthur administration negotiated a treaty with Nicaragua by which the United States was given the exclusive right to construct a canal across that country. The canal was to be jointly owned, with the United States agreeing to a permanent alliance with Nicaragua. Palmer supported this treaty. When it came before the Senate for a vote it failed to receive the necessary two-thirds majority. A motion to reconsider the treaty was taken by the Senate. In his first annual address to Congress in 1885, President Cleveland explained that he did not resubmit the treaty because he was opposed to a policy of territorial aggrandizement and because he desired that the United States maintain its "traditional policy" in respect to the canal.<sup>83</sup>

The second session ended on March 3, 1885. Palmer's performance during his first Congress had been characterized by caution. He had avoided alienating party leaders and had not attempted to promote much legislation. The bills and amendments that he did sponsor were carefully prepared and tenaciously argued. Although his committee assignments were not particularly attractive, he had diligently applied himself to the assigned tasks. He had persistently fought for an increase in the Detroit Public Building appropriation. He had waited until his second session in Congress to



deliver a major address. All his actions reflected the course of a man who was intent on consolidating his position by thoroughly familiarizing himself with the intricacies of the legislative process before acting and by committing himself to legislation that was relevant to citizens of Michigan.

The end of the 48th Congress marked the end of Senator Palmer's apprenticeship in the Senate. In the 49th Congress he would have a chance to practice the skills that he had learned in his first two years in Washington.



FOOTNOTES--CHAPTER IV

<sup>1</sup>John A. Garraty, The New Commonwealth, 1877-1890 (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), p. 222; Fred A. Shannon, The Centennial Years (Garden City: Doubleday and Co., 1969), pp. 50-51; Leonard D. White, The Republican Era, 1865-1900: An Administrative History (New York: Macmillan Co., 1958), pp. 49-50.

<sup>2</sup>White, p. 50; Shannon, p. 53.

<sup>3</sup>Garraty, p. 226.

<sup>4</sup>White, p. 50; David J. Rothman, Politics and Power: The United States, 1869-1901 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), pp. 39-40.

<sup>5</sup>White, pp. 17-18; Garraty, pp. 227-28.

<sup>6</sup>Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1957 (Washington, 1960), p. 691.

<sup>7</sup>Detroit Free Press, March 3, 1883; William Livingstone to Palmer, March 3, 1883, Palmer Papers.

<sup>8</sup>Detroit Free Press, March 13, 1883.

<sup>9</sup>S. D. Elwood to L. S. Trowbridge, March 8, 1883; H. P. Baldwin, R. A. Alger, James Joy et al. to Palmer, March 10, 1883; James Stone to Palmer, March 6, 1883. Palmer Papers. Detroit Post and Tribune, March 5, 7, 1883.

<sup>10</sup>A. H. Morrison to Palmer, March 2, 1883, Palmer Papers.



<sup>11</sup>William Livingstone to Palmer, March 9, 11, 1883, Palmer Papers.

<sup>12</sup>James Stone to Palmer, March 6, 1883, Palmer Papers.

<sup>13</sup>Detroit Post and Tribune, March 9, 10, 1883; E. W. Cottrell to Palmer, March 11, 1883.

<sup>14</sup>Detroit Post and Tribune, March 14, 15, 17, 1883.

<sup>15</sup>Palmer to C. C. Trowbridge, copy, March 16, 1883; C. D. Joslyn to Palmer March 20, 1883; Friend Palmer to Palmer, March 23, 1883. Palmer Papers.

<sup>16</sup>Detroit Post and Tribune, March 15, 17, 1883; E. W. Cottrell to Palmer, March 25, 1883; T. S. Blades to Palmer, March 27, 1883; William Willit to Palmer, April 15, 1883. Palmer Papers.

<sup>17</sup>A. H. Morrison to Palmer, April 11, 1883, Palmer Papers.

<sup>18</sup>Detroit Free Press, April 22, 1883.

<sup>19</sup>A. H. Morrison to Palmer, June 11, 1883; Newcomb Clark to Palmer, June 29, 1883; James Shepard to Palmer, July 8, 1883. Palmer Papers.

<sup>20</sup>Palmer to Republican State Central Committee, copy, June 16, 1883, Palmer Papers.

<sup>21</sup>James W. Long to Palmer, September 21, 1883; E. C. Reid to Palmer, September 24, 1883; Harry A. Conant to Palmer, November 18, 1883; G. McGreery to Palmer, October 3, 1883; C. V. Bell to Palmer, November 15, 1883. Palmer Papers.

<sup>22</sup>Detroit Post and Tribune, July 13, 1883.

<sup>23</sup>Shelby M. Cullom, Fifty Years of Public Service (Chicago: A. C. McClurg and Co., 1911), p. 206.



<sup>24</sup>For a good description of the House's activities in the 48th Session of Congress, see Ben J. Procter, The Life of John H. Reagan (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1962).

<sup>25</sup>Clarence Lee Miller, The States of the Old Northwest and the Tariff, 1865-1889 (Emporia Gazette Press, 1929), pp. 143-45.

<sup>26</sup>Cong. Record, 48th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 49-50; Detroit News, December 10, 1883; according to the Detroit Post and Tribune, December 11, 1883, Palmer had wanted the Post Office assignment.

<sup>27</sup>Cong. Record, 48th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 1577, 2239, 2240; Senate Reports, 48th Cong., 1st Sess., No. 69.

<sup>28</sup>Detroit Post and Tribune, January 30, 1884; C. A. Stebbins to Palmer, November 8, 1883, Palmer Papers; Senate Reports, 48th Cong., 1st Sess., No. 399.

<sup>29</sup>Jos. W. Kay, Chairman, Executive Committee of Veteran's Rights Union, to Palmer, February 21, 1884; J. Buell to Palmer, February 2, 1884. Palmer Papers.

<sup>30</sup>H. S. Lymund to W. P. Hill, Chairman of the Post Office and Post Roads Committee, U.S. Senate, February 23, 1884, Palmer Papers; Senate Reports, 48th Cong., 1st Sess., No. 379; Cong. Record, 48th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 5181.

<sup>31</sup>Detroit Evening News, February 2, 5, 19, 1884; Palmer to Friend Palmer, March 2, 1884, Palmer Papers.

<sup>32</sup>Detroit Post and Tribune, March 11, 1884; Cong. Record, 48th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 4372-75.

<sup>33</sup>Cong. Record, 48th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 2724.

<sup>34</sup>Cong. Record, 48th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 5298; Shannon, The Centennial Years, pp. 77-78.

<sup>35</sup>Cong. Record, 48th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 5937-38; John A. S. Grenville and George Berkeley Young, Politics, Strategy, and American Diplomacy (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1966), pp. 52-53; U.S. Statutes-at-Large, XXIII, pp. 115-16.



<sup>36</sup>Palmer to Ford Starring, February 5, 1884, Palmer Letterbooks, Palmer Papers; Detroit Post and Tribune, February 5, 1884; Detroit Evening News, March 6, 1884.

<sup>37</sup>Detroit Evening News, March 3, 1884.

<sup>38</sup>New York Times, February 5, 7, 1884; Gratwick, Smith and Fryer Lumber Co. to Nelson Aldrich, March 13, 1884; Geo. W. Bond and Co. (wool) to Nelson Aldrich, January 18, 1884. Nelson Aldrich Papers, Library of Congress--hereinafter cited as the Aldrich Papers. Detroit Evening News, April 15, 1884; Appleton's Annual Cyclopedia, 1885, p. 204; Detroit Free Press, May 7, 1884; Cong. Record, 48th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 3908.

<sup>39</sup>Detroit Post and Tribune, January 12, 1884; Detroit Evening News, January 7, 1884.

<sup>40</sup>Detroit Evening News, January 12, 1884; Detroit Post and Tribune, January 12, March 19, 1884; Detroit Free Press, January 16, 1884.

<sup>41</sup>T. S. Blades to Palmer, March 1, 1884; James Stone to Palmer, March 23, 1884; Sumner Howard to Palmer, March 3, 1884; Wm. Livingstone to Palmer, March 15, 1884. Palmer Papers; Detroit Free Press, April 20, 1884; Palmer to T. C. Philips, March 24, 1884, Palmer Letterbooks, Palmer Papers.

<sup>42</sup>Sumner Howard to Palmer, May 3, 1884, Palmer Papers.

<sup>43</sup>Detroit Post and Tribune, April 24, 25, 1884.

<sup>44</sup>Palmer to G. B. Stebbins, March 15, 1884, Palmer Letterbooks, Palmer Papers; Detroit Evening News, March 19, 1884; Detroit Post and Tribune, February 22, 1884; Palmer to Henry S. Frieze, February 9, 1884, Palmer Letterbooks, Palmer Papers.

<sup>45</sup>Detroit Evening News, March 19, 1884.

<sup>46</sup>Detroit Free Press, March 21, 1884.



<sup>47</sup>Detroit Free Press, March 9, 1884; James Peck to William Chandler, William E. Chandler Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>48</sup>Wm. Livingstone to Palmer, May 10, 1884, Palmer Papers.

<sup>49</sup>Palmer to Ford Starring, May 13, 1884, Palmer Papers.

<sup>50</sup>C. L. Dirk to John Sherman, May 30, 1884, John Sherman Papers, Library of Congress--hereinafter cited as the Sherman Papers. [For a good account of that struggle see Harry J. Sievers, Benjamin Harrison, Hoosier Statesman (New York: University Publishers, Inc., 1959)].

<sup>51</sup>Detroit Evening News, April 24, June 7, 1884.

<sup>52</sup>Detroit Post and Tribune, June 7, 1884.

<sup>53</sup>Detroit Evening News, June 7, 1884.

<sup>54</sup>Detroit Post and Tribune, July 14, 1884.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.; Nation, XXXIX (July 10, 1884), 21.

<sup>56</sup>Detroit Evening News, August 13, 14, 1884.

<sup>57</sup>Detroit Evening News, August 15, 1884.

<sup>58</sup>Detroit Post and Tribune, August 21, October 21, 1884.

<sup>59</sup>Detroit Free Press, November 1, 2, 1884; Nation, XXXIX (November 13, 1884), 407; Frank R. Kent, The Democratic Party (New York: Century Co., 1928), p. 287; George H. Mayer, The Republican Party, 1854-1966 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 211; H. Wayne Morgan, From Hayes to McKinley; National Party Politics, 1877-1896 (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1969), pp. 229-30.

<sup>60</sup>Michigan Manual, 1885, pp. 411, 422, 423.



<sup>61</sup>Detroit Post and Tribune, November 17, 1884;  
Detroit Free Press, November 11, 1884.

<sup>62</sup>Detroit Post and Tribune, December 3, 1884;  
Cong. Record, 48th Cong. 2d Sess., pp. 552-55; Garraty,  
p. 115.

<sup>63</sup>Cong. Record, 48th Cong., 2d Sess., pp. 854-55,  
1246-49, 1254; Nielson, pp. 114-16.

<sup>64</sup>Detroit Free Press, February 12, 13, 23-24, 27,  
1885; Detroit Evening News, February 12, 25, 27; Cong.  
Record, 48th Cong., 2d Sess., pp. 1565, 1572, 2083, 2205.

<sup>65</sup>Cong. Record, 48th Cong., 2d Sess., pp. 2334-37.

<sup>66</sup>See David Maldwyn Ellis, "The Forfeiture of  
Railroad Land Grants, 1867-1894," Mississippi Valley His-  
torical Review, XXXIII (June, 1946), 27-60.

<sup>67</sup>Detroit Evening News, January 9, 1885; Detroit  
Free Press, January 22, 1885; Cong. Record, 48th Cong.,  
2d Sess., pp. 1518, 1524.

<sup>68</sup>Cong. Record, 48th Cong., 2d Sess., pp. 1519-20.

<sup>69</sup>Cong. Record, 48th Cong., 2d Sess., pp. 1555,  
1560. In an interview reported by the Detroit Post,  
Palmer was defended by Congressman Byron Cutcheon.  
Cutcheon maintained that Palmer's actions had been mis-  
understood and that Palmer was not fighting for the  
interests of "any railroad company, land ring, or any  
land speculators." Detroit Post, February 23, 1885.

<sup>70</sup>Detroit Free Press, January 22, 1885; Detroit  
Evening News, February 12, 17, 1885.

<sup>71</sup>Cong. Record, 48th Cong., 2d Sess., pp. 1561,  
1637, 1932, 2205, 2209.

<sup>72</sup>Susan B. Anthony to Palmer, June 9, 1884, Palmer  
Papers; Susan B. Anthony, History of Woman Suffrage, Vol.  
IV (Indianapolis: Hollenbeck Press, 1902), p. 62.

<sup>73</sup>Detroit Post, February 7, 1885.



<sup>74</sup>Cong. Record, 48th Cong., 2d Sess., p. 1323.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

<sup>77</sup>Cong. Record, 48th Cong., 2d Sess., p. 1324.

<sup>78</sup>Cong. Record, 48th Cong., 2d Sess., p. 1325.

<sup>79</sup>Detroit Evening News, February 7, 1885; Detroit Post, February 7, 1885.

<sup>80</sup>Clara Barton to Palmer, March 2, 1885; Susan B. Anthony to Palmer, March 2, 1885. Palmer Papers. Palmer sent two mailbags of his speech to Susan B. Anthony, March 18, 1885. Palmer Letterbooks, Palmer Papers.

<sup>81</sup>Detroit Free Press, March 9, 1885.

<sup>82</sup>John S. Newberry to Palmer, December 17, 1884; James McMillan to Palmer, December 18, 1884; Cigarmakers Union 209 to Palmer, January 11, 1885. Palmer Papers. Detroit Evening News, January 11, 14, 1885; W. Stull Holt, Treaties Defeated by the Senate (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1933), pp. 139-40.

<sup>83</sup>The negotiations with Nicaragua by the United States violated the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty. See Holt, Treaties Defeated by the Senate, pp. 135-36; Detroit Evening News, January 14, 30, 1885.



## CHAPTER V

### THE EXPERIENCED LEGISLATOR

A short special session of the Senate immediately followed the second session of the 48th Congress. The only action of the Senate in the special session affecting Senator Palmer was that taken in regard to committee appointments. Palmer received only one new assignment--the chairmanship of the Fish and Fisheries Committee. This was an important committee for a senator from a Great Lakes state to chair. Commercial fishing in those inland waters was a big business and a chairman of the committee who could properly reflect the interests of the Great Lakes fishermen could acquire valuable political support in the multi-state area. Palmer wasted no time in appealing to those commercial fishing interests. Six days after his appointment to the Fisheries Committee, he called for a resolution authorizing the committee to sit during the legislative recess to "investigate the reported decrease of the food fishes of the Great Lakes with a view of recommending legislation for their protection." He also used his influence to obtain a large stock of land-locked



salmon eggs from the United States Commission of Fish and Fisheries for the Michigan Fish Commission.<sup>1</sup>

Besides his activities related to his work on the Fish and Fisheries Committee during the legislative recess, Palmer was able to pay some attention to both business and political affairs in Michigan. His political supporters were anxious that he return to Michigan to "rub bellies with old friends and make conquests of new ones." They informed him that his old political enemies were again active. According to his friends, his political foes were attempting to rally discouraged Michigan Republicans who were still leaderless and divided almost two years after Cleveland's victory. They had also embarked on a campaign to discredit Palmer politically.<sup>2</sup>

Finding himself occupied with business problems on his return to Detroit, Palmer relied on his trusted friend James Shepard to "feel the public pulse" in the outlying areas of the state. Shepard reported that many veterans' votes could be won by sponsoring bills for hospitals, old soldiers' homes, and other projects that would benefit them.<sup>3</sup>

Palmer's business problems were caused by a wave of labor unrest that swept the sawmills in the Saginaw Valley. The strikes began in the Bay City area and spread to the East Saginaw district when about 1,500 men from Bay City swarmed into the Saginaw mills and forced



them to cease operations. Among the mills closed down was one owned by Palmer and Joseph Whittier. The strikers demanded a ten-hour day with eleven hours pay. The strikes idled approximately seventy mills producing 100 million feet of lumber a month. When several mills attempted to continue operations, they were attacked by the strikers. When police failed to maintain the peace, a force of Pinkerton detectives was hired. The presence of the Pinkertons only further antagonized the strikers. As a result, units of the state militia were mobilized and sent to quell the disturbances. The militia stopped the violence and by the end of August most of the men had returned to work at ten hours per day with a reduction of one-eleventh from their previous day's wage. Whittier reported to Palmer that the men in their mill had gone back to work on those conditions. The mill owners estimated the total cost of the strike at 182,000,000 feet of lumber and \$300,000 in workmen's wages lost.<sup>4</sup>

The first session of the 49th Congress opened on December 7, 1885. According to a Detroit Free Press report of an interview with the senator, Palmer did not intend to be "very fertile" in the propagation of bills but did expect to introduce a bill establishing a national quarantine for livestock. The Free Press stated that both Michigan senators opposed any effort to change the tariff laws. Palmer was quoted as saying



that "any measure looking toward a radical change in the schedule of tariff duties will find as strong opponents on the Democratic side of the Senate as on the Republican side. The sentiment seems to be that the question should be given a rest for awhile." Time was to show, however, that tariff reformers such as William Morrison, chairman of the House Committee on Ways and Means, were again active.<sup>5</sup>

Senator Palmer introduced two bills, both of which died in committee. The day after the publication of the interview, he introduced a bill calling for the establishment of infected animal quarantines to prevent the spread of contagious and infectious diseases. Evidence indicates that Palmer's interests as a gentleman farmer rather than pressure from his constituents was responsible for his action. The other bill called for the establishment of adult evening schools in the District of Columbia. His experience on the District committee undoubtedly motivated him to present the bill.<sup>6</sup>

There were two bills in this session for whose passage Palmer expended a great deal of time and effort. The first dealt with the regulation of interstate commerce. The Reagan Bill had passed the House in the 48th Congress but the Senate had substituted its own bill, with the result that no measure had been passed.<sup>7</sup>



Senator Shelby Cullom carried on the fight for railroad legislation in the new Senate as he had in the old. He believed that some type of railroad regulation was inevitable despite the opposition of many railroads. The railroad men, he thought, had been offered ample opportunity to present their views by his select committee that had been authorized in 1885 to investigate the problems of interstate commerce and to provide recommendations for new legislation. According to him, railroad officials had ignored the committee and had even refused to provide it with information concerning railroad operations.<sup>8</sup>

It was Cullom's purpose to avoid discussions on the general subject of regulation that had previously used up so much time. He believed that sufficient public sentiment had been manifested in favor of railroad regulation to make extended debate unnecessary. His bill was based on the premise "that publicity is the most effective remedy for the evils most seriously complained of, so far as it is possible to remedy them by legislation." He therefore placed his faith in the efficacy of a commission that would have the responsibility of reviewing railroad management and operations to determine whether rates were fair and properly publicized. The Reagan Bill differed on this key point. It made no allowance for a commission but instead relied on the courts for regulation.<sup>9</sup>



On April 14, 1886, Senator Palmer gave a major address in favor of the Senate's bill for railroad regulation. He began by announcing that he was going to vote for the bill not because it was a perfect bill but because he hoped that its operation would prepare the way for "more comprehensive legislation." He declared, however, that the object of his speech was not to berate and denigrate the railroads. Noting that he was aware of the railroads' contribution in having "annihilated distance," he insisted, however, that it was important that these servants of civilization remain its servants and not its masters.<sup>10</sup>

He went on to discuss the need for federal regulation, pointing out that all "civilized" European governments exerted varying degrees of controls over their railroads. Thus, the United States was the only major world power that did not in some manner regulate its railroad system. He cited railroad monopolies and stock watering as two of the evils that could be prevented by regulation. In particular, he attacked the practice of railroad discrimination in the form of rebates to favored shippers. He noted that such an arrangement had allowed Standard Oil "to practically control the oil supply of the continent." To redress these evils, he concluded, federal regulation was necessary.<sup>11</sup>



After reviewing the principle features of the Senate's version of the interstate commerce bill, Palmer called for increased salaries for the proposed commissioners. He put his views thus:

Concentrated capital never mistakes cheapness in the employment of its agents for economy and salaries from \$12,000 to \$25,000 for those intrusted with the business management of railways are not uncommon. The Commissioners are to have no other business. On this account I urge upon Senators and the Committee having the bill in charge the serious consideration of an amendment of section 15 increasing the amount of compensation.<sup>12</sup>

(In the bill that was eventually signed into law, salaries were set at \$7,500. Palmer's arguments obviously did not sway his colleagues.)

He said that he did not believe that the legislation would "at once bring the proposed millenium to American transportation."<sup>13</sup> He did think, however, that the American people deserved to be given protection and a chance for their complaints to be heard. He concluded with these words:

All the American citizen has asked in the past or will ask in the future is a fair chance; no odds of the government, but its protection, for which his life is pledged, and its schools, for which his money is paid. Special privileges for none, equal rights for all.

This speech in defense of railroad regulation won praise from various sources. A political advisor wrote that it had given Palmer "good publicity" and the reputation of a "wise legislator serving a most timely utterance." Another supporter called his speech



"eminently fair" and "entirely divested of narrow partisanship."<sup>15</sup>

Other comments were not so laudatory. The Detroit Evening News sardonically complimented Palmer for his speech, declaring that the News stood on the same platform and was happy to see that Palmer had been converted. The newspaper expressed the hope that in particular he would live up to his "eloquent peroration . . . special privileges for none, equal rights for all." The paper suggested that perhaps the best way Palmer could demonstrate his sincerity in his "advocacy of special privileges for none" would be by responding in a "loud clear voice yea" for the Morrison Tariff Bill.<sup>16</sup>

One of the most interesting letters that Palmer received as a result of his speech came from a Michigan member of the Knights of Labor. The working man praised the Senator for his address, declaring that he had "antagonized the most powerful ring of stock gamblers the world possesses, the railroad monopoly in the United States." He went on to warn Palmer that the Republican party should take steps to implement the principles enunciated by the senator since "wire pulling" and "political scheming" would not win Michigan in the fall elections. To insure victory for the Republican party, the vote of the working man had to be secured. This could be accomplished, he suggested, by the passage of



an eight-hour working day bill--at least for minors. He assured Palmer that if he would introduce such a bill and obtain its passage, he would be "the most popular man in Congress."<sup>17</sup>

In his response to this letter, Palmer insisted that as far as the railroad magnates were concerned, he had "never worn any man's or any ring's collar." He acknowledged that the Republican party had made errors but confidently asserted that despite its mistakes, it was the party of "aspiration and free thought." He further acknowledged that one of the mistakes of the last election campaign had been the neglect of the needs and desires of the working class. He advised his correspondent that workingmen should retain their labor organizations and continue to "agitate" for reform but that they should always remain on the proper side of the law. He concluded by saying that "if the country is going to work it is because the workingman is happy and measurably content."<sup>18</sup>

Palmer's response to the workingman's letter was remarkably mild and free from antagonism for a mill owner who had so recently experienced labor discontent among his employees. His sympathy seemed to be with the workingmen although it is noteworthy that he made no promise to sponsor a bill for an eight-hour working day.

While the Senator was busy answering the letters resulting from his railroad regulation address, fierce



debate on the subject continued in the Senate. One issue that provoked some of the most heated controversy was the amendment of Senator Johnson N. Camden of West Virginia, which forbade any common carrier to charge more for a shorter than for a longer distance over the same line in the same direction, a practice that many shippers had vehemently protested.<sup>19</sup>

Palmer objected to the amendment because he believed that it was unfair to the railroad industry as a whole since it gave an unfair advantage to certain railroads. He said that to insure competition some railroads should be allowed to charge more for a short haul than for a long haul. He asserted that nature had favored some railroads by giving them a better terrain and a better population distribution, factors that placed them automatically in a superior position to their less favored competitors. If such factors were ignored, he concluded, then those railroads which could not compensate for their natural competitive disadvantages would fail, thus leaving in existence fewer railroads and less competition. "We must not," he said, "cripple the railroads; we must make them strong and then make them behave themselves. There is the whole difficulty. We don't want to embarrass them; we want to control them."<sup>20</sup>

Senator Camden responded to Palmer's comments by arguing that if there was any discrimination, it was



against the shippers and not the railroads. He explained that a shipper 100 miles nearer the market could be charged twice as much as a shipper living twice that distance from the same market. According to Camden, the object of his amendment was to see "that the shipper who is 100 miles nearer the market shall not pay more in the aggregate than a shipper 100 miles further distance from the market."<sup>21</sup>

Camden's amendment was narrowly approved by a 29-24 vote. Palmer voted against it while Senator Omar Conger, Michigan's other senator, also a Republican, voted for it. Senator John Ingalls of Kansas, disturbed by the vote, angrily accused Camden of being an agent for the Baltimore and Ohio railroads, which had supported the long haul-short haul amendment. Camden did not respond to Ingalls' accusation.<sup>22</sup>

Palmer may have had a private motive for opposing the long haul-short haul clause. Until 1880 most lumber transportation in Michigan was accomplished by water. After 1880 a great proportion of lumber hauling was done by rail. According to one source, Palmer "enjoyed a large car trade, shipping directly to the country dealers" located in all parts of the country. Hence, if Palmer had made arrangements for long distance shipping of his lumber products then he would stand to gain by defeating the clause.<sup>23</sup>



Another amendment to the Interstate Commerce Bill that Palmer vigorously opposed was one that would place lake and water carriers on the same level as railroads in respect to notifying the public of a rate change. The Senate bill required the railroads to give a ten-day notice before changing their rates. Palmer argued that lake craft were owned by many different parties and had constantly competed against each other. With the advent of the railroads, the lake craft were forced to reduce their rates to compete with them. Thus, he reasoned, it was the railroads who were the regulators of the lake craft rate rather than the reverse. He argued, therefore, that since the lake craft were already at a competitive disadvantage they should be allowed to retain their price flexibility because their rates would always roughly correspond to the railroad rates. (Palmer owned stock in the Lake Michigan Navigation Company and many of his prominent Michigan constituents also held substantial interests in Great Lakes shipping companies.)<sup>24</sup>

Senator Joseph E. Brown of Georgia objected to Palmer's argument because the water carriers could, if the amendment was rejected, adjust their rates at will and would have a ten-day advantage over the rail carriers. Palmer countered by declaring that if the lake carriers were forced to give ten day's notice all freighting would be demoralized since people would hold back their freight,



shipping neither "rail nor by boat until the ten days were up." Palmer succeeded in tabling the amendment.<sup>25</sup>

The Interstate Commerce Bill was finally approved by the Senate by a vote of 47-4, with Senator Palmer voting for it. The Senate bill was defeated in the House by a vote of 134-104. The House then substituted its own version (the Reagan Bill) by a vote of 192-4. It was too late in the session for the differences between the houses to be resolved.

Palmer's stand on federal regulation of private industry was a positive one. His Senate speech on the railroad regulation bill had clearly indicated that he fully believed in the concept of federal regulatory powers. Yet he did not advocate government ownership of railroads or any other radical measure such as had been proposed by some of the more strident anti-railroad groups. His attitude was that of a middle-of-the-road businessman in that he recognized that there were legitimate complaints about railroad management practices and that these malpractices could best be remedied by judicious government control. He believed that the federal regulations provided for in the Senate bill would make the operations of the railroads more efficient and their administration more honest. He was not a spokesman for the railroads but neither was he a proponent of the type of railroad reform proposed by Reagan and other Democrats in the House.<sup>26</sup>



The second bill to which Palmer devoted himself in this session was similar in one respect to the Interstate Commerce Bill in that it too involved the issue of federal regulation of private industry. The bill's purpose was to define butter and oleomargarine, to provide for the licensing of oleomargarine producers and distributors, and to place a tax on the product itself. It called for an annual tax of six hundred dollars on manufacturers of oleomargarine, four hundred eighty dollars on wholesale dealers, and forty-eight dollars on retail dealers. Each pound of oleo produced for domestic consumption would bear a five cent tax while oleo produced for foreign consumption would have a tax of fifteen cents levied upon it. To prevent oleo from being fraudulently sold as butter, the commissioner of Internal Revenue was authorized to investigate questionable products to determine whether they were oleo or butter as defined in the bill. An analytical chemist and a microscopist were to be appointed to aid in the search for impure or mislabeled products. The commissioner of Internal Revenue was authorized to hire more chemists if he deemed it necessary.<sup>27</sup>

The proposed legislation was highly controversial as it matched two segments of the economy against each other--the dairy farmers and the manufacturers of oleomargarine. Farm interests claimed that the value of



dairy farms had depreciated from 33 to 50 per cent as a result of the introduction of oleomargarine as a butter substitute. They asserted that the entire dairy industry was paralyzed and could only be saved by immediate relief. Only through federal regulation and taxation of the oleomargarine industry could this relief be obtained.<sup>28</sup>

The manufacturers of oleomargarine aggressively defended themselves. They generated a vast publicity campaign aimed at counteracting the opposition of the powerful dairy interests. Armour and Company sent brochures to many senators explaining in detail why oleomargarine should remain untaxed. Armour argued that the production of oleomargarine contributed to agricultural profits because butter fats were used in the process.<sup>29</sup>

Opposition to oleo legislation was also voiced by stores that sold the product and by institutions such as boarding houses and lumber camps that served mass meals and used oleomargarine as a cheap substitute for butter. One supporter of oleomargarine wrote Senator Palmer that "every lumberman knows oleo is a good cheap food. I do not like the idea of Congress trying to drive it out of the market."<sup>30</sup>

The bill to tax oleomargarine had originated in the House, where it had passed by a vote of 177-101 after considerable debate. In the Senate it was referred to the Committee on Agriculture and Forestry. It was



reported back favorably on July 1, 1886, but accompanied by a strong minority dissent.<sup>31</sup>

There was a delay of almost three weeks before further action was taken on it. Senator James Beck of Kentucky attempted to have the bill delayed by referring it to the Committee on Finance. This action brought instant opposition from several senators who expressed the fear that if such a motion carried the bill would be buried. Beck's proposal was beaten by a vote of 29 nays to 15 yeas. Both Michigan senators voted against the motion.<sup>32</sup>

One of the chief proponents of the Oleomargarine Bill was Senator Warner Miller of New York. He argued that no bill in recent years had aroused so much popular discussion. He emphasized the need to protect the people because the public had demanded protection and further pointed out that the public was not protected from fraud by existing state regulations. Therefore, since state regulations had proved to be ineffectual, it was necessary to introduce new legislation to enable the federal government to assume regulation of the oleomargarine industry.<sup>33</sup>

Southern senators headed the opposition to the oleo bill. Senator Joseph Brown of Georgia said that the additional revenue was not needed because there was a treasury surplus and that the bill could not aid the majority of American farmers. Senator Richard Coke of



Texas saw the bill as a thinly disguised effort of the high tariff protectionists to eliminate the oleo industry. He also foresaw the day--if the oleo bill passed--when taxation of cane sugar to aid beet sugar, corn to aid wheat growers, and hogs to aid cattle raisers--would also be demanded. He concluded by declaring that the bill extended the scope of federal powers beyond the limits allowed by law. If regulation was needed, he thought that the states could provide the necessary legislation. (Since America's dairy industry was located largely in the north, the southern senator obviously allowed sectional feelings to influence his rhetoric. Most of the oleo industry was also located in the north so that his statement in respect to the "high tariff protectionists" was not a very accurate assessment.)<sup>34</sup>

While Senator Miller was spearheading the defense of the bill, Senator Palmer was quietly assembling facts and figures for an address in favor of the proposed legislation. He had been the recipient of a great amount of information--both solicited and unsolicited--concerning the preparation and production of oleomargarine. One supporter of oleo assured him that there was essentially no difference between oleo and butter. He claimed that the "only way to tell good butter from oleo is that the genuine article usually has coarse salt and a fair sprinkling of hairs." Companies that produced



oleomargarine wrote Palmer detailed reports describing the making of their product. Thus he became well informed on the subject.<sup>35</sup>

Palmer's position on the issue had undoubtedly been decided before he began assimilating information on the production of oleomargarine. Although Michigan farmers comprised only 29 per cent of their state's working population (nationally farmers comprised 44 per cent of the work force) they bombarded him with letters in favor of the bill. It was not surprising, therefore, that Palmer, who fancied himself a gentleman farmer, responded to his farmer constituents by supporting the bill. (In 1884 Michigan had 384,578 milch cows that produced 7,898,273 gallons of milk, 38,821,890 pounds of butter, and 440,540 pounds of cheese. According to the Michigan census of 1884, Michigan had 178,551 farmers out of a total working population of 630,852.)<sup>36</sup>

The Detroit Evening News, the nominally independent Detroit newspaper, put the matter thus:

But the position of Messrs. Conger and Palmer is not surprising. There is nothing inconsistent in their action. It is quite in keeping with the policy of protection of which they are both advocates. It would seem however, that Senator Palmer is getting that celebrated ear of his further and further from the ground.<sup>37</sup>

Senator Palmer gave his address to the Senate in favor of dairy protection on July 17, 1886. He began by describing the dairy industry's importance and value to the national economy. He stated that it annually produced



over 500 million dollars worth of butter, cheese, and milk. He then launched into a brief history of the oleomargarine industry. According to him, oleo was first produced during the seige of Paris where, as a result of the scarcity of butter, oleo oil was "mixed with milk, combined with bicarbonate of soda and pepsin from cow's udders: coloring matter added and churned." He then made the following comment:

Of all the desperate innovations inventions to prolong life in the city of horrors, only two, I believe, have retained places in the economy of the living. They are horseflesh for the very poor and the noxious elaborations of oleomargarine for all except the very rich and the very cautious.<sup>38</sup>

As for oleo's chemical composition Palmer asserted that twelve known poisons and twenty-six ingredients of "dubious quality" were used in the formulas that he had examined. He admitted that one chemist had described oleo as "chemically the same" as butter but he sarcastically noted that "chemically charcoal and the diamond are the same." He further cited a statement from Armour and Company that described the additive contained in its product. He claimed that the list "started with nitric acid and ended with caustic soda." To protect the public, he suggested that every butterine pot should contain a statement of its contents. He also submitted a letter from Professor R. C. Kedzie of the Michigan Agricultural College testifying to the harmfulness of oleomargarine additives.<sup>39</sup>



Palmer attacked the oleomargarine industry's claim that it benefited the dairy industry. On the contrary, he contended, great harm was being done to the dairy industry because of unrestricted oleomargarine production. He declared that the export of butter had decreased by over 18 million pounds during the last six years while the export of oleomargarine had increased by 17 million pounds in that same period. He claimed that this growth in the export of oleomargarine was the result of fraud. He asserted that he possessed information indicating that such oleo producing companies as Armour's supplied creameries with oleo oil for the purpose of mixing it with real butter. These same companies forced reputable retail dealers to sell the resulting produce as pure butter.<sup>40</sup>

Palmer said that the farmers and dairy men had already appealed to their state legislatures and that although some twenty states had passed laws regulating oleomargarine, the laws had proved to be ineffective because the states lacked "adequate machinery" to enforce them. He concluded, therefore, that federal regulation and taxation were indeed necessary.<sup>41</sup>

Palmer's speech was expectedly popular with Michigan farmers and dairymen. One of his friends informed him that "Michigan farm boys" made plans to publish the address. The bill was passed by a vote of



37-24 with both Michigan senators voting for it. President Cleveland signed the bill on August 22, 1886.<sup>42</sup>

The voting clearly revealed a geographical division. Southern senators provided almost all of the negative votes while northern and midwestern senators supplied the majority of the affirmative ballots. It was clear from the protests of the southern senators that they believed that it was another "high tariff" measure but this time aimed at a domestic industry. There appeared to be a two-fold fear among the southerners in regard to the bill. First, they believed that if passed, it might set a precedent for the future and that possibly southern agricultural products might be similarly taxed to provide a commercial advantage for Northern agriculture. Secondly, they feared the extension of federal power that was implicit in the measure and which they considered unconstitutional.

The significance of the oleomargarine bill was not its regulatory details but its extension of the federal government's powers. As in the case of interstate commerce, state regulations had proved to be inadequate, and the regulatory powers of the federal government had again been invoked to control private industry--a trend that had only just begun.<sup>43</sup>

As for Senator Palmer, he had further entrenched himself with his Michigan farm constituents and had also



made himself popular in other midwestern dairy states. Many farmers, including members of the American Agricultural and Dairy Association, credited him with having been responsible for the oleomargarine bill's passage.<sup>44</sup>

During the eighties the high tariff policy of the United States resulted in substantial treasury surpluses, averaging over 100 million dollars a year in that decade. Since Republican protectionists successfully fought any attempt to reduce duties, other means were needed to reduce the surpluses. Internal improvement schemes, particularly those aimed at developing rivers and harbors, were the Republican answers to the surplus problem. The internal improvement programs sparked much partisan controversy. The Democrats attacked them as "pork barrel" projects and because they seemed to constitute another extension of federal powers.<sup>45</sup>

Among the Michigan projects being proposed for funding in the Rivers and Harbors Bill before the Senate were the purchase and improvement of the Portage Lake Canal in the Keewenaw Peninsula and the improvement of the Sault Ste Marie locks and the Hay Lake channel of the Saint Mary's River. Senator Palmer defended these projects and the Rivers and Harbors Bill in general. On July 10, 1886, he addressed the Senate, declaring that he had always believed in a rivers and harbors bill and that the current one was "one of the most defensible



bills ever to come before Congress." He claimed that there was no need to apologize for the treasury surplus when there were worthwhile projects justifying expenditures.<sup>46</sup>

Palmer then launched an attack on the federal aid for railroads over the years. He argued that it cost twice as much to ship by rail as by water and declared that those like Senator Thomas C. Platt of New York who believed that the railroads were going to take the place of water transportation were wrong. It was essential, he said, that the federal government improve lake and river navigation routes to enable the public to continue to benefit from water and rail competition. He maintained that for \$350,000 the government would receive a bargain in water projects in Michigan. He then cited statistics revealing that in an eight-year period--1877 to 1885--there had been a 3.000 per cent increase in the number of bushels of wheat shipped from Duluth by water through the Michigan waterways.<sup>47</sup>

Opponents of the appropriations for Michigan charged that the owners of the Portage Lake Canal would profit from the government's purchase. Since the canal owners had been losing money, many people believed that the government would be taking a "white elephant" off their hands. Palmer denied that he represented the Portage Lake Canal owners' interests and there is no



evidence to indicate that he was being unduly pressured by them. He said that it was simply a "wise thing for the states west of Lake Superior to secure the purchase of the canal and put it into the hands of the general government." He further contended that because the canal saved a detour of 150 miles, the cost of shipping grain would be reduced one-half cent per bushel.<sup>48</sup>

Palmer's eloquence and his statistical presentation did not convince Senator George Edmunds of Vermont, who continued to speak against the Michigan projects. Despite the Vermont senator's objections the Michigan items won Senate approval by a vote of 35-21. Palmer was ill and not present when the final vote was taken on the Rivers and Harbors Bill, which passed 42-14. (Palmer had it announced that he had been paired with Senator Vance but would have voted yea if present.) The bill was sent to the President only after four conference committees had toiled to produce a satisfactory compromise measure.<sup>49</sup>

Despite Palmer's chairmanship of the Committee on Fish and Fisheries, he had little to do with the work of that committee in comparison with his involvement with other legislation such as the Interstate Commerce Bill or the Oleomargarine Bill. He did attend to routine committee matters and helped write a committee report that dealt with an investigation into proposed restrictions on mackerel fishing. He favored restrictions on mackerel



fishing during the spawning season to insure the survival of the mackerel as a food fish. During the second session of this Congress a bill with such provisions was passed.<sup>50</sup>

Palmer, however, did not become an active participant in the Canadian-American fisheries dispute that erupted as a result of the expiration on July 2, 1885, of the Treaty of Washington (1871), which had governed Canadian-American fishing relations. Secretary of State Thomas Bayard had arranged that American fishing rights within three miles of the Canadian shore would be maintained in return for a meeting of a joint commission to discuss general maritime problems of the United States and Canada. In January, 1886, however, New England senators, led by William Frye of Maine, George Edmunds of Vermont, and George Hoar of Massachusetts, sponsored a resolution declaring that since American fishermen no longer desired inshore fishing rights, the meeting of a joint commission was unnecessary. The real reason that the New England senators sponsored the resolution was the fear that a joint commission might bring another general reciprocity agreement such as had been made in 1854. The senators also believed that the administration had usurped the Senate's treaty-making powers by arranging the *modus vivendi* without first consulting the Senate. On April 13, 1886, the Senate supported the resolution



by a 35-10 vote. (Palmer abstained from voting.) In reaction to the Senate's move, the Canadian authorities began to enforce fishing regulations under the Treaty of 1818 that permitted American fishermen to enter Canadian ports for shelter, fuel, and water and for no other purpose. When American fishermen began to fish in Canadian waters in defiance of warnings their boats were seized by the Canadian authorities. In response, American fishing schooners began arming themselves for protection.<sup>51</sup>

Even though Michigan fishermen were not directly involved, Michigan newspapers, particularly the important Detroit papers, began calling for action in Congress and on other fronts. They also argued against any attempt at reciprocity since they contended that duty-free Canadian fish would ruin all United States fishermen. The Detroit Evening News was particularly hostile to the seizure of East coast fishermen by Canadian officials and jingoistically declared that if the Canadians were "spoiling for a fight they couldn't follow a better course to have their wishes granted."<sup>52</sup>

The Detroit Tribune was equally boisterous and warlike in its reaction as it endorsed a policy of retaliation against Canada. It declared that the United States should insist upon its rights and "those rights must and shall be acknowledged by our foreign friends and foes."<sup>53</sup>



Despite the fierce rhetoric of his hometown newspapers, Senator Palmer remained unmoved and did nothing to endorse any anti-Canadian feeling or to generate any hostile action against Canada.

Some of the sharpest criticism of President Cleveland came as a result of his political appointments. At the beginning of his term in office the President had given hope to Mugwump Republicans and other civil service reformers that his distribution of political patronage would be on a non-partisan basis. After two years as President, he had come under tremendous pressure from disgruntled Democrats who wanted him to reward the party faithful. He reacted to this pressure by removing large numbers of political appointees and replacing them with Democrats. One prominent Republican who had not been replaced was the customs collector at Detroit, William Livingstone. Livingstone was a good friend and strong supporter of Senator Palmer. Several Detroit newspapers voiced wonder at Livingstone's longevity. They expressed the opinion that Palmer had either "some sort of hold on the President" or had sacrificed other Republican employees to keep Livingstone in office.<sup>54</sup>

That Senator Palmer wielded much influence with President Cleveland is highly doubtful. He wrote several formal letters to the President but they were routine letters that any senator might have written. It is



likely that given the President's early reluctance to remove political appointees, he had been in no hurry to select another collector of customs. Livingstone halted further speculation by resigning his office late in October of 1886, undoubtedly in deference to Cleveland's midterm change in his policy.<sup>55</sup>

The first session of the 49th Congress ended on August 5, 1886. Palmer could look back on the session with satisfaction. He had successfully championed Michigan interests with a tenacity that had met with statewide approval. He had given major addresses on the two principal bills that had been before the Senate and had been on the side of the majority in respect to both. The House had again defeated Representative Morrison's efforts to pass a Tariff Reform Bill, a fact that particularly pleased Palmer since lumber had once again been on the proposed free trade list. He had received much publicity from the Michigan Republican press as a result of his activities. The Lansing State Republican called him "Michigan's favorite senator" and asserted that the "honorable gentleman happens to be so all fired popular throughout the length and breadth of this great state that everybody is singing his praises." It had been a good session for the lumberman from Detroit.<sup>56</sup>

Not all journals and newspapers were in accord with the actions of Senator Palmer and his colleagues.



The New York Times and the Nation were particularly incensed over the passage of the Rivers and Harbors Bill by the Senate. The New York Times called it a "bad bill." The Nation alluded to the "recklessness" of the Senate in adding "indefensible jobs" to the bill. It pointed specifically to the "outrageous scheme" to purchase the Portage Lake and River Company's canal for \$350,000 as a prime example of the type of wasteful expenditure that was included in the bill.<sup>57</sup>

The Democratic Detroit Free Press attacked in a similar vein, calling the bill "log rolling that makes the Rivers and Harbors appropriations a stench in the nostrils of every right thinking man." The Free Press also attacked Palmer specifically, declaring that his stand on the surplus problem was wrong. The paper claimed that the reason for a large treasury surplus was the "high taxes" imposed by lumber lords such as Palmer, for whose benefit "every consumer of lumber from Maine to Oregon is mulcted."<sup>58</sup>

During Palmer's absence from Michigan the political scene had been in a state of constant flux but his friends and advisors kept him informed of Republican activities. The Michigan Republicans had begun in early spring to prepare for the fall election. They feared that the numerous labor strikes and political apathy in the interior portions of the state might defeat the party if



Republicans waited until the fall to begin their campaign. Palmer's advisers, however, were optimistic that with proper campaign preparations, the Democrats would be beaten.<sup>59</sup>

Some of Palmer's supporters were disappointed that he had not used his position to thrust himself into the leadership of his party in the state. One correspondent urged him to act in these words: "You can make yourself the leading man in the Northwest by assuming control of Michigan politics. Your opportunity is now." Palmer resisted these urgent entreaties to become the "boss" of Michigan Republicans and maintained his policy of quiet vigilance over Michigan political affairs by means of his correspondents.<sup>60</sup>

Business problems occupied much of the Senator's time during the summer. Since his pine lands were being exhausted, he began to map out plans for a timber purchase program. He was also plagued by late business reports from one of his chief business managers, Ford Starring. Whenever Starring was late in submitting the proper accounts Palmer bitterly berated him. Starring's apologies did little to soothe his temper. Once again, Palmer's behavior toward an employee demonstrated a side of his character that sharply contrasted with his public image.<sup>61</sup>

Despite the impending fall elections and their importance to him and to the Michigan Republican party,



Palmer played a minor role in the campaign. In fact, he chose to spend part of his Congressional recess in travel. He and his wife sailed for Europe in September and did not return until early in January.<sup>62</sup>

The focus of the 1886 election in Michigan was the gubernatorial race. Cyrus Luce, the head of the Michigan State Grange, was nominated by the Republicans while George L. Yaple, former Greenback congressman from St. Joseph County, was the candidate of the combined Greenback and Democratic parties. Political prognosticators suggested that the "fusion" support behind Yaple was strong enough to threaten seriously the entire Republican slate of candidates for state offices. They were bolstered in this belief by the revival of the Michigan Prohibition party. It was thought that the Prohibitionists would sufficiently dilute Republican strength to allow the fusionists to emerge victorious. As the election drew near it was apparent that Michigan was no longer a Republican stronghold and that the outcome of the election was unpredictable.<sup>63</sup>

The election was extremely close but the Republicans managed to win small pluralities for their candidates for state office and to return a strongly Republican legislature.<sup>64</sup> Luce won by a slender margin of just over 7,000 votes. As anticipated the Prohibition vote cut into the Republican strength; no Republican candidate for



state office received a plurality of over 10,000. The gubernatorial vote was as follows:<sup>65</sup>

Luce (Republican)	181,474
Yaple (Fusionist)	174,042
Dicie (Prohibitionist)	25,179

Michigan Republicans did not have much time to gloat over their slender victory before they were faced with another key political crisis--the selection of a United States senator. Ordinarily this would not have been a difficult task because an incumbent senator was generally assured of renomination if the legislature was controlled by his party. Omar D. Conger, however, whose term was expiring, was faced with stiff opposition. In fact one newspaper declared that "Mr. Conger's boom has struck a cold wave," and predicted that it would take a "political miracle" to re-elect him.<sup>66</sup>

There were several reasons why Conger was vigorously opposed for renomination. In the first place he had been a compromise candidate when he had been first elected to the Senate. He had never possessed strong political support and had not won a large following since he had entered the Senate. Secondly, there were many prominent Republicans who were eager to succeed Conger. Included among these were Jay Hubbell, R. G. Horr, James Joy, James McMillan, and Russell Alger. Finally there was a geographic consideration. Only one senator in



thirty years had come from the western part of the state. Since that portion of the state generally furnished substantial Republican majorities, Republicans from that area were demanding more substantial political representation. Since Conger resided in Port Huron, he could expect no help from the west.<sup>67</sup>

One of the major surprises of the senatorial race was the sudden and unexpected withdrawal of one of the leading candidates, James McMillan, a prominent Detroit businessman and a frequent political foe of Senator Palmer. Most Michigan Republican leaders had expected McMillan to be Conger's successor. His sudden reluctance to be a candidate confused his political foes and threw the race wide open.<sup>68</sup>

Since McMillan had been the leading Detroit candidate for senator, the path was now open for a westerner. There were, however, so many candidates from that part of the state that no one could be called a favorite. It was rumored that because there was such a plethora of Republican hopefuls no Republican caucus would be held. Many candidates thought that they would stand a better chance in the open field than at the hands of political manipulators in the party caucus.

Despite these rumors the Republican party caucus was held on January 6, 1887. After three ballots, Francis B. Stockbridge, a lumberman from Allegan in



western Michigan, won the nomination. Stockbridge received 46 votes to Conger's 23. Twenty votes were scattered over a number of other candidates.<sup>69</sup>

The Detroit Evening News was ecstatic over the choice of a western man since, in its opinion, it opened the way for James McMillan in 1888 by "unanimous consent," now that the geographical debt to western Michigan had been paid. The New York Times, however, was of the opinion that Stockbridge had been selected because he was a lumberman who would continue to work for high tariffs on Canadian lumber. Although the fact that Stockbridge was a lumberman indeed stood him in good stead, the important factor in his election was that he resided in western Michigan.<sup>70</sup>

Stockbridge was formally elected twelve days after his selection by the Republican caucus. He received a total of 87 votes to George Yapple's 36. Palmer had managed to avoid taking sides in the senatorial contest by absenting himself from the proceedings. He had prolonged his European trip and did not land in the United States until the second week of January. By this time the second session of the 49th Congress had already begun.<sup>71</sup>

Palmer's absence from the political infighting that had accompanied the choice of his senatorial colleague had not strengthened him. Indeed, his political enemies had been encouraged by his lack of interest and were busy working for his downfall in 1888. One of his



supporters wrote the senator that "anything to beat Palmer is the pass word." He further exhorted Palmer to marshal his forces against the enemy. Both Palmer's business manager Ford Starring and his cousin Friend Palmer wrote him warnings of political danger. Starring told Palmer that his opponents "were doing everything they can to fix the slide so that when you next go tobagganing you'll be slid into private life with a vengeance." His cousin Friend told him that both James McMillan and Russell Alger were after his seat, and warned that "if you want to go back again to the Senate you must put in some hard work and fix your fences, the bears are after you." Again Palmer gave little indication of his political plans.<sup>72</sup>

Most of the legislation before the second session of the 49th Congress was old business left over from the first session. Since there was such a backlog of legislation and the second session was so short, it was anticipated that few new bills would be presented.<sup>73</sup>

In this session Palmer demonstrated none of the initiative that had characterized his work in the previous session. He seemed to have little interest in pending legislation. Perhaps the best example of his desultory behavior was his reaction to the Senate resolution advocating women's suffrage. This was the topic upon which he had given his first major address



before the Senate. Senator Henry Blair of New Hampshire was promoting the resolution in the second session. Surprisingly Palmer did not make any further remarks in its support. When the measure came up for a vote, he cast his ballot in favor of the resolution, which was defeated by a vote of 34-16. It may have been that he thought it was prudent to refrain from agitating any more than necessary as the issue was extremely unpopular with most Republicans. Also leading suffrage supporters such as Susan B. Anthony had not urged him to speak in behalf of the resolution, a factor that might explain his silence.<sup>74</sup>

Palmer's main activities during this session were concentrated on bills relating to Michigan and his work as chairman of the Fish and Fisheries Committee. He supported a bill regulating the catch of mackerel during the spawning season. The aim of the bill was to regulate coastal fishing so that mackerel schools would not be driven from the coast. The bill met opposition from New England senators (including George F. Hoar of Massachusetts) who were against any restrictions on New England fishermen. Despite this opposition, the Senate passed the bill by a vote of 34-11. A conference committee report was accepted by both houses and the bill signed by the President.<sup>75</sup>

Surprisingly Palmer did not play an active role in the debate on a bill introduced by the Committee on Foreign Relations in retaliation for the seizure of



American fishing vessels by the Canadian government. The bill, which was promoted by a number of New England senators, gave the President the power to deny Canadian vessels the right of entry into American waters if American vessels were not allowed in Canadian waters. It also contained provisions designed to punish Canadian fishermen who entered American waters illegally. The bill was passed by the Senate on a vote of 46-1, with Palmer voting for it. It was signed into law by the President in March, 1887.<sup>76</sup>

Palmer met mixed success with his Michigan bills. He managed to have the appropriation for the Detroit Public Building increased to \$1,100,000. He was unsuccessful, however, in his attempt to extend the land grant of the Ontonagon and Brule Railroad as his bill for that purpose was tabled.<sup>77</sup>

Palmer was urged by agricultural lobbyists to work for the passage of the Pleuro-Pneumonia Bill, the objective of which was to lessen contagious disease among livestock. Although he owned a stock-breeding farm and representatives of the American Percheron Horsebreeders Association and the Michigan Shorthorn Association petitioned him to support the bill actively, he did not enter the debate on the measure. He did, however, vote for it. The bill passed the Senate on February 28, 1887, by a 31-19 vote and was then referred to the House



Committee on Agriculture. Since Congress adjourned four days later, the House had no time to consider it.<sup>78</sup>

There were two important bills before Congress that had occasioned considerable debate in the first session and in which Palmer had taken a special interest. The first of these was the Interstate Commerce Bill. After the conference report came before the Senate there was some discussion as to the merits of the report but Palmer did not participate in it. The bill as agreed on by the conference committee was essentially the Senate's version. Reagan, representing the House, had given way on all issues upon which the two houses differed, except railroad pooling, to secure the passage of the bill; the Senate passed the conference report by a vote of 43-13 with both Michigan senators voting for it. The bill was approved by the President.<sup>79</sup>

The other bill was another Rivers and Harbors "pork barrel" that contained an appropriation for the purchase of the Portage Lake Canal, a project that Palmer had vigorously defended in the previous session. The bill passed by the House appropriated almost \$7,500,000 but by the time it came from the Senate, the total was over \$10,500,000. The conference committee cut over \$700,000 from that amount leaving a final appropriation of just under \$10,000,000. The Michigan project was included in the final version. This was the amount



reported by the conference committee and was approved by Congress. The President, however, killed the bill by a pocket veto.<sup>80</sup>

The second session of the 49th Congress ended on March 4, 1887. A Congress that had begun with great activity on Palmer's part, had ended with his performing only the barest minimum of his senatorial tasks. His efforts on behalf of the Interstate Commerce Bill and the Oleomargarine Bill during the first session had secured for him the approval of many Republicans throughout Michigan and the midwest. His refusal, however, to heed the political advice of his trusted advisers and supporters was costing him his political support as his enemies in the Michigan Republican ranks were concentrating their strength to bring about his downfall. His less than total effort in the second session of the 49th Congress had not enhanced his position. If his political career was not to come to an untimely end, his behavior both in the state and in the Senate would have to change.



FOOTNOTES--CHAPTER V

<sup>1</sup>Cong. Record, 49th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 37, 61; Spencer F. Baird, Commission of Fish and Fisheries, to Palmer, December 14, 1885, Palmer Papers.

<sup>2</sup>James Shepard to Palmer, May 19, 1885, Palmer Papers.

<sup>3</sup>James Shepard to Palmer, June 29, July 27, 1885, Palmer Papers.

<sup>4</sup>J. A. Whittier to Palmer, August 3, 8, 1885, Palmer Papers; Detroit Free Press, July 16, 20, 28, August 14, 1885; Saginaw Courier, July 16, 20, 28, August 14, 1885; The Detroit News in its August 16, 1885 edition, reported that 2,000 strikers were back to work in eighteen mills. That averages out to about 111 men per mill.

<sup>5</sup>Detroit Free Press, December 8, 1885; Detroit Evening News, December 27, 1885.

<sup>6</sup>Cong. Record, 49th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 135, 299.

<sup>7</sup>James W. Nelson, Shelby M. Cullom, Prairie State Republican, p. 91.

<sup>8</sup>Cong. Record, 49th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 1464; Shelby Cullom, Fifty Years of Public Service, p. 319. Recent scholarship has attempted to assign responsibility for railroad regulation to various interest groups, including the railroads themselves. Lee Benson in his Merchants, Farmers and Railroads: Railroad Regulation and New York Politics--1850-1887 (Cambridge, 1955) concludes that the New York merchants were primarily responsible for the Interstate Commerce Act. Gabriel Kolko in Railroads and Regulations, 1887-1916 (Princeton, 1965) argues that it



was the railroads themselves that desired federal regulation. Edward A. Purcell in an article entitled "Ideas and Interests: Businessmen and the Interstate Commerce Act," Journal of American History, LIV (December, 1967), comes to the conclusion that it is difficult to single out a particular business group that was solely responsible for railroad regulation: "Rather it was many diverse economic groups in combination throughout the nation which felt threatened by the new national economy and sought to protect their interests through the federal government." Purcell probably offers the most satisfactory analysis of the railroad regulation movement.

<sup>9</sup>Cong. Record, 49th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 3471-72.

<sup>10</sup>Cong. Record, 49th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 3475.

<sup>11</sup>Cong. Record, 49th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 3477.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.; U.S. Statutes-at-Large, XXXIV, p. 386.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Cong. Record, 49th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 3478.

<sup>15</sup>F. A. Blades to Palmer, April 27, 1886, Palmer Papers; C. C. Allison to A. N. Kellogg Newspaper Co., April 27, 1886, Palmer Papers. (Allison thought Palmer's speech was significant because he was not a Greenbacker.)

<sup>16</sup>Detroit Evening News, April 15, 1886.

<sup>17</sup>J. M. McGregor to Palmer, April 21, 1886, Palmer Papers.

<sup>18</sup>Palmer to J. M. McGregor, April 21, 1886, T. W. Palmer Letterbooks, Palmer Papers.

<sup>19</sup>Cong. Record, 49th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 4178.

<sup>20</sup>Cong. Record, 49th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 4185.

<sup>21</sup>Cong. Record, 49th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 4186.

<sup>22</sup>Cong. Record, 49th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 4191,



<sup>23</sup>Hotchkiss, p. 71.

<sup>24</sup>Cong. Record, 49th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 4319, 4320.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 4357.

<sup>26</sup>Senator Palmer owned both railroad and lake shipping stock.

<sup>27</sup>Cong. Record, 49th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 4040; U.S. Statutes-at-Large, XXXIV, pp. 209-12.

<sup>28</sup>F. K. Moreland, Sec. of the Agriculture and Dairy Association, to Palmer, June 14, 1886; J. T. Cobb, Sec. of the Michigan State Grange, to Palmer, June 14, 1886; Jas. H. Real, President of the American Agriculture and Dairy Association, to Palmer, June 5, 1886. Palmer Papers.

<sup>29</sup>Armour and Co. to John Sherman, May 6, 1886, Sherman Papers.

<sup>30</sup>M. Englemann, President of the Manistee Salt and Lumber Co., to Palmer, June 3, 1886, Palmer Papers.

<sup>31</sup>Cong. Record, 49th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 5213, 6371.

<sup>32</sup>Cong. Record, 49th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 7072, 7069, 7070.

<sup>33</sup>Cong. Record, 49th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 7073.

<sup>34</sup>Cong. Record, 49th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 7186, 7084-84.

<sup>35</sup>Wright and Ketchum, General Merchandise, E. Saginaw to Palmer, June 12, 1886; Armour and Co., to Palmer, May 8, 1886; Tovar Bros. (Wayne County Creamery) to Palmer, June 14, 1886. Palmer Papers.

<sup>36</sup>Michigan Census, 1884; Cyclopedia of Michigan (New York and Detroit: Western Publishing and Engraving Co., 1900), p. 40. Palmer was a gentleman farmer who had



a farm on the outskirts of Detroit where he raised Percheron horses and prime cattle. He belonged to the Percheron Horsebreeders Association as well as to other breeding organizations.

<sup>37</sup>Detroit Evening News, July 19, 1886.

<sup>38</sup>Cong. Record, 49th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 7086-87.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>Cong. Record, 49th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 7086.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>E. W. Cottrell to Palmer, July 26, 1886; James H. Seymour to Palmer, July 22, 1886. Palmer Papers. Detroit Evening News, August 3, 1886.

<sup>43</sup>Detroit Evening News, July 20, 1886.

<sup>44</sup>F. Moreland, Secretary and Treasurer of the American Agricultural and Dairy Association, to Palmer, September 26, 1886, Palmer Papers.

<sup>45</sup>Detroit Free Press, April 23, 1886.

<sup>46</sup>Cong. Record, 49th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 6730.

<sup>47</sup>Cong. Record, 49th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 6731.

<sup>48</sup>Cong. Record, 49th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 6917.

<sup>49</sup>Cong. Record, 49th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 690, 7036-37, 7493, 7979, 8027.

<sup>50</sup>Senate Reports, 49th Cong., 1st Sess., No. 1512; 49th Cong., 2d Sess.

<sup>51</sup>New York Times, January 30, 1886, April 6, May 18, May 21, 22, September 25, October 11, 1886; Robert Craig Brown, Canada's National Policy, 1883-1900 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), p. 29; Capt. W. Whales to Palmer, March 22, 1886, Palmer Papers.



<sup>52</sup>Detroit Evening News, June 13, 1886.

<sup>53</sup>Detroit Tribune, January 27, 1886.

<sup>54</sup>Detroit Evening News, April 3, October 26, 1886; Detroit Free Press, December 14, 1885.

<sup>55</sup>Palmer wrote President Cleveland at least three times, April 22, May 22, November 9, 1885. Cleveland Papers, Library of Congress; Detroit Evening News, October 26, 1886.

<sup>56</sup>Detroit Evening News, August 5, 1886; Detroit Free Press, May 7, June 18, 1886; Lansing State Republican, May 7, 1886.

<sup>57</sup>New York Times, July 17, 1886; Nation, XLIII (July 15, 1886), 48.

<sup>58</sup>Detroit Free Press, April 23, 1886; September 17, 1887. (If either type of criticism bothered Palmer, he did not make it known to his close correspondents.)

<sup>59</sup>James Stone to Palmer, March 2, 1886; E. W. Midden to Palmer, May 12, 1886. Palmer Papers.

<sup>60</sup>F. Fogg to Palmer, May 1, 1886, Palmer Papers. In a letter dated July 26, 1886, James Stone gave Senator Palmer a detailed outline of the activities of the Republican State Central Committee in preparing for the fall elections. Other correspondents made similar reports.

<sup>61</sup>J. A. Whittier to Palmer, July 12, 1886; Palmer to Ford Starring, July 14, 1886. Palmer Papers.

<sup>62</sup>J. A. Whittier to Palmer, January 12, 1887. Palmer Papers.

<sup>63</sup>New York Times, October 10, 1886.

<sup>64</sup>Detroit Evening News, November 3, 1886.

<sup>65</sup>Michigan Manual, 1887-88, pp. 457, 520.

<sup>66</sup>Lansing State Republican, January 4, 1887.



<sup>67</sup>Detroit Free Press, November 16, 1886; New York Times, January 8, 1887; Lansing State Republican, January 7, 1887.

<sup>68</sup>Detroit Free Press, December 7, 1886; Detroit Evening News, December 7, 1886.

<sup>69</sup>Detroit Evening News, January 5, 6, 1887. Since the Republicans had an overwhelming majority in the legislature, Republican caucus approval virtually assured election.

<sup>70</sup>Detroit Evening News, January 7, 1887; New York Times, January 7, 1887.

<sup>71</sup>Lansing State Republican, January 7, 1887.

<sup>72</sup>J. M. Smith to Palmer, January 23, 1887; Ford Starring to Palmer, January 20, 1887. Palmer Papers.

<sup>73</sup>Detroit Evening News, December 31, 1886.

<sup>74</sup>Detroit Free Press, January 12, 1887; Cong. Record, 49th Cong., 2d Sess., pp. 38, 1002; Lansing State Republican, January 27, 1887.

<sup>75</sup>Cong. Record, 49th Cong., 2d Sess., pp. 1482, 1576, 2150, 2169.

<sup>76</sup>U.S. Statutes-at-Large, XXIV, p. 475.

<sup>77</sup>U.S. Statutes-at-Large, XXIV, p. 468; Cong. Record, 49th Cong., 2d Sess., p. 2512.

<sup>78</sup>A. L. Dodge, Assistant Secretary of the American Percheron Horsebreeders Association, to Palmer, February 4, 1887; I. H. Butterfield, Secretary of the Michigan Short Horn Cattle Breeders Association to Palmer, February 4, 1887. Palmer Papers. Cong. Record, 49th Cong., 2d Sess., p. 2386.

<sup>79</sup>Cullom, Fifty Years of Public Service, p. 113; Cong. Record, 49th Cong., 2d Sess., pp. 254, 666, 1435, 2519.

<sup>80</sup>Cong. Record, 49th Cong., 2d Sess., pp. 2473-75; New York Times, March 5, 1887.



## CHAPTER VI

### POLITICAL DECLINE

In its issue of December 1, 1887, the New York Times predicted the course of the 50th Congress--a forecast that proved to be accurate. It commented that the new Congress would be "like most sessions held on the eve of a presidential campaign, fruitful in talk and barren of any substantial results." The paper also predicted that the tariff, foreign commerce, and the reduction of taxation would be the foremost topics of interest to the national legislature. The Times concluded its political forecast with the following remarks:

It may be added with a profound sense of relief to those who had been forced to follow the Congressional Record for any considerable time, that there will not be any great amount of time wasted at this session on the southern question.<sup>1</sup>

As predicted by the Times, the issue of tariff reform became one of the chief topics of debate. In his annual message to Congress in December, President Cleveland devoted his entire speech to this issue. Citing the need to reduce the treasury surplus and to remove the inequities in the tariff laws, Cleveland called for a



general union of tariff reformers in a cooperative effort to reduce import duties. The President was careful, however, not to endorse any theories of "free trade" or to propose any specific plan for Congress to consider. Instead he restricted himself to suggesting tariff reductions on raw materials and endorsing an expansion of the free trade list as a general approach to tariff reform. The President's address was a clear challenge to the Republican party that the election of 1888 would be fought specifically on the issue of tariff reform--a principle that might not only insure Cleveland's re-election but also provide a rallying point upon which the divided elements of the Democratic party might unite.<sup>2</sup>

The search for a campaign issue was not limited to President Cleveland. Many Republican leaders, including Senator Palmer, had eagerly cast about for a "safe" issue upon which to base their campaign. On November 25, 1887, some eleven days prior to the President's tariff message, the Detroit Evening News reported a speech by Palmer in which he called upon the Republican party to take a stand for prohibition, a topic that he believed was closer to the public's emotions than the matter of tariff reform. The essence of his address is contained in the following excerpt:

Whenever the Republican party has been radical it has been triumphant. Whenever the Republican party has asserted a great principle, it has always won, and the question now is whether we shall take the lead



in the prohibition movement or come in at the tail of the procession later. It is absolutely imperative that we have some great moral or sentimental issue to hold the party together. . . . The tariff alone will not do. I know of no other question that appeals to the hearts and homes of people like the temperance question. You have to fire them with some purpose or they will scatter.<sup>3</sup>

Palmer's speech did not result in an immediate thronging of Republicans to the banners of prohibition. Michigan Republicans had been hurt too many times by the third party efforts of the state's prohibitionists to greet such a pronouncement with any great enthusiasm.

Palmer emphatically denied that he was a third party man and asserted that he was merely anxious that the "Republican party should keep pace with the liquor question." Although the Detroit Evening News was doubtful that he had chosen the proper course of action, it did concede that he might be right. "It is by no means certain," it said, that the Senator has not stolen a march upon his rivals. . . . But we shall see what we shall see."<sup>4</sup>

Palmer's closest political adviser, William Livingstone, was mildly upset by the senator's prohibition views but urged him to stick by them lest his political enemies make "political hay" out of his failure to do so. Livingstone further advised him that the temperance people had a reputation of not standing by their friends. He also suggested that the senator not publicly declare his intentions in regard to another term. Livingstone argued



that even if Palmer did not want to run again, he should be in a position to name his successor. He said that Russell Alger and James McMillan had joined forces in opposition to Palmer. Since McMillan was the chairman of the Republican State Central Committee and was noted for his generous donations to the Republican campaign coffers, this formidable alliance would be hard to beat. Livingstone was not pessimistic, however, since he believed that a careful summer campaign spent in "quietly cultivating" state legislators would result in Palmer's re-election.<sup>6</sup>

Despite President Cleveland's dramatic stand on the tariff, the new Congress opened in a quiet vein. House Speaker Carlisle assigned Roger Mills of Texas the task of drafting a tariff bill. Since the formulation of such a complex bill necessitated a careful evaluation of rates, schedules, and prices, it was not expected that any tariff measure would emerge from the Committee of Ways and Means for several months. It was also doubtful that any tariff reform legislation would be approved by a Republican Senate.

In the Senate, committee assignments were made as usual on the opening day of Congress. Palmer received the chairmanship of the Agriculture and Forestry Committee. He was also named as a member of the following committees: (1) commerce, (2) education and labor, (3) transportation



routes to the seaboard. As a lumberman and a representative of a Great Lakes state, his appointment to the Commerce Committee and his chairmanship of the Agriculture and Forestry Committee meant that he was in a position to reflect the interests of Michigan farmers, lumbermen, and lake navigators--a political combination, which, if satisfied, would be an invaluable asset to a senator seeking re-election.<sup>7</sup>

One of Senator Palmer's first acts was the introduction of a bill designed to reduce the number of immigrants allowed into the United States. Probably the most immediate reason for his action was the Chicago Haymarket Square riot in 1886, during which a bomb allegedly thrown by immigrant anarchists killed seven people, including a policeman. Eight militant anarchists were arrested, tried, and sentenced to death. Four were eventually hanged and one committed suicide in his cell. Since most of the eight were foreign born and since the bombing came at the end of nearly six years of labor-management unrest marked by violent strikes, lockouts, and threats, it was not surprising that the general public and the nation's newspapers firmly fixed the blame for labor disputes and violence on immigrants with an anarchist background. Although the Knights of Labor--which had been agitating for an eight-hour working day--attempted to disclaim any responsibility for the Haymarket affair,



it was held accountable by many people for the violence because the union welcomed all types of working men, including unskilled immigrant laborers. Subsequently after 1886 the Knights suffered a permanent decline in membership and prestige.<sup>8</sup>

On November 25, 1887, delegates from Republican clubs throughout the state of Michigan had gathered in Detroit to select delegates to the national convention of Republican clubs to be held in New York during the second week of December. Most prominent Michigan Republicans attended the meeting. Included among the Republican notables were senators Francis B. Stockbridge and Thomas W. Palmer, W. R. Bates of the State Central Committee, S. S. Olds, Russell A. Alger, Hazen S. Pingree, George H. Hopkins, James H. Stone, E. W. Cottrell, and G. B. Stebbins. With an eye toward the 1888 presidential elections, the Republican representatives discussed the position that they should take on the important political questions of the day. On one topic they were unanimous in their opinion--that of restricting immigration. It was the consensus of the delegates that no foreigner should be welcomed to American shores who lacked a certificate attesting to his good character and who would not promise obedience to the American constitution and form of government. The Detroit Tribune lauded the Republicans for their stand and asserted that such laws probably would



have prevented the Haymarket tragedy. The paper also made this comment:

It is time that this gross abuse of American kindness and liberty was stopped. They ought to be prevented from landing on our shores. We demand a clean bill of health when immigrants come from infected districts abroad. Let these jail birds and professional agitators bring proofs of their previous good behavior and in default be shipped back without ceremony. That prescription for a great and growing evil we feel sure will meet with the hearty endorsement of the American people.

This stand on immigration taken by these prominent Michigan Republicans and one of the leading Republican newspapers in the state helps explain Palmer's own position.<sup>9</sup>

Other factors no doubt also influenced Palmer to favor restrictions on immigration. American nativism similar to the type that had flourished in the 1840's and 1850's was reborn in the 1880's as a result of the impact of Social Darwinism, which fostered emphasis on America's Anglo-Saxon background and the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race in general. In the minds of many American nativists--who formed such anti-immigrant organizations as the American Protective Association--the hordes of unskilled immigrants pouring in from Central and Eastern Europe posed a clear threat to American ideals and government. (The American, an anti-immigrant weekly, strongly supported Palmer's immigrant stand.) Supporters of reform crusades for women's rights and prohibition (Palmer supported both) opposed the immigrants' "subversive, European attitude's on these questions." From



a political standpoint, the immigrant leaven posed a threat to the Republican party since much of the immigrant vote was controlled by Democratic city bosses. A curtailment of immigration would also simultaneously serve as a restraint on the growing power of the Democratic party.<sup>10</sup>

Palmer's bill was aimed at halting an influx of what he termed the "defective, dependent and delinquent" classes. According to the senator, the 1880 census revealed that the foreign born made up the following percentage of population of these institutions: (1) 28 1/2 per cent of the insane asylums, (2) 22 per cent of prisons, (3) 34 per cent of almshouses, and (4) 44 per cent of workhouses. To prevent such undesirables from entry he proposed that inspection and investigation of the prospective immigrants take place in their home country. Each immigrant would be required to register with the nearest United States consul, who would check his character and references. If the consul found that the applicant had not been convicted of any political offenses and was not a "lunatic, idiot, nihilist, anarchist, or person unable to take care of himself without becoming a public charge and not hostile to the Constitution or the American form of government," then a certificate of immigration would be issued to him. Without this certificate, no immigrant would be allowed to enter the United States.<sup>11</sup>



On January 24, 1888, Palmer gave a major address in defense of his bill. He prefaced his speech with a declaration that he would not prevent "any capable, honest, industrious, law-abiding person from seeking a home on American soil." He acknowledged the contributions that immigrants had made to the country, both materially and morally. Asserting that his opposition to immigration was not racially motivated, he stated that "my affiliations, social, secular and religious have never been determined by any test of country or creed." Instead he maintained that his legislation had been prompted by the "fierce competition for work wherein the inferior members, by reason of fewer wants and lower aspirations enabling them to accept lower wages, will if no check be interposed, come out the victors in the battle for bread." He described why his legislation was necessary in the following words:

It will be in that case, not the survival of the fittest but the degradation of the best. If we desire that the American workingman shall retain his superiority over the underpaid laborer of Europe, we must from time to time interpose such obstacles as will deter the influx of those who will degrade his labor by undue competition--a competition which joyfully accepts lower wages than the American laborer now receives, because it is an improvement on wages hitherto received by the newcomer and because his wants have been repressed by his environment.<sup>12</sup>

Palmer referred to the efforts of Americans to build a "new civilization" and warned that "to acquit ourselves of our trust to work out the problem of the future



of America, it is absolutely essential that we scrutinize with care not only the factors we now have, but also those which are being constantly injected into our national life." Pointing out that legislation had been passed to exclude a non-homogeneous race such as the Chinese, he concluded that it was only reasonable and "advisable to select the most desirable from our own race, instead of welcoming the dregs with the wine."<sup>13</sup>

He went on to argue that it was time for America to "go out of the 'asylum' business" and "to deny the use of its shore as a dumping ground for the vicious and delinquent human product of other nations." Only those immigrants who desired to "become American citizens in the highest and broadest sense, and whose physical, mental and moral qualifications are such as to render their coming profitable to the republic should be allowed to enter American ports."<sup>14</sup>

To support his statements, Palmer cited immigration statistics provided by the United States Bureau of Statistics. They indicated that 48 per cent of the immigrants admitted to the United States since 1872 had lacked an occupation. Included among the more recent immigrants were the "lower grades of Slavonians, Hungarians, Russians, Jews, Servians, Italians and other races singularly unwholesome in kind if not degree . . . and the fanatical followers of Bakunin, social wolves,



honoring no flag, revering nothing as sacred, defying and despising all laws and rights of persons or property." He argued that if this flow of foreigners continued unchecked, the effect upon native American labor would be to "degrade its character" and lower its standard of living.<sup>15</sup>

Palmer concluded by acknowledging that his bill was not the perfect solution but only a step in "the right direction." He believed, however, that it would aid in the enforcement of present laws and provide a response for the people's demand of a "moral quarantine." Despite his eloquence and his statistical documentation, Palmer's bill did not emerge from the Committee on Foreign Relations.<sup>16</sup>

The public response to the senator's address was generally favorable. His personal correspondence reflected much support for his views. Some correspondents even advocated sterner measures--one writer proposed that every immigrant must "have a sound mind, body, and unquestionable moral character and must be in the country twenty-one years before he is entitled to vote." The New York Times was generally in favor of Palmer's attempt to limit immigration but doubted whether it was feasible to have the consuls conduct the investigation since they were not prepared to make "quasi-judicial investigations" and since it was difficult to determine from a cursory



examination whether a person was a radical anarchist or not. The only major dissenting correspondent was the Hungaria Publishing Co., which published foreign language newspapers. The company objected to Palmer's speech because it believed that he had been unfair to the great number of immigrants who had adapted themselves to American laws and customs. Although it wrote several letters to the senator, the company received no response from him.<sup>17</sup>

Palmer spent much of his legislative time dealing with matters related to the Committee on Agriculture and Forestry. He took particular interest in two measures that came before that committee. The first bill called for a reorganization of the Bureau of Animal Industry to enable it to fight more effectively the spread of pleuro-pneumonia and other contagious animal diseases. This was not only a domestic problem but involved foreign relations also since many foreign countries, including Britain, France, and Germany had at times closed their ports to American livestock because the United States lacked any procedures for examining and verifying the health of animals to be exported. The act creating the bureau in 1884 sought to remedy this situation by appointing a veterinary surgeon as chief of the new bureau to investigate and examine animals intended for export. The bureau chief lacked autonomy as the Commissioner of



Agriculture was authorized to organize and supervise the bureau's operations. Also the commissioner and not the bureau chief was given the responsibility of hiring personnel for the bureau. In addition the commissioner was directed to develop rules and procedures for eliminating pluro-pneumonia and other infectious animal diseases; to institute investigations for the purpose of searching out and destroying diseased animals; and to act in coordination with the secretary of the treasury to develop regulations for the transport of livestock, both domestically and abroad. The duties of the chief and his agents were primarily to investigate and collect information on animal diseases.<sup>18</sup>

Palmer declared that the bureau needed to be reorganized so that it could effectively perform its principle function--that of discovering and eliminating animal disease. Citing the limited authority vested in the bureau chief and the small staff and their lack of expertise--all complaints that had been repeatedly made by livestock men--he reported favorably out of his Committee on Agriculture and Forestry a bill calling for expanded powers for the Bureau of Animal Industry. The proposal called for the dissolution of the existing bureau and the creation of a new one with the same title but with enlarged powers and improved organization. A three-man commission was to be appointed with two of



the members to be cattle growers of "known executive experience" and the other a veterinary surgeon. The commissioners and their agents were to be authorized to enter livestock areas and to make searches for diseased animals, to declare quarantines, and to destroy and pay for infected animals. Palmer believed that creating a commission dedicated solely to the eradication of animal diseases would produce better results than adding to the powers of the Commissioner of Agriculture, who had many other tasks to perform. It meant, according to him, that more men would be in the field rather than in offices in Washington.<sup>19</sup>

Several senators opposed the bill on the grounds that it disregarded the regulatory rights of the states. Palmer asserted that "no extraordinary powers" were granted to the proposed commission and that no "rights of states" would be encroached upon by the passage of the bill. He further argued that "a commission with limited and well defined powers" was necessary to insure proper enforcement of animal disease laws because the present bureau's powers were mainly investigative. After his remarks debate on the bill continued, with Senators Cullom and Vest leading the opposition. Finally Palmer allowed the bill to be removed temporarily from consideration because he saw that with such strong opposition there was little chance of its being passed.<sup>20</sup>



The second important bill before the Committee on Agriculture and Forestry to be championed by Palmer was a House bill to elevate the Department of Agriculture to cabinet status. In 1862 Congress provided for the organization of a Department of Agriculture with a commissioner at its head; thus the department lacked cabinet rank. The Morrill Act and the Homestead Act were also enacted in 1862. These three acts constituted the framework of the federal government's agricultural program well into the twentieth century. These laws had been advocated by farmers and farm organizations for many years. Southern opposition to these agrarian bills, ostensibly on the grounds that they were violations of states' rights, had prevented their passage for a number of years. With the secession of the South from the Union in 1861, the Republican party was quick to consolidate its position with the farmers by swiftly passing the desired legislation.<sup>21</sup>

Many farmers felt aggrieved that their department was not of cabinet rank and agitated for such a change. The National Agricultural Congress and the National Grange at their annual meetings in 1876 passed resolutions in support of cabinet status for the Department of Agriculture. As the Grange declined in power and influence in the 1880's the National Farmer's Alliance replaced it as the chief agrarian spokesman for elevation of the department. Palmer, as chairman of the Senate Committee on



Agriculture and Forestry, received letters from the Farmers' Alliance in favor of a new department. The Alliance argued that the powers of the Commissioner of Agriculture were too weak and that Congressmen regarded the present department only as a means of placating constituents by distributing positions and free seeds.<sup>22</sup>

Palmer's committee did not approve the House bill until it had amended it because it objected to section five, which authorized the transfer of the Army Signal Corps to the proposed new department. When the United States Weather Service was founded in 1870, the Army Signal Service was authorized to administer the weather service's programs because it was believed that army discipline would ensure the dedication needed for accurate readings at lonely weather stations. The Signal Corps also serviced more than 6,000 miles of military telegraph lines over which weather readings could be speedily sent to Washington for analysis. As the military telegraph system declined in importance and as the role of trained civilians in meteorology expanded, the role of the Army Signal Corps in the weather service was severely questioned. Many Congressmen in the 1880's sought to divorce it from the weather service. This struggle for civilian control was concurrent with the effort to place the Department of Agriculture on a cabinet level. Some members of Congress thought that both



objectives might be reached by incorporating in the bill upgrading the Department of Agriculture a provision for transferring the weather service to the department.<sup>23</sup>

Palmer defended the committee's action against opposition led by Senator Morgan (Ala.) and Senator Platt (Conn.), who desired to reinsert the deleted section. He said that he "had been educated to suppose that the Signal Service Bureau appertained mostly to commercial wants and exigencies." He added:

Upon the shores of the Great Lakes, where it is much more essential to know the correct weather than it is upon the Atlantic Coast, the bureau is regarded with great favor. That immense commerce is in a great measure affected by the predictions of the bureau. The bureau has been very successful and its success might not be impaired by attaching it to the Agriculture Department but it would be an experiment.

He acknowledged that the Signal Corps might need reorganization but suggested that this might best be accomplished by a separate bill. Since he was "very anxious" to have a Department of Agriculture given cabinet rank, he did not want an extraneous issue to prevent its creation.<sup>24</sup>

Despite the Michigan senator's arguments, support for the transfer of the Signal Corps continued, spearheaded by Senator Plumb of Kansas. Although there were amendments to the first four sections of the House bill, these were mainly minor alterations in wording; the controversy centered on section five. Palmer continued to stress that the first four sections of the bill were the pertinent portions of the measure and that section five



was irrelevant and that it was unnecessary to "engraft the bureau upon the new department." Palmer was able to defeat the transfer by a vote of 33-9 and to secure the passage of the bill. When the House refused to concur, conference committees were appointed to work out a compromise. Time ran out and consideration of the measure was carried over to the second session.<sup>25</sup>

As in the preceding two Congresses an attempt was made to pass a general land grant railroad forfeiture bill. Once again Senator Palmer attempted to amend the bill so that the conflict over forfeited land titles of the Ontonagon and Brule Railroad could be resolved. He wanted to make sure that those homesteaders and settlers who had settled on the railroad lands by such legitimate means as pre-emption were not displaced from their homes.<sup>26</sup>

Palmer's position placed him in direct opposition to the stand taken by the junior senator from Michigan. Senator Stockbridge wanted all of the Upper Peninsula railroad lands to be forfeited, thus making the stockholders of the Portage Lake Canal--who had been granted land by the state of Michigan previous to the railroad grant--recipients of the land titles held by the Ontonagon and Brule Railroad. Palmer maintained that the Canal company had previously forfeited its rights to those lands because it had never completed the canal according to its contract specifications. He then cited House Report No.



684 of the 48th Congress to support his position and declared that it was the report's conclusion that the canal had never been completed according to the specifications of the granting act.<sup>27</sup>

Stockbridge, along with Senator Hoar (Mass.), continued to defend the legitimacy of the canal company's claim. Palmer, exasperated by his opponents, exploded in a verbal outburst that caused the Senate chamber to ring with laughter. He made this comment:

This is the most intangible, impalpable, illusory, misleading, nebulous fight that I ever was in. Part of the time it is the equities, part of the time it is the equivalent, part of the time it is the law, but all the time on general principles we want the land.<sup>28</sup>

In spite of Palmer's eloquent and tenacious defense of the homesteaders, the Hoar-Stockbridge coalition proved to be too strong and their amendment favoring the Portage Lake Canal interests was attached to the general forfeiture bill. The version of the bill returned by the House, however, declared that settlers on forfeited lands would be entitled to 160 acres of land, thus offering the protection for the homesteaders that Palmer had been attempting to provide. A conference committee failing to reach an agreement, the problem was carried over to the second session.<sup>29</sup>

This confrontation with his colleague from Michigan earned for Senator Palmer the gratitude of the settlers. A spokesman for the Upper Peninsula settlers,



interviewed by the Detroit Free Press, summed up the settlers' attitude toward Palmer in the following words:

But I can assure you the settlers would be badly left if it were not for Senator Palmer. He is the best friend they ever had. He has insisted from the start that nothing should go into this bill that would by any possibility interfere with the right of any bona fide settler and he has not only insisted, but has had his way about it. If their rights are saved, they owe it to the unyielding stand he has taken in their behalf. He has done it too, without acting unfairly to either the railroad company or the cash entrymen. He has simply insisted on fair dealing with all the interests involved.<sup>30</sup>

At the same time Palmer had made enemies of the Portage Canal interests and strained the relations between himself and Senator Stockbridge. Since Stockbridge was already a member of the Alger and McMillan clique that opposed Palmer, this incident could only serve to increase the hostility between the two rival political camps.

Palmer, as usual, kept informed of Michigan Republican politics. He was particularly interested in the efforts of Alger and his supporters to boost the "general" for the Republican presidential nomination. He had been fearful that this talk about the presidency was a smokescreen to cover up Alger's candidacy for senator. His Michigan friends, however, assured him that Alger's professed intentions were genuine.<sup>31</sup>

In April, the sudden and unexpected resignation of James McMillan as chairman of the Republican State Central Committee, "on account of domestic affairs,"



clouded an already murky Republican situation. Since McMillan was being touted as Palmer's successor in the Senate, his withdrawal from his party position raised doubts about his political future. Some of Palmer's friends were certain that McMillan's political career was over while others did not believe that his resignation meant complete withdrawal from politics. Whatever their opinions concerning McMillan's resignation, his friends were unanimous in the advice that the senator should attempt to have himself named as McMillan's successor. This Palmer declined to do.<sup>32</sup>

Palmer's most difficult political problem was to decide on a proper reaction to Alger's presidential ambitions since any public opposition to Alger would widen the split in the Republican party and incur the wrath of the party leaders who were busy preparing for the important fall election campaign. Any action that would seriously hamper party unity and threaten Republican majorities could prematurely end the career of a politician unwise enough to embark on such a course.

As usual the senator relied on his political correspondents to report on the prevailing political situation in Michigan. They advised him to attend the state Republican convention and to avoid open opposition to Alger, even, if necessary, attending the national convention as an Alger delegate. Any opposition to



Alger's candidacy, they warned, would only "sour" his chances for re-election. They cited the events of 1880 when Palmer was forced to show his strength prematurely in the state convention, and as a consequence, had his gubernatorial hopes dashed. James Shepard, Palmer's personal secretary, predicted that Alger would control the state convention and suggested that Palmer's strategy should be to support Alger as a favorite son presidential candidate and James McMillan for governor, thus opening the way for his own unopposed re-election.<sup>33</sup>

Palmer followed the advice of his friends and refrained from publicly opposing Alger's candidacy. To Alger he wrote declaring his neutrality. As a result, Fred Farnsworth, Secretary of the Michigan Republican State Central Committee, could write Palmer that the "white winged dove of peace hovers over all" in the Republican camp.<sup>34</sup>

At the Republican State Convention, which began on May 9, Alger won his party's endorsement for the presidential nomination. Even though Palmer and his friends made no attempt to block Alger's candidacy, unexpected opposition did develop from western Michigan delegates who were Blaine supporters. The Blaine bloc was not strong enough to jeopardize Alger's endorsement although it had been largely unanticipated by the Alger camp, and it cast some doubts on how firmly Michigan would stand behind Alger at the national convention.<sup>35</sup>



The Republican state platform reaffirmed the high protective tariff policies that had been a cornerstone of Republican politics since the Civil War. Alger reflected the Michigan Republican concern for the tariff when he commented on the relationship between workingmen and the tariff in the following words:

If it is necessary to thoroughly protect home industries upon any article or articles, I would increase the duty to the point that would absolutely protect them against such a reduction of wages.<sup>36</sup>

Meanwhile in Congress the Mills Bill had finally emerged from the House Committee on Ways and Means. Included on the bill's proposed free list were such items as wool, salt, lumber, and metal products--all important staple products of the Midwest and Michigan. Southern products such as sugar, rice, and low grade cotton goods suffered only slight reductions in the tariff duties that protected them. Duties were reduced by an average of about 7 per cent. Since the bill had been prepared by Southern and Western Democrats, it was not an attempt at true tariff reform but more of a political measure that favored the South and had little appeal to the North and the Midwest. In Michigan, Republican newspapers and industries affected by the proposed lower duties denounced the bill and Senator Palmer was deluged with mail from businessmen irately demanding the defeat of the measure. The Lansing State Republican accused the Democrats of developing for purely political purposes a tariff that



was seriously detrimental to Michigan industry. The Detroit Evening News succinctly summarized the initial effect of the Mills Bill in these words: "The general feeling is that of satisfaction among Democrats and complaints among Republicans."<sup>37</sup>

As the House began a long debate on the merits of the Mills proposal, the attention of the Senate was focused on the coming Republican National Convention. A number of Republican senators considered themselves presidential timber. Included among this group were John Sherman of Ohio, Benjamin Harrison of Indiana, William Allison of Iowa and Chauncey DePew of New York. Non-senate aspirants included Russel Alger of Michigan and Judge Walter Gresham of Indiana. Over the heads of these presidential hopefuls hung the spectre of James Blaine. Although Blaine had declined to be a candidate and had attempted to avoid a draft by traveling in Europe, his friends, according to Republican newspapers, were determined to make him a candidate. Thus he was still viewed as the leading contender for the nomination. On that basis the other Republican hopefuls planned their campaign strategy. Sherman's plan was to block Blaine's nomination for the first two or three ballots; he felt that only then would he have a chance for victory. So strongly did Blaine's shadow hang over the impending Republican convention that daily reports of his health



were reviewed by his potential rivals. One of Alger's supporters wrote him disgustedly that he "never did see anything so hard to find out as the state of Blaine's health."<sup>38</sup>

The Democrats held their convention in St. Louis during the first week of June. As expected, Cleveland was renominated and old, infirm Allan G. Thurman of Ohio was named as his running mate. In contrast to his earlier address to Congress, Cleveland in his nomination speech cautioned against any sweeping tariff reforms and the Democratic platform reflected these moderate views.<sup>39</sup>

The Republican National Convention opened in Chicago on June 19. Temporary chairman John M. Thurston of Nebraska began the meeting by lavishing praise upon Blaine for his contributions to the party in a speech that made many of the presidential hopefuls and their supporters uneasy. Then Representative R. G. Horr of Michigan presented Chairman Thurston with a gavel made of Michigan products to emphasize the state's position in regard to a protective tariff. Horr spoke thus:

This gavel has upon it copper, wool, iron, salt and wood, the five industries that the party now in power would ruin and abolish from the face of the country. We thought it was meet that this convention should commence early to pound the daylights out of that party, consequently we beg the permission of the convention to present this for the use of our temporary chairman.<sup>40</sup>

Horr and the rest of the protection-minded delegation of Michigan Republicans did not have to worry about



the party's stand on the tariff. The platform that emerged from committee strongly endorsed the protection of home industries. The Chicago Inter Ocean interpreted the Republican platform in the following words:

The Republican party pledges itself to correct the irregularities of the tariff and to reduce surpluses, not by the vicious and indiscriminating process of horizontal reduction but by such methods as will relieve the tax payer without injuring the laborer or the great productive interests of the country. . . . That means protection and nothing but protection--not moderate protection but absolute protection.<sup>41</sup>

With the preliminaries over, the convention turned itself to the main business of the convention, the selection of a presidential candidate. The favorite son candidates had firm control of their delegations. John Sherman warned his Ohio followers that he wanted "no defection or treachery within the delegation" and that any break toward Blaine must be resisted to the end because "it is not honorable and will be resented as I believe by an overwhelming defeat at the polls." Russell Alger of Michigan had his state delegation firmly behind him but was campaigning desperately to broaden the base of his support.<sup>42</sup>

The results of the first balloting reflected the lack of a Republican consensus. A total of 416 votes was needed for the nomination. Sherman led with 229. He was followed by Gresham with 107, DePew 99, Alger 84, Harrison 85, Allison 72, and Blaine 35. A second and third ballot



failed to reveal any candidate coming to the forefront although Alger's vote had increased to 122. The Michigan delegation, Palmer included, steadfastly cast their votes for Alger and attempted to whip up enthusiasm for their favorite son.<sup>43</sup>

The following day, Saturday, June 23, two more ballots were taken. Benjamin Harrison of Indiana gained the second spot behind Sherman, gathering 216 and 213 votes to the Ohioan's 235 and 224. Exhausted after two days of fruitless balloting the convention was adjourned until Monday.<sup>44</sup>

During the Sunday interim many attempts were made to work out deals by the supporters of the various candidates. Alger, for example, received a telegram on Saturday from a DePew supporter who made the following suggestion:

The Blaine managers do not intend that you nor anyone but Blaine shall be nominated but hope to swallow you up in the Vice-Presidency. Now if you and Sherman and Harrison will combine upon DePew, he will be elected and you three may have the government to yourselves. California is willing to go for him under these circumstances.<sup>45</sup>

Despite the clever maneuverings and schemings of the various campaign managers, the event that was to break the deadlock had its origins outside convention headquarters. On Sunday the Maine delegation received a telegram that Blaine would refuse a nomination. This cleared the way for his supporters to go over to Harrison.



They believed that he was the most logical candidate since much of his support came from doubtful states where it was hoped that his popularity and the tariff issue would be the combination which would assure Republican victory.<sup>46</sup>

Desperate attempts were made to forge a combination of Alger, Sherman, Allison, and Gresham forces to put forth a compromise candidate. A number of states, including Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, California, and Missouri decided to support Allison, but this effort fell through when DePew withdrew his support--stating that he had withdrawn his own candidacy because of agrarian hostility to the railroads and therefore was not about to turn around and help nominate the candidate of the agrarians.<sup>47</sup>

By the seventh ballot on Monday Harrison had vaulted into the lead over Sherman with 279 votes to the Ohioan's 230. On the eighth ballot he clenched the nomination with 544 votes to Sherman's 118. Alger received all of Michigan's 26 votes even on the final tally. To placate the East and to reunite the Republican factions there, Levi Morton of New York was added to the ticket as the Vice-Presidential nominee.<sup>48</sup>

Michigan accepted Alger's defeat gracefully as R. G. Horr read the following statement to the convention after the nomination of Harrison:



I came here hoping that this convention would nominate one of Michigan's sons for the Presidency. It has failed to do so. If you want to know how we in Michigan will stand by Gen. Harrison, just think how we have stood by General Alger. . . . We came here hoping to place a soldier at the head of the ticket. We have done it. Now let us go home and ratify the action of this convention.<sup>49</sup>

After the Republican National Convention, the Michigan Republican State Central Committee met to name a permanent chairman. The man selected was George H. Hopkins, a crony of Russell Alger. Palmer was informed by a member of the committee that Alger had bought the position for his friend--"a clear case of boodle." According to Palmer's informant, Alger had promised to raise \$50,000 for the campaign and give from \$5,000 to \$10,000 if one of four men was selected as chairman. With the success of his venture, Alger now had virtually complete control of the Michigan Republican organization.<sup>50</sup>

After learning of Alger's action, Palmer dropped a bombshell among his friends and supporters when he announced that he would not be a candidate for re-election. Maintaining that he had made up his mind several months previously, the senator denied that he had been pressured to withdraw. He said that he was confident of re-election but was tired of his office. He assured them that he still retained his interest in Michigan politics and would participate vigorously in the fall campaign.<sup>51</sup>



After making this announcement, Palmer turned his attention from the Michigan political scene to his senatorial tasks. The Mills Tariff Bill had finally emerged from the House, coming before the Senate in the third week of July. Michigan interests whose products had been placed on the free list anxiously implored their representatives in Washington to kill the measure. Not only Palmer but most Republican senators from midwestern and northeastern states were under pressure from their constituents. It was also important from the standpoint of campaign politics that the Mills Bill fail since its success would mean a publicity coup for the Democrats.<sup>52</sup>

Several days after the appearance of the Mills Bill before the Senate a caucus of Republican senators was called to discuss the party strategy in regard to the measure. At the meeting it was decided that the Senate Finance Committee should "undertake the work of revising the tariff, in harmony with protective principles."

Senator Spooner of Wisconsin put the matter thus:

It may take us until the middle of September or first of October, but the spectacle of the Republican party, held in the Senate during the dog days in an earnest effort to promote the public interest ought to do as much good on the campaign if not a great deal more than we could do during these days in speeches on the stump.<sup>53</sup>

As the Senate became more involved with the tariff, much other legislation was ignored. This was particularly true of the general land forfeiture bill,



which had become hopelessly bogged down in conference and had little chance of success. To rescue his amendment to this bill, Palmer sought to have it passed as a separate measure. This action was almost successful but opposition by Senator Hoar of Massachusetts frustrated his efforts.<sup>54</sup>

Not until the first week of October did the Senate Finance Committee report its version of the tariff bill to the Senate for consideration. The measure did not call for any major changes in existing tariff rates. With the retention of lumber, salt, and wool on the duty list, most Michigan businessmen expressed satisfaction with the Senate bill although one disgruntled cigar manufacturer complained to Palmer because tobacco had been placed on the free list. Palmer approved the Senate bill and made the following remarks in support of it:

The Senate bill provides for a reduction of the surplus without interfering with protected industries. The Mills bill was fixed up to suit the solid South with just enough deference to the interest of certain industries in the North to enable the Democrats to make an issue and not strike the protection sentiment of the North too harshly.<sup>55</sup>

By this time however, most Republicans had decided that if any tariff bill passed, including the Senate's measure, the Democrats would profit in the fall campaign from the publicity that the bill's passage would receive. With reference to the Republican senators'



position, Senator Spooner wrote the following to Governor Rusk of Wisconsin:

The Republican senators have agreed, between you and me, to leave here. It is utterly impractical to debate at any great length the tariff bill or to vote upon it at this session. We don't mean to pass it now and thus lose jurisdiction of the subject. It has taken too long to get it and when that bill leaves the Senate it will be nearly as perfect a bill as can be made on the subject.<sup>56</sup>

The Republicans prolonged the debate on the tariff for several weeks. Finally, on October 21 one of the longest Congressional sessions in history was adjourned as its members were eager to spend the few days left before the election on the campaign trail. During its life over ten thousand bills had been introduced. At least one Michigan newspaper was not impressed by numbers, declaring that the adjournment of Congress ended "one of the longest and least useful sessions in American history."<sup>57</sup>

Since the time between the end of the Congressional session and the November elections was so short, Palmer's participation in the campaign was limited to donations to the Republican campaign fund and to several personal appearances on behalf of Cyrus Luce, the Republican candidate for governor. The campaign in Michigan was bitterly fought as both parties attempted to woo the workingmen to their banners. Since the tariff was the principle election issue, each party sought to convince the laboring classes of the righteousness of its economic stand. The Republicans possessed an advantage because



they also argued that they opposed the importation of foreign labor and thus were the protectors of American labor--an argument that the Democratic party, whose ranks were filled with naturalized Americans, could not readily answer.<sup>58</sup>

The Republicans were hard pressed in Michigan as the Democratic free trade position and the appearance of another strong prohibition candidate threatened to overturn the slim pluralities of 1886. The Republicans lavishly distributed their funds in an effort to halt the Democratic gains. Some of this money was given to county campaign chairmen to fill local party coffers.<sup>59</sup>

The election results were as close as anticipated but once again the well financed Republican organization managed to win. Harrison received a plurality of nearly 23,000 votes over Cleveland while Cyrus Luce won the gubernatorial battle with a 17,000 vote plurality. Vote totals are as follows:<sup>60</sup>

<u>President</u>	<u>Governor</u>
Harrison---236,387	Luce-----233,595
Cleveland--213,945	Burt-----216,450
Fish-----20,945	Cheyney-----20,342
Streeter----4,555	Mills-----4,388

According to one of Palmer's correspondents the election "was the most desperate battle in the history of politics." He also remarked that if the Republicans had not managed the liquor issue properly the prohibition vote could have been as high as 25,000. (The Republicans



had sought to combat the prohibition influence by selecting candidates who were "dry" and by inserting a plank in their platform calling for local option in regard to liquor and stricter enforcement of the existing liquor tax.) Governor Luce, on the other hand, wrote Palmer that the Republicans had been victorious because of the farm vote and the party's emphasis of the tariff issue.<sup>61</sup>

The results of the Republican triumph at the polls had little immediate impact upon Palmer's own political life. Since he had withdrawn as a candidate for reelection to the Senate, his political future was quite uncertain. Although some of his supporters still hoped to nominate him for governor, he remained reticent as usual about his political plans.<sup>62</sup>

During the second session of the 50th Congress, Palmer devoted most of his time to two measures that had been carried over from the first session--the Agriculture Department Bill and the Senate's tariff bill. The Agriculture Department Bill had passed the Senate in the previous session and had been sent to the House for consideration. The House under the leadership of William H. Hatch of Missouri still desired to transfer the weather service to the Agriculture Department, a provision that had been struck out by the Senate. A conference committee met to effect an agreement. Palmer headed the Senate conference representatives, who manifested such



adamant hostility to any suggestion of change in the Senate's version that the House conferees finally yielded.

Hatch gave the following report to the House:

The managers on the part of the House endeavored most zealously to induce the managers on the part of the Senate to recede from the Senate amendment, striking out the fifth section of the bill, transferring the Weather Bureau to the Department of Agriculture. In this we were unsuccessful, the decisive vote in the Senate on this proposition being interpreted by the managers on the part of the Senate as peremptory instructions which they felt compelled to respect.<sup>63</sup>

The House then accepted the report of the conference committee.

That the bill passed in the form it did was largely the result of Palmer's work. He had diligently fought attempts of the House to complicate the measure by adding the Weather Bureau and other agencies to the Department of Agriculture, since he felt that they were irrelevant to its basic purpose. Even the Democratic Detroit Free Press praised his efforts in these words:

"Senator Palmer has labored with a great deal of patient skill to bring about the result that has been reached and the agreement is very largely due to his efforts."<sup>64</sup>

Palmer closely followed the progress of the Tariff Bill. He voted against any attempts to reduce duties on or to place on the free list important Michigan staples. When Senator Vest of Missouri attempted to place lumber on the free list. Palmer rose up indignantly and verbally attacked Vest. He accused the Missouri senator of talking



as if he were in the Canadian Parliament and declared that since Canada subsidized her lumbermen, allowing Canadian timber in duty free would be an act of discrimination against American lumbermen. He then went on to defend the principle of a protective tariff by declaring that the solution for economic equality was to distribute the benefits of the tariff to the public. He asserted that since the fortunes of the wealthy were gained "by exchange, by transportation or by the selling of goods" and not by manufacturing, it was only reasonable to cure economic inequities by using the protective tariff to spread the "benefits of protection and manufactures." By such arguments Palmer helped to defeat Vest's amendment by a vote of 28-19.<sup>65</sup>

The tariff measure that emerged from the Senate clearly reflected the views of the protectionist element. The House returned the bill to the Senate, noting that the Senate bill appeared to be in conflict with Article 1 of the Constitution because "said section vests in the House of Representatives the sole power to originate such a measure."<sup>66</sup> No further progress towards an agreement on a tariff measure was possible during the session.

While Palmer was busy with his legislative tasks, events were taking place that were to have an important bearing on his future. Back in Michigan, James McMillan was nominated by the Republicans to replace Palmer in the



Senate and was subsequently elected by the legislature. This meant that the Alger-McMillan forces were in complete control of the party in the state.<sup>67</sup>

Palmer's efforts on behalf of the Department of Agriculture Bill had won for him considerable support for the new cabinet post of Secretary of Agriculture. Russell Alger, however, also desired a cabinet position, presumably as Secretary of War. Since Harrison, from a point of practical politics, could include in his cabinet only one Michigan Republican, it meant that Palmer would once again face opposition from his state organization in his quest for political office. Because Alger and his supporters controlled the party machinery in Michigan, it was not likely that Harrison would do anything to alienate that faction.

The President-elect did not help the situation by delaying his selection of a cabinet. He did not announce his first appointment--James Blaine as Secretary of State--until January 17, 1889. Meanwhile the Alger-McMillan faction attempted to dissuade him from selecting Palmer and at the same time to persuade him to choose Alger. Alger had emissaries visiting Harrison on his behalf as early as November 24, 1888. He himself wrote to the President-elect that he could not raise any objection to the appointment of Jeremiah Rusk (Governor of Wisconsin) as Secretary of Agriculture; Rusk was



Palmer's chief rival for the position. Yet Alger denied in a letter to Palmer, that he opposed Palmer's appointment and was attempting to influence Harrison against him. Senator Stockbridge also publicly denied that there was a "ring, syndicate or combination between Senator McMillan, General Alger and myself against Palmer." Meanwhile Palmer also maintained the facade of friendly relations by declaring that "if General Alger goes into the cabinet, I of course, shall be glad as a Michigan man that it is so."<sup>68</sup>

Despite the efforts of the Alger coalition, his name was eliminated from the slate of candidates when Redfield Proctor of Vermont was named Secretary of War. One of the chief reasons for Alger's defeat was the adamant opposition of John Sherman, who was still embittered by what he felt was Alger's treachery at the national convention.<sup>69</sup>

With Alger eliminated as a cabinet possibility, his supporters redoubled their efforts to prevent the success of Palmer. Stockbridge reversed his public position and openly declared himself in favor of Governor Rusk. McMillan and Stockbridge also sent a letter to Harrison listing suggested Michigan candidates for federal appointments. Palmer's name headed the proposed list but as minister to Italy. Meanwhile Palmer's friends, including Governor Luce, deluged Harrison with letters of support for Palmer.<sup>70</sup>



Finally, on March 3, news came that Rusk had been selected as Secretary of Agriculture. Palmer's friends were bitter over the opposition of Alger, McMillan, and Stockbridge. The Detroit Evening News reported that Harrison had wanted Palmer but that Alger had told him Palmer's appointment "would be bitterly resented as a reflection upon himself and upon the Republicans of Michigan." Palmer's secretary, James Shepard, was quoted as saying that "Palmer's friends have sore hearts, but they will not have clenched hands until after the Spring election but after that they will try to punish traitors."<sup>71</sup>

Palmer accepted his fate calmly and said that "they were shooting at my hat but my head was not in it . . . now I can retire to my log cabin."<sup>72</sup> He also comforted one of his close friends with these words:

Do not weep for me. I am very happy at the outcome of the whole thing. It is hard on Harrison but cannot be helped. To all my friends who showed their regard for me in the matter I owe my unbounded thanks . . . it is of more importance to me to have the good will of my friends and neighbors than to be Czar of all the Russians.<sup>73</sup>

He wrote in a similar vein to his longtime friend and partner, Joseph Whittier:

The matter of the call to the Cabinet was none of my seeking. It was the President's desire if it could be compassed without a fight. I am very glad that it turned out as it did because I hope now to give twenty years to social life and religion.<sup>74</sup>

On March 4, 1889, the 50th Congress came to its end. The senator from Detroit had acquitted himself well



during its two years of life. His championship of the Upper Peninsula homesteaders and his successful guidance of the Agriculture Department Bill through Congress highlighted his legislative work. Yet, ironically at the peak of his political career, the combination of the hostility of his Republican enemies and his own unwillingness to challenge them for the supremacy of his state's party organization, appeared to have destined him to an early political grave.<sup>75</sup>

Palmer's lackluster political performance in the waning stages of the 50th Congress was a disappointing finale to the senatorial career that had begun in 1883 after the long senatorial struggle from which he emerged the victor. Yet this prolonged battle, in a sense, marked not only the beginning but the end of Palmer's political aspirations. The strategy, the maneuverings, the back-room meetings responsible for his victory, afterwards seemed to be distasteful to him and as a senator he repeatedly stressed that he wished to avoid future political controversy in his career. Many of his supporters had hoped that he would emulate the Zach Chandler and become political boss of the Michigan Republican party. Palmer, however, had been sensitive to the anti-Chandler critics and had repeatedly refused to become chairman of the Republican State Central Committee or to take any other action that would strengthen his position in the party.



Much to the disappointment of his most avid supporters, as his term neared its end, he appeared to have grown increasingly introspective and apolitical as he looked forward to giving, as he himself stated, "twenty years to social life and religion."<sup>76</sup>



FOOTNOTES--CHAPTER VI

<sup>1</sup>New York Times, December 1, 1887.

<sup>2</sup>James D. Richardson, Messages and Papers of the Presidents, Vol. VII (10 vols.; Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1896-98), pp. 575-76.

<sup>3</sup>Lansing State Republican, November 11, 1887;  
Detroit Evening News, November 25, December 1, 1887.

<sup>4</sup>Detroit Evening News, January 6, 1887; December 29, 1887. One of the greatest fears of Michigan Republicans was that a strong stand on prohibition would alienate the powerful German-American vote that was vital for a Republican victory in Michigan. See Charles S. May to Palmer, December 1, 1887, Palmer Papers.

<sup>5</sup>William Livingstone to Palmer, December 26, 1887, Palmer Papers.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Cong. Record, 50th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 16.

<sup>8</sup>Cong. Record, 50th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 33; Garrity, The New Commonwealth, pp. 167-68; Norman J. Ware, The Labor Movement in the United States, 1860-1890 (New York: Vintage Books, 1964, originally published in 1929 by D. Appleton and Co.), pp. 315-17; John Higham, Strangers in the Land (New York: Atheneum, 1971), p. 55.

<sup>9</sup>Detroit Tribune, November 26, December 4, 1887;  
Detroit Evening News, November 26, 1887.

<sup>10</sup>Maurice R. Davie, World Immigration (New York: Macmillan Co., 1936), p. 183; Higham, Strangers in the Land, pp. 32, 41; American Publishing Co., to Palmer, February 3, 1888, Palmer Papers; Sydney Glazier, "Labor and Agrarian



Movements in Michigan 1876-1896" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1932), p. 100.

<sup>11</sup>Cong. Record, 50th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 654-55.

<sup>12</sup>Cong. Record, 50th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 653.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Cong. Record, 50th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 654.

<sup>15</sup>Cong. Record, 50th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 655; Palmer was supplied with immigration statistics compiled by the Bureau of Statistics especially for him. See letter of the Chief of the Bureau of Statistics to Palmer, January 10, 1888. Palmer Papers.

<sup>16</sup>Cong. Record, 50th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 657.

<sup>17</sup>Lansing State Republican, January 7, 30, 1888; New York Daily Tribune, January 27, 1888. American Publishing Co., to Palmer, February 3, 11, 1888; A. S. Kessel to Palmer, January 28, 1888; Hungaria Publishing Co. to Palmer, February 6, 23, 1888. Palmer Papers. New York Times, December 8, 10, 1887; August 23, 31, 1888.

<sup>18</sup>Alfred C. True, A History of Agricultural Experimentation and Research in the United States, 1607-1925 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1937), pp. 59-60; Fred W. Powell, The Bureau of Animal Industry (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1927), pp. 8-10; Leonard D. White, The Republican Era, p. 246.

<sup>19</sup>Cong. Record, 50th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 1329, 2397, 2739-46, 3276; Western Michigan Agricultural and Industrial Society to Palmer, January 22, 1887; A. L. Dodge, Assistant Secretary, American Percheron Horse Breeders Association, to Palmer, February 4, 1887; J. H. Butterfield, Secretary of Michigan Short Horn Cattle Breeders Association, to Palmer, February 4, 1887; Alvin H. Sander, Secretary of the Consolidated Cattle Growers Association, to Palmer, May 25, 1888; Thomas C. Anderson (Kentucky cattle breeder) to Palmer, August 17, 1888. Palmer Papers.

<sup>20</sup>Cong. Record, 50th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 4497, 4672, 4874-77.



<sup>21</sup>White, The Republican Era, pp. 232-34.

<sup>22</sup>A. C. True, A History of Agricultural Experimentation and Research in the United States, 1607-1925, pp. 39, 172-76; Charles H. Greathouse, Historical Sketch of the United States Department of Agriculture (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1898), pp. 9, 21-21; F. Burrow, President of the National Farmers Alliance, to Palmer, April 23, 1888, Palmer Papers.

<sup>23</sup>Donald R. Whitnah, A History of the United States Weather Bureau (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1961), pp. 19, 22-23, 48, 53, 55, 58. Although the Agriculture Department Bill passed in the second session of the 50th Congress with the Weather Bureau omitted, the 51st Congress made the weather service a civilian agency and placed it under the Department of Agriculture.

<sup>24</sup>Cong. Record, 50th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 2769, 3036, 3229, 3274-77, 3779, 3783, 4150, 8607, 8650; Palmer had been in correspondence with the chief signal officer of the Signal Corps (see his letters to Palmer May 23, 24, 1888), who wanted the Corps to remain a military unit. The officer pointed out that if the Corps was transferred to a civilian agency, the maintenance of military telegraph lines "would be left high and dry." The officer admitted that reorganization was needed but not by attaching the Corps to the Agriculture Department.

<sup>25</sup>Cong. Record, 50th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 8608, 8650, 8805, 8807-09, 8892.

<sup>26</sup>Cong. Record, 50th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 2392, 3033-36.

<sup>27</sup>Cong. Record, 50th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 3076, 3324, 3385-88; Detroit Free Press, February 10, 11, 13, 1888.

<sup>28</sup>Cong. Record, 50th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 3818-19.

<sup>29</sup>Cong. Record, 50th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 3877-78, 5939, 6013.

<sup>30</sup>Detroit Free Press, April 13, 1888.



<sup>31</sup>William Gavett to Palmer, January 12, 1887; Fred Farnsworth to Palmer, April 19, 1888; Harry Conant to Palmer, March 6, 1888. Palmer Papers.

<sup>32</sup>Lansing State Republican, April 26, 1888; H. C. Tillman, Assistant Secretary of the Republican State Central Committee, to Palmer, April 24, 26, 1888; Harry Conant to Palmer, April 25, 1888. Palmer Papers.

<sup>33</sup>E. Rust to Palmer, March 23, 24, 1888; C. D. Josleyn to Palmer, March 23, 1888; Fred Farnsworth to Palmer, March 25, 1888; James Shepard to Palmer, April 25, 1888. Palmer Papers.

<sup>34</sup>Fred Farnsworth to Palmer, May 16, 1888, Palmer Papers; Detroit Free Press, May 9, 1888.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.; Detroit Evening News, May 8, 1888; Detroit Free Press, May 9, 1888.

<sup>36</sup>Lansing State Republican, May 10, 1888.

<sup>37</sup>Detroit Evening News, March 1, 1888; Garrity, The New Commonwealth, p. 294; F. W. Taussig, The Tariff History of the United States (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1931), pp. 254-55; Miller, The States of the Old Northwest and the Tariff, pp. 169, 172; H. M. Laud and Sons Lumber Co., to Palmer, November 14, 1888; Gratwick Smith and Fryer Lumber Co., to Palmer March 7, 1888; D. Jarves, President of the Michigan Carbon Works, to Palmer, April 5, 1888; petition from West Coast lumber companies to Palmer declaring against placing lumber on the free list, December 6, 1887. Palmer Papers. Detroit Tribune, January 4, 10, 1888; Lansing State Republican, July 25, 1888.

<sup>38</sup>John Sherman to Richard Smith, John Sherman Letterbooks, Sherman Papers; A. L. Conger to John Sherman, May 20, 1888, Sherman Papers; W. P. Phelps to Alger, May 17, 1888, Alger Papers.

<sup>39</sup>Chicago Inter-Ocean, June 6, 8, 1888.

<sup>40</sup>Proceedings of the 9th Republican National Convention, 1888 (Chicago: Lakely Printing Co., 1888), p. 15. Hereinafter cited as G.O.P. Proc., 1888.



<sup>41</sup>Chicago Inter-Ocean, June 22, 1888.

<sup>42</sup>John Sherman to Henry C. Hedge, June 12, 1888, John Sherman Letterbooks, Sherman Papers; W. P. Phelps to Alger, May 29, 1888, Alger Papers.

<sup>43</sup>G.O.P. Proc., 1888, pp. 15, 166-67; Detroit Evening News, June 16, 1888.

<sup>44</sup>G.O.P. Proc., 1888, pp. 177-80.

<sup>45</sup>Elliot F. Shepard to Alger, June 23, 1888, Alger Papers.

<sup>46</sup>Sievers, Benjamin Harrison--Hoosier Statesman, p. 348.

<sup>47</sup>George Hoar, Autobiography of Seventy Years (New York: Charles Scribner and Sons, 1903), pp. 411-12.

<sup>48</sup>G.O.P. Proc., 1888, pp. 195-205.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 206.

<sup>50</sup>Fred Farnsworth to Palmer, July 4, 1888, Palmer Papers.

<sup>51</sup>Burton Parker to Palmer, July 28, 1888; E. W. Cottrell to Palmer, July 29, 1888. Palmer Papers. Detroit Evening News, July 29, 1888; Lansing State Republican, July 25, 1888.

<sup>52</sup>Detroit Evening News, July 21, 1888; Arthur Hile to Palmer, September 6, 1888, Palmer Papers. (John Sherman was under heavy pressure from the Ohio Wool Growers Association to have wool rates maintained or increased. See John Sherman to John A. Bingham, July 27, 1888, John Sherman Letterbooks, Sherman Papers.)

<sup>53</sup>John Sherman to John A. Bingham, July 27, 1888, John Sherman Letterbooks, Sherman Papers. John Coit Spooner to H. C. Payne, July 31, 1888, copy; Spooner to nn., July 27, 1888, copy. Spooner Papers.



<sup>54</sup>Detroit Free Press, September 15, 1888; Cong. Record, 1st Sess., 50th Cong., pp. 8610, 8642.

<sup>55</sup>Lansing State Republican, October 5, 1888; Detroit Free Press, September 25, 1888, October 4, 1888; Walter E. Barnett, a cigar manufacturer, to Palmer, September 27, 1888, Palmer Papers.

<sup>56</sup>M. Halstead to John Sherman, August 18, 1888, Sherman Papers; John Coit Spooner to Hon. J. M. Rusk, Governor of Wisconsin, copy, Spooner Papers.

<sup>57</sup>Detroit Free Press, October 21, 1888; Lansing State Republican, October 20, 1888.

<sup>58</sup>Russell Alger to Palmer; Chas. Wright to Palmer, September 14, 1888; Cyrus Luce to Palmer, October 22, 1888. Palmer Papers. James McMillan, an open letter to Michigan Republicans, October 6, 1888, McMillan Papers. New York Times, October 8, 10, 1888.

<sup>59</sup>W. P. Healy to Hugh McMillan, November 4, 1888; J. W. Selden to Hugh McMillan, November 10, 1888; D. C. Lockwood to James McMillan, October 31, 1888, James McMillan Papers.

<sup>60</sup>Michigan Manual, 1889, pp. 348, 370, 424, 427.

<sup>61</sup>George Melingh(?) to Palmer, November 1, 1888, Palmer Papers; Detroit Free Press, November 8, 12, 1888; Cyrus Luce to Palmer, February 25, 1889, Palmer Papers. New York Times, July 28, August 27, 1888.

<sup>62</sup>William Gavett to Palmer, December 6, 1888; James Shepard to Palmer, January 14, 1888. Palmer Papers.

<sup>63</sup>Cong. Record, 50th Cong., 2d Sess., pp. 192, 1399.

<sup>64</sup>Detroit Free Press, February 1, 1889.

<sup>65</sup>Detroit Free Press, January 12, 13, 1889; Cong. Record, 50th Cong., 2d Sess., pp. 113-15, 663, 669, 771, 834, 1080, 1085.



<sup>66</sup>Cong. Record, 50th Cong., 2d Sess., pp. 1103-05, 1216, 1936.

<sup>67</sup>Detroit Free Press, January 3, 17, 1889; William Livingstone to Palmer, January 19, 1889, Palmer Papers.

<sup>68</sup>Lansing State Republican, November 20, 1888; Detroit Free Press, November 18, 1888; Alger to Harrison, November 24, 1888; February 4, 1889, Harrison Papers; Detroit Free Press, February 11, 15, 1889.

<sup>69</sup>Detroit Free Press, February 2, December 15, 1889.

<sup>70</sup>Detroit Free Press, March 1, 1889; Cyrus Luce to Palmer, February 25, 1889, Palmer Papers. A confidant of Alger, W. P. Phelps, wrote to Alger on December 18, 1888, that Sherman was "vindicatively hostile as ever and has made up his mind boldly to oppose you in any way that comes into his power. In case of a nomination to office he would openly make the fight against confirmation." Alger Papers.

<sup>71</sup>Detroit Evening News, March 5, 1889; Detroit Free Press, March 3, 1889.

<sup>72</sup>Detroit Evening News, March 5, 1889.

<sup>73</sup>Palmer to E. W. Cottrell, March 9, 1889, T. W. Palmer Letterbooks, Palmer Papers.

<sup>74</sup>Palmer to J. A. Whittier, March 9, 1889, T. W. Palmer Letterbooks, Palmer Papers.

<sup>75</sup>Detroit Free Press, March 4, 1889.

<sup>76</sup>T. W. Palmer to J. A. Whittier, March 9, 1889, T. W. Palmer Letterbooks, Palmer Papers.



## CHAPTER VII

### MINISTER TO SPAIN

The failure of the new Republican administration to appoint Palmer to a cabinet post deeply disappointed his Michigan supporters. Many of them wrote to him expressing their regret. One supporter, obviously disgruntled with the Republican element that had opposed Palmer's appointment, wrote that the "men who seem to be responsible for the relation that the state of Michigan sustains to the general government have blundered in relation to the cabinet question." Another wrote in anger of the "treachery of Michigan men" that had deprived Palmer of the cabinet seat. Even Governor Luce sent his condolences and expressed his surprise and grief over the "strange blunder of the President of the United States."<sup>1</sup>

In spite of the feelings of his supporters, Palmer continued to maintain the composure with which he had first met the news that he was not to receive a cabinet post. He confided to one friend in regard to the cabinet position that he "preferred not to have it if there was to



be a fight." To another he expressed his hope that the conclusion of his Senate term would mean the end of his political activities. Having resigned himself to the end of his career in national politics, he began his preparations for his departure from Washington.<sup>2</sup>

Before Palmer could complete his preparations to return to Detroit, rumors began to circulate that he was to be offered a diplomatic post. These rumors proved to be accurate for on March 11 he was nominated by the President and confirmed by the Senate on March 12 as Minister to Spain. The Detroit Tribune reacted favorably to the news and predicted that the senator's "many friends and admirers in Michigan" would also be pleased by the appointment. The paper concluded its comments by attesting to Palmer's qualifications, calling him a "gentleman of high culture, of large experience in foreign affairs, intelligently informed on all matters of international concern."<sup>3</sup>

The New York Times and the Detroit Free Press reported that Palmer was completely surprised by the news of his appointment. The Times quoted him on the subject thus:

The appointment was a complete surprise to me. I had never asked the President about any appointment. I was lying in bed at my house in Washington when I was informed by Senator Manderson through the telephone that my name had just been sent to the Senate. It was positively the first time that I knew it.<sup>4</sup>

(Palmer's surprise was probably not as complete as he had indicated to the press. Rumors of a diplomatic



appointment for him, possibly to Spain, had been reported by the Detroit newspapers.)

Palmer did not make an immediate decision in regard to the appointment. As he confided to one of his political cronies, he wanted "to go home and talk to the boys about it." He further intimated that no matter what he decided, he would have "no griefs, no tears, no heart burnings and No-vember [sic] in 1890."<sup>5</sup>

Privately, he wrote to a friend that he was aware that the nomination as Minister to Spain was an effort by his political foes to placate him by allowing him "to be let in on the 'sweet.'" He confessed that he did not know how to react to the appointment. To another correspondent he made this comment:

I am somewhat at a loss to know what to do with it and propose to consult with my friends before determining. If I go to Spain it will be for a short stay as I mean to be envisioned in the Log House in 1890 devoting myself to the cultivation of my friends. [The Log House was Palmer's farmhouse located on the outskirts of Detroit.]<sup>6</sup>

Palmer's political advisors at first expressed the opinion that the position was too insignificant for a man of his dignity. Their advice to him was "to go home and go in training for a general knockout and the next governorship." On reconsideration, however, they thought that perhaps a short absence would be healthy for him since it would allow some of the factional strife in the party to subside, to his "advantage" and "comfort." All agreed that his trip abroad should be a "short exile."<sup>7</sup>



Following the counsel tendered him by his political supporters, Palmer accepted the appointment. The Detroit Evening News predicted that he would be returning from Spain soon "to punish his enemies." The paper also predicted that he would be working to prevent Stockbridge's re-election to the Senate and Alger's presidential ambitions from coming to fruition.<sup>8</sup>

Palmer's acceptance of the foreign post was met with warm praise from his friends both in Washington and in Michigan. The Michigan legislature sent President Harrison congratulations on his appointment. The Democratic Detroit Free Press complimented Palmer on his new position and commented that it was an appropriate appointment because he could speak Spanish fluently. The Detroit Tribune offered the opinion that if Palmer was successful in his post--particularly if he was able to negotiate a reciprocal trade agreement for northern wheat and Cuban sugar--he would be destined for an even higher diplomatic post.<sup>9</sup>

As Palmer prepared for his departure, he heard that Russell Alger was in Washington seeking the post of Solicitor-General for an old crony--Henry Duffield. Not wishing to pass up the opportunity to gain a little revenge against Alger, he wrote Senator Sherman, asking him to oppose Alger's nominee. (Sherman still blamed Alger for his defeat at the Republican National



Convention in 1888.) In reporting his action to a friend, Palmer asked with reference to Duffield, "Why make him a major General when he would make a very poor private."

The Detroit Free Press edition of March 15, 1889, reported that Palmer had "squelched" Duffield's bid to be Solicitor-General.<sup>10</sup>

Palmer arrived in Washington in the middle of April and immediately began a ten-day period of training and briefing on his diplomatic duties. During this time he asked and received permission to have Captain Frank Hamilton appointed as his military attache. Hamilton was married to Palmer's niece, the former Mollie Roby. With the departure date only weeks away, he still did not know whether or not his wife would accompany him to Spain. At the last moment Lizzie decided to make the overseas voyage.<sup>11</sup>

The new diplomat was given a farewell dinner by his friends. He expressed his deep regret at leaving them and made the following comment:

It shall be my mission as well as I can do to uphold the dignity of my country, and if my life is spared, to return to you. I shall come back rejuvenated and re-inspired with the expectation of spending an old age with you that shall be pleasant. I am certain, more pleasant than it would be in any other part of the world.<sup>12</sup>

Palmer learned from his briefing by State Department officials that the bulk of his work would be handling complaints against Spain's Cuban policy. These complaints



would be two-fold in nature. First, many Cuban exiles who had participated in the Ten Years War, a rebellion by Cubans against Spanish control that lasted from 1868-78, had taken refuge in the United States and had become American citizens. In some cases the Spanish officials had confiscated their properties in Cuba. After the end of the war, these exiles attempted to bring legal action against the Spanish government to gain compensation for their losses. Secondly, the Spanish government had sought to reduce the volume of trade between the United States and Cuba. It hoped to achieve this trade reduction by levying exorbitantly high import duties on American goods and shippers. At times American ships and cargoes were seized by the Spanish officials in Cuba, bringing appeals to the State Department from the aggrieved American merchants and ship captains. "It was no surprise, then, that the volume of complaints cabled to Madrid from Washington centered on Spanish commercial and economic policy in Cuba."<sup>13</sup>

The Spain that awaited Palmer was only a shadow of the sixteenth century world power that had led the European invasion of the Western Hemisphere. The nineteenth century brought a series of internal disturbances and rebellions that coincided with the Cuban rebellion and were largely responsible for Spain's inability to quell the Cuban insurgency until a decade of war had



passed. So serious were Spain's political problems that in 1873--in the middle of the Ten Years War--the monarch was overthrown and a republic established that lasted less than two years. In 1875 a parliamentary monarchy replaced the republic, with Alfonso XII, the son of the deposed former Queen, Isabella II, as king. With his death in 1885, the Queen Regent, Maria Christian, succeeded to the throne. The government was in reality an oligarchy rather than a constitutional monarchy. The leaders of the liberal and conservative parties, controlling both Queen and Cortes, manipulated elections and changed offices to present a facade of representative government.<sup>14</sup>

Relations between the United States and Spain between 1880 and 1894 were more amicable than in earlier years. Before 1880 they were often conducted in a hostile atmosphere. Spain's Cuban policy and American interest in it were responsible for the diplomatic difficulties. As early as the 1850's, Southern Democrats had sought to annex Cuba and President Buchanan had repeatedly urged its purchase from Spain. With the secession of the South and Lincoln's election, the movement to acquire Cuba was abandoned since the Republicans believed that the Cuban annexation movement had been a Southern plot to preserve the institution of slavery. American interest in Cuba was rekindled by the Ten Years War, during



which American aid was given to the Cuban insurgents. Matters came to a head in 1873 when an American vessel, the Virginus, was seized in Cuban waters and fifty-three persons aboard were executed by Cuban authorities for aiding the revolutionaries. American public opinion became inflamed and the United States Minister in Madrid, Daniel Sickles, did nothing to calm relations by urging the United States government to revenge the deaths. Secretary of State Hamilton Fish, a cooler and more accomplished diplomatist, succeeded in placating the Spanish and removed Sickles from his post. In the ensuing years of relative tranquility, trade between the United States and Cuba had increased to such an extent that it represented one-fourth of the world trade of the United States. The United States consumed at that time 75 per cent of the Cuban sugar crop. Because of the volume of Cuban trade, the diplomatic post in Madrid remained one of the most important in Europe as the United States sought to keep a close check on Spanish authorities in the New World.<sup>15</sup>

The Department of State was most eager to settle what was known as the Mora claim because it represented what the department termed a "type" case; it was the most important of the Cuban exiles' compensation cases originating from the Ten Years War. Palmer's immediate predecessor, Perry Belmont, had attempted to negotiate



a settlement but he had been warned by the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs that the Spanish House of Deputies regarded Mora as a "declared enemy of Spain" and would not initiate any settlement. To acquaint Palmer with the case, Secretary of State Blaine sent him a long letter giving the details and instructions on proceeding with the matter. According to Blaine, Mora was a naturalized citizen and one of the refugees of the Cuban rebellion who were seeking compensation for property seized by Spanish authorities. After hostilities had ended, Mora filed a claim to recover his financial losses. In 1873 the Spanish government issued decrees ordering the restitution of his property but they had never been carried out. In 1886 a Spanish offer to pay a full indemnity of \$1,500,000 was accepted by the United States and by Mora. The Spanish House of Deputies, however, refused to approve the agreement because it wanted the United States to settle first Spanish claims resulting from the cession of the Floridas and alleged injuries suffered by Spanish subjects during the American Civil War.<sup>16</sup>

The State Department, therefore, directed Palmer to inform the Spanish government that the United States government did not recognize any Spanish claims that had not received prior consideration and to continue to press for a settlement of the Mora claim. If Spain refused to settle the issue, then he was to tender the President's



regret and disappointment at the Spanish decision and immediately cable the State Department the "unfortunate results." He was to discontinue discussion and to await further instruction from the State Department. With such instructions as a foretaste, Palmer embarked for his new post.<sup>17</sup>

The Palmers sailed on May 15, 1889. They stopped in Paris and were forced to remain there an extra week because the Spanish Queen Regent was not in Madrid and the new minister's arrival would have caused her some inconvenience. Upon his arrival in Spain Palmer had an interview with the Spanish Secretary of State, the Marquis de la Vega de Armijo, the courtesies were exchanged. On June 17, he was received by the Queen Regent in a simple ceremony since the Queen wanted "no formal address." The new minister merely presented his letters of credence and the letters of recall of his predecessor. He described his reception as "cordial, appreciative and all that the most fastidious could wish."<sup>18</sup>

One of Palmer's first duties was to recommend that the secretary of the United States mission to Spain, Edward Strobel, be retained, even though Strobel had handed in his letter of resignation. Such resignations were usual and expected when an administration changed. Palmer argued that since the problems the United States delegation faced were "economic and not of a political



character," Strobels should not be relieved "until such time as his retiring would not imperil negotiations with which he is conversant and which he can assist in promoting better than a new appointee." Palmer's request was granted.<sup>19</sup>

Both Palmers found their new environment less than satisfactory. Madrid in the spring was extremely cold and the minister required a coke fire. July, however, he found to be "hot as hell." His health was not good as he suffered from a skin rash attributed to the heat and complained of "heart trouble," which he thought was caused by his excessive smoking. His wife was not enjoying her stay because of the street noise at night in Madrid. According to Lizzie, "the people sleep all day and prowl about all night." Despite these discomforts, the Palmers entertained extensively as might be expected of a foreign diplomat, and the United States legation in Madrid was often the "center for social events in the diplomatic corps" stationed in the Spanish capital.<sup>20</sup>

Luckily, Palmer's immediate duties were not overly strenuous. He was asked to check on several claims of individuals and companies against the Spanish government for matters ranging from "illegal imprisonment" to excessive steamship duties. He was also asked to gather information on Spanish shipping, communication, and



ports, both in Spain and Central and South America. The State Department expected that his information "would be found very useful."<sup>21</sup>

At the end of July Palmer sent a resumé of recent developments in the Spanish legislature that he thought would be of interest to the Secretary of State. According to his account, on May 22 the conservative leader of the legislature for the purpose of (1) increasing dissension in the liberal party, and (2) postponing discussion on a universal suffrage bill, directed debate toward the issue of Spanish protective tariffs. The liberal leader, however, presented a series of economic reforms that he desired to be acted upon immediately. No decision could be reached and the session was suspended when attempts to instill order were met with "yells and hisses." The legislature resumed its sitting on June 14, but was again suspended by the Queen when order could not be maintained. Palmer was of the opinion that new elections might be necessary before the legislature once again convened. His report revealed that during his first two months on the job he had made some effort to understand Spanish politics.<sup>22</sup>

On July 30, Palmer received this message from the State Department: "Have you no action as to Mora case for us?" In return he sent a long explanatory letter to Blaine. He said that he had refrained from



communicating Blaine's instructions of May 20 to the Spanish Minister of State because it meant bringing the matter before the House of Deputies, which had displayed previous hostility to the Mora claim. In Palmer's opinion, such action would serve more to "retard than expedite" further negotiations. He said that the United States was in error in believing that the Spanish ministry could pass on the Mora claim because it had avoided a censure vote by a large margin. He pointed out that censure had been avoided only because the government had promised to ask for no settlement of the claim. He further reported that the Mora property had been sold and that most of the money realized from the sale had been absorbed by Mora's creditors. If the property had not been disposed of, an executive order could have released it, but the government could not raise any money without resorting to the legislature. Palmer suggested that the United States should reply favorably to the proposal of the Marquis de la Vega that claims on both sides be examined jointly by the Spanish Minister in Washington and representatives of the State Department. These would include Spanish claims that had been pending for years. In such a manner, he suggested, a compromise agreeable to both sides might be worked out, thus making general redress by the Spanish government unnecessary. Palmer concluded his appraisal with the following words:



Again with a people of the peculiar temper of the Spanish nation, the presentation of the instruction, connected as it is, with the subject of Cuban relations--on which their sensibilities are extreme--may be followed by grave complications in which case it would be highly desirable that our position should be unassailable and our deductions uncontrovertible.<sup>23</sup>

Palmer had shown some courage in disobeying his instructions in order to present a more realistic picture of the problem to the State Department. A less astute man might have carried out his instructions without regard to the consequences. Evidently his advice was heeded, as he was not ordered to proceed according to his original instructions.

August found both the Minister and his wife "not feeling well." Mrs. Palmer wrote to a friend that she was "longing" for the end of their tour abroad.<sup>24</sup>

In September Palmer received congratulations from the State Department for his success in persuading the Spanish government to remit excessive duties exacted by Havana customs authorities on an American steamer's cargo. On certain other American claims, he was not so successful since the Spanish were generally opposed to approving any American claims.<sup>25</sup>

In October Palmer obtained a leave of absence that lasted almost three months; he did not resume his embassy duties until January 24, 1890. He spent much of his leave in London. In the interim, Edward Strobel had retired as secretary of the legation and had been



replaced by Harrie R. Newberry, a Michigander, much to the surprise of Palmer, who had not been notified of the appointment.<sup>26</sup>

Although Palmer had always yearned for a family, up to this point he had been childless. While in Spain he and his wife adopted a small Spanish boy whose parents were an impoverished Spanish army officer and his wife. The boy's Spanish name was Murillo, but the Palmers christened him Harold Palmer and nicknamed him "Monkey Cheeks." Mrs. Palmer was particularly delighted with the addition to the family and thought that the day Murillo was adopted was "one of great fortune." He returned to the United States with the Palmers and later attended law school at Cornell and upon Palmer's death inherited \$200,000.<sup>27</sup>

Upon his return from vacation, Palmer was asked by the Secretary of State to perform a number of tasks. One was to make a report on the number of military veterans and dependents receiving pensions in Spain. His findings were to be part of a comparative study by the United States government of foreign pension programs. He was also asked to be the United States representative at the Convention for Protection of Industrial Property held in Madrid in April because there were no funds available to defray the expenses of a patent office representative. The duties of a diplomat, judging from Palmer's experience, were often wide-ranging.<sup>28</sup>



One of Palmer's last duties was the presentation to the Spanish Minister of State of a United States Navy request for permission to conduct a hydrographic survey of the south coast of Cuba. Before presenting the request, he discussed the proposal with the Spanish Foreign Minister, who informed him that he thought that the Spanish government would be hostile to such a request because the government feared the reaction of the Spanish people, who were wary of American designs on Cuba. The Foreign Minister declared that the presence of American ships in Cuban waters could only raise questions "of grave international importance." Palmer submitted the Navy's proposal as directed but told Secretary of State Blaine to anticipate a negative reaction to it.<sup>29</sup>

On February 14, 1890, Palmer requested the State Department for permission to visit the United States. By this time Lizzie had left Madrid for Paris, ostensibly suffering from exhaustion. On March 7 he received the desired permission. Although the State Department did not know it, Palmer did not plan to return to his duties in Madrid. He had confided to the new secretary of the legation that he was leaving permanently. Having completed almost a year abroad, he was leaving Spain, expecting to run for governor in Michigan.<sup>30</sup>

Palmer left for the United States on April 19 in high spirits, looking forward to the gubernatorial



campaign. On his homeward voyage he received the news of the death of his niece, Mrs. Hamilton, which grieved him deeply since her death marked the end of the direct line of the Palmer family. William Livingstone, a long time Palmer adviser and friend, in a letter to James McMillan made the following comment regarding the impact of Mrs. Hamilton's death on Palmer's political future:

Nothing but death would make the Senator withdraw from the race . . . and I should not be at all surprised knowing as I do the strong affection which the Senator had for his niece, and she being also the last link as it were on his side of the house, if he should withdraw from the canvas entirely.<sup>31</sup>

Livingstone was correct in his prediction of Palmer's reaction to his niece's death. He sent a cable to Livingstone telling him to withdraw his name as a candidate. He said that his decision was final and irrevocable. According to the Detroit Tribune, on his arrival in the United States Palmer would spend a few days in New York before traveling to Washington to seclude himself for some time at the home of his friend and former colleague, Senator Charles Manderson of Nebraska. On June 2, 1890, he officially tendered his resignation as minister. With this action he formally ended his political career.<sup>32</sup>

Thus unexpectedly and prematurely, Thomas W. Palmer retired from the political arena. His performance as minister to Spain was characterized by his usual dedication to his duties. Since he had planned to spend



only a year at his post, it might have been anticipated that he would give only cursory attention to his position. Instead, he had in several instances gone beyond the requirements of the State Department to provide assessments of Spanish politics and policies. It is difficult to say how he would have performed in a crisis. His stay in Spain was too brief and too uneventful to enable him to have significant influence as a diplomat.



FOOTNOTES--CHAPTER VII

<sup>1</sup>Ronald Kelley to Palmer, March 12, 1889; George A. Farr to Palmer, March 4, 1889; Governor Luce to Palmer, March 21, 1889. Palmer Papers.

<sup>2</sup>Palmer to William Gavett, March 16, 1889; Palmer to D. H. Richardson, March 16, 1889. T. W. Palmer Letterbooks, Palmer Papers.

<sup>3</sup>Detroit Tribune, March 11-12, 1889; Detroit Evening News, March 11, 1889; Senate Executive Journal, 1887-1889, pp. 4, 8.

<sup>4</sup>Detroit Free Press, March 12, 1889; New York Times, March 30, 1889.

<sup>5</sup>Detroit Tribune, March 12, 1889; New York Times, March 30, 1889.

<sup>6</sup>Palmer to William Gavett, March 16, 1889; Palmer to Burton Parker, March 16, 1889. T. W. Palmer Letterbooks, Palmer Papers.

<sup>7</sup>Detroit Tribune, March 20, 1889; Joseph Greusel to Palmer, March 18, 1889; E. W. Cottrell to Palmer, March 15, 1889, Palmer Papers; James Shepard to William Livingstone. T. W. Palmer Letterbooks, Palmer Papers.

<sup>8</sup>Detroit Evening News, March 17, 1889.

<sup>9</sup>Detroit Free Press, March 18, 31, 1889; Detroit Tribune, March 20, 1889.

<sup>10</sup>Palmer to John Sherman, April 5, 1889; Palmer to William Curtis, April 5, 1889. T. W. Palmer Letterbooks, Palmer Papers. Detroit Free Press, March 15, 1889.



<sup>11</sup>New York Times, March 30, 1889; Detroit Free Press, March 22, 1889.

<sup>12</sup>Detroit Free Press, April 26, 1889.

<sup>13</sup>Leland H. Jenks, Our Cuban Colony (New York: Vanguard Press, 1928), p. 16; Lester D. Langley, The Cuban Policy of the United States (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1968), pp. 42, 53-54, 61, 70-71, 80, 83, 85.

<sup>14</sup>French Ensor Chadwick, The Relations of the United States and Spain--Diplomacy (New York: Russell and Russell, 1968-Reissued), p. 405; Raymond Carr, Oxford History of Modern Europe, Spain--1808-1939 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), p. 355; Ernest R. May, Imperial Democracy--The Emergence of America as a Great Power (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1961), p. 97.

<sup>15</sup>Sec. Bayard to J. L. M. Curry, January 19, 1887, No. 306; Sec. Bayard to Perry Belmont, December 18, 1888, No. 475; Sec. Bayard to Perry Belmont, March 1, 1889, No. 513. Diplomatic instructions to the United States Legation, Madrid, XX, Records of the Department of State (National Archives, Record Group 59). Hereinafter cited as U.S., Instructions, Spain. New York Times, March 30, 1889; Langley, The Cuban Policy of the United States, p. 85; Chadwick, The Relations of the United States and Spain--Diplomacy, pp. 411, 42-25.

<sup>16</sup>Sec. Bayard to J. L. M. Curry, August 18, 1886, No. 255; Sec. Bayard to Edward H. Strobels, September 17, 1888, No. 449. U.S., Instructions, Spain. Perry Belmont to Sec. Blaine, February 16, 18, 1889, U.S., Dispatches from the United States Legation, Madrid, CXIX, Records of the Department of State (National Archives, Record Group 59). Hereinafter cited as U.S., Dispatches, Spain. Sec. Blaine to Palmer (copy 3), May 20, 1889, Palmer Papers.

<sup>17</sup>Sec. Blaine to Palmer (copy 3), May 20, 1889, Palmer Papers.

<sup>18</sup>Palmer to Sec. Blaine, June 18, 1889, U.S., Dispatches, Spain.



<sup>19</sup>Sec. Blaine to Perry Belmont, April 29, 1889, No. 520, U.S., Instructions, Spain; Palmer to Blaine, June 18, 1889, U.S., Dispatches, Spain.

<sup>20</sup>Palmer to Friend Palmer, June 11, 1889; Frank B. Hamilton to Ford Starring, Palmer Papers. Detroit News, June 2, 1913.

<sup>21</sup>Sec. Blaine to Palmer, May 23, 25, July 1, 1889, Nos. 551, 553, 559; William Wharton to Palmer, July 28, 1889, No. 565. U.S., Instructions, Spain. Palmer to Sec. Blaine, June 21, 22, July 11, 1889, U.S., Dispatches, Spain.

<sup>22</sup>Palmer to Sec. Blaine, July 29, 1889, U.S., Dispatches, Spain; J. B. Moore to Palmer, August 13, 1889, No. 567, U.S., Instructions, Spain.

<sup>23</sup>William Wharton to Palmer, July 30, 1889, No. 566, U.S., Instructions, Spain. Palmer to Sec. Blaine, July 31, 1889, Palmer Papers.

<sup>24</sup>Mrs. Lizzie Palmer to Wm. Griffiths, August 15, 1889; Mrs. Lizzie Palmer to Mrs. Griffiths, August 5, 1889. Palmer Papers.

<sup>25</sup>Alvey A. Adey to Palmer, September 4, 1889, Nos. 568-569, U.S., Instructions, Spain; Palmer to Sec. Blaine, September 25, 1889, U.S., Dispatches, Spain.

<sup>26</sup>Palmer to Sec. Blaine, October 18, 1889, U.S., Dispatches, Spain; Sec. Blaine to Palmer, February 11, 1890, No. 588, U.S., Instructions, Spain.

<sup>27</sup>Palmer to Mrs. Alice G. Gulick, April 19, 1890; Palmer to Mrs. Houghton, December 29, 1890. T. W. Palmer Letterbooks, Palmer Papers. Detroit News, June 12, 1913; Detroit Free Press, June 12, 1913.

<sup>28</sup>Sec. Blaine to Palmer, February 11, 14, 18, 1890, Nos. 588, 590, 593, U.S., Instructions, Spain.

<sup>29</sup>Palmer to Sec. Blaine, April 10, 1890, U.S., Dispatches, Spain.



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE LAST YEARS

Palmer's withdrawal from the Michigan gubernatorial race only signified the end of his political career and not the termination of his service to the public. Despite suffering from an inflammatory skin disease, he accepted in June, 1890, an appointment from President Harrison as one of the commissioners of the World's Fair to be held in Chicago in 1893. Palmer spent the next three years devoting his time and efforts to making the Chicago World's Fair solvent and successful. In March of 1891, he was incapacitated by an illness for several weeks. That same year, the death of Captain Hamilton, his deceased niece's husband, served only to strengthen his determination to remain in political retirement.<sup>1</sup>

During 1892 Palmer supported President Harrison for re-election. Although Cleveland's victory in November disappointed him, he maintained his usual equanimity. He sent his condolences to Harrison and philosophically remarked that he had "come to the conclusion that no one could have carried the Republican party to success."<sup>2</sup>



Palmer repeatedly turned down requests to become politically active again from both friends and the state party organization. According to his secretary he was enjoying his little boy too much and "other things that give him pleasure and enjoyment" to run for office again.<sup>3</sup>

In 1893 Palmer favored Detroit's reform mayor, Hazen Pingree, in his bid for re-election. He did not actively campaign for Pingree as his duties with the World's Fair had exhausted him and he had been confined to his bed for some time after returning home. This time there was to be no disappointment for Pingree won re-election by a healthy electoral margin.<sup>4</sup>

The years 1894-1895 found Palmer still recuperating from his illness. In 1895 a fire destroyed his residence on Woodward but many of his valuable possessions were saved. He then moved permanently to a brick house built on his farm on the outskirts of Detroit. The rest of this land was deeded to the city for a public park, which was later named after him.<sup>5</sup>

Palmer spent much of his time in philanthropic and civic activities, donating money to his favorite charities and making speeches at building dedications and annual meetings of associations of which he was a member. Albion College, the University of Michigan, the YMCA, the American Humane Association, the Detroit Museum



of Art and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals were among his beneficiaries. Palmer, however, was discriminating in his charity. On one occasion he chided his wife for giving funds to one Mrs. Edie. He requested that Lizzie turn over Mrs. Edie's "begging letters" to him before she was "begged poor." Another time he turned down the request of a youth for money for college tuition. He advised the boy to "take a few years in business before trying the higher schools." He further said: "Of all the things, the first you should learn is to keep out of debt and not get what you cannot pay for."<sup>6</sup>

He spent much time during his last years riding around the countryside in a chauffeur-driven automobile. In 1910 his auto was involved in an accident with another car. Palmer survived the crash but his injuries left him in a weakened condition from which he never fully recovered.<sup>7</sup>

Death finally came to Palmer on June 1, 1913. In his will he left slightly over one million dollars to his wife Lizzie, \$200,000 to his adopted son, Harold Palmer, and \$250,000 to various charities. Two of the largest bequests were \$75,000 to Harper Hospital and \$50,000 to Albion College. The Woman's Hospital and Children's Home, the Home of the Friendless, St. Vincent's Orphan Asylum, the House of the Good Shepherd, and the



Arnold Home for the Aged and Incurable each received \$2,000. The Protestant Orphan Asylum, the St. Francis Home for Boys, and the National Woman's Suffrage Association each received \$5,000. The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the Mary Palmer Methodist Church, and the First Congregational Unitarian Church each received \$10,000. The rest of his estate was divided among friends, employees, and distant relatives.<sup>8</sup>

The funeral was a private affair with the President emeritus of the University of Michigan delivering the eulogy. The minister who presided at the final service cited Palmer's contributions to society in the following words:

. . . The Unitarian Church had lost its chief benefactor, Detroit its first citizen and the nation a distinguished public servant. We remember him too as one who lived up to his liberal principles broad enough to include in his sympathies men of creeds different from his own.<sup>9</sup>

Palmer's political career clearly demonstrated that wealth did not guarantee political success. Many men in his own party also possessed wealth and ambition and presented abundant competition for the available political offices. This intra-party competition in Michigan, particularly after the death of Zachariah Chandler, so severely divided Michigan Republicans that general elections were close affairs, with Democratic-Greenback-Labor coalitions always a real threat to Republican incumbents.



The slender margins of electoral victory meant that each party eagerly sought issues that appealed to the electorate. Once the campaign issues had been decided upon, candidates were expected to support the party platform, neither criticizing the existint planks or introducing new issues. Palmer, although ordinarily following the dicta of the party strategists, several times violated the unwritten rule when he supported such reforms as women's suffrage and prohibition to the consternation of his Republican colleagues.

Palmer's experience in state politics demonstrated that a successful politician in the post-Civil War era needed a coterie of dedicated supporters. It was this group that sounded the political currents and paved the way for his electoral success. Their advice and aid were indispensable ingredients for political victory.

The quest for political office usually indicates that an individual is wholeheartedly dedicated to the acquisition of power. Palmer was an exception. On only one occasion, that being his campaign and subsequent election to the United States Senate, did he reveal an overwhelming desire to acquire political power. This lack of sustained desire for political preferment shortened his career in politics.

After his election to the Senate he refused to become a political boss despite the incessant urging of



his friends and associates that he assume control of the Michigan Republican party and thus fill the leadership vacuum created by the death of Zachariah Chandler. He resolutely ignored this advice and publicly declared himself in opposition to political bossism. Thus he failed to fulfill the expectations of his friends and supporters, who hoped that he would "fill Chandler's shoes" and perhaps even surpass "old Zach's" career by occupying the White House.

In his legislative role--both in the state Senate and in the United States Senate--Palmer addressed himself to his tasks with the same meticulous thoroughness with which he carried out his business enterprises. He introduced bills that reflected extensive and careful research and worked with resolute tenacity to secure their passage.

As a Republican senator, Palmer reflected the traditional party positions on economic issues such as the tariff, currency, and the treasury surplus. As a wealthy lumberman he vehemently opposed reciprocal trade agreements with Canada. As a Michigander, he vigorously labored to represent the interests of his state in the national legislature. On national issues he had favored moderate federal controls as indicated by his positions on the Interstate Commerce Bill and the Oleomargarine Bill.



Palmer never regained the enthusiasm for political campaigning that he demonstrated in 1883 when he engineered his spectacular victory. Thereafter his desire for personal political success had waned so greatly that he had little interest in the "grass roots" preparations necessary for the continuance of his political career.

In summary, Palmer's political career demonstrated that he was neither a liberal reformer nor an arch conservative but a man firmly ensconced somewhere in the political center. He approached his work with seriousness of purpose. Nowhere was there evidence that he regarded his political offices as sinecures. Yet he was a man of wit and humor, who at times enjoyed entertainment, both cultural and social, more than his political career. It was this gregarious nature that was his major political weakness. The desire for good conversation, the presence of his friends, and a retirement spent enjoying the fruits of his work sapped his political ambition. This attitude, combined with the animosity of his Republican enemies in Detroit, hastened him to a premature political retirement. Although not a major political figure, his public life is an excellent case study of the post-Civil War period and offers an insight into the politics of that era, both in state and nation.



## FOOTNOTES--CHAPTER VIII

<sup>1</sup>Detroit Free Press, June 2, 1890; Otis Scott to Wm. Wharton, June 30, 1890, T. W. Palmer Letterbooks, Palmer Papers. Otis Scott to W. R. Bates, September 13, 1892, T. W. Palmer Letterbooks, Palmer Papers. J. M. Goodman to Palmer, June 4, 1891; R. D. Mussey to Palmer, April 1, 1891, Palmer Papers. Palmer to Harrison, May 31, 1891, Harrison Papers.

<sup>2</sup>Palmer to Harrison, June 9, 1892, Harrison Papers; John T. Rich, Scrapbook, 1892, p. 4, clipping from Marquette Mining Journal, John T. Rich Papers (University of Michigan Historical Collection, Ann Arbor, Mich.). Palmer to Harrison, November 16, 1892; Harrison to Palmer (copy), November 19, 1892, Harrison Papers. Palmer to his wife, November 11, 1893, T. W. Palmer Letterbooks, Palmer Papers.

<sup>3</sup>Otis Scott to W. R. Bates, September 13, 1892; Otis Scott to Col. Dickson, September 26, 1892, T. W. Palmer Letterbooks, Palmer Papers.

<sup>4</sup>Ford Starring to Col. Dickson, March 4, 1891; Palmer to the Secretary of the Michigan Mutual Life Insurance Co., T. W. Palmer Letterbooks, Palmer Papers.

<sup>5</sup>W. E. Dodge to Palmer, November 13, 1895; James Shepard to Palmer, November 13, 1895; Wm. Livingstone to Mrs. Palmer, July 17, 1895; M. P. Halbut, Secretary to the Parks and Boulevards Commission, to Palmer. Palmer Papers.

<sup>6</sup>H. F. Eberts to Palmer, November 5, 1900; H. C. Loveridge to Palmer, May 6, 1901; George H. Barbour to Palmer, May 30, 1901; A. J. Read to Palmer; Dr. Wm. O. Stillman to Palmer, October 1, 1901; Chamberlain and Guise, Attorneys to Palmer, December 28, 1903; Wm. A. Moore to Palmer, March 8, 1904; George N. Marston to Palmer, May 9,



1909; Arthur Holmes to Palmer, June 1, 1908. Palmer Papers. Palmer to C. A. Black, May 16, 1906; Palmer to wife, November 11, 1893; Palmer to Louis Frost, September 26, 1891. T. W. Palmer Letterbooks. Palmer Papers.

<sup>7</sup>P. E. Baker to Palmer, June 20, 1910; C. A. Black to Palmer, July 20, 1910. Palmer Papers.

<sup>8</sup>Detroit Evening News, June 2, 4, 12, 1913;  
Detroit Free Press, June 2, 4, 5, 12, 1913.

<sup>9</sup>Detroit News, June 4, 1913.



## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

There is no published biography of Thomas W. Palmer. The fullest existing treatment of his life is an unpublished M.A. thesis by Grace Swihart (Wayne State, 1940). Her presentation often lacks analysis, treats Palmer's senatorial career in one chapter, and utilizes only three months of the extensive Palmer family manuscripts. Two good biographical sketches of Palmer are M. Agnes Burton, "Thomas Witherell Palmer," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, XXXIX (Lansing, 1915), and Henry E. Bodman, "Thomas W. Palmer," Michigan Men in the Cleveland Era, Earl D. Babst and Lewis G. Vander Velde, eds. (Ann Arbor, 1948). Two brief biographical sketches are found in History and Biography of Detroit and Wayne County (Chicago, 1909) and Illustrated American Biography (New York and Chicago, 1895).

### Primary Sources

#### Manuscripts

The most important collection of papers for this study were the Palmer family papers deposited in the



Burton Historical Collections of the Detroit Public Library. The 35,000 manuscripts are divided into the Thomas Palmer papers and the Thomas W. Palmer papers. Also included are a large number of letterbooks that deal primarily with business affairs but do contain some important political correspondence. Thirteen personal scrapbooks of Thomas W. Palmer complete the collection.

Other manuscripts in the Burton Collection of relevance to the dissertation were the James McMillan and Byron M. Cutcheon papers. Although there exist only a small number of McMillan's political papers, they do provide revealing information on McMillan's political activities during 1888-89, when he was striving to succeed Palmer as United States senator.

The Russell Alger papers at the William Clements Library, University of Michigan, were few in number for the purposes of this study but did provide some interesting information for the years 1888-90.

Several letters of Palmer to the governor's office are found in the Executive Papers at the Michigan State Historical Commission but are not particularly informative.

At the University of Michigan Historical Collections, the papers of John J. Bagley, Oliver L. Spaulding, and the Brackley Shaw family were the most useful and rewarding. Shaw was a member of the state



legislature that elected Palmer, and his personal observations of the political pressures exerted on the legislators during the prolonged balloting are most revealing.

The Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress, although containing few Palmer letters, was a mine of useful information, particularly concerning the tariff and the election campaigns of 1884 and 1888. The extensive collections of John Sherman and John Coit Spooner were the most valuable. Significant material for this study was also found in the Nelson Gresham papers. The presidential papers of Cleveland and Harrison, although voluminous, were less helpful than I had anticipated.

Palmer's career as a diplomat is clearly outlined in the records of the Department of State, in the National Archives (Record Group 59). The most rewarding of the State Department documents were found under the general category of Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers. These included: (1) Diplomatic instructions, Spain; (2) Dispatches from U.S. Ministers, Spain; (3) Notes to Foreign Legations in the United States from the Department of State, Spain; and (4) Notes from the Spanish Legation in the United States to the Department of State.



Printed Government Documents:  
Federal and State

Federal

Indispensable were the volumes of the Congressional Record containing the debates of the 48th, 49th, and 50th Congresses. Senate Report No. 46, 49th Cong., 2d Sess., provided valuable insights into the complexities of interstate commerce legislation. The United States Statutes at Large and the Statistical Abstracts were also invaluable research tools.

State

On the state level, the Michigan House Journal and the Michigan Senate Journal for 1879 provided essential information on Palmer's activities in the Michigan legislature. Both state legislative records provide only basic information and do not carry a comprehensive record of debate as does the Congressional Record. The Michigan Manual was an important source particularly for Michigan election statistics.

Other Printed Sources

James D. Richardson, ed., Messages and Papers of the Presidents (10 vols.; Washington: 1896-99) was a useful source. Appleton's Annual Cyclopedia (New Series, 20 vols.; New York: 1876-95) provided a most useful compilation of data, both nationally and on the state



level. The Proceedings of the Ninth Republican National Convention, 1888 (Chicago, 1888) and Official Proceedings of the Republican National Convention, 1888 (Minneapolis, 1903), supplied details of the Republican National Convention of 1888.

#### Contemporary Accounts and Memoirs

There are numerous memoirs written by national political figures in the post-Civil War era. Most of these works are unrewarding as they generally lack both candor and perception. The most useful of these works for this study were, Shelby M. Cullom, Fifty Years of Public Service (Chicago, 1911); George F. Hoar, Autobiography of Seventy Years (2 vols.; New York, 1903); O. O. Stealey, Twenty Years in the Press Gallery (New York, 1906); and John Sherman, Recollections of Forty Years in the House, Senate and Cabinet (2 vols.; Chicago, 1895).

#### Newspapers and Journals

The most important source of information on Palmer's local political activities were the Detroit newspapers. The Detroit Free Press was the unyielding defender of the Democratic party but also gave much attention to Republican politics. The major Detroit Republican newspaper underwent several changes of name



and political philosophies during its existence. In the early 1870's it was known as the Advertiser and Tribune until it was taken over by Zachariah Chandler, who changed its name to the Post and Tribune. After Chandler's death the paper was taken over by a group of anti-Chandler Republicans who used the same name. In 1885 the paper was called the Post and in 1886 was renamed the Tribune. Despite these later name changes the paper still maintained its enmity toward former friends of Chandler. The Detroit Evening News was founded by James Scripps in 1873 as an independent newspaper but frequently favored Republican candidates and programs.

The most important Michigan Republican newspaper outside of Detroit was the Lansing State Republican, later known as the Lansing Republican. It provided much information on the state-wide activities of the Republican party and shed much light on the operations of the state legislature and on state political issues in general.

Other Michigan newspapers used were the Jackson Patriot, the Marquette Mining Journal, and the Saginaw Weekly Courier.

The most valuable out of state newspapers consulted were the New York Times useful because of its index and its interest in political affairs throughout the nation, and the Chicago-Inter Ocean, a Republican



newspaper that was a favorite of Palmer's and that gives a good coverage of the 1888 Republican convention in Chicago.

The Forum, the Nation, and the North American Review contain innumerable articles on the activities of the Senate during the 1880's and thus provided a rich background of information.

Histories of Michigan,  
General and Political

A useful early secondary source on the history of Michigan is Henry M. Utely and Byron M. Cutcheon, Michigan as a Province, Territory, and State, Twenty-Sixth Member of the Federal Union, Clarence Burton, ed. (New York, 1906). Clarence M. Burton, ed., The City of Detroit, 1701-1922 (5 vols.; Detroit, 1922) and Silas Farmer, History of Detroit and Wayne County and Early Michigan: A Chronological Cyclopedia of the Past and Present (2 vols.; Detroit, 1890) are histories of Detroit which present little analysis but contain a wealth of information. The two most popular recent general histories of Michigan are F. Clever Bald, Michigan in Four Centuries (New York, 1959), and Willis F. Dunbar, Michigan: A History of the Wolverine State (Grand Rapids, 1965). Both works are deficient in their coverage of nineteenth century Michigan politics and their political analysis is superficial at best.



There does not exist a single comprehensive volume devoted to Michigan political history. Floyd Streeter, Political Parties in Michigan, 1837-1860: An Historical Study of Political Issues and Parties in Michigan from the Admission of the State to the Civil War (Lansing, 1918) provides information on early Michigan history but a more modern work is desirable. Harriette M. Dilla, Politics of Michigan, 1865-1878 (New York, 1912) is an excellent work that has stood the test of time well. It is well researched and offers a good insight into Michigan politics for the period covered. There is no standard work covering Michigan politics from 1878-1890.

Arthur Chester Millspaugh, Party Organization and Machinery Since 1890 (Baltimore, 1917) although covering a later period does shed some light on political party structure in Michigan before 1890. Stephen Beisman Sarason, The Regulation of Parties and Nominations in Michigan: The Politics of Election Reform (New York, 1953) provides information on internal political party practices in Michigan.

### Secondary Works

#### General Studies

Of the older general works, Ellis P. Oberholtzer, A History of the United States Since the Civil War (5 vols.; New York, 1937), and James F. Rhodes, History of



the United States from Hayes to McKinley, 1877-1896 (New York, 1919), provide a great amount of factual data but little analysis.

There have been a number of recent works that have dealt with the politics of the "gilded age." Ray Ginger, Age of Excess: The United States From 1877-1914 (New York, 1965), presents in chapters 6, 8, and 12 a conventional political treatment of the era. John A. Garraty, The New Commonwealth, 1877-1890 (New York, 1968), concisely sketches the story of national politics for a thirteen-year period but the treatment is too brief and, is based mainly on secondary sources. His general thesis that "the safest generalization that can be made about political alignments, aside from the obvious sectional division, is that party preferences were more influenced by family tradition, religion, and local issues of the moment than by the policies or pronouncements of statesmen and their organizations," is open to question. H. Wayne Morgan, From Hayes to McKinley, National Party Politics, 1877-1896 (Syracuse, 1969), is a significant work and presents excellent coverage of important political issues such as the tariff and federal spending. He contends that during this period the Republicans became a national political party because they were able to anticipate accurately the public will in regard to national concerns. He often overemphasizes personalities



when analyzing issues and often fails to examine adequately state issues and the impact that they had on the national scene. Fred A. Shannon, The Centennial Years: A Political and Economic History of America from the Late 1870's to the Early 1890's, Robert Huhn Jones, ed. (Garden City, 1967), is a useful summary but is too episodic and thematically unintegrated to be truly described as a synthesis.

### Biography

There exist many biographies of political figures in the post-Civil War era. The three most important works of this nature for this study involved Democratic leaders. James A. Barnes, John G. Carlisle: Financial Statesman (New York, 1931), is a most useful source of information on tariff legislation and Democratic strategy during the 1880's. Ben H. Procter, "Not Without Honor": The Life of John H. Reagan (Austin, 1962), is a well-written account of Reagan's involvement in the promotion and passage of the Interstate Commerce Act. Herbert J. Bass, "I Am a Democrat": The Political Career of David Bennett Hill (Syracuse, 1961), is an important study of a powerful New York state political figure and gives an interesting account of the impact of Cleveland's tariff message of 1888.

Of the biographies dealing with Republican political personalities, I found the following most useful:



Nathaniel W. Stephenson, Nelson W. Aldrich: A Leader in American Politics (New York, 1930); Leland L. Sage, William Boyd Allison: A Leader in Practical Politics (Iowa City, 1956); David S. Muzzey, James G. Blaine: A Political Idol of Other Days (New York, 1934); James W. Nielson, Shelby M. Cullom: Prairie State Republican (Urbana, 1962); Leon Burr Richardson, William E. Chandler, Republican (New York, 1940); Chester L. Barrows, William Evarts, Lawyer, Diplomat, Statesman (Chapel Hill, 1941); Dorothy Ganfield Fowler, John Coit Spooner: Defender of Presidents (New York, 1961).

George F. Howe, Chester A. Arthur (New York, 1934) is the standard biography of Arthur. Allan Nevins, Grover Cleveland: A Study in Courage (New York, 1932) is the major study of Cleveland but is largely uncritical of his leadership role. Horace Samuel Merrill, Bourbon Leader: Grover Cleveland and the Democratic Party (Boston, 1957) is a briefer and more critical study. Harry J. Sievers has written a three volume biography of Benjamin Harrison. Volume II, Benjamin Harrison, Hoosier Statesman, 1865-1888 (New York, 1959) and Volume III, Benjamin Harrison, Hoosier President (Indianapolis, 1968) were useful for this study. However, both volumes were disappointing as Harrison's senatorial tasks were not as graphically depicted as his personal affairs and his cabinet appointment policy is not given the thorough analysis necessary for a full understanding of Harrison's appointment problems.







Sister Mary Karl George, Zachariah Chandler: A Political Biography (East Lansing, 1969), gives an excellent treatment of Chandler's federal career but it is questionable whether a thorough understanding of Chandler's public life can be obtained without a greater examination of his role in Michigan state politics.

### Special Studies

A dated account of political activity in this period is Matthew Josephson, The Politicos: 1865-1896 (New York, 1938). The author dismisses the idea that serious political issues concerned politicians and emphasizes the division of spoils as the key to understanding politics of that era. David J. Rothman, Politics and Power: The United States Senate, 1869-1901 (Cambridge, Mass., 1966), argued that the post-Civil War years were a period of maturation for the United States Senate, which then "acquired the character and form it was to retain through the twentieth century." He views the development of the party discipline and organizational functions in the Senate as positive political contributions.

Leonard D. White, The Republican Era: A Study in Administrative History, 1869-1901 (New York, 1958), is an invaluable guide to the structure of federal bureaucracy.

Studies devoted to election results and political parties are often revealing and informative. Eugene Holloway Roseboom, A History of Presidential Elections



(New York, 1957), provides a useful general survey of national election results. W. Dean Burnham, Presidential Ballots: 1836-1892 (Baltimore, 1955), is an invaluable compilation of election statistics based on official county returns. Helpful for a study of the Republican party but not very analytical are George H. Mayer, The Republican Party, 1854-1964 (New York, 1964), and Malcom Moos, The Republicans (New York, 1956). William Livingstone, Livingstone's History of the Republican Party (Detroit, 1900), is important for the light it sheds on Michigan Republicans and because the author was a close associate of Palmer.

The best general account of economic affairs is Edward C. Kirkland, Industry Comes of Age: Business, Labor and Public Policy, 1860-1897 (New York, 1961). It is a well researched and balanced account of industrial activities and contributions which more than offsets Matthew Josephson, The Robber Barons: The Great American Capitalists, 1860-1901 (New York, 1934), a one-sided, anti-business study. Samuel P. Hays, The Response to Industrialism: 1885-1914 (Chicago, 1957), analyzes the impact of industrial development upon many aspects of American life.

The best source of information on the development of the movement for the regulation of industry is J. W. Hurst, Law and the Condition of Freedom in the United



States (Madison, 1956). Lee Benson, Merchants, Farmers and Railroads: Railroad Regulation and New York Politics, 1850-1887 (Cambridge, Mass., 1955), contends that eastern interests were responsible for federal railroad regulation. Gabriel Kolko, Railroads and Regulation, 1877-1916 (Princeton, 1965), argues that in many cases it was the railroad leaders who sought regulation for their own purposes.

Although ending its coverage in 1879, Irwin Unger, The Greenback Era: A Social and Political History of American Finance, 1865-1879 (Princeton, 1964), effectively depicts the currency problems in the post-Civil War era in a scholarly manner.

The tariff was probably the most important political issue in the 1880's. No current work effectively analyzes this issue's impact on the politics of the day. Thus the most important secondary works on the topic are of an older vintage. Edward Stanwood, American Tariff Controversies in the Nineteenth Century (2 vols.; Boston, 1903), is written from a protectionist viewpoint but contains much worthwhile information. Frank W. Taussig, Tariff History of the United States (5th ed.; New York, 1910), provides a scholarly analysis of the issue. More important for this study was Clarence Lee Miller, The States of the Old Northwest and the Tariff, 1865-1888 (Emporia, Kansas, 1929), which effectively portrays the impact of the issue on the Midwest and on the Democratic party in particular.



An excellent aid in understanding the impact of reformers upon the political system is John G. Sproat, "The Best Men": Liberal Reformers in the Gilded Age (New York, 1968).

The most valuable work on women's suffrage for this period is Susan B. Anthony and Ida H. Harper, eds., The History of Woman Suffrage (Vol. IV, Indianapolis, 1902). Understandably it suffers from the personal involvement of the editors and the topic needs scholarly attention. D. Leigh Calvin, Prohibition in the United States (New York, 1926) is a shallow work but accurately depicts the political importance of John P. St. John.

A good general account of the foreign policy of this era is Foster R. Dulles, Prelude to World Power: American Diplomatic History, 1860-1900 (New York, 1965). Charles Callan Tansill, The Foreign Policy of Thomas F. Bayard, 1885-1897 (New York, 1940) is a comprehensive but often unanalytical account of United States diplomacy. The most stimulating recent study is John A. S. Grenville and George Berkeley Young, Politics, Strategy, and American Diplomacy: Studies in Foreign Policy, 1873-1919 (New Haven, 1966). Walter La Feber, The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860-1896 (Ithaca, 1963), and Ernest R. May, Imperial Democracy: The Emergence of America as a Great Power (New York, 1961), both provide a general background for United States foreign



relations. La Feber believes, however, that American diplomacy was dictated by a determined search for overseas expansion while May sees no such determined predisposition.

H. Wayne Moran, America's Road to Empire: The War With Spain and Overseas Expansion (New York, 1965), and Lester D. Langley, The Cuban Policy of the United States: A Brief History (New York, 1968), shed some light on Palmer's problems as Minister to Spain 1890-91. W. Stull Holt, Treaties Defeated by the Senate (Baltimore, 1933), is useful as a reference guide. Robert Craig Brown, Canada's National Policy, 1883-1900--A Study in Canadian-American Relations (Princeton, 1964), is an excellent analysis of Canadian-American problems.

### Articles

#### Michigan Topics

The following articles were useful in providing background information on early Michigan: Thomas W. Palmer, "Detroit Sixty Years Ago," in Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, XXXI (Lansing, 1901); Byron M. Cutcheon, "Log Cabin and Log Cabin People," in Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, XXIX (Lansing, 1899-1900); C. M. Burton, "Detroit in the Year, 1832," in Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, XXXVIII (Lansing, 1897-98); Thomas W. Palmer, "Address at the 9th Annual Pioneer Picnic of Cass County," in Michigan



Pioneer and Historical Collections, XXIX (Lansing, 1899-1900).

A good descriptive study of lumbering operations in Michigan is Rollan H. Maybee, "Michigan's White Pine Era, 1840-1900," Michigan History, XLIII (December, 1959). Richard M. Doolen, "The National Greenback Party in Michigan Politics, 1876-1888," Michigan History, XLVII (June, 1963), concisely analyzes the impact that this third party movement had on Michigan politics. John W. Lederle and Rita Feiler Aid, "Michigan State Party Chairmen," Michigan History, XLI (June, 1957), accurately depicts the roles of these important state political leaders.

#### National Topics

The following articles were most helpful in understanding the major issues before the Senate during the 1880's. A. T. Volwiler, "Tariff Strategy and Propaganda in the United States, 1887-1888," American Historical Review, XXXVI (October, 1930), is an excellent analysis of politics and the tariff during that crucial year. Gerald D. Nash, "The Reformer Reformed: John H. Reagan and Railroad Regulation," Business History Review, XXIX (June, 1955), and "Origins of the Interstate Commerce Act," Pennsylvania History, XXIV (July, 1957), shed important light on the background of the Interstate Commerce Act. In the former article he analyzes Reagan's



contributions and in the latter denotes the important contributions of Pennsylvania oilmen to federal regulation. David Maldwyn Ellis, "The Forfeiture of Railroad Land Grants, 1867-1894," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXXIII (June, 1946), and Donald L. McMurry, "The Political Significance of the Pension Question, 1885-1897," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, IX (June, 1922), are excellent articles on two topics that were constantly before Congress in the 1880's. Howard R. Smith, "The Farmer and the Tariff," The Southern Economic Journal, XXI (October, 1954), attempts to penetrate the rhetoric surrounding the farmer-tariff arguments and presents the rural economic situation in the correct perspective. Edward A. Purchell, Jr., "Ideas and Interests: Businessman and the Interstate Commerce Act," Journal of American History, LIV (December, 1967), is a significant article on this controversial topic. Purcell argues that the origins of the Interstate Commerce Act cannot be assigned to a specific interest group and that credit must be given to numerous groups who were simultaneously seeking federal regulation of railroads.

#### Unpublished Dissertation

Only one unpublished dissertation was used in this study. Sidney Glazier, "Labor and Agrarian Movements in Michigan, 1876-1896 (Department of History, University



of Michigan, 1932), adequately describes the third party efforts that characterized Michigan politics in the years covered in the study.







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