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THE AGRARIAN REVOLT IN MICHIGAN, 1865-1900

By

RICHARD HARVEY BARTON

A THESIS

Submitted to the College of Science and Arts
Michigan State University of Agriculture and
Applied Science in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of History

1958

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I. THE AGRICULTURAL BACKGROUND

The interplay of an agricultural depression and an expanding industrialism following the Civil War caused serious problems in the rural economy. Many new problems were created and several new forces were encountered which forced the farmers to alter their previous habits and to begin a period of readjustment. Because of changed conditions, the farmers' traditional patterns of living in economic, political and social affairs were being tested, and in several instances, these patterns were found to be inadequate and had to be changed.

In Michigan, as in several other mid-western and western states, there was a rural revolt against the conditions and practices resulting from the depression and industrialization. Dissatisfied farmers organized, formally or informally, in a protest designed to restore or retain their position in American affairs which they believed was being threatened by the encroachment of corporate interests and influence. During the course of the protest movement, rural thinking about agriculture's position in society underwent a significant change and emerged with an entirely new concept of the relationship between the citizen and the state.

At the close of the Civil War, Michigan's agricultural industry was concentrated in the four southern tiers of counties. It was in the process of converting from a subsistence to a commercial pattern featuring the production of staple crops for national and world markets. While the Michigan farmer raised several crops such as corn, potatoes, wool, dairy products, and fruit and vegetables in sizable quantities, the great cash crop was wheat. The Civil War had stimulated an unusual demand for this grain and the high prices of the war period caused the farmers to increase both production and acreage. As wheat prices rose toward the two dollar a bushel level, farmers became optimistic about the future and the demand for land increased. Land values in Michigan just after the war were rising. Good farms sold for as high as one hundred twnety-five dollars an acre, and seventy-five to one hundred dollars an acre prices were relatively common.[1] These prices did not slow down the agricultural boom, for a capable man could expect to pay for a new farm within two to five years so long as wheat remained near the two dollar level. Because of these developments, the agricultural industry in Michigan

[1]Michigan Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Twelfth Annual Report (Lansing, 1895), p. 433. Hereafter cited as Michigan Bureau of Labor, Report.

appeared to promise an expanding and profitable growth for several decades. However, within a short time several developments occurred to destroy the mainstays of Michigan's agricultural prosperity and provoke the agrarian revolt.

One of the developments was the settlement and cultivation of new agricultural lands in the United States and overseas. Following the Civil War the trans-Mississippi plains were opened to settlers by liberal land policies, and new, fertile lands went into production of crops which began to compete directly with Michigan farm products. The Western farms offered several advantages such as: cheap land; grasslands ready for the plow; large fields to cut unit costs; and the development of transportation subsidized by land grants. Thus, these farms generally had a lower unit production cost than did the Michigan farms, which enabled them to sell their products at lower prices.

New areas also began to appear in foreign countries, especially in the production of wheat, beef, and wool. Again their costs were often lower than for American producers and the United States foreign market for some agricultural products began to contract during the remainder of the nineteenth century. Thus, many Michi-

gan farmers found that the market price for their products was being determined by the lower world price.

Not only must the farmer contend with products from the new areas outside the state; but he also had to meet competition from the frontier of his own state. After the Civil War, the area in Michigan north of the four southern tiers of counties began to be settled and generally marketed products similar to those of the older sections. Here also, land was cheaper and costs based on land were lower, thus tending to give the northern Michigan farmer material advantages despite a slightly lower yield per acre.

Another development which in a large degree made possible the development of the frontier areas was the appearance of efficient, cheaper transportation, by both land and water. Modern transportation facilities could quickly move products into the market centers of the nation and the world, generally at declining freight rates. Thus, with the emergence of low through freight rates, distance from market terminals ceased to be as important a factor as it used to be in the marketing of agricultural commodities. Sections of the nation such as Michigan, though closer to the terminals, no longer could maintain a comparative advantage over sections which were more distant.

Two other factors contributed significantly to the increasing productivity of American agriculture after the Civil War. The first was the growing use of machinery on the nation's farms. New machines were developed to enable the farmer to produce more per worker and also to cultivate more acreage at the same time. The second factor was the application of science to the agricultural industry. New techniques, plants, research, and knowledge were made available to the farmer by agricultural colleges, state and federal agencies, and agricultural organizations. By the mid-1890's, Michigan farms and the Agricultural College had planted or experimented with over thirty varieties of wheat in an effort to raise production levels and quality.[2] As a result of this experience two commercial classes of wheat, Soft Red Winter and Common Wheat, were found acceptable in relation to Michigan's climatic, soil, and industrial conditions. The result of these two factors was a great increase in productivity per farmer, especially in the cash crops upon which Michigan had based its agricultural economy. Surpluses became common in

[2] R. C. Kedzie, "Wheats for Michigan," in Michigan State Farmers' Institutes' Bulletin No. 2 (Lansing, 1896), pp. 197-204. Hereafter cited as Michigan Farmers' Institute.

the years from 1870 to 1895 and their presence contributed to the general depression which plagued American agriculture.

The changes in agriculture after the Civil War constituted an Agricultural Revolution that should have contained more progress and profit for the average farmer than it actually did. But the failure did not lie entirely or perhaps even essentially with the agrarian economy. During the same period, the industrial sector of the economy was enjoying spectacular growth as a result of the stimulation of abnormal demands for materials during the Civil War. However, the rate of expansion in the industrial economy was not large enough to absorb the rate of expansion in the agricultural economy. Economists believe that the industrial production rate of increase should exceed the agricultural production rate of increase by at least two or three times to ensure a healthy agricultural economy.[3] But from 1865 to 1895 both sectors were increasing at about the same rate with a resultant farm depression and large surpluses. From 1895 to 1914 the rate of industrial increase greatly exceeded that of agriculture and the latter en-

[3]Ross M. Robertson, History of the American Economy (New York, 1955), p. 229.

joyed prosperity. Rising employment, higher incomes, and higher prices all promoted by increased industrial activity were conducive to better conditions for agriculture after 1895. The distressed conditions of the latter part of the nineteenth century probably resulted during a transitional period when the agriculture had over-expanded and the industrial sector had not yet matured to the extent needed to make the United States predominently an industrial nation.

Because of the Agricultural Revolution, Michigan farmers were forced to place less reliance upon their cash crop, extensive farming system. The remainder of the nineteenth century was a period of drifting, readjustment, and depression in Michigan until a new intensive, specialized crop pattern emerged to restore some measure of security and prosperity to the farming industry. It was a painful, expensive, and disillusioning transition which contributed to the agrarian revolt in Michigan.

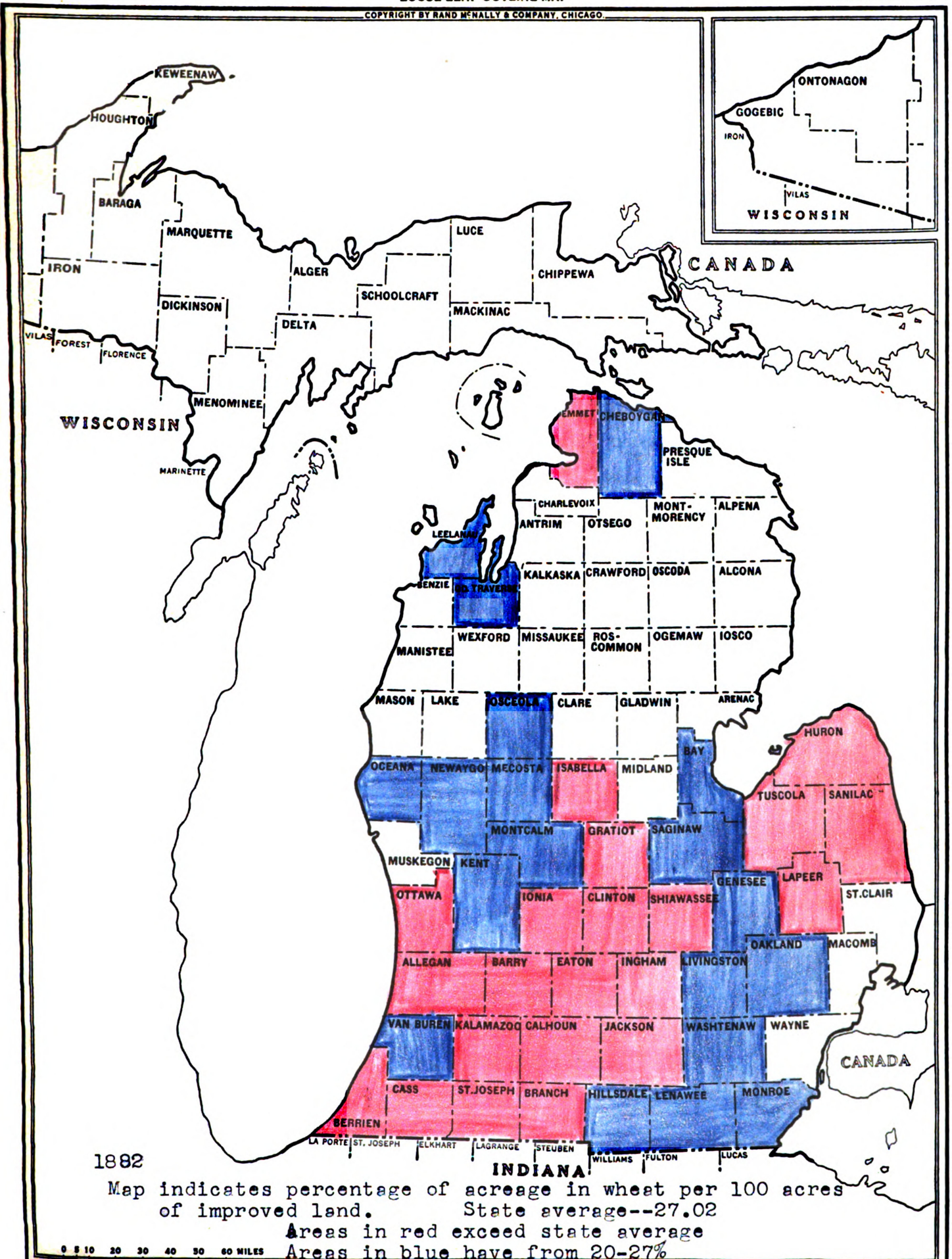
The story can perhaps best be summarized by a description of the decline of the great cash crop, wheat. The abnormally high prices of the Civil War era caused a great boom in wheat which reached its peak in 1882. By then nearly one and three-fourths million acres were

planted to wheat, yielding more than thirty-two million bushels, making Michigan the fifth ranking state.[4] Nearly 28 per cent of all improved land was planted to wheat. This percentage was even higher in the southern tiers where the million bushel a year wheat counties were located. The map on the following page indicates the areas of specialization within the state. However, this concentration in the south had reached its height by 1882. Thereafter, farmers devoted less acreage to wheat and more to other crops. In addition, wheat began to move north within the state.

Wheat, if raised as a cash crop, requires cheap land.[5] This essential requirement was vividly demonstrated in Michigan during the latter part of the nineteenth century when cheaper lands and through rates of transportation combined to destroy southern Michigan's wheat prosperity. By 1878 in the southern counties arable land was worth seventy-five dollars an acre. The total

[4]Michigan Secretary of State, Report Relating to Farms and Farm Products (Lansing, 1886-1887), xxv. Hereafter cited as Michigan Farm Statistics.

[5]R. C. Kedzie, "Agricultural Capabilities of the Soils of the Northern Counties of the Lower Peninsula," Seventeenth Annual Report of the Secretary of the State Board of Agriculture of the State of Michigan (Lansing, 1878), p. 400. Hereafter cited as Michigan State Board of Agriculture, Report.



1882

Map indicates percentage of acreage in wheat per 100 acres of improved land. State average--27.02

Areas in red exceed state average

Areas in blue have from 20-27%

cost of producing an acre of wheat, Professor R. C. Kedzie estimated, amounted to $18 an acre and the farmer needed a price per bushel of $1.05 to break even. However, in the sixth and seventh tier of counties, arable land sold for $25 an acre. This meant that interest and taxation charges were much less than in the south, and the northern farmer needed only 71 cents per bushel to break even. Because of this disparity, the wheat industry in Michigan began to move northward. By 1900 the four southern tiers' share of wheat acreage had fallen from 90 per cent of the state's total in 1876 to 78 per cent.[6]

But by 1890 the northern counties had lost their advantage over the southern. Land in the four southern tiers was then valued at $36.43 an acre, but in the central counties it had risen to $34.29.[7] The expansion of transportation in the state was leveling land values, and this in turn leveled financial returns from the wheat crop.

The crop of 1889 cost $15,089,343 and was valued at $13,931,856. The percentage of loss was approximately

[6]Michigan Farm Statistics, 1900-1901, xii.

[7]Michigan Farm Statistics, 1890-1891, xxxii.

the same for the southern and central counties. If the total loss was taken from the interest on capital invested in the land, the crop of 1889 yielded only 4.4 per cent.

Similar hardships were associated with the corn and oats crops. "A farmer in the southern counties . . . , on a farm of average value, and who raised . . . average crops of wheat, corn, and oats . . . would receive for them only a sufficient amount to pay the wages of labor and other expenses . . . , and less than one-half of one per cent interest on the value of the land on which the crops were grown."[8] This statement by Secretary of State Robert Blacker confirmed the fact that many farmers were suffering financial losses which they could not continue to bear. Even those who realized some profit from their wheat operations were receiving less from their invested capital than practical capitalistic farmers believed was justified.

By the 1890's wheat had definitely lost its position as the major source of income among Michigan farmers. Of the crop of 1894, only a little more than one-third was sold with remainder being retained upon the farms. A prominent Michigan farmer, George B. Horton of

[8]Ibid., xxxiii.

Lenawee, summarizedthe situation as he declared, "Its production is fast being reduced to the mere necessities of furnishing opportunities for reseeding our lands with grass, to furnish straw for our stock, and to have bread for family use."[9] The decline of wheat was repeated in the animal industry where beef cattle and sheep for wool and mutton lost their roles as important sources of cash income. "Having practically lost the great mainstays to our agriculture," remarked Mr. Horton, "our farmers are at present drifting and not fully decided upon what kind of crops, or what system of farming can take their place."[9]

However, a new system of agriculture did slowly and painfully emerge out of the breakdown of the old order. Working with Michigan Agricultural College and the various special farm organizations, many farmers followed the advice to "plant less and cultivate more." By the close of the nineteenth century, an agricultural system of intensive, specialized crops and products especially adapted to local conditions was being developed throughout the state.

The intensive nature of the new agriculture was revealed by the doubling in acreage from 1880 to 1900

[9]Michigan Dairymen's Association, Tenth Annual Report (Lansing, 1894), p. 11.

of such crops as corn, oats, and hay.[10] These products were the foundation for a new dairy and stock-raising industry as the old extensive beef cattle and sheep industry gave way to dairy, swine, and poultry products.[11] In addition to the higher cash value of these products, Michigan farmers were restoring the fertility of their fields through the pasture-animal combination which tended to increase the yield of other crops.

Many other specialized crops or systems made important gains during these years. The value of market gardening products doubled during the ten years preceding 1890 and in five counties along Lake Michigan the value quadrupled. Fruit growing was profitable in the southwestern section and along the Lake Michigan shore. "General farming does not pay eight per cent," a Grand Traverse area farmer reported, "but fruit growing does, and often more."[12] Beans and potatoes, celery in the Kalamazoo and Grand Rapids area, and tarriff-protected sugar beets in the thumb district were other specialized cash crops which enabled farmers to regain financial stability and solvency.

[10] Farm Statistics (1900-1901), xiv,xv.

[11] Romanzu Adams, "Agriculture in Michigan," Michigan Political Science Association, III (March, 1899), 1-40, 28.

[12] Michigan Bureau of Labor, Report, 12th(1895), p. 435.

The dairy industry was another new possibility which held prospects of greater than average profit. One organization reported in 1886 that the average value of dairy products per acre over an eleven year period exceeded eighteen dollars while wheat averaged twelve dollars an acre in value.[13] A further advantage was that they could be placed on the market the year around, not just once a year. The attraction was great, for by 1886 the products of the dairy industry sold for about $15,000,000, which was equal to the entire wheat crop.[14]

While the new agriculture held greater promise for Michigan's farmers, it also was accompanied by serious problems during its formative stage. There was the period of experimentation with new crops and products to determine whether they were suited to a specific locality. Diseases such as yellows and peach rosette often destroyed large portions of the peach crop for several years in succession until science could devise weapons to eliminate them. The severe winter of 1874-1875 injured the fruit trees and set back this young industry for several years. Often the procedure of converting

[13]Michigan Dairymen's Association, Second Annual Report (1886), p. 99.

[14]Michigan Dairymen's Association, Fourth Annual Report (1888), p. 13.

to new crops was expensive and the farmer was forced to borrow money at high interest rates before he could make the transition. The losses incurred under an outmoded system of agriculture plus the cost of adopting a new one probably prevented or delayed the successful readjustment by many farmers. Traditionally, farmers are slow to change and many sections of the state continued to cling to old patterns long after they ceased to have any practical or profitable justification.

The nineteenth century upheaval in Michigan's agriculture made significant changes in its rural economy. There were major readjustments in farm values; the mortgage problem was more severe than in several neighboring states and the farm owner class was being reduced. Also, this squeezing out process was accompanied by a reverse tendency in the industrial section of the state's economy which was enjoying growth and prosperity.

There was a sharp decline in the value of farm land, equipment, and production during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. While much of this was the result of the severe depression of 1893, it also reflected the declining position of agriculture in the national economy. By 1880 the total value of farm

products exceeded $[illegible],000,000[15] but by 1893 the value had dropped to about $81,000,000.[16] The greatest fall in farm values occurred in the four southern tiers of counties between 1884 and 1894. Over $90,000,000 were lost as the value of farm lands, implements, livestock, and products declined. This represented an average loss of over twelve per cent per acre. This large drop took place even though improved land increased by more than 500,000 acres and despite the rise in farm land values adjacent to the cities of the state.[17] Besides this, over 12,000 farm laborers were without permanent employment with an additional loss of several millions of dollars in wages.

This depression fell heavily upon those who had purchased their farms at inflated prices of seventy-five to one hundred dollars an acre. "The price of farm land has decreased nearly one-half in the last few years," complained an Ionia county man, "and it is almost impossible to sell it at that price."[18] From St. Joseph

[15]State Board of Agriculture, Report, 19th (1880), p. 190.

[16]Michigan Bureau of Labor, Report, 13th (1896), p. 284.

[17]Robert L. Hewitt, "Census and Other Statistics," in Michigan Farmers' Institutes' Bulletin No. 2 (1898), p. 256.

[18]Michigan Bureau of Labor, Report, 12th (1895), p. 444.

county came reports that land in 1896 was selling at less than one-half and even one-fourth of its former value.[19] The conditions in the older counties can be summarized by extracts from a speech by a Kalamazoo county representative before the State Board of Equalization in 1901:

> For the past fifteen years a summer and autumn drouth has affected one-half of the county. . . . For the past ten years there has been no seeding upon one-half of the farms, they have produced no hay, clover, pasture, are nearly destitute of stock. The fertility is so depleted that only about a quarter of a crop is produced. . . . Today farms are offered for sale at less than building cost. 82 per cent of the farms are running down. 42 per cent are for sale. 60 per cent of the farmers are in debt, mortgage or otherwise.[20]

Accompanying the farm depression was the burden of mortgages. The Michigan farmers generally borrowed money when prices were high and the outlook for the future was optimistic; however, the prolonged decline in farm prices soon transformed a justifiable debt into an unbearable burden. Mortgage figures were not generally available during the yearly years of this period, but enough existed to give some idea of the problem. In 1888 over 47 per cent of all Michigan farms were mortgaged; then there was a decline during the next five

[19] Proceedings of the State Board of Equalization (Lansing, 1896), pp. 94-95.

[20] Proceedings of the State Board of Equalization (Lansing, 1901), p. 132.

years of about 7 per cent.[21] This was considerably above the national average of 27 per cent for the year 1890.

The interest rate on Michigan farm mortgages was higher than in the neighboring states of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. There were at least two reasons for this. First, Michigan's farming industry was expanding into the northern counties and interest rates were traditionally higher in frontier areas. Second, competition for investment capital by Michigan urban industries, where the expectation of profit was greater, may have forced the interest higher. From a high of around 10 per cent after the Civil War, it declined to 7.1 per cent by 1890. However, the severe farm depression of the 1890's began to push the interest rate higher.[22] The rate throughout most of this period was perhaps twice as great as the return farmers realized from their farm operations. For many farmers, the burden of meeting the annual interest charges was beyond their capabilities and unpaid charges were added to the amount of the mortgage principle. Thus the farmer sank deeper in debt as the depression continued.

[21]Michigan Bureau of Labor, Report, 10th (1893), p. 1176b.

[22]Michigan Bureau of Labor, Report, 10th (1893), p. 1176b.

Because of the hazards and uncertainties associated with the agricultural industry, the farm-owner class declined while the renter class increased. The following figures show the decline in ownership status among Michigan farms during a fourteen year period. These figures indicate the number of farms cultivated by their owners out of each one thousand farms:

1880 -- 900 1884 -- 880 1890 -- 860

1894 -- 838

During the ten year period ending in 1894 the owner-cultivated group increased only 7 per cent while the renter and sharer groups increased 61 per cent and 49 per cent respectively.[23] Statistics of the period do not indicate what percentage of the tenants were sons of retired farmers who were, in essence, partners to their fathers. Most of the change occurred in the southern part of the state. Twenty-three of the twenty-eight southern counties reported a decrease in the farm-owner class while none of the central and only four of the northern counties experienced a similar decline.[24]

The reasons for the increase in tenancy were largely

[23]Michigan Bureau of Labor, Report, 13th (1896), p. 280.

[24]Michigan Farmers' Institutes' Bulletin No. 2 (Lansing, 1896), p. 255.

financial. Young farmers who were entering the industry were discouraged from purchasing farms because of the low prices for farm products. They realized that more money could be made from a rented farm than from an owned farm since taxes, improvements, and interest on capital invested all came out of the owner's pocket.[25] Also, many may have lacked the capital necessary to own a farm and therefore had to become tenants. On the other hand, many farm owners moved to urban areas to live or work and allowed a tenant to operate their farm while they enjoyed the more attractive environment of the city.

Although Michigan was generally considered to have been an agricultural state during the nineteenth century, the last twenty-five years of the century witnessed a pronounced rural to urban movement which equalized the balance between the two ways of life. The movement began early in the 1870's, when for the first time the population in the older agricultural counties began to level off. In the southern counties of Barry, Berrien, Branch, Calhoun, Cass, Hillsdale, Kalamazoo, Oakland, St. Joseph, and Washtenaw nearly all of the land had been settled by 1870 and rising land values gave little

[25]Michigan Bureau of Labor, Report, 12th (1895), p. ix.

encouragement to new settlers.[26] Between 1870 and 1880 over one hundred and fifty rural townships decreased in population. However, during the same decade there was a total increase in population of over 125,000 in the five counties of Wayne, Saginaw, Bay, Kent, and Muskegon.[27] The decline was more pronounced during the next decade. Although the state's population increased by over 450,000 persons, there were nearly 1000 fewer farmers in the state. By 1894 37 per cent of the people of Michigan lived in the seventy largest cities.[28] The area suffering the largest part of the decline in population was the agricultural southern portion of the state, for the northern agricultural counties increased in population during the same period.

While there was a national trend from rural to urban districts, Michigan's movement proceeded at a faster pace. The more extreme dislocation in the agricultural industry diminished both the opportunity and the desire of many to find permanent adjustment there. On the other hand, prospects were much brighter

[26]Lansing State Republican, Nov. 20, 1874, p. 2.

[27]Michigan Bureau of Labor, Report, 1st (1884), p. 182.

[28]Twenty-Second Proceedings of the Annual Sessions of the Michigan State Grange (1894), p. 60. Hereafter cited as Grange Proc.

in the cities where industrial production was increasing and values in general were appreciating.

The disparity between the rural and the urban economy increased during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Capital invested in non-agricultural enterprises showed a greater return each decade in sharp contrast with that placed in farms. By 1885, the 135,000 farms in the state, representing a capital investment of over $574,000,000, produced a total product of around $80,000,000. However, at the same time 8,873 industries with a capital of $92,000,000 turned out a total product of nearly twice that of the farms.[29] A comparison of the average assessed value and profit or rent per acre of land employed in rural and urban enterprises also illustrates the inequality between the two.[30]

Average assessed value of acre	1880	1890
Farm acre	$20.91	$20.82
Manufacturing	$78.16	$131.44
City	$2,059.00	$2,320.72

Rent or profit per acre		Per Cent		Per Cent
Farm	$1.04	(5)	$0.83	(4)
Manufacturing	$23.44	(30)	----	
City	$144.13	(7)	$162.45	(7)

[29]Michigan Board of Agriculture, Report (1885), p. 25.

[30]Michigan Bureau of Labor, Report, 9th (1892), p.

Urban values were appreciating while farm values were not during a decade which was not marked by a severe cyclical depression.

However, even in depression periods, industry had the ability to recover and then progress. While agriculture was still prostrate from the depression by the end of 1895, Michigan industry had grown by over 16 per cent, employment was up 38 per cent, and wages had increased 3 per cent.[31] In looking at the progress in the urban society, the farmer of Michigan had good reason to believe that everyone else was realizing more profit than he was.

The dislocations in Michigan agriculture had more significance than the mere decline of an industry. The farmers accompanied their emergence into the commercial world with organization and entered into the group struggle with other capitalists. They formed social, economic, and political organizations as weapons to defend their traditional way of life and its morality, and then went beyond that to lay the groundwork for a new philosophy of government which could more effectively deal with the problems of an industrial society.

[31]Michigan Bureau of Labor, Report, 13th (1896), p. xxv.

II. THE FARMERS' ORGANIZATIONAL RESPONSE

When the farmer made the decision to convert his type of farm operation from self-sufficiency to one of a commercial nature, he entered a society which was in many ways unlike the older agrarian order. He moved away from the isolated, simple, and personal rural society into a complex, interdependent, impersonal national society. The new capitalistic-minded farmer during the struggle for a greater share of the national income found himself in contact with groups he had never encountered before. The increasing use of the impersonal corporate form of business organization after the Civil War and the tendency of business enterprises of similar interests to group together had the appearance to the farmer of being unnecessary and mainly instigated to prey upon the unorganized. The farmer in many instances failed to understand either the complexity of the new economic system or the need for organizations which performed many useful and needed services; he only saw that these services cost money which he felt should have been his. Since he failed to understand these functions, the farmer mistrusted the other fellow and longed for the conditions of the old rural society.

The new industrial society in which the farmer was beginning to participate held beliefs that were different from those of the agrarian society. The most striking dissimilarity appeared in the interpretation of individualism. One historian clearly defines the issue which separated rural and urban thought and accounted for much of the conflict of the last quarter of the nineteenth century.[1]

> The practical result of the acceptance of economic liberalism was to shape a concept of liberty mainly in negative terms, that is, in terms of a freedom from social controls and a lack of responsibility for social conditions. Whereas in the historic rural economy . . . liberty was the positive fact of individual effort and responsibility, in the rising urban economy it became, at least in a major aspect, a lack of responsibility for the social consequences of individual economic action. A fundamental difference between the two interpretations becomes clear when it is realized that the urban interpretation offers a theoretical justification of economic inequality, while the rural interpretation embodies an emotional attachment to equality, both economic and political. The propositions of the urban interpretation . . . bar action to abate economic inequality or ameliorate the evils that flow from it; the sentiments of the rural interpretation impel action to establish conditions under which individuals can behave and feel as if they are equals.

[1]Ralph Turner, "The Cultural Setting of American Agricultural Problems," Farmers in a Changing World, The Yearbook of Agriculture (Washington, 1940), pp. 1003-1032, p. 1013.

The increasing acceptance of urban liberalism and its application by large economic groups aroused the agrarian conscience to the extent of revolt in an effort to restore the equalitarian conditions of an earlier day.

As the industrial economy continued to grow and the rural continued to contract during the final quarter of the century, the agrarian feared for more than the accompanying economic losses. There was great apprehension that the farming class would lose its traditional standing in society and would be driven down into a status similar to that of the European peasant. The urban classes appeared to be gaining in educational, cultural, social, and political influence while the rural class could not maintain its position due to chronic depression and dislocation. Agrarians continued to reaffirm their traditional beliefs that agriculture was the nursing mother of all occupations and was also the natural and moral way of life. However, each decade these beliefs became less valid and less reassuring and the agrarian creed was clearly on the defensive against the urban aggressor.

Because of these and other developments the farmer joined the group struggle. In an attempt to protect old ways of life and to advance himself in his new capitalistic

profit system society, the farmer formed and joined organizations. Some were general, designed to appeal to all who called themselves laborers and producers; others were special and appealed to those interested in a specific commodity. There were some that appealed to all who wanted to slow the advance of the impersonal industrialization and return to the equalitarian society of the early Republic. Some of these farmer organizations joined political movements or else became political parties themselves. Whatever their course of action, most made significant contributions to the agrarian revolt and to the industry which they represented.

The Patrons of Husbandry or the Grange was the first and perhaps the most important general farm organization to rise from the agrarian revolt in Michigan. The first local Grange was organized in Lapeer county in January, 1872.[2] The next one did not appear until nine months later but then the Grange experienced a rapid growth for the next three years. By 1875, organizational work was nearly completed in the older sections of the state, particularly in the southern counties. As a result, some 616 locals with more than 33,000 members were established

[2]Grange Visitor, April, 1875, p. 7.

in Michigan.[3] In addition, the Grange was beginning to gain a foothold in the counties in the fifth and sixth tiers and a few others to the north. However, this was the highpoint of Grange achievement during the nineteenth century, as membership declined rapidly after 1876. It fell to about 12,000 by 1882 but then began a revival, reaching a total membership of 33,000 by 1901.[4]

There were several reasons for the early decline of membership of the Grange. New organizations usually attract persons who expect immediate solutions for their problems and grievances and when the solutions are not immediately forthcoming, they withdraw to seek another organization. The relatively good wheat yields from 1879 to 1883 coincided with a sharp loss of membership as many apparently felt that prosperity had returned and that there was no further need for organization. The failure of the Grange's economic cooperation program caused several others to lose confidence in and withdraw from the organization. Also, many Michigan Grangers moved West where they continued their membership in the respective state organizations.

[3]Grange Proc., 12th (1884), p. 40.

[4]Grange Proc., 30th (1902), p. 48.

The significance of the Michigan Grange was not in the size of its membership but rather in the nature of its membership. The hard core throughout the nineteenth century was made up of the more commercially minded farmers of the state, those to whom farming was a business to be organized and managed as were other capitalist enterprises. They recognized the need for professional training and knowledge in order to become successful businessmen. The Grange was one of the first farm organizations to realize the instability of the old cash-crop economy in Michigan agriculture and to work for the adoption of the new diversified pattern. Grangers were strong supporters of the state agricultural college and other agencies which were devoted to the application of science and new techniques to the farming industry. In these respects the Grange differed from the Farmers' Alliance and the Patrons of Industry, two other farm groups that appealed to the more impatient, more radical farmers, during the angry period from 1885 to 1895.

There were many reasons for the birth of organizations such as the Grange, but for convenience they can be classified under the usual economic, social, and political headings. In an economic sense the individual-

istic commercial farmer was lost in his new world, "each striving for himself against the superior shrewdness, tact, and deception of those who live and grow rich upon the labors of others."[5] There were many who realized that individualism in the industrial life of the nineteenth century would not likely be fruitful in a material sense. "The tendency of the age is toward combination," declared the State Grange. "All around us we see the results of combined action in every profession, in every trade, in all lines of manufacture and commerce. We note the success of united effort, and as each class labors for its own interests, unless the agricultural class meets combination with combination, they will inevitably be overwhelmed in the conflict."[6]

While the Grange often spoke of the danger of farmers being reduced to serfdom, because of oppression by the trusts and monopolies, the fundamental cause of their concern was the failure to acquire a proportionate share of the rising national income. In the material sense, the agrarian revolt was a struggle between

[5]Grange Proc., 8th (1880), p. 14.

[6]Grange Proc., 13th (1885), p. 65.

capitalists for shares of the wealth of a young industrial country. The point of view which held that the farmer was not progressing as quickly as he deserved was expressed by the Grange when it said, "It (rural unrest) is not from the want of the so-called necessaries of life, for we have them in abundance; nor for the want of the ordinary comforts of a rural home, for we are far better off in that respect than were the generations of farmers before us; nor is it from mere jealousy or envy of the wealth and magnificence of the so-called business classes. It results from an earnest conviction that we are not receiving from our capital invested and our labor applied, a fair share of this accumulating wealth of the nation."[7]

The failure of the farmers to achieve their material goal was in some measure responsible for their inferior social position in an industrial society. While naturally isolated because of distance and inadequate communications, they were in danger of becoming socially isolated due to lack of purchasing power. To elevate the profession of farming socially became one of the Grange's important objectives and probably represented

[7]Grange Proc., 17th (1889), p. 53.

its most lasting success. This organization helped break down the social isolation of its members by giving them an opportunity to exchange ideas, to gain knowledge of their profession and the laws of trade and commerce, and to stimulate a desire to progress beyond a mere sustenance level. Farmers became more concerned about educational facilities for their children; the agricultural press came to play a more vital role in the daily life of the farmer; and because of the greater store of information the farmer became more interested in state, national, and world happenings. Organizations such as the Grange narrowed the social gap between the rural and urban classes.

Many farmers felt that such problems as monopolies, trusts, high freight rates, graft, and mortgages were largely due to their failure to participate in the political life of the nation. "If farmers have suffered from unfriendly legislation," said Worthy Master Jason Woodman, "the fault has been with themselves."[8] Because they had neglected their civic duties, other groups, less moralistic, had seized control of public affairs, openly or secretly, to the detriment of the rural class.

[8] Grange Proc., 4th (1876), p. 7.

The agrarian ideal was to break up this stranglehold on politics by returning to a more direct and simple democracy; an equalitarian state. "We desire equality, equity, and fairness," said Woodman, "protection for the weak, restraint upon the strong, justly distributed burdens, and justly distributed powers."[9] However, the Grangers realized that since they were living in an age of combination that only by combination could they restore democratic conditions. "No great state reform has ever been effected except through influence of organized and united effort and no great interest has ever received legal and just aid and protection from legislation," they declared, "without some medium of organization."[10]

Political ineffectiveness, social inferiority, and economic distress were major causes of the rise of the Michigan Grange. Other farmer organizations of a more radical nature emerge in the state but all were brought to life by the same undercurrent of dissatisfaction and the differences among them were limited principally to the methods of realizing common reforms. However, it was the Grange which gave the farmers' movement in

[9] Grange Proc., 5th (1877), p. 8.

[10] Grange Proc., 4th (1876), p. 7.

Michigan an example of constructive service to the individual and to the industry. Many non-partisan organizations originating after 1872 undoubtedly were modeled upon the Grange with its program for improving the agricultural industry through self-help and readjustment.

A second important general farm organization in the state was the Farmers' Alliance. It first appeared in Michigan between 1881 and 1882,[11] when a state alliance was organized under the jurisdiction of the National or Northern Farmers' Alliance. However, for the next seven years the organization generated very little attention and it was not until 1890 that it began to emerge as an important group in the state. In 1890, the state alliance was accredited by the Southern Alliance at the Ocala, Florida, convention.[12] Also, at that convention, Judge Arthur E. Cole, of Fowlerville, president of the state alliance, was chairman of the committee that framed the famous Ocala platform.[13]

After 1890 the Michigan Alliance began to have an impact upon the state's agricultural and political affairs. Their first annual secret convention met at

[11]Carl C. Taylor, The Farmers' Movement, 1620-1920 (New York, 1953), p. 216.

[12]Ibid., p. 261.

[13]Detroit Free Press, Oct. 7, 1891, p. 3.

Lansing in September, 1890, and a Lansing newspaper, the Alliance-Sentinel, was designated as the official state organ.[14] By the time of the second annual convention in October, 1891, the organization represented some 15,000 members and 550 sub-alliances in 34 Michigan counties.[15] Probably the growth continued beyond those figures because in 1892 Jackson County alone had over 200 sub-alliances.[16] The Alliance organizers were aggressive and energetic in enlisting members. Often the Alliance moved into an area and captured rival organizations such as the Grange and Patrons of Industry, taking members, records, and treasuries and converting them to their own banner.[17]

The Alliance's contribution to the agrarian revolt was political, not economic or social. It appeared in the state after the farmers had spent several years in discussing their reforms and petitioning for their enactment. By 1890, many in the rural areas were weary of the discussion stage and were ready to strike a political blow. The Alliance quickly gathered the discontented around its elaborate program of reform and

[14]Lansing State Republican, Sept. 19, 1890, p. 1.

[15]Ibid., Oct. 7, 1891, p. 1.

[16]Ibid., Oct. 4, 1892, p. 1.

[17]Ibid., Feb. 26, 1891, p. 4.

moved into the political struggle. The People's Party was formed out of the Alliance and was active in Michigan for three campaigns beginning in 1892. However, after 1896 the People's Party and the Michigan Farmers' Alliance disappeared completely, having served their purpose in the field of political agitation.

The third large general farm organization, the Patrons of Industry, was a native Michigan movement originating in 1887.[18] From Michigan, the order expanded into several neighboring states and Canada with a total membership of around 200,000. However, like the Alliance it had run its course by 1896 and it followed the former into obscurity. During its brief existence the order had a spectacular growth in Michigan. By the latter months of 1890, somewhere between 80,000 to 100,000 persons had become members, most of whom lived in the southern and central counties.[19]

But after 1890 the Patrons steadily lost strength. An uncertain participation in politics during the 1890 campaign caused many to leave. Also, the appearance of the aggressive Farmers' Alliance induced still others to drop out and join the new organization. The losses

[18]Sidney Glazer, "Patrons of Industry in Michigan," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXIV (June, 1937), 185-194.

[19]Lansing State Republican, Feb. 26, 1891, p. 4.

continued and by early 1893 less than 10,000 still retained membership in the Patrons of Industry.[20]

While co-operative activities were an important part of the Patrons' program, their principal appeal was a radical series of reforms requiring political action. Therefore in their case, as with the Alliance, the attraction was for the farmer who demanded action, but in the contest to promote that action the Farmers' Alliance was the more successful. The story of the political struggle and of the proposed reforms will be covered in the chapter dealing with the political record.

Although the three large farm organizations were rivals, many of the leaders and members belonged to two or more of the orders, which gave a continuity to the farmers' movement in Michigan. The Grange represented the less radical, long-run approach to the specific problems of Michigan agriculture, while the Alliance and the Patrons arose in response to the feeling of anger and futility which were created by two decades of depression. Two of the orders were spontaneous, originated for a specific purpose and, having partially fulfilled their purpose, they disappeared. "Many members

[20]Michigan Patrons Guide (St. Louis), March 28, 1893, p. 1.

of the Grange have thought and said we were doing nothing and have deserted the ranks to enlist under another banner," the Grange Visitor observed. "Time will prove that the conservative course of the Grange has been the wise one."[21]

[21]Grange Visitor, Nov. 1, 1890, p. 4.

III. THE FARMERS AND THE RAILROADS

The transition to commercial farming after the Civil War would not have been possible without the development of adequate transportation and communication facilities. It would have been difficult for farmers to have realized gains from the specialization and division of labor techniques which characterized the new agriculture had not rapid low-cost transportation facilities been available to handle the large volume of products. There were many essential services which the railroads could perform for the agricultural industry; shipping of bulky products to market during a limited period when all producers wanted to dispose of them; handling special products in situations where the timing of marketing was of vital concern to the producer; handling other products whose perishable nature made it necessary to use specialized equipment and perform elaborate services; and finally, the carrying of passengers was an important element in the life of the nineteenth century.

The railroad companies of Michigan greatly increased their mileage and expanded their facilities after the Civil War in an effort to meet the growing requirements

of the agricultural industry. Mileage which totaled 931 at the close of the war was expanded to 7,945 by the end of the century. This growth was financed by liberal grants of land and money from the federal, state, and local governments; from individuals; and from private capital. The farmers of the state, realizing the vital role which railroads had in relation to their industry, enthusiastically supported the expansion program. They often voluntarily contributed their own money or else voted in municipal elections to bond themselves to aid the construction of roads running through their locality.

However, after 1870 the rural attitude of liberality and friendliness changed to one of hostility and demands for regulation and reform became an important feature of the agrarian revolt. This hostility centered around certain practices of the railroads such as freight and passenger charges; the performance of services and discriminations in carrying out those services; certain financial policies of the railroads; and the special privileges which had been granted to the roads during the era of good feeling. The feeling of many was expressed by a citizen in a letter to Governor Luce, "The railroads we have done so much to help build are like so

many serpents . . . (that) turn and bite us."[1]

In 1870 the voters of Michigan approved an amendment to the state constitution giving the legislature authority to regulate freight and passenger rates. However, for the remainder of the century the legislature did not seek to implement this power in a manner which was satisfactory to the agricultural sections of the state, and as a result complaints about railroad rates became common. One reason for lack of regulatory action was the political influence of the railroad corporations in the state. These companies were able to prevent any undue tampering with rates through the invisible influence they established over the legislature and over the political caucuses and conventions within the state.

Another reason for the absence of legislative control of freight rates was the availability of inexpensive water transportation to the eastern markets over the Great Lakes system. The competition of lake transportation tended to restrict the ability of the railroads to set freight rates at their own discretion. Water transportation was important in the movement of

[1]Mrs. M. C. Campbell to Governor Cyrus Luce, January 24, 1887, Governor's File, Archives of the State of Michigan, Michigan State Historical Commission. Hereafter cited as Governor's File.

bulky products such as wheat, and three-fourths of that crop was moved from Michigan to the eastern markets by the Great Lakes route. Savings were substantial, as the following table of rates effective in the 1890's suggests:[8]

Detroit to Buffalo

Lake transportation	1½¢ per bushel
Rail transportation	4 and 4/5¢

Detroit to New York

Lake and Canal	5½¢
Lake and Rail	5½¢ to 8 3/4¢
Rail only	7½¢ to 9½¢

However, when wheat ceased to be a major factor in the economy of the state and new products were developed which were not adaptable to water transport, then this weapon was not as potent a factor in holding down railroad rates.

While Michigan wheat did rely heavily upon water transportation for the greatest part of the shipment to the east, most of it reached the lake ports by railroad. It was the relatively short distance transport over the railroads which brought the farmers into contact with their most serious freight problem, the local tariff.

[8]Adams, "Agriculture in Michigan," p. 22.

Whether the farmers realized it or not, the local freight charges were the focal point of their attack upon the rail companies. The great variation in charges between the through rate and the local rate constituted a serious threat to the prosperity of the state's agricultural economy. The difference in the two rates was such that a producer living 16 miles from a market had to pay as much for a carload of produce as one living 253 miles away.[3] A comparison of the average through and local rates (in mills) on three Michigan roads in 1877 indicates the severity of this problem:

	Through	Local
Detroit and Milwaukee	5.87	25.42
Michigan Central	7.2	19.91
Flint and Pere Marquette	4.4	22.20

The impact of this condition was felt particularly by the wheat farmers for through rates from the West to the East were declining steadily while local rates remained high. Thus Michigan lost the advantage of being located nearer the eastern markets. The agricultural industries of Western states were being built up at the expense of Michigan's. As one southern Michigan farmer explained, "We have to pay three cents a bushel more on wheat shipped to Detroit than it costs from Chicago to New York."[4]

[3]Michigan State Board of Agriculture, Report, 17th (1878), p. 528.

[4]Grange Visitor, June 15, 1878, p. 5.

The uncertainty of freight rates from year to year was a major grievance of the farmers during the Granger period. When the wheat crop of 1879 began to move onto eastern markets, the railroads raised freight charges 30 cents on each 100 pounds. This resulted in an additional freight bill of $360,000 for Michigan alone.[5] In 1881 rates again increased 18 cents during the shipping season and in the following year another 4 cents a bushel increase added over $3,500,000 to the freight bill for the two seasons.[6] "This frequency of change in rates," complained the Grange, "unsettles calculations of buyers and shippers and upsets business."[7]

Probably much of the instability of rate structures was due to the nature of the railroad industry rather than the result of financial manipulations. The industry had over-expanded and the competitive struggle for traffic caused rates to vary widely from year to year. Since the railroad industry was an example of a heavy fixed-initial-cost business which required increasing traffic in order to keep rates at a reasonable level, excessive competition could have been ruinous. The

[5] Grange Prog., 7th (1879), p. 12.

[6] Lansing Republican, August 17, 1882, p. 4.

[7] Grange Prog., 7th (1879), p. 71.

concept that railroads and other utilities were natural monopolies and should avoid unrestrained competition had not been completely developed or accepted by public opinion in the 1870's. Therefore, the process of consolidation and combination among the railroad companies during this period was but a natural action of self-preservation. Although the farmers bitterly attacked this movement toward economic concentration, it ultimately resulted in more stable rate schedules and at steadily decreasing costs. In Michigan, complaints about freight rates fell off considerably in the decade of the 1880's and did not resume until the late 1890's when the degree of concentration in the railroad industry reached an unreasonable stage.

The farmers' assumption that they bore the cost of freight charges may not have been valid. High rates did not necessarily mean less income for the farmer nor did low rates indicate that the farmer would receive more from the sale of his products. Actually freight costs could be added to the selling price of the product and passed on to the consumer in a non-competitive market. They would not materially affect the basic selling price but would be a cost of distribution. Thus the impact of freight costs upon the farmers' economic

income would fall in his role as a consumer and not as a producer.

While the farmer may not always have been directly affected by freight rates, he did suffer financial losses from other railroad practices. In the furnishing of services and by discriminations, the companies often inflicted injuries upon the producers of the state. In 1871 the Michigan Legislature passed a law which stated, "Any railroad company doing business within this State shall be required to transport without unnecessary delay, and in due order of time, without discrimination, except as to classification, all freight offered for transportation and at uniform rates per mile." However, the law was not implemented to the satisfaction of many people. "This is violated every day," charged the Grange, "and hands farmers over, bound hand and foot, to the tender mercies of the middlemen."[8]

A special investigating committee chosen from the House of Representatives in 1897 made the first complete survey of the nature of railroad discriminations. Some of the more common types of discrimination were: making better rates to large shippers than to small; ex-

[8]Ibid., p. 29.

tending privileges to some and not to others; changing rates from those posted in tariff schedules; neglecting to care for perishable goods; excessive car service charges; discriminating against non-competing points; trouble in settling claims; illegal charges for services; and a tendency for products to weigh more at the terminal point than they did at the shipping point.[9] These discriminations, in addition to being annoying, were costly to the farmer. Because of delays, his products might not reach the market in time to receive the most advantageous price. Again, since the farmer was working on a small margin of profit, discriminations and excess charges might dissipate the anticipated returns. The farmer did not stand alone in his protest against these conditions but received valuable aid from many small-town merchants throughout the state who suffered equally from the effects of these railroad practices.

A third area of protest against the railroad companies originated from certain financial maneuvers which were designed to conceal earnings the public might consider to be excessive. The companies used one or more of these devices to hide profits: over-capitalization; "dummy" corporations; and the acquisition of

[9] Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Michigan (Lansing, 1897), pp. 1590-1606. Hereafter cited as House Journal.

useless or unprofitable roads to reduce the earnings of the parent road. Michigan's incorporation law contained no restriction that stocks or bonds be limited to the worth or assets of the company. Besides, the regulatory agencies were too weak and understaffed to prevent such practices. Given an almost free hand, many railroads watered their stock recklessly. The Grange, in 1880, pointed out that the $300,000,000 valuation given railroad property probably was more than four times the actual cost of construction. Reduced to a per mile figure this meant that the railroads claimed to have expended over $55,000 but that the actual cost was under $20,000 per mile. This meant that freight and passenger rates were being charged to secure profits on some $30,000 of fictitious value per mile. By taking the earnings for 1878, the Grange charged that the companies earned profits of over 12 per cent on estimated cost and more than 27 per cent on actual cost. "We have a right to insist that they receive but reasonable pay," the Grange observed.[10] However, the "watered" stock device continued to be used in Michigan for several decades and proved to be an effective method for the roads to plead

[10] Grange Proc., 8th (1880), p. 83.

relative poverty in profits and earnings in order to escape rate regulation. It had a further use in the field of taxation, for several roads were taxed on the basis of earnings per mile.

The second method used by the railroad corporations to conceal or divert earnings was the creation of corporations within corporations. The new companies were usually formed and controlled by stock subscriptions on the part of the parent corporations with the proceeds being invested in various types of rolling stock. The stock would then be diverted back over the main routes of the parent companies on a mileage cost basis, plus a respectable commission varying from 5 to 15 per cent. Profits of the "dummy" companies proved to be large as the actual owners made extensive use of their facilities and thereby diverted earnings into the treasuries of the hidden company. All of these companies had been formed outside of Michigan, thereby escaping the jurisdiction of the laws of the state. Thus the parent corporations had another means of concealing their true earnings by diverting part of them outside the state and avoiding the Michigan earnings tax.

A third method of hiding earnings used by some corporations was the acquisition of useless and unprofitable

roads. During the era of consolidation, some acquired roads of this nature in order that the earnings from the profitable lines could be divided with the unprofitable ones. This would considerably diminish the over-all earnings per mile and throw the company into a lower tax bracket. This device also was useful in avoiding protests against high rate charges and unusual profits. Also it was a convenient method by which otherwise worthless bonds and securities could be converted into valuable ones when the defunct roads began to show a profit after acquisition by a larger corporation. These three devices for concealing earnings were widely used because they could be carried out quietly and effectively without being subject to public scrutiny.

There was one particular feature of the railroad problem in the state which eventually provoked general hostility toward these corporations. During the early phase of railroad construction, special charters containing liberal privileges had been granted to several companies in an effort to stimulate the expansion of a transportation network. Since this was a period of harmony between the public and the private companies, these special charters did not seem to be unreasonable concessions to make in return for the building of necessary

communication facilities. However, after the Civil War, the charters became symbols of corporate privilege and influence to the agrarians whose goals were equality, equity, and justice. Some features of these special charters were especially irksome and often placed the company outside the authority of the state government.

The Michigan Central Railroad, which became the most powerful in the state, received several of these privileges. They were given a perpetual charter subject only to revision by a two-thirds vote of the Legislature at the end of a thirty year period. If any alterations were made in the charter, the company was entitled to receive compensation for losses resulting from the change. In addition, the directors of the company had the authority to reject any amendment the Legislature might decide to enact. Also, they were given freight and passenger rate maximums which were exempt from revision by regulatory authority -- a privilege denied those roads organized under the General Railroad Law of 1855.

The special charter roads were given favorable taxation concessions. They were subject to a capitalization tax of 1 per cent after 1851 and "thereafter the property and effects of the company, whether real, personal, or mixed, shall, in consideration thereof, be

exempt from all and every tax, charge, or exaction by virtue of any laws of this State now or hereafter to be in force."[11] Eventually, these and similar tax concessions proved to be the rallying point for those who opposed corporate influence and who wanted to regulate it more effectively. The almost complete freedom from a general property tax, in an age when that tax was the backbone of governmental receipts, served to unite the other property-holders and initiated a movement which established control over concentrated economic power. Equal taxation, not excessive freight rates, was the decisive element in the final victory.

The agrarian effort to establish effective regulation of railroads and other modes of communications was not especially successful during the nineteenth century. However, their efforts were not entirely fruitless, for the agitation did help shape public thinking and establish certain principles as guides for public policy. The Grange considered its single most important victory to be the acceptance by the public of the "principle that States, granting charters and valuable franchises to corporations, have a right to legislate for their

[11] Public Acts and Joint Resolutions of the State of Michigan (Lansing, 1846), Act 42.

control, and as to railroads may establish by law maximum freight and passenger rates."[12] Although the Grange had not begun its works in Michigan by 1870, when the people approved a constitutional amendment giving the Legislature authority to establish maximum rates, the action can probably be attributed partly to the agitation of the Grange in neighboring states.

After 1872 the Michigan Grange carried on the fight to have this legislative authority implemented. The demand for regulation was not motivated by a desire to destroy capital employed by corporations, but by a desire to prevent unjust or monopolistic use of that capital.

> We frankly admit the unquestioned right of one's possessing his own property, but when a person or corporation usurps power by use of their wealth as a means of benefitting one section of the country at the expense of another, as in the unjust discrimination of railroad tariffs, when they use their wealth as a medium of influencing unscrupulous legislators and congressmen, then the person or corporation oversteps its bounds, its rights and privileges, and becomes a tyrannical power. . . . Combination must be met by combination. Influences brought to bear upon Congress and the Legislature must be met by an overwhelming influence of the people. . . . Corporations have money. The people have votes.[13]

[12]Grange Proc., 20th (1900), p. 8.

[13]Grange Proc., 13th (1885), p. 73.

In response to demands for regulation, the State created the office of Commissioner of Railroads. However, this office failed to solve many of the problems which were causing public protests. It was under-manned and lacked the authority to modify rate charges, an authority which Legislature retained and never exercised. In addition, many of the Railroad Commissioners secured their appointments only after receiving the approval of the railroad corporations, and could not, therefore, approach their work with an impartial attitude.[14]

Protection of the public welfare and impartial enforcement of the law depended largely upon the personality of the Railroad Commissioner. Two men, Sybrant Wesselius and Chase Osborn, both appointed by Governor Pingree, were examples of effective Commissioners. They made the office a strong regulatory agency within its statutory limits. In the hands of such men, publicity could be an effective weapon, especially in areas where the law was weak or non-existent.

The Grange, while approving the establishment of the Office of Commissioner of Railroads, suggested that it should be strengthened. It spoke out against the

[14]Hazen S. Pingree, Facts and Opinions (Detroit, 1895), p. 15.

influence of the railroads in the selection of commissioners: "We need a commissioner who represents the people and not the railroads against the people." The Grange asked for a State Railroad Commission of three men with full power to prescribe freight and passenger rates.[15] When it became apparent in the 1870's that because of combination and consolidations the State governments could no longer effectively control corporations whose activities were inter-state in nature, the Grange asked for the creation of a National Railroad Commission. This agency would work with the various state commissions to determine the actual cost of transportation of produce from point to point and then would have the authority to fix rates based on the actual cost.[16] However, nothing was accomplished at the state level to strengthen the commissioner's office or his authority during the remainder of the century.

The Michigan farm organizations began to call for the regulation of other forms of transportation and communication during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. They urged that telephones, telegraphs and, in

[15] Grange Proc., 9th (1881), p. 14.

[16] Grange Proc., 7th (1879), p. 73.

some cases, public utilities be declared common carriers and be made subject to regulation by governmental agencies. The Farmers' Alliance demanded public ownership of railroads, telephones, and telegraphs, but the other two groups stopped short of this goal.

The Patrons of Industry, at their annual conference in 1891, called for government ownership only after government control had been given an opportunity to establish effective regulation. "The railroad corporations ... are as many as the waves of the ocean, and by consolidation and combination . . . they are one as the sea. By their union of interests they become an octupus that consumes the lion's share of the wealth produced by labor. . . . They should be placed under state and national control. . . . If they still operate on the principle that the public be damned" they they should be owned by the United States government.[17] Two years later, the National Conference of the Patrons of Industry openly advocated government ownership of railroads, telegraphs, and telephone companies.[18] The influence was negligible as the Patrons had declined to the status of a minor organization.

[17]Lansing State Republican, February 27, 1891, p. 1.

[18]Michigan Patron's Guide, February 28, 1893, p. 2.

The Grange, during the 1890's, was the least radical of the three organizations on the question of government ownership. "The government should not own and operate modes of transportation, as employment of capital there is just as legitimate as in production. The mission of the government is to govern people, not to do the business of the country."[19] However, just as the twentieth century began, the State Grange altered its stand and said, "We favor legislation that shall finally bring about government ownership of railroads, telegraphs and telephone systems."[20] "The people should perform their own business rather than delegate it to private corporations."[21] The various proposals for government ownership, while never enacted into law, were important in speeding the adoption of legislation which led to effective regulation.

This regulation, although it became effective in the twentieth century, was a part of the nineteenth century revolt. The constant rural protest against special charters and taxation privileges, which will be described in the chapter on taxation, resulted in the

[19] Grange Proc., 23rd (1895), p. 80.

[20] Grange Proc., 30th (1902), p. 62.

[21] Grange Proc., 31st (1903), p. 88.

abolition of both by 1901. Six years later, a new three man Michigan Railroad Commission was created and given most of the authority and power which had been lacking in the old Commissioner of Railroads Office. The new board could alter, reduce or order into effect any freight rate that it judged proper. It had the authority over issuances of additional stocks and bonds by the railroads, a power which,had it been granted earlier, could have prevented many of the over-capitalization practices. By 1907 Michigan had finally constructed an efficient and powerful regulatory agency standing between the public and the corporations. Much of the credit for its adoption must go to the farmers of the nineteenth century.

IV. TRUSTS, MIDDLEMEN, AND COOPERATION

The farmers' concern about undue combination or concentration in economic life was first expressed by their outburst against the railroad corporations. But as the tendency of the age began to appear among nearly all of the other business areas, the farmers enlarged their demands for control of trusts from public or natural monopolies to include all examples of economic consolidation. This protest was to be expected from a group of people whose traditions included a strong anti-monopoly bias and an equally strong equalitarian viewpoint. Because of this, nearly all of the farmers' organizations and political parties of the period were dominated by an anti-monopoly tone.

The farmers were gravely concerned about the effect of monopoly upon economic life and the distribution of wealth among the competing groups. The appearance of concentrated power threatened to upset the self-regulating capitalistic economy of the nation by discriminating against the unorganized who lacked the retaliatory weapons which would enable them to hold their own. The farmers were on the defensive attempting to retain

or restore such fundamental laissez-faire doctrines as the law of supply and demand and freedom of opportunity against the attacks of impersonal organizations whose activities in many instances altered these fundamental doctrines. "Capital concentrates to make corners and forms rings to fix prices," complained the Grange. "Transportation companies make and unmake prices. . . . Subsidies and tariffs protect other industries at the expense of farmers. . . . Monopolies have grown dictatorial and imperious in their demands, unrelenting in their exactions, and cruel and unmerciful in their impositions."[1] Unless these examples of corporate power give up "a portion of their present oppressive grasp," the Grange warned, it will "culminate in a revolution, political and social, that may appall the world."[2]

The immediate danger to the rural industrialist from the presence of monopoly was a threat to his own independence. Monopolistic activities could directly affect the value of a farmer's production or could strike at the basis of a farmer's independence; his ability to own property. Fixed prices, high interest rates, dis-

[1] Grange Proc., 7th (1879), p. 83.

[2] Grange Proc., 10th (1882), p. 65.

criminations and all the other practices of the privileged often could influence a farmer's right to use his own property or could even decide whether he could enter the profession. Trusts having the power to influence the independence of other groups in the economy could also change American society by dividing it into distinct social classes through the destruction of opportunity.

Agrarian society feared that once trusts had perfected their economic dictatorship they would then attempt to perpetuate it by dominating the political and legal machinery of the Nation. "Their insatiable greed knows no satisfaction," the Michigan Grange charged. "When their rapacious maw has devoured and encompassed all legitimate business,... we will see them reaching out for the control of the government itself."[3] It was during this period that the rural demand for political reforms of a more direct nature originated. The direct election of presidents and senators, the recall and referendum were devices which the people hoped would prevent or discourage control of political institutions by organized capital. The spirit of the republic could be saved by the ballot.

[3]Grange Proc., 26th (1898), p. 22.

Since the trusts became a problem in a relatively short period of time, the search for a solution had to be carried on without the benefit of precedent. The farmers' first angry reaction was to destroy them. The anti-social features of some immature corporations led to the concept that all large corporations are anti-social. To remove the evils, the agrarians would destroy the corporation. However, when it was realized that bigness was a natural tendency of the American economic scene, rural protests were directed toward initiating some form of governmental control, preferably national. But this produced a dilemma; farmers traditionally believed in a decentralized government exercising little control over the economy. Trusts and monopolies could not be effectively checked by such a government and the farmers had to choose between decentralization in government or unrestrained concentration in the economy. They selected the former and it was partially through this decision that the agriculturalists came to rely upon and demand more governmental participation in the daily affairs of the people.

While the Sherman Anti-Trust Act was a product of the anti-monopoly sentiment, farmers were dissatisfied

with the enforcement of this federal legislation. In Michigan the only farmer organization to offer specific changes in the federal anti-trust policy was the Grange, which adopted the recommendations of the National Grange. It urged an anti-trust law which would clearly define injurious practices, a proposal later included in the Clayton Act of 1914. Another reform it advocated was severe penalties for violations of the law including forfeiture of charters, fines, and imprisonment. For all public officials who aided trusts in the violation of the law, or failed to enforce the law, the Grange called for impeachment, fines, and imprisonment. This would be supplemented by similar state laws to create a uniform pattern of federal and state regulation.[4] While the nineteenth century agrarian revolt failed to develop a comprehensive program for control of trusts, it did perform a useful service in calling public attention to a new economic problem. Because of this agitation, people began to think about the merits and dangers of bigness of corporations, and thus aided in the ultimate development of a more adequate public policy during the twentieth century.

[4]Grange Proc., 27th (1899), p. 21.

In addition to seeking government control, the farmers attempted to mitigate the practices of trusts, rings, and middlemen through cooperative activities. One of the organizational purposes of the Grange was to buy more directly from the manufacturer and to sell more directly to the consumer, thereby avoiding "large and unnecessary commissions." Many farmers failed to understand the necessity for many of the services which were being conducted between the producer and consumer and characterized them as gambling in the necessities of life. The idea of cooperation to promote savings to farmers in the distribution of their products was soon enlarged into a defensive weapon to counteract the actions of other business groups that were interfering with the natural system of supply and demand.

In 1874 the Michigan Grange established the office of state purchasing agent to coordinate and assist the county and district agents within the state. The state agent had neither money nor experience and little was accomplished for several years. "Our rivals in business are men who have made it the study of their lives, . . . we cannot compete with them with our agent working without pay, without money," complained the Grange.[5]

[5] Grange Proc., 3rd (1875), p. 35.

While the state agent never became an important purchasing officer, if measured by volume of business, he was able to assist the county councils in securing better prices on merchandise to be sold through the local grange stores. As a result, some of the local stores were selling more than $100,000 worth of items annually to the farmers of their area by 1880. Some years, the savings to the farmers of the state totaled more than $1,000,000 on such items as farm implements, clothing, seed, sewing machines, salt, and kerosene.

One of the difficulties encountered by the Grange came when manufacturers or dealers formed a ring or association and refused to sell at reduced prices. This happened frequently but the Grange's most successful effort against such action was their victory over the land plaster ring during the late 1870's. "Every establishment for manufacture of plaster in Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin had been concentrated into combination or sort of joint stock company for raising prices."[6] Because of this action, the ring was able to hold the price at $4.00 per ton without any reduction for a five year period. This ring was broken when the Grangers

[6]Grange Proc., 4th (1876), p. 34.

built their own plaster mill in Michigan and sold the product at a lower price, saving clients nearly $500,000 in five years.[7] However, the Grange mill was only a temporary success. The ring lowered their price below that of the Grange and drew many members away, forcing the mill to suspend operations.

In addition to group purchasing, the Grange participated in group action to market farm products. In several counties, selling agents were selected to arrange for the disposal of wool, wheat, and other bulky products. Business agencies were set up in Detroit and Chicago to furnish an outlet for the cooperative associations' products. In general, both the purchasing and selling activities of the Grange were unsuccessful and they declined about as quickly as the Grange itself declined.

There were many reasons for the failure of cooperative enterprises. The Grange lost strength at the same time as other groups in the business world were becoming stronger; the lack of membership reduced the cooperative efforts to small-scale operations. Many members merely used the Grange stores as an agency to force a

[7] Grange Proc., 8th (1880), p. 15.

better price from private businessmen. Grangers also discovered that it was an age of specialization and that they lacked the knowledge needed for success in a strange environment. Several years later, the Grange sadly observed, "The sad history of cooperative association . . . has greatly restrained us from recommending active cooperative moves without exercising exceedingly great care and shrewdness." It would be wiser to "educate ourselves in prices and markets, and come out the better, the wiser, and the richer."[8] Despite the apparent failure, the Grange did firmly establish the idea of cooperation and in a later period farmers turned to it successfully, especially in the marketing of specialty food products such as fruit, potatoes, and dairy products.

During the last decade of the nineteenth century the other two general farm organizations established cooperative agencies. The Patrons of Industry set up the Patrons' Commercial Union of Michigan with an authorized capital of $100,000. The Union attempted to purchase farm implements and supplies at wholesale prices and also established contacts with reliable com-

[8] Grange Proc., 17th (1889), p. 59.

mission houses to get the most favorable price for the farmer's products. Another purpose was to act as a loan agency to refund high rate interest-bearing mortgages.[9] The idea of cooperation spread rapidly within the Patrons organization but the short life of this group destroyed these activities.

The Farmers' Alliance also had a business agency similar to the Patrons, but it confined its purchases to articles which were controlled by trusts and combinations. This was done to avoid antagonizing the local merchants if they carried goods whose price was not affected by combination.[10] Again, the disappearance of the Alliance after its political adventure removed its cooperative agencies.

One reason for the decline of the nineteenth century cooperative movement in the state was the failure to adopt the Rochdale plan. The Michigan cooperative groups were loosely organized buying units attempting to purchase goods at wholesale prices. This practice antagonized other businessmen in the local areas. Also, members of the cooperative group could often be enticed away by the offer of attractive prices which later proved

[9]Michigan Farmer, January 3, 1891, p. 4.

[10]Lansing Journal, October 6, 1891, p. 3.

to be only temporary.

Despite the generally unsatisfactory experience, the Grange reentered the cooperative field near the end of the century. In 1896 its first cooperative fire insurance company was organized in Lenawee county and within six years twenty additional ones were formed furnishing this protection to Grangers in thirty counties.[11]

When the farmers' organizations failed to check oppressive and often illegal practices of middlemen through cooperation, they turned to legislation as a means of finding relief.

[11] Grange Proc., 30th (1902), p. 17.

V. EQUAL TAXATION

During the nineteenth century the general property tax furnished the great bulk of receipts for state and local governments. Earlier in the century much of the wealth of the nation had been in the form of land or improvements on land, so a property tax was assumed to be equitable and fair. However, after the Civil War, wealth began to take other forms which were not readily taxable. More and more wealth was found in bonds, stocks, bank deposits, and mortgages and escaped the same degree of taxation which continued to fall upon wealth in property form.

This situation weighed heavily upon the farmers. Most of their wealth was in visible property, easily assessable, and traditionally the source of governmental receipts. But now not only was the agricultural industry in a depressed condition, but it was also declining in relative size as compared with other industries that were not subject to the same burden of taxation. Besides, the latter part of the nineteenth century was a period of increasing expenditures as governments began to expand their services and functions. The efforts to finance expanding services by a property tax upon the wealth of

a declining industry caused an almost universal and continuous protest among Michigan farmers.

The cry, "equal taxation," represented more than an appeal for justice in sharing the burdens of governmental expenses. Since most of the new wealth which escaped taxation was owned or controlled by corporations, this protest symbolized another manner of attacking the privilege and success of big business. Also, this represented an opportunity to control and regulate corporations at the state level since some of their property necessarily had to be located within the state even though their operations might classify them as interstate. In Michigan, the equal taxation movement and its reforms by the close of the century resulted in the most effective control of corporations of all the methods proposed by the agrarian reformers.

One specific problem which caused much distress among the farmers was the question of mortgage taxation. Should the farmer be required to pay taxes upon his property even if a mortgage incumbered over half its value or should the holder of the mortgage be taxed on the value which he held? "What an outrage it is to tax men on property which they owe for," one farmer declared, "while the holder of the mortgage generally

escapes. Every man should be taxed on what he actually owns, no more and no less."[1] The farmers objected violently to paying taxes on their entire property value while the "capitalist" holding their mortgages, which often were the biggest part, successfully evaded paying taxes upon this personal property.

The Grange submitted the first plan to deal with this problem when in 1875 it proposed that farmers be taxed for the entire value of their property but that the property holder could apply to the principal or interest of his mortgage that portion of his tax which represented the incumbered value of the property.[2] This plan, which became known as the California Mortgage Plan, was also advocated by the Farmers' Alliance and the Patrons of Industry. The Alliance asked that the tax receipt representing the amount of the mortgage be made legal tender for the purpose of paying off either the interest or the principal.

Because of rural pressure the Legislature of 1883 passed a law which attempted to tax personal property held in the form of mortgages. This failed to solve

[1] Grange Visitor, June 15, 1878, p. 5.

[2] Grange Proc., 2nd (1875), p. 41.

the problem or to raise any appreciable amount of revenue. To escape the tax, mortgage holders assigned their holdings to friends living outside the state and Michigan authorities were unable to place them upon the tax rolls.[3] Others who were taxed passed the tax back upon the mortgagee by raising interest rates or threatening to foreclose. Within a year opponents of the law had secured its repeal despite a veto by the Granger Governor Luce. "The money-loaning agents had so frightened their creditors with threats of distressing them still further unless (it) was repealed that the creditors flooded the legislature with petitions for its repeal," the Grange complained.[4] In 1891, under the administration of the populist Governor Winans, another mortgage tax law was passed, but it too was repealed by the succeeding Republican administration. The failure of this type of action caused many people to study the problem from a different aspect and in the future reformers gave more thought to the possibilities of reducing interest charges by increasing the volume of money or by establishing governmental lending agencies to break the money monopoly of

[3]Marshall C. Kelly to Governor Cyrus Luce, May 11, 1889, Governor's File.

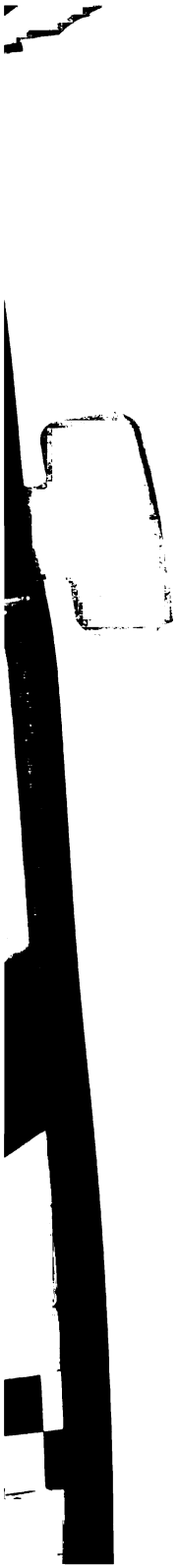
[4]Grange Proc., 17th (1889), p. 35.

private capital.

The campaign to equalize the burdens of taxation in Michigan probably extended over a longer period of time, involved more supporters, both rural and urban, and occupied the foremost position among the many reforms which were advocated in the nineteenth century. This issue more than any other single one elected and re-elected Hazen S. Pingree, a reformer, to the governorship and received more attention from him than any other problem. Organized groups in agriculture, labor, and business, in addition to individual citizens all heavily supported attempts to place all property upon an equal basis with respect to taxation.

The farmers' complaint was that they were paying far more than their fair share of the tax burden of the state, as "real estate bears seven-fold more burdens in way of direct taxation than personal estates."[5] Part of the problem originated from assessment practices. Tax rolls were not re-evaluated often enough to give credit for the decline in agricultural land values. Farmers who had originally purchased land at $100 per acre were still being taxed at that figure even though the value had fallen to one-half or one-third because of the

[5]Grange Visitor, Feb., 15, 1873, p. 2.



depression. The rigidity of taxes in comparison with soft prices meant that farmers had to divert more and more of the production of their farms into tax funds and less remained for their own use. There was a great demand from the rural sections for improved assessment procedures at the local level and for equalization among counties by some state authority.

By 1895, rural property was assessed at a total of $492,902,641 while urban was assessed at a figure of $460,971,466, although 54 per cent of the population lived in the urban areas. Farmers complained that their property was seriously over-valued since the State census of 1894 revealed the true value of their holdings to be only two-fifths of the total.[6] Many farmers would have agreed with the Grange when it declared, "If there is to be any discrimination in rates of assessments, it should be in favor of nonaccumulative and depreciating property, including farms."[7]

If some groups were bearing too great a share of governmental expenses, then some other groups were receiving special privileges which enabled them to escape

[6] Grange Proc., 24th (1896), p. 73.

[7] Grange Proc., 21st (1893), p. 78.

their equitable share. Most of the latter were found in either one of two groups: corporations in the exploitative industries such as lumbering and mining; or corporations who owed their favored position to concessions given by the state in the public utilities area, such as railroads, telegraphs and telephones. It was the last group which irritated the public greatly, because the government itself had granted special favors to corporations while withholding them from the general public.

Many instances of evasion of their tax burden among these corporations began to receive public attention. One Upper Peninsula corporation had filed a sworn statement with the Secretary of State that its property was worth $1,250,000 but on the county assessment roll the value was placed at only $30,000. Another corporation in the same area was valued at nearly $500,000 but did not appear on the tax rolls at all. In other parts of the state, valuable timber lands worth many times more were equalized at from one to five dollars an acre.[8]

However, the most notable offenders were the railroad corporations, whether operating under the General

[8] Grange Proc., 24th (1896), p. 73.

Railroad Law of 1871, or under one of the many special charters. Those railroads which were under the regulation of the law of 1871 were subject to an earnings per mile tax that varied from 2½ per cent to 5 per cent of their yearly gross earnings. However, the inability of state officials to verify all of the yearly railroad earnings statements plus the ability of the railroads to hide or conceal part of their earnings probably made the tax returns from this source somewhat less than they should have been. Prior to 1871, taxation of railroads furnished nearly 35 per cent of the total tax returns, but after 1871, its contribution dropped to less than 18 per cent of the state total despite the increasing value of the property. The special charter roads were paying a 1 per cent capitalization tax as stipulated by the original contract. By 1895, while the other property owners of the state were paying a tax rate of about 2½ per cent of their assessed valuation, the railroads because of their special tax privileges were paying less than one fourth of 1 per cent on their cash value.[9] Besides this, the tax per mile of road in

[9]Hazen Pingree, May 6, 1897, in George W. Fuller, ed., Messages of the Governors of Michigan (Lansing, 1927), IV, 62. Hereafter cited as Fuller.

Michigan was considerably less than that in many other Mid-west and Western states.[10]

Believing these conditions to be opposed to the concepts of equality and justice, the people of the state from 1870 to the end of the century demanded tax reforms. The idea which emerged from the many demands was one of taxing all property upon an ad valorem or cash value basis. While five Governors of the State specifically called attention to the problem, it was only under two, Winans and Pingree, that progress was made.

Winans, who owed his election in 1890 to a widespread political revolt against inaction by the Republicans, pointed out to the Legislature that there was no good reason why railroad property should not be taxed upon its assessed valuation as was other property. The Legislature of 1891 made some attempt to equalize the tax situation by a law which would require all special charter roads then paying a capitalization tax to begin paying their taxes under the gross earnings plan by 1892. But the charter roads rejected this act on the basis that it was only an amendment to the General Railroad Law of 1871 to which they were not subject. This was

[10] Gov. Rep., 24th (1896), p. 74.

evidence to many that no real reform could be accomplished until the special charters themselves were abolished.

The next Legislature in 1893 passed further legislation amending the special charters and requiring those roads to adopt the gross earnings tax system. The powerful Michigan Central road which had the right to accept or reject amendments to its special charter finally agreed to make the change but apparently only because the gross earnings tax during the depression of 1893 would be less than the old capitalization tax.

The next phase of reform occurred under the two administrations of Hazen Pingree when the ideal of equal taxation finally was achieved after a bitter fight with the corporations. The powerful interests who opposed tax reform found valuable allies among the "Immortal Nineteen" in the State Senate who consistently voted against measures designed to equalize the tax burden.

Pingree's first problem, that of the special charter roads, was made clear when these roads announced they were removing themselves from the gross earnings tax and returning to the capitalization tax plan. This situation of a state permitting corporations of its own creation to accept or reject the laws of the state was intolerable and could only be remedied by the outright repeal of all

special charters and the placing of the roads under the general law. In 1893, the Legislature appointed a three man commission to negotiate with the charter roads to determine the conditions upon which they would surrender their charters. It was two years before the roads agreed to give up their special privileges, and then only on the condition that they be allowed to sue the State for any damages or losses suffered due to the surrender and reorganization.

While these negotiations were under way, the battle for a new tax law was being conducted in the Legislature. Governor Pingree and his supporters sponsored the Atkinson Bill which would set up a State Board of Tax Commissioners to assess property of corporations; would have the authority to levy taxes; and would divert the tax receipts into the primary school fund.[11] This passed the House but was killed in the Senate during the regular session. When the Governor called a special session of the Legislature to resubmit the bill, the result was the same. At the next regular session both houses approved as the powerful railroad bloc in the

[11]Charles R. Starring, "Hazen S. Pingree: Another Forgotten Eagle," Michigan History, XXXII (June, 1948), 140.

Senate allowed it to pass knowing that the Michigan Supreme Court would declare it unconstitutional, which it did.

The Governor's next move was to ask for a Joint Resolution by both Houses to provide for submission to the people of an amendment to the Constitution so that the Supreme Court's objection to the Atkinson Bill would be removed.[12] Again the Senate blocked this in a regular and a special session, but in the second special session public opinion for tax reform was so intense that the Senate approved the resolution. The proposed constitutional amendment was submitted to a popular vote in November, 1900, and was overwhelmingly approved by 422,723 to 54,757 votes.

After this approval, the Governor called another special session of the Legislature just before his term expired and made his last plea for the Atkinson Bill. Once again the Immortal Nineteen in the Senate defeated the bill and Pingree left office without having achieved his goal of seeing equal taxation established in the state. However, in 1901 the Legislature finally passed

[12]Gov. Hazen S. Pingree, June 16, 1899, in Fuller, IV, 180-182.

an act embodying the main features of Pingree's proposed reforms.

While the long struggle to bring railroads under an ad valorem tax system was going on, several other important measures had been passed by the Pingree Administration which generally reduced tax rates and burdens for the majority of citizens. The repeal of special charters of several railroads forced them to reduce passenger fares and to increase tax payments. Tax rates of express and telegraph companies were raised several per cent, as were specific taxes upon railroads in 1897. In 1899, a State Tax Commission was created which in the first year alone added some $350,000,000 worth of property to the tax rolls. By 1901, the equal tax law of that year added another $150,000,000 worth of property. The result of these reforms was immediate. The 1900 rate of assessment per $1000 was 26 per cent lower than that of 1899, and in some local areas the reduction was over 50 per cent.[13]

This long fight which was brought to a successful conclusion by Governor Pingree represented hard work on the part of many people and groups. The Grange was

[13] Grange Proc., 29th (1901), p. 17.

particularly important in keeping the issue alive and in persuading elected officials to act. The creation of a State Tax Commission as a means of equalizing tax loads had long been a Grange objective.

VI. MONETARY PROBLEMS

Of all the trusts which the farmers believed were oppressing them, the "money trust" received the bitterest denunciation and aroused the greatest political activity. To the farmer and laborer, the "money trust" was invisible and unincorporated, but was conceded to be located in the East where it conspired to enslave or destroy the other sections. Its illusiveness made it more difficult to attack than a railroad corporation. While the farmers were not always certain of its identity, they were aware of its methods. The "money trust" had created a monopoly over the nation's currency which it had contracted in volume for its own profit, thereby making interest rates high and prices low. The farmers' point of attack was to re-expand the supply of money in the United States in order to lower interest rates and to raise prices. Their objective remained the same though they might advocate inflation by greenbacks, additional coinage of silver, or some other device.

The money shortage which began after the Civil War and continued throughout the remainder of the century was constantly impressed upon the farmers' thinking by

an increasing mortgage burden and high interest costs. Farmers did not object to mortgages as such, since their capitalistic business often required the contraction of long-term debt, but they did object to interest rates which often were much higher than the productive earning capacity of the property. This condition represented, they thought, a direct threat to the ownership of private property, the basic foundation for commercial agriculture. "To make capital invested in a farm yield to the owner but 3 to 5 per cent, while the mortgage on the farm draws 10 per cent," the Grange warned, "is unjust discrimination . . ., the tendency of which is to reduce the laborers to paupers, and the farmers to mere tenants."[1]

The mortgage burden in the state was high, although different groups could not agree upon the amount. In 1887, the Michigan Commissioner of Labor reported that mortgage indebtedness was $64,000,000, while the Grange statistician announced a figure of $77,000,000. Three years later the United States Census said that it was $96,000,000.[2] The Patrons of Industry of Clinton County

[1] Grange Proc., 4th (1876), p. 7.

[2] Grange Proc., 22nd (1894), p. 59.

quoted the Bankers' Magazine as saying that Michigan farms were burdened with $500,000,000 of mortgages.[3] The exact figure could never be determined since many farmers refused to reveal the extent of their debt, but conservatively, around 50 per cent of the farms were mortgaged in the 1890's, representing a debt equal to more than one-third of the assessed value of all farm property.[4]

The greatest danger involved in this debt was not its size but its cost. High interest rates, usury, and falling prices made the debt unmanageable in many instances and threatened ultimate loss of property and investment for some farmers. In the 1870's, 10 per cent mortgages were the average, but the rate was much higher if the mortgagee demanded an extension of time. Besides this, if the mortgage was being foreclosed, there was no legal limit on the fee which an attorney might charge for the legal proceedings, and the fee, plus advertising and court costs, often equaled the amount of the mortgage.[5] Since agriculture in the same period was

[3]Senate Journal (Lansing, 1891), p. 337.

[4]Grange Proc., 22nd (1894), p. 59.

[5]Grange Proc., 6th (1878), p. 11.

only earning about 4 per cent, financial ruin was the only prospect for the debtor.

While the interest rate declined to 7.3 per cent in the 1890's, prices of farm products fell even faster, making the burden greater. In some cases, unpaid interest was added to the principal of the mortgage; in others, land from the farm itself was given in payment. Under these circumstances, Eastern money lenders were regarded as oppressive tyrants and enemies of justice. "The drain of money from Michigan to Eastern capitalists is fearful," one woman complained. "We are giving our very last dollars to keep our homes . . . yet knowing very well if our crops fail us our homes must go. Their rates of interest are so high, there is little left to pay taxes. . . . Is there no help for us?"[6]

Falling farm prices during the depression of the 1890's accentuated the problem still further. Then it took at least 200 bushels of wheat to pay the interest on a $1,000 mortgage whereas just after the Civil War 33 bushels would have paid it.[7] The severity of the

[6]Mrs. M. C. Campbell to Governor Cyrus Luce, January 24, 1887, Governors' File.

[7]The Populist, Lansing, Michigan, July, 1894, p. 4.

mortgage problem caused even the more conservative Grangers to despair of the future. "No farmer can pay 7 per cent with 50 cent wheat, . . . the farmer will wear himself out and only pay interest to the banker, who is getting now 15 to 20 per cent annually. The farmer should give up his farm and start over."[8] Many farmers must have agreed with the Populist when it asked, "How long will it take the money lender to absorb all the wealth of the Country? . . . More money and less misery."[9]

In an effort to control the interest rate, farm organizations turned to the government and asked for maximum limits. They based their demands upon the power of Congress to coin money, regulate its value, and establish a uniform currency. "Should not interest also be uniform and regulated?"[10] The Grange asked for a 7 per cent ceiling on interest rates, with a penalty of forfeiture of the full amount of interest due for violation. In addition, it petitioned the Legislature to "limit to a reasonable amount the fees and cost of foreclosures of mortgages."[11] The latter request was also

[8] Grange Proc., 22nd (1894), p. 19.

[9] The Populist, p. 1.

[10] Grange Proc., 4th (1876), p. 13.

[11] Grange Proc., 11th (1878), p. 10.

an attempt to break up what the Grange considered to be a lawyer monopoly over the business of foreclosing mortgages. When their legislative requests were defeated, the Grange warned that this "should arouse us to the danger of electing smart lawyers to legislate for us."[12]

The other two large farm organizations at a later date followed the Grange's lead. The Farmers' Alliance asked for a 5 per cent ceiling with a penalty of forfeiture of all principal and interest for violation.[13] The Patrons of Industry asked for a 5 per cent limit with a penalty for usury.[14] Individual groups within the major organizations often asked for lower limits.

There were individual proposals for governmental mortgage loan and savings associations on a state and national basis. The idea behind these was that surplus funds in certain counties and states could be used in other areas which were short of funds; then this fluidity of money would act as an automatic regulator of circulation and interest rates. The backers of such associa-

[12]Grange Proc., 7th (1879), p. 22.

[13]House Journal (1891), p. 1551.

[14]Lansing State Republican, Feb. 27, 1891, p. 1.

tions believed that interest rates could be reduced to 4 per cent and would be uniform throughout the nation.[15] However, the plan was not generally sponsored by any large organization or group of organizations during the nineteenth century. The Grange once considered a cooperative state bank to loan mortgage funds but this was disapproved by the State Convention. Probably the failure to develop banking facilities specializing in farm credit was due in large measure to the great reliance which farmers placed upon the nineteenth century movements to increase the quantity of money in circulation as the method to relieve financial distress.

Proposals for government assistance in the field of working credit did not become prominent until the last decade of the century when the Alliance and the People's Party submitted the sub-treasury plan. Under this scheme farmers could deposit their produce at government warehouses and secure treasury notes equal to 80 per cent of the value of the produce and could redeem the notes by paying 2 per cent interest. This 2 per cent loan idea was backed by many farm organizations, including the National Grange. However, the Michigan Grange opposed the idea because it disapproved

[15]Ernest Hollenbeck to Governor Cyrus Luce, December 23, 1889, Governors' File.

of any plan "that will encourage people in contracting debt. . . . What farmers need are greater facilities for paying debts. It would create a feeling of helpless dependence upon government aid, relaxing individual effort, destroy energy and self-reliance."[16] However, the Grange, before the end of the century, altered its views on government aid to agriculture. The severity of the depression of the 1890's, in addition to the popularity of the sub-treasury plan, caused the Grange to change.

In Michigan, those who wanted an inflation of the currency were believers in the quantity-of-money theory. They thought simply that an increase in the supply of money would result directly in a rising price level and a falling interest rate. Since the opposite condition existed, a falling price level for farm products and a high interest rate, many, if not a majority, of the farmers consistently supported inflationary proposals during the nineteenth century. The Greenback and People's parties with their programs of monetary reform drew most of their support from the rural areas of the state.

An examination of the Grange's thinking about this

[16]Grange Proc., 18th (1890), p. 31.

question and a comparison with other groups indicates the attitude of some Michigan farmers during the period. For three years after its organization in the State, the Grange permitted financial questions and all questions of policy to be discussed by its members. However, by 1877, when the Greenback party was becoming prominent in State politics, the problem of political partisanship in a non-partisan organization caused the Grange to rule that discussion of national finances and currency was "a political question and out of order." This did not prevent participation in politics, however, and many Grangers became Greenbackers and were converted to inflationary ideas.

The continued depression in farm prices and the rise of new farm groups with demands for monetary reforms brought the currency question back into Grange discussions by 1889. The State Convention of that year asserted, "We must now combine and mass our forces, not only to arrest but to force back the money power which . . . now monopolizes and appropriates to itself most of the accumulating wealth" which the nation produces.[17]

[17]Grange Proc., 17th (1889), p. 53.

In examining the situation, the Grange concentrated on four particular aspects of the nation's financial system: the inadequacy of currency in circulation; the metallic base; the evil of national banks and their note-issuing power; and the possible effects of foreign investments in the United States upon our supply of currency.

The Grange reflected the general demand when it called for an increase in the circulating medium of exchange, based on gold and silver, at least in proportion to the increase in productivity and population of the nation. This was an extension of the law of supply and demand to the currency field, as it called for an increase of money per capita to match the increase per capita of production in order to permit the exchange of all merchantable products.[18]

The basis for this expansion of currency would be supplied by government purchase of the "entire product of our gold and silver mines at its bullion value." Then the United States Treasury would issue legal tender coin certificates at the coin value of the bullion but

[18]Ibid., p. 54.

would not coin either metal, unless the "necessities required it."[19] The Grange felt that the essentials of its plan were incorporated into the Sherman Silver Purchase Act of 1890, which required the government to buy 4,500,000 ounces of silver bullion monthly in exchange for legal tender treasury notes. While it considered this inadequate to meet the "universal financial stringency," the Grange did credit the bill with averting the same rapid decline in values which took place in 1889 and with relieving the debtor class to a small extent. Therefore it continued its original demand for the use of the entire output of both gold and silver, or at least not less than $12,000,000 per month of legal tender notes.

In the early 1890's the Grange opposed the "free and unlimited coinage of either gold or silver," because "if the government stamp of coinage adds anything to the money value of the metal coined, the people whose credit gives it that added value are entitled to the benefit."[20] Specifically, the opposition to the Populist demand for "free silver" centered around the fear that it would

[19] Grange Proc., 18th (1890), p. 28.

[20] Grange Proc., 19th (1891), p. 37.

result in a contraction of the nation's currency, not an inflation. Free coinage of silver, said the Grange, would contract the currency by nearly $700,000,000, the amount of gold then in circulation, for silver money would drive the gold into hoarding. Also, it "would throw nearly the whole burden of raising silver bullion to par with gold upon the farmers of the United States." However, the effects of the serious depression of 1893 gradually drove the Grange closer to the silver views of the Populists.

The depression caused a financial crisis which was draining the nation of its gold supply. Gold was being used for silver purchases under the Act of 1890; foreign-held investments were being liquidated with it; private individuals were also hoarding gold, and tax receipts were dwindling. In the face of this, the Sherman Silver Act was repealed, so the farmers charged, upon the insistence of the bankers. Then to restore its gold reserves to a level consistent with monetary safety, the government sold its bonds in exchange for the needed metal. These actions finally convinced many that the government and the money trust were completely allied against the producing classes. "The government, by its

false and destructive financial policy of making gold . . . the sole measure of credit values, has embarrassed itself, and now comes forward as a borrower in competition with debtors whom its financial policy has distressed." The Grange further charged, "Having made it more profitable to hoard legal tender money than to invest it in any productive enterprise, it now comes in as a borrower for the purpose of hoarding a hundred million more."[21]

While the Grange continued to press for its reforms during the depression, it indicated a willingness to take the free and unlimited coinage of silver at a 16 to 1 ratio. It would accept the Populist demand with a modifying clause which would place an import duty on all foreign silver coin and bullion "equal to the difference between the gold value of silver bullion in Europe and its coined value here."[22] By 1895, the Grange was ready to call the demonetization of silver in 1873 "the most potent factor in the depression. It can be remedied by the free and unlimited coinage of silver and gold" at 16 to 1.[23] By this time, to the Grange as well as to

[21] Grange Proc., 22nd (1894), p. 63.

[22] Ibid., p. 66.

[23] Grange Proc., 23rd (1895), p. 60.

the other farmer organizations, the currency question was more than a request for a particular reform. It had come to symbolize the contest between the trusts and the people; few really understood the complexity of the problem, but they were willing to try free silver and give it a ch[redacted].

One useful aspect of the Grange's attack upon the monetary system came from their criticism of the use of gold. "There is a want of confidence in any financial system that depends for stability upon the fortuitous production of a single metal." In pointing out that the world supply of gold bullion was largely due to accidental discoveries of this metal, reformers caused people to begin thinking about a new monetary system which could be more easily inflated or contracted to meet the financial demands of an expanding economy.

The attack upon the currency led farmers also to attack the banks which supplied a great portion of that currency. During the nineteenth century most farm organizations and reform parties called for the abolition of national banks and the transfer of their note-issuing power to the federal government. The Grange acknowledged that these banks furnished a great service to the nation during the Civil War in enabling it to float its bonded

debt but after that "the necessity (was) over, and their usefulness past." It reflected the views of most farmers as it declared, "We are opposed to the issuing of paper money by any person, bank, or corporation other than the United States and that all such issuances in the future should be prohibited by law."[24]

Apart from the belief that the people should retain control over the money supply through their representatives, the banks came under attack because of the common feeling that they were exercising an undue influence over the government for their own private advantage. "It is not that the government is in the banking business, but that the banks are in the government business, that is raising the mischief with private business and public affairs," observed the Grange during the 1890's. Bankers who were commonly thought of as performing no useful productive function were charged with receiving a net profit of over 20 per cent annually, while farming and other productive efforts were suffering losses.[25] Because of these attitudes most bankers were automatically thrown into the money trust classification by

[24] Grange Proc., 17th (1889), p. 54.

[25] Grange Proc., 23rd (1895), p. 62.

farmers who increasingly tended to look to their own government for financial aid and reform.

Investments made in the United States by foreign individuals or corporations was the fourth monetary problem. The United States had been a net borrower in an international sense with imports exceeding exports until 1873. After that date exports tended to exceed imports and the United States was repaying its creditors, although it still continued to borrow from foreign sources. The farmers' objection did not center around the existence of foreign investments in the United States, as they contributed to the supply of currency, but rather to the effect upon circulating medium if these investments were suddenly liquidated. The farmers in a nationalist, not an isolationist sense, demanded an expansion in our own currency to fence out foreign capital by providing enough domestic money to finance our own productive investments. In addition, the interest and dividends which formerly went to foreigners could then be retained in the United States.

This short-sighted policy of trying to keep money at home ignored both the contribution which foreign

capital had made in building up the productive capacity of the nation and the workings of international finance. But the real fear arose from the fact that international payments during this period were generally financed by gold and that gold shipments out of the United States had a contracting effect upon the domestic currency. Another distressing aspect to the farmers was that the outbreak of a financial crisis in Europe caused a dumping of American securities upon the market, accompanied by a violent movement of gold from America to Europe and an intensification of the agricultural depression in this country.

The Grange charged that the interest earned by foreign capital amounted to more than $150,000,000 annually, which exceeded the combined production of gold and silver in the United States. "Unless checked, it will exact an annual tribute of $400,000,000 for the benefit of English capital during the next generation."[26] To most farmers, the solution to the problem of foreign investments was the abandonment of gold as the sole metal for the backing of currency and the substitution of inflationary measures which would enable the nation to finance its own internal development through the stimulus of a rising price level.

[26]Grange Proc., 19th (1891), p. 36.

Part of the resentment against foreign capital probably arose from the presence of alien companies within the United States. Farmers charged that alien syndicates and corporations were in control of vast areas of western lands, elevators, flour mills, and other productive enterprises enabling them to create vast monopolies and trusts. To the American farmer an alien trust was far more to be feared than a domestic trust, for the latter potentially could be reached through government regulation. To control or destroy the alien monopoly the farmer wanted to abolish the need for or the opportunity for foreign investments. By laws they sought to prevent aliens from owning real estate in any form in this country and through inflation to prevent the intrusion of foreign capital. "We shall hail the day," the Grange said, "when the last sale of American securities in Europe has closed."[27]

It is probable that the farmers' struggle to increase the amount of money circulation would have had little effect upon the price level or their real income.

[27] Grange Proc., 21st (1893), p. 45.

Monetary theory had not yet worked out the possibilities of a flexible money system based upon expansion and contraction of demand deposits under the direction of a central bank. This did not appear until the twentieth century. The farmers' contribution was to point out the need for a flexible system and to focus public attention upon the inadequacies of the existing one.

VII. POLITICAL AND LEGAL PROBLEMS

Many farmers believed that the important questions of the day, such as regulation of trusts, freight and interest rates, equal taxation, and monetary reform had been created because of imperfections in the political machinery of the nation. To solve these problems and to prevent them from reappearing again, they advocated a series of reforms designed to permit a more direct democratic expression of the people's will. Some reforms were directed toward the removal of certain indirect political practices such as the manner of electing United States Senators by state legislatures, while other reforms attempted to overthrow boss rule within political parties and thus allow the electorate a greater choice in the selection of candidates.

In nearly all general farm organization and third party platforms there were demands for political reforms throughout the nineteenth century. No one group or party can be credited with primary responsibility for the development of any particular reform for public sentiment was instrumental in the shaping and evolution of these new political concepts.

Electoral problems were the source of a number of agrarian reforms. So long as the United States was predominantly agricultural, the caucus and convention methods of nominating candidates for public offices were reasonably democratic, but the urbanization and industrialization that followed the Civil War created an environment in which they were abused. Such new features as impersonal wealth, corporation power, political bosses, and unsophisticated voters made it possible for urban politicians to obtain more power over public affairs and public officials. Consequently farmers were being forced out of the decision-making role in governmental matters. Since the decisions as to who should control the government were largely being made in the urban areas, the farmers struck back defensively in an attempt to purify the electoral process. The direct primary movement, while basically of urban origin, was supported by the rural areas in the hope that it would break the power of the city boss.

The demand for the direct primary system, while present in the platforms of the Alliance and Patrons of Industry in the 1890's, did not receive serious attention generally until the beginning of the twentieth century. By that time, the use of money to influence dele-

gates in nominating conventions was so openly employed that it had become a state disgrace. Beginning in 1903 the state began to allow certain counties to use the direct primary system and by 1909 a workable law for the entire state had been enacted.

The same desire for more control over state candidates was behind the movement for the direct election of president and United States senator. The National Reform party of 1874 first called attention to this and the Alliance and Patrons both carried the same demands in their platforms. The Grange, in regard to political reforms, lagged behind the other two groups and it was nearly the end of the century before it officially endorsed such proposals as primary elections, direct election of presidents and senators, initiative and referendum, and the merit system. While the Grange did not oppose such legislation and many Grangers demanded them, the non-partisan nature of this organization and its attempts to secure its objectives through pressure group activities rather than political accounted for the time lag. On the other hand, the Grangers were early supporters of equal suffrage for women as a matter of justice and continued to press their demand for this reform throughout the agrarian revolt.

Other reforms advanced by the farmers included a secret ballot, principle of local option for cities and villages on the prohibition question, home rule for cities, a state merit system, election of state and federal judges, and the abolition of free railroad passes for legislators and officials.

While the Grange was among the last to join the groups asking for political reforms, it was perhaps the first to request changes in legal procedures of the state and attempt to restrict the activities of lawyers and judges. Part of the early hostility of the Grange toward this class probably arose when the farmer first entered the commercial phase of farm organization. The greater complexity of this economy brought him into more contact with the law and the members of the legal profession. The farmer was confused by legal procedures and, as in politics, he worked to simplify or circumvent them. "The laws are so multiplied and complicated," one Granger complained, "that no two lawyers understand them alike."[1] Many thought that the "lawyers' occupation is complicating the laws for the men on whom (they) rely for business."[2]

[1] Grange Visitor, June 1, 1878, p. 7.

[2] Ibid., August 1, 1878, p. 5.

This antagonism soon led to demands for regulation of lawyers and court practices. The Grange demanded that the fees of lawyers be fixed at a reasonable rate. Then, because "courts, like war, are necessarily destructive of property,"[3] the Grange attempted to obtain legislation which would prevent certain cases from being appealed from lower courts to higher ones. From experience, the farmer had learned that the cost of court proceedings was often much higher than the original amount of the claim. Therefore the Grange asked for a law to prevent the appeal from a justice court to any higher court if the judgment was less than one hundred dollars. If any of the parties to the dispute wanted to appeal, the Grange would recommend that the appeal be made to a court of arbitration of three persons, one to be chosen by each of the litigants, and the third arbitrator to be chosen by the other two.[4] In 1897 this proposal, which by then had the indorsement of the State Association of Circuit Judges, passed the House but was sidetracked in the Senate "by the lawyers who would have been deprived of their fat fees."[5]

[3] Grange Proc., 2nd (1875), p. 41.

[4] Grange Proc., 6th (1878), p. 57.

[5] Grange Proc., 25th (1897), p. 12.

In order to reduce the time involved in court cases and to reduce expenses to the public, the Grange asked for changes in the jury system. There were many who believed that jury trials for civil cases in circuit courts were unnecessary and that the judge could much more quickly render a final verdict. In response to this the Grange recommended that three-fourths of a jury of twelve were sufficient to render a verdict in all except criminal cases.[6]

During the earlier years of the agrarian revolt most farmers believed that judicial positions should be filled by means of popular elections, for the people were well-qualified to make such decisions. Some even went further and stated that legal training should not necessarily be a prerequisite for a judicial post. In 1878 the National Greenback party nominated Henry Chamberlain, a non-lawyer, for judge of the Second Judicial District, an act which found approval in the rural areas.[7]

While the sentiment to elect untrained citizens to judicial positions abated as the farmers matured in

[6]Grange Proc., 22nd (1894), p. 82.

[7]Grange Visitor, October 15, 1878, p. 1.

their commercial environment, the idea that the people should retain control over the election of judges became a fixed part of rural thinking. The desire to maintain as direct a control as possible over public officials was extended to cover all branches of government, legislative, executive, and judicial.

VIII. OTHER ISSUES

There were several other issues of importance to the farmers but they did not have the same degree of imperativeness as did questions of monopoly, taxation, currency reform, and political reform. Demands for changes in the tariff policy, for pure food laws, good roads, rural free delivery, and social legislation, while important, were often secondary to the more basic grievances.

Michigan was not a free trade state and within that framework it was to be expected that the majority of her farmers favored the protective tariff principle in tariff legislation. When their own products were affected, the farmers strongly favored protection, especially when they were still engaged in the production of such items as wool and meat. However, when the state began to shift to speciality items which were not threatened by foreign imports, the farmers' interest in protection declined.

Whenever Congress attempted to reduce thetariff on items produced in Michigan, the Grange would work diligently to prevent it. One reason for this was the sen-

timent that if the manufacturers received protection for their finished products then the producers of raw materials should have equal protection.[1] "If we must have free wool, let us have free cloth," was the sentiment of many. Another reason for equal protection was the belief that tariffs for the manufacturer, but not for the producer, resulted in the formation of industrial monopolies.

The Grange took a position somewhere between high tariff and free trade. A tariff which was too high resulted in monopoly; but one which was too low resulted in oppression of the laboring classes and the farmers. The proposed reciprocity treaties with Canada also found the Grange in opposition with a demand for protection of home industries. However, in the 1880's it modified its position in an attempt to curb the growth of monopolies. By suggesting that "importation should be permitted, duty free, of any manufactured article that American manufacturers have combined to raise the price of,"[2] the Grange showed its usual interest for the farmer.

[1]Grange Visiter, January 1, 1878, p. 4.

[2]Grange Proc., 9th (1881), p. 68.

But by the end of the century, this organization was again firmly convinced of the necessity of protection for American products. The sugar beet industry in Michigan owed its existence to protection given by the tariffs of 1890 and 1897. This new crop was another addition to Michigan's agriculture and farmers saw more justification for protection.

The Patrons of Industry, with more members from the urban industrial areas than the Grange, questioned a high tariff policy in relation to the growth of monopolies but did not formally attack the problem. Most farmers in the state, regardless of party membership, accepted the principle of equal protection and overlooked the fact that financial gains from tariffs as a producer might well be offset by higher costs as a consumer.

Pure food regulation in the state became an issue when the farming industry began to concentrate upon the production of certain specialty crops such as milk, butter, cheese, and sugar, all of which were subject to adulteration. Also, because several neighboring states had enacted pure food laws, Michigan was becoming a dumping ground for such products of unethical manufacturers as olee. The Grange was the most important agency

in securing the passage of legislation to regulate these practices. In 1892 a State Dairy and Food Commission was created. For the next few years the Grange worked to strengthen the police powers of that office, in addition to increasing to the scope of its activities. This legislation was not easy to secure, for manufacturers threw all their influence into the struggle against it. The President of the Michigan Dairymen's Association described the extent of this influence during one of the many campaigns to regulate the sale of oleomargarine. "It was freely talked about the Capitol last winter that the manufacturers of oleomargarine, through their hired attorneys, would not have cheated the people of Michigan out of the forced sale of olee on its own merits if our senior United States Senator had not given his influence in their behalf against us. If these imputations were not true Senator McMillain should explain to the people."[3]

The Grange fought for proper labels on products which contained preservatives, antiseptics and glucose, to extend legislation to cover drugs, clothing and dry goods; and to have officials of the Dairy and Food Commission placed under civil service.

[3]Grange Proc., 23rd (1895), p. 16.

In the last decade of the century, farmers began a vigorous campaign for good roads and rural free delivery. By this time, farmers were producing more specialized items for sale upon the local markets. These could easily be shipped by the farmer or a local transportation system. The building of a year-around wagon road network was necessary for the efficient distribution of farm products into the urban market centers. Also, the social life of the rural inhabitant could be materially improved by usable roads. The Grange was one of the leading groups advocating state assistance, and it recommended that the state constitution be amended to once again permit the state to give financial aid for internal improvements.

The adoption of rural free delivery in Michigan was an acknowledgement of the farmer's advancing social and commercial status. "Business interests of far less importance than ours, employing only a fraction of the capital invested, have in postal service been carefully looked after," said the Grange. "The mails should be carried to the farmer's place of business as well as to that of the merchant and manufacturer."[4]

[4]Grange Proc., 24th (1896), p. 69.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the right of free delivery of mails to the rural areas had been established and the service was being introduced, after a successful experiment at Climax, Michigan.

There were several other reforms, or attempted reforms, affecting social life and which reflected the moralistic tone of the rural protest movement. The temperance campaign received its strongest support from the farmers and nearly all the farm organizations spoke out against the liquor traffic. Their opinions often were expressed in the platforms of the several third party movements, except when the party attempted to win support from the industrial workers. Then the demand for prohibition might be dropped so as not to antagonize the foreign-born elements.

Farmers also were ardent supporters of equality for women. As early as 1879 the Grange declared, "We can no longer deny women the right of elective franchise."[5] By 1893 Grange and other support accounted for the passage of a woman's suffrage bill, but it was ruled unconstitutional.[6]

[5]Grange Proc., 7th (1879), p. 66.

[6]Grange Proc., 21st (1893), p. 52.

Other reforms requested by the Grange were: equal pay for women for the same kind and amount of labor as that done by men; the right of women to be elected to any civil office "the duties of which relate to education;" and laws giving widows the entire control of the settlement of estates.

Education was recognized, by rural people, as one of the most important forces in the struggle to maintain and then to elevate the profession of farming. The Grange virtually adopted the State Agricultural College and fought constantly to improve it, recognizing the assistance which higher education could furnish the farmer in his attempt to find new agricultural potentialities. Farmers were active in securing the introduction of subjects in the elementary schools which were valuable to agriculture, thereby hoping to develop an appreciation for the dignity of their profession among the rural youth. Farmers were expanding their horizons during this century and education was the medium which helped them commercially and socially to keep pace with the advancements in the urban areas.

IX. THE POLITICAL RESPONSE

Any attempt by the rural people to obtain legislative recognition for their demands was conditioned by the reality that Michigan was a one-party state during this period. The Republican party after the Civil War maintained a supremacy in state politics which could only be shaken by unusual conditions of unrest among the voters or by a complete disregard for the interests of the rural groups. Therefore, since the Democratic organization was too weak to challenge their hold, the Republicans did not have to respond quickly to the threat of third party activity or the attractiveness of their platforms.

Also, much of the third party strength was drawn from Democratic ranks, which further weakened their position and made necessary their coalition with the rebels on the latters' terms. But there was always enough independency among the rank-and-file members of the Republican party which, if combined with the bolters from the Democrats, could overthrow the dominant party. While a great many leaders of the third parties came from the Republican party, it was always possible for

the parent to induce them to come back with the promise of a position which they could not hope to receive through their act of independence. Most of this political insurgency arose in the older agricultural counties of the south where the effect of the agricultural depression was the most severe.

Political activity in the state varied from the non-partisan pressure-group activities of the Grange to the outright third party techniques of the Greenbackers and Populists. Most of the support for these actions came from the rural areas, but leadership was often furnished by representatives from the urban professional class to an extent which far exceeded their numerical strength. Members from the inclusive union organizations such as the Knights of Labor were often successfully united with the farmers in political activity, but those from the craft unions avoided politics in favor of economic action.

Results were not what the reformers expected, but the constant pressure of independent political activity did educate many people and some political leaders to the need for more progressive legislation. By the end of the century, the Republican party had thrust upon it

the role of sponsoring several of the reforms which had been demanded for a quarter of a century, and in this manner it came to be regarded again, as in anti-slavery days, as the best vehicle for progress in the state.

The Michigan Grange although not formally entering politics still had a disruptive effect upon the course of political development within the state. "The Grange is the Alma Mater of the independent voter," was a claim that summarized the influence this organization had upon subsequent events. "We believe the independent voter, found in every party, is the most potent factor in the success of any reform which is demanded by farmers, and that he can do more as a member in one of the two great political parties than he can by attempting to form a new one."[1] Because Michigan was a one-party state during most of this period, the Grange encouraged cutting loose from party ties in an effort to upset political calculations. Discussion of farm problems, drawing up of proposed legislation for reforms, and inquiring into governmental principles led many Grange members to the conclusion that independence in voting would speed the accomplishment of the general objectives of the farm revolt.

[1]Grange Visitor, August 1, 1891, p. 4.

While the Grange hoped to limit its activities to independence within the two major parties, many of its members broke away and helped form and support some of the third party movements, particularly when it became clear that the dominant party had little intention of accomodating the views of its rural faction. However, the Republican party being strong in the rural areas, the traditional link between the party and the Grange was difficult to break, and independence within a party dominated by business interests was not destined to produce very many concessions for the rural group.

During its early period the Michigan Grange's weapon for the securing of reforms or legislation was the legislative petition or resolution. Exhaustive lists of grievances and proposals for reforms were sent to both the legislature and congress in the belief that the law-makers were unaware of true conditions in agriculture but having been informed would take action to alleviate the wrongs. It was not long before this method by itself proved to be worthless. "Our petitions . . . are, so far as we know, sleeping the sleep that knows no waking," was the conclusion of the Grange.[2]

[2]Grange Proc., 7th (1879), p. 39.

The realization that it had asked for too many reforms at once and lacked the strength to push any of them through caused the Grange to turn to another method which proved to be much more successful.

The organization began to win more victories when it copied the tactics of business groups and set up a lobby or a legislative committee. By limiting its goals and concentrating its efforts upon certain key proposals, the Grange achieved more results than it could have by a political party technique. The use of the legislative committee, which began around 1885, was productive when attention was focused upon items benefiting a certain class of farmers such as the dairymen or fruit growers, but was less effective in securing reforms which would benefit the mass of farmers. Its use in the nineteenth century was a forerunner of the greater use and success it enjoyed in the twentieth.

The ablest men were selected to serve on the legislative committee; Cyrus Luce, master of the State Grange and later Governor; Judge Ramsdell, chairman of the finance committee of the Grange; Sanford Brown, a former master; D. D. Buell; Kenyon L. Butterfield; and others. The members would select not more than four proposals

at each session of the legislature, place them in mature or final form, and then attempt to direct them into law.[3] By the last decade of the century the Grange was successful in most of its legislative proposals. In 1895, it secured the passage of a bill authorizing state appropriations for holding Farmers' Institutes under the management of the State Board of Agriculture; it helped defeat the adoption of a Township Unit School System bill; it was instrumental in securing the appointment of its choice for the Office of State Tax Statistician; but failed to obtain the passage of pure food legislation until a later legislative session.

The Grange did not place all of its reliance upon the lobby, but in addition attempted to elect members or other farmers to public office. Generally, there was a conviction in the rural areas that much of the distress in agriculture and corruption in government was due to the lack of farmer representation in the various law-making bodies. The answer seemed to lie in the election of honest farmers who would then restore the old concepts of equality and justice in administration by driving out of office selfish politicians and by the passage of classless legislation. This belief led many

[3] Grange Proc., 23rd (1895), p. 15.

farm groups to pledge to vote for no one who was not a practicing farmer. This pledge became strong enough during certain periods to persuade party leaders to concede some offices to rural leaders. Cyrus Luce, a Granger, became Governor in 1886 because of the discontent among the farmers, and Governors Winans and Rich also won nomination because of their rural support. However, farmers came to realize that the election of their candidates to high offices did not either materially improve their condition or cleanse the political system of its impurities. The old agrarian ideals of civic responsibility and service were not enough to cope with the new conditions of an expanding industrial economy.

The Farmers' Movement in Michigan therefore turned to the use of third parties as a technique for securing reforms. The first such party appeared in 1874 under the misleading name National Reform Party and was one of a series of similar parties springing up in the Mid-West as a result of Granger agitation. The idea for a third party was launched by a National Mass Reform Convention at Lansing early in August.[4] The leadership of this

[4]Lansing State Republican, August 7, 1874, p. 3.

convention was furnished by prominent farmers, some of whom would continue to be important in the development of third parties throughout the nineteenth century. Eugene Pringle of Jackson, later to be a Populist leader, was permanent chairman and Perry Mayo, a Grange officer and later a candidate for office on the Populist ticket, was a vice-president. This was the first evidence of the continuity of leadership which characterized nearly all third party movements in the state; from 1874 to 1896 some of the same persons are prominent in directing this political activity. Later in 1874, the farmers in the Reform party were joined and perhaps outnumbered by leaders from the ranks of organized labor and professional men from the urban centers; another trend which would also continue throughout the remainder of the century.

The temper of this convention was anti-monopoly and not greenbackerism as in the neighboring states of Indiana and Illinois.[5] The fact that the anti-monopoly feeling was directed against the railroad corporations indicated that the Grange had done its work in Michigan. The convention called for the immediate regulation of freight rates by the state and also said that "it is

[5] Lansing State Republican, August 7, 1874, p. 3.

the duty of the Legislature at once to so change the rate and mode of taxing railroads that they shall bear equal burdens with other property."[6] The equal taxation movement probably began at this meeting.

Failure to touch upon the greenback question which was beginning to arouse public feeling in the state may have cost the party considerable support when it called for a sound currency by approaching "a specie basis as speedily as shall be consistent with financial prosperity." This wavering position alienated many persons on both sides of the financial question. The entire Kent county delegation withdrew from the Committee on Resolutions in protest against the failure to support greenbacks.[7]

The rural attitude toward direct democracy and economy in government found expression in resolutions calling for a one term principle for the President and the use of the surplus in the state treasury for the reduction of taxes.

Following the convention, plans were completed for a third party. In September its first and only state

[6]Ibid.

[7]Lansing State Republican, August 21, 1874, p. 2.

political convention was held and a full slate of state officers were nominated. Another precedent was established at this time when evidences of fusion with the Democratic party were apparent. The reform candidate for Governor, Henry Chamberlain of Three Oaks, and two other candidates for state offices, were also nominated by the Democratic convention on the following day, thus setting the example most other third parties adhered to when neither party could hope to win without an alliance.[8]

As a result of the fusion most of the reform strength in the state was focused upon Chamberlain and the Democratic party in the fall election. The Republicans, who failed to nominate a well-known farmer on their ticket, carried the election by less than 6,000 votes. The National Reform candidate for Lieutenant Governor, Levi Sparks of Berrien County, received only 7,348 votes, but over 90 per cent were concentrated in the four old southern agricultural counties of Branch, Eaton, Calhoun, and Hillsdale.[9] This was the first political evidence that the older Republican agricultural areas were restless and dissatisfied with their party's policies.

[8]Lansing State Republican, September 11, 1874, p. 2.

[9]Ibid., November 27, 1874, p. 2.

While the vote for the Reform party was not large, the idea of political independence was becoming more prevalent among the rural voters especially at the local governmental level. Twenty-two counties, nearly all in the southern half of the state, elected officers of both the Democratic and the Republican parties, which furnished Michigan with its greatest display of independent voting up to that time and also smoothed the path for third party activity in the future.[10] "The granger seems to have been abroad," was the comment of the Detroit Tribune as it studied the returns.[11]

Indirectly, the National Reform party was a forerunner of the Greenback party in Michigan. In November, 1874, the Independent party of Indiana, a farmers' group interested in greenbackism, was host at a convention it had called to discuss the possibility of forming a national party around the currency issue. Representatives from seven states, including Michigan, attended and made initial plans for a national convention. The single issue or reason for being was the money question as they demanded the payment of national debt in greenbacks and

[10]Ibid., November 20, 1874, p. 2.

[11]November 6, 1874, p. 1.

the issuance of interconvertible legal tender currency and bonds.

A preliminary national convention was held in Cleveland in March, 1875, where the name "Independent" was officially chosen for the new party. Also, the decision was made to call a nominating convention at Indianapolis in May of the following year. In the months preceeding this convention, a fusion with the anti-monopolists was completed, uniting two groups whose views on money were almost identical.[12]

Also in 1875 the Greenbackers held a convention in Detroit, which took action to assist the activities of the new political party. It was decided to organize Greenback clubs in every state to spread the ideas and purposes of the party. This project was placed under the direction of Marcus M. Brick Pomeroy, editor of Pomeroy's Democrat of New York, and anumber of these clubs were initiated in the state.[13]

The nominating convention which met at Indianapolis

[12]John R. Commons and others, History of Labour in the United States (New York, 1918), II, 168-171. Hereafter cited as Commons.

[13]Carl C. Taylor, The Farmers' Movement, 1620-1920 (New York, 1953), p. 187. Hereafter cited as Taylor, Farmers' Movement.

in 1876 was largely a farmers' organization for only a few labor leaders were present. One of them was Richard Trevellick, a labor leader from Detroit, who was later to be an important influence in the Michigan Greenback party. Moses Field, a Detroit businessman, and a Democratic Congressman, was chairman of the convention. Field for a number of years was the leading figure in the party in Michigan. The convention chose Peter Cooper of New York for its presidential candidate and adopted a short platform calling for repeal of the specie resumption act, opposition to any further contraction of the greenbacks, asked for cessation of any further issues of gold bonds or further purchases of silver.[14]

The Michigan Greenback convention also met in May at Jackson. Most of the delegates were from Eaton, St. Joseph and Jackson Counties.[15] Plans were made for a nominating convention to meet in Grand Rapids in August after the two major parties had drawn up their tickets. The slate which the Greenbackers adopted was a combination of men from all the other parties. Charles Carpenter of Oakland County, their first choice for

[14]Ibid., p. 186.

[15]Lansing State Republican, May 5, 1876, p. 1.

governor, was a Granger, a railroad director, a Democrat, and the Prohibition party's candidate for governor in 1874. Their nominees for Secretary of State and State Treasurer were nominated for the same positions on the Democratic ticket. The candidate for Superintendent of Public Instruction was the same as the Republicans'. Carpenter soon removed himself from the race and Levi Sparks, of Berrien County, was moved up to the governor's position.

The party was too inexperienced and lacked the funds and organization necessary to attract attention and supporters. It caused little concern among the regular party leaders and its only opportunity to gain recognition came in certain districts where it could throw its few votes into a close race between Democratic and Republican candidates. In the November elections, the Greenback party received a little more than 8,000 votes, with over a third of them cast in two industrial counties, Kent and Wayne.[16]

But in two years, the party overcame the difficulties which hampered it in 1876 and polled some 73,000 votes, a growth which threatened the two major parties and eventually led to fusion with the Democrats and a partial victory in the election of 1882. One reason for

[16]Lansing State Republican, November 17, 1876, p. 2.

the large increase was the willingness of laborers to join with the farmers. The series of strikes which swept the United States in 1877 were put down, to the disgust of the workers, by federal and state troops. Thereupon, many workers turned to politics to secure what economic tactics had failed to do. In many areas the laboring groups and the Greenback party merged or agreed upon a political platform. This was carried to the national level at Toledo in 1878, where the Greenbackers and the Labor Reform party allied under the name National Party. Nevertheless, the new party was still largely under the direction of farmers, lawyers, or professional men, not labor leaders. However, laborers in 1878 came out in larger numbers to support the new party.

Other reasons for increased success were the perfection of organizational work and an intensive educational program which were conducted during the year preceding the 1878 elections. "During the fall and winter of 1877-8, when there was no particular interest manifested in political matters, the agitation of the financial question was vigorously and systematically carried on in every township and school district in the county (Jackson), the leaders being Moses W. Field, Dick

Trevellick, and Ralph Hoyt."[17] Similar work was probably performed in other counties with discussions and organizational details under the direction of professional men from the local areas. By the summer of 1878 the new party was backed by able leaders, good organization, additional supporters, and consequently it looked forward to the off-year election in the fall.

The Greenback nominating convention was held early in June in Grand Rapids, a stronghold for currency reform. Since it was held before the two older parties had scheduled their conventions, there may have been some thought on the part of the Greenback leaders that a fusion with one of the other parties might be possible. The convention selected Henry Smith, Greenback mayor of Grand Rapids, as its candidatefor governor, in addition to a full slate of candidates for the state offices. Smith, a prominent agricultural implement dealer in Grand Rapids, had been elected mayor in 1878. He was re-elected in 1880, but died the following year.

The platform dropped all references to the interconvertible bonds and called for abolition of all interest-bearing government bonds and the substitution of legal

[17]Detroit Post and Tribune, August 28, 1878, p. 2.

tender paper money to be issued only by the general government. It also called for repeal of the Resumption Act, equal coinage of silver, a shorter work day for labor, and reservation of public lands for actual settlers only.[18]

However, the money problem was the main issue of the campaign and the Greenbackers, by seizing the initiative, forced the other parties to take a stand on this question. "The new party movement is the only thing in a political way that is talked of," one Detroit paper commented. "Old political issues and old party divisions are seldom mentioned."[19] The Republicans met later in June and called for currency "worth its face." Furthermore, they "viewed with apprehension the spread of opinions and growth of sentiments expressed by the National Greenback party, the various socialistic and communistic organizations, . . . which if adopted . . . must bring disaster and ruin to business, and subvert our high principles."[20]

[18]Lansing State Republican, June 7, 1878, p. 1.

[19]Detroit Evening News, August 21, 1878, p. 1.

[20]Lansing State Republican, June 14, 1878, p. 1.

The Democrats, who were to convene during July, were badly split over the money question. The Greenbackers were recruiting three Democrats to one Republican during the winter and spring of 1878, and some of the county Democratic organizations were trying to place their party on the Greenback platform.[21] By May, perhaps a majority of the Democratic leaders were disposed to form a coalition with the new party. This was a natural move since many Democratic leaders like George Sanford of Lansing, and Willard Stearns of Adrian, newspapers publishers, were greenbackers.[22]

At the state convention in July, the Democrat party was divided between the "softs" and the "hards." The latter, a minority, were from the Detroit sound money faction of the party and held the key positions and controlled the finances of the party. The "softs" were the rank-and-file members, caucus and poll workers who had voting power but not positions. The most extreme faction was that group representing the tier of counties along Lake Michigan and they were prepared to

[21]Ibid., May 14, 1878, p. 11.

[22]Lansing Republican, July 12, 1878, p. 4.

adopt the Greenback platform. If they could not swing the rest of the party over to this position then their plan was to join with the moderates for a platform which would call for the abolition of national banks and bank notes and substitute a national currency in their place. Should both attempts fail, then these groups would go over to the Greenbackers.[23] During the early days of the convention the "softs" were in command as the Lake shore counties were joined by Democratic greenbackers from the counties of Branch, Ingham, Lenawee, Allegan, Hillsdale, Berrien, and Kent. The Upper Peninsula and Saginaw districts were about evenly divided.

However, due to their influence and power the "hards" turned back the tide of greenbackerism and won control of the convention by nominating a hard money man for governor. The "softs" protested that the money plank would ruin the party and pointed out that the Democratic party in the states of Maine, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, and others had already adopted the Greenback platform. Willard Stearns predicted that the money stand of the party would further drive the Democrats into a minority party of 50,000 votes, a prediction which was accurately born out by the results of the fall elections.[24]

[23]Detroit Evening News, July 2, 1878, p. 2.

[24]Lansing Republican, July 12, 1878, p. 1.

There were several reasons, besides the farm depression, for the "soft" money sentiment in Western Michigan. This area, in many respects, was an agricultural frontier during and after the Civil War. Land speculation was prevalent and its success would be enhanced by "easy" money and rising land value. Since it was an area of recent settlement, many of the farmers had contracted long-term debts during the era of war prosperity. But after 1870, declining prices for land and farm products made debt payments burdensome. To escape from this, many farmers turned to inflationary schemes that promised to restore higher prices. The Detroit Post and Tribune of November 16, 1878, claimed that many western Michigan farmers were converted to greenbackerism after reading inflationist articles in the Chicago Inter-Ocean, a paper with wide circulation in that section of the state.

After the July convention, many Democrats and Democratic papers repudiated the hard money platform and more than a few joined the Greenbackers. In many areas, the two parties fused for the local elections. In Tuscola, they united on a single ticket for county officers. Cass and Ingham saw a partial fusion at the county level, and in Ionia and Montcalm the two joined

in the choice of a state senator. There were many other examples of such action.[25]

The campaign of 1878 was a lively one. Most of the attention was focused upon the new party which the Grand Rapids Enquirer said was "a necessity of the times; organized and brought into life to save the country from destruction at the hands of the spoilsmen."[26] This campaign approached in intensity and fear the one of 1896 when free silver was the central issue. Feelings were bitter and tempers were stretched dangerously as editors and orators fought one another. Since 1878 was also a depression year, this increased the tension as witnessed by the declaration of the Ingham county Greenbackers when they repudiated the Republican party "for the death like silence of our machine shops and forges, the wreck and ruin of business men, destitute wives and hungry children, . . . for the increase of communism in the land. . . . We demand that the laborers of the land have a right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness as well as the Bond Holder."[27]

[25]Ibid., November 1, 1878, p. 2. Detroit Post and Tribune, August 15, 1878, p. 2.

[26]Saginaw Weekly Courier, May 9, 1878, p. 2.

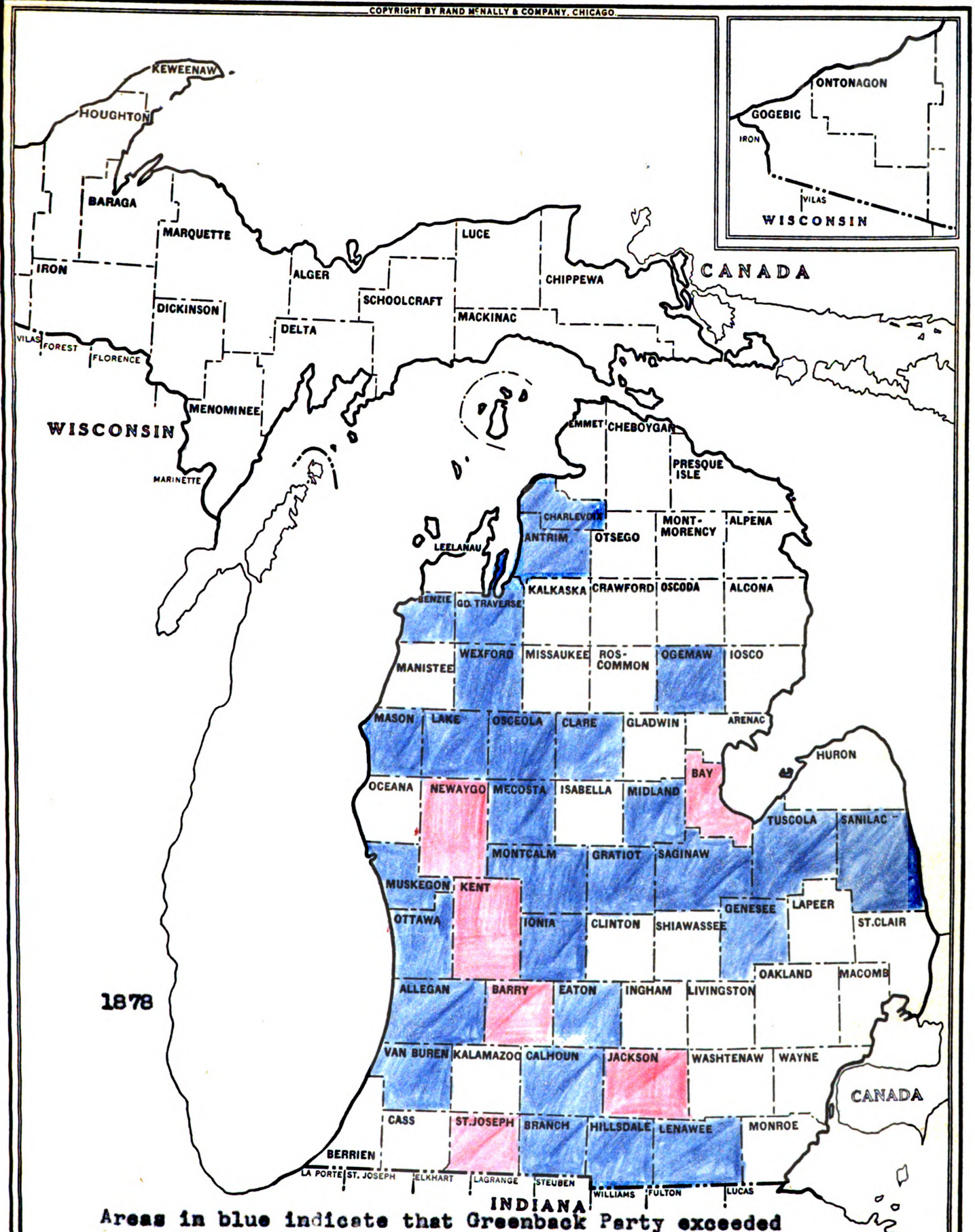
[27]Lansing Republican, May 28, 1878, p. 4.

A Republican paper answered this charge by saying, "The sooner the Greenback Communist party goes out of existence, the sooner hoarded capital will be unlocked and the hum of the busy wheel of industry be heard all over the land."[28]

The Republicans won the election easily as their candidate for governor polled 126,000 votes to 78,000 for the Democrats while the Greenback candidate received 73,000. The latter party carried six counties, Newaygo, Kent, Barry, St. Joseph, Jackson, and Bay. The map on the next page indicates the areas of Greenback strength, and reveals that in 1878 the laborers in the outstate industrial counties as well as the farmers supported the ticket. There was no similar protest from the counties bordering the Wayne county Detroit industrial area. This will be true of all future nineteenth century third party movements as the Detroit workers were much less inclined to break with their party affiliations than were the outstate workers. In 1878, the Greenbackers carried the cities of Grand Rapids, Jackson, West Bay City, and Hastings, while running second in Adrian, Hillsdale, Big Rapids, Dowagic, and Cadillac.[29]

[28]Detroit Post and Tribune, October 7, 1878.

[29]Lansing Republican, November 15, 1878, p. 1.



Areas in blue indicate that Greenback Party exceeded state average strength.
Areas in red indicate that Greenback Party carried county.

0 5 10 20 30 40 50 60 MILES

As a result of the election, eighteen Greenbackers were sent to the Legislature, five to the Senate and thirteen to the House. Four were from Kent county, three from St. Joseph, two each from Jackson, Barry, and Allegan, and one from Montcalm, Bay, Oceana, Branch, and Newaygo. The majority of these new members were farmers while the remainder represented a scattering of occupations. Although this group was relatively large it in no way held the balence of power in either house.

The election of third party candidates to the state legislature came to be a feature of Michigan politics only in the off-year campaigns and never during the presidential year elections. Since Michigan was a solidly Republican state, the lure of a national campaign brought out voters in such numbers that third parties were completely overwhelmed. But in the off-year elections third parties, by a well planned campaign, could always manage to elect several members to the legislature.

While the leaders of the Greenback party of 1878 were drawn largely from the Republican party, most of the support came from former Democrats. The next phase of political activity was to center around the possibility of a fusion of the Greenbackers and the Democrats

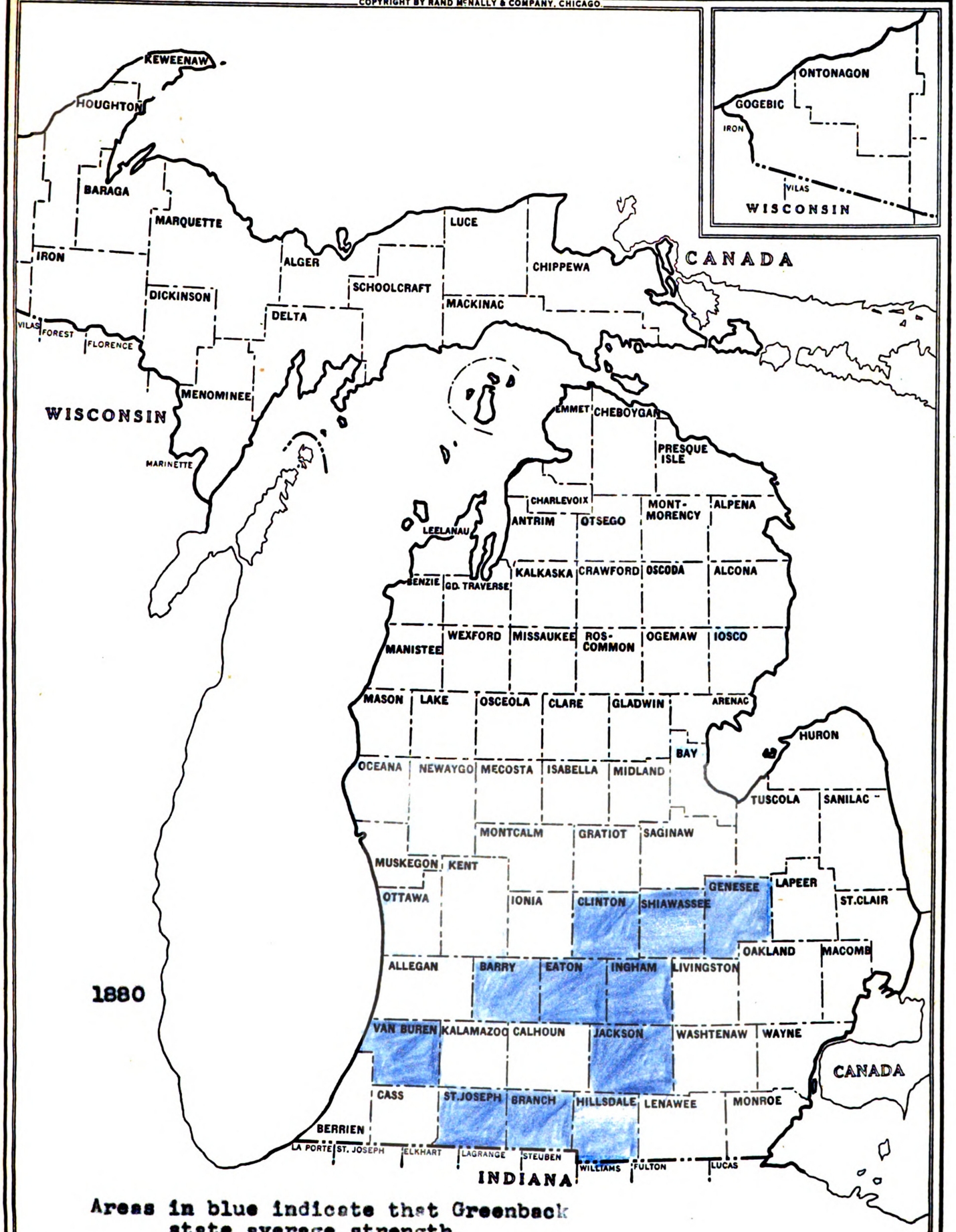
since the latter were a hopelessly minority party with no prospects for success in the state. In March, 1879, the two parties met at the same time in Lansing to seek ways of working together. The Greenback platform committee submitted its document calling for government control of money to be issued in sufficient volume "to meet the requisites of business," which meant it was now advocating the quantity theory of money. Then, both conventions selected committees of conference to work out the union of the two groups. This was completed when the Democratic convention, after much protest, accepted the Greenback platform in its entirety. Both parties then agreed to support the same candidates for supreme court justice and University regents in the spring election.[30]

However, the fusion of 1879 did not last and in the regular state elections of the following year each party presented a separate ticket. The Greenbacker candidate for governor, David Woodman of Paw Paw, received just over 31,000 votes, a decline of 42,000 in party strength since the last election. Because it was a presidential year, voting was heavy for the two major

[30]Lansing Republican, March 4, 1879, pp. 1-2.

parties and the Greenbackers failed to carry a single county. Another factor in the decline was the return of prosperity which reduced the foundation for much of the protest. As a result, twenty counties which had supported the ticket in 1878 at a rate greater than the state average failed in 1880 to furnish similar support. Many of the defectors were in the Lake Michigan shore area or in the new agricultural central counties. This was only partially off-set by the emergence of six counties that contributed more support than they had previously. It would appear from these facts that farmer support declined much more than did the urban worker support.

After this election it was apparent to the Democratic party leaders that they could not hope to win a state election without the support of the Greenbackers, who, although reduced in numbers, still controlled a sizeable bloc of voters. Therefore, during the next two years informal discussions were held between the two groups which were to lead to a more effective fusion of the parties. The Democrats, needing votes, had to offer the Greenbackers important state offices to induce them to enter the alliance. On the other hand, there were influential persons in the Greenbacker group who wanted



Areas in blue indicate that Greenback state average strength.

0 5 10 20 30 40 50 60 MILES

MADE IN U.S.A.

This Map is also available in size 17 x 22

to bring their following into the Democratic party to build up its strength against the Republican majority. Josiah W. Begole of Flint, a former Republican congressman, a prominent Greenbacker, and a successful candidate for Governor on Fusion ticket of 1882 later disclosed his strategy in this respect. "My intention was, all the time I was in the Greenback party, to eventually bring that party into the Democratic party which I did. Had the Free Press given the Greenback party the credit they ought to have, they would have went (sic) into and supported the Democratic Party."[31] Begole explained that after the remonetization of silver in 1879, the party had accomplished its purpose and was of no further use.

In preparation for the 1882 campaign, both parties held their nominating conventions at the same time; the Greenbackers in Grand Rapids and the Democrats in Jackson. The big issue before each was fusion and whether the delegates would accept such an action. Actually, several days before the conventions were to begin, the party

[31]Josiah W. Begole to Governor Edwin Winans, September 20, 1892, Governor's File.

leaders had met in a secret conference at Eaton Rapids and had made an agreement. Each party was to adopt its own program, but both would agree upon the same slate of candidates. Fusion would therefore not be extended to principles but only to personnel.[32]

The Greenback convention, with delegates from forty-four counties, approved of fusion, 251-189. However, nearly 100 delegates walked out in protest against the decision. The entire Bay, Saginaw, and Otsego county delegations withdrew and formed another ticket to contest for the state offices.[33] Other delegates who opposed the fusion were from the rural areas and believed that the decision had been engineered by the urban element of the party. "People outside the political strongholds of cities and large towns, we are sure, do not favor the sell-out," one delegate from Ingham charged. "Has the democratic party given us the first shadow of a promise to uphold a single principle which we have been advocating?"[34]

In spite of opposition, both conventions agreed to unite upon a list of candidates. At the secret

[32]Detroit Evening Press, August 23, 1882, p. 1.

[33]Lansing Republican, August 28, 1882, p. 4.

[34]Ibid., September 9, 1882, p. 4.

meeting at Eaton Rapids, the state offices had been divided into two groups. The first section consisted of governor, commissioner of state land office, superintendent of public instruction, and member of the state board of education. The second section was made up of lieutenant governor, secretary of state, state treasurer, auditor-general, and attorneyggeneral. It was also decided at the Eaton Rapids meeting that the Greenback party should have first choice and it chose the first one.[35] Therefore, its candidate, Josiah W. Begole, became the fusion candidate for governor.

By 1882, the Greenback platform had expanded far beyond the currency issue which originally had given birth to the movement. While still calling for the abolition of national banks and bank notes and asking for the unlimited coinage of both gold and silver, the party further demanded national control of corporations; reforms in politics such as a free ballot and a fair count; besides condemning the Republicans for "the assessment of office-holders for a corrupt campaign fund (as) the crowning shame of a party owned by grasping monopolists and bossed by unscrupulous politicians."

[35]Ibid., August 24, 1882, p. 4.

At the state level, the party favored the repeal of the specific tax upon corporation property and the substitution of an equal tax upon their property in the municipality where located. It also declared that "the right to petition to amend the constitution is a sovereign power of the people and we therefore favor the submission to the people of the question of constitutional prohibition of the liquor traffic for ratification or rejection."[36]

The fusion struck hard at the supremacy of the Republicans and their nominating convention denounced the union as "political prostitution." Fear of the strength of the new party was prevelant among Republican leaders and they hit back in harsh terms. "This state . . . witnessed one of the most corrupt political alliances that ever disgraced the politics of Michigan," the Coldwater Republican complained. "The alliance is simply one of political vandalism."[37] However, the Republicans did little to counteract the threat of the fusion party when they renominated Governor Jerome, a non-farmer, in the face of widespread rural dissatisfaction.

[36]Ibid., August 26, 1882, p. 3.

[37]Adrian Weekly Press, September 8, 1882.

Begole proved to be more popular than the other candidates on the fusion ticket. He defeated Governor Jerome by a narrow margin, but the remainder of the state officers went to the Republicans. He carried thirty-four counties, most normally inclined to the Democratic ticket, but he also cut deeply into the Republican majorities in the predominantly rural counties. The Republican farmers' protest against a non-farmer candidate was augmented by an unfavorable season for agriculture. While farm crops were abundant and prices rising from 1879 to 1884, the year of 1882 was one of widespread crop failures in the state and the wheat yield fell to about twelve bushels an acre. This also contributed to the large degree of independent voting during the fall election.

Having scored a partial victory through fusion, both parties continued the alliance during the spring elections of 1883. The Greenback party nominated Charles Willett for university regent and Thomas Sherwood for supreme court justice while the Democrats nominated Arthur Clark and John Champlin for the same offices. All four candidates were victorious over their Republican opponents.[38]

[38]Lansing Republican, March 10, 1883, p. 2.

In 1884, although the party had dwindled to insignificance nationally, the Greenbackers were still a powerful element in Michigan politics. In addition to having control over the choice for governor on the fusion ticket, they were also given the attorney-general's position. Outside of this change, the political arrangements between the two parties were much the same as they had been in 1882. Both nominating conventions met at the same time in August, the Democrats in Grand Rapids and the Greenbackers in Detroit, but with constant communication between the leaders of both parties.

In Michigan, as in the nation, this was a year of unusual political activity with new groups becoming important and with more crossing of party lines. Organized labor in some areas was beginning to show evidences of a greater interest in independent political action. At the Wayne county workingmen's convention, John Devlin, the chairman, remarked that "it is a known fact, . . . that wages are steadily decreasing year by year. . . . We must make up our own ticket of the men who are known to be staunch defenders of the interests of labor."[39] He pointed out that, by a careful combination

[39]Detroit Free Press, August 12, 1884, p. 8.

with other tickets, labor could get some of its own candidates elected.

The protest vote was given another possible vehicle of expression when the Anti-Monopoly party in the state held its nominating convention in Detroit simultaneously with the Greenbackers. In attendance were some one hundred delegates from the counties of Smilac, Midland, Ionia, Hillsdale, Wayne, Ingham, and Shiawassee, in addition to delegates from the cities of Lansing, Bay City, Kawkawlin, Alpena, South Saginaw, Croswell, Port Huron, Petersburg, St. Louis, Jonesville, and eight wards in Detroit.[40] Some of the delegates were anti-fusionists from the Greenback convention, but a majority probably were representative of the laboring class.

The temporary chairman was Frank Fogg, new to Michigan politics, but an experienced Greenbacker from Maine who had recently come to the state as part-owner of a Lansing newspaper. Fogg will be active in nearly all third party movements during the rest of the century. However, Joseph Labadie, a labor leader of Detroit, became permanent chairman and attempted to fuse the Anti-

[40]Detroit Evening News, August 19, 1884, p. 1.

Monopoly party with the Greenbackers and the Democrats. Declaring that he would have opposed fusion had the Republicans nominated Cyrus Luce, a farmer, but now he favored it because "Alger represents the railroad, bank, lumber and salt monopolies and every other kind of monopoly. I favor doing anything and striking hands with anybody to crush monopoly and its representative."[41] In spite of this plea, the convention decided to place a straight Butler ticket in the field headed by Wildman Mills of Sanilac, who later withdrew. In the fall election only a few hundred votes were cast for the party as most of the protest strength was given to the Fusion ticket.

The Anti-Monopoly platform represented the same spirit as that in the other reform movements. It attacked class legislation which made enemies of capital and labor, thus building up a "purse-proud" aristocracy; it called for reciprocal trade agreements with free tariff for the necessities of life but a high tariff on luxuries; asked that only the government should issue money; demanded government control of commerce and rates; prohibition of pools and monopolies; and a national

[41]Detroit Free Press, August 20, 1884, p. 3.

domain reserved for settlement by citizens. In addition, nearly all of the labor planks of the Greenback platform were adopted.[42]

The party had little significance except that it furnished an opportunity to study the thinking and demands of some of the more radical labor leaders and farmers who were representative of the populism which was beginning to appear.

Meanwhile, the Greenbackers, who had renominated Governor Begole, were adding new planks to their platform. They asked for a direct vote for all federal officers possible of election, "especially president, vice-president, senators and postmasters." Also, much more attention in 1884 was given to labor. Prohibition of the immigration of pauper labor was demanded because, "as long as the product of labor is protected by law for the benefit of the few, we insist that labor shall be protected for the benefit of the many." The party denounced prison contract labor, the use of scrip for wages, and asked for a child labor law as well as health and safety laws in industry. They called for the repeal of the Baker law, which forbade strikes, and asked for

[42]Ibid.

another law which would prohibit the importation of strike-breakers, except at the discretion of the governer.[43] The labor planks were an attempt to retain the labering vote of the past and to attract additional strength from this class which was once again showing considerable interest in political activity.

In the fall election, General Russell Alger, Republican, defeated Governor Begole, Fusionist, by less than 4,000 votes. The two major parties were extremely close in basic strength with the Republicans polling 48.11 per cent and the Fusionists 47.01 per cent. This narrow margin was maintained in the Legislature where in the Senate the Republicans held 18 seats to 7 each for the Democrats and Fusionists. In the House the ratio was 52 for the Republicans and 48 for the other two parties. This was further complicated by the fact that the Knights of Labor claimed to have 19 representatives in the Legislature elected on all three tickets.[44] Also, at the Congressional level, in 1884, seven of Michigan's eleven congressmen were elected by the fusion parties. It was largely due to the educational work of these con-

[43]Ibid., p. 3.

[44]Detroit Evening News, November 10, 1884, p. 4.

gressmen that the ideas of currency reform and free silver persisted in Michigan.

Although they had taken the state election in a year when a Democratic President had been selected, the Republican party was aware that it could no longer ignore the farmer and labor vote without serious consequences. When the fusionists were again successful in the spring elections for supreme court justice and university regents, the Republicans were forced to make concessions to the protest groups in order to hold the governorship. As the Lansing State Republican warned, the next Republican candidate "should be a farmer's candidate and a workingman's candidate. The soldiers are now irritated and have to be considered."[45] In 1886, the Republicans nominated for governor Cyrus Luce, a Granger who was well-known in the rural areas. "It is the voice of the people, . . . they are being heard and recognized," was the reaction of one member of the Grange upon hearing of Luce's nomination.[46]

Luce's candidacy placed a severe strain upon the non-partisan stand of the Grange. The editor of the

[45]July 6, 1886, p. 2.

[46]Mrs. Perry Mayo to Cyrus Luce, August 27, 1886, Governor's File.

official publication, the Grange Visitor, aggressively campaigned for the former Master of the Grange without openly calling for his election. "I shall push this matter just as far and as fast as my judgment approves," J. T. Cobb, the editor, wrote to Luce. "I am after Democrat and Greenback votes."[47] This use of the Visitor provoked a good deal of criticism among the Grangers, many of whom were Greenbackers and supporters of the Fusionists.

The Greenbackers and Democrats again followed their familiar pattern of fusion with the former still receiving the top choice of governor. Their candidate was a young lawyer and congressman, George L. Yaple, the Boy from Mendon. Since Yaple was a non-veteran and a lawyer, two important groups of voters were ignored. In addition, during the campaign the Fusion candidate engaged in free trade discussion when it was not an issue. This diversion in a protectionist state probably cost many votes.[48]

Luce defeated his opponent by over 7,000 votes while the Republicans increased their strength in the

[47]J. T. Cobb to Cyrus Luce, August 30, 1886, Ibid.

[48]Lansing State Republican, November 5, 1886, p. 2.

Legislature by receiving 47.87 per cent of the vote in comparison with 45.32 per cent of the vote for the opposition. This also was the last year for Greenback preference in the selection of state officers on the Fusion ticket. The decline in their strength was so apparent that the Democrats safely concluded that most of that party's members were back in the fold.

Although the Greenback party was officially disbanded in 1887 at a national convention, the Michigan faction continued to function. In 1888, they were given the posts of auditor, attorney-general, and land commissioner on the last fusion tickets of the two parties which was defeated by Governor Luce by over 17,000 votes.

While this marked the end of the Greenback era in the state, it did not depart without having made several contributions. The money question had been so thoroughly presented that nearly all parties and groups had been forced to take an open stand upon the issue and they continued to do so for many years after the original party had disappeared. The Greenbackers had also popularized many other living issues of the day, such as labor legislation, political reforms, government regulation of monopolies, and equal taxation. By advocating these

issues for nearly a decade it carried them forward until the newer organizations and parties of the populist era could pick them up and work for their acceptance. The Greenbackers by their strength thrdatened the one party domination of the state by the Republicans and forced them to consider more adequately the needs of farmers and laborers than might have been done had not the spirit of political independence become so widespread.

The gap between the Greenback period and the Populist era was filled in by the Union Labor party. This organization was created on February 22, 1887, at Cincinnati, Ohio, by a convention of farmers and laborers. The original purpose of the convention was to form a national independent labor party but, at the convention, farmer delegates predominated when many labor groups failed to join the enterprise. Upon the formation of the Union Labor party, the national executive committee of the Greenbackers dissolved their party.[49]

This new party held its first convention in Michigan during the campaign of 1888. The idea of fusion came before the convention but was turned down, partly because the national committee had ruled that there should be no

[49]Commons, II, 465.

fusion with any of the older parties. Another reason why the party declared against fusion was that the remnants of the Greenback party were still active in state politics. The Union Labor group refused to admit that the Greenbackers were an authorized party after February 22, 1887, and so could not join them in an alliance with the Democratic party.

Two prominent members of the state comittee of the Union party were Frank Pegg, the Greenback leader, and Arthur Cole of Fowlerville, head of the Farmers' Alliance. The presence of Cole and the similarity of the party's platform to that of the Populists indicates the predominance of rural influence in the new group. It asked that all currency be issued directly to the people, in the same amount per capita that gave the prosperity of 1866; free and unlimited coinage of gold and silver; the application of all idle money in the treasury to the payment of the bonded debt at par; forfeiture of all unearned land grants and seizure of all lands held by aliens, speculators and corporations; the loaning of money by the government to the people directly on land security at a low rate of interest; government ownership of the means of transportation, communication, and all mines; abolition of convict labor for contractors;

reduction of hours of labor; a pension for every soldier and sailor; a graduated income tax; the direct election of United States senators; the elimination of contract foreign labor; taxation of railroad property at the same rate as all other property; reduction of railroad passenger fares to 2¢; making combinations and pools a felony; and taxing improved and unimproved land equally. The convention did turn down a proposal by Frank Fogg for a constitutional amendment to abolish the United States Senate.[50]

The party placed a complete ticket, headed by Wildman Mills of Sanilac, in the regular campaign of 1888. However, only 4,500 votes were cast for the Union Labor party, which was less than 1 per cent of the total vote. It did not appeal to labor as not votes were received from Wayne county and only one from Kent county. The farmers probably avoided the party because it seemed to be a labor group. The party did carry one county, Arenac; received 19 per cent of the vote in Huron county; and ranged from 3 to 4 per cent in Barry, Eaton, Midland, Ogemaw, and St. Joseph counties.

[50]Detroit Evening News, August 16, 1888, p. 1.

The appearance of the Union Labor party seemed to revive interest in third party activity. In 1890, there was a display of independent political action during which the Republican party lost control of the state administration for the first time since the Civil War. Agriculture was still depressed, the farmers were restless, and the newer farm organizations gave up their economic programs and turned to politics to seek relief. The temper of the rural mind during the year was explained by a farmer from Traverse City in a letter to Governor Luce in which he pointed out that the farm depression had come upon the state during a Republican supremacy of more than a quarter of a century. "Unless some relief is attempted, the Republican party will next fall or in 1892 . . . be invited to the rear to clear the way for some party that will attempt to afford the much needed relief."[51]

The first stirrings among the farmers began in February when the Patrons of Husbandry held their annual convention at Flint. The organization, which then claimed 110,000 members, including Arthur Cole, Presi-

[51]H. E. Steward to Governor Cyrus Luce, July 10, 1890, Governor's File.

dent of the Farmers' Alliance, and Frank Fogg, declared itself ready to enter the political scene. "We propose to begin at the caucus to elect our men, then carry the county conventions, and be ready for the state meeting. Let the Republicans desert the farmers and put up some Detroit millionaire for governor and we will turn strong democrats; and should the Democrats nominate some manipulator of trusts . . ., for the same office, we will be just as good republicans. We do not want a third party but we hope to be strong enough to compel the old parties to favor us."[52]

Between February and July, a great amount of political planning and maneuvering was under way in an attempt to unite all of the dissatisfied farmers and labor elements into one party. In June, chairman James Winnie of the Union Labor party issued a call for a convention at Lansing to be held near the end of July. He addressed the call to the Farmers' Alliance, Knights of Labor, Patrons of Industry, Patrons of Husbandry, and the Greenbackers for the purpose of selecting candidates who would best represent the demands and principles of the combined membership. Winnie said, "Let us unite in Michigan, for principles are everything. Let us repeat

[52]Lansing State Republican, February 27, 1890, p. 1.

the story of 'under the oaks at Jackson.'"[53] All of the groups invited arrived in Lansing during July in addition to the Prohibition party which was holding its nominating convention at the same time. The Union Labor party and the Greenbackers met together while the Patrons of Industry held a separate convention. Meanwhile the leaders of the diverse groups, James Winnie, General Innes of the Greenbackers, Henry Allen the state master workman of Schoolcraft, John Devlin a Democratic labor leader from Detroit, T. M. Sherriff, secretary of the state Knights of Labor Assembly, Captain McGregor of Detroit representing the single-tax movement, and others began to work on the formation of a combination ticket which perhaps might have been endorsed by the Democrats.[54]

The Patrons of Industry meeting in their own convention approved entering politics on an independent ticket by a vote of 54 to 38.[55] However, instead of merging with the Union Labor and Greenback factions, they invaded and captured the Prohibition convention. As a result, all of the nominees on the Prohibition ticket,

[53]Lansing State Republican, June 30, 1890, p. 1.

[54]Ibid., July 29, 1890, p. 1.

[55]Detroit Free Press, July 30, 1890, p. 4.

except for educational and judicial posts, were Patrons of Industry men with the head of the Patrons, Azarish Partridge, as the candidate for governor.[56] The Prohibition platform in 1890 therefore became distinctly an anti-monopolist document calling for the enactment of the radical platform of the Patrons, although it still demanded the prohibition of the liquor traffic.[57]

At the same time the Union Labor and Greenback parties continued their efforts to form an independent party. Their convention, which was predominantly a farmers' group, was reenforced by several Patrons of Industry men who came over from their own meeting because the Patrons' planks on government loans to farmers was thrown out of the Prohibition platform. Together these groups formed the Industrial party and adopted a platform which combined the demands of the Farmers' Alliance and the Knights of Labor. It was essentially the Populists' platform which was associated with the People's party of 1892 and 1896.[58]

[56]Ibid., July 31, 1890, p. 3.

[57]Lansing State Republican, July 31, 1890, p.1.

[58]Ibid.

The Industrial party's choice for governor was Eugene H. Belden of Horton, a farmer, associated with the Knights of Labor, Farmers' Alliance, Patrons of Industry, and who had also served as chairman of the Jackson county Republican committee.[59]

Organized labor except for certain leaders had generally stayed away from these proceedings in Lansing. The reason for the non-participation was given by one labor man who observed of the formation of the new party:

> They will . . . follow the footsteps of all similar organizations in Michigan, which, when undertaking to dabble in politics, and asking for something to better the condition of the toiling masses, have invariably been unable to agree upon a remedy for the supposed existing evils, . . . for the reason that they have not been able to educate themselves, so they could understandingly make a demand from the law-making powers of the state and nation, and therefore the result has invariably been disastrous to the working people, and they have universally antagonized the other parties and therefore have lost all they might have gained if they had intelligently worked with either of the two parties in power. In my opinion, the Patrons of Industry and the Farmers' Alliance are rushing to the doom that overtook the Greenback party.[60]

Following this activity in Lansing, the two major parties held their nominating conventions. The Republi-

[59]Detroit Evening News, July 31, 1890, p. 1.

[60]Lansing State Republican, July 29, 1890, p. 1.

cans, having given the farmers a candidate of their choice for the two past elections, turned to a non-farmer candidate for the 1890 campaign. This antagonized a great many in the rural areas where John Rich of Lapeer was a popular man and one of the leading contenders for the office of governor.

On the other hand, the Democrats selected Edwin Winans, a farmer from Hamburg. Winans believed in many of the principles of the populist movement and was well thought of among the farmers because of his strong demands for equal taxation and currency reform. His selection was an indication that what was later called populism had already influenced a large part if not a majority of the rank-and-file of the Democratic party.

As a result of the election, the Democrats controlled the state administration, their first such victory since the Civil War. The two minor parties, the Prohibition and Industrial, received nearly 10 per cent of the vote, with the latter obtaining about 3½ per cent of the total. This party, the direct predecessor of the People's party, exceeded its state average strength in nineteen counties. However, within those counties, support was uneven, with some of them giving far above the average. In Arenac, the party ran second, while in Branch, Eaton,

Huron, Ingham, Jackson, Livingston, Midland, St. Joseph, Tuscola, and Van Buren, it received from 10 to 20 per cent of the vote. It was supported best in the agricultural areas with some support from outstate labor, but in 1890 it was not yet a general protest movement to the degree that the People's party of 1892 and 1894 would be.

There were some minor successes for the third parties in the legislative elections. Three Patrons of Industry candidates were elected to the senate and one to the house while the Industrial party sent three to the lower house. All of the new members were farmers and because of the narrow margin which the Democrats maintained over the Republicans in the senate, the balance of power there rested with the farmers' bloc of third party or independent members.

The Democratic victory of 1890 was more significant in its indication of political unrest than for any important contributions to reforms. The party was not prepared for a comprehensive legislative program and the ambitions of many reformers were unfilled during its short two year term. However, the spirit of the people, who were instrumental in producing the political upset of 1890, was indicative of a growing impatience with fail-

ure of the old parties to meet the new issues of the nineteenth century. This was indicated by the tone of a petition to the Democratic majority in the House of Representatives as they were beginning their first session:

> We, the Patrons of Industry, Farmers' Alliance, Knights of Labor, and other kindred organizations, know that every democrat of Livingston was elected on the Patron and Industrial platform. Party caucuses, political tricksters, rings and combines have controlled the old parties on both sides so that the voice of the people has become powerless, and the wealth of the nation and state has concentrated in the hands of the few at the expense and poverty of the many, and your knowing as well as ourselves that it was the votes of the poverty stricken class as well as on their platform that you attained your election, and we the party of the people being too poverty stricken to offer you any boodle or bonus . . . therefore not only petition but demand that you shall not only work and vote . . . to have (our demands) become laws . . . and it shall be done quickly, not proposed and tabled indefinitely for the next generation to act upon.[61]

Following the election, the dissatisfied groups in Michigan acted quickly to consolidate the gains and to build toward a more inclusive political organization. On November 29, in Lansing, a joint convention was held for all farming and laboring groups. At first, this was an area meeting of delegates from the Farmers' Alliance,

[61] Journal of the House (Lansing, 1891), p. 453.

Patrons of Industry, Grange, Knights of Labor, and Carpenters' Union representing the counties of Ingham, Eaton, Clinton and Shiawassee. These delegates from the local associations formed an Industrial Union "to take a general interest in everything appertaining to the general welfare of the producing masses, and to check, as far as lies in its power, the further encroachment of corporated monopoly."[62] This new organization held an enlarged convention on December 19 in the same city when delegates from the other counties of the state met and approved an alliance of the several groups to bring about a better understanding and to further legislation.[63] This action in the state was a reflection of similar understandings being reached at the national level by laboring and farming organizations.

The question of political action or political independence was discussed at a third conference in May. The leaders of the major groups decided to submit the problem for decision to each subordinate unit before reaching a definite conclusion. Four important groups were involved in this plan, the Patrons of Industry,

[62] Michigan Farmer, December 13, 1890, p. 4.

[63] Lansing State Republican, December 19, 1890, p. 4.

Farmers' Alliance, Knights of Labor, and the Citizens' Alliance and Industrial Brotherhood.[64] The Grange was not formally represented to the extent that it took similar action, but it probably had unofficial representatives in attendance.

During the summer, the local units within each group polled their members to determine whether a majority favored independent political action or not and the verdict was given in support of a new party. The last of the four major organizations to take action was the Farmers' Alliance which waited until its second annual convention at Lansing in October. Encouraged by the words of an Oakland county delegate who declared, "What we want in Michigan is a duplicate of the action of the Kansas Alliance," the convention adopted the Ocala platform and voted for independent political action.[65]

In December, the developments of the past year reached their climax and the new People's party was born. A convention made up of representatives from the Patrons of Industry and Farmers' Alliance, who had three-fourths of the delegates, plus others from the

[64]Ibid., May 13, 1891, p. 1.

[65]Ibid., October 6, p. 1; October 8, 1891, p. 1.

Citizens Alliance and Industrial Brotherhood, Knights of Labor, Grange, Prohibitionists, and National Citizens' Industrial Alliance again met in Lansing to complete their work.[66] The party was launched enthusiastically except for the problem of prohibition. Some opposed it because they felt that it would alienate the foreign born if the liquor traffic were supressed. Still others favored nationalization, but the final verdict was to place the party on the side of prohibition.[67]

While the new party was evolving from the many conferences and meetings, the other large farm organization, the Grange, maintained its official non-partisan attitude towards political affairs. We "offer no crazy patch-work of inconsistent, incongruous and conflicting demands upon the government for farmers to stand on," the Grange declared. We "refuse to be used by the political malcontents of either party as a commercial factor in their bargains for office."[68] This overlooked the campaigns of 1886 and 1888 when the Republicans insured their hold upon the state by the nomination of the Grange master, Cyrus Luce, for governor.

[66]Lansing Journal, December 29, 1891, p. 3.

[67]Ibid., December 30, 1891, p. 3.

[68]Grange Proc., 19th (1891), p. 35.

The People's party, in making preparations for the 1892 campaign, set up political organizations in at least fifty of the state's counties. Holding two conventions, one in Lansing and the other in Jackson, the party proclaimed its platform and selected its candidates for the state and national offices. Declaring that "we are engaged in a contest which involves the perpetuity of a republican form of government, based on equal rights of all as against a monied aristocracy, tending toward despotism," the party rejected all ideas of fusion with the old parties.[69]

The platform contained most of the prominent populist demands: abolition of national banks as banks of issue; government issuance of full legal tender currency directly to the people, based upon land or its products at a tax not to exceed 2 per cent per annum; the amount of circulating media to be increased to not less than fifty dollars per capita; free and unlimited coinage of silver; abolition of all monopolies, trusts, and combines and the most rigid state and national control of all corporations; all railroad, telegraph, telephone and express lines not so controllable to be owned by

[69]Detroit Free Press, June 17, 1892, p. 3.

the government; repurchase of lands held by foreign syndicates, and that all lands held by grant to railroads and other corporations in excess of what is actually used and needed be retained by the government and held for actual settlers only; abolition of tariff on necessaries of life; prohibition of the liquor traffic; a graduated income tax; universal suffrage, equal pay for equal service; removal of all under the age of sixteen from the treadmill to the schoolroom; and the eight-hour day.[70] There were several more planks in the platform of the new party, many designed to appeal to labor in the hope of attracting support at the polls. These included a denunciation of the use of Pinkertons and convict labor; a demand that all manufactured items should bear the name of the manufacturer; that all election days be legal holidays; that mine inspectors be elected by the people; the initiative and referendum; use of arbitration in labor disputes; and the continued separation of church and state.[71] Most of the populist reforms were but a continuation of the older Grange, Greenback, and Union Labor demands which were tied together by the central feature of anti-monopoly.

[70] Grange Visitor, May 1, 1892, p. 1.

[71] Lansing State Republican, August 3, 1892, p. 1.

In some respects, the Michigan platform was more radical than that adopted by the National Convention in Omaha in July. The planks calling for the abolition of all monopolies; abolition of tariff on necessaries; universal suffrage; child labor laws; equal pay for equal service; arbitration of labor disputes; and labels on manufactured goods were not included in the National platform. Several of these may have resulted from conditions which were pertinent to the industrial experience of Michigan. On the other hand, the demands for postal savings banks; the direct election of United States Senators; and the Australian ballot -- all features of the Omaha platform -- were not included in the Michigan platform. This ommission might have been the result of rural predominance at the convention, or perhaps inadequate newspaper reporting of the time.

Although many of the delegates at the People's convention had been familiar figures in past third party movements in the state, most of the nominees were new and many were from the Republican ranks.[72] Although there was some support at the Populist convention for Governor Winans, whom the Democratic leaders had per-

[72]Detroit Free Press, August 3, 1892, p. 1.

suaded not to run for reelection, the nomination for governor on the new party's ticket went to John W. Ewing of Eaton, a Republican and Patron of Industry member.[73]

Having been defeated in 1890, partly because they ignored the rural vote, the Republicans now nominated the popular John T. Rich to head their ticket after beating down the first attempt by Mayor Hazen S. Pingree to capture the governorship. The hard money leaders of the Democratic party were successful in ditching Governor Winans and replacing him with a man who held more orthodox monetary views. While Winans and perhaps a majority of the Democrats were in favor of free silver, Don Dickinson, leader of the party and Chairman of the National Committee, kept down the silver issue in the hope of placing Michigan behind Grover Cleveland during the 1892 presidential election.[74]

The action of the Democratic leaders directly clashed with the wishes of the rank-and-file of the party, for Winans was their choice as well as the choice of many Populists. "The Gold Bugs would not

[73]Detroit Evening News, August 4, 1892, p. 1.

[74]Lansing State Republican, August 18, 1892, p. 1.

have you to reign over them," one People's party adherent wrote Winans. "If the people are properly educated, a man will not be nominated at the dictation of the Money Gods of Wall Street."[75] Another Populist from Oakland County congratulated Winans for his withdrawal from the race and asked "how any man that has Jeffersonian principles can belong to the democrat party at this time with corporate money being circulated by the national banks and the party" and say nothing against the system. "It seems that the leaders of democrat and republican parties believe at this time in the Hamilton doctrine that the rich should rule the poor."[76]

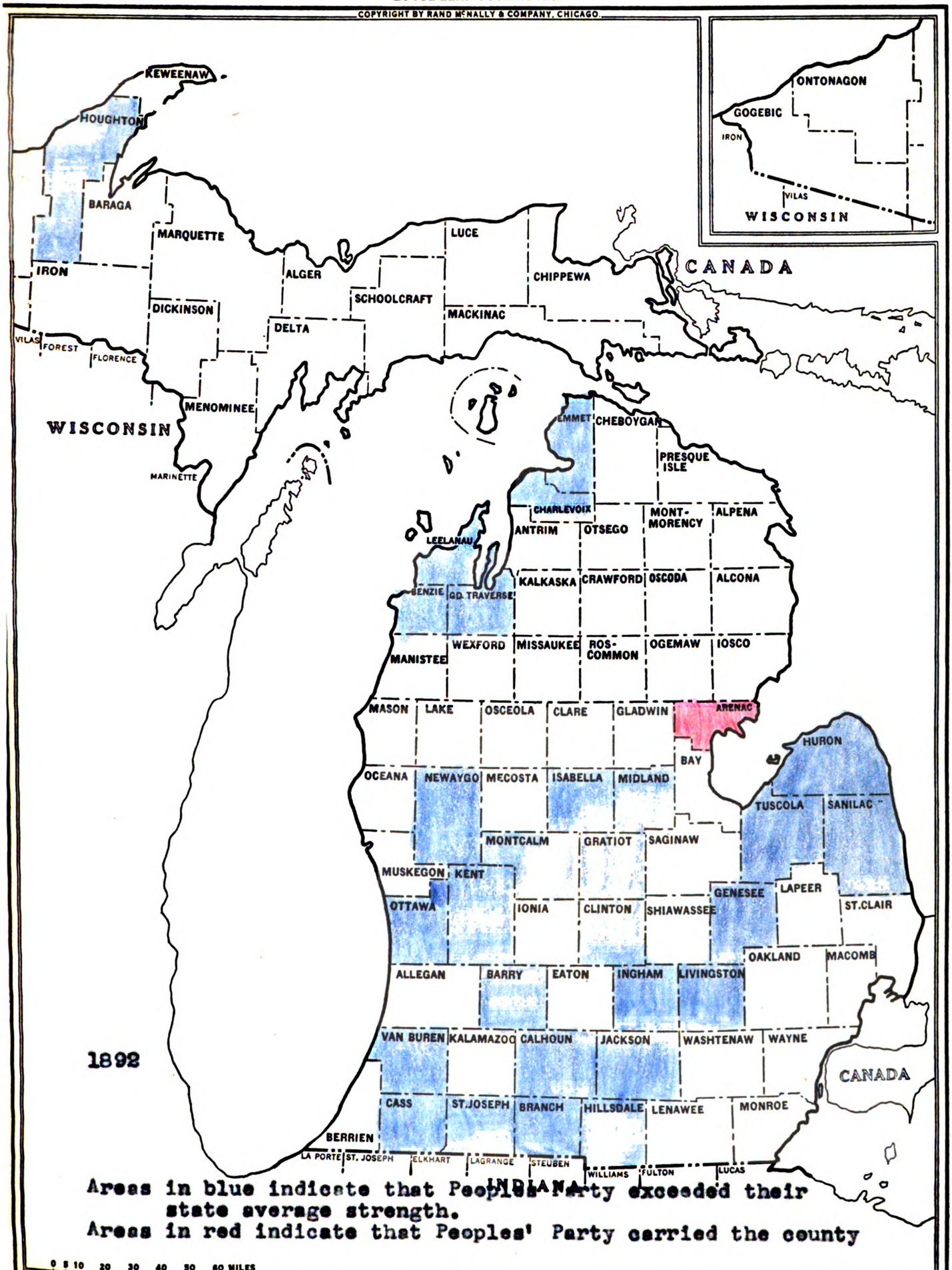
In the fall elections, both the Republican and the People's parties gained strength at the expense of the Democrats, who lost control of all state offices and both houses of the legislature, despite the victory of the party in the national election. The new party gathered about 21,000 votes or about 4½ per cent of the total cast. Their support was not as localized as had been the vote for the Industrial party two years earlier. Twenty-nine counties voted for the new party at a rate

[75]George F. Upton to Governor Edwin Winans, August 28, 1892, Governor's File.

[76]Ibid., John Terry to Edwin Winans, August, 1892.

greater than its state average. The county of Arenac was the only one to swing over to the Populist cause with 37½ per cent of its vote in the three-party contest, but Gratiot gave over 20 per cent with Barry, St. Joseph, Sanilac, Huron and Tuscola furnishing around 15 per cent. An encouraging sign for the party was the support from labor areas, especially in the outstate lower peninsula cities and with an opening wedge in the upper peninsula mining territory in Houghton county. With Michigan's growing industrial economy and increasing labor force, an alliance between the farmers and workers could have great political potentialities, especially since the serious depression of 1893 was about to hit the economy.

With the depression well under way during the 1894 campaign, the distress which it had produced added to political uncertainty. The Knights of Labor convention in Holland during February appointed a committee to arrange a call for a meeting of all industrial organizations of the state. The convention was scheduled to meet in Lansing during July at the same time that the People's party was holding its nominating convention. It was at this point that the Grange came closest to entering politics when the executive committee split over attending



the industrial conference as three members disapproved while two voted in favor of it. One of the latter, Perry Mayo, came to the meeting as an individual and was chosen by the People's party as its candidate for lieutenant governor.[77]

The two conventions, the People's and the Industrial, were almost completely in agreement on principles and action as many of the persons attending were delegates to both. It was another attempt to unify more completely the industrial groups of the state into an effective political organization. The only obstacle came from the trade unions, a minority group, who did not want to commit themselves to third party action. They did approve the principles listed in the Omaha platform but blocked a resolution in the Industrial convention which endorsed the People's Party. The trade unionists thought that third party activity would weaken their strength and they favored the Gompers strategy of voting for the friends of labor within the two major parties.[78]

At the same time, the People's convention dele-

[77]Detroit Evening News, July 3, 1894, p. 5.

[78]Lansing State Republican, July 5, 1894, p. 1.

gates were being aroused by Judge Arthur Cole's warning that if the People's party didn't succeed by peaceful methods to reform the country, "there would be raised up a generation with steel enough in their hearts, love enough for God, and hell enough in their hate, to march in solid phalanx against plutocracy, and to insist that these things which have been taken away from the people shall be restored."[79]

The delegates, now representing sixty-four counties, had to wrestle with the problem of selecting a candidate to head the ticket who would appeal to the dissatisfied voters. The name of Mayor Hazen Pingree of Detroit was offered by that city's delegates. Pingree was becoming increasingly popular among the People's party followers when they realized that he was applying many of their principles in his administration of the city. "There is a good deal of populistic air pervading that office," was the conclusion reached earlier at the Wayne county Populist convention.[80] While Pingree received a sizable bloc of votes for governor at the People's convention, he was not ready to accept a third party nomination, nor

[79]Detroit Free Press, July 5, 1894, p. 8.

[80]Detroit Sunday News-Tribune, July 1, 1894, p. 3.

were the Populists yet ready to accept Pingree. Upon the withdrawal of his name, a deadlock was broken, and the nomination went to Doctor A. W. Nichols of Greenville.

The party retained the basic features of its previous platform, but added several new planks. Now the Populists demanded the election of judges; incorporation of cities and villages under a general statute; sanitary inspection of factories; municipal ownership of street railroads, gas and electric light plants; and a law requiring foreign corporations to maintain offices in Michigan. Some of the new demands reflected the activities and reforms which Mayor Pingree had popularized in Detroit.[81]

The Republican leaders turned back another strong Pingree effort to obtain the governor's nomination on their ticket and renominated Governor Rich for a second term. They also defeated an attempt to place a plank for the free and unlimited coinage of silver in their platform and then waited to see if Pingree would bolt and head a new third party movement. Despite considerable support for such an action, Pingree decided against it on the basis that he would take more votes from the

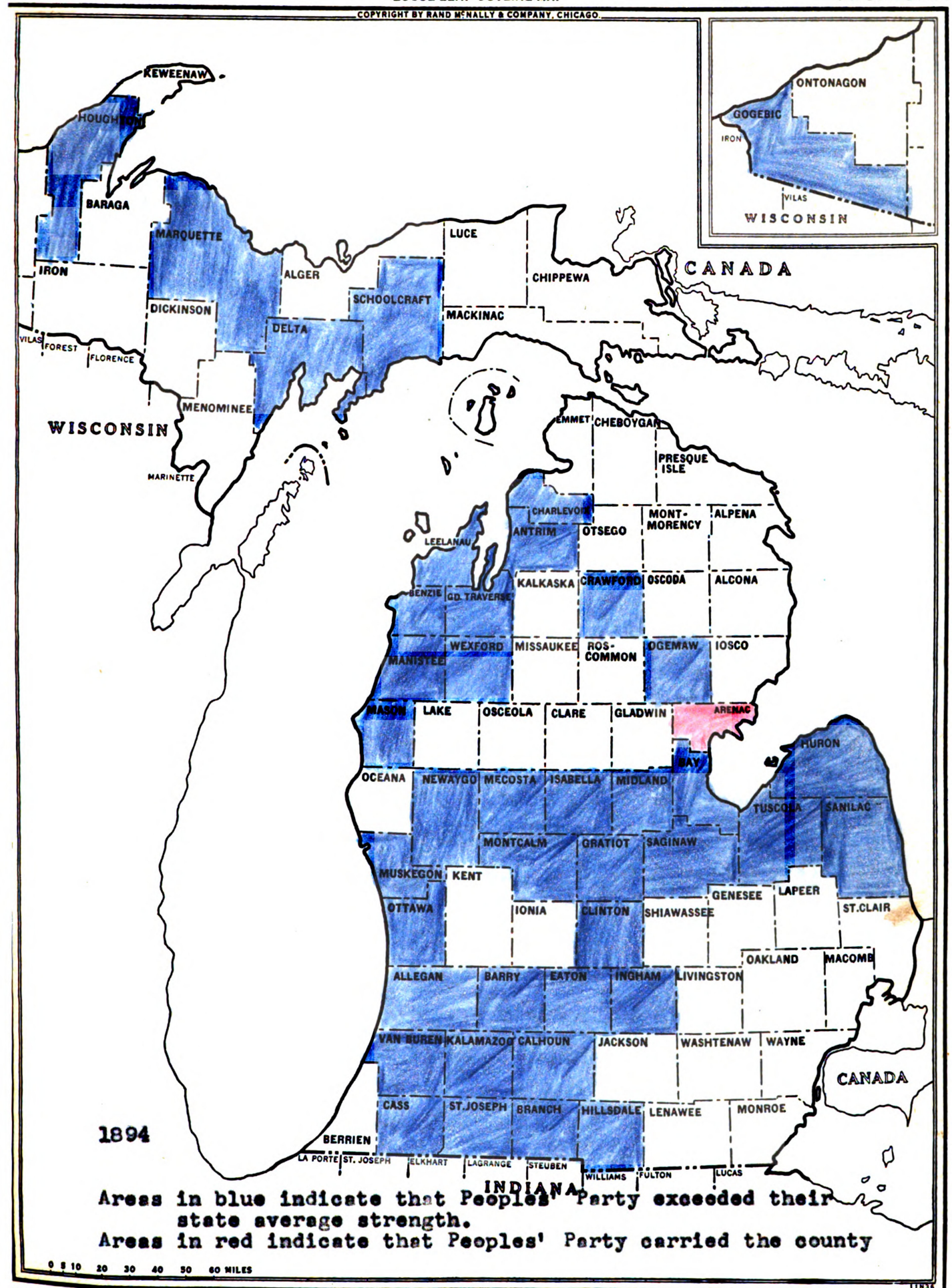
[81]Lansing State Republican, July 5, 1894, p. 1.

the Democrats than the Republicans, thereby electing Rich. In addition, the mayor studied the political mood of the people and determined that they were disgusted with the national Democratic administration and were ready to vote Republican regardless of issues.[82]

Although the Democratic party in the state was now dominated by the soft money group and nominated Spencer Fisher who believed in free silver, it suffered its worst defeat since the Greenbacker split of 1878. The Republicans received over 57 per cent of the total vote as compared to 30 per cent for Democrats and 7 per cent for the People's party.

The latter party received votes from all but one of the state's counties and in forty-one of them, the vote was greater than its state average. New areas of strength came from the upper peninsula mining counties and the lower peninsula agricultural counties. While Arenac again was the only county in which the Populists were the leading party, in several other counties they had become or were threatening to become the permanent second party. This situation, as in 1878, opened the way for a revival of fusion which would be accomplished

[82]Ibid., August 11, 1894, p. 1.



Areas in blue indicate that Peoples' Party exceeded their state average strength.
Areas in red indicate that Peoples' Party carried the county

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MADE IN U.S.A.

This Map is also available in size 17 x 22

before the next election around the central issue of free silver.

Almost immediately after the state election of 1894, the Democratic party began a reorganization which finally converted it into a free silver organization. A conference held in Detroit, in November of 1894, was followed by a free-silver Democratic convention in Lansing during the following month. By 1896, all but a few of the party adherents were in favor of making the silver issue the paramount one of their platform.

The same sentiment was beginning to dominate other groups as well, especially those in the rural areas. The depression of 1893 had struck hard, and Michigan's agriculture industry was more depressed than at any time since the Civil War. As wheat prices went down, the farmers' interest in free silver went up. One reporter, after making a survey in the rural areas, summarized the feeling concerning money, "Farmers say we don't know whether free silver will help us or not, but we do know we cannot be worse off than we are, and it will be a change."[83] The most important areas of possible defection were in the lower tier of counties where in the

[83]Ibid., August 21, 1896, p. 2.

past Republican and Democratic congressmen of liberal monetary views had educated their constituents thoroughly.[84] Even the more conservative state Grange was largely dominated by silver sentiment in 1896. Mason Woodman, former Master of both the State and National Grange, estimated that at the 1895 state convention the delegates favored silver by a sixty-six to ten vote. "The struggle is, and will be, between those who want to buy more with the dollar and those who want to give less for the dollar," Woodman remarked.[85] By the summer of 1896, the columns of the Grange Visitor were so filled with silver correspondence that on July 16 the editor declined to publish any more articles about the money question.[86]

Early in 1896, steps were taken which led to the formation of a political organization centered around the free silver issue. In January, a call from Grand Rapids, the old center of Greenbackerism, announced that "a non-partisan bi-metallic conference will be held at the Downey House in Lansing, January 16 . . . The time is fast approaching when the friends of free silver must

[84]Ibid., October 31, 1896, p. 3.

[85]Grange Visitor, March 19, 1896, p. 4.

[86]Ibid., July 16, 1896, p. 2.

decide what position they will take at the polls." The call was signed by Charles Sligh, Amos Musselman, Sybrant Wesselius, of Grand Rapids, and Mayor James Turner of Lansing, all of whom were both prominent Republicans and close friends of Mayor Pingree. Invitations were mailed to Pingree and about fifty other Republicans and nearly all, except the mayor, came to the convention.[87]

The meeting itself was non-partisan as important figures from many groups arrived to give their support to the new movement. These included Spencer Fisher of Bay City, former Democratic candidate for governor; Judge J. G. Ramsdell, chairman of the Grange's finance committee; Willard Stearns of Adrian, an old Greenback leader; and A. M. Todd, a prominent Kalamazoo Democrat. During the meeting the executive committee, which included the above men, as well as those signing the original call, selected a state committee of one man from each county to organize more thoroughly the silver forces in the state.[88]

[87]Lansing State Republican, January 8, 1896, p. 1.

[88]Ibid., January 17, 1896, p. 4.

In March similar action was taken by the Free Silver Democratic conference in Lansing. This resulted in considerable overlapping of activity and interest which naturally led to more common effort and eventual fusion.[89]

By mid-summer, when the time for the various nominating conventions was approaching, the silver Republicans converted their informal movement into a regular political party. The idea of many in the group was that if the Republican leaders rejected Pingree's bid for governor, he would be available as the key candidate on a fusion ticket of all the other political parties in the state. However, Pingree, who was now confident of nomination by the Republican party, carefully concealed his stand on the money question until he had secured the long-awaited call. "I am a firm believer in protection, the Republican party and McKinley," said Pingree after his nomination.[90]

However, even before Pingree received the call from his party, the other organizations in the state had made plans to hold all of their conventions at the same time in Bay City and to unite on one set of can-

[89]Ibid., March 13, 1896, p. 1.

[90]Ibid., August 7, 1896, p. 3.

didates. This type of action was necessary because the Republicans had earlier passed an anti-fusion law which prohibited the placing of the same set of candidates on two or more tickets, a type of fusion which the Greenbackers and Democrats had used during the last decade.[91]

During the month prior to the various silver conventions in Bay City, many of the parties fused at the local or county level forming a Union Silver-Democratic-People's-Prohibition ticket. In Ingham county, for example, fifty-six delegates were chosen by the new party for the state convention, being distributed among the associated factions in this ratio: fifteen each for both the Republicans and Democrats; and thirteen each for the People's and the Prohibition parties.[92]

Not all elements within each party gracefully accepted the idea of fusion. A small group of gold Democrats, who opposed the "heresy of free silver" broke away from the parent organization and formed a separate party which only received about 10,000 votes in the election. While most of the Prohibitionists were free silver advocates, and did merge with the other parties, there

[91]Ibid., July 17, 1896, p. 1.

[92]Ibid., August 24, 1896, p. 1.

were some who objected to fusion with the Democrats because of the latters' attitude toward the liquor traffic. Dr. Henry Reynolds, editor of Living Issues, declared that "we won't join the Democrats. It would be like trying to unite heaven and hell. We are in favor of free silver, but not secured in that way."[93] Those of similar views stayed in the party and ran a separate ticket which polled around 5,000 votes.

There was opposition to fusion among the Populists, particularly to fusion with the Democrats. Part of it was due to a strong Pingree sentiment among the members of the party and there had earlier been a movement within the group to endorse him for governor.[94] Even when this failed, many believed that no fusion candidate could defeat the Republican choice; therefore "it would be better to go down alone than to get smothered in a democratic embrace."[95] However, the majority of the Populists believed that enough silver Republican votes could be won over which, with the Democratic and Populist support, would be enough to save the silver cause in the state.

[93]Ibid., August 22, 1896, p. 1.

[94]Ibid., August 13, 1896, p. 1.

[95]Ibid., August 17, 1896, p. 1.

After all the opposition was silenced or had withdrawn, the three parties met in a joint convention and selected a list of candidates. The top position went to the Union Silver Republicans when Charles Sligh of Kent was picked to head the ticket. The People's party was given the two posts of auditor-general and land commissioner and the remainder were divided between the Democrats and Silver Republicans.[96] The new fusion party was known as the Democratic-People's-Union Silver party, or Popocrat as it came to be called by its opponents.

Since this new organization threatened to gather enough strength to overthrow the Republican party in the important 1896 presidential campaign, the attacks upon it were bitter. "Is there an honest, patriotic voter in Michigan," the State Republican asked, "who can contemplate this stinking mixture -- this Cheap John patent medicine, made-to-sell-the-people combination, the fruit of indiscriminate and shameless political harlotry for the sake of spoils -- without the flush of shame mounting to his brow?"[97] This set the tone of the campaign which, in Michigan as in the nation, was accompanied by fear, threats, and denunciations.

[96]Detroit Evening News, August 26, 1896, p. 4.

[97]August 28, 1896, p. 2.

The fusionists lacked enough money to finance a strong and effective fight. Since the hard money Democrats had withdrawn from the regular party, they had also withdrawn a great source of financial support. Many of the candidates had to contribute personally almost all of their campaign expenses. Because of the rapidity with which the new party was formed there was an apparent lack of harmony and coordination of effort in the face of an efficient Republican machine. Also, the party lost a powerful supporter when the Detroit Free Press, angered over the conversion to free silver, withdrew from the Democratic ranks and joined the Republican. Most important of all problems facing the party was the presence of Mayor Pingree on the opposing ticket. He was exceedingly popular among the voters of the state and to many he represented the best hope for securing reforms which had been unfulfilled for a quarter of a century.

The overwhelming importance attached to the issue of free and unlimited coinage of silver throughout the nation tended to submerge the other reforms which had traditionally been a part of the protest movement in Michigan. The intensity of the national campaign between Bryan and McKinley was duplicated in the state

campaign. Republican papers were filled with long articles attacking silver proposals and warning of the disaster which would follow their adoption. "If labor votes for Bryan and free silver, it votes away one-half of its wages. It will vote its organizations and unions out of existence," the State Republican warned. And in addition, "It will vote its children into ignorance and toil . . . It will vote its women . . . into slavery in the very mines which silver men will operate."[98]

To back up the newspaper attacks, Michigan businesses used intimidations of various types to keep workers from voting for the protest ticket. One was the threat of unemployment which would follow a Democratic victory. The following letter was prominently displayed in a Lansing factory to impress upon the employees the need for judicious selection of candidates.[99]

Ford and Johnson Chair Co.
Michigan City, Indiana
October 15, 1896

Lansing Spoke Company
Lansing, Michigan

Gentlemen:

If Mr. Bryan is elected we will not want to buy stock at any price. If McKinley is elected we expect to want lots of it at good prices.

[98] September 3, 1896, p. 2.

[99] [redacted]ng State Republican, October 23, 1896, p. 1.

Even the visit of the Democratic candidate Bryan to Michigan in October failed to lend much aid to the sagging fusionists. By then, it was apparent in the state that Pingree would win easily and Bryan's visit had little effect.

> Put away the little torches,
> Bury deep free silver's song;
> There's no further use for either,
> Wandering Willie's come and gone.

This jingle in the State Republican after the leading Democrat's tour was an appropriate epitaph for the free silver movement in Michigan.[100]

In November a large majority of Michigan voters, obeying the appeal to "step up to the music of the union and cast your ballot for Sound Money, Law, and Order, and against the red flag of anarchy," chose Hazen Pingree and the Republican ticket, thereby placing the state's reform movement in a new framework for the next four years.[101] Pingree carried all except eighteen counties and received over 304,000 votes while the Republican party's candidate for secretary of state could only muster 294,000. Sligh's vote totaled 221,000 as compared with 235,000 for the fusion party's candidate for secretary of state.

[100]Ibid., October 17, 1896, p. 1.

[101]Ibid., October 31, 1896, p. 2.

Most of the reform strength, with only a few exceptions, was turned upon Pingree at the election. Of the eighteen counties supporting the DFUS ticket, four were normally Republican agricultural counties that carried their protest through 1896. Branch, Calhoun, Eaton, and Isabella as representatives of the Greenbacker and Populist tradition supported it for the last time. However, the first two split their vote to support Pingree while the other two supported the straight fusionist ticket.

The reform movement in the state, for the first time, was centered around the leading figure of the dominant political party. It was removed from association with radical third parties and acquired an air of respectability it had never before enjoyed. For the next four years, energy could be expended upon the enactment of specific reforms instead of being exhausted by the fruitless struggle of third party activity to either secure office or force the acceptance of demands by the major parties. Governor Pingree's four years in office dried up the farmers' revolt of the nineteenth century to such an extent that third party activity in the state disappeared abruptly for the next decade and Pingree himself was the climax and culmination of the movement. The return of prosperity after 1896, especially in agriculture, was also a major reason for the decline of the agrarian revolt.

X. THE PINGREE ERA

The last decade of the nineteenth century can appropriately be termed the Pingree Era. Hazen S. Pingree, a prosperous shoe manufacturer of Detroit, began his first term as Mayor of the state's largest city in 1889 and served continuously in that office until 1897 when he began his four year rule as governor. Pingree's contribution to the reform movement in Michigan was not as an originator of ideas as nearly everything he thought or did had been brought to life by some other group. However, his great contribution was the gathering together of the many thoughts and reforms which sprang from minority parties or organizations and through his energy and action making them acceptable to the majority. He blended together the protests of both the rural and urban societies and presented them to the people in the form of a practical political platform within the dominant Republican party. He presented the action of the progress movement; the nucleus around which nineteenth century reform ideas could best hope to find permanence by means of legislative enactment.

Anti-monopolism dominated Pingree's attitude toward many of the issues of his day. He reflected the fear of many that the growth of corporations and trusts would eventually destroy the traditional American society of free competition and individual enterprise, and in its place substitute an industrial feudalism. The desire to retain an atomized society of small enterprisers, small farmers, and skilled workers was the background for his anti-monopoly thinking. "Individuality is fast disappearing," Pingree warned. "We are becoming a nation of corporate masters, . . . and of helplessly dependent servants."

He also challenged the economic doctrines which maintained that industrial concentration was a natural development within our system. "We are warned by a bloodless and soulless science, that no effort of legislation can stop this. . . . If they are right, a prospect lies clearly in view that may well appall the patriotic and the humane."[1]

The Governor's plan to restrain corporate abuses was to establish state supervision of all companies that dealt with the public. This would prevent

[1]Gov. Hazen S. Pingree, Jan. 4, 1899, in Fuller, IV, p. 125.

financial abuses such as stock-watering and concealment of earnings and would encourage honest investment capital which Pingree wanted to protect. Periodic submission of earning reports and state control of corporate stock and bond issues would, in his opinion, do much to prevent the abuses. This was actually done during his administration in the limited area of insurance companies operating within the state. Stronger supervision by the State Commissioner of Insurance closed over thirty companies and resulted in the arrest and conviction of several officials who were financially irresponsible.[2]

However, he realized that state control was a small factor in the regulation of corporations and trusts, and that national legislation was the only effective source. But he was pessimistic even about this and declared that short of government ownership and control "no means are yet apparently adequate to prevent their rapid concentration into a few hands." To prevent the problem from becoming more acute, Pingree asked for a federal law which would severely restrict the type of businesses in which the corporate form of organization could be used. "Why should any corpora-

[2]Ibid., p. 107.

tion be organized for conduct of mere mercantile or manufacturing business; this should be left to individuals."

The Governor, like many others, failed to see any relationship between the protective tariff and the growth of monopoly. He believed that the tariff, "a wise policy," had been responsible for the increase of manufacturing in the United States but argued that the fruits of the industrial prosperity had been absorbed by a few unscrupulous monopolists when they seized control of the new companies.

However, there was an area where Pingree's thinking was ahead of public opinion. He saw in the action of many corporations a distinct threat to our supply of natural resources and began to call attention to the need for conservation of land and resources. In Michigan he deplored the useless exploitation of much of the state's finest timber lands by private companies that had obtained them by devious means and then having become wealthy evaded the payment of their just share of taxation.

While Pingree failed to develop a progressive policy to deal with the corporation problem generally, he did emerge with a very definite policy toward those corpora-

tions or companies known as public utilities. It was one of the major accomplishments of his public career when he established the principle that franchises granted by the people to a private company should be granted in the interests of the people. This was a further refinement of the earlier Granger attitude toward railroad companies.

Soon after he became mayor, Pingree objected to the many special favors which street railways, gas, electric light, and toll road companies enjoyed under the franchises which they had obtained from the common council. He observed that many of the utilities had not been modernized, were charging exorbitant rates, or were paying only a fraction of what they should have in taxes. To correct these abuses, Pingree attacked the entire practice of granting franchise and developed a policy which finally led to municipal ownership.

"A public franchise," Pingree said, "when it has passed beyond state or municipal control, may become a power greater than the sovereign power."[3] In order that the government might prevent further abuses by utilities, Pingree suggested that it institute a more detailed system for the granting of public franchises

[3]Gov. Pingree, Jan. 12, 1897, Ibid., p. 39.

including the following points: it should reserve the right to fix rates; it should supervise the construction of the utility so that the actual valuation could be known; yearly reports of receipts and expenditures should be submitted by the company; there should be no consolidation of one company with another and no individual stockholder of one company should own either directly or indirectly any stock in another company operating in the same city; no franchise should be extended during the life of the original one; and no franchise shall be granted by a municipal authority without being submitted to a vote of the people.[4]

Early in his fight with the utility companies in Detroit, the mayor believed in municipal ownership only as a last resort, "for it would be a blow struck at individual enterprise and exertion and when these are lost the virility of the nation is destroyed." However, as the private companies continued to resist any and all attempts toward their reform in spite of public demand, Pingree came to believe that the best interests of the public could be achieved only through municipal ownership. It would remove franchise awarding from the corrupting influence of politics, would

[4]Ibid., p. 40.

reduce fares, and would result in a well planned and well ordered physical plant and facilities.[5]

As a start toward this goal, in 1895, a municipal electric plant was completed in Detroit which furnished power at a cost of only a quarter as much as that offered by the private companies. However, the municipal ownership movement was slowed down in the nineteenth century because of a rigid interpretation of the state's constitution by the Supreme Court. But because of Pingree's constant attack a majority of the people were educated to the necessity for closer supervision and cheaper fares, and shortly after he left office the constitution was amended to permit municipal ownership of utilities.

Pingree's fight against the abuses in franchise charters was a successful continuation of the old agitation against the special charters held by railroad corporations. He was taking advantage of a general dissatisfaction with corporation privileges and applied it first at the municipal level. Later, as governor, he returned to the state level and abolished the special charter by placing all corporations under the general incorporation law.

[5]Gov. Hazen S. Pingree, Jan. 4, 1899, Ibid., p. 118.

Pingree was also typical of the nineteenth century reform spirit in his belief that many of the evils of society could be removed by more direct democracy. "Every official, high and low, should be brought so closely in touch with the people that he would not dare to enter into a combination against their interests; and this country would be spared the scandal, the shame and sorrow of a senate pandering to giant monopolists; selling the very birthright of the people in their greed for gold."[6]

To purify the political system, he believed that the reform had to begin where "governing power originates, in the party organization and the convention." By abolishing conventions and caucuses and establishing a direct primary system, the people would have a direct choice over their candidates for public office. Besides the direct election of all state officers, Pingree in keeping with popular sentiemtn would also add the office of United States senator to those subject to the people.

The state of Michigan had for some years allowed the people to approve or reject changes in the consti-

[6]Lansing State Republican, June 28, 1894, p. 1.

tution. Also in certain local areas the people had the right to approve the issuance of municipal bonds. Pingree wanted to extend these limited forms of a referendum by the passage of a general referendum law giving the people full authority to approve or reject legislative acts. (In addition, he was an advocate of home rule for cities as "the only rule consistent with our system of government.")

Pingree's solution for the settlement of conflicts between capital and labor was arbitration, a principle which he consistently adhered to in both practice and policy. It was similar to the old Grange attitude that arbitration of disputes between two parties was the most direct and least destructive method that could be employed. His statement that "justice should be meted out to both (capital and labor) with an equal hand, . . . but don't shield the one and call out the troops for the other," was progressive and won a majority of the laborers over to him.[7] Besides arbitration, he favored stronger child-labor laws because he blamed monopolies for the practice of employing large numbers of children in industry. To reduce unemployment and to permit more

[7]Ibid., August 4, 1894, p. 1.

workers to enjoy "some of the advantages and real pleasures of life," Pingree became an energetic supporter of the eight-hour day movement.

Pingree's greatest victory as Governor was the equal taxation struggle. While it was not accomplished during his administration, all of the hard work and agitation necessary for its final acceptance was done under his direction. However, he did not regard that as the solution of the problem, as he was interested in a law which would have led to the ultimate purchase by the state of all railroads. No doubt, a great deal of his thinking about government ownership of transportation and utility companies was colored by the bitterness which developed out of the contest to establish government regulation, but at the end of his political career he was apparently convinced that government ownership of all franchises of a public nature was the only solution which would eliminate many of the public abuses.[8]

A list of the other reforms which Pingree favored would reveal his debt to the Grangers, Greenbackers, Populists, and labor groups for the ideas which formed the heart of his program. His advantage in securing

[8]Gov. Hazen S. Pingree, Jan. 4, 1899, Fuller, IV, 135.

results over the other groups was his great quality of humanitarianism which enabled him to appeal to all classes for support. While he was largely a product of the industrial society, his motives and goals so closely resembled those of the agrarian society that the rural areas found no difficulty in accepting him as the leader of the reform movement. His program was guided by the same spirit of justice and equality that had been characteristic of the farmers' movement, a classless and non-partisan ideal for American society.

Pingree's universal popularity enabled him to become governor despite the determined opposition of the leaders of the Republican party. During this period the party was so completely controlled by the new industrial and commercial class that no one who failed to secure their approval could hope to become a candidate for office except under the most unusual circumstances. While it was this class which first selected Pingree to run for mayor of Detroit, they were quite unprepared for the type of reform program that he adopted. When many were wounded by the mayor's zealous program they began making plans to prevent him from enlarging his political career to eventually include the governor's office. However, his actions in Detroit began to attract atten-

tion among the outstate voters and as he seemed to be in the same spirit as the reformers of the Greenback-Populist tradition, it was not long before demands were heard asking that Pingree become a candidate for governor.

He was willing in 1892, but the Republican leaders easily blocked him in favor of John Rich. But two years later, after the depression of 1893, with unrest more common among the voters, Pingree made a more determined attempt. He was attracting more support from Republican editors and from among the younger element of the party. The Lansing State Republican began swinging over to Pingree's camp with favorable stories of his reforms. In the upper peninsula the Marquette Mining Journal gave its readers a clear picture of the situation in Detroit where Pingree appeared to be fighting the same enemies as were reformers everywhere.

> With the exception of the Evening Journal all of the English dailies in Detroit are systematically engaged in misrepresenting and ridiculing Mayor Pingree, Scripps' two dailies -- the Evening News and the Tribune being particularly unjust. . . . Why? . . . Mayor Pingree has been of vast service to Detroit and its people, but in serving the city and its citizens he has rendered himself obnoxious to the corporations and rings that had been fattening on the municipality. . . . Are the papers after him because he is a friend of the people and the foe of the rapacious corporations and ringsters of Detroit?[9]

[9]Lansing State Republican, July 20, 1894, p. 2.

With evidences of increasing support outstate, some of the younger figures in the Republican party began a campaign in 1894 to oppose the renomination of Governor Rich and replace him with Pingree. In June, at the Morton House in Grand Rapids, a meeting was held of all those who were opposed to Rich. This was sponsored by several of Pingree's followers, the leaders being Amos Musselman, Sybrant Wesselius, and Charles Sligh.[10] However, this move failed as the precedent for giving a governor a second term proved to be a convenient device for warding off the mayor's campaign.

By 1896, it was clear to some Republicans that Pingree would only with great difficulty be prevented from securing the nomination. Since it was also the year for a presidential election, the party leaders decided that Michigan's electoral votes would safely be guaranteed for the Republican party if Pingree headed the state ticket.[11] However, there were other considerations which prompted them to allow him to go ahead. There was a fear that if he was blocked once more he would split the party with independent political action.

[10]Musselman Grocery Company to Mr. M. M. Robinson, June 25, 1894, Governor's File.

[11]Charles R. Starring, "Hazen S. Pingree: Another Forgotten Eagle," Michigan History, XXXII (June, 1948), 137.

"If Pingree is defeated in the convention," Judge Ramsdell the Granger warned, "and there is no telling what the railroad and other corporations will do with their strong organization and well-oiled machine, he will go into the field as an independent candidate."[12] Others felt that if he became governor, then he would so completely enmesh himself in the larger political scene that the people would soon tire of him and refuse to vote for him again.

There did seem to be an organized campaign during the summer of 1896 against Pingree which centered around Governor Rich's office. The leading figure in the Stop-Pingree-Movement was Arthur Loomis, the governor's secretary, who corresponded with a number of other Republicans who planned to head off Pingree. "There is no denying the fact that the sentiment for him in many localities is simply overwhelming and the opposition of the Detroit papers does not injure him at all," Loomis complained.[13] To off-set this popularity, the anti-Pingree group compiled a list of Republican newspapers in the state that possibly could be induced to fight his nomination by building up public opinion against

[12]Lansing State Republican, Feb. 15, 1896, p. 2.

[13]Arthur Loomis to J. R. McLaughlin, Detroit, April 13, 1896, Arthur Loomis Letterbook.

the Detroiter. We must oppose the "anarchist," declared Loomis "and our state will be spared the humiliation of going into the Altgeld business."[14]

Despite opposition, Pingree was easily nominated in 1896 as his own political machine was prepared for this convention. Probably no one could have stopped him then without wrecking the Republican party. He was given the second term without opposition and again finished well ahead of his ticket at the election.

His popularity was not limited to his own state. Pingree's attacks upon utility franchises, his municipal ownership ideas, and his depression relief measures such as gardens for the unemployed were watched by many others. Several of the larger cities of the nation adopted the "Pingree Potato Patch" method for alleviating distress among the unemployed. His actions were observed carefully by reformers in many other states, and Pingree's annual messages to the Legislature which contained his program and comments upon reform were distributed by the thousands. Since he was one of the first governors who might be placed within the

[14]Arthur Loomis to Perry F. Powers, April 13, 1896, Ibid.

new progressive movement of the next century, his ideas and actions probably served as an example to several other reform movements outside of his home state.

With Pingree's last term of office, the reform movement of the nineteenth century ended. "He had pushed the political pendulum as far as it would go in the reform direction," one of his associates later remarked. But within a few years the ideas of the past century were gathered up by the newer progressive movement and many finally became a part of the laws of the state.

XI. GOVERNMENT AND THE CITIZEN

The farmers' revolt in Michigan while seemingly barren in respect to specific accomplishments did much in helping to establish a new concept of the relationship between the government and the people. By the end of the nineteenth century, the citizen's idea of the role and function of government as they affected his life had been drastically revised. This new viewpoint was well expressed by the Grange in 1894 when it observed:

> The economic and industrial conditions of the past are not the conditions of today. This is the age of organization, combination, and cooperation. The concentration of capital in gigantic enterprises, not to compete with each other, but to overthrow opposition, to set at defiance the laws of trade and to fix prices, suggests alarming possibilities. In the face of this can the farmer maintain his independence and secure his rights? Organization is his only chance, and only then by the protection and aid of the government. Time was when it was to talk of the dangers of paternalism and a concentration of power in the general government, but that day is passed. The government of the future must be strong enough to rigidly control all corporations and possible combinations of capital, or they will control the government and our industrial liberties will be lost.[1]

[1] Grange Proc., 22nd (1894), p. 92.

The farmer had moved farther and faster than he realized during the last four decades of the century. In the beginning, the dislocations and discriminations which the industrial society imposed upon agriculture began to convince many that the only manner in which the individual could protect his interests was to turn to the government for aid. The doctrine that the government was the agent of the people and that it should respond to the wishes of the people found greater acceptance each decade. This view was responsible for the rise of reform leaders who were willing to study the demands of the protest groups and then attempt to translate them into legislation. "I believe that, in the people resides the sovereign power," Hazen Pingree declared, "and that the voice of the people is the voice of God."[2]

The farmers called upon the government for aid early in an effort to establish social control over indiscriminate corporations and businesses. While the first requests often asked only for specific legislation to restrain certain unsocial practices by other

[2]Lansing State Republican, June 28, 1894, p. 1.

groups, the farmers soon began to supplement these with demands that the government act as a positive and a permanent force in regulating society. This was an open invitation or often even a demand that the government interfere in activities which previously had been considered to be outside the scope of its legitimate function.

Not only did the farmer ask for the regulation of the other fellow, but he also asked that the government extend its activities to aid groups within society. "It is the duty of the government," the Grange remarked, "to enact such laws as tend to rebuild our languishing industries and to maintain them."[3] By the end of the century the farmer had arrived at the point where he accepted government aid as an essential feature in the prosperity of agriculture. This he did not consider radical for the farmer could point to similar instances of aid, such as the tariff and subsidies, which previously had been granted to other industries.

After having accepted the doctrine of government aid and interference, farmers began to ask for and obtain responses from the government which represented a direct movement away from the laissez-faire doctrines of

[3]Grange Proc., 23rd (1895), p. 80.

the period. Government, both national and state, began to establish permanent agencies which could exercise an ever-expanding influence over the lives of its citizens. In Michigan, the creation of such agencies as the Commissioner of Railroads, Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Dairy and Food Commission, the State Tax Commission, and others were evidences the functions of government were no longer to be narrowly defined. On the contrary, the farmers' revolt in the state had taught the people to look toward the government for help in solving or alleviating many of the problems which, because of the complexity of an industrial society, were beyond the control of the individual.

While the farmers of the nineteenth century did not primarily develop the concept of a general-welfare state, they were instrumental in breaking down the old doctrine of laissez-faire as it was understood by the industrialist or urban individualist. In this manner, they opened the door for the development of a philosophy of government which sought to preserve the older qualities of justice, equality, and opportunity through government intervention.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

Manuscript material in the area of this study was relatively scarce. Most of the leaders and organizations participating in the protest movement were not conscious of their role in the historical sense and therefore left little or no account of their activities. The correspondence in the Governor's files might have proved to be valuable had it been available. However, it was the practice of each Governor upon leaving office to remove the bulk of his correspondence. Of that remaining in the Michigan State Archives in Lansing, Governor Luce's correspondence was the most useful. There were several letters from his fellow Grangers as well as others in the state who were interested in removing some of the burdens from agriculture. Governor Winan's file also contained interesting comments from several of the members of the Farmers' Alliance or Populist party.

A search of much of the remaining archival material in Lansing failed to uncover items of specific reference to the agrarian revolt. However, the examination was useful for understanding the spirit of this period.

Another potential source of historical material, the Burton Historical Collection in the Detroit Public Library, also contained but a few scattered references. The Arthur P. Loomis Letterbooks, 1896-1910, in 4 volumes, contained a few interesting letters about the attempts to stop the Pingree boom in the state. Loomis was secretary to Governor Rich and later to Governor Warner. His letters were a good source for the period following 1900.

The Pingree papers in the Burton Collection were disappointing. They are largely newspaper clippings, examples of campaign literature, or copies of some of his more familiar speeches. The typewritten transcript by Cyril Player and Mrs. Marjorie Player, "Hazen S. Pingree, the Biography of an American Commonplace," Detroit, 1931, 371 pp., contained little that was new about the former governor.

Two pamphlets by Moses W. Field, an early Greenbacker, are in the Burton Collection. One, "The Currency Question," Detroit, 1868, 12 pp., was written when Greenbackerism was almost exclusively a labor demand. The second, "Greenbacks!" Detroit, 1877, 18 pp., contains the standard arguments for continuation of that popular money. There was also a short pamphlet by Henry

Chamberlain, Democratic-Reform candidate for governor in 1874. This one, "Reduction of Taxation," Detroit, 1870? was an early indication that the tax burden was beginning to annoy the farmers.

The printed documents and reports of the various agencies of the State of Michigan contained a wealth of material on the agricultural industry and the protest movement. The Annual Reports of the Michigan Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics (Lansing, 1874-1900), are a valuable source for information concerning the farm mortgage burden. They are also useful for periodic surveys of conditions in both the agricultural and industrial areas of the state. In addition, the Reports often sampled the degree of protest among the farmers and laborers which furnished an opportunity to study the immediate problems of these two groups.

The Annual Reports of the Commissioner of Railroads of the State of Michigan (Lansing, 1872-1900), present statistical reports about the development of this industry. Several of the Reports describe the nature and extent of the complaints against the railroads.

Complete information about the agricultural industry can be found in Michigan, Secretary of State, Report Relating to Farms and Farm Products (Lansing). This was

issued annually and contained statistics for each crop and product raised on Michigan farms, as well as information describing the trends in acreage, number of farms, and production in every county of the state. Often useful cost-of-production and value-of-production studies were made which were informative in relation to the political protest.

The Journals of the House of Representatives and of the Senate are generally disappointing. They contain little information except for routine affairs. However, the Journals of the Legislature of 1891-1893 were a source for sampling the farmer and labor protest sentiment. There were several petitions and resolutions from the Farmers' Alliance locals as well as the Patrons of Industry groups. In the Pingree administration the Journals contained excellent accounts of the taxation problem and the political struggle which accompanied it.

Another valuable source of material on both the agricultural industry and the protest movement was the Annual Reports of the State Board of Agriculture of the State of Michigan. These included many articles written by the staff of Michigan Agricultural College on the problems and progress in the industry. Also, until 1896

the Farmers' Institute Reports were included in the Annual Reports and these were especially useful. Articles and discussions of all aspects of the rural scene were included and covered such topics as good roads, taxations, social growth, and political participation. In 1896 the Michigan State Farmers' Institutes began issuing separate Annual Reports.

A somewhat pessimistic account of conditions is included in the Michigan, Secretary of State, Proceedings of the State Board of Equalization (Lansing, 1896 and 1901). Many of the representatives pled poverty for their counties, but their comments often revealed the specific problems and readjustments in each section of the state.

The materials published by the farm or agricultural organizations of the state were also vital to this study. The Annual Proceedings of the Michigan State Grange were an excellent source for examination of the ideas and actions of the only general organization to span the entire period. While more conservative than many of its locals, the Grange was one of the leading outlets for rural protest in the nineteenth century. Its official organ, the Grange Visiter, often more accurately reflected the sentiments of the locals and individual members.

The other two organizations, the Farmers' Alliance and the Patrons of Industry, left virtually no official records. No trace of the Alliance was found, and of the Patrons only a few issues of their organ, the Michigan Patron's Guide (St. Louis), still survive. The Burton Historical Collection contains some copies of the Guide for the years 1891-1893, but these are not representative of the early spirit of the Patrons. The organization had begun to decline by late 1890 and the surviving papers do not reflect the militant tone of the earlier period.

The special farm organizations or societies have preserved valuable materials describing their activities. The Annual Reports of the Michigan Dairymen's Association (Lansing, 1885-1900), and the Annual Proceedings of the Michigan State Horticultural Society (Lansing, 1885-1900), both were examples of the more optimistic farmers who were attempting to break away from old agricultural patterns. These contain many reports about the prospects for the new agriculture as well as descriptions of the problems faced in attempting to diversify.

Election statistics and biographical information were included in the Michigan, Secretary of State, Official Directory and Legislative Manuals (Lansing).

On the national level, the period from 1865-1900 has been the subject of many excellent studies. However, this same period in Michigan history has not yet attracted the same degree of attention. Some aspects have been adequately treated while others have been entirely neglected. There are several good histories of Michigan that furnish background for this period. Willis F. Dunbar, Michigan Through the Centuries (New York, 1955), 4 vols., and George N. Fuller, Michigan, A Centennial History of the State and its People (Chicago, 1939), 4 vols., both have topical chapters on such subjects as agriculture, labor, industry and many others pertaining to the post-Civil War era. An older work, Henry M. Utley and others, Michigan as a Province, Territory, and State (New York, 1906), 4 vols., is useful for its chronological survey of the period.

There are several articles pertaining to agriculture and rural life in Michigan. Romanzu Adams, "Agriculture in Michigan," Michigan Political Science Association, III (March, 1899), 1-40, is a complete survey of agriculture following the war. It is largely drawn from material found in the various state reports and is helpful in presenting some of the major trends within

the industry. Willis F. Dunbar's "The Transformation of Rural Life in Michigan Since 1865," Michigan Academy of Science, Arts, and Letters, XXIX (1943), 479-488, shows the influence of industrialization and urbanization upon the rural people.

Two articles by Elton B. Hill, "Agricultural Regions in Michigan," Michigan Academy of Science, Arts, and Letters, XIV (1931), 367-376, and "History of Farm Management in Michigan," Michigan History (1938), while primarily concerned with the twentieth century, have some material dealing with the preceeding century.

The rural to urban population movement has been described in a thorough manner by both O. W. Freeman, "A Geographic Study of the Growth and Distribution of Population in Michigan," Michigan Academy of Science, Arts, and Letters, XV (1913), 39-53, and Rolland H. Maybee, "Population Growth and Distribution in Lower Michigan, 1810-1940," Michigan Academy of Science, Arts, and Letters, XXX (1945), 253-266.

Background material relating to two items of special interest are found in J. H. Brown, "How We Got the R. F. D.," Michigan History, VI (1922), 422-459, and Karolena M. Fox. "History of the Equal Suffrage Movement in Michigan," Michigan History, II (1918), 90-109.

The most useful work on Hazen S. Pingree is Charles R. Starring, "Hazen S. Pingree: Another Forgotten Eagle," Michigan History, XXXII (June, 1948), 129-50. This is the only account which describes in any detail the public career of Pingree. Valuable insights of Pingree are given in Chase Osborn's The Iron Hunter (New York, 1919). Osborn served the Pingree administration in appointative positions. The debt which Pingree owed to the Populists can be found in his book, Facts and Opinions (Detroit, 1895). An account of the struggle between the street railways and Mayor Pingree is given in Graeme O'Geran, History of the Detroit Street Railways (Detroit, 1931). The messages of Governor Pingree, as well as those of all preceding governors, are conveniently available in George N. Fuller, ed., Messages of the Governors of Michigan (Lansing, 1927), 4 vols.

The only other political leader of this period besides Pingree who has received attention is Richard Trevellick. Clifton K. Yearley, jr., "Richard Trevellick, Labor Agitator," Michigan History, XXXIX (December, 1955), 423-444, is an excellent article describing the activities of a man who was prominent in the Greenback movement on both the national and state level, as well as an able leader of labor in the United States.

The general farm organizations have received very little attention in secondary works. Sidney Glazer, "Patrons of Industry in Michigan," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXIV (June, 1937), is a detailed account of the origin of this group, but its development was not related to the general protest movement within the state. A short description of the Grange is available in M. A. Patterson's "The Grange in Michigan to 1900," unpublished master's thesis, 66pp., Wayne University, in the Burton Historical Collection.

Two books are especially useful in relating the Michigan protest movement to the regional or national movement. John R. Commons and others, History of Labor in the United States (New York, 1918), vol. II, and Carl C. Taylor, The Farmers' Movement, 1620-1920 (New York, 1953), both have revealed the part which Michigan labor leaders particularly enacted in the regional parties and conferences. Another recent book, Sidney Fine, Laissez Faire and the General-Welfare State (Ann Arbor, 1956), presents an excellent analysis of the contributions of the nineteenth century protest movements in relation to the changing concepts of the role of the government.

Political activity of the period is only briefly and inadequately covered in Harriette M. Dilla, The Politics of Michigan, 1865-1878 (New York, 1912). A more competent, but still brief description is found in Arthur C. Millspaugh, Party Organization and Machinery in Michigan Since 1890 (Baltimore, 1917). The newspaper files provided the most important source for political information of this period.

The Lansing Republican and the Lansing State Republican newspapers on file at the Michigan State Library were the most valuable of all. Their coverage of the activities of all political parties was more extensive and impartial than that of any other paper. Next in usefulness were the Detroit papers, Free Press, Evening News, and Post and Tribune, in that order. They gave above average attention to political activities and movements within the Detroit area, but generally, their coverage of outstate news was not as complete. Other papers consulted were of limited value except for editorial comment. The Adrian Weekly Press, the Saginaw Courier, and the Lansing Journal were among the more significant of the other papers.

The agricultural papers such as the Grange Visitor and the Michigan Farmer, while avoiding political news

as much as possible, frequently contained interesting letters from subscribers in which political issues were presented. Often the intensity or urgency of such issues could be determined by this reader interest.