THE LIBERAL REFORM MOVEMENT IN MICHIGAN POLITICS 1870-1876

Dissertation for the Degree of Ph. D.
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
DOUGLAS EMERSON STECK
1975

ABSTRACT

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By

Douglas Emerson Steck

Reform agitation in American politics in the 1870s was widespread. It was related to rampant corruption and incompetence in government and a desire to move from the problems and concerns of the Civil War era to those of the post-war period. Much of the reform impetus came from political "independents" who organized reform-oriented third party movements. In Michigan their efforts led most notably to the establishment of the state Liberal Republican Party in 1872 and the National Reform Party of 1874. This study examines the men, issues, and political events which constituted the Michigan Reform experiment. It also assesses the impact of the Liberal Reform drive on state politics and on the relative strength of the Republican and Democratic parties in Michigan.

The most helpful research materials for this project were the correspondence of Michigan Reformers and their supporters, and selected state newspapers which gave extensive coverage to the Reform effort. Of the manuscripts consulted the most comprehensive were the

Austin Blair papers in the Burton Historical Collection of the Detroit Public Library. The papers of other Reformers in this collection were relevant, as were those located in the Michigan Historical Collections at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, and the Historical Collections at Michigan State University in East Lansing. Among the available reform-minded newspapers were the Grand Rapids Daily Times, Kalamazoo Gazette, Marshall Democratic Expounder, [Battle Creek] Michigan Tribune, Lansing Journal, and Detroit Free Press.

Several additional types of source materials were used. They included printed government documents of state and national relevance, manuals and almanacs, and collections of political speeches.

Works related to state and local history were indispensable. Most pertinent were county histories, biographical works, and monographs dealing with various phases of Michigan's political history.

The research performed in these and other sources led to a number of major conclusions about the Liberal Reform movement in Michigan politics. First, it substantially affected both the Republican and Democratic parties in the state. Reformism helped to discredit the former and to bolster the image of the latter, and played an important role in bringing about the defeat of Zachariah Chandler for the United States Senate in 1875. Second, it provided numerous political candidates and orators in Michigan during the 1870s. Third, it set the tone for state politics and stimulated the revival of independent voting. Fourth, it facilitated the political growth of the farmers' movement. And, fifth, it contributed to the

development of the machinery of fusion through which the Greenbackers and Democrats seized control of the statehouse in 1882.

As for the Reformers themselves, a number of other conclusions were reached. For the most part Michigan Reformers were self-made men of considerable wealth, talent, and respect. They tended to be sincere in their reform efforts which aimed at making the existing governmental and political system more responsive to the needs of the people. Generally they were less interested in gaining political office personally than in ensuring the success of the Reform movement. As a group they did not exhibit the anti-democratic cynicism and distrust of the populace found in many eastern Reformers. They did not always agree with one another nor were they always consistent in their positions on the issues but in their good will toward the people they remained steadfast. Most of them it could be claimed were motivated by a strong sense of social responsibility and political idealism.

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1870-1876

By

Douglas Emerson Steck

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of History

1975

To My Parents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to acknowledge my appreciation for the inspiration, guidance, and encouragement extended to me throughout the entire doctoral program by the members of my guidance committee. Special thanks are offered to Professors Robert E. Brown and Richard E. Sullivan. And, for his efforts in my behalf, a sincere note of gratitude is extended to my major professor and thesis director, Dr. Frederick D. Williams.

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PREFACE

The first half of the decade of the 1870s was a time of widespread concern for political reform. On the national level it witnessed the Liberal Republican effort of 1872 and the reform-oriented Hayes-Tilden campaign of 1876. In several states a myriad of reform movements were launched which affected to varying degrees the politics in those states. The years from 1870 to 1876 in Michigan saw the emergence of a Liberal Reform movement, centering primarily upon the Liberal Republican and National Reform Parties in the state.

This study examines the origins, course, and results of the Reform experiment in Michigan. In the process it answers the following questions. What were the issues which evoked a reform response among men of different political persuasions in Michigan? How were the Liberal Republican and National Reform Parties organized and what policies did they advocate? How much impact did the Liberal Reform movement have on state politics and on the relative strength of the two major parties? What was the relationship between the Reform effort and the success of the farmers' movement in Michigan? What factors contributed to the decline of the independent Reform experiment by 1876? And, what was the political legacy of the Reform effort in the years after 1876?

The Reform leaders themselves are analyzed. Their backgrounds, beliefs, and goals are used as keys to understand their motives and sincerity. Finally the relationship of Michigan Reformers to those elsewhere is evaluated and the respective character of Reformers in and out of Michigan is examined.

CHAPTER I

SEEDTIME FOR REFORM

The years from 1870 through 1872 can be considered the "seedtime" for political reform in Michigan. These years witnessed some early manifestations of discontent with the Republican machine and popular support for the cause of reform. Of cardinal importance was the emergence of major issues which were damaging to the Republican party and which the Reformers exploited in launching the Liberal Republican movement in the state. Those issues can be categorized as national, state, and local in scope.

The national issues encompassed several related to the aftermath of the Civil War and in particular to the process of Reconstruction in the South. Michigan Reform Republicans and Democrats maintained that the Radical Republicans continued to foster the hostile feelings of the war long after it was over. They believed President Ulysses S. Grant was especially culpable. In a speech at Detroit, Austin Blair, Civil War governor of Michigan, charged that the president had been "trying to make peace with the sword."[1] Another leading advocate of Liberal Reform in the state, Charles S.

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[1]Speech of Austin Blair, July 22, 1872, bound in "Michigan Political Speeches," Michigan State Library, Lansing, Michigan.

May of Kalamazoo, stressed that the time had come for "the final peace and reconciliation between North and South."[2] Michigan newspapers which backed the Liberal Republican movement in 1872 demanded "universal amnesty and peace."[3] And when the Liberal Republicans drew up their state platform, it called for "a revival of fraternal feelings between sections."[4]

Part of the concern expressed over the lingering antagonism of Reconstruction was directed at the denial of constitutional rights in the South. Of particular interest were the rights of individuals vis-à-vis the government. Attention focused on the abrogation of many southerners' rights to the franchise and habeas corpus. Blair demanded that "the people of the southern states be governed under the Constitution."[5] The Liberal Republicans, meeting in Jackson, articulated the need for "the removal of all disabilities on account of the rebellion, and the protection of habeas corpus."[6] One

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[2]Speech of Charles Sedgewick May, September 27, 1872, in C. S. May, Speeches of the Stump, the Bar, and the Platform (Battle Creek: Review & Hearld Co., 1899).

[3]Marshall Democratic Expounder, August 10, 1872; Detroit Free Press, January 25, 1872; Grand Rapids Democrat, July 24, 1872.

[4]"Michigan Liberal Republican Platform," typescript copy in the Spencer Collection, Michigan State Library, Lansing, Michigan. Hereafter cited as the "Michigan Platform."

[5]Blair's speech, July 22, 1872, "Michigan Political Speeches."

[6]"Michigan Platform."

reform-minded newspaper called for "the preservation of individual liberty and the inviolability of the writ of habeas corpus,"[7] and another pointed out that "individuals have inalienable rights, not ceded to the government, and which majorities cannot take from them."[8]

In addition to stressing the need for the maintenance of individual rights under the Constitution, the Reformers pursued the issue of the rights of state and local governments. They claimed that these rights had been denied on a massive scale by the federal government's treatment of the South after the war. The Marshall Democratic Expounder envisioned extreme dangers in this denial of the "preservation of the rights of states as guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States."[9] Speaking of the proper relationship between the federal and state governments, Austin Blair said that "each is supreme in its own sphere of authority and neither has any right to interfere with the other." "The balance of power in the American system," he stated, "depends upon that preservation." He added that he had "no belief in the perpetuity of the American government at all unless that system could be maintained." "We must

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[7]Marshall Democratic Expounder, August 10, 1872.

[8]Michigan Argus (Ann Arbor), July 15, 1870.

[9]Marshall Democratic Expounder, August 10, 1872. See also Saginaw Daily Courier, May 7, 1872.

not," he said, "take the powers of the states and subject them to the great central authority at Washington, for this would remove the constitutional safeguard of the people for local self-government."[10]

Another series of nationally oriented issues exploited by those who opposed Radical Republicanism centered around the economic policies of the Grant administration. Liberals felt that more steps should be taken to insure sound currency and the maintenance of the public credit.[11] They were for the most part "hard money" advocates.[12] At Cincinnati the Liberal Republicans stated in their platform that "the public credit must be sacredly maintained, and that repudiation in every form and guise must be denounced." Further, they resolved that "a speedy return to specie payment is demanded alike by the highest considerations of commercial morality and honest government."[13] This stance was heartily endorsed by Liberal Republicans in Michigan.

The high protective tariff was an issue as well. Michigan's two senators and six representatives in Congress in 1870 were all high

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[10]Blair's speech, July 22, 1872, "Michigan Political Speeches." See also speeches of Duncan Stewart and Robert McClelland, ibid.

[11]"Michigan Platform."

[12]Irwin Unger, The Greenback Era (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), p. 131.

[13]Kirk H. Porter (comp.), National Party Platforms, (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1924), p. 77.

protection Republicans.[14] And they, along with other Radicals, reportedly acted in concert with businessmen to perpetuate a monopoly of the domestic market for native manufactures through the protective tariff. The public in turn was swindled by the high prices charged for goods sold in a market free from foreign competition. "The merchants and manufacturers," one paper said, "have too long with the full complicity of government been permitted to fleece their fellow citizens through the instrumentality of the tariff." The voter was admonished to consider "what right the central government had to tax the common consumer...for the benefit of private companies?"[15]

Reformers demanded a "move away from extravagance in government spending and a return to rigid economy."[16] An example of the greatly deplored waste was the abuse of the franking privilege. One journal described as "enormous" the frauds "perpetrated under the cover of the franking privilege." It noted that the Radicals employed the privilege to "transmit whatever printed matter they

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[14]Clarence Lee Miller, The States of the Old Northwest and the Tariff, 1865 - 1888 (Emporia: Emporia Gazette Press, 1929), p. 78.

[15]Kalamazoo Gazette, February 23, 1872, January 12, 1872. See also Grand Rapids Daily Times, September 20, 1870.

[16]"Michigan Platform."

wished to disseminate" at the public expense.[17] Another example of this extravagance was the construction of an elaborate stable at the rear of the White House at a cost of $30,000. Opponents held that the money for this project was taken illegally from funds appropriated for the State Department and that "it had never been accounted for and no record appeared regarding it."[18] As economy measures, Reformers frequently suggested the elimination of such expenditures and "the dismissal of all unnecessary government officials and agents to lighten the public burden."[19] Finally, the machinations of the inscrutable Secretary of the Treasury, George S. Boutwell, were of growing concern. He regularly "leaked" information concerning the sales and purchases of gold and bonds by the government and changes in interest rates on bonds to certain Grant men on Wall Street, such as Henry Clews.[20] These brokers were thus able to make "great fortunes at the expense of the American people."[21]

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[17] Michigan Argus, May 4, 1870. See also Marshall Democratic Expounder, September 5, 1872.

[18] Michigan Argus, September 27, 1872.

[19] Marshall Democratic Expounder, August 10, 1872.

[20] Matthew Josephson, The Politicos (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1938), p. 122; Earle Dudley Ross, The Liberal Republican Movement (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1919), p. 185.

[21] Kalamazoo Gazette, September 27, 1872.

The Grant administration was heavily criticized, as well, for its handling of foreign affairs. Senator Charles Sumner's arraignment of the President's foreign policy received wide circulation in Michigan. In it he contended that Grant "touched nothing he did not muddle." After citing problems with Spain and Cuba he asked, "When before in our history have we reached such bathos?"[22] Particularly upsetting to the Reformers and critics of Grant was his attitude toward the Dominican Republic.[23] The President apparently acted under the influence of adventurers and capitalists who wanted to tap the fabulous Dominican riches by annexing the Republic. Grant became a booster of their cause and employed special executive agents to help facilitate annexation. He pledged privately to use all his influence in Congress to win approval of the plan. This presidential pledge outraged his opponents and prompted one Michigan paper to write: "We hope that the Senate will persist in its refusal--not withstanding the personal lobbying at its doors by President Grant--to ratify the treaty for the purchase of San Domingo."[24]

The national issue which captured the most attention of Reformers and opponents of Republicanism in Michigan was that of

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[22]Speech of Charles Sumner, May 31, 1872, bound in the "Jenison Collection," Vol. 27, Michigan State Library, Lansing, Michigan.

[23]Walter Lafeber, The New Empire (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1963), pp. 38-39; Ross, Liberal Republican, pp. 9-10.

[24]Michigan Argus, April 1, 1870.

graft and corruption in the highest echelons of government. Critics of the administration abhorred the detrimental effects of the "spoils system" and viewed the election of 1872 as a "struggle of the people for honest government against cabals and rings."[25]

The general atmosphere of corruption and dishonesty derided by Liberal Reformers and others had spawned a number of well publicized scandals prior to the fall of 1872. The attempted cornering of the gold market by Jay Gould and Jim Fisk with initial presidential acquiescence or cooperation lent some credibility to charges that the Republican leaders were "thieves."[26] The so-called Chorpening fraud was subjected to endless examination. The charge was that Postmaster General Creswell "had attempted to defraud the government of a vast sum of money." He purportedly approved the payment of $443,000 to George Chorpening, a former mail contractor. The claim was very old, dating back to service rendered prior to 1856, and grossly inflated. Assistant Postmaster General George Earl, a close friend and associate of Creswell, resigned his position to become Chorpening's attorney. He prosecuted the claim and won the extraordinary concession from Creswell. To Reformers the whole episode reeked of graft.[27]

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[25]May's speech, September 27, 1872, Speeches of the Stump; Michigan Tribune, March 8, 1872.

[26]Kalamazoo Gazette, January 7, 1872.

[27]Blair's speech, July 22, 1872, "Michigan Political Speeches;" Michigan Tribune, July 26, 1872.

The New York customs house fraud also aroused the ire of Michigan opponents of the Republican Party. They charged that the New York customs house was considered by the President and the Secretary of the Treasury, "not as a department of the government whose employees were appointed to faithfully collect the revenues, but rather as an instrument to run the state and city government in the interest of General Grant and his party." In addition, numerous officers were under salary at the customs house who did nothing but "blackmail honest and wealthy merchants by false charges of attempting to defraud the government." If payoffs were not obtained from these merchants their goods would be seized and they would be put out of business. A government official testifying before a Senate investigation committee swore under oath that "the general order of business at the New York customs house was so managed as to extort unjust charges, that it was a nuisance, in short that it was robbery."[28]

Another travesty fostered by the Republican Party, according to critics, was the voting fraud. They believed that the national administration aided and abetted illegal election maneuvers in the various states to insure its maintenance in power. The Pennsylvania frauds exemplified this charge. The opposition press in Michigan claimed that "there was not a shadow of a doubt that the Radicals' candidate John F. Hartranft [Republican gubernatorial

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[28]Kalamazoo Gazette, February 23, 1872; Michigan Argus, January 19, 1872.

candidate and close associate of Simon Cameron] carried his majority by an organized system of fraud, by repeaters, ballot-box stuffing, and forged or altered returns." In one Philadelphia ward, the fifteenth, the four election judges certified that "the returns as they made them up and signed them were subsequently altered."[29]

An additional issue of national scope which was tied to corruption was that of government facilitation of the railroad monopoly, through land grants and preferential treatment. E. D. Ross has said that "an anti-monopoly argument in which the opposition could attack the administration effectively was that regarding abuses in public land grants."[30] To the Reformers, the speech of Michigan Republican Omar D. Conger in the House of Representatives, in June, 1870, epitomized the attitude that fostered government support of such monopolies at the public expense. Conger maintained that "certain cheapness and speed of loading, unloading, and transporting our surplus products, merchandise, and manufactures over so vast a country as ours is the foundation of national prosperity; and as far as the financial condition of the country will permit, I think it is the duty of the government...to favor and further such a policy."[31] A

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[29]Michigan Argus, October 25, 1872; Michigan Tribune, October 25, 1872; Kalamazoo Gazette, October 4, 1872.

[30]Ross, Liberal Republican, p. 168.

[31]Speech of Omar D. Conger, June 13, 1870, "Michigan Political Speeches."

typical response to such a proposal was voiced by a leading Michigan Liberal Republican, Duncan Stewart of Detroit. In a speech at a Greeley-Brown ratification meeting in the summer of 1872, Stewart queried: "Is it right that the Congress of the United States or the President of the United States or anyone else should give away pieces of land larger than countries in Europe...pieces of land as large as the whole New England states...?" He then answered his own question by saying: "No, every man who owns land must cultivate it. I would like to see Jay Cooke cultivating a farm ten times as big as New England and I would like to see Tom Scott as his plowman." Stewart pleaded with his audience to "look at the public lands and see how the public has been plundered and then decide that the land belongs to the people and not to the government, and that it [the government] has no more right to rob the people than a guardian has to rob an orphan that is placed in its care."[32]

National party despotism constituted another major issue for Reformers and opponents of Republicanism in Michigan. Reformers held that leaders of the Republican Party were growing unresponsive to the wishes and aspirations of the membership, and were prone to the use of strong-arm tactics to insure support for their policies. As one historian has said: "There was a bitter dislike of the thoroughgoing Jacobin or Cromwellian spirit in Congress and in the Army. Under the plea of loyalty and of conserving hard won victories,

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[32]Stewart's speech, July 22, 1872, ibid.

conscientious Christian Republicans were called upon to support their party in whatever it did."[33] This became increasingly difficult as more and more evidence of dishonesty and wrong doing by Republican leaders was uncovered. In July, 1872, a former Michigan Republican congressman drew attention in a pro-Greeley speech to the party's efforts to "ostracize anyone who dared utter a demand for reform."[34] A Republican friend of Blair wrote that "there is a bitterness in the manner of the Grant men toward all who venture an opinion adverse to their own."[35] And C. S. May stated that "if there were no other reason for revolt, then party depotism would furnish one."[36]

Many sensitive Republicans were coming to abhor the tyranny of the Radical election practice known as "waving of the bloody shirt." A contemporary observer illustrated the Radical tendency to use this tactic in speaking of Zachariah Chandler. He said that to Chandler "Democrats were copperheads and copperheads were rebels."[37] The speech of John Creswell in Jackson typified the bloody shirt charge.

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[33]Henry Clyde Hubbart, The Older Middle West, 1840-1880 (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1963), p. 243.

[34]Detroit Free Press, July 26, 1872.

[35]George W. Fish to Austin Blair, March 19, 1872, in the Blair Papers, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library, Detroit, Michigan.

[36]May's speech, September 27, 1872, Speeches of the Stump. See also Michigan Tribune, January 19, 1872.

[37]Henry A. Haigh, "Lansing in the Good Old Seventies," Michigan History, XIII (1929), p. 100.

He labeled Democrats as "renegades who had gone over to the enemy."[38]

At the heart of the despotism problem was the patronage and power wielded by the "White House Ring" and a cabal of powerful congressional Radicals. In the words of one Reformer, "the rank and file Republicans are as powerless in their party as a flock of sheep. They have no voice in it to control its policies or nominations. They can vote for such men as Chandler and the like shall suffer to be nominated. That is all they can do."[39] Adding to the Reformers' chagrin was their conviction that the government controlled by the Radical oligarchy did not work for the people, but rather for the party. Congress, they said, "looked not after the interests of the people but after the interests of the party."[40] As they saw it, government had become its own vested interest.

The blame for party despotism and the seemingly ubiquitous corruption and malfeasance in the federal government naturally was concentrated upon the most visible of the national leaders: the President, Vice President, and leading Radicals in Congress. This placing of blame took the form of a multi-faceted attack on figures such as Ulysses S. Grant, Henry Wilson, and Zachariah Chandler.

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[38]Speech of John Creswell, August 1, 1872, "Jenison Collection," Vol. 27.

[39]May's speech, September 27, 1872, Speeches of the Stump.

[40]Michigan Argus, May 20, 1870.

One phase of this attack on individual Republican leaders was launched from a puritanical position which proposed that government officials must order their personal lives and habits according to Christian morality.[41] Pious critics denounced the President as a foul-mouthed, blasphemous drunk who led an "unChristian" life. Chandler and others naturally came under similar attack. A pro-Greeley Detroit editor described the Michigan Senator as a "drunkard and a coarse, vulgar, ignorant man who was profane in conversation and often times filthily obscene."[42] One newspaper proposed that "if God can forgive an unrepentant rebel and Chandler cannot, it is only evidence of how far the latter stands from the path of Christian duty and that he is in rebellion against the divine will."[43] In a sense, then, the personal morality of national figures identified with the Republican administration was measured against Christian teachings and found wanting. Reformers appealed to "Christian and moral men" to recognize these figures for what they were--evil, self-centered, and morally and spiritually depraved men.[44]

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[41]Wilmer C. Harris, Public Life of Zachariah Chandler, (Lansing: Michigan Historical Commission, 1917), p. 106.

[42]H. E. Baker to Brackley Shaw, December 28, 1870, in the Shaw Papers, Michigan Historical Collections, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[43]Michigan Argus, February 9, 1872.

[44]Kalamazoo Gazette, October 16, 1872; Lansing Journal, September 26, 1872.

Beyond such puritanical attacks, the leading national Republicans were castigated individually on a more mundane plane for a plethora of odious traits.

Grant came under fire for his ineptness, gift-taking, nepotism, and cronyism. Reformers generally agreed that the sole ground for the selection of Grant as President had been his military record. They ridiculed the notion that a good general would make a good chief executive. "It was evident," one said, "that General Grant had no civil qualifications for the presidency as his whole training had been military, and as he had never even taken interest enough in public affairs to vote but once in his life."[45] Former Michigan governor Robert McClelland stated at a Greeley-Brown ratification meeting that President Grant "certainly has never shown any ability whatever to discharge the duties incumbent upon him from the position he occupies."[46] The Liberal Reformers and their allies obviously envisioned themselves engaged in a struggle for "effective administration and against presidential incompetence and pretension."[47]

Grant's penchant for accepting expensive gifts from influential people in business and government gave the advocates of

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[45]May's speech, September 27, 1872, Speeches of the Stump.

[46]McClelland's speech, July 22, 1872, "Michigan Political Speeches."

[47]May's speech, September 27, 1872, Speeches of the Stump.

reform another opening for attack. The Lansing Journal cried that "our President has an insatiable greed for gifts."[48] Grant's indiscretions in that regard made him vulnerable to some vituperative comparisons. One postulated that

> Grant went into office poor. Tweed went into office poor. Grant is rich. Tweed is rich. Grant claims that his residences, farms, horses, etc. came from gifts. Tweed claims that his speculations made him a millionaire. Grant may be insensible to the shame of his gifts. Tweed may be insensible to the shame of his speculations. The parallel between the two notorious gentlemen is striking.[49]

Admittedly this is an extreme illustration of inferential character assassination, but at the very least Liberal Reformers and Grant's enemies maintained that such gift-taking was a manifestation of the General's lack of judgment and of his unfitness for the presidency.

Grant left himself vulnerable to charges of nepotism through his habit of appointing relatives to government positions.[50] Further complicating matters was the fact that many of these relatives disgraced their new offices. Michigan observers noted the case of F. M. Lamper, a cousin of Grant who was appointed by the President as a whiskey agent in Chicago. Lamper was subsequently discovered mishandling the revenue and removed. Grant then put

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[48] Lansing Journal, September 5, 1872.

[49] Kalamazoo Gazette, January 5, 1872.

[50] Ibid., August 2, 1872. In an article entitled "Our Royal Family" it was noted that no fewer than 22 members of the Grant clan were government appointees. A similar article is in Michigan Tribune, August 30, 1872.

Lamper in charge of a land office in the Washington Territory at a salary of $4,000. "Cousin Lamper showed the family characteristics by becoming a defaulter to the amount of $25,000." The only question remaining in the mind of the Reformers was where Grant would next appoint his cousin.[51] Another case of nepotism that aroused even more fury was that of the President's brother-in-law, James F. Casey, who was appointed to the office of collector of the port of New Orleans. In that position he not only embezzled funds but also engaged in "offenses against the sovereignty of the State of Louisiana." He did this by employing bribery, blackmail, and other reprehensible tactics to acquire the support of state legislators for measures that would politically and financially benefit himself and the Republican organization in the state.[52]

Complementing the issue of nepotism was the issue of "cronyism." Reformers noted that if one happened to be a friend of Grant, or a friend of a friend, he stood a good chance of gaining a political appointment regardless of his past record or ability. An example of this was the case of George K. Leet, a young army officer who had been a member of Grant's staff during the war. Leet went to New York with a letter from the President "seeking business" and

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[51] Kalamazoo Gazette, January 12, 1872.

[52] Blair's speech, July 22, 1872, "Michigan Political Speeches."

ended up in the lucrative general order business at the customs house taking in thousands of dollars from wealthy merchants.[53]

The tentacles of such "cronyism" were in some instances so pervasive as to extend to the next generation. A case in point was that of H. C. Johnson, a close personal friend of Grant. Johnson's son was trouble prone and among other things, he had forced himself on a servant girl, served time in the house of refuge, engaged in barroom brawls, and shot a man. Yet his father by virtue of his friendship with the President had enough political and pecuniary influence to bail him out of trouble every time. Ultimately, "the young hopeful turned up as a lieutenant in the regular army."[54]

Charges of "cronyism" were many and infamous men such as Orville E. Babcock and Horace Porter were linked to the White House as a result.[55]

Henry Wilson, designated as Grant's running mate in 1872, was the object of persistent complaints by Liberals and others about his "Know Nothing" background. A "verification" was published in Michigan that Wilson had indeed been elected to the Senate from Massachusetts on the basis of "Know Nothing" support. This "verification" was attributed to J. P. Healy, a former law partner of Daniel

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[53]Michigan Argus, February 9, 1872; Michigan Tribune, July 26, 1872.

[54]Michigan Argus, September 20, 1872.

[55]Josephson, Politicos, pp. 120-125.

Webster.[56] In Detroit, the outspoken proponent of the Liberal Republican cause, Duncan Stewart, stated colorfully that "Henry Wilson walked through the doors of the Know Nothing lodge into the Senate of the United States and never could have gotten there any other way."[57]

Wilson's old speeches came back to haunt him as well. One was circulated in which he had said that "foreigners had not the sense of a Newfoundland dog...and were vile, filthy, degraded, idiotic paupers and vagabonds."[58] Obviously such revelations greatly disturbed most immigrant groups and in Michigan they upset most particularly the German community. In fact, this "element had in large numbers been alienated from the administration and thus regarded with much favor the new independent reform movement."[59]

Liberal Reformers spearheaded the demand for something to which the Republicans only paid lip service--civil service reform. Only this reform, they held, could eliminate the evils of the spoils system and provide for government appointments on the basis of honesty,

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[56] Marshall Democratic Expounder, April 29, 1872. See also Michigan Tribune, September 13, 1872.

[57] Stewart's speech, July 22, 1872, "Michigan Political Speeches."

[58] Marshall Democratic Expounder, August 29, 1872.

[59] Ross, Liberal Republican, p. 166. See also Mark O. Kistler, "The German Language Press in Michigan," Michigan History XLIV (1960), pp. 307-309 and Lansing Journal, August 15, 1872.

ability, and efficiency. In their national convention at Cincinnati the Liberal Republicans emphasized civil service reform as the most important answer to the graft and corruption associated with the Grant regime. In their platform they stated: "We regard thorough reforms of the civil service as one of the most pressing necessities of the hour. [We hold] that honesty, capacity, and fidelity constitute the only valid claims to public employment [and demand] that the offices of the government cease to be a matter of arbitrary favoritism and patronage, and that public station become again a post of honor."[60]

In Michigan Charles S. May argued that "next to the great need of reconciliation and final peace between North and South, is the necessity for reform in the civil administration of the government." In this connection he recalled the demand of the national platform for a single term limitation on the presidency as a key to effective reform. But the most vital prerequisite to the achievement of the desired changes in the civil service was a change in governmental leadership. "We must," May exhorted Michigan voters, "elect honest and competent men to office in order to get real civil service reform."[61]

Thus, a number of issues of national scope constituted "seeds of reform" in Michigan. These included the administration's

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[60]Porter, National Platforms, p. 77.

[61]May's speech, September 27, 1872, Speeches of the Stump.

intransigence toward the South, its abrogation of individual and states' rights, its prodigal economic policies, its bungling and avaricious moves in the sphere of foreign affairs, its handling of public lands, the general tenor of corruption in national politics, party despotism, and the personal morals, philosophies, and practices of Republican leaders.

A number of other issues, more exclusively related to the state political scene, emerged between 1870 and 1872. They too became "seeds of reform."

Two of these issues centered upon proposed constitutional amendments which the electorate of Michigan voted upon in 1870. One dealt with public support of railroads and the other concerned increasing the salaries of elected officials.

Of the two the railroad question drew greater attention, debate, and concern. It stemmed from a railroad aid law passed by the legislature in 1869 which enabled "any township, city, or village to pledge its aid, by loan or donation, to any chartered railroad company...for the construction of its road."[62] If a majority of the voters approved such aid, bonds would be issued. And, from that point on it would be incumbent upon local authorities to "levy, assess, and collect upon the taxable property a sufficient sum of

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[62]Michigan, Acts of the Legislature, 1869, I, 89. For a discussion of the railroad development in Michigan and the aid problem see Edmund Calkins "Railroads of Michigan Since 1850," Michigan History, XIII (1929), pp. 5-25.

money to pay all bonds or interest upon the same as either the bonds or the interest became due."[63] This law was subsequently reviewed by the state supreme court in May of 1870 and was declared unconstitutional. The central principle of the majority decision was that a tax "to be valid must be levied for a public purpose and to tax a community for the benefit of a private corporation which proposed to construct a railroad was not a power of the legislature."[64] The court decision led to a special session of the legislature which convened at the end of June and drew up a resolution to submit to the voters in November, a three-part constitutional amendment which would allow such aid to railroads. The three sections of the proposed amendment were: that the rates of state railroads be regulated by the state legislature and that rate discriminations be disallowed, that consolidation of parallel or competing lines be prohibited, and that individual municipalities by citizen vote could issue bonds to help pay for railroad construction.[65]

Because of the legislatures' refusal to accept the edict of the court, the railroad issue and the principle of "taxation of the public for private gain" became one of the main lines of attack

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[63] Acts, 1869, I, 93.

[64] Harriette M. Dilla, The Politics of Michigan, 1865-1878, Vol. XLVII, No. 1, Columbia Studies in History, Economics, and Public Law (New York: Columbia University Press, 1912), p. 108.

[65] Ibid., p. 110.

against the Republican Party in Michigan.[66] The Michigan Argus declared that "to issue bonds to help build a railroad is not legitimate taxation, it is spoilation, and robbery without the highwayman's excuse." It added that "the confiscation of a man's money for the benefit of twenty men who are organized as a railroad company, whose sole object is their private enrichment is utterly at war with the Constitution of the United States and the State of Michigan."[67]

Another proposed amendment also resulted in heated controversy. It provided increases in state and judicial salaries. Obviously this proposal ran contrary to the growing demand by Reformers and the public-at-large for greater frugality in government and less taxes. It was perceived as a "salary grab" and as later balloting would show was about as unpopular with Republicans as with Democrats.[68]

A further issue which aroused the Reformers' ire in Michigan was the virtually complete domination of state politics by Zachariah Chandler of Detroit. Chandler's tyranny was resented by substantial numbers of people within the Republican Party.[69] A friend wrote to

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[66] Ibid., p. 121.

[67] Michigan Argus, July 1, 1879. See also Detroit Free Press, October 15, 1870.

[68] Dilla, Politics of Michigan, p. 120. Michigan Manual, 1871, p. 246.

[69] Ross, Liberal Republican, p. 21.

Blair that "the best Republicans in our state know that the party is controlled here by the dictator Chandler, a man who disgraces his constituents instead of honoring them."[70]

Much of Chandler's power stemmed from his control of the federal patronage in the state which he dispensed through the head of the Republican State Committee, Stephen Bingham. As one contemporary historian put it, "Stephen Bingham was the factotum of the Chandler regime and potentate and dispenser of the political pap and federal patronage in Michigan."[71] In stressing the need for civil service reform, Austin Blair pointed out that "Mr. Bingham of the State Republican Central Committee issued a circular to all postmasters and government officers, saying that they had been assessed for political purposes and the money came in from all quarters."[72] Chandler's control and manipulation of the patronage was exacerbated by the fact that his "endorsement" was requisite for gaining most significant elective offices in the state.[73]

Chandler was the leader of the so-called "Detroit Ring" which was increasingly resented by non-Detroiters. An observer of the Michigan legislature of 1871 noted the dissension on the part

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[70]J. N. Frey to Austin Blair, April 11, 1872, Blair Papers. See also George Fish to Blair, February 8, 1872, and J. F. Driggs to Blair, April 13, 1872, ibid.

[71]Haigh, "Lansing in the Seventies," p. 105.

[72]Saginaw Daily Courier, November 2, 1872.

[73]Marshall Democratic Expounder, April 4, 1872.

of the Republicans from the "out-state" areas who were "very bitter... since Detroit had had both U. S. Senators the greater part of the time since the state had been admitted to the union."[74] This dissatisfaction was also apparent in the correspondence of Republicans. Letters written to Blair alluded disparagingly to the "Detroit Ring" and speculated on ways to break down "Detroit's supremacy."[75]

In a Kalamazoo speech, C. S. May called attention to the futility of trying to reform the Republican Party in Michigan as long as Chandler controlled it. And, he stated, "there is no way to overthrow Chandler from within the party." The only answer to the conundrum in May's view was to bolt the party and join the Liberal Republican Movement.[76]

Because of the dominance of the state government by Radical Republicans, a number of instances of partisan abuse occurred in the legislature. The reapportionment of the congressional districts of the state early in 1872 was a case much publicized by those demanding reform. In the selection of the senate reapportionment committee, Lieutenant Governor Morgan Bates appointed "thirteen Republicans and of the Democratic strength he did not appoint a single one." The

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[74]Louis M. Miller, "Reminiscences of the Michigan Legislature of 1871," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, XXXII (1902), p. 432.

[75]George P. Sanford to Austin Blair, February 3, 1872 and March 9, 1872, and J. F. Driggs to Blair, April 13, 1872, Blair Papers.

[76]May's speech, September 27, 1872, Speeches of the Stump.

Senate at the time was composed of twenty-six Republicans and six Democrats. The Free Press stated that "when it came to appointing a partisan committee, Morgan Bates, receiver of the United States Land Office at Traverse City and Lieutenant Governor of the state was without rival."[77] In light of such shocking tactics dissident Liberals and Democrats concluded that the Republicans effectively gerrymandered the new districts to assure themselves of victory in subsequent elections. Such unabashed and blatant political opportunism contributed to the reform crusade.[78]

The state government was also wracked by allegations of misconduct on the part of officials and departments. An illustration was found in complaints about the state financial policy which "kept an average balance in the treasury of $750,000 for the benefit of pet banks." A specific charge stipulated that as of October 22, 1872, the balance in the state treasury was $1,011,164.57 and this unwarranted surplus was "fat plucking for the ring banks." The essence of such charges was that excess monies in the treasury were being lent at minimal interest to favored banks for their use. Thus, the people of Michigan were in effect being taxed for the benefit of the bankers and their Republican politician co-conspirators.[79]

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[77] Detroit Free Press, March 19, 1872.

[78] Dilla, Politics of Michigan, p. 131. The act of reapportionment was opposed by most Democrats in the legislature and by a total of 17 Republicans.

[79] Michigan Argus, November 1, 1872; Michigan Tribune, October 25, 1872.

A more spectacular scandal involved the impeachment of the commissioner of the state land office, Charles A. Edmunds. The Michigan House of Representatives sent to the Senate a list of eleven charges against Edmunds "in support of its impeachment against him for corrupt conduct in office and for crimes and misdemeanors."[80]

A number of the articles of indictment dealt directly with Edmund's official duties. They stipulated that the commissioner had conspired with fellow clerks in the land office to withhold from public sale large tracts of land for the benefit of certain land speculators and for their own personal enrichment. They further charged that Edmunds and his clerks had bought lands from the land office while employed there, in direct violation of the law, and that they had engaged in the illegal purchase and sale of swamp land script.[81]

Other articles had to do with purported immoral acts by the land commissioner not directly connected with his official duties. One charged that Edmunds "had published and circulated an obscene printed paper entitled Every Wednesday Night, containing impure, scandalous, and obscene matters, language and descriptions...which was a scandal in the community and tended to corrupt the morals of youth and other good citizens of the state." Another contended that

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[80]Michigan, Journal of the Senate, 1872, p. 6.

[81]Ibid., pp. 7-10.

he had been drunk publicly on a number of occasions and that he flew in the face of "laws of decency and morality by committing adultery with certain females in Lansing and elsewhere." He had thus disgraced his office and was unfit to hold it any longer.[82]

Ultimately, Edmunds was acquitted because a two-thirds vote could not be obtained on the charges.[83] But the damage had been done. The accusations against the commissioner were widely circulated and believed in Michigan. They represented everything that Reformers stood against: dishonest and wasteful government, graft and fraud, and immoral and unChristian actions. Certainly they helped to swell the ranks of the fledgling reform movement in the state.[84]

The problem of political harassment also emerged as a significant issue in the years from 1870 through 1872. Much of this harassment was limited to verbal and written invective. The use of the "bloody shirt" tactic to villify and discredit Democrats and the attempts to intimidate Republican Reformers has already been noted. Both of these tendencies were illustrated in the rabidly Republican Adrian Times and Expositor. Columns which dealt with activities of the Democrats were regularly headed "The Confederates" and those that referred to the Liberal Republicans were entitled "The Left Wing."[85]

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[82] Ibid., pp. 11-13.

[83] "Michigan," Appleton's Annual Cyclopedia, XII (1872), p. 541.

[84] Dilla, Politics of Michigan, p. 132; Kalamazoo Gazette, May 31, 1872.

[85] Adrian Times and Expositor, September 12, 1872.

Sometimes the acrimony extended beyond verbal or written expression to physical abuse. On occasion, opponents tried to break up Liberal gatherings prior to the election of 1872. At one such meeting in Cass County, a group of Radical rowdies put a donkey into the hall where the featured speaker was commencing his address. The frightened animal ran around the room braying loudly and effectively disrupted the proceedings. "This outrageous attempt of the Grantites to prevent free speech," said the Kalamazoo Gazette, "though in accordance with their policy of hate, will cost them some votes in Cass County."[86]

The matters discussed above are representative of the issues of state scope which Liberal Reformers and their political allies exploited to further their cause and undermine the corrupt, entrenched, Republican political machine.

At the local level of government and politics a plethora of problems related to Republicanism were manifest.

Local officials were the subject of charges of ineptness, corruption, and nepotism. The case of Sheriff Lymon M. Gates of Kalamazoo County is typical. Gates was an avowed Radical Republican who used his position to undermine the political opposition and consolidate Republican power in the county. His ineptness sometimes appeared to be masked intimidation of local citizens who opposed him

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[86]Kalamazoo Gazette, November 1, 1872.

politically. The local paper cited the case of Samuel Tift who was shot at by the sheriff while driving along the road with his own wagon and team. Gates subsequently stated that he was under the impression that the horses were stolen. The sheriff and his family also exemplified at the local level the kind of Grantite nepotism and string-pulling that was so abhorrent to Reformers. Gates appointed his brother as a deputy sheriff and made room on the public payroll for his minor son as a turnkey in the jail. Further, the Gates clan owned a hotel in town and family members used their positions, influence, and time to drum up tourist business at the establishment.[87]

The county board of supervisors was a local governmental unit that came under fire at times. The Kalamazoo Gazette expounded upon the supervisors' "haste to gerrymander the county to secure the interest of a faction," and tersely concluded that:

> It is a burning shame that the supervisors of our county... should so far violate the law, common decency and even common honesty as to perpetrate such a fraud upon their neighbors and fellow citizens and all for no other reason than a mere contemptible little party advantage. It shows the deep-seated dishonesty that preambulates every part of the Republican Party.[88]

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[87] Ibid. Sworn affadavits by Kalamazoo constables were published which indicated that Gates had offered one man the position of deputy sheriff to deliver the vote of his German friends, and had offered to pay other men to increase arrests and lodgings in his jail.

[88] Ibid., January 19, 1872.

In the municipalities, the city council was often the target of criticism. In Detroit, for instance, the men appointed by the council to take the census of births and deaths in the city were all Radical Republicans who canvassed at public expense asking not only questions relevant to the census but many of political relevance too. They inquired as to how many voters resided at given addresses and even as to how they cast their ballots in past elections. These men were paid out of the public treasury and used materials purchased with public funds. The Detroit Free Press "objected to men under the cloak of being appointed to take a census of births and deaths endeavoring by categorical questions to obtain political information," and suggested "that when the Radicals desire to make a political canvas, it should be done at their own expense and not saddled on the city."[89]

These, then, are a few examples of the types of local issues that received attention by Liberal Reformers and other enemies of the regular Republican Party in Michigan from 1870 through 1872.

These years were significant as well, because of the appearance of some early manifestations of Reform strength in the state. It was becoming clear that the disaffection with the Republican Party over the issues just enumerated was being translated into political results. The emergent political impact of the Reform

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[89]Detroit Free Press, March 22, 1872.

cause can best be seen in the voting results of the state election of 1870, the defeat of John F. Driggs for Congress, and the rejection of the proposed constitutional amendments to aid railroads and raise the salaries of state officials and judges.

In analyzing the balloting of 1870, Harriette M. Dilla claimed that the election "marked the beginning of a reform movement which was to attain a tremendous importance four years later."[90] Her declaration was based in part upon the steady decline of the Republican vote in the gubernatorial contests after 1866. In that election, the Republican candidate, Henry H. Crapo, received 96,746 votes to 67,708 for his Democratic opponent.[91] This gave Crapo, who identified strongly with congressional Radicals, the greatest plurality ever afforded a gubernatorial candidate in the state up to that time.[92] And all six congressmen from Michigan chosen that year were Republicans. In 1868 the vote for Republican Henry P. Baldwin for governor was 128,051 and that for the opposition was 97,290.[93] Thus, the Republican Party had slipped, from garnering almost 59 per cent of the vote in 1866 to somewhat more than 56 per cent in 1868. By

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[90]Dilla, Politics of Michigan, p. 119.

[91]Michigan Manual, 1869, p. 230.

[92]Willis F. Dunbar, Michigan: A History of the Wolverine State (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1965), p. 466.

[93]Michigan Manual, 1871, p. 245.

1870 the Republicans got only 53.8 per cent of the votes,[94] with a 101,031 count for Baldwin compared to a vote of 84,363 for the Democrat Charles C. Comstock.[95] In that same year came a significant diminution of the Republican victory margin in all the congressional elections of the state. In the first district the margin was less than one thousand, and in the fifth district it was a razor-thin 279 votes. In the sixth district, the Republicans not only lost the seat but realized a total vote drop of nearly 5,000 from the previous election. In 1868 the Republican nominee had polled 20,115 votes to 16,720 for the Democrat. But in 1870 the Democrats won with a count of 16,618 compared to the Republicans' 14,879.[96]

The growing concern over Republican corruption was best illustrated in the defeat of two-term congressman, John F. Driggs, in the sixth district. As noted above, the Republican Randolph Strickland had easily carried the district in 1868 by over 3,000 votes, but two years later Driggs lost it by about 2,000 votes to the Democrat, Jabez G. Sutherland. By 1870, John Driggs was so tainted with corruption that he was being denounced by some members of his own party as well as by the Democrats.

Many of the charges levelled against Driggs stemmed from his previous activities in Congress. One of these held that he had

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[94]Dilla, Politics of Michigan, p. 119.

[95]Michigan Manual, 1871, p. 245.

[96]Ibid., pp. 247, 250, 251.

accepted a bribe to appoint a non-resident of his district to the military academy at West Point.[97] A more serious and more publicized charge related to Driggs' role in the Isabella County land fraud. The congressman reportedly accepted a $5,000 payment from speculators to procure legislation which would allow the sale of Indian reservation lands to private lumber interests. Such procurement, according to the charge of the United States district attorney, was achieved by "bribery, by impositions, and by fraudulent means."[98]

Because of the substantive nature of the charges against Driggs, a number of reform-minded Republicans resorted to an action which foreshadowed the Liberal Republicans' effort of 1872. They held a convention at St. Johns in Clinton County which repudiated Driggs as candidate for Congress in 1870.[99] The bolt was applauded by the independent Grand Rapids Daily Times as a protest against party corruption and proscriptiveness. It was also compared favorably to the simultaneous bolt of Liberal Republicans in Missouri.[100]

Despite some reservations, the regular party convention confirmed his candidacy with the nomination. Opponents then charged that Driggs through his agents had offered bribes to the members of

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[97]Dilla, Politics of Michigan, p. 117.

[98]Detroit Free Press, October 22, 23, 26, November 2, 1870.

[99]Dilla, Politics of Michigan, p. 116.

[100]Grand Rapids Daily Times, September 30, 1872.

the nominating convention to cast their ballots for him.[101] Ultimately it was left to the voters to administer a resounding defeat to this tarnished office-seeker.

Further indication of the growing desire for change and reform in Michigan is found in the fate of two of the constitutional amendments presented to the voters in 1870. The railroad aid amendment, as already shown, was divided into three sections. The first two, which called for the regulation of rates and the elimination of rate discriminations by the state legislature and the prohibition of the consolidation of competing lines were overwhelmingly approved. The affirmative plurality was 27,205 for the first section and 25,718 for the second. The third section which provided for public aid for the construction of railroads was soundly rejected by a margin of 28,375 ballots.[102] These results revealed a pattern of selective voting and a real concern for the control of the much criticized railroad monopoly. Michigan voters also turned down the "salary grab" amendment, which would have increased judicial and state salaries, by a plurality of 32,803.[103] Obviously the electorate was becoming more concerned about frugal, effective, and honest government.

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[101] Dilla, Politics of Michigan, p. 117.

[102] Michigan Manual, 1871, p. 246.

[103] Ibid.

The period from 1870 through 1872 was truly a "seedtime for reform." Issues of national, state, and local scope emerged to crystallize resentment against entrenched Republicanism and to create an impetus for reform. And, the evidence indicates that the desire for reform was beginning to be translated into concrete political actions which would contribute to the rise of the Liberal Republican movement in Michigan.

CHAPTER II

LIBERAL REPUBLICANISM IN MICHIGAN

By the beginning of 1872 in Michigan, "there was manifested a growing discontent with the management and policies of the Republican Party and a marked tendency toward independent action."[1] Many long-time Republicans agreed with the sentiment of attorney E. L. Koon of Hillsdale, who proposed to Blair that "it may be necessary to cut the cords [of the Republican Party] for it does seem that they are being drawn pretty tight by the men running the machine. Political slavery is the very worst kind and sometimes becomes unbearable."[2]

The invitation to engage in an independent effort came from the "only existing official Liberal organization, that in Missouri." On January 24, 1872, a state Liberal convention had been convened at Jefferson City. The resolutions drawn up at that convention included those demanding universal amnesty, reform of the tariff and civil service, and a limitation upon the power of

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[1]Ross, Liberal Republican, p. 21.

[2]E. L. Koon to Austin Blair, February 24, 1872, Blair Papers. See also Eugene Rowlson to Blair, June 22, 1872; J. N. Frey to Blair, April 11, 1872; H. Wright to Blair, July 5, 1872; and V. A. Saph to Blair, July 6, 1872, ibid.

the federal government to interfere with the rights of the states. A call was issued to "all Republicans desirous of aiding in securing such reforms," to gather for a national convention on May 1, 1872 at Cincinnati, Ohio.[3]

The response to the Missouri convention was warm among those in Michigan most frustrated with the Republican administration. The sympathetic Michigan press described the affair most favorably in terms of size, representativeness and enthusiasm. It was claimed that so many people flocked to Jefferson City that all the local hotels and resorts were filled to overflowing. The convention itself was reported to be "one of the largest ever assembled in the state." The makeup of the convention was representative not only of the Liberal faction in Missouri but of many other places as well. "Several prominent gentlemen were in attendance from other states" including Tennessee, Ohio, and New Jersey. The participants perceived themselves to be involved in a "grand and noble work" and enthusiasm ran very high. The reading of the platform "called forth repeated and very enthusiastic applause and a general storm of cheers followed the close." The hope was expressed by those in attendance, "for the inauguration of a movement which would be supported by the majority of American people in the interest of reform and true Republicanism." The convention was thus viewed in Michigan as a

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[3]Ross, Liberal Republican, p. 51-52.

most important step toward "insuring the end of the corruption and unconstitutional usurpations of the Grant administration."[4]

The propitious coverage of the Missouri convention was accompanied by an attitude of hopeful optimism toward the call for a national convention. That call, advocated by the "ablest and best men of the country," was seen as a crucial act in the expansion of the Liberal Republican Movement."[5] A paper signed by leading Detroit Republicans, including several prominent Germans was circulated in Michigan ardently "accepting the invitation of the Liberal Republicans of Missouri to be represented at the Cincinnati Convention."[6] Lansing businessman and newspaper publisher George P. Sanford wrote to Blair that "the people are in earnest for a thorough-going reform of the administrative abuses of this [Grant] government.... If the choice lies between the continuation of this administration and coalition under Trumbull, Greeley, Cox, Davis or any other good man, the people will speak next fall in tones that will penetrate even the profound stupidity of Chandler."[7] In Mason,

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[4]Detroit Free Press, January 25, 1872; Saginaw Daily Courier, January 25, 1872. Austin Blair of Michigan received a personal invitation to Cincinnati from a committee of leading Liberal Republicans. William Cullen Bryant, Jacob D. Cox and Carl Schurz to Blair, June 6, 1872, Blair Papers.

[5]Niles Democrat, March 30, 1872; Ross, Liberal Republican, p. 55.

[6]Marshall Democratic Expounder, April 18, 1872.

[7]George P. Sanford to Austin Blair, February 3, 1872, Blair Papers.

newspaper editor D. B. Harrington said, "I am awaiting...the Cincinnati convention with some interest. The right man on a good platform would reduce the Grant stock to the condition of Confederate bonds."[8] Practically all discontented Republicans in the state believed that the proposed Cincinnati convention was "pregnant with meaning."[9] "The ripple started by the Liberal Republicans of Missouri was beginning to be felt...in Michigan."[10]

The Cooper Institute meeting of April 12, 1872, another milestone in the early organization of the Liberal Republican party, was celebrated warmly by many in Michigan. It was described in some of the state's papers as "an imposing affair" and "the largest political meeting ever held in New York City." Thousands, reportedly, were turned away from the jam-packed hall. The vast gathering, including many men "prominent in political and social clubs," was addressed by such "distinguished statesmen of the Republic" as Lyman Trumbull and Carl Schurz. The enthusiasm of those privileged to hear the speakers was "unbounded."[11]

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[8]D. B. Harrington to Austin Blair, March 24, 1872, ibid.

[9]J. S. Upton to Austin Blair, February 12, 1872, ibid.

[10]H. C. Hall to Austin Blair, April 5, 1872, ibid.

[11]Kalamazoo Gazette, April 19, 1872; Detroit Free Press, April 13, 1872; Saginaw Daily Courier, April 16, 1872.

Such zealous reporting of the event involved very optimistic conclusions about the potential of the fledgling Liberal Republican drive. In light of the "vast turn out" some reporters believed that "the people were alive to the new movement, inaugurating, as it would, reform in all branches of government."[12] A statement by the Kalamazoo Gazette best summed up the impact of the Cooper Institute experience on hopeful Reformers in Michigan. "It begins to look," contended the paper, "like the days of this corrupt [Grant] administration are numbered. Cincinnati is coming up. The Liberal Republicans are in earnest, they mean business."[13]

A few days after the Cooper Institute meeting the process of selecting delegates to attend the Cincinnati convention was initiated in Michigan by a group of well-known Republicans. The group led by Duncan Stewart of Detroit, a locally famous Scotsman and entrepreneur, issued a public call for a meeting to be held at the Biddle House in Detroit on Thursday evening, April 18, 1872. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the method for "securing a proper representation at the Cincinnati Convention." This call was signed by such prominent citizens as Stewart and Charles Endicott of Detroit; J. B. Ten Eyck, George P. Sanford, and George House of Lansing; and Osmond Tower of Ionia.[14]

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[12] Saginaw Daily Courier, April 16, 1872.

[13] Kalamazoo Gazette, April 19, 1872.

[14] Saginaw Daily Courier, April 17, April 18, 1872.

The method for choosing delegates to Cincinnati was dictated to a great extent by the late date. To arrange a state convention for that purpose, with less than two weeks remaining prior to the opening of the Cincinnati convention, seemed infeasible. Hence, the Detroit conference recommended "that each town, city, and county send delegates who should meet there [in Cincinnati], organize, and appoint such committees and take such action as would be necessary to represent the state."[15]

In accordance with the Detroit directive, groups of Liberal Republicans in Michigan issued clarion calls for meetings to select delegates. Typical of these was one printed by the German Republican newspaper, Zeitung, which declared that "the time for action has come. Throughout the whole land people are rising in their majesty to root out corruption. Reform has been attempted in the now existing dominant political party, to no avail.... The people are [therefore] on the eve of creating a new party to achieve reform and the beautiful city of Cincinnati shall be the birth place. The flourishing Saginaw Valley should be represented there."[16]

The means of selecting delegates at the local level varied. In some cases a delegation was appointed by the local Liberal Republican committee.[17] In others people simply volunteered on an individual

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[15]Dilla, Politics of Michigan, p. 135.

[16]Saginaw Daily Courier, April 19, 1872.

[17]Ibid., April 21, 1872.

basis to attend the national convention.[18] Actually, though, the invitation to go to Cincinnati was open to all Republicans who opposed the Grant regime and a large attendance was greatly desired.[19]

During the pre-convention period, extensive correspondence occurred among leading Michigan Republicans with liberal leanings.[20] In the exchange of letters, the men who were to form the vanguard of the state Liberal Republican movement attempted both to ascertain each others feelings about Cincinnati, and to persuade one another to support the movement. In correspondence with C. S. May of Kalamazoo, Austin Blair discussed the "war on Grant and the military ring [which] waxes hotter and hotter every day." He noted that "Trumbull, Schurz, and Sumner seem determined to take their friends and march off in a body," and he wondered about the implications.[21] Along with others such as St. Joseph railroad builder A. H. Morrison and George Sanford, May in turn wrote to Blair "offering advice and asking his position concerning the Liberal Republican movement."[22] J. P. Thompson

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[18]Howard P. Nash, Third Parties in American Politics (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1959), p. 110.

[19]Dilla, Politics of Michigan, p. 136.

[20]Robert Charles Harris, "Austin Blair of Michigan: A Political Biography " (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of History, Michigan State University, 1969), p. 241.

[21]Austin Blair to Charles S. May, March 9, 1872, in the May Papers, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library, Detroit, Michigan.

[22]Harris, "Blair," p. 243.

of Grand Rapids, an editor and noted agriculturalist, invited Blair to appear at a mass rally called to appoint delegates to Cincinnati and to organize a Liberal Republican Club. He tried to persuade Blair to commit himself publically by saying: "Governor, we ask you to lead us in this movement. Our city and county, and congressional district are ripe for it. With you as our leader we can carry this state."[23]

As a result of the Detroit meeting and directive, of the local gatherings around the state, and of the extensive correspondence between leading Liberal Republicans, a semblance of organization began to emerge which would be further enhanced by developments at Cincinnati.

Most of the Michigan men arrived in the Ohio city on the morning of April 30, 1872. They held an impromptu meeting at the Spencer House in the late morning, and decided that Michigan would support Charles Francis Adams for president. As a Massachusetts congressman and son of former president, John Quincy Adams, he possessed the necessary political credentials and impeccable moral character. A few of those present voiced their intention of supporting Austin Blair for the vice-presidential post.[24]

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[23]J.P. Thompson to Austin Blair, April 19, 1872, Blair Papers.

[24]Port Huron Daily Times, May 1, 1872.

A second and more significant conference convened at the Spencer House at 2:30 that afternoon. Approximately forty Michiganders were present.[25] In accordance with the decision of the convention organizers, an official delegation was selected, composed of twice as many members as the state had senators and representatives in Congress.[26] This meant that Michigan's delegation would have twenty-two members, based on nine representatives and two senators. Saginaw was well represented on the delegation. Chauncy W. Wisner, a lawyer and active local politician, was chosen chairman and Claude Beirele, owner of the German paper Zeitung, was designated the secretary. After the selection of the delegation, a resolution was proposed and passed that the delegation should vote as a unit. Next, a state central committee was picked to take charge of the canvass in Michigan. This was comprised of one member from each of the state's congressional districts and Detroit industrialist and civic leader Frederick Carlisle was named chairman. Finally, after a debate on the balloting for president and a reaffirmation that Michigan would vote for Adams with former Ohio Governor Jacob Dolson Cox for vice-president, the meeting adjourned.[27]

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[25] Ibid.

[26] Nash, Third Parties, p. 110.

[27] Marshall Democratic Expounder, May 2, 1872; Port Huron Daily Times, May 1, 1872.

At noon on May 1, 1872, Colonal Grosvenor of Missouri and Stanley Matthews of Ohio officially opened the convention. These men "set forth the short-comings of the [Grant] administration and the responsibilities of the delegates in the usual style."[28]

On the following day several members of the Michigan delegation were selected for service on convention committees. M. Mansfield (third district) was named to the committee on credentials; J. P. Thompson (fourth district) to the platform committee; Otto Starck (first district) to the committee on organization; and W. S. Maynard (third district) to the committee on rules. The convention also designated O. B. Clark (third district) of Michigan as one of the vice-presidents.[29]

On the second day the convention adopted a rule providing for individual voting as opposed to unit voting. This rule negated the decision of the Michiganders at their meeting of April 30th; however, most of the state delegation did vote together on the various ballots for president, and fragmentation was kept to a minimum.[30]

The platform was adopted unanimously on the morning of May 3rd. It included calls for ending the animosities of the war, for restoring full civil and political rights to individuals and

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[28]Ross, Liberal Republican, p. 91.

[29]Proceedings of the Liberal Republican Convention, in the Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library, Detroit, Michigan, p. 6.

[30]Ross, Liberal Republican, p. 91.

states, for hard money, fair taxation, limitation of land grants to actual settlers, and for a return to honest, frugal, and efficient government. It was non-committal on the tariff, leaving the determination of that issue "up to the people."[31]

At this juncture the convention proceeded to its crowning work, the naming of the candidates to lead the new movement."[32] In the balloting the Michigan delegates split their votes unevenly between Adams and the erratic editor of the New York Tribune, Horace Greeley. On the first ballot Adams gained an easy margin of 56 votes over Greeley, the Michigan vote being 18 for the former and 4 for the latter. After those results were tabulated, B. Gratz Brown, Missouri Reformer, withdrew from the contest and many of his votes were switched over to Greeley, who then captured a two vote plurality on the second ballot. Strangely enough, just when Greeley surged ahead, the entire 22 Michigan votes were cast for Adams. On the sixth and final vote the Michigan tabulation was 20 for Adams and 2 for Greeley. Before the results of the sixth ballot were announced, however, there occurred a veritable stampede to Greeley, who consequently ended up the victor with a total of 482 votes to 187 for Adams.[33]

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[31] Proceedings, p. 2.

[32] Ross, Liberal Republican, p. 96.

[33] Proceedings, pp. 21-29; Ross, Liberal Republican, pp. 97-100.

The selection of a vice-president required only two ballots. On the first, Michigan delegates divided between several different choices with Governor Gilbert C. Walker of Virginia, George W. Julian of Indiana, Senator Lymon Trumbull of Illinois, Senator T. W. Tipton of Nebraska, B. Gratz Brown and J. D. Cox all getting votes. Trumbull and Cox subsequently withdrew from the race and Brown won easily, with Michigan's vote on the second and final ballot a solid 22 for Brown.[34]

Before the men at Cincinnati disbanded they elected a Liberal Republican National Executive Committee and tapped a Michigan delegate, D. E. Corbitt of the fifth district, for membership.[35]

Several leading Liberal Republicans in Michigan wholeheartedly endorsed the Cincinnati Platform and the nomination of Greeley. Blair was pleased. Of the platform, he said, "the convention spoke my thoughts entirely." And he "enthusiastically approved" Greeley's nomination.[36] "We have a candidate," he said, "who proposes to make peace by holding out the olive branch."[37] He lauded Greeley as a defender of individual and states rights, a

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[34]Proceedings, pp. 30-31; Ross, Liberal Republican, p. 100.

[35]Detroit Free Press, May 4, 1872.

[36]Harris, "Blair," p. 244.

[37]Blair's speech, July 22, 1872, "Michigan Political Speeches."

tenacious yet sensitive fighter for principle, and a charitable man who acted in a wise and generous manner when he provided bail for the imprisoned Jefferson Davis.[38] C. S. May believed both Greeley and Brown to be among "the earliest and best Republicans in the country." He described them as honest, trustworthy, and "eminently representative Republicans standing on a Republican platform."[39] Duncan Stewart saw Greeley as a "man of the people" and the platform as an instrument providing for the "return of government to the people."[40]

Of the Michigan Republicans who stood ready to sacrifice for reform, George C. Worth was representative. A circuit court commissioner from Hastings, he stated: "I am conscientiously in favor of the Cincinnati platform and its candidates, and have made no secret about my preferences. I am ready to resign my county office and to cast my lot with the Liberal Republican movement... come what may I am disposed to stand or fall with...the movement and am willing to risk all I have upon the issue."[41]

There were other Republican Liberals, however, who were not at all euphoric about the nomination of Horace Greeley. "While I

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[38] Ibid.

[39] May's speech, September 27, 1872, Speeches of the Stump.

[40] Stewart's speech, July 22, 1872, "Michigan Political Speeches." See also A. H. Morrison to Blair, May 22, 1872 and George H. Murdock to Blair, June 24, 1872, Blair Papers.

[41] George C. Worth to Austin Blair, May 12, 1872, Blair Papers.

sympathize most heartily with the principles underlying the Cincinnati movement" one wrote, "I am by no means enthusiastic over the results [nomination] of the late convention."[42] Another theorized that "Uncle Horace is much the strongest man south of the Mason Dixon line but Adams or Trumbull would have [been] stronger in Michigan."[43] A third said, "I have much confidence in Mr. Greeley's honesty and good intentions but he is unfortunately a visionary."[44]

A large segment of the Liberal support in Michigan was comprised of Germans, and they were alienated by the choice of Greeley. In fact, Carl Schurz, one of the major architects of the Liberal movement, believed that "the great mass of Germans who had formed such a strong element among the Liberals, were entirely alienated and doubted if even he could rally them again."[45] The Germans apparently were unahppy with Greeley because of his support of protection and abstinence and would have preferred either their countryman Schurz or Charles Francis Adams as a candidate.[46]

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[42]Edwin Fleming to Austin Blair, May 20, 1872, ibid.

[43]S. S. Lacey to Austin Blair, May 16, 1872, ibid.

[44]Horatio Pratt to Austin Blair, June 25, 1872, ibid.

[45]Ross, Liberal Republican, pp. 108-109.

[46]Ibid., p. 166.

Despite their "bitter disappointment," Grant and Wilson were more objectionable than Greeley to many of them.[47] Henry Wilson had been a notorious "Know Nothing" back in Massachusetts and was thus despised by the Germans. Excerpts from his speeches appeared in Michigan papers aimed at securing German support for the Liberal ticket. One of these quoted Wilson calling Germans "lop-eared, wide mouthed, mullet headed Dutchmen just up from some hut in the land of Kraut, with foam of beer still sticking in their horse-tail whiskers and their breath smelling of garlic and onions, enough to kill a white man at 300 yards."[48] Further, the Grant Administration was resented because of "its sale of arms to the French during the war between that power and the Fatherland."[49] Eventually most Germans decided to "follow the lead of their great countryman and distinguished orator and statesman, Carl Schurz, and pledge themselves to vote in the interests of reconciliation and honest government for Greeley and Brown." And by the end of July of 1872, the liberal Lansing Journal claimed that "six of the seven German newspapers in Michigan supported Greeley and the Germans of the state were for him in about the same ratio."[50]

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[47]Hubbart, Middle West, p. 252.

[48]Marshall Democratic Expounder, August 29, 1872.

[49]Lansing Journal, August 15, 1872.

[50]Ibid., August 15, July 25, 1872. In Detroit all three German newspapers were anti-Grant with the Abend Post most strongly pro-Greeley. That paper was owned by August Marxhausen, a close personal friend of Carl Schurz, who usually shared Schurz's views. Kistler, "German Press," pp. 307-309.

The Democrats of the state were very supportive of the Cincinnati platform. The platform demand "that states should be secure in their rights under the constitution, and that the centralizing encroachments of the federal government should be checked, was identical with that of the Democracy." The Democrats claimed that the platform was one "we could have made ourselves." They believed that it was "broad enough for all true lovers of freedom, equality, and constitutional liberty to stand upon."[51]

On the Greeley nomination, most Democrats at first were either noncommittal or vehemently opposed. One view was that Greeley was an inconsistent fellow who did not generally inspire much confidence and cooperation, but he was for amnesty, equal rights, and had the support of Negroes and laborers. Thus, either endorsement or condemnation of him was to be "withheld until the feelings of the people were known."[52] The other view was that Greeley was a supremely "egotistical, vain, foolish, and nervous man...who as president would be exposed and succumb to wild and unwise perversions of the practice and theories of government." This view argued that the only thing Horace had ever been consistent on in his life was his "hatred of the Democratic Party." Part of the pique manifested in such an assessment was explained by the

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[51] Detroit Free Press, May 4, May 25, 1872; Saginaw Daily Courier, May 7, 1872.

[52] Saginaw Daily Courier, May 4, 1872.

fact that the Liberal Republicans had "contemptuously spurned the Democrats from their convention" and were therefore to be considered as "enemies of the Democratic Party."[53]

It is clear that the decision of many Republicans and Democrats to support Horace Greeley hinged upon the outcome of the Democratic convention at Baltimore. A typical Republican sentiment was expressed by J. P. Heinshaw of Brooklyn, Michigan, who wrote: "I will no longer support Mr. Grant and if the Democracy...should endorse Mr. Greeley and the Cincinnati platform, I feel much inclined to...."[54] Heinshaw's inclination became reality. A Liberal Republican paper noted a veritable "stampede of Republicans to Greeley... since the Cincinnati nomination was ratified at Baltimore."[55] Some Democrats, who had been recalcitrant towards Greeley, changed their minds after Baltimore. The once alienated Free Press believed it "to be the duty of the Democracy and of the Democratic organs to support the nominations made by the Democratic Convention...."[56]

The Liberal Republicans held an early organizational meeting in Lansing on July 2, 1872. This gathering occurred in the

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[53]Detroit Free Press, May 12, May 16, 1872. Some of the irreconcilable Democrats led an abortive "straight Democratic" movement which held a convention in Jackson on September 27, 1872. Robert Bolt, Donald Dickinson (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1970), p. 15. Dilla, Politics of Michigan, p. 142.

[54]J. P. Heinshaw to Austin Blair, June 24, 1872. See also Alpheus Williams to Blair, May 27, 1872, Blair Papers.

[55]Lansing Journal, August 1, 1872.

[56]Detroit Free Press, July 14, 1872.

senate chambers of the state capitol and was attended by fifty to sixty leading Liberal Republicans. Speeches were made by such notables as Austin Blair of Jackson, General George Inness of Grand Rapids, and Nelson B. Jones the socially prominent real estate and insurance dealer of Lansing. Two major items of business were transacted at the meeting. First a Liberal Republican Executive Committee was established to complement the Liberal Republican State Central Committee which had been set up at Cincinnati. This Executive Committee consisted of Amos Root from Jackson, A. H. Morrison from St. Joseph, George G. Briggs from Grand Rapids, Osmond Tower from Ionia, and Perry Joslin from Saginaw. The second order of business was to call a mass convention in Jackson on the 25th of July. The call was directed to all Liberal Republicans of Michigan and to all who were in "sympathy with them," to gather at Jackson "to ratify the nomination of Greeley and Brown, and to endorse the platform adopted by the Liberal Republican mass convention of Cincinnati."[57]

The Jackson meeting was significant for a number of reasons. First, it was representative of the many Greeley-Brown ratification meetings which were held in various cities across the state and constituted a major element in the Liberal Republican campaign. Second, it witnessed the creation of an official platform for the Liberal Republicans in Michigan. Third, it resulted in a reorganization of the

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[57] Saginaw Daily Courier, July 3, 1872; Grand Rapids Daily Times, July 21, 1872.

upper echelons of the Liberal Republican hierarchy, and finally it laid out the "blueprint" for fusion with the Democrats during the campaign of 1872.

In many ways the event at Jackson was a prototype of an important campaign tool, the mass ratification rally. The rally was designed to stir up interest and enthusiasm in the Liberal cause by attracting large crowds and maximum coverage in the press. The Jackson affair was attended by approximately 5,000 people from all parts of the state. Some came in delegations and others singly. A number of bands from surrounding towns were brought in and they provided a continuous display of marching and supply of patriotic music. The spirit generated by the music was further heightened by the firing of guns and cannons. The town and its buildings were amply draped with bunting and streamers and large American flags were displayed everywhere. The meeting itself was held in an open square at the corner of Main and Jackson streets in front of the court house. There, a special elevated speakers' platform had been constructed and decorated with "green boughs of tamarack." Over the platform, hanging between two ornate columns, was a life-sized portrait of Horace Greeley.[58]

At the proper time, those assembled selected officers and committees for the meeting. By popular acclaim, they chose former

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[58]Saginaw Daily Courier, July 26, 1872; Detroit Free Press, July 26, 1872.

Governor Austin Blair to preside over the event as "president of the day" and appointed nine vice-presidents, one from each congressional district. In addition, they selected three secretaries and a committee on resolutions.

Blair called the meeting to order and a number of individuals proceeded to berate the Grant and Chandler regimes and laud the Liberal cause. The speakers included Blair, Lyman Trumbull, state legislator Jacob Ferris, and former congressman Randolph Strickland.[59]

At the conclusion of Trumbull's speech, the chairman of the committee on resolutions, Eugene Pringle of Jackson, read the platform which was then adopted with great cheering.[60] The preamble of the platform noted that it had been drawn up by a geographically representative committee, "assembled from all the portions of the state." It mentioned, too, that the committee in its work had been "encouraged by the recollection of a similar movement in 1854 and of the convention which then organized and named the Republican Party."[61] Being "mindful of the great events which had removed slavery and other causes of division among the American people, and believing that reconciliation was the duty of the hour," it stated the following:

1. A reaffirmance of the principles relating to the equality of men; to the settlement consumated by amendments of the Federal Constitution; to the removal of all disabilities on account of the Rebellion; to local self-government and

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[59] Ibid.

[60] Ibid.

[61] "Michigan Platform."

the protection of the habeas corpus; to a reform of the civil service, including a limitation of the presidency to a single term; to the maintenance of the public credit and the sacredness of the debt we owe the defenders of our country; to holding the public domain for actual settlers; to the duties of honesty and firmness in our intercourse with foreign nations, which are well set forth in the resolutions adopted by the convention lately held at Cincinnati.

2. That the unanimity with which the Democratic Party had accepted the political situation with regard to the matters settled by the war and amendments to the Constitution warrants all good citizens...in regarding these issues...to better illumine a page of history than to be the cause of present differences.

3. The evidence being clear that party management is now in the hands of corrupt rings, intent to hide from the people the villainy which lurks in public offices, we point out the only practicable remedy...is an entire change of administration....

4. That without desertion of any principle, the opportunity is now afforded to make such change both in the national and state governments as twelve years in the one and eighteen in the other of uninterrupted possession by the same political party render proper, in order to rid the departments of bad usages and dangerous precedents and by the publicity which change affords to give the people opportunities for checks and securities for the good behavior of their public servants.

5. That the Jeffersonian test of honesty, capability, and faithfulness to the Constitution, which should be applied to all candidates for office, seems to be fully met by Horace Greeley and B. Gratz Brown....

6. That in order to secure honest government, to revive fraternal feelings between different sections of the country, and to preserve the Constitution and the right of local government in the states, we desire and invite the co-operation of men of all parties and past political associations.[62]

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[62] Ibid.

Another resolution, not related to the platform, was introduced and passed which changed the makeup of the state central committee. This proposed that the committee which had been appointed at Cincinnati be combined with the state executive committee which had been appointed at Lansing. This expanded body was charged with supervising the canvass and issuing a call for a state Liberal Republican nominating convention.[63] Pursuant to passage of this resolution, a meeting was held in Lansing on July 29, 1872. Present were the members of the new committee. The chairman was former state senator and organizer of the Michigan G.O.P, Whitney Jones. The members were F. Carlisle, H. C. Hall, C. B. Blake, G. C. Jones, D. E. Corbitt, V. A. Saph, W. A. Lewis, A. Root, A. H. Morrison, G. G. Briggs, O. Tower, P. Joslin, and C. Beierle. The secretary of the committee was N. B. Jones. The committee proceeded to draw up a call for a Liberal Republican State Convention in August.[64]

One of the most crucial results of the Jackson meeting emanated from a conference that was held in the evening after the public rally was over. On that Thursday night the existing state committees of the Liberal Republican and Democratic parties met jointly and agreed to a plan of political fusion for the upcoming campaign and election.[65]

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[63] Saginaw Daily Courier, July 26, 1872.

[64] Kalamazoo Gazette, August 2, 1872.

[65] Marshall Democratic Expounder, August 1, 1872.

Such a move had been anticipated by both the Democrats and Liberal Republicans. A number of attempts had been made by both sides to win sympathy and support for fusion. The Liberal Republican National Committee, meeting in New York City on July 12, 1872, had recommended to the Liberal Republicans in the various states "to hold their state and congressional conventions, when possible, at the same time and place with the Democracy, in order that conference may unite the two parties in the electoral, state, and congressional tickets."[66] A Democratic paper called for "a thorough and harmonious organization and concert of action between the Democrats and Liberal Republicans through which a complete revolution in the country as well as state...could be effected and a glorious victory gained over the Grant ring."[67] One appeal for cooperation was reminiscent of Thomas Jefferson's first inaugural address and his comments about Federalists and Republicans. It simply stated that "we are all Democrats, we are all Liberal Republicans."[68]

The plan endorsed at Jackson was as follows: each party would maintain a distinct organization and hold its own preliminary meetings, county and state, attended by its own delegated representatives. Nominating conventions, however, for county, state, and congressional offices, would be held at the same time and place.

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[66] Grand Rapids Daily Times, July 17, 1872.

[67] Niles Democrat, July 20, 1872.

[68] Marshall Democratic Expounder, July 18, 1872.

Nominations would be made by joint committees of conference comprised of equal numbers of Democrats and Liberal Republicans. Members of these committees would report back to their respective conventions and if the agreed-upon nominations were accepted, the two conventions would meet in joint-session to ratify them.[69]

The rationale for such a plan was: (1) it would make "each wing of the political movement a high contracting party to all nominations;" (2) it would "secure the nomination of men who were reasonably acceptable to both sides, because it gave to each side a veto power upon any objectionable candidate;" and (3) because "each wing of the movement would be represented by its own elected delegates at all conventions, all nominations made by those conventions, would be binding upon all parties to the creation of the conventions."[70]

Thus, arrangements were made to have cooperation concurrently with separation. This well suited those who could not bring themselves to completely forsake their separate and traditional identity. J. P. Thompson, for example, had written to Blair: "I feel it is of great importance to effect and preserve a Liberal Republican organization. I have no idea of being swallowed by the Bourbons."[71]

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[69] Ibid., August 1, 1872.

[70] Ibid.

[71] J. P. Thompson to Austin Blair, July 30, 1872, Blair Papers.

There were other members of the Liberal Republican and Democratic parties who believed that more cooperation was necessary for certain phases of campaigning than was actually possible under the plan of fusion. So an urgent request was issued for the formation of Greeley-Brown clubs around the state. Since these were not to be considered part of the party machinery but rather as "campaign agencies," there was no need for maintaining separate organizations. In the clubs, Democrats and Liberal Republicans could work together in complete harmony.[72]

The Greeley-Brown clubs which were to be an important cog in the political effort of 1872, were formed at local meetings of interested Democrats and Liberal Republicans. At a typical gathering in Grand Rapids, speeches were given by leading local representatives of both parties. The Honorable Jacob Ferris, a Republican state legislator and former supporter of Grant, resoundingly declared that "Democrats and Liberal Republicans must band together to save the country from ruin and to end military despotism and to preserve civil liberties." Colonel Andrew T. McReynolds, a Democrat of long-standing, followed with a discourse on the necessity of ending the war once and for all and of restoring peace for the country and civil government in the North and South.[73]

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[72]Marshall Democratic Expounder, August 1, 1872; A. H. Morrison to Blair, May 8, 1872, Blair Papers.

[73]Grand Rapids Democrat, July 24, 1872.

Each club drew up a constitution and in the case of Grand Rapids the preamble to this document summed up the purpose of the club. It stated a belief in the "need for a change of administration," and "for the purpose of promoting the election of Greeley and Brown," it announced "the formation of a Greeley-Brown Club and the adoption of a constitution and by-laws."[74]

The officers and committees of the clubs were charged with carrying out various duties vital to the campaign. Among these were arranging mass rallies and the appearance of speakers, acquiring and circulating documents helpful to the Liberal cause, recruiting members, making lists of voters, canvassing the wards, and collecting monies for the campaign.[75]

During the summer of 1872, the Liberal Republicans and Democrats staged a series of Greeley-Brown ratification rallies in Michigan's more substantial cities and in many of the small towns as well. Most of these were similar to the one in Jackson, already described. Perhaps the most popular speaker at these affairs was Ex-Governor Austin Blair. His letters reveal a never-ending number of requests by officers of local Greeley-Brown Clubs and other interested parties to appear and deliver an address.[76] Other speakers

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[74] Ibid. See also Michigan Tribune, July 26, 1872; and Marshall Democratic Expounder, July 25, 1872.

[75] Ibid.

[76] W. D. Harriman to Austin Blair, August 7, 1872; Jerome W. Turner to Blair, July 5, 1872; J. H. Richardson to Blair, August 12, 1872, Blair Papers.

in great demand included Lyman Trumbull, Randolph Strickland, Eugene Pringle, A. T. McReynolds, C. S. May, Ex-Governor Robert McClelland, and Duncan Stewart.

In the months of August and September the Jackson blueprint for fusion underwent a thorough trial at county and congressional conventions. The Liberal Republicans held their preliminary meetings locally and selected their own delegates to attend the conventions. The Democrats did the same. Once the conventions were underway. a joint committee of conference hammered out the list of nominees to be endorsed or rejected by the two conventions. The resulting tickets were usually well-balanced between Democrats and Republicans.[77]

The most significant Liberal Republican convention was, of course, the state convention held in Grand Rapids on August 22, 1872. The newly-enlarged Liberal Republican State Central Committee issued a call on July 29th for the convention to nominate "candidates for presidential electors and state offices." On the matter of representation at the state convention, the call explained that "each county would elect two delegates for each Representative to which, under the last apportionment it was entitled in the lower house of the state legislature and that every organized county should be entitled to at least one delegate. Further, with the exception of the

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[77] Kalamazoo Gazette, September 6, 1872; Saginaw Daily Courier, August 29, 1872; Grand Rapids Democrat, September 11, 1872.

Upper Peninsula counties, "no delegate would be entitled to a seat who did not reside in the county he represented."[78]

On August 22nd the Liberal Republican convention took place in the circuit court room of Lippeg Hall in Grand Rapids. The meeting was called to order at 12:00 noon by Osmond Tower of Ionia, a member of the Liberal Republican State Committee. Tower appointed Randolph Strickland of St. Johns as the temporary chairman of the convention and Nelson B. Jones of Lansing as the temporary secretary.[79]

Upon assuming the chair, Strickland thanked those assembled for the privilege of his position. He then delivered a brief speech. "We are charged," he stated, "with reforming the abuses of our national administration. A civil service reform is necessary, and for this purpose the good and true men are binding themselves together all over the nation. Upon the Cincinnati platform the people of the country are joining together for the good of their country. The people desire an honest government. We are entitled to it. As Liberal Republicans we should join hands with all who favor reform and reconciliation. And, I trust that concord will govern our deliberations."[80]

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[78] Kalamazoo Gazette, August 2, 1872.

[79] Detroit Free Press, August 23, 1872; Grand Rapids Daily Times, August 23, 1872; Michigan Tribune, August 30, 1872.

[80] Ibid.

On the motion of various participants, a number of committees were created. These included a committee on credentials and permanent organization chaired by O. B. Clark, a committee on resolutions chaired by Jerome W. Turner, and a committee on conference, chaired by Adam Elder. Following the selection of committees, the convention recessed until 2:00 in the afternoon.[81]

Upon reassembling, the convention was called to order by Strickland and the committee on credentials presented a report on the official delegates for the various counties. This report was accepted and adopted. Then, the committee reported on the permanent convention officers. The president was lumber magnate Dwight Cutler of Ottawa. Among the vice-presidents chosen from each congressional district were A. Marxhausen of Detroit, Allen Potter of Kalamazoo, Osmond Tower of Ionia, H. C. Briggs of Howell, and John F. Driggs of Saginaw. Secretaries of the convention were Nelson B. Jones of Lansing and Robert F. Hill of Kalamazoo.[82]

Mr. Cutler then took the chair and called for the next order of business which was the reporting of a new Liberal Republican State Central Committee. The chairman of the new committee was the omnipresent Nelson B. Jones of Lansing. Members from the first district were Adam Elder and August Marxhausen of Detroit; from the

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[81] Ibid.

[82] Ibid.

second district were W.D. Harriman of Ann Arbor and H. C. Hall of Hudson; from the third district were Daville Hubbard of Marshall and Dr. E. A. Foote of Charlotte; from the fourth district were A. H. Morrison of St. Joseph and H. Barnaby of Mendon; from the fifth district were H. H. Pope of Allegan and Osmond Tower of Ionia; from the sixth district were R. C. Ripley of Flint and H. C. Briggs of Howell; from the seventh district were V. A. Saph of Marine City and J. B. Wilson of Lapeer; from the eighth district were A. M. Cummings of Bay City and Dr. E. Fish of Granville; and from the ninth district were George Wagner of Marquette and C. S. Pratt of Traverse City.[83]

At this point a small group of black men appeared in the convention hall. Led by M. Sweeney of Battle Creek, these "colored friends of Greeley and Brown" asked to address the gathering. "They were admitted to the floor of the convention amid loud applause and their eloquent speeches were met with cheering." At the conclusion of the speeches, two of their number, Sweeney and W. C. Carter of Ypsilanti, were spontaneously elected as delegates to the convention.[84] Perhaps the enthusiastic response of the Liberal Republicans was in some measure a reflection of their guilt that theirs was basically a white man's movement and that the newly enfranchised blacks were to play a very minor role.

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[83] Ibid.

[84] Ibid., Kalamazoo Gazette, August 30, 1872.

The Democrats, who were holding their convention in near-by Luce's Hall, requested that the conference session now commence. The Liberal Republican conference committee subsequently retired to a meeting with the Democratic conference committee. The Liberal Republican convention then recessed.[85]

About 5:30 p.m. the convention reconvened and "it was announced amid great excitement that the joint conference committee had agreed upon a state ticket." The committee then made this report: for governor--Austin Blair of Jackson; for lieutenant governor--John C. Blanchard of Ionia; for secretary of state--George H. House of Ingham; for state treasurer--Joseph A. Hollon of Saginaw; for attorney general--Matthew H. Maynard of Marquette; for auditor general--Neil O'Hearn of Livingston; for commissioner of the land office--George H. Murdock of Berrien; for superintendant of public instruction--Willard Stearns of Lenawee; and for member of the state board of education--Dr. Edward Feldner of Wayne. Of this slate the Liberal Republicans were Blair, House, Murdock and Feldner.[86]

Presidential electors were as follows: for electors-at-large--George V. Lothrop of Wayne County and Charles S. May of Kalamazoo County; for the first district--Otto Starck of Wayne County; for

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[85]Grand Rapids Daily Times, August 23, 1872; Detroit Free Press, August 23, 1872; Michigan Tribune, August 30, 1872.

[86]Ibid.

the second district--John Wahl of Monroe County; for the third district--Andrew J. Bowne of Barry County; for the fourth district--Henry Chamberlain of Berrien County; for the fifth district--Henry Fralick of Kent County; for the sixth district--Randolph Strickland of Clinton County; for the seventh district--Abraham Smith of St. Clair County; for the eighth district--Charles Babo of Bay County; for the ninth district--Charles B. Fenton of Mackinac County. In this group the Liberal Republicans were Starck, May, Strickland and Babo. The report of the committee was accepted and adopted and the Democratic Convention was informed of this action.[87]

A committee of Democrats then appeared at the Liberal Republican convention and announced that the report of the joint conference committee had been unanimously adopted in the Democratic convention. The chairman of this committee "cordially invited the Liberal Republicans to join the Democrats in a joint session to ratify the nominations. This invitation was accepted with great enthusiasm and the convention adjourned to proceed to Luce's Hall. A procession of Liberal Republicans, headed by a local band, formed and marched over to join the Democrats to the delight of all involved.[88]

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[87] Ibid.

[88] Ibid.

After a tumultuous welcome by the Democrats, the combined convention received the nominees into its presence. Austin Blair received an especially deafening ovation and proceeded to make a short acceptance speech. The other nominees followed suit. All were then given loud cheers of approval.[89]

A list of resolutions was read and ratified. The first "recognized the justice, patriotism, magnanimity and wisdom of the great doctrines enunciated in the Cincinnati platform." The second endorsed the candidacies of Horace Greeley, "a man distinguished for his purity of character and probity," and B. Gratz Brown, "a man of industry, intelligence and experience." The third ratified the nomination of Austin Blair in whom were "all those high qualities of honesty, intelligence, experience and devotion to the public welfare...." The fourth ratified the other candidates on the state ticket as "gentlemen of well known worth of character and fitness for elevated official positions." The fifth triumphantly resolved that "with such a platform and such a national and state ticket we boldly and confidently enter this political contest, conscious of the high claims and justice of our cause to war with an unscrupulous, wily, and corrupt enemy, who is intent upon the exercise of governmental power, public plunder and self-aggradizement, relying on the intelligence, patriotism and virtue of the great American people, firmly believing that a

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[89] Ibid.

complete triumph awaits us."[90] This last resolution sounded the keynote of the campaign to be waged against entrenched Republicanism in the nation and state up to the November election.

In the nine congressional districts, candidates were selected by joint conference as well. The nine men who ultimately emerged as the choices to do battle with the Republicans were A. S. Bagg of the first district, Adrian College President Asa Mahan of the second district, John Parkhurst of the third district, Allan Potter of the fourth district, Andrew McReynolds of the fifth district, Augustus Baldwin of the sixth district, John Richardson of the seventh district, Chauncey Wisner of the eighth district, and Samuel P. Ely of the ninth district. Of these nominees, Mahan, Potter, Richardson, and Wisner were Liberal Republicans.[91]

During the fall campaign the issues developed by the Liberal Republicans and their Democratic supporters were essentially those discussed in chapter one. "As in other campaigns of the Reconstruction period, the war and its results furnished the chief lines of argument."[92] There were continued demands for honesty, frugality, and efficiency in government. These were supplemented by appeals for hard money, sound

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[90]Resolutions adopted by the joint Liberal Republican-Democratic Convention, August 22, 1872, typescript copy in the Spencer Collection.

[91]Kalamazoo Gazette, September 20, 1872; Michigan Tribune, September 13, September 20, 1872.

[92]Ross, Liberal Republican, p. 173.

credit, and a downward revision of the tariff, and a cry for significant reform of the civil service. The general thrust of the Liberals' demands was supportive of a return of government to the people and a simultaneous destruction of political centralization, bossism and rings.

The Liberals appealed strongly to the integrity and conscience of all voters, Democratic and Republican. This approach seemed increasingly relevant as the campaign wore on due to the emergence of a new and momentous scandal--credit mobilier.[93]

Michigan Reformers also made entreaties to more specific yet politically potent socioeconomic and ethnic groups. The main ones were the farmers, the workingmen, and the Germans. For the benefit of the agrarians, it was noted that "the Republican Party of the state was trying to reconcile the great agricultural interests to taxation for the benefit of the salt, copper, and lumber interests."[94] The Republican party was represented to the urban worker as the benefactor of his business and banking interests which "built palaces for a lucky few and condemned the working man to slums and tenements."[95] Horace Greeley was presented as a hero of the working man and "the only man who ever ran for the presidency

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[93]Kalamazoo Gazette, September 20, 1872.

[94]Grand Rapids Daily Times, September 20, 1872.

[95]Marshall Democratic Expounder, August 8, 1872.

of the United States that served a regular apprenticeship at his trade."[96] Richard Trevellick of Detroit, the politically active president of the National Labor Union, reportedly "came out" for Greeley and Brown.[97] The argument for the low tariff was directed at the worker just as it was at the farmer. Reform advocates said that high tariffs had effectively cut America off from world markets and had thus lessened domestic production and caused unemployment."[98] Thus interestingly, the Liberal Republican movement, through its anti-monopoly and low tariff appeals aimed at farmers and workers, cut across geographic and economic lines and resulted in an "interaction between agricultural and urban centers."[99] Among ethnic groups the Germans received the most attention from the Liberal Republicans and their Democratic allies. As has been noted, the old "Know-Nothing" speeches of Henry Wilson, the vice-presidential candidate, were dredged up and published in Liberal Michigan newspapers. Under a banner heading "Foreigners Read This," one journal

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[96] Saginaw Daily Courier, November 2, 1872.

[97] Clifton K. Yearley, "Richard Trevellick: Labor Agitator," Michigan History, XXXIX (1955), p. 435; Marshall Democratic Expounder, August 8, 1872. Conrad Marxhausen, brother of liberal publisher August, was an important figure in Detroit's labor movement, Kistler, "German Press," p. 310. Unfortunately the politically potent Detroit trades assembly was on the decline by 1872, Sidney Glazier, "The Michigan Labor Movement," Michigan History, XXIX (1945), pp. 73-82.

[98] Marshall Democratic Expounder, August 8, 1872.

[99] Chester Destler, American Radicalism (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1966), p. 6.

introduced a quotation from such a speech made in 1856 with these words: "Foreign born citizens, remember that if you vote for the Grant ticket this fall, you will endorse the man who uttered [this speech]." Generally the German community was exhorted to support the Liberal cause of their countryman Carl Schurz and to refute the corrupt and prejudiced Grant regime.[100]

The political campaign of 1872 was characterized by inflamed emotion, acrimony, and personal abuse. "The efforts of Liberals to break up the old party and their willingness to enlist the aid of Democrats [in so doing] made the Republicans most bitter toward that element. And, the Greeley politicians...found their readiest and most congenial arguments in the abuse of the President and his advisors."[101] Certainly too, the "press contributed greatly to the calumny." Attempts to drop "bomb shells" were common. The Liberals were constantly exposing new cases of fraud and corruption at all levels of government, perpetuated by the evil Republican party.[102]

The Liberal forces attempted to convince the people of Michigan that there was a ground swell of support for the reform

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[100] Saginaw Daily Courier, October 30, 1872; Lansing Journal, August 15, 1872.

[101] Ross, Liberal Republican, p. 150.

[102] Ibid., p. 162.

cause among former staunch Republicans. Endless lists were printed in various state newspapers enumerating the defectors from Republican ranks. These members of the G.O.P. in "long-standing" were to vote for Greeley because "the once great party formed for progress was now turned into a political ring...." Literally hundreds of signatures of former Republicans were obtained to endorse the new movement.[103]

The campaign was marked by a great deal of political "hoopla." "Hilarious mass meetings and parades" were held "to appeal to the voter's emotions and prejudices." The Greeley-Brown campaign clubs played a large role in organizing such affairs.[104] One facet of the "hoopla" was the construction of campaign headquarters which were replicas of Horace Greeley's famed farmhouse in Chappaqua, New York. Such a structure was raised in Lansing and dedicated with a great, emotion-packed rally. In describing the building, the Lansing Journal, a Liberal Republican paper, noted that the most paramount of the decorations was a "large-sized portrait of the standard bearer in the cause of honest government, Horace Greeley." This likeness was "wreathed in evergreens" and beneath it appeared the words, "Greeley and Brown the peoples candidates." In front of

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[103]Saginaw Daily Courier, July 17, 1872; Marshall Democratic Expounder, July 18, 1872; Michigan Tribune, July 19, 1872.

[104]Ross, Liberal Republican, p. 161.

the speaker's stand the word "Reconciliation" met "the eyes of all present." A motto in German to the left of the speaker's stand was translated as "We stand strong in truth, right, and beauty." Anti-Grant mottos were scattered throughout the structure. Among them the following: "A land grant for poor men--U. S. Grant for the nabobs," "Honesty is the best policy--a motto discarded by the Grantites," and "Death to Political Rings."[105]

The results of the election indicated that the campaign efforts of the Liberal Republicans and Democrats had not been overly efficacious. For the office of President of the United States, U. S. Grant received 138,455 votes in Michigan compared to only 78,355 for Greeley. In the gubernatorial race Austin Blair ran somewhat better than did Greeley for President. He received a total count of 81,880 to 138,968 for the Republican nominee John G. Bagley.[106]

A county by county analysis reveals that the closest races were in the counties of Jackson, Livingston, Macomb and Monroe. In these counties the Republican plurality was minimal. The fusion ticket also piled up significant counts in Berrien, Clinton, Saginaw, Washtenaw, St. Clair, Oakland, Wayne, Genessee, Ingham, Kent, Lenawee, Calhoun and Kalamazoo.[107]

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[105] Lansing Journal, August 22, 1872.

[106] Michigan Manual, 1873, p. 257.

[107] Ibid., pp. 254-257.

The German enclaves in Clinton and Saginaw counties went overwhelmingly for the Liberals and Democrats. In Westphalia, for example, the totals showed 249 for Greeley and 252 for Blair to only 22 for Grant and 23 for Bagley. In Frankenmuth, the Germans gave Greeley 172 and Blair 173 while Grant and Bagley received only 29 and 30 votes respectively.[108]

The Republicans swept all nine congressional races rather handily. The closest contest was recorded in the first district where the Liberal candidate polled 9,843 to only 11,703 for the Republican.[109]

The election results in Michigan were indicative of those in the rest of the country.[110] The Republicans had thus achieved a substantial victory.

The reasons for the failure of the Liberal Republican-Democratic effort were numerous. "The most fundamental explanation of the tidal wave of 1872 was...that the country had confidence in Grant and his administration and did not wish at the time of re-adjustment from the great war to risk a doubtful experiment."[111] Despite the charges against him and his advisors, Grant yet stood

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[108] Ibid., pp. 278-321.

[109] Ibid., p. 258.

[110] Ibid., pp. 428-429.

[111] Ross, Liberal Republican, p. 190.

as a great and admirable war hero in the eyes of the people.[112] And, to many Republicans the Democratic Party was "still thought to be unreconstructed" and Horace Greeley was viewed as "erratic and unstable."[113] Apparently, too, the power of "Old Zach" and the state Republican organization was formidable, for despite the combined Liberal-Democratic effort, Michigan delivered an impressive percentage of the vote for Grant.[114]

Another significant factor in the victory of the Republicans in the nation and the state was "the impossibility of reconciling large numbers of Democratic voters to Greeley's candidacy...."[115] A comparison of the returns of the 1872 election with earlier ones "shows conclusively that large numbers of Democrats stayed away from the polls...."[116] Oakland County, for example, had given Horatio Seymour 4,442 votes for president in the election of 1868 and 4,363 votes to the Democratic candidate for governor in the election of 1870. In 1872 the county could muster only 3,326 votes for Greeley

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[112] Ibid.

[113] Ibid.; Lansing Journal, November 7, 1872.

[114] Cassopolis Vigilant, November 14, 1872; Michigan Tribune, November 15, 1872; Lansing Journal, November 21, 1872.

[115] Ross, Liberal Republican, p. 188. See also Lansing Journal, November 7, 1872. It should be noted, too, that in Michigan "it was impossible for many Democrats to forget Blair's ultra-Radicalism of the past." See Dilla, Politics of Michigan, p. 147.

[116] Ross, Liberal Republican, p. 189. See also Bolt, Dickinson, p. 16.

and 3,605 for Blair. Wayne County which had gone Democratic in both 1868 and 1870 went Republican in 1872, despite a substantial vote for the Liberal-Democratic ticket. Even in sparsely populated Mackinac County the traditional Democratic majority was shaved to a slim 26 votes.[117]

The fact remained, too, that economic prosperity still was prevalent in 1872 and the average voter associated the success of the Republican Party with the continuation of "good times."[118]

Some reactions of the Liberal Republicans were tinged with bitterness. One Liberal journal asked "can an honest election be had?" It noted that the patronage was part of the problem. It was "very largely increased since the war and was simply immense. Its command of money was unlimited. Its swarms of office holders could give up their entire time to the duties of political canvassers."[119] The influence of big money and big business was also criticized. "More Republicans would have joined us" said the Lansing Journal, "but for the malign influence of gold and stock gamblers, and the cowardly fear of the great moneyed corporations of the country who believed the Republican administration, if re-elected would continue

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[117] Michigan Manual, 1873, pp. 255-257.

[118] Ross, Liberal Republican, p. 190.

[119] Lansing Journal, November 7, November 21, 1872. See also Michigan Tribune, November 15, 1872.

to serve their interests better than would any other one."[120] Illegal election day activities were also rumored. "Fraud stalked abroad under the meridian sun of election day" complete with "repeating, ballot box stuffing, and miscounting."[121]

But a note of hopeful optimism was expressed as well. A Liberal Republican journal maintained that "it takes time to harmonize and consolidate a party formed from elements heretofore antagonistic. The Liberals and Democrats will yet achieve the result. They are in an honest majority in this nation [and] the principles they have contended for are wise, just and necessary to the safety and perpetuity of this Republic. Patience and fidelity will achieve their triumph."[122] Some Liberal Republicans were greatly encouraged about the possibilities for the future. George Murdock of Berrien wrote to Austin Blair that "two years hence with proper candidates and judicious action you may put Berrien County down for one senator and two representatives in the state legislature."[123]

Although the Liberal Republican experiment failed in Michigan and in the nation in 1872, it was significant. It contributed to a growing demand for honesty and responsibility in

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[120] Ibid.

[121] Lansing Journal, November 7, 1872.

[122] Ibid.; Michigan Tribune, November 8, 1872.

[123] George H. Murdock to Austin Blair, November 13, 1872, Blair Papers.

government. This concern was manifested to some degree in the striking gains of the anti-Republican forces in elections of 1874 and the unseating of the Radical Zachariah Chandler from his senate seat in 1875.[124]

Further, the "events of 1872 marked the end of the old Republican coalition of the Civil War years. Having tasted insurgency in the Liberal Republican movement, many erstwhile Republicans remained out of the old party and either became nominal Democrats or joined the various agrarian and reform parties of the period."[125] This was certainly true in Michigan.

Some others returned in future years to the ranks of the G.O.P. where they formed the nucleus of a "Mugwump" faction which was to bring a vital reform concern to the once jaded party. In Michigan "the element of reform became a prominent part of the Republican program."[126]

Despite the presence of "disappointed office seekers" and "political adventurers"[127] within the ranks of the Liberal Republican movement, it was not primarily an exercise in political opportunism

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[124]Dilla, Politics of Michigan, pp. 171-179.

[125]John G. Sproat, The Best Men: Liberal Reformers in the Gilded Age (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 87.

[126]Dilla, Politics of Michigan, p. 189.

[127]Ross, Liberal Republican, p. 66.

or negativism. In Michigan especially, the movement was headed by the sort of "respectable and in many cases eminent" men who were perhaps too few in the national movement.[128] These individuals were successful in business and agricultural pursuits. They were highly principled and socially concerned and active. They were also living proof of what has been called the "most striking feature" of the Liberal Republican effort, that is, the "large number of Free-Soilers and founders of the Republican party among the bolters."[129]

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[128] Ibid., p. 65.

[129] Ibid., p. 61. See also William Stocking, Under the Oaks (Detroit: Detroit Tribune, 1904), pp. 22-23, 38-39, 40-41, 49-50; Floyd B. Streeter, Political Parties in Michigan 1837-1860 (Lansing: Michigan Historical Commission, 1918), pp. 93, 111, 190; Theodore Clark Smith, The Liberty and Free Soil Parties in the Northwest (New York: Russell and Russell, 1967), pp. 142, 200-203, 293.

CHAPTER III

NATIONAL REFORMERS ON THE MARCH

The Liberal effort in Michigan did not expire with the debacle of 1872. There were still, in 1873, Republicans who were sufficiently alienated from the regular party to persist in an independent course. J. H. Richardson of Tuscola stated: "our cause is just and it must prevail....I am for reform body and soul."[1] S. R. Hughes of St. Joseph wrote to Blair that "the numerous astounding developments made since the close of last fall's campaign have fully justified and vindicated the course of honest Liberal Republicans," and that he believed "more firmly than ever in the absolute necessity of rescuing the government... by taking it out of the hands of the corrupt men that now administer it."[2] Democrats, too, were imbued with the thought that their salvation lay in an alliance with disaffected Republicans. For example, in supporting the concept of fusion for the spring elections, John G. Parkhurst urged a "good set of resolutions

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[1]John H. Richardson to Austin Blair, March 16, 1873, Blair Papers.

[2]S. R. Hughes to Austin Blair, April 1, 1873, ibid.

and a new name under which all opponents of corruption, fraud, and a central government can unite."[3]

As a result of this sentiment, a joint Liberal Republican and Democratic call was issued in the spring of 1873 for a convention in preparation for the upcoming state election. The convention was to be held in Jackson on the 27th of March to "nominate candidates for the supreme court and two regents of the university." The call was addressed to "all who are opposed to the corruption of men in power and all who desire to participate in an earnest and determined effort to reform existing abuses and restore honesty and economy to the management of all public trusts." All such persons were invited to "participate in preliminary meetings...called to elect delegates to the state convention." The call was signed by both Foster Pratt, the chairman of the Democratic State Central Committee, and Nelson B. Jones, chairman of the Liberal Republican State Central Committee.[4] This year was to be different, then, from 1872. It was to witness the complete merging of the Democratic and Liberal Republican forces without even a pretense of maintaining separate organizations. There were to be no separate conventions or selection of nominees by joint conference.

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[3]John G. Parkhurst to Austin Blair, March 16, 1873, ibid.

[4]Grand Rapids Democrat, March 12, 1873; Michigan Tribune, March 20, 1873.

This trend was also noticeable in the organization of the county conventions. The case of Kent County was typical. There a call was issued for "a county convention of Democrats and Liberal Republicans...to appoint delegates to the state convention at Jackson and to nominate a candidate for county superintendent of schools." The call was addressed to "all persons who are opposed to corruption in office in any and every form, congressional or otherwise." Each town and ward would be entitled to select three delegates to the county convention. That body in turn was to designate two men to attend the state convention for every representative the county had in the state legislature. Again, in a manner similar to the call for the state convention, both the chairman of the Democratic County Committee and the chairman of the Liberal Republican County Committee signed the call.[5]

The spring state convention assembled in the Jackson Union Hall on March 27, 1873. It was called to order by Foster Pratt, the Democrat, and Eugene Pringle, the well-known Liberal Republican from Jackson, was elected as the permanent chairman. The opening statements of these two men foreshadowed a new sort of political organization which was to facilitate a complete Liberal Republican-Democratic fusion. Pratt said that "events are rapidly drifting all the elements opposed to the administration into a new

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[5]Grand Rapids Democrat, March 19, 1873. A unified approach was employed at the municipal level as well. See the Michigan Tribune, April 3, 1873.

and distinctive organization." Pringle then proposed that the convention was "representative of a people astounded at the corruption shown by the recent congressional investigations, the actors in which were shielded by the great party controlling the government." "They were assembled" Pringle went on, "to carry out the popular idea that there should be a reconciliation of affairs and the administration of government should be conducted on the principles of reform and economy."[6]

The proceedings of the convention were marked by relative harmony. The officers and committees selected were comprised of representative numbers of Democrats and Liberal Republicans. And there appeared to be a distinct spirit of cooperation among them.[7]

The committee on resolutions presented a report which was adopted with great enthusiasm. The statements contained therein were indicative of a blurring of traditional party identities and labels.[8] The introduction to the resolutions noted that the delegates were "elected for the most part without reference to past political affiliations to represent the view of those opposed to the manifold corruptions of the party in possession of the government." They were, it claimed, "impressed with the importance

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[6]Detroit Free Press, March 28, 1873; Michigan Tribune, April 3, 1873; Marshall Democratic Expounder, April 3, 1873.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Hubbart, Middle West, p. 253.

of organizing an opposition which could unite upon living issues all men who, for whatever cause, desired a change of administration and were hopeful of being able to co-operate with similar movements in other states...."[9]

The resolutions reaffirmed the sentiments of the Cincinnati and Baltimore platforms of 1872. They considered "all questions relating to slavery, the rights of citizens, and the national debt, so settled and determined by constitutional amendments as to be historical only and no longer living issues." They went on to condemn the Credit Mobilier and Salary Grab scandals as well as military rule in the South and continued centralization of the power of the federal government. They demanded the "renovation of the civil service in every department" and the strict accountability of all elected officials.[10]

The final resolution summed up the view of assembled Democrats and Liberal Republicans on the type of organization, cooperation, and candidates they desired. "We prefer," it read, "an organization independent of past party associations under such auspices as will carry no dead issues into future political contests. We have no honors for Democrats or Republicans as such, we should

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[9] Detroit Free Press, March 28, 1873; Michigan Tribune, April 3, 1873.

[10] Ibid.

seek candidates on account of fitness and not for party services, we would restore government to its pristine purity...."[11]

The concern expressed for the political independence of the nominees was well illustrated by a debate which occurred over the proposed candidacy of Henry T. Hinman for regent of the university. Hinman, a life-long Democrat, was nominated by Andrew T. McReynolds, also a former Democrat. The nomination was opposed by Liberal Republican George P. Sanford. The latter said that he "would have preferred another gentleman, solely on the grounds of past affiliations." After much debate, Andrew M. Fitch of Albion was suggested as a candidate. Since his political past was less rigidly ensconced in either of the major parties, he was perceived as an independent and Sanford supported his nomination. Fitch then joined Duane Doty as the two nominees for regents.[12] Another independent political figure, Isaac Christiancy, was tapped as the choice for the Michigan Supreme Court.[13]

The keynote speaker for the convention was the Honorable Austin Blair. He stressed that the charges made against the Republican Party during the 1872 campaign had been borne out by recent scandalous developments in the federal administration. He

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[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

urged again independent political action to correct such abuses. His speech was warmly received and it was clear that he enjoyed the great respect and approbation of those in attendance.[14]

The issues articulated by the Liberals during the abbreviated spring campaign were headed by the Credit Mobilier and Salary Grab scandals in the federal government. These were presented as evidence of pervasive greed, corruption, and wastefulness in the Republican administration and party.[15]

In the state a scandal of such dimensions was uncovered that it was tabbed the "Michigan Credit Mobilier." An investigation showed that former Land Commissioner Charles Edmunds, who had been acquitted of impeachment charges by the Michigan Senate in 1872, had indeed been blatantly guilty of at least some of the charges. He had been involved in a "general land steal" which resulted in the illegal sale of reserved lands to private speculators. State lands, federal lands, mineral lands, and lands reserved for railroads in Michigan were sold, with Edmund's authorization, to private interests at very low prices.[16] This discovery seemed to indict the Republican Party in Michigan of concealing corruption,

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[14] Ibid.

[15] Michigan Tribune, February 27, April 13, 1873; R. B. Robbins to Blair, March 14, 1873, Blair Papers.

[16] Detroit Free Press, April 11, 1873; Michigan Tribune, April 19, June 19, 1873.

for it appeared likely that the Republican-dominated Senate had whitewashed their tainted fellow party member by refusing to convict him on the impeachment charges.

Another state issue was a new "salary grab". This took the form of an act of the state legislature to increase the pay of its employees in violation of the Constitution.[17]

The election results in the state were not too encouraging for the Liberals. Their strongest candidate was Isaac Christiancy for the state supreme court. But to their chagrin he was also nominated by the Republicans because of his former Free Soil sympathies. Thus, there was really no contest here and Christiancy was elected without opposition. In the races for the two regencies of the university, the Republicans won handily. The special elections in the two judicial districts also resulted in Republican victories. In the newly created 20th judicial district, however, the Liberal candidate, Flavius J. Littlejohn, ran a strong race, and in his loss there was reason for hope.[18]

Despite the overall defeat in the spring elections in Michigan, the Reformers were not discouraged. They had a ready

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[17]Dilla, Politics of Michigan, p. 151; Laws of Michigan, 1873, pp. 2-4.

[18]Detroit Free Press, April 8, 1873; Dilla, Politics of Michigan, p. 149. Littlejohn received 3,799 votes and his Republican opponent J. W. Stone, accumulated 3,991. For complete election statistics see Michigan Almanac, 1874, pp. 56-57.

rationalization. It simply was that the voters of the state "under the party lash, with money used freely" might be expected to give a majority to the Republican ticket. They insisted, though, that the people of Michigan would not willingly "sanction the corruption of the party in power" and if freed from harassment, they would disavow that which, to their collective conscience, was reprehensible.[19]

The Liberal analysis of the election outcome in states other than Michigan was genuinely optimistic. In perusing the vote in states such as Ohio, Missouri, New York, and Connecticut, the sympathetic press concluded that "the drift of public sentiment is against the Republican Party. The people have shown their indignation against the Credimob robberies and whitewashings, against backpay thefts, and against executive interference in state governments." The reaction to the "sweeping Liberal victory" in Connecticut was absolutely euphoric. There, it was claimed, the main issue was "Creditmobilierism" and political corruption in general and the "victory for the right was emphatic."[20]

During the fall elections of 1873 in Michigan, Liberals took a further step toward the establishment of a completely new

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[19] Grand Rapids Democrat, April 15, 1873; see also Marshall Democratic Expounder, April 17, 1873; Michigan Tribune, April 10, 17, 1873.

[20] Ibid.; The Connecticut Liberal coalition was one of the most successful. See Ross, Liberal Republican, p. 219.

Reform party. A special congressional contest in the fifth district, necessitated by the death of the popular Republican incumbent Wilder D. Foster, highlighted the elections.[21]

On October 22, 1873, a convention met in Grand Rapids to select a Liberal candidate for the vacant seat. Such well-known Democratic Reformers as John C. Blanchard and Henry Fralick and equally illustrious Republican Liberals as A. B. Morse and Osmond Tower attended.[22]

Blanchard, who was beginning to emerge as one of the most sincere and effective Reformers of the period, requested the passage of a resolution officially designating the gathering, a "People's Convention." Specifically, the resolution stated that the "convention assembled, without reference to any and all past political organizations, declares itself to be a people's convention and as such seeks to nominate a suitable candidate for Congress without reference to such candidate's past political preferences or associations."[23] Thus all traditional party identities were to be discarded in favor of a new non-partisan label.

The platform of the "People's Convention" contained a number of provisions reminiscent of the Liberal Republican demands

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[21] Grand Rapids Democrat, October 29, 1873.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

of 1872. One called for a maintenance of the public credit and the payment of the public debt "as rapidly as the resources and best interests of the country" should demand. A second advocated a return to the "economical administration of government" and to the principles of honesty, capability, and accountability in the ranks of government. A third requested "wise and judicious legislation either by Congress or the states which would protect labor from the avaricious exactions and encroachments of capital, and secure among other things the cheap transportation of the products of industry from one section to another." A fourth was opposed to "special or class legislation and to donations of public lands to railroads or other corporations either by national or state governments. A fifth denounced the Credit Mobiliers and increases of salaries of public officials while in office.[24]

The participants in the "People's Convention" wasted little time in selecting a nominee. He was Charles C. Comstock, a furniture manufacturer and former mayor of Grand Rapids. In accepting the nomination, Comstock made clear that it had been "entirely unsought" by him but that he was willing to do the best he could to win for the people and reform.[25]

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[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid.; See also Representative Men of Michigan (Cincinnati: Western Biographical Publishing Company, 1878), 5th dst., pp. 19-20.

Following the balloting several key participants in the convention delivered speeches. A. B. Morse of Ionia railed against the many abuses in government and underlined the need for reform. John C. Blanchard referred in his oration to the Bible. He quoted the statement: "when the wicked bear rule the people mourn." He then proposed that "this clause is very applicable to present times." "We have nominated," he went on, "a most excellent candidate in whose honesty and integrity all have faith. Let us then go home and work, work, work, to elect him and there may be a prospect that the wicked will cease from troubling and the weary will be at rest."[26]

In the ensuing campaign the general themes of political independence, honesty, and frugality developed at the "People's Convention" were echoed by the Reform forces. The liberal Grand Rapids Daily Times said: "We now have two candidates in the field for congressman from our district. One is on the Republican ticket with its Credit Mobilier and Back Pay aroma still fresh. The other stands upon a platform ignoring Republicanism and Democracy, but adhering to honesty, integrity, and the wish to do the greatest good for the greatest number."[27]

The election in the fifth district was exceedingly close. In fact, no final statement of victory or defeat could be made for

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[26]Grand Rapids Democrat, October 29, 1873.

[27]Grand Rapids Daily Times, October 23, 1873.

a number of days after the voting until the last ballot from the most obscure burg in the district had been tabulated. In the end it became clear that Republican W. B. Williams had triumphed by an infinitesimal plurality of 68 votes.[28] This result was truly startling in light of the fact that the deceased Republican incumbent had carried the district just one year earlier by a majority of 8,606 votes.[29] The forces of reform were naturally not happy about the defeat, but they were ecstatic over the performance of their candidate who easily carried Kent and Muskegon counties, while acquitting himself well in Allegan, Ionia, and Ottawa.[30]

In reviewing the outcome of the elections of the fall of 1873 in Michigan and around the country the Liberal reaction was enthusiastic. "Taken altogether," a Liberal Republican journal claimed, "the elections resulted in general Republican disasters." It argued that the voting patterns in such widely disparate locations as Ohio, California, Iowa, Minnesota, New York, Virginia, Kansas, New Jersey, and Massachusetts constituted the "beginning of a great work, undertaken by the friends of reform." The

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[28]Grand Rapids Democrat, November 12, 1873.

[29]Michigan Manual, 1873, p. 260.

[30]Grand Rapids Democrat, November 12, 1873. In observing the small margin of the Republican victory in the fifth district one paper said, "the Grant men are astounded." Michigan Tribune, November 13, 1873.

victories were attributed to the hard work, acumen, and alacrity of "those who had charged themselves with correcting abuses in governmental administration." These people were exhorted to "continue their good work and remain unflagging in their determination to adhere to the cause of justice and good." If they did "the people of the country would surely have cause to rejoice in the result of future elections."[31]

In their attitudes Michigan Reformers were in alignment with the feelings of national Reform leaders. "G. W. Curtis and others interpreted Republican loses in the off-year elections of 1873 as a rebuke of Republican recklessness."[32]

During the time remaining in 1873 Michigan Liberals busied themselves with plans for the following year. George Murdock, a consistent advocate of independent reform, wrote Blair a number of letters putting forth his views on the possibilities of the cause in the new year. He called for the early organization of a new movement and speculated that the Liberals "headed by a good state central committee could get over 100,000 votes in the fall of 1874 and secure a reliable majority in the legislature."[33]

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[31]Grand Rapids Daily Times, November 7, 1873; Michigan Tribune, November 13, 1873.

[32]Ari Hoogenboom, Outlawing the Spoils (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1961), p. 126.

[33]George Murdock to Austin Blair, November 17, 1873. See also Murdock to Blair, October 20, 1873 and December 6, 1873, Blair Papers.

The precedents set in 1873 for independent political action in 1874 were significant. Perhaps the most meaningful of these was the expressed Liberal conviction that to achieve genuine reform it would be necessary to surrender past party affiliations and to give up traditional political labels as well. The unique types of organization experimented with in the spring and fall elections would serve as models for 1874. The events of 1873 constituted the "stepping stones toward the formation of a new party that would unite all the friends of reform and of a return to just government."[34] This new party would crystallize in 1874 and be called the National Reform Party.

The new year witnessed continued efforts for independent political reform at the local level. These were most noticeable in special elections held in February of 1874 to fill vacancies in the state legislature, and in the regular spring municipal and county elections in April.

The resignation of Philip H. Emerson, senator from the eighth legislative district, occasioned a special election in Calhoun County. By the end of January Liberal Reformers in the county had issued a call for a convention to choose a nominee to fill the vacated seat. The call invited to the February convention "all electors of Calhoun County who favor reform and economy in the

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[34]Kalamazoo Gazette, April 4, 1873; Michigan Tribune, December 4, 11, 1873.

administration of government and who are opposed to the continuance of the present corrupt and extravagant use of the public funds or the endorsement of vast monopolies by subsidy or land grants."[35]

The convention was attended by many well-known proponents of reform who were from the start in an innovative and independent mood. Those present included Samuel S. Lacey, a close friend and confidant of Austin Blair and a leading Liberal Republican, and Daville Hubbard of Marshall, an influential farmer and soon to be leader in the National Reform movement. The inventive spirit of the participants manifested itself in the adoption of a new party name--the "People's Reform Party." A resolution passed that in the upcoming election the Liberal slate be headed by the "People's Reform Ticket."[36]

The convention selected William F. Hewitt as the "people's candidate" for state senator. It then resolved that "without regard to party or prior political antecedents we present to the electors of this county our candidate William F. Hewitt for senator in the spirit of reform." It further resolved that its purpose was to "rescue the nation from the present corrupt and unfaithful partisans whose conduct and purposes are a serious menace to the free institutions established by the founders of the government."[37]

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[35] Marshall Democratic Expounder, January 29, 1874.

[36] Ibid., February 12, 1874; Michigan Tribune, February 19, 1874.

[37] Ibid.

In Berrien County a similar situation existed. A vacancy in the Michigan House of Representatives necessitated a special election. Former Democrats and Liberal Republicans joined together in a "People's Convention" to select a candidate. They picked Ethan A. Brown, who, despite his past Democratic ties, had become according to observer George Murdock, a firm advocate of independent reform.[38]

A third example of reform activism occurred in Hillsdale County. There a "People's Convention" nominated John P. Cook to fill a vacancy in the state senate, caused by the death of William Stoddard. Upon accepting the nomination, Cook stated he stood for "opposition to monopoly and subsidies."[39]

In the special elections, Hewitt, Brown and Cook were successful, and their victories had a buoyant effect on Liberal Reformers and the enemies of regular Republicanism.[40] Pro-reform organs crowed: "the first gun of the next campaign has been fired." "It has broken the ring," and "defeated the corruptionists." They

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[38]George Murdock to Austin Blair, February 17, 1874 and February 26, 1874, Blair Papers.

[39]Hillsdale Standard, February 17, 24, 1874.

[40]Hewitt defeated a Republican opponent in Calhoun County where the Grant majority had been 2010 in 1872 and John Cook was victorious in Hillsdale County, a "banner Grant County." There the President had garnered a majority of 3500 votes in 1872. Michigan Tribune, February 26, March 5, 1874.

maintained that the victories showed that a "reform party if fully organized can carry the state in next fall's election."[41] Thus it was being suggested that a reform party be created on a state-wide basis.

During the regular spring municipal and county elections the trend toward independent reform and the rejection of traditional party ties and identities continued. This was illustrated in the town of Marshall. There a majority of the old-guard Republicans who had been "among the most earnest, active, and influential members of that party since its organization," officially deserted.[42]

At the convention to select municipal candidates on a "People's Reform Ticket" the following resolutions were made:

> Whereas the status of the old political parties has become unsatisfactory to the great mass of taxpayers of the country, and in as much as they are fast becoming subservient to controlling rings and scheming politicians and,
>
> Whereas the great issues which created them are past and new issues involving new interests are fast demanding our attention and legislation and,
>
> Whereas a Republican form of government is a government of the people, a government by the people, and a government for the people therefore,
>
> It is resolved, that we hereby absolve our allegience to them and unite upon the great principle that all legislation should be to secure the greatest good for the greatest number and,
>
> Resolved, that as farmers our claims have been totally ignored by both political parties and we have had no part in government,

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[41] Marshall Democratic Expounder, February 26, 1874; Michigan Tribune, February 26, 1874; Niles Democrat, March 4, 1874.

[42] Marshall Democratic Expounder, March 12, 1874.

except to foot the bills and,

Now we demand the representation we are entitled to and we intend to have it and,

Resolved, that this movement shall be known and designated as the People's Reform Party.[43]

Among the usual concerns of Liberal Reformers a strong note of agrarian discontent was discernible in these declarations and that element was to be of vital significance in the National Reform effort in Michigan. The impact of the Grange was clearly beginning to manifest itself politically.[44]

The response of Reformers to the spring election results in the state revealed a growing confidence in the possibilities for the ultimate success of their cause. In Marshall, for example, the "People's Reform Ticket" was elected by a substantial majority and the "Grant-Chandler Ring" was "left without a representative." "The people," exclaimed one journal, "have condemned the Credit Mobilier, salary stealing, and venal character of the present administration."[45]

The outcome of the April elections around the country bolstered this confidence. "The elections," said an observer,

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[43] Ibid.

[44] Richard H. Barton, "The Agrarian Revolt in Michigan 1865-1900" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of History, Michigan State University, 1958), p. 122.

[45] Marshall Democratic Expounder, April 9, 1874. The victory of the "People's Reform" ticket in Battle Creek also reflected what the local Reform organization called an overwhelming defeat of "Grantism" and the "Ring." Michigan Tribune, April 9, 1874.

"prove that the power of the Republican Party is being broken by the forces of Reform and the people feel at liberty once more to think and act for themselves. A great revolution is underway and the general lesson taught by the April elections is that the Republican Party has received a premonitory stroke of the general paralysis that it will experience in November of 1874."[46]

The emergence of the state-wide National Reform Party in Michigan must be viewed as the culmination of an evolutionary process. Its origins can be traced back as far as 1870 to the famous "bolt" of the Republicans of the sixth district against the renomination of J. F. Driggs for Congress. The Liberal Republican drive of 1872 was a contributory factor. Important too, were the events of 1873. By 1874 conditions were virtually ideal for the formation of a new, reform-based party.

The roles of two men early in 1874 were of crucial importance to the organization of the National Reform Party in the state. They were George Murdock of Berrien and John C. Blanchard of Ionia.

Murdock was one of the earliest advocates of a state-wide new party movement. He urged this concept on Blair in a series of letters in 1873 and kept up his barrage during the early months of 1874. On January 6th he wrote requesting more support for a new

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[46]Niles Democrat, April 11, 1874.

party and conjectured that Foster Pratt, the Democratic leader, might be willing to accept the notion. In February he wrote again commenting favorably on the independent reform effort in the special legislative election in Berrien County. And by March he was taking credit for the idea of calling a mass convention to set up a new party.[47]

Despite Murdock's claims, it appears that John C. Blanchard, a well-liked and respected young lawyer from Ionia, was the principle architect of the National Reform Party in Michigan. On April 4, 1874, he wrote to Blair enclosing with his correspondence a circular which he had authored. It was signed by himself and five other leading citizens of Ionia. This document which was printed on January 4, 1874, constitutes the earliest description of the National Reform Party in the state. The circular entitled "Declaration of Principles of the National Reform Party" was introduced with the following words:

> We the undersigned citizens...of the state of Michigan desirous of perpetuating our free institutions...with equal rights and privileges to all, and feeling satisfied from the experience of the past few years that the tendency of the present administration is to corruption, centralization, and the ultimate overthrow of republican institutions...and feeling that the only remedy to avert such a state of things and to bring the country back to that purity of administration and respect for constitution and law that existed in the early days of the Republic is through the organization of a new political

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[47]George Murdock to Austin Blair, January 6, 1874, February 17, 1874 and March 23, 1874, Blair Papers.

> party, which we respectfully suggest be called the National Reform Party.... We hereby organize ourselves into such a new political organization and...cordially invite every true lover of his country, without regard to past political preferences, to join in such political action.[48]

The ensuing list of fourteen major principles commenced with a statement supportive of the Union and the federal system of government while reaffirming the belief in states rights and a strict construction of the Constitution. Other points called for the maintenance of the public credit and the payment of the public debt, the use of the tariff for revenue and a "just and equitable" system of taxation, territorial expansion, a liberal pension law for Union veterans and their families, a fair homestead law to "secure homes for all actual settlers of the public domain, civil service reform limiting terms in office for most elected officials, economy and merit as guiding principles in governmental administration, a uniform national currency and limitation on interest rates, protection of labor from capital, the control of railroads and a cessation of land grants to them, a prosecution of Credit Mobilier, and repeal of the Salary Act.[49]

In his letter accompanying the circular Blanchard spoke hopefully of the political potential of the proposed new party. "I

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[48]"Declaration of Principles" enclosed in a letter from John Blanchard to Austin Blair, April 4, 1874, ibid.

[49]Ibid.

have no doubt," he said, "that a good state ticket can carry the state in the next election, also the legislature. In which event I am pressing your name [Blair] for senator." He further indicated to Blair that he would call for an organizational convention in Lansing sometime in June.[50] Blanchard, however, was subsequently upstaged by a group of reform-minded state legislators.

Interest in a new party had been growing among anti-Republican and independent members of the legislature for quite a while. On March 23, 1874, George Murdock wrote to Blair about his correspondence with newly-elected State Representative Ethan A. Brown. The letter had informed Murdock that certain members of the legislature had met in caucus on the evening of March 18th to discuss the possibilities for calling a mass convention to set up a new party. "They decided," he said, "to wait till they got home to get up petitions simultaneously in the different counties they represented...."[51] They could thus test the grass-roots support for the idea. On May 11th Murdock received a letter from State Senator John P. Cook dealing further with the need for calling a state convention to launch the new party. Murdock related this to Blair and added: "I feel certain our chances would have been better if we had organized last February but lost ground can be made up

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[50]John Blanchard to Austin Blair, April 4, 1874, ibid.

[51]George Murdock to Austin Blair, March 23, 1874, ibid.

if we have a harmonious convention and a working state committee."[52] Clearly, then, the interested legislators were about to make a move.

That move came with the selection of a committee by the opposition members of the legislature to write and issue a call. This legislative committee was comprised of State Senators John P. Cook of Hillsdale and Thomas S. Cobb of Kalamazoo and Representative Ethan A. Brown of Berrien.[53] The call came on May 22nd for a "mass state convention" in Lansing, on August 6, 1874, "to secure the organization of a party on the basis of live issues, and for the restoration of purity and statesmanship to the high places of our state and national government." The new party was to be founded upon and dedicated to "liberty, union, purity in office, and reform in the administration of government." The need for an independent party resulted from the "inability and unwillingness of all existing parties" to do anything about the incompetency and corruption in government which "was by themselves created."[54]

This call was picked up and published in many of the state's newspapers. It was naturally allotted more attention in those which had reform leanings. Such organs attempted to impart a sense of national scope to the new party by focusing on the reaction of Liberals in other states to the Michigan call. An

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[52]George Murdock to Austin Blair, May 11, 1874, ibid.

[53]Marshall Democratic Expounder, May 28, 1874.

[54]Grand Rapids Democrat, May 27, 1874; Michigan Tribune, June 4, 1874.

article from the Milwaukee News, known as the "leading reform journal of Wisconsin," was published in Michigan. It contended that the Reformers of Michigan would "lead the people of the state out of the corrupt and degenerate Republican organization into the gathering army of Reformers in the great Northwest." It further argued that the movement would "prevent the return of drunken Zach Chandler to the United States Senate."[55] The Michigan reform press made note of independent reform movements which were emerging in other states such as Wisconsin, Iowa, California, Oregon, Kansas, and Minnesota.[56]

The much heralded Reform convention assembled in the senate chambers at the state capitol in Lansing on August 6, 1874. Approximately one hundred delegates were present. Among the Reformers attending were William F. Hewitt, Henry Chamberlain, D. B. Harrington, George W. Underwood, W. W. Woolnough, Thomas S. Cobb, George H. Murdock, John C. Blanchard, C. C. Comstock, Jerome W. Turner, and Randolph Strickland. The Honorable John P. Cook called the meeting to order and after the selection of committees on resolutions and permanent organization Austin Blair delivered a keynote address.[57]

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[55]Grand Rapids Democrat, June 3, 1874; Michigan Tribune, June 11, 1874.

[56]Ibid.

[57]Detroit Evening News, August 6, 1874; Lansing Journal, August 13, 1874; Michigan Tribune, August 13, 1874.

The report of the resolutions committee began by emphasizing the impossibility of reforming the existing parties from within. It called for independent action and appealed for a united effort by all regardless of past political views. It went on to support the provision of a sound currency and a return to hard money, the maintenance of the rights of states to "order and control their own domestic concerns," the single term principle for the presidency, and the exorcism of "needless officeholders, contractors, and corrupt rings."[58]

In a special anti-monopolistic appeal to the farmer, one resolution proposed that "the legislature had the right to regulate the fares and freight rates on railroads to protect the public against unfair charges." Also it held that the "legislature must tax railroads equally with other property for the support of government." Finally, it denounced the provision of free railroad passes for members of the state legislature, state officers, and judges. This practice was "inimical to the interests of the laboring and producing classes."[59]

The resolutions also criticized the operations of the state treasury. In particular they attacked the practice of maintaining an unwarranted and unreasonably high surplus of funds which were

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[58] Ibid.; Kalamazoo Gazette, August 14, 1874; Grand Rapids Democrat, August 12, 1874.

[59] Ibid.

stored in certain undisclosed and privileged "pet banks." The state treasury, they admonished, must diminish the large balance by spending it in such a way as to "greatly reduce the people's taxes." Further it must keep records of the accounts of public funds "open to public inspection." And the state treasurer must provide the legislature with information on the location and safety of public monies.[60]

The independent Detroit Evening News summed up the platform of the Lansing convention in a way which captured the spirit of the new party. "The platform," it said, "recognizes the fact that there is a good deal of honesty and patriotism laying [sic] around loose in both the existing parties, but their acts in the past show that reform cannot be obtained by acting with either."[61]

Not all the participants in the Lansing convention were entirely enamored of the platform. Specifically, there were men in the delegation from Kent County who were disillusioned with the demand for hard money. This "looked more to contraction than to the expansion of the currency" and as a result the Kent County delegates, led by C. C. Comstock, withdrew in a body.[62] That county was to become a hotbed of Greenback agitation just two years hence.

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[60] Ibid.

[61] Detroit Evening News, August 7, 1874.

[62] Grand Rapids Democrat, August 12, 1874; Lansing Journal, August 13, 1874; Kalamazoo Gazette, August 14, 1874.

One of the last and most important acts of the convention was the appointment of a state central committee for the National Reform Party. The members were J. P. Cook--chairman, Eugene Pringle, James S. Upton, Jerome Turner, and George Murdock. This group was to coordinate the activities of the new party in the upcoming campaign. In its first official act the committee issued a call for a state nominating convention to be held in the city of Jackson on September 9, 1874.[63]

Shortly after the Lansing meeting, the central committee began to supervise the setting up of National Reform committees in the various counties and the calling of local conventions to select delegates to the state convention. It provided that each representative district in the state legislature could send two voting delegates to Jackson.[64]

The delegates thus designated gathered at Bronson's Hall in Jackson just after 11 o'clock on the morning of September 9, 1874. The convention was called to order by John P. Cook, who moved to appoint temporary officers. They were Andrew T. McReynolds as chairman and Albert A. Dorrance as secretary. Several committees were next established. They included many familiar names such as

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[63] Ibid.

[64] Kalamazoo Gazette, August 28, 1874.

Eugene Pringle, John H. Richardson, F. M. Holloway, F. A. Baker, and William F. Hewitt.[65]

The commencement of the afternoon session witnessed the announcement of official delegates and permanent officers. McReynolds remained as chairman of the convention and Dorrance as the secretary.[66]

Chairman McReynolds delivered a speech of more than an hour's duration. He spoke of the necessity of cooperation between Liberal Republicans and Democrats in order to combat the corruption and evils of entrenched Republican power in the nation and state. He dwelled on the reprehensible actions of the central government including the Salary Grab Act. In speaking of the currency issue he was vague. He was "neither in favor of inflation nor in favor of contraction...."[67] After McReynold's oration the convention recessed to allow the committee on resolutions to complete its work.[68]

During the recess John Blanchard of Ionia addressed those remaining in the hall. He spoke briefly of the need for reform at all levels of government. He offered a series of suggestions which

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[65]Ibid., September 11, 1874; Detroit Evening News, September 9, 1874; Michigan Tribune, September 17, 1874; Detroit Free Press, September 10, 1874.

[66]Ibid.

[67]Detroit Free Press, September 10, 1874; Michigan Tribune, September 17, 1874; Kalamazoo Gazette, September 11, 1874.

[68]Ibid.

he hoped would be incorporated in the as yet uncompleted platform. Among these were a single term limitation for president, two terms for senators and representatives in Congress, and the election of postmasters in all cities of less than 25,000 inhabitants.[69]

Upon reassembling the convention heard the report of the committee on resolutions. It charged that reform was infeasible through either of the existing political parties and that a new party was necessary. It was to be organized as the National Reform Party and was to work for the following: a reduction in the number, power, and salaries of the offices of the national government; safeguards that office-holders would be selected on ability and not subject to undue political pressures; more elective offices and a speedy turn to sound currency and free banking. After some debate the convention adopted the report and temporarily adjourned.[70]

The main order of business at the evening session was the election of candidates for the state ticket. In the balloting for governor, Henry Chamberlain of Berrien County won out over John P. Cook of Hillsdale. Other top selections on the ticket were Jerome W. Turner of Owosso, chosen for lieutenant governor, William F. Hewitt of Marshall for state treasurer, Frederick M. Holloway of Hillsdale for auditor general, Chauncey W. Green of Farmington for

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[69] Ibid.

[70] Ibid.

commissioner of the state land office, Andrew T. McReynolds of Muskegon for attorney general, George H. House of Lansing for secretary of state, and Duane Doty of Detroit for superintendent of public instruction.[71]

Next, the Reformers selected a state central committee with Fred Baker of Detroit as chairman and John C. Blanchard of Ionia as secretary. Other members included W. W. Woolnough of Battle Creek, George H. Murdock of Berrien, and George W. Underwood of Hillsdale. The committee was charged with filling any vacancies which might appear on the state ticket and with the "speedy calling" of congressional conventions.[72]

At the close of the National Reform convention, Austin Blair delivered an address. He lauded the state ticket and claimed that it was comprised of men of "honesty and brains" and that such men would win the support of the people. He took Chandler and the "Detroit Ring" to task and fired a broadside at Grant and the Salary Grab. He stressed that the campaign would be a crucial one and would result in a heavy turn-out of voters. If the Reformers would only exercise judgment in making local and legislative nominations, they would achieve a great victory in the fall.[73]

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[71] Ibid.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Ibid.

The Democrats did not fuse with the Liberal Reformers as they had in 1872. They believed that they could preserve their separate identity and through partial cooperation with the Reformers carry the elections. Some of the Democratic regulars were alienated from the Liberals by 1874. The Michigan Argus, which at one point in 1872 had been very supportive of the Reform movement, explained this alienation. It claimed that the Democrats were tired of "playing second fiddle to the Reformers." Further it blamed the disastrous defeat of 1872 on the Liberals and said that that alone "ought to satisfy all that the Democracy cannot be transferred bodily to a new organization."[74]

The Democrats held their convention in Kalamazoo on September 10, 1874. In making up their ticket they adopted four of the National Reform candidates. They accepted Henry Chamberlain for governor, George H. House for secretary of state, Chauncey W. Green for commissioner of the state land office, and Duane Doty for member of the state board of education. For the other posts they substituted men of their own choosing.[75]

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[74]Michigan Argus, quoted in Lansing State Republican, July 10, 1874.

[75]Dilla, Politics of Michigan, p. 158; Michigan Tribune, September 17, 1874. Henry Chamberlain who headed both the Democratic and National Reform state tickets in 1874 was very concerned with honesty and morality. He helped to organize the Three Oaks Anti-Swearing Society. See circular of November 4, 1875 in the Chamberlain Papers, Historical Collections, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan.

The National Reformers and Democrats came to share a fifth candidate by a rather extraordinary set of circumstances. Several days after the Reform convention Andrew T. McReynolds, who had been designated as the nominee for attorney general, wrote a letter to the National Reform State Central Committee declining the nomination tendered to him at the convention. He claimed that he was prompted by a concern for a united front and victory in the upcoming election. He expressed the hope that the Democratic choice would be substituted for himself on the Reform ticket. In fact, he suggested that the entire National Reform ticked should withdraw in favor of the Democratic one. He cited the case of New York where a reform organization had issued a platform and statement of principles but had put no nominee in the field to avoid jeopardizing the Democracy's chances of defeating the Republicans.[76]

This action by McReynolds should not really have surprised the Reformers if they had listened closely to his speech at their convention. In that talk he spoke in terms of Democrats and Liberal Republicans cooperating for victory against the common enemy. He did not emphasize at all the concept of a new party completely removed from the old ones. This was odd since he was the chairman of a convention which was quintessentially concerned with a new and independent reform movement.[77]

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[76]Grand Rapids Democrat, September 16, 1874; Michigan Tribune, September 24, 1874.

[77]Detroit Free Press, September 10, 1874.

At any rate, the withdrawal of McReynolds triggered a flurry of consultations among Reform leaders. The most notable of these was between F. A. Baker, chairman of the state central committee, and Charles S. May, long-time spokesman for reform from Kalamazoo. Baker, of Detroit, wrote a number of letters to May trying to persuade him to accept the nomination for attorney general. He argued that May's name would strengthen the ticket and that he "would make a better candidate for the post than those offered by either of the other parties." To allay May's concerns about preserving his image as an objective and selfless reformer, Baker wrote: "I do not think your candidacy would hurt you, the people are perfectly aware of the fact that you did not seek the nomination and do not covet the office."[78]

The problem of the vacancy was not easily solved. At first, May declined the offer of Baker but continued to give his hearty support for the National Reform Movement. The predilection of the Reform Central Committee was then to endorse the Democratic nominee for attorney general, M. V. Montgomery. Finally May consented to the use of his name on the Reform ticket but indicated his reluctance to engage in active campaigning for his own election.[79] Ultimately the two parties came to share five candidates. They were

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[78]F. A. Baker to Charles S. May, September 16, 1874 and September 19, 1874, May Papers.

[79]Michigan Tribune, September 24, October 15, 1874.

Chamberlain, House, Green, Doty and J. M. Sterling. The latter, the Democratic nominee for state treasurer, was embraced by the National Reformers when their man, W. F. Hewitt, indicated a desire to run for a county office.[80]

Thus there was only a quasi-fusion between the Democrats and the National Reformers in 1874. Some of the candidates were shared but others were not and the two parties "maintained throughout the campaign a separate organization."[81]

In the selection of congressional candidates this pattern generally held true. Democrats and National Reformers held separate conventions and did not, for the most part, nominate through joint conference. There was some sharing of candidates as on the state tickets. Those men selected by both parties included Alpheus Williams representing the first district, Fidus Livermore for the third district, Allan Potter for the fourth district, and Mark Wilber for the fifth district.[82]

In the latter district there occurred a throwback to the tactics of 1872. The Democrats and National Reformers met simultaneously in Grand Rapids and employed a joint conference committee

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[80] Lansing Journal, October 8, 1874; Michigan Tribune, October 8, 1874.

[81] Dilla, Politics of Michigan, p. 159.

[82] "Michigan," Appleton's Annual Cyclopedia, XIV (1874), p. 557.

to arrive at the selection of Wilber.[83] This development though, was the exception rather than the rule in 1874.

Separate organizations were used at the legislative and county levels as well. In most districts the Democratic and National Reform labels were kept intact but there was some sharing of candidates. However, there were a few cases where fusion was complete under the Reform banner.[84]

During the campaign the National Reformers kept up a constant attack against the Grant regime which they claimed was culpable for the numerous scandals which had transpired between 1872 and 1874. In addition to Credit Mobilier and the Salary Grab, there were the "Sanborn Contracts," the "Washington Ring" steal of "Boss Shepard" and other odious affairs.[85] Grant was labeled by the Reformers as "unfit for office." They charged that "by his selection of advisors and confidants, by his neglect of public duties and his indifference to public wrongs, by his distribution and use of the public patronage" he had "done more to demoralize the public service than any five presidents who had preceeded him." The "revolting" possibility that he might run for a third term seemed feasible since "he had not denied it." Reformers

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[83] Saginaw Daily Courier, September 20, 1874.

[84] Michigan Tribune, September 17, 1874. An example of complete fusion was found in Calhoun County.

[85] Ibid., October 29, 1874.

therefore renewed their demand for the limitation of the presidency to a single term as part of an overall reform of the civil service. Grant, they said, "had throttled civil service reform in its cradle, as King Richard had smothered the princes in the tower."[86]

Radical Reconstruction in the South persisted as an issue in 1874. The Reformers detested what they termed the "federal tyranny" in Louisiana, where William P. Kellogg was "backed up by federal bayonets." They generally portrayed the southern governments as under the thumb of venal, avaricious carpetbaggers who, with their ignorant black partners, were totally incompetent to govern and were consumed with plundering. The civil rights of the southern whites, they said, were being completely abridged under the Radical Reconstruction program. The Reformers also slashed at the ongoing use of the "bloody shirt" tactic by the Republicans against their political opponents, North and South.[87]

In addressing themselves to state issues the National Reformers kept up a constant barrage against Chandler and his corrupting influence on Michigan politics. Chandler men in state government were said to be tyrannical and extravagant and prone to enriching themselves at the public expense. Critical scrutiny of the operations of the state treasury led to the conclusion that

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[86]May's speech, October 15, 1874, Speeches of the Stump. See also Michigan Tribune, September 24, October 29, 1874.

[87]Ibid.

the people of the state were being swindled and over-taxed to support the state treasurer and certain privileged bankers in style. Austin Blair repeatedly called for an end to the "plunder of the public treasury."[88]

The subjects of taxation and the related preferential treatment of railroads were given much attention by the Reformers. They complained that taxes for the ordinary citizen were too high and that they could be reduced by spending some of the surplus funds in the treasury and halting the exemption of railroad property for tax purposes. They further contended that the distribution of free railroad passes to state legislators, judges, and other officials must cease. The railroad monopoly with the complicity of government was detrimental to the people and must, they claimed, be controlled.[89]

The thorough corruption of the G.O.P both in the nation and state was a central campaign issue. The party, Reformers charged, had "fallen from its high purpose, the moral strength and purity were gone and the great animating force which had held it together was seen no more for with the victory had come the spoils, plunder, and easy virtue." The party was "full of maladministration

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[88]Saginaw Daily Courier, July 7, 1874. See also Michigan Tribune, October 15, 1874.

[89]Lansing State Republican, June 12, 1874; Michigan Tribune, June 18, 1874.

and corruption and was the prey of rings and upholders of monopolies." It could not, therefore, "be reformed from within." It was "too full of corruption and too completely in the hands of the worst men in it." These men "controlled the caucuses every time" so the honest Republicans had "no remedy except to bolt the nominations and go outside the party."[90] Another related issue subjected to criticism was the Republican practice of assessing its state office holders a certain percentage of their salaries to finance campaigns.[91]

Actually the National Reformers argued that both the major parties had outlived their usefulness. They were self-serving and consumed with outmoded and dead issues. The time had come to put the past behind. "Our business," said C. S. May, "is not to perpetuate and keep alive the political divisions and animosities of the days which are gone but to meet like men the issues and questions of the present times."[92]

Although the issues of the currency and the tariff were of great interest to the people, the Reformers assumed a rather ambiguous stance on both. Officially they called for a return to specie and seemed to support a restriction of the currency. But their stand on resumption was tempered with a rather vague thought

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[90]May's speech, October 15, 1874, Speeches of the Stump.

[91]Dilla, Politics of Michigan, p. 167.

[92]May's speech, October 15, 1874, Speeches of the Stump. See also Michigan Tribune, June 4, 1874.

that it should be done only at a pace that was consistent with the best interests and financial prosperity of the country.[93] The tariff, they held, was to be "used for revenue."[94] The Reformers were apparently afraid of alienating the pro-Granger element by taking too strong a position on economic policies that were contrary to the achievement of an expanded and inflated currency.[95] There was no elaboration on the tariff simply because the Grangers themselves could not definitively agree upon it and, therefore, the least specific stand would offend the fewest.[96] These same Reformers did not hesitate, though, to take the Republican administration to task for its fiscal vascillations and wastefulness, which they claimed had exacerbated the depression underway since 1873.[97]

As in 1872, the Reformers aimed a special appeal at the farmers and urban workers. These two groups were especially hard hit by the ongoing depression. "In this situation it was natural

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[93]Dilla, Politics of Michigan, p. 158; Michigan Tribune, August 13, September 24, 1874.

[94]Dilla, Politics of Michigan, p. 158.

[95]Ibid., See also Michigan Farmer, July 14, 1874.

[96]Solon Justus Buck, The Granger Movement (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1933), p. 155. Some Michigan farmers apparently supported the tariff on lumber, salt, wool and grain. See Michigan Farmer, June 23, 1874.

[97]May's speech, October 15, 1874, Speeches of the Stump; Michigan Tribune, October 2, 1873.

for Reform leaders to attempt a coalition between the two discontented producing classes...."[98] The general ploy was to blame the depression and economic inequities on monopolies constructed and perpetuated by the "privileged classes" with the acquiescence of the Republican-controlled government.[99]

In 1874 the National Reformers did not direct any specific appeals to the Germans or other ethnic groups as the Liberals had done two years previously. Because this was not a presidential contest it was more difficult to make a meaningful issue out of Henry Wilson's "Know-Nothing" past or the Grant administration's support of France in the Franco-Prussian War. An indirect appeal was made to the Germans, however, by pointing out the support of the Republican dominated state government for prohibition which was unpopular in the German community.[100]

The National Reformers were totally apathetic toward potential black voters. There is virtually no mention made of black people in the Reform campaign rhetoric. One can only speculate that the Reformers concluded that the black vote would go automatically to the Republicans and that any vigorous entreaty to

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[98]Richard M. Doolen, "The National Greenback Party in Michigan Politics," Michigan History, XLVII (1963), p. 163.

[99]Kalamazoo Gazette, August 14, 1874.

[100]Dilla, Politics of Michigan, p. 173; Michigan Tribune, March 25, 1874. The prohibition issue is examined in Floyd Streeter, "History of Prohibition Legislation in Michigan," Michigan History, II (1918), pp. 289-308.

blacks might serve only to antagonize whites who otherwise would support the third party.

In many ways the campaign in Michigan was less emotional than that of 1872. Personalities did not dominate as they had previously. Instead, Reformers appealed to the voter's reason, his integrity, his courage, and his independence. They asked him to follow the dictates of his conscience in transcending political and party considerations to cast his ballot for honesty, frugality, and "the good of the country." "Be brave, be manly, and true to your convictions," they exhorted, "it will not hurt you to be in a third party for a little while or to vote for principle without hope of immediate success. That is what the grand old pioneers of anti-slavery did in this country...."[101]

There was less "hoopla" and campaign gimmickry employed in this election as compared to the contest of 1872. This was to be expected since 1874 was an "off-year" election. There were fewer mass rallies and grand gatherings but some things remained. The "bombshell," for instance, was used frequently by Reformers in turning up new scandals in state government like that related to the operations of the state treasury. The presentation of the Reform movement as one of national scope was used again. Reform publications concentrated on the coverage of independent reform

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[101]May's speech, October 14, 1874, Speeches of the Stump. See also Michigan Tribune, June 11, July 23, 1874.

efforts in various states and linked them directly to what was going on in Michigan. The idea of a "national revolution" against corruption was used to generate interest in and support of reform in the state.[102]

The results of the fall election of 1874 constituted a landslide victory for the opponents of the Republican Party. Nationally, it was clear that "the bloody shirt could no longer control the outcome of an election." The Republicans lost control of the House of Representatives in their "first political defeat in a national election since the Civil War."[103] Across the country "many state offices came again into Democratic control and the Liberal influence, especially in the West, either in close alliance with the Democrats or in independent movements, was an important factor."[104] The Grand Rapids Daily Times exclaimed that the results of the elections "must be gratifying to the true friends of reform and good government everywhere. The administration has been rebuked in unmistakable language and they must listen to the demand for change by the people from Massachusetts to California."[105]

Michigan was very much in step with the rest of the nation in 1874. In the gubernatorial race the Republican incumbent John

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[102]Niles Democrat, April 4, 1874.

[103]Kenneth M. Stampp, The Era of Reconstruction, 1865-1871 (New York: Random House, 1965), p. 209.

[104]Ross, Liberal Republican, p. 210.

[105]Grand Rapids Daily Times, November 4, 1874.

Bagley just squeezed by the Democratic and National Reform candidate Henry Chamberlain with a total vote of 111,519 to 105,550.[106] The Republican gubernatorial vote had thus plummeted from over sixty-one per cent of the total ballots cast in 1872 to just over fifty per cent in 1874.[107] Chamberlain carried many counties, including Berrien, Clinton, Ingham, Ionia, Jackson, Kent, Lenawee, Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, Saginaw, St. Clair, Washtenaw, and Wayne. Further, he lost the counties of Kalamazoo, Muskegon and St. Joseph by a combined margin of only 190 votes.[108]

In the congressional races the Democratic and Reform candidates won in the first, fourth, and sixth districts. This was especially impressive in the latter two districts which had gone Republican by majorities of 5,266 and 5,492 votes respectively in 1872.[109] The Republicans were victorious in the other six districts but with substantially diminished majorities contrasted with two years before. In fact, in those districts where the G.O.P.

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[106] Michigan Manual, 1875, p. 233; Michigan Almanac, 1875, p. 66.

[107] Dilla, Politics of Michigan, p. 171.

[108] Michigan Manual, 1875, pp. 231-233.

[109] Ibid., pp. 236-238.

triumphed the pluralities were less than 1,600 votes in all but the ninth district.[110]

The state legislature was drastically altered by the election. Prior to 1874 it had been utterly dominated by the Republicans. After the contest that party clung to a combined majority in both houses of only ten. The new Senate was comprised of fourteen Democratic and Reform members and only eighteen Republicans. In the House there were forty-seven Democratic and Reform seats to just fifty-three for the Republicans.[111]

The reaction of Michigan Reformers to the outcome of the state election was exuberant. They called the results "grand and glorious" and suggested that "the power and dominion of ring rule war broken and that Grant-Chandlerism had received its fatal blow."[112]

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[110] Ibid., pp. 235-240; see also Michigan Almanac, 1875, p. 67. The 1874 election also witnessed the overwhelming defeat of the new proposed state constitution and the womens' suffrage amendment. These are discussed in D. C. Shilling "Constitution making since 1850," Michigan History, XVIII (1934), pp. 33-47 and in Karolena Fox, "The Movement for Equal Suffrage in Michigan," Michigan History, II (1918), pp. 90-109. The Reformers attitudes reflected those of the majority of voters and they generally considered the constitution and womens' suffrage "dead issues." Michigan Tribune, August 13, 1874.

[111] "Michigan," Appleton's Annual Cyclopedia, XIV (1874), p. 557; Michigan Almanac, 1875, pp. 32-33.

[112] Marshall Democratic Expounder, November 5, 1874; Michigan Tribune, November 4, 1874. In his diary, John A. Parkhurst wrote "good news from the elections. Republicanism is everywhere defunct." Parkhurst Diary, November 4, 1874, in the Parkhurst Papers, Historical Collections, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan.

The reasons for the great successes recorded against the long dominant Republican Party in the fall of 1874 were many. First, there was the financial panic which gripped the nation and struck severely at the producing classes. Second, there was "the continuing exposure of scandals which reached into Grant's official family...."[113] Third, there was the "Crime of 1873" which in the view of farmers in depressed agricultural states had "passed Congress through the corrupt influence of a cabal of powerful government bondholders who conspired with treasury officials and influential congressmen."[114] Fourth, there was division within the Republican Party over matters related to Reconstruction, the economy, and political tyranny.[115]

In Michigan these factors were augmented by some other state-related considerations. The Republican Party in the state "was more odious to the Granger element than was the Democracy, while its prohibition sympathies alienated the German element and liquor interests." In addition, "the administration of state finances by Treasurer Victory P. Collier elicited harsh criticism and the large surpluses with continued taxation embittered many taxpayers who would otherwise have supported the Republican Party."[116]

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[113]Roy F. Nichols, The Stakes of Power 1845-1877 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1961), p. 216.

[114]Allen Weinstein, Prelude to Populism: Origins of the Silver Issue 1867-1878 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), p. 8.

[115]Nichols, Power, p. 217.

[116]Dilla, Politics of Michigan, p. 173.

The most successful candidates were endorsed by both the Reformers and Democrats and were well-known political figures. This was true in other states as well as Michigan. There were, however, "hotbeds" of independent reform sentiment in the state where lesser-known candidates with no official Democratic support received a substantial segment of the vote. A good example was the case of Levi Sparks, candidate for lieutenant governor on the National Reform ticket. Known mainly to farmers, he received a strong vote in the "four old southern agricultural counties of Branch, Eaton, Calhoun and Hillsdale."[117]

The overall impact of the National Reform effort was significant. The success of the Democrats can be explained in large measure by their adoption of the types of reform issues which were introduced by the National Reformers. Also, the fact that the newly-elected Democratic and Reform members of the legislature along with some independent Republicans were so thoroughly committed to reform boded ill for the continuation of Zachariah Chandler as senator from Michigan with his re-election attempt coming up in 1875. Finally, the National Reform effort was significant because it perpetuated the tradition of independent voting which had been revived by the Liberal Republican movement of 1872. That tradition has subsequently proven to be a vital and stimulating factor in our political history.

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[117]Barton, "Agrarian Revolt," p. 125.

CHAPTER IV

THE REFORM TIDE CRESTS, THEN EBBS

The Reform effort in Michigan reached its apogee in 1875 and then subsided in 1876. In what one observer called "the most thrilling political incident" of the 1870s, a coalition of Reformers and Democrats unseated Chandler from his "high and mighty estate in Michigan" in January of 1875.[1] Thereafter, the former Liberal Republicans and National Reformers actively pursued the debate on such issues as civil service reform and the currency but had difficulty maintaining an independent movement. By the presidential election of 1876 most of them had affiliated with either the Democratic or Greenback Parties.

Zachariah Chandler had long been criticized by Reformers, Democrats, and many regular Republicans for his personal and public habits. He was depicted as a drunken, foulmouthed blasphemer who was totally devoid of moral scruples and integrity. He was further charged with political tyranny in the domination and manipulation of the Michigan Republican Party for his own selfish ends.

Of course some of the opposition to Chandler was based in political opportunism but his defeat had much more to do with

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[1]Haigh, "Lansing in the 70s," p. 109.

considerations of reform, integrity, and the preservation of the democratic process. Many of those men who provided the crucial margin of victory opposed the Senator on these latter grounds. In October of 1874 the reform-minded Lansing Journal published an editorial which set the tone for the fall political campaign and for the January struggle against entrenched "Chandlerism." It focused on moral power in politics and stated that "chicanery and fraud may for a time succeed in politics but in the long run there, as elsewhere, honesty is the best policy...[and] moral power alone is omnipotent."[2]

The growing opposition toward Chandler received forceful expression after the fall elections of 1874. Because the "Democrats and Liberals had achieved the grand work of obliterating the 60,000 vote Republican majority in the state while electing four members to Congress and nearly half of the legislature," it appeared that "the defeat of Zach Chandler for the United States Senate" was near at hand. The question began to crop up in anti-Republican journals of "who should succeed Senator Chandler?"[3]

Signs of discontent with Chandler and his tactics within the ranks of the Republican Party were increasingly evident. The organ most concerned with voicing Republican opposition to the

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[2]Lansing Journal, October 8, 1874.

[3]Ibid., November 5, 1874; Detroit Free Press, November 6, 1874; Michigan Tribune, November 26, 1874.

Senator was the Detroit Advertiser and Tribune. In explaining the Republican setbacks in the fall election the paper claimed that "among the most potent agencies in producing our defeat has been the discontent excited by obnoxious systems of party management and the distrust aroused by the prominence gained in Republican councils by men representing the lower and not the better tendencies of politics." The Republicans of Michigan, it said, "must heed and profit" by that fact and reject the effort of Chandler for another senatorial term.[4]

What troubled an increasing number of Republicans most was the phenomenon of "senatorial rule" as manifested in the arbitrary hegemony of Chandler in the Michigan party. To them, "Mr. Chandler personified an utterly indefensible system of political management" characterized by the "filling of federal offices with active and devoted retainers bound to him by selfish ties." He "dictated nominations for elective positions" by manipulation through his agents and "proscribed public men who were not pliant to his will." He used his patronage powers to "bargain for the support of local politicians." And, most insidiously, he "set up fidelity to himself as the standard of Republican orthodoxy." In these many ways Chandler "identified himself with that utterly demoralizing style of politics which makes the spoils its chief weapon and debauches the

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[4]Detroit Advertiser and Tribune, November 10, 1874.

independence and integrity of men in position, which paralyzes the will of the individual voter and which substitutes a tyranical and prescriptive regency for freedom of party action."[5]

With such disapprobation expanding, speculation over a possible successor to Chandler was rampant. The correspondence of legislators and politicians revealed this interest. State Senator John N. Mellen wrote to Blair asking what support the former governor might have among the newly elected members of the state legislature for the position of United States Senator. "Knowing that there is a division among the Republicans on Mr. Chandler," he said, "I feel that the Democrats may unite with the anti-Chandler men on someone and I frequently hear your name mentioned...."[6]

This type of hypothesizing was also apparent in the editorial pages of the anti-Chandler press. One of the early suggestions offered was that a state supreme court justice might make a suitable compromise candidate. The three most frequently mentioned were Thomas M. Cooley, James V. Campbell, and Isaac P. Christiancy.[7] The Detroit Evening News claimed, however, that the most logical candidate to succeed Chandler would be "a third party man" most likely Charles S. May or Austin Blair. "The former," it

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[5]Ibid. See also Michigan Tribune, March 5, 1874.

[6]John N. Mellen to Austin Blair, December 5, 1874, Blair Papers. See also George Fish to Blair, January 11, 1875 and M. D. Ward to Blair, January 11, 1875, ibid.

[7]Dilla, Politics of Michigan, p. 174.

said, "would undoubtedly be an available man to unite on, one possessing the requisite ability and prominence while being eminently free from any party ties."[8] There thus seemed to be at least a partial consensus that someone connected with the political Reform movement in the state would replace Chandler in the Senate.

The Granger interests of Michigan began to involve themselves by supporting Webster Childs as their choice for senator. Childs in their estimation would provide a distinct and felicitous departure from Chandler's outspoken opposition to currency expansion and paper money.[9]

The employment of the caucus to virtually dictate the nominee for the senatorial seat was bitterly denounced by the anti-Chandler forces. The Detroit Advertiser and Tribune maintained that this practice was a "perversion of the Constitution which required the election of senators by a free vote of the state legislatures." The "dictation of the caucus was held under the pressure of an enormous lobby organized in the interest of an active post-seeker."[10] The Lansing Journal proposed that "old Zach Chandler is about to commit political rape upon the State of Michigan and force her to submit to his low desires for the senatorship." Lansing, it

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[8]Detroit Evening News, January 8, 1874. For a similar view, see Michigan Tribune, December 3, 10, 1874.

[9]Dilla, Politics of Michigan, p. 175; Michigan Tribune, November 26, December 10, 1874.

[10]Detroit Advertiser and Tribune, January 7, 1875.

said, "will be overrun with a violent, ravenous mob of frenzied lobbyists...and all opposition will be browbeaten and howled down by the fierce crowd of Chandlerian janizaries." The question was posed: "shall political influence and money power force him [Chandler] upon a protesting and nauseated constituency?"[11] The Grand Rapids Daily News concurred in this sentiment when it argued that increasing numbers of Republicans were exhibiting an "aversion to the caucus gag."[12]

The Republican senatorial caucus was held in Lansing on Thursday evening, January 7, 1875. The swarms of Chandler lobbyists had been diligently at work the previous few days bringing every possible Republican into the fold. By the day of decision only fifty-seven men had signed the call for the caucus. Two more who were absent had their names appended retroactively. Chandler was easily victorious in the caucus vote as he received fifty-two of the fifty-seven votes cast. The other five were scattered between Webster Childs, John Bagley, and James Campbell. But what appalled the Chandlerites most was the bolting of the caucus completely by twelve Republicans.[13]

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[11] Lansing Journal, December 31, 1874.

[12] Grand Rapids Daily Times, January 7, 1875.

[13] Detroit Advertiser and Tribune, January 8, 1875.

These bolters were quickly tabbed the "immortal twelve" by the Detroit Evening News.[14] They were Senator J. H. Jones of Branch County, and Representatives G. P. Robinson and G. W. Van Aken of Branch County, S. R. Billings and Leroy Parker of Genesee County, E. L. Briggs and S. M. Garfield of Kent County, W. F. Harden of Allegan County, T. J. West of Berrien County, L. J. Taylor of Shiawassee County, Cady Neff of Wayne County, and A. B. Copley of Van Buren County. It was rumored that all twelve were supportive of Webster Childs but the subsequent balloting did not bear that out. They did share, however, a common dislike of Zachariah Chandler and what he stood for and did not wish to see him win a fourth senatorial term.[15] In a letter to Blair, State Senator George W. Fish, a long-time friend and fellow Reformer, called the bolters "perfect heroes." He expressed the hope that they could be persuaded to unite with the Democrats and Liberals in the legislature upon "some good man who would be satisfactory to all."[16]

The next several days prior to the first ballot of the legislature were marked by an almost desperate attempt on the part of the Chandler lobby to persuade the bolters to change their minds. At first the Chandler forces used the promise of rewards for a change

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[14]Detroit Evening News, January 14, 1875.

[15]Ibid., January 8, 1875.

[16]George W. Fish to Austin Blair, January 11, 1875, Blair Papers.

of heart. "Promises of anything and everything" were made to the bolters and to those who might convince them to come back into the fold.[17] The next approach was the appeal for party harmony. But that did not work either and the Detroit Tribune astutely observed: "All talk about harmonizing the party when it is uttered by the men who have been practicing political tyranny is hypocritical trash. The good sense of all candid men revolts and their honest indignation rebels against such proceedings."[18] Ultimately the Chandler men resorted to a thinly disguised type of brass-knuckled pressure and harassment characterized by tacit threats. "The opposition found themselves assailed from all sides with great force and infinite ingenuity." "Platoons of men from all walks of life attacked the little band of anti-Chandler men." This process of blatant pressure was likened to "dragooning."[19] But "the army of hired lobbyists could not whip in the brave and honored twelve,"[20] and George Fish expressed the hope to Blair that "the friends of the anti-Chandler movement would write words of encouragement to the brave men who had so far dared to withstand the immense pressure of the lobby."[21]

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[17] Grand Rapids Daily Times, January 6, 1875.

[18] Detroit Advertiser and Tribune, January 11, 1875.

[19] Ibid.; Grand Rapids Daily Times, January 8, 1875.

[20] Grand Rapids Daily Times, January 9, 1875.

[21] George W. Fish to Austin Blair, January 11, 1875, Blair Papers.

Obviously, "the Republican opposition to Mr. Chandler within the legislature was neither slight in character nor shallow in conviction." It was rooted in"the Senator's personal failings, his close fellowship with the likes of Simon Cameron, his use of the patronage, the proscriptive treatment meted out to the unpliant, the presence among his trusted adherents of so many men wholly devoid of scruples and his attempt to force himself upon the state and party for a fourth senatorial term."[22]

In addition to the regular Republican bolters, the Michigan legislature included several Liberals who were also to be a part of the anti-Chandler coalition. These were men who had been active in either or both of the Reform movements of 1872 and 1874. They were former Liberal Republicans and National Reformers. Among these legislators were Senators George W. Fish of Genesee County, Allen B. Morse of Ionia County, and Thomas S. Cobb of Kalamazoo County. In the House of Representatives they included men such as Ethan A. Brown and C. A. Potter of Berrien County and Joseph A. Hollon of Saginaw County.[23]

The third and most numerous group arrayed against the Chandlerites was, of course, that comprised of the regular Democrats.

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[22]Detroit Advertiser and Tribune, January 11, 1875.

[23]Michigan Manual, 1875, pp. 441-478; Michigan Almanac, 1875, pp. 32-33.

Their acknowledged leader in the anti-Chandler struggle was William L. Webber, Senator from the twenty-fifth district encompassing Saginaw County.[24]

In pure numbers the combined anti-Chandler forces were impressive but because of their diverse backgrounds and interests they were to have difficulty uniting upon a single candidate to oppose Chandler. This became increasingly evident as the voting got under way on the 19th of January.[25]

On the designated day at 3:00 p.m. the balloting commenced in the Senate and the House. In the former, the vote was split between ten candidates including some men closely identified with the ongoing Liberal Reform movement. These were Robert McClelland, Henry Chamberlain, Isaac P. Christiancy, and Austin Blair. Chandler received seventeen of a possible thirty-one votes cast in the Senate.[26] In the House the votes were divided among fourteen nominees. Those identified with the Reform effort were John C. Blanchard, C. C. Comstock, Robert McClelland, and Isaac P. Christiancy. In the House vote Chandler received a total of forty-six.[27] He thus had a combined total of sixty-three votes

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[24]Dilla, Politics of Michigan, p. 198. See also J. A. Hubbel to Peter White, January 24, 1875 in the White Papers, Michigan Historical Collections, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[25]Michigan, House Journal, 1875, pp. 113-114.

[26]Michigan, Senate Journal, 1875, pp. 91-92.

[27]Michigan, House Journal, 1875, pp. 113-114.

and fell just four short of the number required for election. He had been successful in gaining the votes of five of the original bolters but the other seven split their crucial ballots among Childs, Christiancy, and Blair and thus deprived him of victory.[28]

In the hours preceeding the next vote at 12:00 noon on the 21st, the Chandler lobby applied pressure of such fanatical intensity on the remaining Republican bolters that one of them broke. He was Samuel M. Garfield, representative of the second district in Kent County. The pressure applied to Garfield was so unrelenting and cruel in light of his well publicized stroke and partial paralysis that the unscrupulous nature of Chandler's power politics was dramatically demonstrated. Just days before the voting began Garfield had been forced to change his residence clandestinely to rid himself of the lobbyists who would give him no rest. And finally, despite his better judgment and principles, he had to give in or risk death from his infirm condition. In face of the lobby and "petition pressure played upon him with great skill and persistence," he capitulated "in weakness and despair." The Detroit Advertiser and Tribune decried the outrage and stated: "Like the hunted and wounded deer on whose flanks the hound has fastened and cannot be shaken off, the sick and worn out legislator was brought down." It concluded that Chandler had gotten one more vote "but not an ounce of moral support."[29]

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[28] Ibid.

[29] Detroit Advertiser and Tribune, January 20, 21, 1875.

On January 21, 1875, a ballot was taken in a joint session of both houses. This time Chandler garnered sixty-four votes, having picked up Garfield's. But the combined opposition, including the remaining six regular Republican bolters, cast their sixty-eight ballots for other candidates. The strongest of these was G.V.N. Lothrop, followed by Isaac Christiancy, and Webster Childs.[30] This was the closest that Chandler was to come to re-election as senator.

The Democrats, Liberals, and bolting Republicans had not yet coordinated their actions. But as it became clear that they had the required number of votes to win, they held some secret consultations. "The result of their discussions was the agreement that if a man satisfactory to all could be found, they would unite and secure his election."[31] Pursuant to this arrangement the name of Isaac P. Christiancy was suggested. "The selection was a fortunate one" and all the anti-Chandler forces were now poised to administer the coup de grâce.[32]

On Thursday, January 21, a third vote was taken. This time an overwhelming preponderence of the Chandler opposition cast their vote for Christiancy and the combination "gave precisely the necessary majority of all the votes cast" to elect Christiancy.[33]

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[30]Michigan, House Journal, 1874, pp. 124-125.

[31]Dilla, Politics of Michigan, p. 178.

[32]Ibid.

[33]Zachariah Chandler, His Life and Public Services (Detroit: The Detroit Post and Tribune, 1880), p. 338.

The final count was sixty-seven for Christiancy and forty for Chandler. Many of the Senator's backers changed their votes at the last minute to different men hoping to confuse and frighten the opposition into deserting Christiancy. The tactic did not work and merely resulted in a diminished total for Chandler when the final count was certified.[34]

"There was much weeping and gnashing of teeth that day at Chandler headquarters,"[35] but his opponents were ebullient. The headline of the Lansing Journal screamed: "Old Zach Busted." The paper claimed that "all honor is due to the brave and magnanimous Democrats and Liberals who joined hands with six brave Republicans to break the most odious and arrogant ring that ever cursed Michigan."[36] The Marshall Democratic Expounder stated that Chandler had been defeated because he was "the exponent of a system of partisan politics and the chief of a remorseless ring of mere politicians who sold their influence and the patronage of government to perpetuate their own lease of political life and secure their advancement."[37] In his diary for January 21, 1875, John G. Parkhurst wrote: "I. P. Christiancy elected U. S. Senator and Zach Chandler defeated, a great victory over

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[34]Detroit Evening News, January 21, 1875.

[35]Mary Karl George, Zachariah Chandler (East Lansing; Michigan State University Press, 1969), p. 240.

[36]Lansing Journal, January 21, 1875.

[37]Marshall Expounder, January 28, 1875.

politicians and money power."[38] This event "marked the high tide of...anti-Republican success" in Michigan during the Reconstruction period.[39]

Chandler's successor in the Senate was a man acceptable in the eyes of Liberals, Democrats, and Republicans alike. He was "an original Republican,"[40] having helped organize that party in Michigan after actively participating in the Free Soil Movement. Prior to that he had been a Democrat. He was first elected to the state supreme court in 1857 and was re-elected without opposition in 1865 and again in 1873. While on the bench he "withdrew entirely from partisan politics"[41] and cultivated the reputation of a "serious scholar and great jurist."[42] He was thus generally perceived as an independent man of principle and his aloofness from campaigning made him especially popular with the Reform forces.[43]

In the spring of 1875 the Democracy took steps to undercut the impact of any future state Reform movement not under Democratic auspices. First, the Democrats waited until after the Reformers had issued a call for a state convention prior to the

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[38]John G. Parkhurst diary, January 21, 1875, Parkhurst Papers.

[39]Dilla, Politics of Michigan, p. 179.

[40]Detroit Post and Tribune, Chandler, p. 338.

[41]Detroit Free Press, January 22, 1875.

[42]Haigh, "Lansing in the 70s," p. 109.

[43]Dilla, Politics of Michigan, p. 149.

spring elections. They then issued their own call and scheduled their convention one day before the already announced Reform Convention. This time the Reformers were going to have to adopt the Democratic candidates instead of vice-versa. Second, the Democratic State Committee issued a call for a "Democratic and Liberal" convention hoping to draw would-be Liberals and Reformers away from an independent course into the Democratic organization.[44]

The Democratic call was issued on February 6, 1875 for a "Democratic and Liberal Convention" to be held in Jackson on March 2nd for the purpose of nominating candidates for justice of the supreme court and regent of the university. In directing county committees to hold conventions to select delegates to Jackson, the call said that those committees should "extend a cordial invitation to all opposed to a partisan judiciary."[45] This statement set the tone for the Democratic state convention and campaign. The Democracy assumed the mantle of non-partisanship in order to lure independents away from the third party Reform movement and to imply that the Republican Party was a vehicle of partisanship and corruption.

At their convention the Democrats selected Benjamin F. Graves for a full term on the supreme court bench and Lyman B. Norris

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[44]Detroit Free Press, February 7, 1875; Marshall Democratic Expounder, February 11, 1875; Kalamazoo Gazette, February 12, 1875.

[45]Detroit Free Press, February 7, 1874; Kalamazoo Gazette, February 12, 1875.

for a partial term to fill the vacancy left by the departure of Christiancy. The candidates for regents of the university were Samuel T. Douglass and Peter White. In its coverage of the convention the Democratic Detroit Free Press used the headline: "Non-Partisan Nominations Made for the Supreme Bench."[46]

The call of the National Reform Party of Michigan for a spring state convention was issued on January 28, 1875, over a week earlier than that of the Democrats. It designated Lansing as the site of the convention to be held on the third day of March, one day after the Democratic convention. It was signed by the members of the National Reform State Central Committee.[47]

In accordance with the call, county conventions made local nominations and elected delegates to the Lansing gathering. The convention in Wayne County gave the best clue as to the nature of the Reform effort for 1875. It was held February 24, 1875, to nominate candidates for circuit court judge and county superintendent of schools. Fred Abbott Baker, a Detroit lawyer, and chairman of the National Reform State Central Committee, was a leading participant in the Wayne convention. He offered to the assembled men the following preamble and resolution which were unanimously adopted:

> Whereas the facts recently reported to Congress by the Louisiana investigating committee conclusively show that the

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[46]Detroit Free Press, March 3, 1875.

[47]Marshall Democratic Expounder, February 11, 1875; Kalamazoo Gazette, February 12, 1875.

> difficulties in that state have been caused by the interference of the Administration through the Customs House party at New Orleans with the local elections and that by such interference and with the assistance of the federal army the will of the people of Louisiana as lawfully expressed at the ballot box has been overthrown and their right of local self-government destroyed, therefore
>
> Resolved that for the purpose of securing to the people of the United States the right to order and control their own local affairs, free from Executive influence or dictation, the power of appointing civil officers whose duties require them to reside in the several states should be taken from the President and vested in the People.[48]

In this resolution Baker alluded to a number of the on-going concerns of the Michigan Reformers. These were the Grant Administration's Reconstruction policy, its centralization tendencies at the expense of local, state and individual rights, its corruption, and the need for curtailing the appointive powers of the President and increasing the elective powers of the people. This latter concern was elaborated upon by A. G. Comstock of Detroit who presided as president of the Wayne Convention. In a speech to the meeting he declared that "civil service reform is the great need of the hour."[49] About the only major issue not touched upon in Baker's resolution was that of the necessity of maintaining "hard money" and a sound currency, but that was to be amply addressed by the Reformers at Lansing.

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[48] Detroit Free Press, February 25, 1875.

[49] Ibid.

Among those selected by the Wayne County Reform Convention to attend the state convention in March were Baker and the outspoken German Reformers and hold-overs from the Liberal Republican movement of 1872, Otto Starck and Adam Elder.[50]

F. A. Baker called the state Reform Convention to order at 11:00 a.m. on March 3rd. The members chose General John G. Parkhurst of Branch County as temporary chairman and the Honorable C. A. Potter of Berrien County as temporary secretary. Following the reports of the committees on credentials and organization, there occurred the confirmation of Parkhurst as permanent chairman and A. G. Comstock of Detroit as permanent secretary.[51]

The committee on resolutions, chaired by F. A. Baker, reported the following preamble and resolutions:

> Whereas the Administration party by its action in Congress and its management of the government since the last election has shown itself unequal to the demands and necessities of the Country and incapable of self-reformation, and,
>
> Whereas the Democratic party has a majority in the next House of Representatives and upon its action in our opinion depends the result of the next presidential election and in a great measure the destiny and the future welfare of the Republic, therefore,
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> Resolved, that the next Congress be requested to pass joint resolutions proposing amendments to the Federal Constitution as follows: (1) Prohibiting Senators and Representatives from soliciting appointment to or removals from office and authorizing Congress to provide for the election by the

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[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid., March 4, 1875; Kalamazoo Gazette, March 12, 1875.

> people of any and all civil officers whose duties are local in their nature and require them to reside in the several states (2) Providing for the election of the President and Vice President and United States Senators by a direct popular vote and making the President ineligible for re-election (3) Prohibiting Congress from making anything but Gold and Silver legal tender in the payment of debts.
>
> Resolved, that the State Central Committee be instructed to call a State Convention in March of 1876 to consider the question of calling a National Convention to nominate candidates for President and Vice President of the United States.[52]

The proposals dealing with the accountability of federal officials, the election of previously appointive officers by the people, and the limitation of the presidency to one term were carbon copies of similar demands made by the Reformers in 1874.

Some elements were new and distinctly novel. The suggestion of direct popular election of the president, vice president, and senators was rather enlightened and foreshadowed a similar demand made later by the Populists and by the Progressives after them. The proposal for calling a national convention to select a presidential ticket constituted a new expansion of the scope of the thinking of Reformers in Michigan. Men who previously had been content merely to envision themselves as part of a national stream of reform now were contemplating the initiation of a national reform organization themselves. Ironically this burst of optimism and energy came just at the time the movement was beginning to wane in the state.

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[52] Ibid.

The statement on the currency was much stronger than the Reform position taken in 1874. No longer was there any qualification about resumption or the return to hard money. This illustrates the fact that the money question was beginning to emerge as the most significant issue on the political front and that the Reformers were now willing to alienate their agrarian allies by condemning inflation. This risk hurt the already weakening Reform movement.

Other resolutions of the Reform convention of March, 1875, were addressed to the Democracy. One expressed thanks for Democratic support in the overthrow of Chandler. "The Democrats of the state legislature," it read, "are entitled to the thanks of the people for the patriotism evinced in rising above party prejudice and uniting in the election of Judge Christiancy to the United States Senate, thus denying the party what belongs to the country and mankind."[53]

The final resolution of the Reform convention endorsed the Democratic nominees chosen the day before. It claimed that "the action of the Democratic and Liberal Convention held at Jackson...meets the cordial approval of this convention and we hereby accept the nominees as our own candidates and commend them to the support of the intelligent electors of the State."[54]

Baker sent a copy of the convention resolution to Isaac Christiancy. In a return letter the Senator wrote that "the

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[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid.

resolutions represent some important principles I am inclined to favor."[55]

The gracious acceptance of all the Democratic candidates is somewhat significant for it indicates an abandonment of the Reformers insistence upon independent candidates. Graves and Norris could be interpreted to be non-partisan independents but a man such as Peter White from the upper peninsula was more firmly identified with the Democracy.[56] This apparent capitulation to the Democrats is partially explained by the Reformers' recognition that the Democracy had outmaneuvered them politically by holding its convention first and nominating candidates. It also revealed an increasing doubt about the Reformers' capability to carry significant number of votes on their own without the Democratic fusion. And, finally, it signaled a new departure in political tactics for Michigan Liberal Reformers still operating outside either major party.

The departure involved discontinuing the use of the state-wide political reform structure for campaign purposes and using it to influence the debate on the great issues of the currency and civil service reform. Some Reformers, however, did persist in

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[55]Isaac P. Christiancy to Fred Abbott Baker, March 14, 1875, in the Baker Papers, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library, Detroit, Michigan.

[56]Michigan Manual, 1875, p. 451.

an independent course in local politics in the spring and fall of 1875 and the spring of 1876.

The highlight of the Reform movement in Michigan in the fall of 1875 was the organization of a "hard money" conference. On September 28, 1875, the state central committee of the National Reform Party of Michigan issued a call addressed to "the People of Michigan" for a "mass convention" to be held in Detroit on October 14, 1875.[57]

The call warned that "those who believe in sound currency should not underestimate the strength of the inflationists." It proposed that "the prosperity, the honor and the happiness of the nation demanded that the [inflationist] movement be defeated." The "hard money" conference "would assist in this work." Those attending would have an opportunity to discuss the problem and elect delegates to a national hard money conference to be held later in Cincinnati. "A cordial invitation was extended to all classes of people without regard to party signification."[58]

F. A. Baker called the conference to order at 12:00 noon on October 14th and delivered a short address on the evils of inflation. Those attending selected the publisher of the Michigan Tribune, W. W. Woolnough of Battle Creek, as temporary chairman and

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[57] Marshall Democratic Expounder, September 30, 1875; Kalamazoo Gazette, September 24, 1875.

[58] Ibid.

A. G. Comstock of Detroit as temporary secretary. Next they established a committee on resolutions comprised of J. W. Griffith of Greenville, J. G. Parkhurst of Coldwater, and F. A. Baker. After this action the convention recessed.[59]

Upon reconvening, the convention named the following permanent officers: Jerome W. Turner of Owosso as chairman and A. G. Comstock as secretary. Turner spoke out in behalf of hard money and Comstock read letters from Senator Isaac Christiancy, former Governor Austin Blair, and Congressman George H. Durand. In these letters the writers expressed their disappointment at not being able to attend the convention due to other duties and responsibilities but expressed their sincere belief in the avowed purposes of the meeting. They elaborated on the evils of inflation and the absolute necessity of maintaining hard money.[60]

At this point the committee on resolutions presented its report. The first resolution spoke of the call for a national hard money conference and stressed Michigan's responsibility to dispatch delegates to that event. Concerned Michiganders, it said, had "discarded all party feeling" because of their overriding belief "that foreign and domestic commerce and all productive industry must languish under a currency depreciated and fluctuating in value and a

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[59] Detroit Free Press, October 15, 1875.

[60] Ibid.

revenue which is unequalled in its burdens." The second resolution expressed the extent of the commitment of those in attendance to hard money and against inflation. "We inflexibly set our face," it said, "against all schemes for currency inflation or any form of paper currency, greenbacks, or otherwise, so long as that currency shall consist of irredeemable promises to pay money." In supporting resumption it said, "we will oppose any policy which has not the direct purpose to establish paper currency on a par with and actually redeemable in coin." A third resolution "cordially commended to the friends of sound currency throughout the United States" the concept of a national conference on the most serious national money problem.[61]

The appointment of the Michigan delegates to the Cincinnati convention then took place and included some of the most illustrious leaders of the ongoing Michigan Reform movement. The delegates were Charles S. May of Kalamazoo, Austin Blair of Jackson, J. H. Richardson of Tuscola, George H. Murdock of Berrien, F. A. Baker of Detroit, W. W. Woolnough of Battle Creek, G. W. Underwood of Hillsdale, J. Westley Griffith of Greenville, Byron Stout of Pontiac, and John Hosmer of Detroit.[62]

The convention closed with a short address by Eugene Pringle of Jackson. He emphasized that hard money must be the "redemption basis of any circulating medium."[63]

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[61] Ibid.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Ibid.

In the fall county and municipal elections the independent Reform effort was not nearly as visible as it had been previously. In Wayne County, for example, there was a Democratic County Convention and no separate Liberal or Reform convention. Further, two of the candidates selected by that convention as Democratic nominees for justice of the peace were Peter Guenther and A. G. Comstock.[64] These men had been identified with the independent Reform movement both at the local and state level just a few months before the spring elections.[65] During the campaign there was considerably more talk about the "reform Democracy" than about the independent Reform movement.[66] These elections provided evidence that the Reform cause, though not dead, was to find future expression within the traditional party structure rather than in the form of a third party effort.

In analyzing the outcome of the local elections of the fall of 1875 in Michigan and elsewhere, journals that had previously stressed coverage of the independent Reform movement changed their emphasis. They talked not of a third party outside the two major parties but rather of the determining role to be played in elections by the "independent voter."[67] He would not be a slave to one party

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[64] Ibid., October 17, 1875.

[65] Ibid., March 4, 1875.

[66] Lansing Journal, October 14, 1875; Kalamazoo Gazette, November 5, 1875.

[67] Lansing Journal, November 4, 1875; Kalamazoo Gazette, March 31, 1876.

but would switch his support between the two parties depending upon the circumstances and the candidates. "The independent voter" it was argued, "had provided the Republicans with a slight margin of victory in the 1875 elections, not because he was reconciled to "Grantism" but because he was alarmed by the ghost of repudiation." Having "smashed inflation that year" the same voter would, "if the issue of endorsing Grantism was presented again...denounce it with nausea and vehemence!" The independent voter moving freely between the Democratic and Republican camps was now viewed as the key to a "grand victory for reform and honest government."[68]

By the beginning of 1876 the remaining independent Michigan Reformers were continuing their work on major national issues. They directed most of their attention to civil service reform.

The activities of Fred Abbott Baker, by now the acknowledged leader of the independent Reformers, illustrated this proclivity. He kept abreast of the actions of Michigan men in Congress who were interested in civil service reform legislation. Among these were Representatives Alpheus S. Williams and George Willard.[69]

Williams, who had been supported by the National Reformers and Democrats in his successful congressional bid in 1874, authored

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[68] Lansing Journal, November 4, 1875.

[69] George Willard to F. A. Baker, January 19, 1876, Baker Papers.

House Resolution 50 which was introduced on January 24, 1876. It called for a constitutional amendment which would achieve the following reforms: (1) prohibit senators and representatives "from soliciting appointments to or removals from office;" (2) provide for congressional creation of "a civil-service commission...with absolute advisory and confirmatory powers in regard to appointments to and removals from office;" and (3) provide that "civil officers whose duties require them to reside in the several states...be elected by the people...."[70] This resolution was supported by Baker and the wording was almost identical to that used by the latter in drawing up resolutions for the National Reform party in the spring of 1875.[71]

George Willard, United States Representative from the third district of Michigan, was also promoting civil service reform in Congress and was influenced by Baker and the Michigan Reformers.[72] He wrote to Baker thanking him for support in "preserving the independence of the several departments of the government." He lauded Baker for his understanding of "the essential principles which should be kept in view in securing an efficient and uncorrupt administration of public affairs." He concluded by saying: "I am fully aware that questions relating to national policies and reforms in the

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[70] Congressional Record, 44th Congress, 1st Session, p. 591.

[71] Detroit Free Press, March 4, 1875; Kalamazoo Gazette, March 12, 1875.

[72] House Journal, 44th Congress, 1st Session, p. 260.

methods of civil service administration have received at your hands much careful and thoughtful attention." He promised to consult Baker on the feasibility of future moves toward the success of "the great work of civil service reform."[73]

Baker was also in contact with civil service reform advocates from outside of Michigan. He received a letter from Representative Scott Lord of New York dealing with the Williams' proposal and the possible loopholes in it. Lord proposed a resolution to amend the Constitution to provide for the election of postmasters, marshals, assessors, and collectors, and for their accountability to the people and their removal from office for misconduct. Scott's letter recognized the leader of the Michigan Reformers as a nationally respected figure in the civil service reform effort.[74]

The spring elections of 1876 brought further evidence that the independent Reform effort had become relatively inactive in state politics by this time. There were a few examples of independent Reform activity but these were diminished from former years. Rather, there seemed to be a more complete merging of Reformers with the

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[73]George Willard to F. A. Baker, January 19, 1876, Baker Papers.

[74]Scott Lord to F. A. Baker, June 24, 1876, Ibid. Baker, in fact, had been commended for his interest in civil service reform by such nationally respected Reformers as George William Curtis. See G. W. Curtis to Baker, September 19, 1874, ibid.

Democrats. In Saginaw the Democrats chose "the great reformer Chauncey W. Wisner to head their ticket for mayor."[75] And in Kalamazoo and Jackson, the Democrats and Reformers joined together and supported a Liberal Democratic ticket.[76]

The most dramatic division seems to have been between the two major parties and the Greenbackers who were now running candidates in many municipal contests throughout the state. In some places the fear of the Greenbackers was so hysterical that former political enemies became allies to defeat the threat. In Vassar, Michigan, "the Republicans abandoned their organization and joined with the hard money Democrats to defeat the Greenback Ticket."[77] Many Liberal Reformers had by now concluded that they must join with one or both of the existing parties to undercut the evil of inflation.

But even into the spring of 1876 a coterie of Reform leaders continued to cherish hopes of independently controlling the outcome of elections. And, they acquired the support of men of like minds from several states. F. A. Baker and other Michiganders received copies of a significant letter from New York. It was an official invitation to a national Reform conference to be held in

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[75] Detroit Evening News, March 31, 1876.

[76] Ibid.; Kalamazoo Gazette, April 7, 1876.

[77] Detroit Evening News, April 1, 1876.

New York City in May.[78] The invitation was introduced with these words:

> The widespread corruption in our public service which has disgraced the Republic in the eyes of the world and threatens to poison the vitality of our institutions, the uncertainty of the public mind and of party counsels as for grave economical questions involving in a great measure the honor of the government, the morality of our business life and the general well being of the people, and the danger that an inordinate party spirit may through the organized action of a comparatively small number of men who live by politics, succeed in overriding the most patriotic impulses of the people and in monopolizing political power for selfish ends, seem to render it most advisable that no effort should be spared to secure to the popular desire for genuine reform a decisive influence in the impending national election.[79]

The conference was to be held to "prevent the national election of the centennial year from becoming a mere choice of evils and to secure the election of men to the highest office of the Republic whose character and ability would satisfy the exigencies of the present situation and protect the honor of America's name." In short, an all out effort was to be made to "secure to the popular desire for genuine reform a decisive influence in the impending national election."[80]

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[78]William Cullen Bryant, et al. to F. A. Baker, April 6, 1876, Baker Papers. Others to receive invitations were C. S. May, G. W. Underwood and James E. Scripps. See Lansing Republican, May 19, 1876; Kalamazoo Gazette, April 2, 1876.

[79]Ibid.

[80]Ibid.

This letter was signed by a formidable group of Reformers from several states. They included Henry Cabot Lodge, William Cullen Bryant, Theodore W. Woolsey, Alexander Bullock, Horace White, and Carl Schurz.[81] Because the two major parties were beginning to realize that the independent Reformers might hold the key to victory in the upcoming election, the New York conference "was watched with much attention by the politicians of both sides."[82] The convention included approximately two-hundred delegates from eighteen states. The Michigan participants were C. S. May, G. W. Underwood, and James E. Scripps.[83]

In the presidential contest of 1876 the two major parties made an all-out effort to attract the remaining independent Liberals into their ranks. This effort was manifest both at the national and the state level, and in the end was almost completely successful.

The Democrats were by far the most effective in the struggle to attract the Liberal Reformer. "The strength of the Democratic Party, both numerically and morally, in 1876 was vastly superior to what it had been four years before." Of the many factors which had contributed to its "increased vitality, considerable weight

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[81] Ibid. For a good discussion of the "Fifth Avenue Conference" see Sproat, Best Men, pp. 90-92 and Hoogenboom, Outlawing Spoils, pp. 138-139.

[82] Ross, Liberal Republican, p. 229.

[83] Lansing Republican, May 19, 1876.

must be given to the influence of the Liberal element, both in adding directly to the Democratic vote and in increasing the party's reputation for loyalty and integrity."[84]

On matters of national concern the Democrats launched a two-front drive to attract the Liberal independents. They attached the new scandals of the Republican Administration, especially the spectacular Belknap and Whiskey Ring affairs, and stressed that they were opposed to this sort of dishonesty in government and would ally with all of a like mind. Second, they supported Samuel S. Tilden for the presidency and portrayed him as the hero of reform for what he had done to the Tweed Ring as the crusading governor of New York.[85]

With regard to Michigan, the Democrats related examples of Republican "ring rottenness" in the state,[86] and made a vigorous attempt to include Reformers in their organization. In their call for a preliminary state convention to select delegates to the National Democratic Convention in St. Louis, they were amicable toward the independents. That call by the Democratic State Central Committee urged the county committees "in calling their respective

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[84]Ross, Liberal Republican, p. 227. It is interesting to note that whereas most of the Michigan Reformers migrated into the Democratic Party in 1876, the majority of eastern Reformers went into the Republican ranks. See Sproat, Best Men, p. 102.

[85]Detroit Free Press, July 9, 1876; Kalamazoo Gazette, March 3, 10, May 12, 1876.

[86]Detroit Free Press, July 16, 1876.

conventions...to cordially invite Liberals and all others, without regard to previous party affiliations, who are opposed to the extravagance and corruptions of the Republican Party to unite with us...."[87]

That convention, described as one of the biggest and most enthusiastic ever, was held in Detroit on the 24th of May and was distinctly oriented toward the reform sentiment. One of the resolutions produced by the gathering claimed that "while political parties are necessary agencies in the administration of government yet the love of party should always be subordinate to patriotism, and none should be placed in nomination but such as are honest, capable, and efficient...." Another maintained that "no party deserves success at the polls except upon the basis of unselfish devotion to the best good of the whole people." And, a third proclaimed that "in the interest of pure government outraged, free institutions imperiled, and to redeem the American name from the stigma attached to it by the corruptions of the party in power, we cordially invite the co-operation of all honest men irrespective of former party affiliations."[88]

The convention was amply sprinkled with well-known Liberals and many were placed in key positions. A. B. Morse and George P. Sanford were named as permanent secretaries. Sanford also

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[87] Ibid., March 10, 1876.

[88] Ibid., May 25, 1876.

found himself placed on the new Democratic State Central Committee. Members of various convention committees included men such as O. W. Powers and C. C. Comstock. Among the official delegates were H. C. Hall, J. K. Parkhurst, A. A. Dorrance, N. S. Boynton, and Henry Chamberlain. J. C. Blanchard was in attendance but not as a delegate.[89] All of these had been involved in either or both the Liberal Republican and National Reform drives.

After the St. Louis convention had been held the Democrats in the state stepped up their efforts to capture the members of the independent Liberal Reform movement. The Detroit Free Press stated that "the spirit of reform is abroad and cannot be doubted by any thoughtful person who has attended the meetings of the Democrats and Liberals in Detroit and elsewhere since the St. Louis convention." It added that "the masses have a firm belief that reform is an imperious necessity and there is a united front of opposition to the plunderers who represent the present administration."[90]

Further efforts to cement the coalition of Liberals and Democrats were exemplified by ratification meetings and the creation of campaign clubs. The meetings were scheduled by the Democrats to ratify the St. Louis nominations and usually included easily recognizable Liberal Reformers as speakers along with the representatives

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[89] Ibid.; Kalamazoo Gazette, May 26, 1876. For coverage of of the Democrat convention in St. Louis see Kalamazoo Gazette, June 30, 1876.

[90] Detroit Free Press, August 12, 1876.

of the Democracy. At typical gatherings the orators included C. S. May, Robert McClelland, G. V. N. Lothrop, and Eugene Pringle. The press coverage of these events usually stated that the mass meetings were held for "Tilden and reform" and for "honest men and honest government."[91] A number of "Democratic-Liberal Clubs" were organized reminiscent of the Greeley campaign clubs of 1872. They strove to bring close cooperation between Liberals and Democrats and to facilitate the handling of the campaign.[92]

In the official Democratic call for the state nominating convention the state central committee kept up its policy of encouraging the participation of formerly independent Liberals. It urged the county committees in calling for local conventions to select delegates to the state convention to "invite all citizens irrespective of past party affiliations who are opposed to continuing the corrupt rule of the past four years and to the control of bad men at the seat of government to unite with us...."[93]

The state convention in Detroit on August 9, 1876, was clearly programmed to maximize the issue of reform and to encourage the active participation of Liberal Reformers. The temporary chairman

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[91] Detroit Free Press, July 9, 1876; Kalamazoo Gazette, July 21, 28, 1876.

[92] Detroit Free Press, August 12, 1876; Kalamazoo Gazette, July 28, 1876.

[93] Detroit Free Press, June 27, 1876; Kalamazoo Gazette, June 30, 1876.

G. V. N. Lothrop, said in his opening remarks that "it is our duty to place in the Executive chair of the nation the man who more than any other in this country is the representative of official cleanliness and pure statesmanship which the times and the suffering people demand."[94]

The official platform incorporated several resolutions concerned with reform. "We declare," one read, "that the supreme object of political action at the present time is to bring about such reform in public administration as shall remove from office the men and the party whose corruptions have dishonored the Republic at home and disgraced it in the sight of foreign nations...and restore to the people...a just, honest, economical and constitutional government." A second said, "we demand of our public servants both state and national, honesty, capability, and fidelity as guarantees of good government...and the inauguration of the reform demanded by the people."[95]

Among the official delegates and participants in the convention were several men active in the independent Liberal cause in previous years. The delegates included J. G. Parkhurst, W. W. Woolnough, T. S. Cobb, A. B. Morse, G. P. Sanford, Mark Wilber, and Henry Chamberlain. Men of Liberal persuasion were also members of

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[94]Detroit Free Press, August 10, 1876.

[95]Ibid.

the official committees of the convention. W. D. Harriman and G. W. Powers served on the committee on credentials and Byron A. Stout on the committee on resolutions.[96]

The official nominations of the Democratic convention included a number of outstanding Liberals. Electors-at-large were the indomitable Austin Blair and J. S. Upton. The Liberal Reform officers of the state ticket were George H. House for secretary of state, J. G. Parkhurst for state treasurer, and Frederick M. Holloway for auditor general.[97]

The Reformers were also active in the Democratic congressional conventions. In the third district, for example, Eugene Pringle of Jackson made a speech at the nominating convention in support of the nominee Fidus Livermore.[98] In the first district the Democratic choice for Congress was General A. S. Williams who had been a candidate of the National Reformers in 1874.[99]

Like the Democrats, the Republicans also tried to attract the support of independent Reformers in 1876. The Republicans stressed that they indeed were wholeheartedly behind reform and honest administration of government. They described Rutherford B. Hayes as the epitome of integrity and lauded him as a great hero of

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[96] Ibid.

[97] Ibid.

[98] Detroit Evening News, August 25, 1876.

[99] Ibid., November 9, 1876.

civil service reform.[100] While not denying the existence of numerous scandals at the national level of government during the Grant presidency, they did take credit for correcting the abuses themselves. "Amid all the clamor against the administration," they said, "the fact stands out that no guilty man is allowed to escape though he be a party leader in a great city or a member of the president's cabinet."[101]

At the same time the Republicans did cast some aspersions upon the Democracy's claim to the title of the party of honesty, integrity, and reform. They stressed that Democrats had been notoriously corrupt in government service at various levels and even raised some questions about the reform image of the Democratic presidential nominee Samuel Tilden. They charged that the latter, while he had been chairman of the New York State Democratic Central Committee, had enjoyed close ties with Boss William Tweed of Tammany Hall in New York City and had been friendly with a number of Tweed's henchmen such as Peter Sweeny and Richard Connally.[102]

Prior to the calling of state conventions to choose delegates to the Republican National Convention in Cincinnati, the Republican National Committee issued a call which invited all interested

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[100] Detroit Advertiser and Tribune, August 24, 1876.

[101] Lansing Republican, June 27, 1876.

[102] Detroit Daily Post, August 24, 1876.

parties in the several states to attend the to-be-scheduled conventions. It invited "without regard to past political differences or previous party affiliations...all who were in favor of the continued prosecution and punishment of all official dishonesty and of an economical administration of government by honest, faithful, and capable officers."[103] And in Michigan the State Republican Committee, in calling for the convention to be held at Grand Rapids on May 10, appealed to "all Republican electors and other voters without regard to past political differences or party affiliations who believed in and supported the principles enunciated in the National Call."[104] Obviously the state Republicans were desperately trying to mend their tattered image and attract the independent reform-minded voter.

At the preliminary state convention to select delegates to the national convention, the Republicans kept up their effort. S. D. Bingham, chairman of the Republican State Central Committee, opened the convention with a short address in which he counseled the assembled that "in this campaign the presentation of such men for candidates as are eminent for ability, purity, and integrity is necessary."[105] The resolutions of the convention reiterated the

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[103] Lansing Republican, June 5, 1876.

[104] Ibid., April 28, 1876.

[105] Ibid., May 12, 1876.

demand for Republican candidates of ability and honor, and called for the practice of honesty and economy in matters of governmental administration.[106]

Despite their efforts to appeal to the independent Liberal, there was little evidence at this gathering that the Republicans were successful. The press coverage of the event made virtually no mention of former Liberal leaders as being elected delegates to Cincinnati or merely as attending or participating in the convention.[107]

The Michigan Republicans also carried on the reform theme in their activities related to the state nominating convention of August 3, 1876. In their announcements of the convention and in their resolutions produced at the convention they appealed to the Liberal independent. The first resolution of their platform endorsed the principles and nominees of their national convention at Cincinnati and proclaimed that these were a sure "guarantee that the party's record in the future...would be distinguished for the preservation of the Union, faithfulness to its financial engagements, and protection of civil and political rights and a prompt and efficient reform in government service."[108]

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[106] Ibid.

[107] Ibid.

[108] Detroit Daily Post, August 4, 1876.

As in the case of their preliminary state convention, the appeals to the former Liberal independents did not appear to work. On the official lists of the Lansing state convention officers, committee members, and official delegates, there was a dearth of recognizable Reform leaders. The same was certainly true of the candidates nominated by the convention.[109]

The third important party active in Michigan and national politics in 1876 was the Greenback Party which did have some success in winning the support of former Liberals. Despite many Democratic and Liberal statements in the past about the dangers of inflation and soft money, there was an amicable attitude toward the Greenbackers by 1876 based probably on political expediency and the possibility of defeating the Republicans through fusion with the Greenbackers. The fact that the great majority of the Liberals were now associated with the Democracy combined with the "very friendly relationship existing between the Democratic and Greenback parties during this campaign" helps explain the participation of some Liberals in the Greenback movement. And, the appearance of the names of some Liberal Reformers on both the Democratic and Greenback tickets for this year helped.[110] Also, there were many former National Reformers from the agrarian counties of the western part of

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[109] Ibid.

[110] Dilla, Politics of Michigan, p. 200.

the state who had harbored inflationist predilections for a long time who quite naturally migrated into the Greenback Party.[111] Finally there were some Reformers who had been Liberal Republicans in 1872 and National Reformers in 1874 and had adhered to a hard money line previously. Some of the latter group had even participated in the "hard money" conference of 1875. But they now ended up in the Greenback Party of 1876.[112] This seeming contradiction cannot be fully explained. Perhaps this small handful of men were simply committed to the third party principle and were more comfortable outside the two major parties. Quite possibly they saw in the overall Greenback aims some of the same goals of former Liberal movements. It is conceivable as well, that the aftermath of the depression of 1873 changed their minds about the advisability of a hard money stance.

At a preliminary convention in Jackson on May 3rd to pick delegates to the National Greenback convention to be held in Indianapolis on May 17th, there was evidence of possible reform influence. In their resolutions the Greenbackers called for some things which were reminiscent of earlier reform demands. One was for more protection of the laboring classes and the control of the capitalist-banking class. In demanding support for "farmers, mechanics and laboring men" they charged that both of the old political parties

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[111] Detroit Evening News, August 25, 1876.

[112] Ibid.

"were so completely committed to the interests of the parasite classes as to be wholly unfit to serve the people earnestly and honestly." The Greenbackers also demanded that the public domain be preserved for actual settlers and not be "distributed to speculators, and corporations." They further called for a limitation of two terms for most governmental office holders. They condemned "extravagance and fast living" on the part of office holders which contributed to "villainous corruption, monstrous frauds, and gross immorality" among those who were supposed to be the "servants of the people."[113]

In the upcoming election the Greenbackers favored "upright and honest men to administer government instead of political barnacles, tricksters, post-traders, and office-brokers." Such men of integrity and intelligence had to be selected "regardless of former political associations to fill positions of trust and responsibility." All "good men" of whatever political affiliation were invited to join the Greenbacks to obtain their goals.[114]

Some past Reformers were present at the May Greenback convention and were even chosen as delegates to the National Greenback Convention. They were Mark D. Wilber, former National Reform

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[113]"Michigan Greenback Platform and Proceedings," typescript copy in the Spencer Collection.

[114]Ibid.

congressional candidate from the fifth district, and Levi Sparks, the National Reform candidate for lieutenant governor in 1874.[115]

"Former Liberals were also prominent at the Greenback state nominating convention in Grand Rapids on August 24, 1876."[116] C. C. Comstock of Grand Rapids was chosen as an elector-at-large. Levi Sparks was nominated for lieutenant governor and J. H. Richardson was chosen for commissioner of the state land office. Two past Reformers who had been picked by the Democrats were endorsed by the Greenbackers. They were John G. Parkhurst for treasurer and Frederick M. Holloway for auditor general.[117] Levi Sparks subsequently became the Greenback candidate for governor when the choice of the convention for that post, O.K. Carpenter, declined the nomination.[118]

The independent Liberal-Reform movement in Michigan had thus subsided by 1876 but it had had an important impact on state politics. It provided a number of the major candidates for state elections between 1872 and 1876. It allied with the Democratic Party, thus allowing that party to neutralize some of the copperhead stigma, and take the offensive against the extravagant and

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[115] Ibid.

[116] Ross, Liberal Republican, p. 217.

[117] Detroit Evening News, August 25, 1876.

[118] Barton, "Agrarian Revolt," p. 129.

corrupt Republican party as the force of reform and honesty and frugality in government. It was instrumental in facilitating the coalition of opposition forces to defeat Zach Chandler for the Senate. And it helped to influence the established parties to adopt a political stance more conducive to reform. Finally, it encouraged the practice of independent voting.

CHAPTER V

REFORMERS IN PROFILE

Any study of Liberal Reform as a political phenomenon leads naturally to speculation about the background, motives, and goals of the Reformers. In the post-Civil War era the champions of change were extremely individualistic and thus difficult to categorize. But they did share some common traits and this has encouraged historians to attempt to describe the "typical" Liberal Reformer of that period.

In his book The Best Men: Liberal Reformers in the Gilded Age, John G. Sproat cautions that it is somewhat risky to generalize about a reformer "type." He points out that among the Reformers there were "some very real differences in character, temperament, and intellect...." He notes that the Reformers collectively comprised a "very loose confederation" and that men "signed on and backed off at will, joining perhaps only for a national presidential campaign, or to press for a single pet reform, or to express an indistinct but felt sense of frustration or outrage." Yet Sproat does concede that there were at least some who could be considered more or less "full time" Reformers.[1]

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[1]Sproat, Best Men, p. 273.

He attempts to profile some of the characteristics of the persistent Reformer. They were, he says, among the "best men in American society after the Civil War--the men of breeding, and intelligence, of taste and substance." And they shared some traits which "gave them a recognizable identity among dissenters in the Gilded Age." One was their economic philosophy. "Their political economy was orthodox liberalism, idealistic and sternly inflexible." They were rigid adherents of the theory of laissez-faire which seemed to them to complement this "country's traditions of property rights and individual freedom." They believed that the economy operated according to certain natural, immutable laws which worked most efficaciously for the benefit of the greatest number when left unfettered.[2]

Another common trait was a quasi-puritanical perception of morality and material success. Reformers linked the two and used them as a standard in making political judgments. "Their moral code, grounded firmly in the Protestant tradition," was the "criterion by which they judged public questions and political candidates." And they contended that "respect for traditional moral values produced material rewards as well as spiritual." They believed that "only through moral rejuvenation...could the United States fulfill its destiny." That work was to be done by the principled and righteous Reformer whose affluence and social prestige were evidence of his purity and integrity.[3]

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[2] Ibid., pp. 7-5.

[3] Ibid., p. 9.

To the Liberal Reformers the most venerated hero was the "independent man in politics." They exalted the person who "refused to permit the base spirit of party to corrupt his individual judgment." In their ongoing war against political abuses they thrived on the independent stance which allowed them to ignore traditional appeals to party loyalty or the lash of party discipline. Their aim was to pit the major parties against one another in quest of independent support and thereby force the parties to embrace as part of their platform the desired reforms.[4]

Of great importance to the Liberals' entire approach to reform was the exercise of moderation. They demanded evolutionary rather than revolutionary reform. They hoped to "restore certain conditions of the past or to mildly amend certain new and disturbing developments." They had no misgivings about the capitalist system and were ardent advocates and defenders of the concept of private property. They desired no fundamental alterations in the structure of government. They only wanted to make government more responsive to the needs and will of the people by reducing the influence of special interests in the government. "They deplored all extremism...and sought to avoid precipitate action or surrender to base passion."[5]

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[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid., pp. 9-10.

Despite the demanding and often frustrating nature of political reform the Liberals believed it to be their "public duty and responsibility." As the "best men" of society they must lead the battle or surely "reform would fail and the abuses in society would become stepping stones to power for demagogues, time-serving politicians, and radical agitators of all sorts."[6]

In addressing himself to the phenomena of midwestern reform in the gilded age, Russel B. Nye also identified characteristic traits of Reformers. One was the moderation of their efforts which "aimed at planned experimentation rather than disintegration and upheaval." They desired to seek reform within the "current framework of politics," utilizing "traditional, legitimate, political means like the ballot, the third party, and fusion...."[7]

An additional shared concern of Reformers was the eradication of specific economic and political grievances or evils which were injurious to the citizenry. Generally "midwest reform politics attempted from the beginning to adjust government to the needs of the people."[8] Reformers and "third party dissidents fought

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[6] Ibid., p. 10.

[7] Russel B. Nye, Midwestern Progressive Politics, 1870-1958, (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1959), p. 13.

[8] Ibid., p. 14.

monopolists and the interests so that well-being and power might flow unimpeded...to the laborer and farmer."[9]

In terms of heritage, vocation, and political sentiment one historian has characterized the Liberal Reformers as follows: they were "mostly professional men, editors, lawyers, doctors, clergymen and professors, whose families had long occupied an honored position in society." They "started their careers as free-soilers and finished them as anti-imperialists. In the interim along with the civil service reform they advocated tariff reform, sound money, and antimonopoly."[10]

Solutions proposed by typical Reformers for the abuses that offended them were the simple remedies of good government, economic orthodoxy, and moral rejuvenation." They thought that by "reviving the Jeffersonian regard for limited government," living by "Christian moral precepts," and trusting in "the natural laws of economics" they could redeem and preserve America's reputation as a "stronghold of opportunity and individual freedom."[11]

Such generalizations about the backgrounds, motives, and goals of Liberal Reformers in the nation and midwest lead per force to a comparison of the Reformers who were active in Michigan politics

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[9]Russel B. Nye, This Almost Chosen People (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1966), p. 26.

[10]Hoogenboom, Outlawing Spoils, p. x.

[11]Sproat, Best Men, p. 6.

from 1870 to 1876. This effort will be facilitated by brief biographical descriptions of F. A. Baker, Austin Blair, John C. Blanchard, William D. Harriman, Daville Hubbard, Charles S. May, A. B. Morse, George K. Murdock, Allan Potter, Eugene Pringle, John H. Richardson, Duncan Stewart, Osmond Tower, Jerome W. Turner, and George W. Underwood.

No survey of leading Michigan Reformers would be complete without the inclusion of Austin Blair. As much as any other, he was noted as an active supporter of the Liberal Reform effort during the years in question. He was a Liberal Republican in 1872, a backer of the National Reform Party in 1874, and a Reform Democrat in 1876.

Blair came to Michigan from upstate New York. He had attended the local public schools there and taken two years of pre-college training at Cazenovia Seminary. Later he attended Hamilton College and finished his collegiate career at Union College. Upon graduation he became a teacher for a short while and then entered the legal profession.[12]

Blair moved to Michigan in June of 1841. He settled in Jackson and began a law practice. He relocated in Eaton Rapids where he commenced his Michigan political career by winning the position of Eaton County Clerk. "His next try for political office was less successful" and in the fall of 1843 he was defeated in a race for

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[12]Harris, "Blair," pp. 5-9.

the state legislature. Tradgedy plagued Austin Blair in Eaton Rapids and he lost both his daughter and wife to illness. He subsequently moved back to Jackson "where he resided for the rest of his life."[13]

Over the years he pursued a long and illustrious legal and political career. The posts he held ranged from local municipal and county offices to the state legislature, to the Civil War governorship, and to the United States Congress. He was associated at various times with the Whig Party, the Free Soil Party, the Republican Party, the Liberal Republican Party, the National Reform Party and the Democratic Party. He helped to found the Republican Party in Michigan in 1854.[14]

Blair's biographer has noted that he was a "political idealist" from the start. Along the way he fought for such causes as the abolition of slavery and capital punishment, prison reform, achievement of the franchise for blacks, and various types of political reforms to make government frugal, efficient and responsive to the needs of the people.[15]

Blair fitted well the model of the Liberal Reformer. He perceived himself to be among the "best men" of society and therefore destined and obliged to be a leader of the Reform cause. He

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[13] Ibid., pp. 17-27.

[14] Ibid., pp. 26, 33, 89, 215.

[15] Ibid., pp. 30-40.

was convinced that the spoils system militated against the political success of the "best men." "Ignorant men," he said, get appointments when intelligent men cannot," and "vicious men vault into snug places which honest men seem unable to reach." He demanded men of intelligence and political ability for elective office. Consequently he was an outspoken advocate of civil service reform.[16]

At various Reform conventions and gatherings in Michigan the Civil War Governor made references to the necessity of morality and accountability in politics. He called for a high level of moral "purity" for all individuals aspiring to office. He thus exhibited the puritanical strain which was characteristic of the Liberal Reformers.

A true democrat, he insisted that government be responsive to the needs of the people. In calling for governmental reform at all levels, he held that men "must demand the severe accountability of the government to the people."[17]

Blair believed in and publicly supported government which was efficient and frugal, but his brand of reform was anything but revolutionary. He wanted change but within the existing social, political, and economic framework. His advocacy of third party reform efforts was nothing more than an attempt to show what the two major parties had been in the past and must strive to be in the future.[18]

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[16] Ibid., p. 239.

[17] Saginaw Daily Courier, July 7, 1874.

[18] Ibid.

Fred Abbott Baker of Detroit was another leading Reformer. He was one of the principal architects of the National Reform movement of 1874, an organizer of the "hard money" conference of 1875 and a leading advocate of civil service reform in 1876.

Baker was born on a farm in Holly Township in Oakland County. He began his education in the public schools and continued it at the Michigan Agriculture College in East Lansing and Eastman's Business College in Poughkeepsie, New York. He subsequently served as a clerk and a bookkeeper in his father's general store in Holly.[19]

When the war came young Baker tried to join the army. He volunteered for service in Michigan's 11th Cavalry but was turned down for health reasons. He had a hernia.[20]

Not being satisfied with the life of a store employee Baker took up the study of the law. He was admitted to the bar in 1867 and entered law practice with a well-known attorney, Col. Sylvester Larnard, in Detroit.[21]

While he was with Larnard, Baker became an expert in the area of constitutional law and the law of municipal corporations. He received accolades for his role in the widely publicized "park

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[19]George Irving Reed (ed.), Bench and Bar of Michigan (Chicago: Century Publishing Company, 1897), pp. 378-379.

[20]Ibid., p. 22.

[21]Ibid., p. 380; Michigan State Gazetteer and Business Directory, 1875, p. 216.

case." The state legislature had passed a law which compelled the city of Detroit to purchase certain lands for a park. Baker "publicly and fearlessly in advance of everybody else attacked the statute as unconstitutional." He prepared a brief on the case which served as a cornerstone of the campaign against the legality of the legislature's action. The state supreme court sustained Baker's argument and the law was struck down.[22]

As for political identity, Baker was a Democrat during most of his career. He did diverge from that course on a number of occasions, however, when it seemed to him that genuine reform could be attained only through a new, third party effort. He was one of the original National Reformers and served as state chairman of the organization in 1875. Baker "never sought political preferment" but did serve in various capacities when drafted. He participated, for example, as a member of the village council and a representative in the state legislature.[23]

During his political career, Baker generally manifested those traits which were indigenous to the model Liberal Reformer. He was an independent spirit. This was illustrated in his pursuance of the "park case" before the public acceptance of his stand had been confirmed. He was firmly committed to the notion that a man's

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[22]Reed, Bench and Bar, p. 380.

[23]Ibid., pp. 380-381.

principles must determine his actions. This conviction carried over into his political activities. He lauded the will to "rise above party prejudice" where ever it interfered with the needs of the country.[24]

Baker believed that government should be directly responsible to the electorate and thus he supported the concept of the direct election of senators, the vice-president, and president. He further endorsed the idea that "the people should elect any and all civil officers whose duties were local in nature and which required them to reside in the states where the duties were performed."[25] There is no doubt that he considered himself and was considered by others to be one of society's "best men," well suited for a prominent place in the crusade for civil service reform. This sentiment was expressed by leading Liberal Reformers, both in and out of Michigan.[26]

Since his own success was firmly rooted in the existing socioeconomic and political system, Baker sought reform without revolution. He had risen from rather humble origins to become one of Detroit's leading lawyers, and his legal fame had been enhanced by his pursuit of an independent and principled course in politics.

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[24]Detroit Free Press, March 4, 1875.

[25]Ibid.

[26]George Willard to F. A. Baker, January 19, 1876 and William Cullen Bryant, et al., to Baker, April 6, 1876, Baker Papers.

Quite simply he strove to make the existing "system" work more beneficially for the optimum number of people in society. He saw this as his gravest responsibility.[27]

John Celsus Blanchard was another important Reform leader. Born in Cayuga County, New York, in 1822, he received his early education at Temple Hill Academy and Camuga Institute. In 1836, at the age of fourteen, he moved to Michigan.[28] Once there he engaged in a number of menial jobs, including a clerkship in a store and work as a farm hand. He studied the law on his own and in 1874, at the age of twenty, he passed the bar examination. He then entered legal practice in Detroit.[29] Later, Blanchard removed to Ionia, Michigan and joined a law partnership with A. F. Bell of that town. In time he and Bell emerged as the most prestigious firm in mid-Michigan. This felicitous development was due almost exclusively to Blanchard's brilliance in the field of criminal law. He came to be recognized as the "head of his field."[30] During his career he defended thirty accused murderers and never lost a case.[31]

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[27]Other information on Baker is found in Michigan Manual, 1877, p. 656; Michigan Biographies, Vol. I (Lansing: Michigan Historical Commission, 1924), p. 41, and A. H. Marquis, Book of Detroiters, (Chicago: A. H. Marquis, 1914), p. 38.

[28]Representative Men, 5th dst., p. 10.

[29]John S. Schenck, History of Ionia and Montcalm Counties, (Philadelphia: D. W. Ensign and Company, 1881), p. 170.

[30]Ibid.; Michigan Gazetteer, 1873, p. 359.

[31]Portrait and Biographical Album of Ionia and Montcalm Counties, (Chicago: Chapman Brothers, 1891), p. 775.

Blanchard's incisive legal mind was complemented by a sincere social concern. He was a "liberal benefactor" of almost every worthy project. Besides his efforts in behalf of churches and schools, he contributed at least a thousand dollars a year to other charitable causes for many years. He served as a school director in Ionia and was a trustee and supporter of Albion College.[32]

As an independent, vigorous, and involved politician, Blanchard was first active in Michigan's Free Soil party and later became a leader in the Liberal Republican and National Reform efforts of 1872 and 1874. Before and after these third-party experiments he was a Democrat. Blanchard held many offices over the years and in 1872 was the Liberal-Democratic nominee for lieutenant governor of Michigan.[33]

Of Blanchard's many social committments, the church and fraternal organizations ranked first. He was active in the Methodist Episcopal Church and for a long time was a prominent member of the Order of Masons.[34]

The life style of John Blanchard generally reflected his affluent and socially prestigious position. He resided in a magnificent house, built with stone from a quarry of which he was part owner.[35]

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[32]Schenck, History of Ionia County, p. 170.

[33]Representative Men, 5th dst., p. 10.

[34]Schenck, History of Ionia County, p. 170.

[35]Biographical Album of Ionia County, p. 775.

Blanchard was widely revered for his high standards of morality and integrity and for his personal determination. His perseverance won him respect and he was lauded as a self-made man, well deserving of his position of "prosperity and influence." The citizens of Ionia manifested their admiration for him by electing him as president of the village.[36]

Blanchard's brand of reform was genuine, unselfish, and uncompromising. He wanted "purity of administration and respect for the Constitution and the law," and demanded elected officials who were "honest and capable and rigidly accountable" to the electorate. He insisted upon the preservation of the rights of individuals and states. He called for a frugal and efficient government, and, above all, one that acted not to serve the "privileged classes," but to serve the general welfare.[37]

John Blanchard was no revolutionary. He supported the existing governmental and economic system. As a self-made man he was well aware of the benefits to be derived by anyone willing to work and apply his energies for a desired goal. Thus he simply strove to restore the morals and principles that had "existed in the

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[36]Schenck, History of Ionia County, p. 170. See also E. E. Branch, History of Ionia County (Indianapolis: B. F. Bowen Company, 1916), p. 300.

[37]Circular enclosed in Blanchard's letter to Blair, April 4, 1874, Blair Papers.

early days of the Republic." If this could be done, the "system" would work as the founding fathers had originally intended.[38]

Blanchard's sincerity in the cause of reform was unquestioned. Even his political opposition recognized it. The Lansing State Republican, in a bitingly satirical essay on the motives of some of those in attendance at the National Reform Convention in September, 1874, acknowledged that Blanchard's purpose was to further "the interest of reform."[39]

Also active in the Michigan Liberal Republican and National Reform movements was William D. Harriman of Ann Arbor. Harriman was born in Vermont in 1833 and was educated in the local schools and at the Peachman Academy. He taught in his native state for a number of years before coming to Michigan.[40]

Harriman was an active and independent political figure. He was a Republican before becoming involved in the Reform movement. He voted for Greeley in 1872 and was active as a Liberal Republican in that year, and as a National Reformer in 1874. Subsequently he became a Democrat and retained that political identity.[41]

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[38] Ibid.

[39] Lansing State Republican, September 11, 1874.

[40] Portrait and Biographical Album of Washtenaw County, (Chicago: Biographical Publishing Company, 1891), p. 444.

[41] Ibid.

As a successful lawyer, judge, and politician, Harriman was deeply involved in the civic and business affairs of Ann Arbor. He was a trustee of the Unitarian Church and president of the Ann Arbor Savings Bank. Quite naturally he was considered as one of the city's leading citizens and he resided in a "large, elegant brick residence."[42]

In addition to being a longtime advocate of honesty and reform in politics, Harriman believed in laissez-faire economics and was a proponent of free trade.[43]

Harriman was a beneficiary of the American social, political, and economic structure and he sought to make that structure work better to benefit more people. He certainly did not want to overthrow or destroy those existing institutions and traditions which had accounted for his success.

Daville Hubbard of Marshall was representative of the Granger-oriented farming interest which, by 1874, had become a salient feature in the Reform movement. Hubbard was born on a farm in New York in 1829 and moved to Michigan in 1835. He rapidly emerged as one of the more effective and prosperous farmers in the Marshall area. Indeed, his farm was one of the finest in the state, a real showcase.[44]

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[42] Ibid.; History of Washtenaw County (Chicago: Chas. C. Chapman Company, 1881), p. 1002.

[43] Biographical Album of Washtenaw County, p. 444.

[44] Representative Men, 3rd dst., p. 56.

When the Civil War came Hubbard entered the Union Army as a private and eventually rose to the rank of captain. He saw action at the first battle of Bull Run.[45]

His Michigan political career began with membership in the Free Soil Party. After this experience he assisted in the formation of the Republican Party in the state. By 1872 he had become so disillusioned with that party that he joined the Liberal Republican ranks and worked for the election of Horace Greeley. He later moved into the National Reform Party and the Greenback Party before returning to the Republican fold. Although urged on numerous occasions to run for various local and state offices, Hubbard declined. But he did serve in organizational capacities at various levels of politics. He was thus willing to "work in the trenches" without yielding to the temptation to gain any public glory for himself.[46]

Hubbard was one of the principal organizers of the Grange. He was keenly aware of the interests and needs of farmers and believed that the organization could serve them. He held several posts in the Marshall Grange including that of Master for the first two years.[47]

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[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid.

Hubbard grew wealthy from his activities in agriculture and business. In addition to his farm in Marshall he purchased several others in and out of Michigan. The largest of these was a 2,300 acre farm in Iowa. There and elsewhere he raised and sold prize sheep and cattle. In Marshall he was a stockholder and director of the First National Bank and a partner in a hoe company and other enterprises.[48]

Hubbard was among the most affluent men in his area and his pursuit of the "People's Reform" effort was not based on any need for personal gain. As one of the "best men" in his community, he was concerned with the restoration of honesty and efficiency in government. And his knowledge of the special needs of the farmer made him typical of the agrarian Reformer.

Of the many Michigan Liberal Reform leaders, Charles Sedgewick May was perhaps the most widely known and respected. His national reputation for political oratory was almost as strong as his reputation in the state. May was born in Sandisfield, Massachusetts on March 22, 1830. Four years later his parents moved to a farm in Kalamazoo County, Michigan, where May spent his formative years.[49] He received his early education in the local schools, went

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[48] Ibid. See also Washington Gardner, History of Calhoun County (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1913), pp. 1214-1215.

[49] David Fisher and Frank Little (eds.), Compendium of History and Biography of Kalamazoo County (Chicago: A. W. Bowen and Company, 1906), p. 522.

to college at the Kalamazoo branch of the University of Michigan, and Bennington, Vermont. He passed the bar examination in 1854.[50]

Having embarked briefly upon a law career, May delved into journalism. He served as the Washington correspondent for the Detroit Tribune, ultimately ascending to the associate editorship of that paper. Still later he returned to Kalamazoo and resumed the practice of law.[51]

When the Civil War came, May then the county attorney, resigned his office and organized Company K of the Second Michigan Infantry. This was Michigan's first volunteer company and May "led it with honor" in battles including Bull Run. He was later commended for his bravery and recommended for promotion, but his military career was short-lived. A break down of his health led to a premature honorable discharge.[52]

Upon returning to Kalamazoo and his legal practice May quickly became involved in politics. In 1863 he was elected to the position of lieutenant governor of Michigan on the Republican ticket with gubernatorial candidate Austin Blair. He acted in concert with the Liberal Republicans in 1872 and the National Reformers in 1874

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[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Portrait and Biographical Record of Kalamazoo, Allegan, and Van Buren Counties (Chicago: Chapman Brothers, 1892), p. 468.

and thereafter with the Democrats. On numerous occasions he declined invitations by the Reformers and Democrats to run for Congress and other offices.[53]

May's political impact was in large part attributable to his extraordinary oratorical ability. He gained a national reputation as a speaker in 1863 upon delivering an address to the state senate supporting the war effort. This speech was circulated widely throughout the northwest under the title of "Union, Victory, and Freedom." It appeared in its entirety in many Republican journals throughout the North. In 1872 he gave an address in Kalamazoo supporting the Liberal Republican cause and condemning the corruption of the Grant Administration. This was employed by the Liberals as a campaign document on a national basis. In 1874 a similar speech on behalf of the National Reform Movement in Michigan became the main campaign paper. In 1876 May's speech at Cleveland, Ohio, backing Tilden and Hendricks, was published in leading Democratic organs.[54]

May's legal success was also due to a significant degree to his oratory. He was involved in many famous trials and delivered a number of briefs before the state supreme court. One especially noteworthy effort was entitled "Trial by Jury" which he presented

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[53] Ibid.; Michigan Biographies, Vol. II, p. 87.

[54] Biographical Record of Kalamazoo County, p. 468.

before the law department of the University of Michigan. This "gave him standing as an advocate second to few in the Northwest."[55]

The secret of May's oratorical stature lay in the force and clarity of his style and delivery. One observer said that he was "forceful and earnest, his diction at all times pure and flowing, his manner self-possessed, and as he advanced with his subject he warmed to a glow of oratory that charmed all who heard him."[56] Another said that "the classical quality of his style, the strength and often pungent quality of his sentences and logic, and purity and effectiveness of his imagery and diction, with pleasing, well modulated voice and gesture, and often intense earnestness, rendered him a leading public speaker and orator, whether before a jury or on the platform."[57]

May was a very religious man and was active in the Unitarian Church. For a number of years he served as the vice-president of the national Unitarian Conference. And in 1870, upon the death of the president of the Conference, he was appointed by the national committee to fill the vacancy.[58]

Generally recognized as a man of purity, impeccable integrity, and strong independent values, May was said to be "of a

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[55] Ibid., p. 469; Kalamazoo Gazette, March 26, 1875.

[56] Biographical Record of Kalamazoo County, p. 523.

[57] Fisher, Compendium of Kalamazoo County, p. 523.

[58] Ibid.

very sensitive nature, true to his convictions of propriety and right, and an advocate of the pure life."[59] He was known "as a thoroughly independent thinker, and an affable, scholarly, cultivated gentleman."[60]

In politics one of the main criterion of the Liberal Reformer was a genuine independent spirit and the courage to act on that spirit. May met this test. He displayed "an unswerving regard for principle, a pronounced independence, and an unyielding moral courage." He never "made himself subservient to any party and ever kept himself aloof from the mere machine politicians...."[61] A dogged opponent of political tyranny, he stated that the party "should never command or coerce. It should never have any claims upon people further than those which accord with the reason, the judgment, and the conscience of the individual voter."[62]

May and his family were socially prominent. They had two grand residences, one in Kalamazoo and an exclusive summer home on the shore of Gull Lake. May's wife and children were "well educated and occupied good positions in society." Here certainly was one of the "best families" of Michigan.[63]

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[59] Ibid.

[60] Portrait of Kalamazoo County, p. 469.

[61] Ibid., pp. 468-469.

[62] May's speech, October 15, 1874, Speeches of the Stump.

[63] Portrait of Kalamazoo County, p. 469.

Another prestigious Michigan Reform leader was Allen Burton Morse. He was a native of Michigan, born in 1839 at Otisco in Ionia County. He attended public school on an irregular basis, receiving much of his early education from his father. The elder Morse was a judge of the probate court and had served as a member of the state legislature. Young Morse later took a two year course at the Michigan Agricultural College.[64]

Morse's war record was truly impressive. In 1861 he enlisted in the army and saw action in many famous battles including Manassas, Gaines Mill, Antietam, and Chickamauga. He lost an arm in the Battle of Missionary Ridge and was commended for bravery under fire by William T. Sherman.[65]

Upon completion of his military service he returned to Ionia, took up the study of the law, and was admitted to the bar in 1865. He practiced law in and around Ionia for some twenty years thereafter.[66]

Allen Morse enjoyed a long and distinguished political career. His offices ranged from county prosecuting attorney, to mayor of Ionia, to state senator. In 1874 he was the Liberal candidate for senator from the 27th district and was elected by a substantial

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[64]Schenck, History of Ionia County, p. 164.

[65]Ibid.

[66]Michigan Biographies, Vol. II, p. 124.

majority in a normally strong Republican district.[67] In that race the Liberals pointed out that "Morse...had been a good Republican as long as Republican meant anything" good.[68] The culmination of Morse's political and legal career occurred in 1885 when he was elected to the Michigan Supreme Court.[69]

Morse was a man of tenacity, principle, and bedrock integrity. In legal, judicial, and political activities he "expressed opinions fearlessly."[70] His oratory reflected this approach. It was "plain, simple, and direct."[71] When he believed that the regular Republicans had gone astray he was not afraid to support the Liberal Republicans in 1872 and the National Reformers in 1874.

George H. Murdock of Berrien Springs was a leading spirit of the Liberal movement in the state, and especially of the National Reform effort of 1874. He was born in Bedford County, Pennsylvania in 1829 but received his education in the select schools of St. Louis, Missouri, where his family had moved. In 1847 he came to

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[67]Schenck, History of Ionia County, p. 164; Michigan Manual, 1875, p. 447; Men of Progress (Detroit: Evening News Assoc., 1900), p. 227.

[68]Detroit Evening News, October 13, 1874.

[69]Portrait of Ionia County, p. 203.

[70]Schenck, History of Ionia County, p. 164.

[71]Portrait of Ionia County, p. 203.

Berrien Springs, Michigan, establishing permanent residence there. He operated a store in the community before entering politics by winning election as Berrien County Clerk.[72]

When the Civil War commenced, Murdock organized Company I of the First Michigan Sharpshooters. He served in the Army of the Potomac, seeing action in the Battle of the Wilderness and in the siege of Petersburg. He was seriously wounded in the head during the latter campaign. For meritorious service he was promoted to major and honorably discharged from the army in December, 1864.[73]

Upon returning home, Murdock re-entered politics and over the years served in various local offices. At first he was a Republican, but he affiliated with the Liberal Republican cause in 1872, helped organize and direct the National Reform movement in 1874, and by 1876 had entered the Democratic fold. After 1876 he owned and operated the official Democratic county organ, the Berrien County Journal.[74]

Murdock was instrumental in promoting the construction and extension of railroads in southwestern Michigan. He facilitated the extension of railroad service to Berrien Springs and acted as an

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[72]Portrait and Biographical Record of Berrien and Cass Counties (Chicago: Biographical Publishing Company, 1893), p. 291.

[73]Ibid.

[74]Ibid.

officer of the St. Joseph Valley Railroad for several years. In addition to his railroad activities he generally "aided and promoted all enterprises of a private and public nature that would benefit his village."[75]

Allen Potter, a distinguished Liberal Reformer from Kalamazoo, was born in Saratoga County, New York, in 1818. Educated in the local schools, he eventually took up the trade of tinner and came to Michigan in 1838 where he pursued his vocation in the southern part of the state.[76]

In 1845 he moved to Kalamazoo and became a successful entrepreneur. As owner of a hardware store and tin shop he went into partnership with some of the well-to-do residents and purchased a blast furnace. Later he became a partner in a gas company and also rose to prominence in the banking field as the organizer and vice-president of the Michigan National Bank.[77] He was a founder of the South Haven Railroad and served as president of the line as well as assisting in the establishment of the Kalamazoo Paper Mill.[78]

In addition to being an astute and shrewd businessman, Potter was a humane and generous man who contributed freely to local

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[75] Ibid., p. 292.

[76] Fisher, Compendium of Kalamazoo County, p. 172.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Portrait of Kalamazoo County, p. 1137.

churches and charities. He was an incorporator of a college, and served for several years as the treasurer of the Michigan Asylum for the Insane at Kalamazoo.[79]

Allen Potter led a varied and independent political life. His experience included terms in the United States Congress, the state legislature, and as mayor of Kalamazoo. Originally a Republican, he became increasingly independent due to disillusionment with the G.O.P. In 1872 he was a Liberal Republican and he associated with the Independent or National Reform movement in 1874. Thereafter he aligned with the Democratic organization.[80]

Potter was widely respected both as a business leader and politician. "In his legislative work," an observer noted, "he projected the same energy, capacity, and breadth of skill that distinguished him in private business. He displayed a wide and accurate knowledge of public affairs that made him a valuable member of the bodies to which he was sent as a representative."[81] Regarded locally and across the state as one of the "best and purest men," Potter was an "influential and deservedly respected resident of Kalamazoo County."[82]

Liberal Reformer Eugene Pringle was born in Otsego County, New York, in 1826. He spent much of his youth in Chautaugua County

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[79] Ibid.

[80] Ibid.; Michigan Biographies, Vol. II, p. 203.

[81] Fisher, Compendium of Kalamazoo County, p. 175.

[82] Detroit Free Press, August 31, 1872.

where he attended the district school. He extended his educational experience at the Mayville Academy and the classical school at Batavia. By age eighteen he had begun to study the law and was admitted to the New York Bar in 1849. In 1850 Pringle moved to Jackson, Michigan, and set up a law practice in partnership with Samuel H. Kimball. He "soon became recognized as one of the earnest, versatile and able young advocates of the state."[83]

A "long and distinguished service in public office" was initiated in 1852 when Pringle was elected a circuit court commissioner. He went on to occupy many other positions including that of state legislator and mayor of Jackson. Changing party identity according to personal convictions and principles, Pringle was successively a Democrat, a Republican, a Liberal Republican, a National Reformer, and a Democrat again.[84]

Pringle was recognized throughout the state as one of the foremost corporate attorneys and promoters of railroad companies. He worked incessantly for legislation which would expedite the financing and extension of railways in Michigan. A prime mover

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[83]Charles V. DeLand, DeLand's History of Jackson County (Logansport, Indiana: B. F. Bowen, 1903), p. 498; Michigan Gazetteer, 1873, p. 374.

[84]DeLand, Jackson County, pp. 498-499, 501. See also Representative Men, 3rd dst., p. 79, and Michigan Biographies, Vol. II, p. 212.

behind the development of the Grand River Valley Railroad, Pringle served as an officer of that and other lines.[85]

Pringle was a participant in the formation of other business ventures besides railroads. He aided in the founding of the Jackson Iron Company, served as its secretary, and played a key role in the development and exploitation of the company's extensive properties on the Lake Superior shore. Pringle also became a stockholder in a company set up to furnish a water works for the city of Jackson. As the attorney of the company, he supported legislation providing for the local ownership of the water works through the purchase of stock by the municipal corporation. "This was the first instance of municipal ownership of public utilities" in Michigan.[86]

Socially, Eugene Pringle was one of the elite of Jackson. He and his family were considered among the most prestigious. They were "in the best social life of the city." Their plush home was a local landmark and the center of much "gracious hospitality." Pringle was honored as one of the "most distinguished citizens and sterling pioneers of Jackson."[87]

Pringle's character was typical of the sincere Liberal Reformer. His "integrity of purpose in all the relations of his

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[85]DeLand, Jackson County, p. 500; Men of Progress, p. 315.

[86]DeLand, Jackson County, pp. 500-501.

[87]Ibid., p. 502.

life was ever beyond cavil. He performed all duties public and private with a high sense of honor and in a manner alike commendable and upright." His individuality was "so distinctive that he could not but encounter personal antagonisms, but even his bitterest opponents did not venture to assail the honesty and sincerity of the man at any point in his active and signally useful career."[88]

The most illustrious Liberal Reformer from Tuscola County was John H. Richardson. He was born in Randolph, Vermont, in 1814 and spent his youth there. He worked on a farm and picked up his early education in the district schools as best he could. In 1847 Richardson moved to Michigan, settling near the town of Tuscola. He secured a tract of pine lands, built a saw mill and went into the lumber business at which he was conspicuously successful. He later built a flour mill and after that a sash and blind factory. All of these ventures were financially profitable. The income from these enterprises was supplemented by two large and productive farms which Richardson owned and operated. Speaking of this clearly ambitious and self-made man, one writer noted that "He had been eminently successful in business and had acquired a fine competence and all the fruits of his own labor."[89]

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[88] Ibid., p. 501.

[89] History of Tuscola and Bay Counties (Chicago: H. R. Page and Company, 1883), pp. 36-37.

When the Civil War commenced, Richardson joined the cause of the Union and became a hero. His exemplary actions in the Peninsular campaign led to a promotion to lieutenant-colonel. In the fall of 1863 his health failed and forced him to resign from the military.[90]

Before and after the war Richardson served in a number of county and state positions through appointment and election. He exhibited a strong strain of political independence and was in succession a Republican, Liberal Republican, National Reformer, Democrat and Greenbacker.[91]

A man of lofty political principles, Richardson continually demanded the highest standards of morality and conduct of those endowed with the public trust no matter to which party they belonged. He was a life-long advocate of reform. He once wrote to Blair that the Liberal cause "was just and must prevail" and concluded that he "was for reform body and soul."[92]

Richardson's social prominence in Tuscola was great. He lived in "a fine residence in the village" and enjoyed the "confidence and esteem of his many friends" who placed him in an "honorable position."[93]

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[90] Ibid.

[91] Ibid.; Michigan Biographies, Vol. II, p. 234; Michigan Manual, 1883, p. 485.

[92] J. H. Richardson to Austin Blair, March 16, 1873, Blair Papers.

[93] History of Tuscola County, p. 37.

One of the main proponents of the Liberal Republican cause in 1872 was Duncan Stewart of Detroit. He was born in Scotland and emigrated to the United States and Detroit in 1843. Although not formally educated, he revealed a strong sense of business acumen from a rather tender age.[94]

Stewart engaged in many business pursuits during his adulthood. He became one of the most important, large-volume grain merchants in the United States. He served as president of the Detroit Board of Trade and was a member of the board of directors of the Second National Bank. Also he was a major owner of the Western Transportation Company.[95]

In addition to his successful business activities Stewart was a great humanitarian and a dedicated member of the Presbyterian Church. He contributed substantial amounts of money over the years to various causes. One of the most visible of his projects was the construction of a new church in the city. The result was a "beautiful Gothic structure" which became, with time, a landmark.[96]

In politics, Duncan Stewart was an influential Republican. This was illustrated by his early relations with Senator Zachariah

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[94]Clarence and Agnes Burton, History of Wayne County and the City of Detroit (Detroit: S. S. Clarke Publishing Company, 1930), pp. 295-296.

[95]Ibid., p. 296.

[96]Ibid., p. 297.

Chandler. The latter at one point offered Stewart the Republican nomination for the gubernatorial post. Such an endorsement was tantamount to election in Michigan, but Stewart declined on the grounds that he had private commitments which were more important to him than election to the highest office in the state. Obviously he was an independent and individualistic thinker who would not be swayed by the wealthy or the powerful.[97]

Although Stewart was generally regarded as an "old line" Republican and party leader, he had become extremely disillusioned with that party by 1872. He was chagrined by the policy of Radical Reconstruction which was being pursued in the South. It was said that after he had spent a few months in that section "he came back converted" to the Liberal view.[98]

Stewart also was extremely agitated by the persistence of Republican support for a high tariff. He believed that this operated for the benefit of the capitalist classes to the detriment of the workingman. Further, he concluded that it was the duty of the federal government to prevent the capitalist from leeching on the productivity of the workers through such instruments as the tariff and various "land grabbing" schemes.[99]

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[97] Ibid.

[98] Grand Rapids Democrat, July 31, 1872.

[99] Detroit Free Press, August 10, 1872.

Stewart concluded that the only rational course for him to take would be to support the Liberal Republican drive whose presidential candidate had as some of his avowed goals the reconciliation of North to South and letting the people decide what was to be done about the tariff. During the campaign Stewart became one of the most sought after and respected supporters of the Liberal Republican cause.[100]

Osmond Tower of Ionia was another staunch Liberal Reformer in Michigan. He was born in Hampshire County, Massachusetts, in 1811. Educated in the common schools, he learned carpentry and practiced that trade through various moves which brought him first to upstate New York and finally to Michigan where he settled in Ionia in 1835.[101]

Once he arrived in Ionia, Tower branched out into various business associations. These included partnership in a drygoods operation, a hardware firm, and a company which manufactured and sold hot-air furnaces. He also got into the railroad business, serving as a major stock holder and principal officer for the Ionia and Lansing railroad and the Ionia and Stanton railroad. He further became president of Home Mutual Insurance Company.[102]

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[100]Stewart's Speech, July 22, 1872, "Michigan Political Speeches."

[101]Schenck, History of Ionia County, p. 160.

[102]Ibid.; Michigan Gazetteer, 1873, p. 360.

Tower began his political career as a Whig and then became a Republican, Liberal Republican, and National Reformer. He held many offices ranging from county clerk to state senator.[103] As a reform-minded politician he was considered a man of strong will and "unquestioned integrity," and his moral character was said to be "above reproach."[104]

The Towers comprised one of the most preeminent families in Ionia. They enjoyed the approbation of neighbors and friends and they lived in what was termed "a magnificent residence."[105]

Jerome W. Turner was born in Franklin County, Vermont, in 1836 and came to Howell, Michigan, with his parents in 1839. He received his early education in the local public schools and at Northville and Lodi Academies. After attending the University of Michigan he took up the study of the law and successfully completed his bar examination by 1857.[106]

For awhile Turner engaged in a law practice with Judge F. C. Whipple in his home town. But shortly he moved to Shiawassee County and settled in Owosso which became his permanent residence.

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[103]Schenck, History of Ionia County, p. 160; Branch, History of Ionia County, p. 504; Michigan Biographies, Vol. II, p. 365.

[104]Schenck, History of Ionia County, p. 160.

[105]Ibid.

[106]Portrait and Biographical Album of Clinton and Shiawassee Counties (Chicago: Chapman Brothers, 1893), p. 326.

He entered again the practice of law at his new home and became one of the more respected advocates of the area.[107]

During the war, Turner received various appointments which kept him rather far removed from the battlefield. He served as an adjutant and paymaster in northern Michigan and in Louisville, Kentucky.[108]

Turner enjoyed an extended political career, during which he was twice elected to the state senate and was chosen as mayor of Owosso. Throughout his political life Jerome Turner displayed a proclivity for honesty and reform in government. Consequently he deserted the Republican Party because of its corruption and joined wholeheartedly the Liberal Republican and National Reform movements. When the independent Reform effort declined, he moved over into the Democratic ranks.[109]

Turner and his family were intellectual and social leaders in Owosso. He provided his seven sons and one daughter with "superior educations" and three of them followed him into the legal profession. His wife was a "lady of rich and varied accomplishments."

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[107] Ibid.; Michigan Gazetteer, 1873, p. 515.

[108] Biographical Album of Shiawassee County, p. 326.

[109] Ibid.; Michigan Biographies, Vol. II, p. 374; Charles Moore, History of Michigan, Vol. IV (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1913), p. 2147.

Turner was granted much "admiration and honor" by his fellow citizens who recognized him as "one of the most highly respected members of society in Owosso."[110]

George W. Underwood, who was also in the vanguard of political reform in Michigan in the 1870s, had a successful background. Born in Massachusetts in 1814 he attended local schools. His higher education was superior. He went to both Amherst and Union Colleges as well as a theological school in Connecticut, and was known as a "formidable scholar."[111] In 1843 he removed to Hillsdale, Michigan and opened a drugstore. In addition to becoming the area's best known druggist, he also devoted much time and effort to his farm.[112]

Underwood was very socially conscious and thus became involved in many organizations and cultural causes. He helped found the Agricultural Society of Hillsdale County and served as president of the Hillsdale County Fair Association. He was instrumental in providing for the erection of an impressive public opera house for the town. In addition he was the most important force behind the founding and development of Hillsdale College,[113] having

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[110] Biographical Album of Shiawassee County, p. 326.

[111] Representative Men, 2nd dst., p. 73.

[112] Ibid.; Elon G. Reynolds, Compendium of History and Biography of Hillsdale County (Chicago: A. W. Bowen and Company, 1903), pp. 327-328.

[113] Representative Men, 2nd dst., pp. 73-74.

organized a group of local men to put up the necessary money to locate the college at Hillsdale, when a similar group was trying to get it established at Coldwater.[114]

Underwood was a man of great integrity and faith. He was a proponent of temperance and a strong Christian, and demanded of elected government officials the same high moral and ethical standards which he set for himself. When the Republican leadership refused to provide these, Underwood became actively involved in the Liberal Reform movement in the state.[115]

The profiling of Michigan Liberal Reform leaders in the 1870s reveals that in many ways they were typical of the reformer "type" as described by scholars such as Sproat and Nye. They certainly were men of intelligence and substance and were considered by themselves and others to be the "best men" of society. They further believed it to be their responsibility to reform government to make it more honest, efficient, and responsive to the needs of the people. To be sure they were men of high morality, integrity, and faith, and they were motivated by a quasi-puritanical impulse. They and their contemporaries linked financial and material success to "right living." For the most part, they were intimately involved in business affairs and were very much imbued with the classical

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[114] Portrait and Biographical Album of Hillsdale County (Chicago: Chapman Brothers, 1888), p. 181.

[115] Representative Men, 2nd dst., p. 74.

economic philosophy of laissez-faire. The evidence indicates that they were interested in maximizing their profits and building up great personal fortunes with grand homes and material comforts. They also were very aware of their social responsibilities and were generally philanthropists on one scale or another. They were interested in furthering education as well as morality and gave heavily to schools, colleges, and churches. The reform they advocated was non-revolutionary, perhaps even conservative. They simply wanted to restore to government the honesty, frugality, and efficiency which they perceived to be characteristic of the early Republic.

In some other ways the Michigan Reformers were not like those described by Sproat and Hoogenboom. These historians attributed to Liberals in the gilded age an anti-democratic strain and a cynicism in reform.[116] They also charged that some Reformers were political "outs" who were trying to get back in.[117] There is a dearth of evidence to support these contentions with most of the Michigan Reform leaders. Obviously there were a few who used the Reform movement as a vehicle to recoup previous political losses. There may have been some as well who disdained the common people. Surely, too, the Reformers at times were caught in contradictions between what they did and said and between business and legal transactions and political stances. And some of them switched positions

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[116]Sproat, Best Men, p. 271.

[117]Hoogenboom, Outlawing Spoils, p. ix.

on certain issues over the years. But generally the Reformers were well-meaning and relatively consistent in their views and actions.

It appears that the Liberal Reformers of Michigan were neither anti-democratic nor crass political opportunists. Most of them were self-made men who had risen to great heights from rather humble and often poor beginnings. They knew of the plight of the common man and addressed most of their political efforts toward making the political system responsive to him. They were willing to take political risks to ensure this end. Further many of the Reform leaders were loath to take any political credit for their actions. Practically all turned down offers to run for office at one time or another because they might, by pursuing office, undermine the credibility of their motives. As a body they were sincere, genuinely concerned Reformers who were motivated in the main by a good dose of political idealism.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

The Liberal Reform experiment in Michigan politics from 1870 to 1876 had many significant ramifications. It helped to discredit the national Republican Party and simultaneously to enhance the image of the Democratic opposition. It also undermined the position of the state Republican organization and of the men who ran it. In this latter regard it played a vital role in the political defeat of Chandler in 1875. It supplied many state and local candidates for the elections during the period. From its ranks came campaigners and orators who helped influence political reform across the country. Reformers set the tone for state politics during the seventies and were instrumental in reviving the tradition of independent voting. They contributed to the success of the farmers' movement, and aided in the development of the machinery of fusion through which the statehouse was wrested from the Republicans in 1882.

Republican domination and Democratic impotence had characterized Michigan politics from the Civil War to the decade of the seventies. The Republican machine led by such powerful bosses as Zach Chandler completely controlled and dictated the course of political events in the state. The Democrats had been discredited

by charges of "copperheadism," and the "bloody shirt" was waved frequently and effectively in determining the outcome of elections in a manner beneficial to the Republicans.

The Liberal Reform effort helped to alter this situation. Reformers tarnished the image of the Republican Party and depicted that party as the vehicle of vindictiveness toward the South which worked to keep alive and perpetuate the divisiveness and antagonisms of the war. They claimed that the Republicans stood for party tyranny and political bossism and emphasized the ubiquitous corruption which had proliferated under a Republican administration. They criticized the Republican support of the high tariff as detrimental to the interests of the working man and charged that the monetary policy of the Grant administration was one of vascillation between contraction and inflation. The foreign policy of the Republican party they noted was imperialistic and grasping and completely contrary to the principles of self-determination and the right of peoples to direct their own affairs and destinies. Disregard for the right of people to self government was also manifested by the Republicans in their southern policy. And Republican interest in the southern blacks, they charged, was based primarily on political considerations. In short, the forces of Reform pointed up the many weaknesses and faults of the Republican party and demanded that thoughtful and objective voters abandon it.

While attacking the Republicans the Liberal Reformers were aiding the Democrats by working in close alliance with them. By association, the Democracy seemed to stand for things desired by the Reformers. These included the reconciliation of the sections of the country, the restoration of individual and states' rights, especially in the South, anti-imperialism in foreign affairs, sound money and responsible economic practices, the elimination of corruption and tyranny in politics, and a return to efficiency, frugality and honesty in government at all levels. In short, the Reformers lent some gravely needed credibility to a thoroughly discredited party. The Democracy could now take the offensive for the first time in years. It could declare itself to be the champion of honesty, reform, frugality, and humanity. It could argue that Democrats worked for the common man while Republicans were the servants of business interests and political bosses whose needs were antithetical to those of the laboring man.

By associating the Michigan Republican Party with the evils and deficiencies of the Grant administration, the Liberal Reformers helped to bring about the downfall of that party from its hitherto unassailable position in the state. This effort was expedited by the presence of the despised and mistrusted political boss, Zachariah Chandler. Most of the objectionable dimensions of party tyranny and corruption at the national level could be documented in the state in the activities of Chandler and his lieutenants.

If such men could be overthrown, the Reformers reasoned, then government at all levels could be made more honest, efficient, and responsive. The fundamental Reform appeal was to return government to the people.

One of the most momentous changes wrought in state politics through the efforts of the Liberal Reformers and their Democratic allies was the overthrow of boss Chandler in 1875. There can be no question but that the Reformers helped to set the tone of the attack on Chandler which ultimately resulted in his downfall. From 1870 onward the Reformers directed a continuing assault against the character, morals, and political habits of "Old Zach," and succeeded in marshalling public opinion against the Senator. Repeatedly they used him to symbolize everything that was the epitome of the corrupt, dishonest, and wasteful politician. In addition to setting the tone of verbal assault they also played an instrumental role in the actual political operations which brought on his defeat. The reform-minded legislature which finally turned him out of office was sprinkled with Liberal Reformers who had come to that body on Reform tickets from various parts of the state. They combined effectively with Democrats and bolting Republicans to win the victory. And it is interesting that the man selected to replace Chandler was the independent reform-oriented Isaac Christiancy.

The Liberal Reform effort contributed substantially to the choice of major and minor candidates in state elections during the years under examination. In 1872 the state ticket which opposed that

of the Republicans consisted of a number of true Liberal Republicans in addition to some long-standing Democrats. In 1874, again, the ticket consisted of National Reformers and Democrats. During the period of study there were several men of a reform bent elected to the state legislature. In county and municipal elections as well, men of the Liberal Reform forces were chosen to represent local constituencies. These candidates played a major role in the successes recorded against the Republicans. In some instances of combined slates the Reform candidates were more attractive to the voters than were the Democratic candidates.

In addition to providing major and minor candidates to oppose Republicans during the years in question, the Liberal Reformers furnished some of the most respected campaigners and orators in the state. A few of these had national reputations. Included among such figures were Austin Blair, Duncan Stewart, Charles Sedgewick May and Fred Abbott Baker. Such individuals were so widely known and respected that they certainly helped to achieve the election of Liberal Reformers and their Democratic allies in many places.

Those men are also significant because they proved that the Reform movement was not the product of politicians who, in selfish pursuit of office, created third parties to achieve for themselves what they could not acquire within the traditional two-party structure. Many of them neither sought office nor accepted a draft for office. They were willing to work in other capacities to

achieve success of those principles and goals which they held dear. They certainly were not "losers," desperately seeking a means to regain some lost stature or prestige. Most of them enjoyed the respect and approbation of their fellow Michiganders. They were usually successful professional or business men and they applied to a political cause the same talents and perseverance that spelled success for them in their private lives. Obviously such men did not operate out of greed or selfish motives. Instead they appeared willing to sacrifice themselves to some degree for those things in which they fervently believed.

The Reformers set the tone of state politics in general during the period. The evidence indicates that the Democrats and Republicans took up the cry of reform and the restoration of honesty to government. This became especially obvious with the election of 1876 when, in both the nation and the state, the emphasis was on reform and clean and effective government. These concerns were reflected in party platforms and in the statements and character of party candidates. The Reformers were able to influence the tenor of state and national politics out of all proportion to their absolute numbers because the leadership of the two established parties realized that the Reformers' demands had great popular appeal. Thus they moved to "steal the thunder" of the Reformers by adopting as their own the Reform cause.

In addition to setting the tone of state politics the Liberal Reform effort also contributed much to the revival of a

pattern of independent voting in Michigan. This development was crucial in light of the blind and emotional ties to the traditional parties that resulted from the feelings engendered by the Civil War and its aftermath. For the first time since the conflagration, people were beginning to base their vote not upon the appeal of their party to revulsion against the "enemy" but rather upon a logical consideration of the issues. Still more significantly, they were being asked by the Reformers to do what was honest, frugal, and right, rather than what was good for one party and detrimental to the opposing one.

As the Republican vote in the state diminished over the years under study, it became clear that the appeal was at least partially working. Many individuals across the state were beginning to conclude that the Republican party was not acting in their best interests and was even acting in ways which were not honest. People were becoming more discerning in declaring allegiance to a party if indeed they did that at all. They were gaining the courage to abandon long-standing loyalties and voting patterns and to create new ones. This was one of the great services of the independent Liberal Reform movement in Michigan. It encouraged the abandonment of blind party support through the ballot and substituted in its place a concern for independent ballot casting and political action based upon rational and moral considerations. In short, it helped to restore principle to politics and to instill in the voter a new sense of responsibility to do the right thing, to do that which would benefit the people as a whole.

The independent Reform effort was also of crucial significance to the emergent farmers' movement of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The farmers had for some time been subjected to deplorable economic conditions growing out of financial panic, natural disasters, business monopoly, and an unsympathetic government. The Grange had emerged in the 1870s as a vehicle to help the farmer improve his plight, but it was at first avowedly anti-political in organization and function. A third party structure, sensitive to the special needs and interests of the agrarian community was required and that structure was provided by the Liberal Reform effort. This is not to argue that the Liberal Reform movement in the state was simply an agrarian political protest. It was not. It emerged before the farmers organized and then served as a vehicle for farmers, along with many other groups, to achieve the overthrow of the entrenched Republican machine which worked in ways injurious to the farmer and other laboring men of the state. Aside from some local Reform organizations, however, most of the leadership of the movement was provided by non-farmers or part-time farmers. Simply stated, the Liberal Reform movement was not exclusively for the benefit of farmers, even though it did help them and was supported by them.

One of the most important roles of the Liberal Reform movement in state politics during the 1870s was the restructuring and fusing of the opposition to the Republican party. Fusion was first tried, with limited results, in 1872 when the state Liberal Republicans

and Democrats shared the same ticket. It was tried again, in a slightly different form, but with considerably more success, in the elections of 1874. In that instance there were separate tickets for the National Reform and Democratic parties, but the two had many of the same nominees. The sharing of candidates on state tickets, along with the new forms of simultaneous convention activity, contributed to the early refinement of fusion machinery. This was used with startling success by the Democrats and Greenbackers in gaining control of the state house in 1882. The use of fusion tactics generally increased the chances of the opponents of Republicanism in local, state and federal elections. The Liberal Reformers must be given much of the credit for the development of effective "fusion politics" in the state.

In a more general sense the Liberal Reform movement in Michigan and elsewhere was important because it reflected the changing concerns of a people in a period of transition. In the years after the Civil War the populace longed to lay to rest the old issues connected with that tragedy. They wished to take up the concerns of the present. They desired the restoration of integrity and efficiency to government and solutions to emergent economic problems. By addressing themselves to these desires of the people, the Liberals "peculiarly typified the new post-bellum age."[1]

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[1]Ross, Liberal Republican, p. 238.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

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MANUSCRIPTS

The most valuable source of manuscripts for the study of Michigan political reform in the 1870s is the Burton Historical Collection in the Detroit Public Library. Located there are the papers and correspondence of many of the men who played leading roles in the Reform effort. Among those represented are Austin Blair, Charles S. May, Fred Abbott Baker, and Osmond Tower.

The Blair Papers for the years 1870 through 1876 are the most helpful. Included in the former governor's correspondence are countless letters from Reform leaders in and outside of Michigan. Of special interest are those which reveal the political strategy of the Reformers for the elections of 1872 and 1874. Since Blair was one of the most noted politicians among the Reformers, he was inundated with letters requesting his assessment of the political scene and the possibilities of Reform success in the state. Numerous appeals to run for office and to appear at Reform campaign rallies are also contained in the letters.

The May Papers, although much less extensive, are of strategic import. They contain a number of Blair's letters asking for advice and support. They also reveal how May, who generally sought to avoid running for office to maintain the integrity of his reform stance,

was beseeched on numerous occasions to go against his judgment in this regard. The letters reveal the great respect that May, the most noted Reform orator, commanded in Michigan.

The Baker Papers are most critical for a proper understanding of the National Reform effort of 1874 and the campaign for civil service reform. Baker was the acknowledged state leader of both of these movements and was consulted by Reformers both in and outside of Michigan.

Another Reformer whose correspondence appears in the Burton Collection is Osmond Tower of Ionia. Although sparce in number, Tower's letters provide insight into his views on politics and the characteristics he most valued in politicians.

The papers of persons who were basically Democrats but sided with the Reformers are represented in the Burton Collection. One of the more pertinent collections in this category contains the papers of Alpheus S. Williams.

Of use, too, are the Proceedings of the Liberal Republican Convention (New York, 1872) also found in the Burton Collection.

The Historical Collections at Michigan State University in East Lansing contain some materials germane to the Reform movement in the state. Most helpful of these are the diaries of John G. Parkhurst containing his views of such things as the defeat of Chandler in 1875. Also certain items in the Chamberlain Family Papers relate to the activities of Henry Chamberlain who was at various times a Reformer, Democrat, and Greenbacker.

At Ann Arbor, the Michigan Historical Collections of the University of Michigan are valuable in the main for the papers of Republicans, Democrats, and Greenbackers who acted in concert with the Reformers, and who were on occasion endorsed as joint candidates. Among the most relevant are the papers of Brackley Shaw and Peter White, and the reminiscences of Charles C. Comstock.

PRINTED GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS: FEDERAL AND STATE

Federal

The most useful Federal Document is the Congressional Globe which became the Congressional Record in 1873. The debates recorded therein are especially valuable for determining the role of reform-minded Michigan congressmen in furthering the cause of reform at the federal level. The Congressional Record for the 44th Congress, 1st Session, for example, reveals the purposes of Michigan civil service reformers. The House Journal and Senate Journal are also helpful in tracing the actions of Reformers from Michigan in their respective houses. The United States Statutes at Large are of aid as a reference to federal legislation of a reform nature.

State

The Michigan House Journal and the Michigan Senate Journal are useful in ascertaining the activities of the legislature and the voting records of the Reform members. In particular the Senate Journal of 1872 is a great help in understanding the details of the

impeachment proceedings against Land Commissioner Edmunds. Also the House Journal of 1875 is instructive for determining the voting records of Reformers, Democrats and bolters in the senatorial election of 1875. Further, the Laws of Michigan to 1873 and the Acts of Michigan thereafter enable one to understand legislation which was unpopular with the voters of the state and which helped to undermine the image of the Republican Party. This includes statutes covering things such as public aid to private railroad companies and the state "salary grab." They are also helpful in revealing those acts which were passed because of the reform impetus. One of the most important sources of voting statistics, information on constitutional amendments, and the personnel of state government is the Michigan Manual. The volumes used range from 1869 on a bi-annual basis through 1877. They are most valuable for revealing the strength of Reform-related voting by town, city, county, congressional district, and state.

NEWSPAPERS

A plethora of state newspapers provide much of the basic information on the personnel, activities, and issues of the Reform movement.

A number of Democratic papers consulted had liberal leanings in the 1870s. Of these the Detroit Free Press, Marshall Democratic Expounder, Kalamazoo Gazette, Grand Rapids Democrat, Saginaw Daily Courier, and the Lansing Journal were used most extensively. After

some initial opposition to Liberal Reform efforts, the Free Press changed ownership and began to endorse Liberal Republicanism. Thereafter, throughout the years under consideration, it contained some of the most thorough coverage of Reform activities and conventions of any paper in the state. The Expounder gives good general coverage to Reform and is informative on the Reform pursuits of the farming element in Calhoun County. Also, S. S. Lacey, a longtime Reformer and confidant of Austin Blair, assumed control of the organ during the period under consideration. The Daily Courier provides valuable information on the Reform cause in the Saginaw Valley and the interests of reform-minded Germans in that area. The Journal was founded in 1872 as a Reform newspaper supporting the Liberal Republican cause. It was first published by George Sanford, a Liberal Republican and a close friend of Blair. By 1874 it had become Democratic but continued to give coverage to the Reform effort, especially as it dovetailed with the Democratic campaigns. Other Democratic organs which are of use include the Michigan Argus of Ann Arbor, and the Niles Democrat.

Of the Republican papers the pro-Chandler Detroit Post is helpful, as is the Lansing Republican. The anti-Chandler Republican sheet until its merger in 1877 was the Detroit Advertiser and Tribune. This paper naturally gives considerable coverage to that dimension of the Reform movement which resulted in the defeat of Chandler in 1875. Helpful, too, are such papers as the Jackson Daily Citizen, the Coldwater Republican, the Ionia Sentinel, the Hillsdale

Standard, the Port Huron Daily Times, and the Adrian Times and Expositor.

Two professed independent journals have considerable value. One is the Detroit Evening News, which gives balanced coverage of most of the significant political events in the state, while openly supporting neither of the two major parties. The other is the Grand Rapids Daily Times, which was a Liberal Republican sheet in 1872 and pursued an independent course thereafter.

In some ways the [Battle Creek] Michigan Tribune is the most representative Liberal Reform paper. It was owned and edited by Walter W. Woolnough of Battle Creek, a leading Liberal Republican and National Reformer. It covers both of these movements, extensively. Unfortunately it is only available through 1874.

The Michigan Farmer is useful for determining the agrarian position on matters such as the tariff and the currency.

OTHER SOURCES

Helpful statistical data are available in various directories and almanacs. Of special use are the Michigan Almanac and the Michigan State Gazetteer and Business Directory for the 1870s. The former provides a wealth of political data and the latter offers information about the business and professional affiliations of Reformers and others. Appleton's Annual Cyclopedia is also useful for its coverage of Michigan political activities in 1872 and 1874.

Several collections of political speeches in the State Library in Lansing are germane. These include "Michigan Political Speeches;" "Speeches by Michigan Men;" C. S. May, Speeches of the Stump, the Bar, and the Platform (Battle Creek, 1899); and relevant volumes in the "Jenison Collection."

The Spencer Collection is valuable as a source of state party platforms and convention proceedings and participants for the period.

Two excellent contemporary accounts of the political scene in the state capitol in the seventies are Lewis M. Miller, "Reminiscences of the Michigan Legislature of 1871," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, XXXII (1948), pp. 419-447, and Henry A. Haigh, "Lansing in the Good Old Seventies," Michigan History Magazine, XIII (1929), pp. 99-112.

Coverage of matters related to the Liberal Reform movement is found in: Richard Barton's unpublished Ph.D. dissertation "The Agrarian Revolt in Michigan, 1865-1900" (Michigan State University, 1958); Edmund Calkins, "Railroads of Michigan Since 1850," Michigan History Magazine, XIII (1929), pp. 5-25; Richard Doolen, "The National Greenback Party in Michigan Politics," Michigan History Magazine, XLVII (1963), pp. 161-183; Sidney Glazier, "The Michigan Labor Movement," Michigan History Magazine, XLIV (1960), pp. 303-323; Karolena Fox, "The Movement for Equal Suffrage in Michigan," Michigan History Magazine, II (1918), pp. 90-109; D. C. Shilling, "Constitution Making Since 1850," Michigan History Magazine XVIII (1934), pp. 33-47

and Floyd Streeter, "History of Prohibition Legislation in Michigan," Michigan History Magazine, II (1918), pp. 289-308.

Among the sources of biographical information on the Michigan Reformers are Michigan Biographies, 2 vols. (Lansing, 1924); Representative Men of Michigan (Cincinnati, 1878); and G. Reed (ed.), Bench and Bar of Michigan (Chicago, 1897). The most concentrated and detailed information, however, is in a myriad of county histories and biographical albums which go into great detail about the lives and fortunes of the prestigious Reform leaders. Typical of these are such volumes as John Schenck, History of Ionia and Montcalm Counties (Philadelphia, 1881); Portrait and Biographical Record of Berrien and Cass Counties (Chicago, 1893); Compendium of History and Biography of Kalamazoo County (Chicago, 1906); Clarence and Agnes Burton, History of Wayne County and the City of Detroit, 6 vols. (Detroit, 1930); and Charles DeLand, DeLand's History of Jackson County (Logansport, 1903).

The most thorough volume on a single major Reformer is Robert Charles Harris' unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, "Austin Blair of Michigan: A Political Biography" (Michigan State University, 1969).

Works on the leading antagonist of the Liberal Reformers are Wilmer Harris, The Public Life of Zachariah Chandler (Lansing, 1917); Mary Karl George, Zachariah Chandler: A Political Biography (East Lansing, 1969); and the Detroit Post and Tribune's Zachariah Chandler: His Life and Public Services (Detroit, 1880).

Good brief biographies of leading Michigan Democrats in the 1870s are Robert Bolt, Donald Dickinson (Grand Rapids, 1970) and Peter White (Grand Rapids, 1970).

There are but few histories dealing with Michigan politics in the period under consideration. The most valuable is Harriette Dilla, The Politics of Michigan 1865-1878 (New York, 1912). This volume provides a good description of the major political issues and parties of the Reconstruction era in the state. It is rather weak, however, on the Reform movement. The coverage is brief and in some cases provides an inaccurate picture of the character of the Reformers and the structure and operations of the Reform parties. Despite this and other shortcomings, it remains the only work devoted exclusively to Michigan politics in the Reconstruction era. Floyd B. Streeter, Political Parties in Michigan, 1837-1860 (Lansing, 1918), provides valuable background material on the activities of Reformers before the Civil War and William Stocking, Under the Oaks (Detroit, 1904), covers the creation of the Republican Party in Michigan and lists the founders, many of whom later became Reformers.

The general histories of Michigan provide insights into the issues and conditions which contributed to disillusionment with the Republican Party in the state, and to the rise of Reform opposition in fusion with the Democrats. These include Clever Bald, Michigan in Four Centuries (New York, 1954); Willis Dunbar, Michigan: A History of the Wolverine State (Grand Rapids, 1965); Charles Moore, History of Michigan, 4 vols. (Chicago, 1915); and Henry Utley and Bryon

Cutcheon, Michigan as a Province, Territory, and State, Clarence Burton (ed.), 4 vols. (New York, 1906).

Four volumes pertaining to the politics of the Middle West are, Henry Hubbart, The Older Middle West 1840-1880 (New York, 1936); Horace Merrill, Bourbon Democracy of the Middle West 1865-1896 (Seattle, 1953); Theodore Clarke Smith, The Liberty and Free Soil Parties in the Northwest (New York, 1967); and Russel B. Nye, Mid-western Progressive Politics (East Lansing, 1959). The latter offers a good discussion of the early organization of the Reform movement of the 1870s.

GENERAL SECONDARY SOURCES

The general subject of the Reconstruction Period is adequately covered in several works which incorporate the more recent scholarship on the subject. They are Roy Nichols, The Stakes of Power (New York, 1961); Rembert Patrick, The Reconstruction of the Nation (New York, 1967); Kenneth Stampp, The Era of Reconstruction (New York, 1965); and John Hope Franklin, Reconstruction After the Civil War (Chicago, 1961). These present judicious and balanced accounts of the Reconstruction process and the participants in it. In each volume the image of the Radicals, carpetbaggers, scalawags and blacks is somewhat redeemed. The national prevalence of political corruption is noted, as are some of the positive achievements of the Reconstruction governments in the South.

David Donald, The Politics of Reconstruction (Baton Rouge, 1965), is a quantitative study which shows that Republican Radicalism could be partially explained by the practical necessity of getting elected.

A number of older works on Reconstruction are also vital. William A. Dunning, Reconstruction, Political and Economic (New York, 1907) is the seminal study. Claude Bowers, The Tragic Era (Cambridge, 1929), is based on the fallacious view that the period was negative and destructive without any redeeming features. The debacle is blamed on the irresponsible Radicals, predatory carpetbaggers, specious scalawags and ignorant freedmen.

Paul Buck, The Road to Reunion (Boston, 1937), is useful in understanding those forces which operated to bring the alienated sections back together after the Civil War.

Andrew Johnson's role in the Reconstruction process is examined in several works. The older view is Howard K. Beale, The Critical Year, 1866 (New York, 1930). He sees the President as the champion of individual and states' rights and a proponent of reconciliation besieged by a coalition of vicious Radicals and grasping business interests. That view is contradicted by Eric McKitrick, Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction (Chicago, 1960), which reveals the chief executive as a man who was incapable of compromise even with the moderates in Congress, and who, through his emotional personal reactions to criticism of his policies, virtually ensured his isolation and the take-over of the Reconstruction process by the Radicals.

John and LaWanda Cox, Politics, Principle, and Prejudice (New York, 1963), indict Johnson for ignoring the plight of the freedman and for failing to insure at least minimal civil rights for him.

The standard account of the Grant Presidency is William Hesseltine, Ulysses S. Grant: Politician (New York, 1957).

The close of Reconstruction is explained in C. Vann Woodward, Reunion and Reaction (Boston, 1966). In detailing the events which led to the compromise of 1877 and the removal of federal troops from the South he emphasizes political bargaining, the influence of railroad interests and northern apathy toward southern blacks.

The post-Reconstruction era is covered in John Garraty, The New Commonwealth (New York, 1968) and Robert Wiebe, The Search for Order (New York, 1967). Stanley Hirshson, Farewell to the Bloody Shirt (Bloomington, 1962) and Vincent De Santis Republicans Face the Southern Question (Baltimore, 1959) discuss the strategies developed by the Republican party to rebuild a power base in the South. The key issue was whether to appeal to the black or white voter and they vacillated on this. In The Right to Vote (Baltimore, 1965), William Gillette proposes that in supporting the Fifteenth Amendment, Republican leaders were less concerned with the black southern vote than with the vote of northern blacks. The plight of blacks in America during the post-Reconstruction period is found in Rayford Logan, The Negro in American Life and Thought, The Nadir 1877-1901 (New York, 1965). The title indicates how blacks were generally treated by whites.

Reconstruction foreign policy is adequately covered in Walter Lafeber, The New Empire, An Interpretation of American Expansion

(Ithaca, 1963). This work contends that American expansionism 1860-1898 was prompted mainly by pressures from business interests. Other standard volumes such as Robert Ferrell, American Diplomacy, A History (New York, 1959) are also helpful in deciphering those strands of Grant's foreign policy objectionable to the Reformers.

Business is treated in Thomas Cochran and William Miller, The Age of Enterprise (New York, 1942). This volume keys on the rise to dominance of big business in the American economy. A sympathetic treatment of business development is found in Edward Kirkland, Industry Comes of Age; Business, Labor, and Public Policy, 1860-1897 (New York, 1961). This volume lauds and congratulates businessmen for their leadership and initiative. They are viewed generally as men of integrity who had the general welfare at heart. A similar work is Thomas Cochran, Railroad Leaders 1845-1890: The Business Mind in Action (New York, 1966). A discussion of the life style, philosophy and rationale of business leaders is found in Edward Kirkland, Dream and Thought in the American Business Community 1860-1900 (Ithaca, 1956). The older interpretation which is highly critical of the business heads of the latter half of the nineteenth century is Matthew Josephson, The Robber Barons (New York, 1934). This work depicts businessmen as ruthless tyrants who trampled on the rights of workers and consumers in their lustful pursuit of the almighty dollar.

Money issues including such matters as free silver, greenbacks, and the tariff are covered adequately in several volumes. Allen

Weinstein, Prelude to Populism: Origins of the Silver Issue 1867-1878 (New Haven, 1970), provides the background of the silver movement and comes up with some new conclusions. He argues, for example, that there was some element of truth to the conspiracy theory of the "Crime of 73." The subject of greenbacks is most definitively treated in Irwin Unger, The Greenback Era (Princeton, 1964). A main theme of this book is that there is no easy way to define who the hard money or soft money people were at any given moment. Support or opposition to greenbacks depended upon a number of complicated and shifting issues and considerations which often resulted in the seeming alliance of rather strange bedfellows. Stanley Coben, "Northern Businessmen and Radical Reconstruction," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XLVI (1959) and Robert Sharkey, Money, Class and Party (Baltimore, 1959) also argue that it is difficult to link political identity with financial policy or position. In looking at the attitudes of businessmen toward Reconstruction they found that no correlation could be drawn consistently between business interests and either a Radical or conciliatory policy toward the defeated South. The views rather were as diverse as the businessmen themselves. On the subject of the tariff, the most valuable volume for the period is Clarence Miller, The States of the Old North West and the Tariff, 1865-1888 (Emporia, 1929). He indicates that the position of mid-western congressmen on the tariff was at first shaped by response to the agrarian interests of the region and later mainly by party affiliation.

The plight of the farmer in the period under examination is discussed in Fred Shannon, The Farmers' Last Frontier (New York, 1945). The standard version of the rise and function of the Grange is Solon Buck, The Granger Movement (Cambridge, 1933).

The definitive account of political corruption in the latter part of the nineteenth century is Matthew Josephson, The Politicos (New York, 1938). This work attributes much of the rampant corruption to the undue influence of business interests in the political process.

A number of books are valuable in considering the Reform response which evolved in reaction to dishonesty and insensitivity in government. These include Eric Goldman, Rendezvous with Destiny (New York, 1956), and Richard Hofstadter, The Age of Reform (New York, 1955), which concentrate primarily on the period beginning with the 1890s but which include enlightening remarks on Reform in the 1870s and 1880s. Chester Destler, American Radicalism, 1865-1901 (New London, 1946) is also useful. The best and most recent study of Liberal Reform after the Civil War is John Sproat, The Best Men: Liberal Reformers in the Gilded Age (New York, 1968). A valuable analysis of the civil service reform effort is Ari Hoogenboom, Outlawing the Spoils (Urbana, 1961). Both of the latter volumes cast a cynical eye on the real motives and sentiments of the Reformers. Sproat proposes that they viewed themselves as the social and political elite and were really anti-democratic in attitude. They seemed to distrust and even disdain what they considered to be the ignorant

masses. Hoogenboom, on the other hand, sees the main support for civil service reform as emanating from the political "outs" who were motivated by their desire to recapture lost political office by changing the ground rules. These conclusions are generally not substantiated in this study of Michigan Liberal Reformers.

Several works on the subject of third parties are helpful in comprehending the political manifestations of the Reform sentiment. Among these are Fred Haynes, Third Party Movements Since the Civil War (Iowa City, 1916); William Hesseltine, The Rise and Fall of Third Parties (Washington, 1948); and Howard Nash, Third Parties in American Politics (Washington, 1959). Also relevant is Fred Shannon, American Farm Movements (Princeton, 1957).

The standard account of the Liberal Republican experiment of 1872 is Earle Ross, The Liberal Republican Movement (New York, 1919). Although it is dated, it remains the only full-length study. The Cincinnati convention is covered well in Matthew Downey, "Horace Greeley and the Politicians: The Liberal Republican Convention in 1872," Journal of American History, LIII (1967). Also pertinent is Patrick Riddleberger, "The Break in the Radical Ranks: Liberals vs Stalwarts in the Election of 1872," Journal of Negro History, XLIV (1959).

Typed and Printed in the U.S.A.
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