AGRARIAN REFORM AND THE NEGRO FARMER IN TEXAS

1886-1896

APPROVED:

[Signatures]

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The history of the agrarian reform movement in Texas, its origin and its activities, reveals a minimal participation of the Negro. The relationship of the white farmer and the Negro in Texas with regard to agrarian reform demonstrates what they had in common and why the black did not choose to embrace agrarian reform.

Since it is generally conceded that depressed economic circumstances led to the agrarian reform movement, the post civil war farm economy in Texas is briefly surveyed. The Negro, as the white in Texas, was primarily a farmer and differed in his poverty from the white only in degree. The continued decline in the price of cotton, while cotton acreage and production increased, provided the major economic dilemma.

Significant insights into the reasons for the blacks' rejection of the agrarian reform movement came from an examination of the social environment of the rural inhabitants in Texas. While farmers, regardless of race, suffered fears, anxieties, and discrimination, social separatism prevented
communication and class unity between the races. Among the Negroes, separatism led to the development of conservative leadership dedicated to maintaining the status quo. Thus the Negro developed an inneb-directed concept of reform seeking an elevation from slave to citizen by adoption of middle class virtues. The poor white farmer, on the other hand, satisfied with, and conscious of, his class identity had an outer-directed concept of reform, seeking to relieve his distress by changing the law and redistributing political power.

Examination of the development of agrarian reform organizations in Texas: the Grange, and Greenback Party and, in more detail, the Farmers' Alliance and the People's Party establishes an identifiable pattern in the relationship of the black and the white agrarian reformer. While the agrarian movement manifested itself in organizations like the Grange and the Alliance, which primarily served as educational tools, the white exhibited no desire for Negro participation. The Colored Alliance failed to exert influence in either the white or black agrarian community. When the white reformers, however, sought to implement their program with their support of political parties, then the white reformer demonstrated a strong interest in the Negro, more specifically in his vote.
Although the People's Party wanted the Negro vote, they made only meager concessions to get it, ignoring Negro demands for equal enforcement of laws and generally supporting the status quo in race relations. Only in 1896, when the Republican Party agreed to support the Populist state ticket, did the reformers gain major Negro support, and then, not because of principle but because of political expediency. Philosophically, little distinction existed between the dissident black Republicans and the black populists.

In conclusion, the speculations of historians regarding the black and populism are carefully examined. The widely held supposition that populism inaugurated a new policy in black and white relations is completely without foundation in Texas. The white reformers like the white conservatives remained loyal to "white supremacy" and racial separatism.

Research in primary source material, newspapers, public documents and books provided the basis of most of this history. Particular attention was given to contemporary Negro newspapers in order that a balanced interpretation of events and attitudes could be presented, revealing a large number of articulate and often eloquent black spokesmen in Texas. Material introduced not as yet examined in the historical literature was a narrative of the cotton pickers' strike in
1891, a discussion of Negro farmers organizations in Texas and the role of the black populist leader, Melvin Wade.
AGRARIAN REFORM AND THE NEGRO FARMER IN TEXAS
1886-1896

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In America, prior to the twentieth century, having a black skin never became fashionable or achieved popularity among the whites or blacks, north or south. Yet, the agrarian reform movement of the late nineteenth century seemed to present a unique and intriguing instance in American history, where the Negro and white farmers, equally oppressed, attempted to overcome their prejudices and social customs in order to jointly seek a better life. Unfortunately, a close study of the major agrarian reform movement in Texas in their relation to the Negro community, especially among Negro farmers, failed to substantiate these expectations. The white agrarian reformer and the Negro, each preoccupied with his own problems, ignored one another, and although they eventually arrived at a political entente, they never achieved a mutual understanding of either the heart or the mind.

While research in southern Negro history during the later decades of the nineteenth century presents some problems, they are, by no means, as overwhelming as in antebellum Negro history, since by that time a number of articulate Negro spokesmen had emerged in Texas. Although none of the
numerous contemporary Negro newspapers published in Texas could be examined, several out-of-state Negro newspapers of the times provided valuable information on the Negro in Texas. Contemporary white Texas newspapers, both reform and conservative, contributed significant and relevant material. Federal and state documents on education and agriculture as well as the census and state charters gave the researcher detailed information on Texas not to be found elsewhere. Secondary sources on Texas Negro history as well as Texas history during the years under survey proved to be extremely limited, making the research necessary more extensive. Given the complex political, social, and economic developments in Texas, a study of the Negro and agrarian reform provided a stimulating area for historical research.
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CHAPTER I

"MUSCLE . . . STOCK IN TRADE"

Years of bondage provided the black man with little that would sustain, nourish, and develop him after his emancipation. A preacher from Corsicana, Texas, wrote in a Negro newspaper that "the mass of slaves were turned loose in ignorance and superstition, [and] thousands of them live today in the same stage." A generation after the Civil War, two thirds of the Negro males and one half of the Negro females earned their livelihood cultivating the soil. Over one quarter of the Negro females ten years and older worked, compared to only six per cent of the white females, while three quarters of the men of each race had jobs. White and Negro men in Texas closely paralleled one another in occupations, with a substantial majority being farmers.

1 Detroit Plaindealer (Negro), December 2, 1892.

More Negroes than whites, however, worked as poorly paid farm laborers. An ordinary farm laborer in Texas received $.95 per day without board and $.71 per day with board. During harvest time in Texas a man earned on the average $1.23 a day without board and $.96 per day with board. Wages per month by annual employment were $19.20 without board and $12.60 with board. In the Texas "black belt" county of Walker, wages were reported as low as $5.85 per month. The Negro in most instances earned twenty to thirty per cent less than the white for the same work. "Since the Negro lives in comfort on much less than the white laborer," one planter observed, "the lower wage inflicts no hardship." R. M. Humphrey, superintendent of the Colored Farmers' Alliance, thought otherwise, and before a Senate Committee on Agriculture he told of seeing Negroes "dreadfully pinched with hunger" eating food "the coarsest commonest . . . upon which you cannot subsist other laborers" while

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Negro women worked "in the cotton fields with a single thin garment, without shoes."\(^6\)

According to Samuel Barrows, a man who traveled extensively throughout the south in the 1890's, sixty cents a week sustained a Negro with the staples of his diet: pork, meal, and syrup. In Georgia, a Negro testified that "a man could live mighty good on thirty five cents a week."\(^7\) The poor white farmer fared not much better with a diet consisting of pork fat, whose occasional streak of meat earned it the sobriquet of "white meat" or "sow bosom"; corn pone made with vitamin-deficient white corn meal; and molasses the sugar content of which provided energy of short duration. Labor nourished by such inadequate diets could not have functioned at an efficient level.\(^8\)

Both races suffered poverty and malnourishment, but the white, trapped by social tradition into supporting white supremacy, which in turn encouraged cheap Negro labor, gave stimulus to his worst competition. At one time, the white

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\(^6\) *National Economist*, June 7, 1890.

\(^7\) Samuel Barrows. "What the Southern Negro is doing for Himself," *Atlantic Monthly*, LXVII (June, 1891), 505-515.

redemptioner and the slave had had much in common, but after the redemptioners entered the free labor market, they attributed "the cause of their wretchedness to the existence of slavery." Later white workers maintained that low wages resulted from unfair competition from cheap black labor.

Evidence of the poor white laborer's resentment of black came when the Knights of Labor met in Richmond, Virginia, in 1886. Only at the insistence of the powerful Grand Master, Terrence Powderly, who declared "in the field of labor . . . we recognize no line of race," did the convention allow the seating of the Negro delegates. The support Powderly gave to the unpopular cause of the Negro may have weakened his power, which declined after the Richmond meeting. Subsequently from organized labor, there was "no radical utterance from any leader of authority advocating equality of opportunity for the Negro." Negro chapters of the Knights of Labor continued to be organized in the south, but a Negro newspaper reported that what attracted the men was the "secrecy . . . the mystic names, the ceremonies, the

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10 Dallas Morning News, October 15, 1886.

vows, and the obedience required, not a union commitment to racial equality. As the labor union continued to object to Negro membership, the number of skilled Negro workers declined, forcing the Negro to find work on a farm or in some unskilled occupation.

Negroes revered the land. When 450 Negro farmers, teachers, and ministers met in conference at Tuskegee, Alabama, on February 23, 1892, they strongly urged their people to buy land even "a few acres at a time." Given a choice, the Negro, like most Americans at the time, preferred to own or rent rather than work as a farm laborer. This reluctance by the Negro to "hire out" resulted partially from his slave experience and partly from his post-war experience. The control and supervision of the white employer bore a strong resemblance to the hated and feared overseer. Even though a generation had grown up under emancipation, Negroes recalled vividly their slave days for years to come.

Immediately after the Civil War the Texas legislature passed a series of laws aimed at controlling Negro labor.

12Washington Bee (Negro), September 7, 1887.


These "black codes" allowed a judge, acting as a guardian for a transient Negro minor, defined as anyone under twenty-one, to place him in apprenticeship until the Negro reached maturity. Rules and regulations stipulated his working conditions, but no form of supervisory board existed to see that these rules were obeyed by the employer. The rules provided punishment for anyone caught harboring a runaway, while the most restrictive law required forfeiture of wages by a laborer judged not to have fulfilled his contract. Another law demanded that a convicted vagrant who could not pay his fine be ordered to work it off as the judge saw fit.  

All these laws used to restrict the movement of the Negro, helped develop the Negro's anathema for working under the supervision of a white. Often the employer, resenting having to pay wages in times of scarce money to ex-slaves, failed to live up to his contract with the Negro.  

Opinion varied among whites about Negro labor; many leveled against the Negro age-old complaints about farm labor whatever the race. Some planters claimed that "the

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negro as a field hand is a failure," and others argued that "the negro is the most docile and tractable of all laborers and under proper management the most contented and profitable." The former Commissioner of Agriculture from Tennessee explained the differences between white and Negro labor in that "the first has ambition, calculates possibilities and looks forward to the future, the latter enjoys the present, is indifferent of self denial which makes thrift and prosperity possible." Negro observers regarded most black workers as "honest and steady" or "very sober and industrious."

Before a Senate Committee on Agriculture a planter from DeWitt County, Texas, attributed the "depression of the cotton raiser" to the unreliability of the Negro laborer on whom planters depended to "make a crop." The planter asserted matters had changed soon after the war when "the manumitted slave was from previous training and force of habit, a very desirable laborer, but as the new generation sprang up, they became more lazy, thriftless and unreliable."

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18 Ibid.
19 New York Globe (Negro), September 22, 1883; April 7, 1883.
20 Hoffman, "Race Traits," p. 263.
This general complaint of unreliability of labor extended to workers of both races. Problems of obtaining satisfactory labor did not directly concern most Texas farmers, who had not owned slaves before the war and who in any event had no money to hire help after the war.

In 1880, sixty-seven per cent of the farmers in Texas owned their own land, but by 1900 the number had diminished to fifty per cent. The non-landowning farmers consisted either of sharecroppers or tenants, who differed legally from the "cropper", since tenants leased the land and paid with cash or a share of the crop. A tenant, having technically more independence, could plant and buy what he chose, while the cropper, without the resources of a tenant, contracted his labor just before the planting of the crop, choosing and selling his crop as dictated by the planter. The acreage allotted to the cropper depended upon the number of working members in his family.

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Although government statistics reported a decrease in the size of farms in Texas from an average 240 acres in 1860 to an average of 128 acres in 1880 and an increase of the number of farms during these same years from 29,004 to 174,184, a Department of Agriculture statistician considered them misleading. Negroes listed as renters of independent farms were actually farm laborers who refused to work for wages and insisted on a semblance of independent management; and thus a single farm not to be alienated from its single owner or even divided by any permanent lines of division, was reckoned as half dozen farms or more. Very few of these individual laborers on shares, working under various terms of contract, can be considered independent renters of farms. They are rather temporary tenant-workers of fractional parts of farms.

Two trends in land ownership emerged. On the one hand, a few whites owned large farms cultivated by Negroes; and on the other hand, the majority of farmers, black and white, worked old plantations divided into small segments; "one-mule farms" of twenty-five to thirty acres were common among the blacks.


27 Barrows, "What the Southern Negro is Doing for Himself," p. 810.
The economic condition of the Texas Negro varied somewhat from county to county. In 1876 the estimate was that five per cent of the Negroes in Texas owned land. By 1890, estimates varied from twenty to thirty per cent. R. M. Humphrey testified before a Senate Committee that in Texas "for fifty miles up and down the Trinity, they [Negroes] own their own rich river bottom and have turned it into farms." A Negro writing from Wharton, Texas, to the New York Freeman about the prosperity of some Negroes in the "black belt" counties of Wharton, Brazoria, Ft. Bend, and Matagorda, declared that some black farmers harvested yields of forty to fifty bales of cotton and at times as much as one hundred bales. Some owned farms and steam gins, he wrote proudly; "others are buying up to fifty and one hundred acre tracts." One Negro was reportedly worth $25,000, another $20,000, and five between $5,000 and $10,000 each.

However, the Austin Citizen reported that

Most of the colored farmers are in poor condition to make a crop, hundreds having nothing to live upon while they are working and have to mortgage all they

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29 National Economist, June 7, 1890.

30 New York Freeman (Negro), July 16, 1887.
have got before they can rent the land, and thus one or two more short crops will entirely ruin them. 31

Records in only three southern states, Georgia, North Carolina, and Virginia, indicate the aggregate wealth of the Negro based on tax returns. Since all three states showed the same relationship in the distribution of wealth between the Negro and white, it can be assumed that the other southern states with similar economic conditions repeated the pattern. In 1880 the per capita income for the white in Georgia was $285.49 per year, while the Negro income was $7.95 per year. By 1890 the white per capita income had increased to $374.90 per year, and the Negro income had risen to $14.26. In 1879 the Negro possessed 2.3% of the aggregate wealth of Georgia, and by 1892 his share had crept up to 3.5%. 32

In effect, the Negro farmer had little money. Thomas Fortune, Negro editor of the New York Globe, declared before a Senate Committee that "few colored laborers on a farm ever get their hand on a dollar bill." 33 According to a

31 Austin Citizen (Negro) quoted in the Dallas Morning News, December 29, 1886.
33 New York Globe (Negro), September 22, 1883.
letter written by a white farmer from Barret, Texas, the white farmers, "hundreds of good, hard working men . . . are now, and have been practically without a dollar." 34 The disparity between white and Negro incomes was great, but the difference among whites must have been equally great. Many of the white farmers lived under distressed economic conditions with means so limited that their share of the wealth was closer to the black man's than to the monied whites.

Two economic classes existed in Texas: the "landlord-merchant-banker-capitalist" class comprising one-sixth of the population, and in possession of the money, political power, and other assets whereby they could extend credit; the other class consisted of debtors, politically impotent croppers, tenants, and mortgage-ridden yeoman-farmers. 35  

Will Carlton, a farmer poet, wrote of the plight of the mortgaged farmer:

We worked through spring and winter, through summer and fall
But the mortgage worked the hardest
and the steadiest of all
It worked on nights and Sundays,
it worked each holiday;
It settled down among us and never went away.

34 Southern Mercury, April 19, 1894.

35 Shannon, Farmer's Last Frontier, p. 97.
Worm or beetle, drought, or tempest, on a farmer's land may fall. But for first class ruination, trust a mortgage 'gainst them all.

Since the Negro had few opportunities or skills whereby he could accumulate enough money to become a banker, a merchant, a landlord, or a capitalist, he like most of the white farmers became a member of the debtor class.

Humphrey, intimately acquainted with the Negro farmer, described for a Senate committee the general share-cropping agreements the Negroes made. If the black owned stock, he would "rent land by giving one fourth of what they made in cotton; and, if they have neither stock nor land, then they go to some white neighbor and propose to work for half." A Negro who worked between twenty-five to thirty acres would pay one bale of cotton, which was worth about $50.00, to about two and one half bales of cotton worth between $100.00 to $125.00. One observer pointed out that the land sold between $5.00 and $7.00 an acre, so that "rent in some cases equals half the value of a farm." Whites sharecropped

36 Southern Mercury, January 18, 1894.
37 National Economist, June 7, 1890.
38 Barrows, "What the Southern Negro is Doing for Himself," p. 807.
under much the same conditions. The average white farmer brought in a five-or six-bale crop and, considering the high price of ten cents per lb., "the three-hundred dollar return allowed the worker's family a hundred dollars' store credit for the year's living expenses."39

Some whites blamed the Negro's economic distress on his inability to "manage and cultivate even a small farm" without supervision. Their farms, reported the Progressive South, are "such in name only and the cultivation of the soil and the condition of the grounds are of the lowest order."40 Irrespective of these reports, the production of cotton, cultivated primarily by Negro labor, increased steadily.

More cotton failed to put more money in the farmers' pockets. They seldom accumulated enough money or credit to pay off their debts. A correspondent in Texas reported to the Commissioner of Agriculture that one third of the farmers in his state were in debt, and that one half required "advances from the merchant." In Texas it was "common practice for the farmer to arrange with a merchant for an advance of $2.00

39 Shannon, Farmer's Last Frontier, p. 115.

to $5.00 per acre, generally $3.00 ... to be secured by a crop lien." Before getting a lien, a renter would have to persuade the landlord to wave his lien on a crop in favor of the merchant, or "endorse the renter's note." Usually the landlord accommodated the renter since he wanted tenants and in some cases had an interest in the merchant's store.

For the Negro the usual practice was not to give credit till the crop is above ground and only then just enough to supply the absolute necessities. If legislation prohibiting such advances were enacted it would necessitate some means being devised to supply the colored farmer with means to make his first crop and also to make him provident with his money when it was made and sold. No matter how good or how bad the season, large numbers of colored farmers are absolutely without means, if they cannot obtain supplies they cannot farm, or only in such small truck as will bring them a few dimes to get something to eat. This class of farmers have no credit and if the merchants cannot be secured they will make no advance which will be a greater hardship than paying a large profit. After all a crop mortgage is no worse than a chattel mortgage, a bill of sale or a lien to secure payment, in fact it is giving security for what they must have to proceed with their vocation of and make a living.

The crop lien, a legal bond, gave the merchant that part of a farmer's harvested crop necessary to pay off the farmer's debt. The lien never specified the amount of a


42 Opinion (Richmond, Texas) quoted in Dallas Morning News, December 17, 1886.
given crop; that depended on the market price at the time of harvest. If the farmer's crop failed to retire the debt, then the merchant attached a crop lien for the next year. Since the merchant paid out advances in store credits, the farmer consequently had to purchase all his supplies at the store that held his lien. Rarely had he enough cash to buy elsewhere.

A Texas correspondent reported to the Commissioner of Agriculture that the annual rate of interest on a lien amounted to twelve per cent and "the actual difference between cash and credit prices were twenty-five to fifty per cent"; another observer claimed that in some cases interest reached as high as one hundred per cent. While Humphrey estimated that "250% is considered reasonable" in interest rates for the Negro, another Texas leader of Negro farmers, Robert Lloyd Smith, charged that credit prices for the Negro ran 50% to 500% above cost. Thus the farmer

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44 Barrows, "What the Negro in the South is Doing for Himself," p. 809.
45 National Economist, June 7, 1890; Robert Lloyd Smith, "Village Improvement Among the Negroes," Outlook, LXIV (March 31, 1900), 733-736.
contended with a high interest rate on his lien and weighted prices at the stores at which he had to buy, making the "borrower... literally a slave to the lender." 46 The Negro "emerged from civil bondage" only to be enslaved in "financial bondage." 47

Just like the poor white man, Humphrey explained, the Negro met "a necessity, a sort of force to get in debt while he makes that crop." 48 The merchant, also in debt, had to pay high interest rates on his loan, causing him to supervise closely what his poor credit-risk debtor-farmer planted. As the farmer's indebtedness increased, he planted more cotton, often at the merchant's insistence. To do this he gave up land devoted to corn, cattle, and vegetables, becoming thereby less self-sufficient and more dependent upon the merchant for credit.

Between 1886 and 1896, the debtor suffered a particular disadvantage because the dollar appreciated, meaning that the dollar, with which the farmer paid off his loan, was

47 Barrows, "What the Negro in the South is doing for Himself," p. 810.
48 National Economist, June 7, 1890.
worth more than the one he borrowed. As an example of dollar appreciation and the decline of farm prices, the *Southern Mercury* published a comparison of farm commodities in 1888 and 1893. The first column indicated the amount it would take to pay $100 or 10% on an $1,000 loan in 1888. The second column showed the amount it would take to pay $70 or 7% on an $1,000 loan in 1893.

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<td>Commodities equal to $70</td>
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<tr>
<td>50 bushels of wheat</td>
<td>155 bushels of wheat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>165 bushels of oats</td>
<td>300 bushels of oats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125 bushels of corn</td>
<td>265 bushels of corn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250 lbs. of butter</td>
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<tr>
<td>250 lbs. of wool</td>
<td>450 lbs. of wool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 lbs. of cotton</td>
<td>1000 lbs. of cotton</td>
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When the price of cotton, the primary crop in Texas, declined, the farmers, black and white, found themselves entrapped in a state of perpetual indebtedness. Crop liens, inflated store prices, high interest rates, and low cotton prices reduced the farmers in Texas to a state of peonage.

In 1895, Texas devoted almost six million acres, two thirds of its total productive acreage, to cotton, which

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50 *Southern Mercury*, September 20, 1894.
determined the economic fate and destiny of the Negro farmer. Texas produced the largest number of cotton bales in the country, but ranked ninth in the number of bales produced per acre.\(^{51}\) In 1876, Negro labor in Texas accounted for sixty-two per cent of the cotton crop, and the decline in the price of cotton from \$.085 per lb. in 1885 to \$.066 per lb. in 1896 immediately affected the Negro.\(^{52}\)

Cotton acreage increased between 1886 and 1896 by one and one half million acres; yet, the total value of the crop declined.\(^{53}\) One cotton grower complained to the Commissioner of Agriculture that "unless farmers can get ten cents per lb. for cotton they can never keep out of debt." He said cotton at seven to seven and one half cents per lb. "will not more than pay for the supplies in making the crop."\(^{54}\)

"Cotton was king" in Texas, although Texas farmers grew crops other than cotton, devoting 500,000 acres to corn, consumed, for the most part, in the county in which it was

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\(^{51}\)USDA, Yearbook, 1886 (Washington, 1897), p. 570.

\(^{52}\)Ibid., p. 575.


grown, 325,000 acres to hay, 387,000 to wheat, and 13,000 to potatoes. Farmers, especially black farmers, knew how to cultivate cotton, and it could be depended upon to "make a crop" even in dry years. One Texas farmer claimed that he could "make more money out of cotton at five cents than out of corn at fifty cents." He charged that when he tried the "pork business" all he had was "grease, grease and no money." Texas farmers warned that if Texans "quit the growth" of cotton "as a money crop", it would "bankrupt the south" and bring "two black Sundays . . . together."56

Although specialization in cotton made the farmer much less self-sufficient, it depleted the soil less than any other staple.57 The value per acre planted with cotton was much greater than acreage devoted to other staples. Merchants encouraged, and in some instances demanded, the cultivation of cotton, since it was a cash crop, did not spoil, and had the added advantage of not being susceptible to consumption by the grower.58 They readily extended high

55 USDA, Yearbook, 1896, p. 571.
56 Texas Stock and Farm Journal, January 11, 1895; People's Cause (Cooper, Texas), December 3, 1897.
58 Hicks, The Populist Revolt, p. 45.
risk credit to farmers for cotton production. With the relentless logic of simple arithmetic, the farmer and merchant figured more cotton meant more money.

Overproduction brought a decrease in the price of cotton, but Texas farmers "knowing nothing of supply and demand" refused to recognize the problems associated with overproduction. A farmer in the reform paper the People's Cause explained that "it has been plainly demonstrated that it is not over production but under-consumption" that causes cotton to bring low price. Another farmer complained that "it is very nice for a few kid-glove farmers, on paper to get together and resolute to plant less cotton," but he doubted any practical farmer would pay much attention to it.59

Production of cotton continued to increase and the price declined in response not only to over-supply but also to an unregulated market. Since most tenants and share-croppers deposited their bales with the merchant, few actually marketed the cotton themselves. After harvest, merchants unloaded their cotton on the market at the same time, depressing the price of cotton. Since most of the world's

59 Texas Stock and Farm Journal, January 11, 1895; People's Cause, December 3, 1897.
cotton came from the United States, a regulated market would have allowed the Americans to set the price of cotton.  

With the decline of the price of cotton, the farmer became more sensitive to discrimination in freight charges by the railroads in Texas. They discovered with dismay that "the rate for 817 track miles from St. Louis to Galveston by way of Palestine, Texas was only sixty dollars per car, while a rate of ninety dollars was demanded for 201 miles separating Palestine and Galveston."  

Railroad freight rates per ten miles on the southern Galveston, Houston and Henderson were $5.43 in 1886, compared to $.64 on the northern, Lake Shore and Michigan Southern. By 1896, because of farmer agitation and the establishment of the State Railroad Commission, the situation eased somewhat, with the rate on the southern line having been reduced by more than half, but this was still three times the northern rate.

The Negro and the white farmer together experienced hunger and frustration while tilling soil that brought few rewards and yielded only to bodies spent in a lifetime of

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60 Shannon, The Farmer's Last Frontier, p. 112.


futility. The Negro's suffering, if it differed at all from the white, can only be expressed in negative superlatives. The food he ate was the coarsest; the prices he paid were the highest; and the wages he earned were the lowest. Certainly the condition of the farmer warranted reform, and since the black and white farmer belonged to the same class in relation to the means of production, the land, the next reasonable step would be a joining together to seek reform, if black and white men could be reasonable toward one another in the south.
CHAPTER II

"I'D RATHER BE A NIGGER THAN A PO' WHITE MAN"

Between the years 1886 and 1896, a flurry of articles appeared, written by northern and foreign observers, on "the progress of the negro" in the south, which invariably concluded that the Negro had not made great advances since his emancipation, few having "obtained wealth or eminence." In response, articles and editorials presenting the southern view maintained that the white southerner was the only one who understood the Negro and encouraged northerners to support the status quo in southern race relations. Although white people who lived in the same communities as the Negroes possessed a minimum of material and social assets, their progress was rarely noted or examined by those authors writing on the "negro problem." It was as if Negroes had a monopoly on poverty and ignorance.

1See, e.g., James Bryce, "Thoughts on the Negro Problem," North American Review, CCCXCI (December, 1891), 641-660. This English historian, author of The American Commonwealth traveled through the south in 1883 and 1890.

Unfortunately, in the rural areas of Texas, a perpetual state of ignorance enmeshed both black and white. Side by side struggling to survive, blacks and whites lived and suffered "gross inequalities" in the education of their children compared with the public education of city children.

Few Negroes in Texas who remained to till the soil after emancipation knew how to read. Haphazardly, after the Civil War church missionaries and the Freedman's Bureau established schools for the Negroes, often with white teachers who, suffering harassment and ostracism by the white community, had to find board with Negro families. By 1870, the Reconstruction government in Texas maintained an effective centralized public school system requiring taxes, which most white Texans strongly opposed. Consequently, with the end of Reconstruction, the public school system collapsed in Texas. Between 1875 and 1886, a new public school system gradually evolved, which was inadequate and


unequal, especially for the four out of five children who attended rural schools.  

The best public schools developed in the cities and towns where the state legislature permitted sale of bonds and levying of special taxes for the maintenance of schools. Rural schools, denied income from such fund raising, therefore, had inferior schoolhouses, poorer teachers, lower teacher salaries, and shorter school terms.  

In fact, "in many counties the value of the common jail exceeded that of all the school property in the country." The average country school, valued at $300, including furniture and site, contrasted with the average city school in Texas worth $8,000. Even the Negro schools in Austin, valued at half the white schools in that city, had assets more than double the average rural school. One country teacher declared that the rural schoolhouses,  

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6Frederick Eby, Development of Education in Texas (New York, 1925), pp. 216-217.  
8"The Negro Common School," Atlanta University Publications, 1, 84.
"ventilated by whole fields full of air . . . would not make decent barns." The furniture, he described as consisting of benches, some with backs, each accommodating six boys studying Webster's "old blue-black speller," while "around the wall of the house a plank a foot wide is nailed up to furnish writing facilities." The "makeshift" houses, claimed the superintendent, were "unattractive, uncomfortable, and unhealthful." In 1890, the state of Texas owned only 3,286 of the 8,825 schoolhouses, and in some cases, churches and barns substituted for schoolhouses, while in other instances, Negroes held school in the open air.

Under these conditions, finding qualified teachers for rural schools presented a major problem in Texas. State superintendent, O. H. Cooper said in 1889 that most of the country teachers lacked experience, and many could "barely pass the elementary examinations required for county certificates." Dr. Atticus Haygood, representative of

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11 USDI, Report to the Commissioner of Education, 1889, II (Washington, 1890), 1416.

the Slater Fund, observed that teachers in colored schools remained "pitifully incompetent" as did many teachers in southern public schools.13

The poor quality of teaching in rural Texas schools bore a direct relationship to the low teacher's salaries, which ranged between $30 and $50 a month for a school term, which averaged between three and five months. Although in 1890, Negro male teachers in the "black counties" of Robertson, Brazos, Matagorda and Waller received higher wages than white teachers, these were exceptions. Generally, Negro teachers' wages ran 20% to 25% lower than whites.14 Most Negro teachers had to "farm, sell books, keep store or barber ship to help out short terms and small salaries."15 Since the level of certification determined a teacher's wage scale, wage differential between the races could have been without prejudice, but a possibility of discrimination at the examiner level also existed.


15 "Colored Department," Texas School Journal, XIV (May, 1895), 189.
Besides low salaries, poor facilities, weak teachers, and short school terms, rural education in Texas had inadequate organizational structures. Of the two school systems found in rural Texas, district and community, the later prevailed among the Negroes and exhibited the greater weaknesses. The community school, with no power to tax, provided flexibility of organization in sparsely populated sections of Texas, since the community school determined its boundaries each school year, depending upon the scholastic enrollment. For Negroes, it meant that widely scattered children could be assigned to a single segregated school, making it at times impractical for more than a few to attend a school miles away from their homes. The impermanence of the community school discouraged the building of school-houses and the accumulation of other assets, while parents tended to show little interest in a school which might be non-existent in a few months.  

In 1886, Oscar H. Cooper, Texas superintendent of education, explained that those parents least interested in the education of their offspring abused the community school

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17 Texas, Department of Education, Special Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1887, p. 29.
system. Such parents, having no intention of sending their children to school, enrolled their children in response to soliciting made by teachers and trustees, which enabled the community school to receive funds on the basis of padded lists, thereby depriving some children of schooling and encouraging the growth of multiple weak schools instead of a single strong one. Cooper complained that the community school led to "local bickerings, sectarian rivalry and even personal quarrels." In 1895, James M. Carlisle, president of the Texas State Teachers Association, echoed the same sentiments, advising that all community schools be placed with district schools.

Functioning district schools demonstrated their advantages over the community schools, but they remained inferior to the city schools and accessible to only a minority of the Negro students. Carlisle maintained that the district school provided "greater efficiency, longer school terms, better school houses and supplies;" however, in 1887, two thirds

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18 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
of the Negro pupils in Texas attended the inferior community schools as compared with one third of the white. 21

Since Texas legally segregated the races in its schools, the Negro school often reflected many of the problems of the larger black community, especially the tendency toward religious sectarianism, and the strong desire among some Negroes to play politics. The editors of the "Colored Department" in the Texas School Journal cautioned Negro teachers to "beware of the mad dog of sectarianism. He is loose in every community. He'll bite and his bite means death to reason and sensible co-operation." 22 Some Negro teachers capitalized on the "sectarian racket" by demanding that "Baptist folk ought to have a Baptist teacher." 23 Other Negro teachers discovered that their job often represented a political plum, making their appointment dependent not so much on training and ability, but rather on "wire pulling" and their familiarity with members of the school board. 24


23. Ibid., p. 38.

All Texas rural schools, district or community, black or white, attended primarily by the poor and the politically impotent, remained inferior to the schools located in the cities, where the wealth and power of the state was concentrated. According to one historian of Texas education, this condition was not a matter of chance, since "these unjust discriminations against the country children had their foundation in the laws and the constitution of the state."  

Since rural inhabitants in Texas, regardless of race, had inferior public education because of state laws, the logical step was to change the laws. Essentially, poor white farmers aimed at such changes in the state's educational laws through agrarian reform movements such as the Grange, the Alliance, and the People's Party. Only the farmer's lack of full understanding of the problem limited his demands for educational reform. Actually, farmers in Texas had little idea of what constituted standards of good education. Few understood that the scholastic population in Texas, smaller in proportion to the entire state than any other state in the Union, spent an average per capita for school purposes

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less than one-half the average spent in the United States as a whole.  

Convinced by politicians that an adequate school fund existed, farmers remained reluctant to increase taxes for improving the schools. Unwilling to acknowledge the insufficiency of the school fund, which was actually the case, farmers believed that Texas provided a basically good public school system, hence, needed only a more equitable distribution of the school fund. Even Carlisle, a constant critic of public education in Texas, declared before an audience of Negro teachers that Texas had a "great system of education." To the agrarian reformer, the greatest need of the rural school was in a longer school term, which they deemed entirely possible through better management of the state school fund.  

Although both races and every major political party in Texas supported a six month school term, obstacles prevented cooperation on educational reform between whites and blacks.

26 O. H. Cooper, "Address," Texas School Journal, VI (October, 1888) 266.

27 James M. Carlisle, "Address to the State Teachers Association (Colored)," ibid., X (July, 1892) 607-609.

28 Southern Mercury, July 2, 1896; Texas Stock and Farm Journal, January 4, 1895.
Carlisle summed up the white Texan's resentment against paying taxes for Negro education when he said "the colored people contribute but a few cents per capita of school population and yet receive a greater sum per capita on the enrollment in school than the whites do." Hardly thinking of reform in Negro education, Carlisle told the Negroes they should have a "proper appreciation" of the public education given them by "voluntary action" and "recognize what the white people of the south are doing for them."\(^{29}\) Blacks, on the other hand, complained that whites often refused to give Negroes "the same provision as to character of buildings, furniture, number and grade of teachers as required by law."\(^{30}\)

Not only did the question of distribution of funds divide the races on education reform, but each race had an entirely different outlook as to the potential purpose of education. The white farmer looked upon education, especially agricultural education, as a means of keeping his children on the farm, and general education as a way of building an enlightened citizenry capable of protecting and promoting the interests of the rural community. The black farmer saw

\[^{29}\] James M. Carlisle, "Address to the State Teachers Association (Colored)," 697-699.

in education, the key that would open doors which separated the slave from the freeman as well as divided poverty from wealth. The white reformer, the Granger, the Allianceman, and the populist, never regarded education as a direct means of solving his economic woes, his activities all indicated a firm belief in a political solution to those problems.

On the contrary, blacks tended to stress education over politics as the avenue by which to solve their economic problems. By 1886, many Negroes had grown disillusioned with politics, especially with the national Republican Party, although they continued to vote for it and show some interest in it. Blacks began to think that to "call a few choice Negroes up to the political pie counter and dish out several cuts in the form of Collector of Customs in some port" benefited few Negroes. Considering white reaction, even the occasional election of a Negro state legislator, a local constable, clerk, or sheriff had its negative aspects. J. Harvey Jones, of Calvert, an active participant in the Texas Colored Men's Conventions, wrote in a Negro newspaper about his disgust with politics:

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We negroes ... think that too much useful time has been wasted by us in politics with an expectation of getting from some one, no matter whom, "the forty acres and a mule," so we want only but little to do with politics or any other kind of ticks and more attention paid to the training and education of our sons and daughters fitting them for honorable stations in life .... We want more land with unquestioned deeds in our hands we want our own bank account. We want more frame houses, and less log cabins and clap board shanties.\(^{32}\)

"The avenue of wealth," Negroes believed, was open to everyone willing to educate himself,\(^{33}\) and Negro enrollment revealed the eagerness of blacks to educate their children. In 1890, Texas, like only one other state, registered a proportionally greater Negro enrollment than white.\(^{34}\) The percentage of Negro illiterates declined from 75.42% in 1880 to 49.93% in 1890, but this markedly contrasted with 7.98% illiteracy in the native white population in Texas.\(^{35}\)

By 1896, however, the number of Negroes enrolled in Texas schools had declined to 55.05% from 74.80% in 1886, and by 1900, Negroes failed to show any substantial gains in

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\(^{32}\) New York Globe (Negro), September 8, 1893.

\(^{33}\) Houston Blade (Negro) quoted in Dallas Morning News, May 11, 1888.


literacy during the previous ten years. These declines resulted from the inadequate community schools, and, perhaps, from a new generation of Negro parents, less dedicated to education than their parents had been. Articulate Negroes in Texas did not, however, abandon their faith in education, but they began to focus their attention on the type of education that would best "elevate the race." 36

A controversy developed among Texas Negro educators in the eighties and nineties between advocates of "industrial" education for Negroes and promoters of "classical" education. This predated by some years the difference in philosophy between the national Negro educators William Edward Burghardt DuBois and Booker Taliaferro Washington. DuBois, a Harvard educated mulatto professor, supported efforts to seek out and educate the "talented tenth" in the Negro community along lines parallel to the best liberal education in the white community. Washington, a mulatto graduate of Hampton Institute and founder of the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, advocated industrial and agricultural education as meeting the existing needs of the greater masses of Negroes. 37


During a meeting in 1895, Texas Negro teachers divided into two camps, one supporting a Negro branch of the university and the other an industrial school. Some Negro teachers, while not denying the importance of industrial education, contended that a classical education should also be available to blacks because it "fit the individual to live completely and served the true ends of education." To those opposed to a Negro university, the editors of the "Colored Department" in the Texas School Journal countered that some Negroes saw "no need of well educated teachers, ministers and doctors in our race; no need of any literary talent of any higher order," and, they concluded, that some Negroes would just as soon close the schools and doom the Negro "to be an ignorant serf."  

Far from promoting Negro serfdom, a member of the Negro teacher's association wrote in 1887 that industrial education was essential, since few doubted "the negro is to remain an agriculturist." He found it "amazing to note how little" the Negro "knows about [farming]." Skilled instruction like that at Tuskegee and Hampton, he counseled, enabling the

38 "Colored Department," Texas School Journal, XIV, 478.

39 Ibid., (June, 1896) 228.
Negro to become better "cooks, farmers and mechanics" suited to the needs of the Negro race. Colleges, he concluded, held few benefits for the mass of Negroes.  

At the Negro teachers meeting in 1895, one educator explained that the needs of the majority should have priority over the needs of the few. Negroes in Texas, he pointed out, would continue for years to be "hewers of wood and drawers of water;" therefore, schools like Hampton and Tuskegee would be of great value to his race in Texas. The philosophy upon which Hampton Institute based its educational system maintained that when the farmer learned how to increase his production, he "would see his family better fed, better educated" with the subsequent disappearance of the "credit system" and the "depressing circumstances" of his environment.  

The experience of the white farmer refuted a philosophy that claimed agricultural education would bring economic prosperity. While the production of cotton reached an all time high in Texas, the farmer's income decreased, and he

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40 Galveston Daily News, February 1, 1887.
41 "Colored Department," Texas School Journal, XIV (September, 1896), 478.
42 Detroit Plaindealer (Negro), April 17, 1891.
became ensnared to, rather than liberated from, the credit system. Although the white farmer encouraged the establishment of industrial and agricultural schools in Texas, he adamantly maintained that no change in his farming methods or financial management would alter his economic straits. Thus the Negro and white reformer held diametrically opposed concepts of agrarian reform.

While the white farmer tried to find political solutions to his economic distress through an outer-directed reform, concerned with laws, legislators, and political parties, the Negro sought inner-directed reform. Abandoned by the national government, the Negro hoped to find prosperity and acceptance in the white community by adopting the middle class virtues of thrift, honesty, self-help, race pride, and solidarity.

Negro leaders pleaded with their people to depend not on laws or white people but to help themselves by abandoning "lavish and improvable ways" as well as "wastefulness, stubborn mismanagement and willful neglect of duties." For the Negro's edification their leaders listed other self-improving virtues, cautioning the blacks not to promise "something you don't expect to fulfill," not to buy "that
which you never expect to pay for," and not to lie or be

late. 43

Negro writings as well as campaigns for Negro teachers, trustees, and examiners for Negro schools reflected the blacks' pride in race. The editors of the "Colored Department" of the Texas School Journal professed that the Negro child "should be familiarized with the history of the Negro in America and with the lives and achievements of the great leaders of the race." 44 One reader even objected to the title "Colored Department" writing: "I would have liked 'Negro Department' better, because we are negroes." 45

The white farmer in the reform movement developed ambivalent attitudes about the Negro. Committed to white supremacy, he encouraged the Negro in his development of middle class virtues, knowing full well that the practice of

43 Texas Citizen (Dallas, Negro) quoted in Dallas Morning News, July 10, 1888. It was, no doubt, editorial policy for white papers to pick up quotes like these from Negro newspapers since they reflected white opinion, but Negro newspapers examined by the author did embrace this attitude also. For a discussion of contemporary Negro newspapers see August Meier, Negro Thought in America, 1880-1915 (Ann Arbor, 1963).

44 "Colored Department," Texas School Journal, XIII (December, 1895) 508.

such virtues would not lead to prosperity for the Negro. This ambiguity extended to education as well, where the white farmer, fully cognizant of some weakness in rural public education, preferred to believe that the Negro received in public education "munificent provision for the well-being and uplifting" of his race. 46

In at least one area, poor whites and Negroes recognized a mutual interest, and that was in the matter of the convict labor system, especially since a large number of black convicts unable to pay even a ten dollar fine worked for twenty-five cents a day for forty days to pay the fine. 47 In 1890, the state leased half of its convicts outside the prisons to work on railroads, contract farms, share farms, and rock quarries, 48 and in 1886, the Dallas Morning News reported that convicts furnished most of the labor used on sugar plantations in Texas. 49

While the whites demanded the prohibition of convict labor, Negroes tended to ask only for the amelioration and

46 Carlisle, "Address to the State Teachers Association (Colored)," p. 609.
47 Galveston Daily News, August 9, 1896.
49 Dallas Morning News, December 16, 1886.
protection of the law. The Colored Men's Conventions requested Negro prison inspectors to investigate brutal treatment and, in some cases, the murder of prisoners. A Negro delegate to the People's Party convention in 1896 regarded the adoption by the convention of a resolution guaranteeing a minimum wage for convicts of fifty cents a day as justifying his trip to the convention.

Negroes considered especially humiliating the "yoking or chaining of male and female prisoners together," which Negro leaders found "demoralizing," considering that many of the victims had committed only petty crimes. A letter written from Overton, Texas, to a Negro newspaper bitterly described such a chain gang:

I would say that such a practice is constantly kept up in this country. I am sorry to say that as I was passing one of the streets of this city yesterday I witnessed ... [a chain gang] and all of the women were colored. Because they could not pay their fines, they had to work them out upon the streets with the men. I think that this is one of the greatest sins in the South among the administrators of the law. They enforce the law upon one side, and leave the other free from punishment.

51 Galveston Daily News, August 9, 1896.
52 Proceedings of the State Convention of Colored Men, 1883, p. 16.
53 New York Freeman (Negro), September 18, 1886.
Forced to work out their fines, the poor, in their relations to prison system, as with educational system, became in Texas victims of discrimination, contributing to the development of rural communities marked by ignorance, anxiety, and fear.

Although blacks and whites had in common a great fear of physical harm, but that fear provided no basis for cooperation, since each race feared the other. If the agrarian reform movement hoped to capture the sympathy and loyalty of the Negro, it would have to reassure the black. The Texas Negro in 1886 had a heritage of fear and terror of the white man, which originated with his enslavement, and which continued through Ku Klux Klan terrorism and White Cap intimidation. This heritage, compounded with the ignorance and superstition of the masses of Negroes, magnified the fear of lynching among blacks. The vividly detailed description of a young Negro being "roasted to death" in Longview or the lynching of six Negroes in Hempstead, including three boys, thirteen, fourteen, and fifteen, caused blacks to view lynching as one of their chief problems.

In 1886, the Galveston News reported that "lynch law in Texas, especially this year has been invoked quite frequently."
Only the past week five persons in Texas were removed by  
lynchers. In 1892, the Plaindealer reported fifteen  
lynchings in Texas. A typical incident occurred in Wiley,  
Texas, when a white man killed a Negro picking cotton just  
"for a past time." The murderer escaped as was the case in  
Temple, Texas, where a white man shot a Negro and "insulted"  
his wife.

The rape of a white woman served as the most frequent  
excuse for lynching a Negro. Frederick Douglass charged  
that whites used such incidents because people regarded  
them as the "most revolting and shocking" crimes "this side  
of murder." Why is it, Douglass exclaimed, that for over  
two hundred years no one had taken notice of the rape of  
Negro women by white men. When rape was not the charge,  
lynchings often had political overtones, especially when  
the Negro threatened the white man's supremacy as in the  
"wholesale hangins" in Brenham, Texas, which were, according  
to the Dallas Morning News,

56 Detroit Plaindealer, February 3, 1893.
57 Frederick Douglass, "Lynch Law in the South,"  
the culmination of the incendiary speeches made
by the Radicals during the recent elections, and
while all good citizens regret the hangings, they
cannot but think that tardy justice was done. The
two white Radicals who instigated the negroes to go
to the polls armed are still at safe distance. 58

Reports of negro activities in the white press did
nothing to alleviate the white man's fear of the negro.
In 1887 the Houston Daily Post reported that "over two
hundred negroes were in arms" in Matagorda County, Texas,
and added that "the negroes had been largely reinforced." 59
Another report of the same incident cast considerable doubt
on the Post's story, however. A Washington Bee reporter
described "the white people from ten years upward armed and
parading through the streets, and the colored man scared
and humble." Instead of two hundred armed negroes, the
reporter encountered "150 white men armed to the teeth
arresting on suspicion without warrant, every Negro they
come across." 60 Unfortunately, few whites read the Washington
Bee or the New York Globe whose reports scoffed at accounts
of a "nigger rising" in Madison County, Texas; instead, the
Globe maintained that the negroes there could not

59. Houston Daily Post, September 26, 1887.
60. Washington Bee (Negro), October 8, 1887.
must be fifty responsible pieces of live arms of all descriptions and calibers. What in the name of Hades have the darkies to rise with? What would become of their children? Where would they get provisions? The majority of the farming class are right now making contracts and mortgaging themselves for next year's rations ... The colored people have no thought of rising. They know that there are thousands of whites and many of them foreigners who would be too glad, of any opportunity to butcher poor helpless, defenseless, innocent Negroes.

With occasional lapses, the white press in Texas opposed lynching, declaring that "every man should be fairly tried." Conservative papers, like the Dallas Morning News, maintained that the situation could be remeved if the courts would "get off their old fashioned methods of dreaming, drawling and dawdling and by energy and promptitude ... convince people they mean business." The reform press, represented by the Southern Mercury, agreed that "delay of the law breeds the spirit of the mob law and lynching," emphasizing, however that justice should be administered fairly "without the pale of money influence."

Discussions among contemporary legal experts emphasized the complexity of the problem and maintained that the remedy

61 New York Globe (Negro), November 17, 1883.
62 Dallas Morning News, May 27, 1892.
63 Southern Mercury, November 16, 1894.
for lynching rested with the people and the laws, not with the courts. Since a conviction for rape could only be obtained with the public testimony of the victim before a magistrate, grand jury, and trial court, and since few women chose to give such testimony, it was entirely feasible that a guilty man could go free. Lynchers, legal experts explained, in venting their frustration with the sophisticated legal procedure intended "not to violate the law but vindicate the law." A discussion in the Yale Law Journal concluded that the lyncher's primitive desire to see the offender suffer and the guilty convicted could be met by increasing the number of capital crimes and eliminating executive pardons.

Blacks found no justification for lynching in the laws of the United States or in the higher laws of humanity. In response to an unusually brutal lynching in Paris, Texas, the Richmond Planet wrote that "no excuse given can justify the inhuman and cannibalistic tortures to which . . . the colored man was subjected." The men who committed such crimes,


the Planet accused, "demonstrated conclusively that they are as liable to commit a crime as an accused as the one charged against their defenseless victim."66 Negro leaders in Dallas pleaded with the whites to tell them what they could do to diminish the white man's hate.67 Since the Negroes believed the lynchings originated among the poor whites, they appealed to "the better class," to those who were to "the men born" and to those for whom they had "slaved and toiled" not to allow the lynchings to go on.68

Douglass failed to understand why whites denied a trial to the blacks, especially since few of the all white jurors and judges were prejudiced in behalf of the Negro. A letter written on April 11, 1893, by Issac Bruce, a Negro sentenced to die for rape, in which the black man pleaded with Governor James Stephen Hogg for clemency, gave an indication of the white man's justice for the black man in Texas:

Highly Honored Sir:

I am here in jail and sentenced to hang and now I have come to you for mercy. Dear Governor I don't think I had a fair trial at all. I proved where I was

66 Richmond Planet (Negro), February 11, 1893.
67 Galveston Daily News, May 7, 1892.
68 Washington Bee (Negro), November 19, 1887; Richmond Planet (Negro), May 27, 1893.
at every hour in the day and proved where I was that night when they said the crime was committed, and she said that the man that done it had a knife and pistol and the sheriff arrested another man with a knife and pistol, and he was muddy and wet and suited the description the woman gave to a tee. And when he was arrested he ran from the officer and tried to get away. And there was a man got on the stand and swore they saw the other man with the woman's father drinking whiskey together. And there was a man said the girl shuddered when she came in at me, but dear governor the girl did not shudder when she came in at me, but she did shudder when she seen all of the men standing in a row. She looked up and down the row of men I was in and looked at me and said the Negro had on a white shirt. And I think she said it was me because I had on a white shirt. Dear Governor you know it is hard upon me to give up my life for nothing. I say myself the man that committed the crime ought to be punished for it, but I say punish the right man. Some of the same men that wanted to mob me was on my jury. Now do you think that was a fair trial? Now dear governor please help me for I am no more guilty than you are and why should my life be taken from me? If it was so that God could come down here He would tell you the same. So please master help me if it is in your power. I will close.

Your humble servant,
Issac Bruce

By 1904, Texas accounted for more lynchings than any other state, and any politician who capitalized on the

69 Austin Daily Statesman, May 15, 1893; Dallas Morning News, May 16, 1893; Austin Daily Statesman quoted in Richmond Planet, May 27, 1893. Although Hogg stated it was "nearly probable" that Bruce "committed the crime," he commuted his sentence to life imprisonment in the "absence of more positive proof."

Negro fear of lynching by promising some concrete action stood to gain significant political support in the black community. The reform movement, unlike the opposition, did not exploit the lynching issue, seemingly because any "race problem" had the potential danger of being used by "the democracy" to obscure the real issues separating them.

James Stephen Hogg, Attorney General (1886-1890) and later Governor (1890-1894) of Texas, issued a number of strong proclamations against lynchers. Although deep commitment to law and order rather than to racial equality motivated Hogg, his supporters used his record on lynching as an "inducement for hundreds of negroes ... indifferent or inclined to the other side to rally around the banner" under which Hogg fought.71

Men like Thomas Nugent, twice nominee for state governor on the populist ticket, also opposed lynchings. In response to an especially brutal lynching in Paris, Texas, Nugent found that the "fullest peril to society" existed in "men at a distance from the place of execution and who witnessed none of its sickening details ... justify all that was

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71 Letter from Henry Oliver to J. S. Hogg, August 1, 1887. James S. Hogg: Letters Received, May 21, 1836-August 30, 1889. Typescript copy in Southern Methodist University Library (Dallas, Texas) 1, 27a–27x.
done." To place further emphasis on his personal revulsion, Nugent declared, "no crime possible to human depravity can warrant a resort to refined cruelty in the infliction of punishment." Finding a means of prevention, Nugent contended, provided the only remedy for lynch law, yet he offered no concrete proposals. 72

Perhaps, Nugent realized that these lynchings stemmed from the anxieties and fears of insecure people, since both whites and blacks feared the rape and assault of their women; yet, again a common anxiety failed to unite the races since each race held the other responsible, while the blacks remained the chief victims of lynchings. One woman, speaking before the Georgia State Agriculture Society, bluntly stated: "If it needs lynching to protect woman's dearest possession from human beasts, then I say Lynch a thousand times a week."

72 Dallas Morning News, February 17, 1893. To derive from these statements that Nugent refused to censure the lynchers as Robert Saunders does in "Southern Populists and the Negro," Journal of Negro History, LIV (July, 1969) 240-261, is to do Nugent a great injustice and distort the facts. Saunders' further assertion that Nugent's opposition to Hogg's proposed anti-lynching measures meant refusal "to support fully strong anti-lynching measures" is to assume Hogg's proposals were legally tenable which Nugent, a former district judge, deemed not to be the case. Indeed, none of Hogg's rhetoric succeeded in convicting even one lyncher.
if necessary." She went on to explain that many "men quit farming" because their women lacked security.\(^73\)

What is rarely noted is the black man's intense and historically understandable fear of rape and assault of his women by white men. The Texas Blade described the feelings of a black man when a white man insulted a Negro teacher:

Had this young lady been white and the insulted colored, a rope would have been his portion. This is not the first time our women have been approached by these filthy, obscene reptiles, who have the idea that every colored woman is a prostitute and every colored man is a pimp. There is virtue and pure manhood still in the possession of the race and these vile unprincipled creatures should be aware of the fact.\(^74\)

Most whites preferred to believe the Negro an inferior creature; yet, a letter from Wharton, Texas, signed "Philo-African" commented on the ambivalent attitude of whites toward social equality: "He (the Southern white man) will eat with, drink with, sleep with and every chance he gets will mingle his blood with the Negro—but only in a certain manner. He without doubt is the grandest fraud of the nineteenth century . . . ."\(^75\)


\(^74\) Texas Blade (Negro) quoted in the Washington Bee (Negro), June 26, 1887.

\(^75\) New York Age (Negro), March 18, 1888.
While de facto segregation had existed for some time in Texas, proposed state legislation for racial segregation on the railroads brought the issue of social equality into sharp focus. As Negroes grew more articulate, they began to demand equal rights before the law, including first class facilities for first class fare. In 1883, the Colored Men's Convention of Texas voiced these sentiments, and in 1888 a Negro from Texas complained that "ladies who had paid full fares were driven into second class dirty smoking boxes." To reconcile law with custom, the Democratic Party made a campaign pledge in 1890 to segregate the railroads in Texas, and in 1891 the Democratic state legislature passed a law separating the races in railroad cars, making it mandatory that railroads in Texas maintain equal facilities for Negroes.

The Negro community in Texas presented a divided opinion on the "separate car law." The Texas Colored Men's Convention in 1883 did not object to "social separation" provided guarantees of equal accommodation existed. After the

76 Ibid., March 17, 1888.

separate car law passed the legislature, Negro leaders
condemned it and asked for its repeal, although a number
of Negroes demanded only the enforcement of the law's
provisions for equal facilities. 78

Whites, dominated by the concept of "white supremacy,"
offered the black no solution to the problem of "social
equality," and the black's only recourse demanded that he
withdraw into a separate society with the Negro church at
its fulcrum. Although the poor white and black both embraced
Protestanism, the Negro church played a large role in the
Negro's rejection of agrarian reform.

The clergy presented one of the few opportunities for
a rural black to enter the professional class, and, once in
the ministry, he became committed to the preservation of a
separate black church, and assumed a moral obligation to
preserve the status quo. The Negro clergy endorsed the
Republican Party not only because it was the party that had
emancipated the black, but also because it matched the
preacher's conservative and materialistic philosophy as well.
The preacher encouraged his flock to concentrate on the
heavenly rewards to come and not his sufferings on earth. 79

78 Proceedings of the State Convention of Colored Men, 1883, p. 16; Galveston Daily News, September 2, 1891.

While separatism helped develop Negro leadership and separate organizational structures, like burial, aid, and fraternal societies, it alienated the Negro from social intercourse with the poor white, especially, from those involved in the agrarian movement with its demand for change. Melvin Wade, a black populist from Dallas, often objected to the church's dominance in Negro life, which detracted the black's attention from his worldly problems:

I love the church and believe in Jesus Christ, but the darkies own [sic] too much to church. We're allus singin' give me Jesus and the other fellers have all the rest. Well the white man owns the world and the niggers own Jesus. Let us sing give me Jesus and a share of everything else.  

Separatism, moreover, removed the Negro from relevant social and political issues, while bogging him down with sectarian rivalry. In 1889, the Colored Men's Convention reported that in Texas alone 2,000 Negro churches existed. An "old timer" from Texas related how "de Mefdis's an' de Baptis's spise one anothuh . . . so much . . . dat dy hab fis' fights cuttin' scrapes an' shootin' sprees all de time." Another black "old Timer" found the distinguishing characteristics of the various sects represented in his oxen:

80 Dallas Morning News, February 17, 1896, June 20, 1897.  
You see ole Camelite dere, he runs into evuh hole of wattuh he see; ole Prespuhteerrun, he go along evuh day an' you harly knows he's dere; Ole Mefdis', he puffs an' he blows an' goes 'roun' wid his tongue hangin' out, but he ain't pulled a pou^; Ole Baptis', hisself, won't eat wid de rest of 'em.  

The church succeeded in separating the Negro from the white and from his fellow blacks as well. Since racial separatism ruled in Texas, communication with the Negro became a major problem in trying to enlist his support for agrarian reform. The principle means of informing the Negro about agrarian reform, and political change through laws, legislators and political parties designed to meet the needs of the common man, remained limited to newspapers and individual leaders in the black community.

White reform newspapers and Negro newspapers, provided the two main avenues of written communication between the Negro and the white during the period of agrarian reform. Texas saw the publication of numerous Negro and white reform

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82 Ibid., p. 69.

83 The Texas Negro newspapers were as follows: Dallas: Weekly Express, Texas Citizen, Item; Galveston: City Times, Argus, New Idea, Gazette; Austin: Herald, Austin Citizen, Searchlight, Austin Blade; San Antonio: Advance, Tongulet; Houston: Houston Blade, Houston Citizen, National Alliance; Bellville: Enterprise; Caldwell: Teacher; Hearne: Hearne Guide; Fort Worth: Star; Marshall: Monitor, Reporter; Navasota: Bugle, Sequin; Oakland: Helping Hand; Rockdale: Rising Sun; Victoria: Guide; Waco: Paul Quinn Weekly, Southern Herald; Wharton: Elevator; Yoakum: Spectator; city unknown: Baptist Preacher, Christian Star, Lighthouse, Pioneer.
newspapers between 1886 and 1896; both had meager financial support and many survived only briefly. While no extant copies of the Texas Negro newspapers have been discovered, copies of the reform newspapers do remain, as do several out of state Negro newspapers. The reform papers ignored such Negro problems as lynching, separate coaches, and the black's desire for equal protection of the law, but they did from time to time appeal for black vote. The Negro newspapers, not representative of the Negro farming interest, generally ignored the agrarian reform movement, regarding it as representing white men's interests.

Since written communication channels between the white reformers and blacks remained closed, the conversion of the Negro to agrarian reform depended primarily upon oral communication. Separatism prevented the direct free flow of ideas between the races in churches, schools, and even in the stores where social etiquette proscribed how and about what a black and white could converse.84 When the reformers decided they wanted Negro support, they had only one means of spreading the word and that depended solely on individual leaders.

The first leader to preach reform among the Negroes in Texas was R. M. Humphrey, a white farmer and Baptist missionary among the Negroes. Although he seemed like a natural choice, the Texas Alliance had no part in his becoming General Superintendent of the Colored Farmers' Alliance and showed no interest in either him or his Negro followers. Investigation of available documents casts considerable doubt on the astronomical membership figures Humphrey claimed for the Colored Alliance in Texas where actual membership may have totaled less than one hundred. Such a small following would indicate for him a limited role as leader of the blacks.  

In the rural areas of Texas, Negro leadership confined itself to the churches which, unlike those in the white rural community, did not provide leadership for the reform movement because of the innate conservatism of church leaders. The black farmer, much like the poor white farmer prior to agrarian reform when he depended upon "the democracy" to articulate his needs, depended upon leadership from the black middle class. The leader, dwelling in the cities, better educated and more prosperous than the farmer, did not

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85 Fort Worth Gazette, September 10, 1891.
specifically articulate the black farmer's interests. At best, they represented the wider interests of the black race and, at worst, they reflected their own personal political interests.

When the Negro community discussed the possibility of an Afro-American League, W. A. Peete of Tyler, Texas, described the qualities needed by a Negro leader and the difficulties confronting a Negro leader.

It is plain that it is not enough that a leader be a man of commanding intellect and with plenty of earthly common sense; it is not enough that he be a man capable of evolving plans and of executing them; not enough that he be a so-called 'Christian-gentleman' . . . but it is of the utmost importance that he be a man of probity, a man of wide vision, and of directive mind, and a man whose fire and energy will kindle like qualities in the hearts of his followers and enlist the sympathies of the good and great of all races and of all climes . . . I know such a man would not get the support of all negroes--all negroes would not support God, if it could be proved that God is a negro. 86

Above all, wrote a Negro school teacher from Wharton, Texas, Negro leaders needed to "remember that the white American is all powerful in the South either for weal or for woe and you carry yourself accordingly" because if any black made "it difficult or impossible for him to continue

86 New York Freeman (Negro), July 16, 1887.
his peculiarly paternal methods in politics... you will more than likely be asked to change base." 

While almost all of these qualities for Negro leadership can be found in the two Negro men chosen by white reformers in Texas to carry the word of reform to the Negro people, the black populist leaders differed little from black Republican leaders either in background or in political philosophy. Black populist leaders in Texas, John B. Rayner, mulatto teacher from Calvert, Texas, and Melvin Wade, Negro carpenter from Dallas, Texas, both city dwellers and ex-Republican leaders failed to furnish leadership for the black farming community noticeably different than that provided by the black Republican leaders. Rather than offer the blacks a choice between agrarian reform and conservative Republicanism, Wade and Rayner concentrated on opposition to the Cuney controlled Republican Party of Texas. This shallow approach operated with a decided disadvantage, since the Republican Party already had within its ranks strong and well organized forces opposed to Cuney control. Consequently, the black populist leaders, actually envoys from the white populists, failed to engender widespread support in the Negro community.

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87 New York Age (Negro), August 18, 1888.
Throughout the agrarian reform period despite similarities in language, religion, fears and anxieties, whites and blacks continued to be separated by mutual distrust and cultural heritage, failing to cooperate in seeking solutions that would improve their means of livelihood as well as remove discriminatory economic legislation. Separatism prevented free communication between the races and encouraged Negro leaders to seek independent solutions to their problems while white farmers dedicated to white supremacy also failed to recognize and accept many areas they had in common with the Negro. The black farmer, without effective agrarian leadership, relied on direction from conservative middle class Negroes opposed to radical agrarian reform. Articulate Negroes interpreted reform as an inner-directed experience entirely different from the white reformers' outer-directed plans for reform. Since the communication channels between the white and black remained effectively blocked, social or political understanding between them failed to materialize, and effective agrarian reform movements developed in Texas only among the whites.
CHAPTER III

TWO ALLIANCES: 1886-1891

Providing an outlet for agrarian discontent, the Grange, or Patrons of Husbandry, organized in Bell County, Texas during 1873, found such widespread support among farmers that 45,000 white Texas men and women had become Grangers by 1877. 1 Since the idea for such an organization had originated in the north, the Grange opened membership to both races, but in Texas the organization developed for whites only. 2 The Texas Grange solicited Negro cooperation only when it actively sought to establish a third party. Although he felt he used "the strictest methods of economy . . . the best and soundest practical judgement," 3 the farmer faced a declining income while his production increased.

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2 Saloutos, Farmer Movements in the South, p. 34. The author speaks of Negro Granges called Councils of Laborers, but he cited no such groups in Texas.

Essentially, the Grange gave the white farmer a means of venting his frustration with this situation.

Through the Grange, farmers discovered that all around the country others shared their problems, and the Texas farmer like those in other areas of the country began to develop a class consciousness. This mutual interest between men recently arrayed on opposite sides of the battlefield represented a remarkable achievement. Although the Granger recognized his class identity as a producer of wealth, the Grange philosophy denied the existence of a class struggle.

W. W. Lang, college educated farmer and Worthy Master of the Texas Grange, explained, "You are to wage war upon no industry . . . the great industrial interests of the country are mutually dependent upon each other, and you cannot destroy one without injury to all."  

The question was not one of class against class; but rather, how all class interests could be equitably represented.

Lang directed farmers, in seeking a solution to their problems, must "look below the surface" and "see that legislative mismanagement, is the true cause of our present financial ruin, and the distress widespread over the land."  

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.
Since the Grange's non partisan policy prohibited locals from campaigning for specific candidates or parties, the leadership encouraged farmers to become knowledgeable voters. Lang declared that farmers needed to develop a political consciousness:

In your deliberations you should not be confined to the mere considerations of what mode of cultivation will produce the maximum yields . . . but you are required to broaden your views so as to discuss what laws and customs of society affect your success, and with a clear understanding of your rights and interests, endeavor to redress your wrongs and remedy your injuries.  

Convinced their problems originated from an unfavorable political bias, Grangers tried to change the laws by petitioning the legislature and influencing its members. Essentially they wanted regulation of railroads, trusts, and interest rates; abolition of the national banks; repeal of the state tax on agricultural produce; and a decrease in state officials salaries and expenditures.  

Demonstrating its political strength in the Texas constitutional convention of 1876, whose ninety delegates contained forty Grangers, the farmer's representatives managed to write into the

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6 Ibid.

constitution articles regulating railroads and interest rates. 8

Above all else, farmers began to center their hopes for relief on fiscal reform, thus many Grangers naturally turned to the Greenbackers, a third party dedicated to changing national monetary policy. From the time the Texas Greenbackers first convened in 1878 until their decline in the mid eighties, they steadfastly demanded an inflated and flexible currency, which the debt ridden Grangers deemed essential for their economic recovery.

The debtor-farmer attributed much of the decline in farm prices after the Civil War to the federal government's policies of decreasing Greenbacks and restricting the coinage of silver. Debtor-farmers maintained that cheap money brought high prices and that gold, in limited and expensive supply, kept prices down. Although in 1878 the national congress responded by allowing a limited coinage of silver, the Greenbackers remained unsatisfied deeming the allowance insufficient. 9


The Greenbackers also found totally inadequate for debtor-farmers the federal government's reliance upon bank notes to meet the monetary needs caused by the fluctuations of inflation and deflation. Since government bonds secured bank notes, their supply depended directly on the number of bonds held by the national banks. Thus the more bonds a bank held, the greater the supply of bank notes with the opposite holding true as well. Seeking more profitable speculative investments during boom times, the private investor sold his government bonds, thereby depressing their price. Attracted by the low prices banks bought the bonds, hence, expanding the money supply at a time least advantageous to the farmer. During deflation, the economic condition most prevalent in the years under survey, the private investor retained or invested in government bonds, thereby contracting the money supply just when the market needed inflationary impetus.  

Only when Grangers and other white farmers attempted to implement their reforms through a political party, did they show any interest in the Negro, establishing a precedent in political relationship between the Negro and the white agrarian reformer later followed by the populists. While

\[10\] Ibid.
the Greenback Party favored neither Negroes or Republicans, it sometimes openly solicited their votes. In 1880, for example, the Greenbackers inserted a plank important to the Negroes in their platform, which denounced "attempted disfranchisement of citizens as a crime," but their 1882 statement of policy declared that the Republican Party "is no more worthy of support now than when driven from power by the righteous wrath of indignant people."11 This statement failed to deter the state Republican Party Convention with its Negro majority from endorsing, several months later, the principles and platform of the state Greenback Party.

Common principle was not an issue, as it had not been in 1878, when the Texas Republican Executive Committee endorsed the Greenbacker's state ticket,12 recognizing their political impotence in state politics and the necessity of cooperating with either a third party or a faction of the dominant party. By that year, of the 482 Greenback Clubs, 70 were Negro, and half of the Negro votes cast in 1878 went to Greenback

11 Winkler, Platforms of Political Parties, pp. 200, 208.

12 The majority of the Republican State Executive Committee favored backing the Greenbackers; a minority of that committee disagreed, held their own convention and ran their own state ticket. See Winkler, Platforms of Political Parties, p. 190.
candidates. The greatest Negro support for Greenback candidates came from the rank and file Negro Republican, who although unfamiliar with Grange doctrine, voted for the Greenbackers because the Republican leaders directed him to do so. Republican-Greenback cooperation came to an end when, with the advent of some prosperity in the early 1880's and the adoption by the Democratic Party of some of the Greenback planks, third party adherents returned to either the Democratic or Republican Parties.

Greenback-Republican efforts affected future relations between white agrarian reformers and Negroes in Texas. Intimately involved in the Greenback-Republican coalition was the Texas mulatto, Norris Wright Cuney, who controlled the majority of the Negro votes as leader of the Republican Party of Texas from 1883-1896. The unsuccessful Greenback-

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Republican efforts in the seventies and eighties undoubtedly influenced Cuney's later decision to deny Republican support for the People's Party of Texas in 1892 and 1894, thereby significantly decreasing the Populists's chances of capturing the vital Negro vote.

By the time the Grange reached its peak in the mid 1870's, a group of farmers had organized an Alliance in Lampasas County, Texas, designed to protect farmers from cattle thieves and land sharks. This group, destined to supplant the Grange as the leading proponent of agrarian reform, originally failed because of internal political differences, but farmers in Parker County, Texas, established another Alliance in 1879. Similar to the Grange prior to its entrance into politics via the Greenback Party, the Alliance concerned itself chiefly with procedure, which was secret and ritualistic. With "all party political features . . . struck out from the original Lampasas declaration of principles," its 1880 state granted charter defined as its main purpose the encouragement of agriculture.


17 William L. Garvin and S. O. Daws, History of the National Farmers' Alliance and Co-operative Union of America (Jacksboro, 1887), p. 15.
Members of these alliances came "largely from the disorganized ranks of the Grange" \(^{18}\) which, after the disappearance of the Greenbackers declined rapidly, \(^{19}\) feebly continued to function but did not totally disappear. The state Grange continued to publish a newspaper, the Texas Farmer, until the turn of the century, which offered the farmer more conservative solutions for his problems than did the Alliance. William L. Garvin and S. O. Daws, official historians and members of the Alliance, summed up the mixed blessings of the Grange heritage:

The good accomplished by the Grange movement was of vast importance to the laboring people of this country not only in modifying existing legislation, but, what was of more moment to them, in educating public sentiment in favor of co-operative protective associations. The Grange was thus an important factor in paving the way for the greater movement, the Farmers' Alliance. But the moral effect of the decline of the Grange was one of the greatest obstacles that the Alliance had to meet and overcome in its early history. \(^{20}\)

After the demise of the Greenback Party between 1885 and 1886, the Texas Alliance experienced a remarkable spurt of

\(^{18}\) Hunt, *Farmer Movements in the Southwest*, p. 27.

\(^{19}\) Ralph Smith, "Grange Movement in Texas, 1873-1900," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, XLII (April, 1939), 306.

growth, adding in that year alone 2,200 local sub-alliances, bringing the total number within the state to 2,750. \(^{21}\)

The Alliance drew its members not only from ex-Grangers but from new settlers as well, priding itself on being the first in the south to "bury the bloody shirt." Chief among its original purposes was to "suppress personal, local, sectional and national prejudices." \(^{22}\) Ben Terrell, an Alliance lecturer, added that the organization hoped to eradicate prejudices against other industrial classes and political parties, \(^{23}\) but apparently the Alliance gave no consideration to the suppression of racial prejudice.

When the Texas State Alliance met at the courthouse in Weatherford, Texas, on February 7, 1882, the delegates decided to insert "white" in that section of their constitution delineating membership qualification. Alliancemen denied membership to Negroes because they considered them undesirable social companions for their wives and daughters:

As the Farmers' Alliance was designed to be a social institution where we meet with our wives and daughters for the purpose of discussing and bringing about a


better understanding of those social principles which underlie the foundations of society and are the strength of all our institutions, and to encourage the practice of those virtues which purify the hearts and lives of men in their social capacity, hence the Farmers' Alliance . . . inserted an amendment in the Constitution restricting its applications for membership to white persons only. 

Since 1882 was an election year, by excluding Negroes from membership the Alliance emphasized its non-political character. During its early days, Negro applications for membership must have been few, since the Alliance had organized only in Parker, Wise, Jack, Palo Pinto, and Hood counties where few Negroes resided. In 1880, Parker County had 15,250 whites and 615 Negroes while by 1890 whites had increased to 21,009 and Negroes to 671. Wise County in 1880 contained 16,435 whites and 165 Negroes, while by 1890 the whites numbers had grown to 23,971 whereas the Negro inhabitants had decreased to 161. 

Neither the Negro's plight nor his vote was of much interest to farmers in these counties.

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24 Garvin and Daws, History of the National Farmers' Alliance, p. 35; see also Garvin, History of the Grand State Farmers' Alliance of Texas, p. 46.

The Grand State Alliance Convention held in Cleburne, Texas, on August 3, 1886, marked a "turning point in the development of the Alliance in Texas." Some of the delegates, representing the eighty four counties, were attending their first Alliance convention. The atmosphere was tense. Although the Alliance constitution prohibited political discussion or action in state and local meetings, many former Grangers, tired of petitions, sought from the Alliance stronger political action. Newspapers and politicians fanned the flames in that election year by broadcasting that the fast-growing Alliance was about to actually enter politics.

The Alliance convention demanded legislation "as shall secure to our people freedom from the onerous and shameful abuses that the industrial classes are now suffering at the hands of arrogant capitalists and powerful corporations." Instead of petitions, the Alliance demanded that land be held only in limited quantities, and in addition called for the abolition of foreign land holdings, fence removal from

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26 Hunt, Farmer Movements in the Southwest, p. 31.
27 Dunning, Farmers' Alliance History, p. 40.
29 Dunning, Farmers' Alliance History, p. 41.
public land, regulation and higher taxation of the railroads, increased money supply, and abolition of convict lease labor.  

Upon presentation of these demands to the convention "the storm broke, and general heated discussion was the result." The meeting divided into two factions, since the dissenting group regarded the demands as representing decisive political action. After the convention president resigned, Dr. Charles W. Macune, executive committee chairman, assumed responsibility for unifying the two factions. He succeeded by persuading the non-partisan faction to delay their intended withdrawal from the Alliance until the meeting scheduled for January 18, 1887 in Waco, Texas.

Apparently many Alliancemen were intent upon direct political action. At about the same time as the Cleburne meeting, the Alliance supporters in Comanche County, Texas, convened for the sole purpose of nominating and backing candidates for county offices. These delegates endorsed resolutions remarkably similar to the demands made by the Alliance at Cleburne. Their nominees, all Alliance leaders,

30 Winkler, Platforms of Political Parties, pp. 235-236.
31 Dunning, Farmers' Alliance History, p. 45.
32 Ibid.
running under the label of the Human Party, accepted the nominations "only after the leading Democratic office holders and politicians had refused to support the farmers." The Democratic Party in turn accused the farmers of representing a secret society and being in collusion with the Republican Party. Thomas Gaines, president of the Comanche Alliance answered the charges in dialect:

Will you allou a clod hopper space in your paper to correct sum eronious mistakes and to defend the horney handed sons of the soil. We hear it said that the citizens ticket or movement is a secret organization this is a mistake, others says it is gotten up by a few republicans that is seeking office here in the county, I want to say to all such wait and see the result, see how many republicans ride into office on the farmer.

Negro Republicans certainly could have had little political influence in Comanche county where they declined in number from 79 in 1880 to 8 in 1890, since in 1886 the whites had threatened to kill any black who did not leave the county.

Gaines further explained why the white farmer resorted to running his own ticket:

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33 Billy Bob Lightfoot, "The Human Party: Populism in Comanche County," West Texas Historical Association Yearbook, XXXI (October, 1950), 34.


We have read it in sum of our leading papers giving advice to us to right our wrongs at the ballot box we have undertaken it now we have been hiss at and all sorts of slang been hurled at us if I am not mistkan the chief gave that advice and I now see it pealing forth its bolts at the movement we want to get men in office that will work for the interest of the laborer do away with land thieves we have thousands of acres of our public domain goble up we find there is no justice in the lau let a poor man vilate the lau he gets the full extent of it. a man with money can plunder and rob biolate the lau and he is all right. I must cut this short by saying ... stand up for your rights go to the ballot box and there make your fight. 36

While Gaines confessed he had always voted the Democratic ticket, he concluded that it was "the same old story."

The farmer's party made a clean sweep of Comanche County offices in 1886. By that date the Alliance had within its folds active participants in politics; yet, both factions of the white Alliance, partisan and non-partisan, repudiated Negro membership and cooperation.

Since the white Alliance in Texas clearly had rejected the Negro, by 1886 the establishment in that year of a Colored Farmers' Alliance in Texas still presents something of a mystery. Theodore Saloutos, an historian of farmer movements in the South, claims that the northern Alliance authorized the Colored Alliance, much to the chagrin of the

southern Alliance, under "their liberal charter-issuing policies" which allowed for Negro members. Further Saloutos contends that Milton George, editor of the *Western Rural*, official organ of the northern Alliance, promoted the action. Still unresolved in how the colored Alliance actually originated in Texas. At the time of the Cleburne meeting C. W. Macune mentioned that he received the *Western Rural* regularly and that "preserved the published rulings of the national secretary as to qualifications for membership, and the rules prevailing in the National Alliance governing charters, etc." Perhaps Macune acted upon a suggestion by George. Born and raised in the North, Macune demonstrated as editor of the *National Economist*, official organ of the Southern Alliance, some interest in the Colored organization.

Unfortunately, not much is known of R. M. Humphrey, the white former Baptist missionary who organized the Colored Alliance in Texas. Documentation on his career exists only for his years with the reform movement, 1886-1892; biographical information before and after that period can be gleaned only from his speeches, writings, and statements to the press,

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37 Saloutos, *Farmer Movements in the South*, pp. 69, 79.
38 Dunning, *Farmers' Alliance History*, p. 107.
which because of his penchant toward exaggeration cause skepticism. His writings reveal a man of some education, and he claimed to have been a colonel in the Confederacy, using on one occasion the title of General. About his past, he told a senate committee that "I am a white man, a southern man, and have not been very friendly always toward the colored people." He related that he began farming in 1865, growing cotton and corn with Negro hired hands. He expected the Colored Alliance "to reform and regenerate a race which, from long endurance of oppression and chattel slavery, had become exceedingly besotted and ignorant."39

Sixteen obscure Negroes met with Humphrey on December 11 and December 29, 1886, to write a series of principles and compose a state charter. 40 From the beginning, Humphrey envisioned the Colored Alliance as an organization devoted to reforming the Negro rather than the laws of the country. The Colored Alliance's declaration of principles clearly showed a non-partisan orientation similar to that which originally prevailed in the white Alliance. With the exception


of one article the Colored Alliance principles duplicated those of the white Alliance, which were to promote agriculture, to pursue non-partisan political education, to suppress local prejudices, and promote harmony. The last article in the declaration, however, remained unique to the Colored Alliance. It declared as its purpose:

To aid its members to become more skillful and efficient workers, promote their general intelligence, elevate their character, protect their individual rights; the raising of funds for the benefit of sick or disabled members of their distressed families; the forming of a closer union among all colored people who may be eligible to membership in this association.

This article reflected interests alien to the white Alliance program, but prevalent in the Negro community: self help, racial solidarity, elevation of the race, and protection of civil rights.

This Negro tendency toward inner-directed reform again emerged in the Colored Farmers' Alliance state charter granted on February 28, 1887. The second article of the charter declared the purpose of the organization:

The object of this corporation is to elevate the colored people of this state by teaching them: To love their country and their home, To care more for their helpless and sick and destitute, To labor more earnestly for the education of themselves and their

41 Ibid.
children especially in agricultural pursuits. To become better farmers and laborers and less wasteful in their methods of living, To be more obedient to the civil law and withdraw their attention from political partisanship, To become better citizens, truer husbands and wives.

Although the Colored Alliance organized on lines parallel to the white Alliance, and although Humphrey commissioned many white organizers, Negroes constituted almost the entire membership. The ritual was different from that of the whites, their charter did not come from the Texas white Alliance, and their purposes reflected interests unique to the Negro community.

Other Negro farmers organizations existed in Texas with purposes similar to those of the Colored Alliance. In 1882, the state granted a charter to the Colored Farmers' Association of Texas of Mt. Vernon, Texas, while the Colored State Alliance of Calvert, Texas, received a charter from the state on June 4, 1887. The purpose of the latter group was that of

42 Texas, Office of the Secretary of State, Charter #3208, February 28, 1887. The Texas charter became the basis for a national charter granted on March 14, 1888. See Humphrey, "History of the National Colored Farmers' Alliance," p. 291.

43 National Economist, September 14, 1889.

44 Texas, Office of the Secretary of State, Charter #1845, December 15, 1882.
Aiding and assisting its members and their families in cases of sickness destitution and distress, to promote and improve by its teachings and charities the moral and social condition of its members and suppress hatred and prejudice to encourage kindness, harmony and brotherly love among its members, to foster and stimulate labor and industry upon the farm and to advance the happiness of colored farmers by inculcating habits of sobriety, frugality and industry and to elevate and enhance the agricultural pursuits of colored farmers.

On May 21, 1887, the state provided the Colored Farmers Home Improvement Lodge of Tyler, in Smith County, with a charter for the "mutual protection and improvement industrially and socially" of the Negro farmer. All these charters, signed by relatively obscure individuals, expressed ideas current in the Negro community.

Because it enjoyed some success, more is known of the Colored Farmers' Improvement Society organized in 1889 by Robert Lloyd Smith, a Negro teacher in Colorado County. In the small town of Oakland, Texas, with a population of 200 to 300 inhabitants, Smith found in the "Freedman's Quarter" Negroes residing in buildings, which he described as "dilapidated dwellings with broken window panes, stuffed

45 Texas, Office of the Secretary of State, Charter #3319, June 4, 1887.

46 Texas, Office of the Secretary of State, Charter #3363, July 2, 1887.
with pillows and rags, unkempt yards." Trying to encourage the Negroes to improve their homes, Smith soon realized that on credit purchases the Negro paid 50% to 500% above cost, which kept most of the Negroes in debt and left few with money to spend on improving their homes. 48

With an initial membership of fourteen, the Farmers' Improvement Society proposed to abolish the Negro's dependence upon credit, to create interest in improved farming methods, to encourage cooperative purchasing of supplies, and to aid others in sickness and death. To discourage its members from using credit, the society established twelve degrees, the first of which a member earned when he went three months without opening a charge account. The fifth degree indicated that the member had gone twelve months without opening such an account and that he had a $25 surplus. A member could continue in such a manner until he reached the twelfth degree. 49

By 1898, there were 1,800 members of the Farmers' Improvement Society in thirty six Texas towns. 50 In 1900,

48 Robert Lloyd Smith, "Village Improvement Among the Negroes," Outlook, LXIV (March 31, 1900), 734.
50 "Efforts of American Negroes for their Own Social Betterment," Atlanta University Publications, I, 35.
the average member had $270 worth of taxable property. 51

Smith naturally endorsed Booker T. Washington's philosophy which strongly advocated self help:

The Negro problem as far as the Negro himself is concerned is to teach him how to live; how to take hold of things that are about him and use them, so that in that which makes for better citizenship tomorrow will find him more advanced than today. It is that he may take the soil and sunshine, the rain and the snow, fair weather and foul, the great institutions upon which civilization rests—the family, the church, and the science of government—and turn them to his own account, beginning with what ever he finds at hand—the axe, the hoe, the plow, the tool of the mechanic, the pot, the scrubbing brush, as well as the pen and the sword and work out for himself a place in the best thought and life of the republic. 52

Not only did Smith win the approval of the Negro community, but a district which had a majority of whites elected him to serve two terms in the state legislature from 1894-1898. While in the legislature, he helped defeat a bill that would have required segregation in railroad waiting rooms, and he also helped secure an anti-lynching law. 53 Smith

53 "The College Bred Negro, Report of a Social Study made under the direction of Atlanta University together with the proceedings of the Fifth Conference for the Study of the Negro Problems, May 29-30, 1900," Atlanta University Publications, II, 71.
attributed his success to his favorable reception by the whites and his willingness to accommodate them. He said:

... it might as well be understood once and for all that any solution of the race question that leaves out the Southern white man and his attitude and relation to that solution is a "Comedy of Error," [sic] perhaps I might more truthfully say a "Tragedy of Errors" [sic] I can speak only for Texas and the white people of Texas.54

In marked contrast with the white Alliance, which eventually sought outer-directed political reforms, Negro farmers' societies with remarkable consistency eschewed politics and supported inner-directed reforms as a means of improving their race. The Colored Alliance, one of many such organizations in the Negro community, stood apart perhaps because of its white leadership.

When the white State Farmers' Alliance met in Waco, on January 18, 1887, the delegates endorsed the Cleburne demands despite the ill feelings between factions which obstructed orderly proceedings. C. W. Macune adroitly avoided a splintering of the Texas Alliance by diverting the delegate's attention to detailed business proceedings and to a proposed consolidation with the Farmers' Union of Louisiana.55

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55 Dunning, Farmers' Alliance History, pp. 48-63.
The newly formed National Farmers' Alliance and Co-operative Union, which included Texas and Louisiana and eventually all the southern states, met on October 12, 1887, in Shreveport, Louisiana, where it adopted the Texas state alliance constitution, which prohibited Negro membership. In addition to demands similar to the Cleburne resolutions, the convention also called for the more radical plan of government purchase of "telephone and telegraph lines."  

Although the Texas Farmers' Alliance, meeting in Dallas on August 20, 1888, did not demand government ownership of the means of communication and transportation, they did call for a railroad commission that would insure equitable freight charges. Farmers charged that railroads, banks, and corporations benefited from the profits of their increased labor, while those "who are engaged in productive industries, are being driven year by year, and day by day, nearer a condition of serfdom and tenantry."  

By establishing business exchanges where a farmer could with a minimum investment buy his supplies at low cost, Alliancemen hoped to retain some of their profits. Humphrey,

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56 Ibid.
general superintendent of the Colored Alliance, met with representatives from various state Colored Alliances on March 14, 1888, to further the development of cooperatives. On July 20, 1888, J. J. Shuffer, president of both the Texas Colored Alliance and the National Colored Alliance, authorized Humphrey to establish exchanges in "several states." The Colored Alliance taxed each male member in the area of the exchange $2.00 to establish a capital fund, which could be "used to buy a stock of bacon, or to pay off a mortgage, and being at once replaced, is ready the next week for some similar investment." The assertion by Saloutos that the Colored Alliance of Texas had assets of $136,000 "beyond and above all liabilities" seems absurd when the white Alliance never acquired more than $85,000.

As in the white Alliance, not all the exchanges enjoyed success, and when the Colored Alliance Exchange in Florida closed with a debt of $160, it engendered some bitter and revealing comments concerning white leadership of black organizations. The Colored Farmers' Alliance in Florida

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58 Humphrey, "Colored Farmers' Alliance," p. 290.
59 Saloutos, Farmer Movements in the South, pp. 93-95.
began when "an agent came there from Texas for the purpose of organizing Branch organizations and ... also to establish an exchange store." E. Fortune, Jr., brother of the editor of the New York Age, receiving his information on the Florida Colored Alliance from "one of the victims of this now very little appreciated organization" wrote:

The principal thing I wish to call attention to in this article is the fact that the colored farmers of this section allow themselves to be made the horse upon which white men ride into wealth and virtually control them. It is high time in our onward march to put less confidence in the honeyed words of white men, who to get into the good graces of the colored people will attend their meetings and call them "Sister So and So and Brother So and So." Trust them not . . . .

Fortune concluded his article with the hope that perhaps the time will come when we will learn to put our trust in one another more and less in those of another race who while professing to be our friends are only so to advance their own selfish ends and feather their own nests.

Whites too opposed the operation of Colored Alliance exchanges. The Washington Bee reported that in Duran, Mississippi, planters accused the Colored Alliance store of selling guns to Negroes. Furthermore, whites warned the publishers of the Advocate, voice of the Mississippi Colored Alliance in Valden, not to send the paper through the mail.

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60 New York Age (Negro), November 2, 1889.
61 Washington Bee (Negro), September 21, 1889.
Unfortunately, little evidence remains of the Colored Alliance activities in Texas, except those of its leader, R. M. Humphrey, thus, making its history essentially the tracing of Humphrey's activities and thoughts. In 1888, Humphrey's actions in various state conventions indicated a movement away from a non-political stance. At the Convention of Farmers, Laborers, and Stock Raisers held on May 15, in Waco, Texas, Humphrey "tendered the thanks of the Colored Alliance for assistance from the white brethren," and "a mutual exchange of courtesies" took place. The Knights of Labor controlled this convention even though most of the 300 delegates from some seventy counties were Alliancemen. Their militant convention platform called for abolition of national banks and alien ownership of land; direct vote for the President, Vice-President, and Senators; a national usury law; free balloting with a fair count; as well as the radical concept of government ownership of the means of transportation and communication.

On July 5, Humphrey attended the Union Labor Convention in Fort Worth, and the convention made him a presidential candidate.

63 Winkler, Platforms of Political Parties, p. 257.
elector. The convention adopted the platform of the Non-
partisan convention, that had met in the same city just a
few days previously, which varied little from the platform
adopted by the Convention of Farmers, Laborers, and Stock
Raisers, except that it called for a graduated income tax,
unlimited coinage of silver, better public schools, rotation
of public offices, and compulsory arbitration laws. The
platform declared independence from "all political parties,
rings, bosses and cliques," and "charged the two old parties
with being guilty of squandering our public domain, which
was the natural and inalienable birthright of the people."64
Humphrey, as a presidential elector for the Union Labor
Party, clearly aligned himself at that time with those
Alliancemen advocating partisanship.

Abruptly, the next year Humphrey urged non-partisanship
in a speech before the Colored Farmers' Alliance:

I can clearly see that many of you to-day think I
ought to suggest some political party through whose
means the country might be regenerated, and with
whom you ought to associate and vote. Any such effort
on my part would be an effort to place the Alliance in
a political harness which thing would be repugnant to
me as well as to every true man.

64 Winkler, Platforms of Political Parties, pp. 256-257,
260-263; Ralph Smith, "Farmers Alliance in Texas, 1875-1900,"
Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XLVIII (January, 1945), 361.
65 National Economist, December 14, 1889.
No longer did Humphrey look at the major parties or politics with disdain. He reminded the Negro farmers that the "Alliance has for its principle the cleansing and regenerating of all of the political parties of this country", and as citizens they should vote according to their convictions.

Unlike the white Alliance, Humphrey maintained that the Colored Alliance should avoid discussion of political issues. He explained:

In politics the Alliance does not claim neutrality; it only claims that since we have men of all political parties in our membership we ought therefore to exclude parties and issues from our meetings, so that our members should be asked no questions as to whether they belong to the Union Labor, the Republican or the Democratic Party.

Although the annual state alliance meeting on August 20, 1889, confined itself to non-partisan issues such as the "crippled condition" of the exchange and the "tendency of boys to leave the farm," the Alliancemen supported "Hogg almost to a man." James Stephen Hogg, state Attorney General and "progressive Democrat", won Alliancemen's allegiance because he favored a railroad commission and had a record of doing battle with corporate interests; however, Evan Jones,

66 Ibid.
67 Dallas Morning News, August 22, 1889.
Alliance president, told a reporter that the Alliance would endorse neither a party nor a candidate. As at previous state white Alliance meetings, the convention made no mention of either the Colored Alliance or Humphrey.

Meeting in Waco at the same time as the white Alliance met in Dallas, the Colored Mens Convention of Texas provides a dramatic comparison of the interests of the white reformers and the Negro community. The blacks voiced concern with the denial in some Texas counties of the Negro's right to vote and serve on juries, discrimination on railroads, and lynchings. The white reformers shared a common interest with the Negroes on none of these issues, and the Colored Convention demonstrated no interest in agrarian reform. Neither group recognized in any manner the activities of the other.

Unlike the Texas Alliance, the hugh conglomerate meeting of the Knights of Labor, and the northern and southern Alliances held at St. Louis in December, 1889, did extend some recognition to the Colored Alliance. The National Alliance, weekly newspaper of the Negro organization, reported

68 Ibid., August 20, 1889; August 21, 1889. The state Grange meeting in McGregor, Texas, on August 15 emphasized its non-political persuasion.

69 Ibid., August 23, 1889.
as "notable among the doings of the week . . . the recognition and attention paid by the white organization to the Colored Farmers' National Alliance." Each of the white groups sent a delegation to the Colored Alliance, and Humphrey encouraged the Negro Alliancemen to cooperate with the white Alliancemen:

Our relations with the Farmers National Alliance (white) should have your special attention. A year ago that group bestowed an honorable recognition upon you and arranged a plan of inter-race co-operation. They have since that date united with the National Wheel . . . . It is hoped that in this your day of success your wisdom and discretion will incline you to the heartiest cooperation and good will toward your white brethren.  

While Humphrey preached cooperation, Macune revealed in St. Louis, that in 1887 the southern Alliance had rejected a plan for merger with the northern Alliance because among other things that group allowed Negro members.  

Basically the demands endorsed by the St. Louis convention consisted of the Cleburne demands with the addition of the radical demand for government ownership of the means of communication, and, of major political significance for

70 National Alliance (Negro), quoted in National Economist, December 28, 1889.

71 National Economist, December 14, 1889.

Texas, the approval of the sub-treasury plan. With this plan, the farmer would possess the flexibility to sell his crop at the most advantageous price, and hence, escape from the ruinous crédit system in which he was enmeshed. In every county that had an annual sale of farm produce equal to half a million dollars, the plan called for the establishment of a sub-treasury combined with a warehouse for crop storage. At a nominal interest charge of 1% plus minimal handling, any farmer could for up to one year store his crop. In return, the sub-treasury could issue the farmer a certificate of deposit equal in value to 80% of the value of the stored produce.\footnote{Hunt, Farmer Movements in the Southwest, pp. 36-40; The Subtreasury System (Washington, 1891), p. 12.}

Hogg, the Democratic candidate for governor of Texas in 1890, refused to endorse the sub-treasury plan, but the greater part of the Democratic platform stressed measures attractive to the Alliance: opposition to a protective tariff, abolition of the national banks, break up of trusts, unlimited silver coinage, six month term for public schools, and a railroad commission. The plank calling for a railroad commission excited most interest among the Alliancemen. The Dallas County Alliance hastily called a Farmers' Convention
for April 12, 1890, fearful that a State Road Convention
might obstruct the establishment of a railroad commission.
Although the threat failed to materialize, farmers, both
Grangers and Alliancemen, demonstrated united support for
a commission. 74

Just a week after the Democratic Convention nominated
a candidate and adopted a platform so favorable to Alliance
demands, the State Farmers' Alliance convened in Dallas and
expressed general approval of the action taken by "the
democracy." Evan Jones commented that the Democratic
platform "pleased the people" since it contained "all the
demands heretofore made by the Farmers' Alliance of Texas viz.
regulation of railroads, unlimited coinage of silver, destruction
of land syndicates and alien ownership and breaking up of trusts, monopolies, etc." 75 Jones maintained the sub-
treasury would be unnecessary if these other inequities
disappeared. The Alliance president continued to assure the
membership that the Alliance had no more intention of entering
politics than the "masonic, odd fellows or any other order." 76

75 Dallas Morning News, August 19, 1890.
76 Ibid., August 20, 1890.
Some of the delegates expressed dissatisfaction with the Democratic Party, however. W. R. Lamb, delegate from Montague County, Chairman of the Independent Party Executive Committee of the Fifth District, and president of the Texas Federation of Labor, acknowledged that the Democratic Party "gave us Hogg and a commission but sidetracked the farmers on everything else." He accused the Democratic Party of "a piece of trickery" when they opposed the national banks without offering a substitute such as the sub-treasury plan; however, Hogg's failure to endorse the sub-treasury plan, Lamb declared, did not prevent his support of Hogg, since the Governor had no responsibilities in national fiscal issues.  

Endorsement of the sub-treasury plan became the central issue at the state Alliance Convention. The opposition described it as paternalistic, monopolistic, and unconstitutional, representative of influence "outside of and foreign to Texas," but by a vote of seventy three to twenty three with sixteen counties abstaining, the delegates overwhelmingly approved the sub-treasury plan. Finally, to quiet

77 Ibid., August 19, 1890.
78 Ibid., August 22, 1890. Since the Alliance proceedings were secret, reporters discovered only two of the counties abstaining, Travis and Greer.
the opposition, the chairman appointed a committee to work out some kind of compromise. The committee reached the agreement that the individual members were "free to take any position they may prefer" on the sub-treasury plan. 79

Although the Texas Alliance continued to ignore the Colored Alliance, Humphrey, hoping it might have some influence with a Republican Congress, testified in the spring of 1890 before a Senate committee on behalf of the sub-treasury plan. On April 29, 1890, prior to his testimony, Humphrey met with the trustees of the Colored Alliance in Birmingham, Alabama. They asked Humphrey to tell the senators they needed the sub-treasury or some "kindred measure" because

the proposition to lend money of lands can be of little avail to us. We have no lands to mortgage. The proposition to increase the amount of currency can be of little avail to us, for we have nothing to buy money with. Our muscle is our stock in trade and what we must beg the Government to do is to recognize that muscle, recognize the principle that labor is the basis of all wealth and if the Government will aid us to care for the product of our labor that will be all we demand. 80

Later in the spring of 1890 the National Alliance demanded election of legislators "who will work for the sub-treasury.

79 Ibid., August 24, 1890.
80 National Economist, June 7, 1890.
who will see to it that the people have money at one percent interest, just as the bankers have it." The Colored Alliance newspaper complained that the farmers "create 7/8 of the wealth and pay directly and indirectly 7/8 of the taxes and that they can't borrow one dollar from the government while the national bankers can borrow $350,000,000 to loan to the people at from 8-20%." \(^{81}\)

With its advocacy of the sub-treasury plan and endorsement of those legislators who supported it, the National Alliance began to reflect a decided interest in politics.

In the non-election year of 1891, the Richmond Planet analysed the Colored Alliance's non-partisanship to be a wise only as a temporary measure:

> To our mind the Colored Farmers' Alliance cannot pursue another course than that foreshadowed by its acknowledged leaders, eschew politics until the time comes for them to throw their weight with that side which will accord them their rights--and place itself in line with those principles which the farmers love so well.\(^{82}\)

The National Alliance tried to persuade the Negro farmer to abandon his traditional loyalty to the Republican Party. "Vote for principle not for parties. It can make no difference with

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\(^{81}\) National Alliance (Negro), quoted in National Economist, June 21, 1890.

\(^{82}\) Richmond Planet (Negro), August 15, 1891. See Meier, Negro Thought in America for a discussion of Negro newspaper's editorial policy with regard to partisanship on election and non-election years.
us whether a man is a Democrat, a Republican or any other partisan, so long as our wives are barefoot, our children naked, and our homes mere hovels."\(^8_3\) The Colored Alliance newspaper told its readers that farmers "will not much longer ask what the political bosses and rings believe, but will demand legislation in the interest of the whole people."\(^8_4\)

The Colored Alliance, unlike the white Alliance and the Democratic Party, exerted no influence upon the state Republican Party's platform or ticket. The Republican Party of Texas opposed legislation proposed by white reformers for abolition of the national banks, formation of a railroad commission, as well as "class legislation," such as the sub-treasury plan, while favoring a protective tariff and a Federal Elections Bill.\(^8_5\) This last measure found opposition in the State Democratic platform as well as in the Jack County Republican Convention where the whites formed a majority.\(^8_6\)

\(^8_3\) National Alliance (Negro), quoted in National Economist, June 21, 1890.

\(^8_4\) Ibid.

\(^8_5\) Winkler, Platforms of Political Parties, pp. 291-292. The Federal Elections Bill or "Force Bill" was un成功fully presented to the national Congress in 1890 by the Republicans; it proposed federal guarantees of a free franchise.

\(^8_6\) Dallas Morning News, August 18, 1890.
but the Republican Party platform carried no direct response to the Democratic Party's plank promising legislation to compel the railroads to maintain within the state "separate coaches for white and black passengers." 87

While the southern Alliance wanted "equal and exact justice to all men, regardless of race, [or] color," they also endorsed separatism, desiring "all colored organizations to have their own state and national organizations as well as their own schools and churches and separate hotels and railroad accommodations." 88 On the other hand, the National Alliance reported that the Colored Alliance worked in "perfect harmony with the white Alliances", and both alliances were "helping to settle the race question by united effort along lines where all can agree." 89 Although the National Economist printed Humphrey's proclamation, claiming the Colored Alliance had the "greatest good will and hearty co-operation of the white inhabitants of all the states," 90 the Texas Alliance in reality demonstrated no such inclinations.

87 Winkler, Platforms of Political Parties, p. 289. Hogg also opposed the "Force Bill"; see Cotner, Hogg, p. 289.

88 Alabama Mirror, quoted in National Economist, September 6, 1890.

89 National Alliance (Negro), quoted in National Economist, July 19, 1890.

90 National Economist, January 25, 1890.
Nonetheless, the Colored Alliance, according to Humphrey, continued to thrive, and in December, 1889, Humphrey mentioned the existence of other colored farmer's organization which he hoped to unite into one group. A month later, the National Economist announced the consolidation of Humphrey's Colored Alliance with another organized by a white man, Andrew J. Carothurs of Beeville, Texas, thus, "sacrificing their own interests and all personal ambition." At that time, Humphrey claimed a membership of one million for his organization, and by the end of the year his figures rose to 1,200,000 with 90,000 in Texas. Other than Humphrey's statements, these figures remain unsubstantiated. Even R. L. Smith's Farmers' Improvement Society, enjoying prestige in the white and black communities of Texas, after five successful years numbered only several thousands. The Colored Alliance had to compete for members with many other farmer, fraternal, benefit, and aid societies, making it extremely 

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\[91\] Ibid., December 14, 1889.

\[92\] Ibid., January 25, 1890. For more information on Carothurs see his letter to Houston Daily Post, September 8, 1891. He was a delegate to the Texas Populist Convention in 1896; see Galveston Daily News, August 9, 1896.

\[93\] Saloutos, Farmer Movements in the South, pp. 80-81.
unlikely that Humphrey's membership figures represented the true picture.

While the Colored Alliance apparently contained few members, its actual achievements seem even more meager. Before a Senate committee, Humphrey testified that the Colored Alliance helped Negroes buy land along the Trinity in Texas and kept them free of mortgages, but he confessed they were not prosperous, blaming the government which by its "constant fluctuation of money had held the colored man by the shoulder every November while a Southern sharper fleeced him."\(^{94}\) Although the National Alliance asserted that the farmers came together to "discontinue the credit system" and establish good relations "between producers and consumers, farmers and manufacturers,"\(^{95}\) the Texas Colored Alliance, unlike the Farmers' Improvement Society, had, except for the one exchange in Texas, no immediate remedies to help relieve the farmers of their wretched condition.

The Colored Alliance held little interest for the white delegates gathered in Ocala, Florida, for the National

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\(^{94}\) National Economist, June 7, 1890, pp. 186-192.

\(^{95}\) National Alliance (Negro), quoted in National Economist, April 5, 1890.
Council of the National Farmers' Alliance and Industrial Union on December 2, 1890. The Alliancemen made the familiar demands: unlimited coinage of silver, abolition of the national banks, more circulating money, prohibition of alien ownership of land, and the establishment of sub-treasuries. Noticeably absent from the demands was a call for government ownership of the means of communication and transportation. The question of the establishment of a third party dedicated to agrarian reform stimulated heated discussion at the meeting, with the greatest support for such a move coming from the west and the strongest opposition emanating from the southern delegates. 96

Perhaps not entirely unrelated to the interest in a third party, the meeting demonstrated greater awareness of the Colored Alliance than any previous national Alliance meeting. On December 5, a committee appointed from the national white Alliance reported on its cordial visit with and reception by the Colored Alliance and further recommended "that equal facilities educational, commercial and political be demanded for colored and white Alliancemen alike, competency considered." A confederation, composed of the

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96 Dunning, History of the Farmers' Alliance, pp. 138-167.
white Alliance, the Colored Alliance, and the Farmers' Mutual Benefit Association, pledged its support to the St. Louis demands of 1889 and to those legislators who supported those demands.97

Having gone farther than any other southern Alliance convention in considering the Colored Alliance, this same meeting, however, opposed the "Force Bill," and the Colored Alliance condemned it for doing so. Reverend J. L. Moore, delegate to the Colored Farmers' Alliance meeting in Ocala simultaneously with the white Alliance explained that while the Negro farmers there had no interest in perpetuating the Republican Party, they did wish to support Alliance demands, which remained impossible in the South without some free franchise guarantee. The Federal Elections Bill, Moore declared, although admittedly wanting in some aspects, remained the only such proposed legislation. Colored Alliancemen, Moore contended, held in low esteem "the few pitiful offices a few of our members could secure," but valued reform legislation that would benefit the Negro masses in general. Moore demanded to know what point there

97 Ibid.
would be in urging political reform among Negroes who could not vote as they wished.98

The National Economist stated that the Alliance resolution condemning the "Force Bill" originated not from a "lack of interest in the colored man, or from a desire to subserve any political adversary but for [sic] the Alliance has a better and less costly plan."99 In addition, the Alliance paper published an article justifying the white Alliance's opposition to the "Force Bill" because of its high cost, and it pledged the Alliance's guarantee for a fair vote to everyone including the Negro, which would make for a "more 'perfect justice' than has ever been shown him by any association or party."100

After the 1890 convention, the Colored Farmers' Alliance confronted financial difficulties. The National Alliance warned Colored Alliancemen:

Do you know that while you are buying badges and regalia and all that kind of thing and not subscribing for your paper nor paying your dues, you are very liable to absolutely break up your Alliance? Most men buy bread first and after that fine clothing, and men who buy the fine clothes first very often have to

98 National Economist, March 7, 1891.
99 Ibid., January 10, 1891.
100 Ibid., January 17, 1891.
do without bread. There are very many of the States that have made no reports and paid no dues, and yet we get thousands of letters from them asking about badges and regalia. We want to remind you that when you have not paid dues for 6 months you stand suspended from the Alliance and would not be allowed to wear its badges or regalia, or if you wear them you would have to wear them backwards. 101

With the Colored Farmers' Alliance experiencing financial difficulties and with the white Alliance undergoing an internal power struggle between those in support of a third party and the sub-treasury and those opposed to both ideas, Humphrey chose to lead a cotton pickers strike in 1891. This episode gives enormous insight into Humphrey's character: his methods of operation, his relationship to the white Texas Alliance and the local Colored Alliances, his relationship to his own organizers and newspaper, his reputation and reception in the white community, as well as to his honesty.

News of an impending cotton picker's strike first broke in Texas papers on September 7, 1891. Receiving wide coverage in the major state dailies, it took the state by surprise "that such a movement which is called the Cotton Picker's League could have been kept quiet--not to say secret so long is the wonder of the hour." The Houston Daily Post

101 National Alliance (Negro), quoted in National Economist, April 4, 1891.
received inquiries from newspapers throughout the country desiring more information on the strike, its magnitude, and its effect on the south.  

A reporter, promptly dispatched to interview Humphrey at his home in Houston on Magnolia Street, found him uncooperative, but the newsman disclosed that a secret circular had been published, referring in all probability to the September 6, 1891, edition of the National Alliance, which contained the Cotton Picker's League proclamation. Written by Humphrey in an imperious style, the proclamation commanded 600,000 cotton pickers supposedly belonging to the League to stop picking cotton for others from September 12, 1891, until November 1, 1891, unless the planters agreed to pay $1.00 per 100 lbs. of cotton, plus board. The proclamation instructed the cotton pickers to unite, stand firm, enlist the cooperation of other pickers, ostracize those who continued to pick cotton, and to act in a respectful and peaceful manner.  

After the publication of the proclamation, Humphrey described by a reporter as "something of a philosopher and

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humanitarian" spoke freely about the League. Although Humphrey was Superintendent of the Colored Alliance and used their newspaper to publish the Cotton Pickers Proclamation, he denied any connection between the two organizations. He explained that the League originated to offset intentions by planters' and merchants' groups, such as those in Memphis and Charleston, to reduce cotton picker's wages to 40 cents per 100 lbs. of picked cotton with no board. Humphrey charged the "planters and speculators" with making the pickers bear the brunt for the low price in cotton by paying "starvation wages" which caused the pickers' "families to suffer the fearful consequences."\(^{104}\)

The threat of low wages, Humphrey declared, contributed to the phenomenal growth of the League. Out of an estimated 2,500,000 pickers in the country of which 1,500,000 were Negro, Humphrey claimed on September 6 a membership of 800,000 with names coming in at the rate of from 40,000 to 50,000 a day, and by September 11 he reported 1,100,000 on the membership rolls.\(^{105}\)

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\(^{104}\) Houston Daily Post, September 6, 1891; Dallas Morning News, September 8, 1891.

\(^{105}\) Houston Daily Post, September 7, 1891; Fort Worth Gazette, September 10, 1891, September 12, 1891. Humphrey added 200,000 members to the 600,000 listed in the proclamation.
Humphrey declared that the League consisted of whites and blacks from all the cotton states, but he claimed that because the reports sent to him lacked information on race, he could not indicate the relative strength of each race. The League's only membership requirement, he said, was an "oath of honor" with "no secrecy, no obligation, no entrance fee, or anything of the kind;" however, Humphrey volunteered the information that the Negroes would not talk about the organization unless you gave "them the grip."\(^{106}\)

After the initial reaction of surprise, the strike proclamation elicited a mixture of responses, including fear, anger, skepticism, and amusement. The *Galveston Morning News* carried the report that in Hempstead, Texas, located in the cotton belt near Houston, the strike was "only laughed at by the more sensible colored men."\(^{107}\) In Walker County, to the northwest, planters also laughed at the strike vowing they would "let cotton rot first" before they paid the demanded wages. A planter told the *Houston Daily Post* that "some concerted action should be at once taken to either break the force of the strike or avert it altogether."\(^{108}\)

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\(^{106}\)Ibid.

\(^{107}\)*Galveston Daily News*, September 10, 1891.

\(^{108}\)*Houston Daily Post*, September 7, 1891.
An editorial in the same newspaper said Humphrey's demands would "make the cost higher than the profit." 109

Members of both the Colored Alliance and the white Alliance in Texas seemingly remained uninformed of the picker's strike, but when interviewed by reporters, they tended to regard it as "impractical." G. A. Fosgard, district secretary of the white Farmers' Alliance in Houston, explained that since most Negroes in Texas worked "on shares for themselves," there remained not more than one quarter to one third receiving wages for picking cotton. If the good weather continued, Fosgard pointed out, planters' families would pick the cotton themselves, if necessary. The strike, he commented, "would not do much harm in Texas" where the Negro needed money for the holidays "even if there is any truth in it." 110

Sam J. Jenkins, Negro lawyer from Brenham, Texas, and who earlier in the month had been a delegate to the Texas Colored Mens' Convention, said in an interview that the strike would not work in Washington County since "all of the colored members of the alliance were farmers and would

109 Ibid., September 8, 1891.

be opposed to it as against their interest, while the cotton pickers were very well satisfied with what they are getting."

The Brenham paper added that "nothing has been heard of the movement here." 111

Upon interviewing cotton planters in Texas, reporters discovered few who knew anything of the impending strike or for that matter about the League. Some planters seemed perplexed as to why the Negro, receiving favors from his landlords and loans from the white farmer, would want to strike. Others maintained that such a strike was impractical, either because of the availability of Mexican labor or the picker's dependence on a weekly foot ration. In a number of instances, the planter, as the Allianceman Fosgard, explained the strike's infeasibility by noting that most Negroes "worked on shares" and received no wages. 112 To other planters, the strike became an Alliance conspiracy to regulate the price of cotton:

The white alliance leaders in several of the cotton states have made desperate attempts to curtail the acreage of land planted in cotton with a view of making a scarcity of the staple and thus forcing higher prices. Is this threatened colored strike engineered by members of the white alliance?

111 Brenham Banner, quoted in Galveston Daily News, September 11, 1891; Galveston Daily News, September 12, 1892.

112 Houston Daily Post, September 8, 1891; Galveston Daily News, September 10, 1891.

113 Galveston Daily News, September 10, 1891.
Even Andrew J. Carothers, head of the independent Colored Alliance that had merged the previous year with Humphrey's organization, supported this theory, writing to the Houston Daily Post that if "I could speak privately ... I could tell you speculation is at the bottom of this scheme."\(^{114}\)

To discourage would-be strikers, the Houston Daily Post published letters from members of the Colored alliances in Texas and other states. J. W. Carter, lecturer for the Colored Alliance in Georgia, wrote:

Have nothing to do with the strike. Thousands of you have made debts to be paid by cotton picking and you know better than any one else what you can pick for. We don't intend to interfere with your local affairs but would advise you to arrange your matter as best suits your circumstances. Strikes may do for the alliance of Texas. It will not be the case in Georgia.\(^{115}\)

Carothers, in an open letter to the cotton pickers headquarters in Giddings, Texas, urged the pickers not to strike because the Colored Alliance wanted the "co-operation and aid of the white farmer," but a strike would "engender race feeling bitter and deep lasting" which would lead to "riot and bloodshed."\(^{116}\) An excerpt from the Atlanta Constitution, also published in the Houston Daily Post, declared "the

\(^{114}\) Houston Daily Post, September 8, 1891.

\(^{115}\) Ibid., September 12, 1891.

\(^{116}\) Ibid., September 8, 1891.
strike of the cotton pickers... will not receive the endorsement of genuine Alliancemen whether white or colored. 117

Negative reaction to the strike spread to its organizer, Humphrey. One editorial accused him of acting like a czar issuing a "ukase" and of serving "his own selfish ends by duplicity and chicanery."

The Austin Statesman said he belonged to a group of "meddlesome busybodies and professional agitators" under the influence of "political wire pullers and schemers from the North and West."

One planter declared him an enemy of both races:

The white man who would engineer such a movement is not only an enemy to every farmer in the country, but is worse even than that to negroes many of whom would go hungry and in rags but for the money they make in the cotton field. I will not say what I'd like to do with him. 120

The Dallas Times Herald advised that "Humphrey should be in better business than stirring up strife between the blacks and their employers. His place is in the cotton field where he could make an honest living." 121

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117 Atlanta Constitution, quoted in Houston Daily Post, September 12, 1891.
118 Houston Daily Post, September 8, 1891.
119 Austin Statesman, quoted in the Detroit Plaindealer (Negro), October 2, 1891.
120 Houston Daily Post, September 8, 1891.
121 Dallas Times Herald, September 12, 1891.
Perhaps the only favorable report the strike received appeared in the Plaindealer which reported that it was glad the strike was talked about. It will serve to teach the colored man his strength and how to use it and is no doubt the forerunner of industrial disaffection which must ultimately mean industrial advancement among them. It will help, too, to enlighten the candid Alliancemen to the true spirit and purpose of his Southern brother. It will also show the colored Alliance how weak is the twig on which they hung their faith.122

Ignoring the disparaging remarks appearing in the press, Humphrey initially remained optimistic, although he knew many of the pickers would "continue to work and [that] their leaders [be] bought off." He thought there would be enough strikers to affect the harvesting of the crop, but as the strike day drew closer, he became less optimistic, fearing the "movement was started too late in the season" and reflecting that an earlier start would have "shaken up the commerce of the world."123 Possessing "evidence that the planters in many places have reduced the scale of prices to 20 and 25 cents per hundred," Humphrey refused to make a decision allowing some pickers to compromise on

122Detroit Plaindealer (Negro), October 2, 1891.
123Houston Daily Post, September 7, 1891; Fort Worth Gazette, September 12, 1891.
70 or 75 cents, fearing it would discourage planters from raising wages. 124

On the day for which Humphrey had called the strike, September 12, 1891, the Fort Worth Gazette reported a "most searching inquiry at many points throughout the South has failed to develop that there is anything of a formidable nature in the Cotton Pickers' League." 125 Reports on the strike came into the state newspapers from counties all over Texas, and only in Moulton, Fayette County, did thirty-three or thirty-five cotton pickers strike. One farmer in Anderson County, where a white and a colored man had agitated for the strike, reported an attempt to strike, but he fired them and that settled the matter. In Wharton County, five colored alliances called a secret session, in which four opposed and one favored the strike; however, the press reported no strike in that county. Austin County reported that a colored man had agitated for a strike but none materialized, while in Grimes County, although everyone heard and talked of the strike, none developed. In response to newspaper queries, the following counties, comprising

124 Fort Worth Gazette, September 12, 1891.
125 Ibid.
much of the cotton producing area of the state, reported that the strike had failed to materialize: Polk, Bee, Williamson, Colorado, Montgomery, Navarro, Hays, Kyle, Austin, Anderson, Karnes, Lee, Brazos, Grimes, Walker, Waller, Washington, Wharton, Victoria, Burleson, Trinity, Brazoria, Matagorda, DeWitt, Caldwell, Harris, Guadalupe, Robertson, Leon, and Wilson. A number of the counties reported the Negroes knew nothing about Humphrey, and even more reported they knew nothing of the League.  

Although Humphrey claimed knowledge of the League six months prior to the strike, it apparently received no attention from either the Negro organizations or from the white Alliance. Just a few days prior to the publication of the League's proclamation, the Texas Colored Men's Convention, meeting in Galveston, made no reference to the impending strike. The cotton report, listing the cotton condition in each county, also failed to note any cotton pickers' strike, as did the Louisiana State Colored

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126 Houston Daily Post, September 13, 1891; Dallas Morning News, September 16, 1891; Fort Worth Gazette, September 17, 1891.


128 Dallas Morning News, September 16, 1891; Galveston Daily News, September 13, 1891.
Farmers' Alliance meeting on September 10, 1891. The Galveston Daily News on September 16, declared the strike "was a fake of the first magnitude, and was perhaps without any foundation in fact." 

Although Humphrey differentiated between the Colored Alliance and the Cotton Pickers' league, it appears doubtful that anyone else did. White and black Alliancemen, planters and reporters considered the League to be part of the Colored Alliance; hence, when the press made inquiries concerning the strike, it became apparent that the Colored Alliance was neither widespread in Texas nor largely supported by Negro farmers.

The strike highlighted many of Humphrey's weaknesses. Since reports about the strike indicate that he was relatively unknown among the Negro community, his leadership role in it could not have been influential. In the strike situation, the Colored Alliance appears as a "one man show," with Humphrey issuing proclamations and publishing them in the National Alliance with no authorization other than his own. The organizational structure of the Colored Alliance also

129 Dallas Morning News, September 11, 1891.
130 Galveston Daily News, September 16, 1891.
apparently was weak, if any existed at all outside of Humphrey, since not only did the local alliances fail to support the strike, they often opposed it, as did the only other known leader of the Colored Alliance in Texas, Andrew J. Carothers. Humphrey apparently accepted his new role as organizer for the cotton pickers without either informing the Colored or white alliance, since few alliance-men black or white had heard of the League or its strike. Humphrey failed to enlist the support of the white Alliance or the Negro community for the strike, and the public record indicates no attempt on his part to do so when he issued the proclamation only six days prior to the strike. Grandiose schemes, poorly organized with less than candid estimation of the support they could command, characterized Humphrey's methods of operation.

After appearing at an Alliance meeting in St. Louis in February, 1892, Humphrey, representing the Colored Alliance and advocating a third party, disappeared from the public eye. In Texas, the Colored Alliance, competing with numerous other fraternal and benevolent organizations among Negro farmers, failed to win widespread support in the black community. Its contribution to the reform movement or the Negro community remained minimal.
The Colored Alliance failed to develop leaders from their own rank and file as did the white Alliance. Negro leaders in the reform movement came from the Republican Party without the benefit of followers indoctrinated with Grange and Alliance concepts of class identity and pressure group politics. The rank and file Negro saw himself not as farmer versus capitalist, but black versus white, while the Negro reform leader, coming from the cities, failed to identify with the Negro farmer.

Humphrey's claim that the white Alliance originally proposed to suppress racial prejudices does not bear up under close scrutiny. With typical exaggeration, Humphrey maintained that from the beginning the Alliance demonstrated profound interest in the "race question," and that "at the first practicable moment steps were taken looking into a peaceful solution" to it. As evidence, he cited the visits made to the Colored Alliance by the national white Alliance committees, which began three years after he helped organize the Colored Alliance.

The Texas Alliance deliberately excluded the Negroes and showed no desire to co-operate in any fashion with the

Colored Alliance. This policy of separatism hindered the formation of any class solidarity among the races. White Alliancemen in Texas, immersed in their demands for political reform, generally ignored the Negro, except when as in the Greenback episode, the whites wanted the Negro vote. Attitudes of separatism among white farmers, neither more liberal nor more reactionary than other contemporary thought on the race question, prevented the development of a foundation upon which to build a color blind third party. Only after the Ocala meeting, did the third party idea become the overriding interest of the white Alliancemen in Texas, and only then did the whites demonstrate renewed interest in some kind of cooperation with Texas blacks.
CHAPTER IV

"ALL WHITE MEN LOOK ALIKE"

In Texas, the People's Party, dedicated to the farmers' interests, emerged during an era complicated with intricate political maneuvers. When the populists actively participated in the state elections of 1892, 1894, and 1896, political parties split, fused, and formed unorthodox alliances developing a new alignment of forces in each election.

Negro political allegiance in these state elections shifted among the Democratic, Republican, and People's Parties depending on the year, candidates, amount of intimidation and the number of bribes. Having never integrated into the agrarian reform movement, the Negro farmer had no political identity. Most Negroes followed the erratic course of the Republican Party, which not only supported the populists in 1896, but contained within its ranks, in other years as well, Negroes supporting fusion with the populists. Negro Republicans and those blacks who joined the People's Party, together indicate the Negro's political involvement with populism in Texas.
The immediate events that led to the creation of the People's Party in Texas primarily concerned white Alliance-men. After Texas Alliancemen returned in December, 1890, from their national meeting at Ocala, Florida, where they heatedly discussed the advisability of a third party, disenchantment with Governor Hogg began to mount. In March, when the Railroad Commission bill came before the state legislature, Harry Tracey, head of the Alliance legislative steering committee, found that neither Hogg nor the Alliance legislators supported the Alliance's desire for a commission with elected members. Much to the chagrin of the Alliance, the legislature acceded to Hogg's wishes establishing a commission with appointed members.¹

When Hogg chose to ignore the Alliance demand for the appointment of an Allianceman to the commission, made during their meeting in April, 1891, some Alliancemen felt betrayed and began to consider a third party. W. R. Lamb, Alliance-man and head of the Texas Federation of Labor, returned in May, 1891, from the national Alliance Conference in Cincinnati, which hatched the People's Party, and where he had become a member of its executive committee. In July, Lamb issued a

call for a state People's Party Convention to meet in Dallas just before the annual state Alliance meeting. ²

Rooted in third parties like the Greenbacks, the Human, and the Union Labor, the People's Party thought itself "born not made," dedicated as the black populist leader, John B. Rayner explained, to driving out the "proud, greedy, and wicked . . . from our legislative, judicial and executive chambers." ³ According to Rayner "the sword of Jehovah and the people's rights" had come to do battle with evil. The People's Party was the outgrowth of the evil conditions which exist in our governmental and social systems. These conditions are formed and fostered by unjust laws and it is the mission of the people's party to correct these evil influences. The working of the platform may be brought forward and become prominent, new ones may be taken up and old modified but the grand principles of justice and human fraternity which underlie its foundations never change.

Such high and unchanging principles as "justice and human fraternity," only seemed to develop in the agrarian reform movement with the formation of the Greenback and People's parties. The Texas Grange and Alliance had demonstrated remarkable consistency in ignoring the Negro. The reform

²Ibid.
³Southern Mercury, June 26, 1896.
⁴Ibid., January 18, 1894.
parties however, solicited the Negro vote, just as every political party did in Texas, since Negroes comprised twenty-two per cent of the state population.  

Democrats and Populists used similar methods to capture the Negro vote. Each had "colored" clubs, picnics and barbecues for Negroes, Negro lieutenants, and each encouraged Negro attendance at political rallies. The populists even had "colored days" at their encampments and went so far as to elect one or two Negroes to their executive committee.

The precedent for including white and black members on an executive committee existed in the Republican Party of Texas although, as in the People's Party of Texas, the majority of the executive committee were white. While most Republicans were Negroes, generally loyal to the party that emancipated them, there were respectable white Republicans too. The caricature of the white Republican as an opportunist-carpetbagger and the black Republican as an ignorant and silly buffoon is overdrawn and inconsistent with the respect commanded by white Republican leader Webster Flanagan and by

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5 Martin, People's Party in Texas, p. 89.

6 Cotner, Hogg, pp. 218, 312-313; Martin, People's Party, p. 95; Dallas Morning News, May 1, 1892, September 1, 1892; Galveston Daily News, June 12, 1892, June 18, 1892, June 17, 1892; Wharton, History of Fort Bend County, p. 100.
black Republican leader Norris Wright Cuney. Political co-operation between the races in Texas was not a novel innovation of the populists.7

Political co-operation between black and white extended to the illegal. The poor and ignorant Negro sold his vote, for selling votes commonly occurred during this period, particularly in the large cities both in the North and South, and the white man bought it to insure his dominance. The briber marched the voters to the polls like cattle, "each one holding in plain sight the ballot which has been given him . . . until actually deposited in the ballot box"; afterwards the voters met at some prearranged place to "receive the price of his disgrace."8

In some cases, force assured the Negro vote. In the sixteen counties where the Negroes were in a majority,9 such was particularly true, especially in Harrison County which was notorious for its intimidation of Negro voters.10


8National Economist, April 27, 1889.

9USDI, Eleventh Census, Compendium, 508-511. The sixteen counties were Brazoria, Brazos, Camp, Fort Bend, Gregg, Grimes, Harrison, Jackson, Marion, Matagorda, Robertson, San Jacinto, Walker, Waller, Washington, Wharton.

A letter to a Negro newspaper claimed as "false in the extreme" a Texas newspaper's description of voting in Harrison County as "orderly and light."

The Democrats refused to admit the colored Republican judges and clerks. The colored clerks took up quarters just outside and took the name and ticket voted by each man. This of course was displeasing to the Democrats [and] during the day these tally sheets were forcibly taken from the colored clerks and torn into shreds. Wednesday morning P. F. Dennis and C. A. Johnson both colored, running respectively for the offices of Representative and Constable were ordered under the menaces of cocked revolvers to de camp post haste or have their head blown off at sight twenty hours thereafter. This is what we call a shotgun argument, eh! Eight colored men were brought from Scottsville, this county, and lodged in jail simply because they were contending for a fair count as opposed to ballot box stuffing. There are ten Republicans in this county to one Democrat; yet, the Democrats claim that the county is Democratic by a two thousand majority . . . . Affairs are not conducted thus all over the State of Texas.

In the same year as this account from Harrison, another Negro wrote that in Smith County "rifles have never been heard here, no blood spilled on account of politics and no man forcibly prevented from expressing his manhood by means of the ballot box."\textsuperscript{12} Reports in 1883 from Negroes in Houston and Corpus Christi claimed that "colored men deposit their

\textsuperscript{11} \textit{New York Freeman} (Negro), November 13, 1886.
\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Ibid.}, October 16, 1886.
ballots according to the dictates of their conscience without fears of molestation from any quarter."\(^{13}\)

By 1889, intimidation of the Negro voter had become a major concern of the Negro community, and the Colored Men's Convention in that year held whites responsible for denying the Negro "free exercise of his elective franchise."\(^{14}\) In October, 1889, white men in Fort Bend County organized a protective organization, dedicated to "protecting lives, liberty and property" of white citizens. These whites objected to Negro officeholders and their alliances with other whites known as "Woodpeckers." They denied bonds to Negroes to prevent them from holding office. Such white men's associations spread to nearly all of the black counties in Texas. In some cases they entered into an agreement with the Negroes, allowing them to vote the national ticket as they pleased in return for support of the state Democratic ticket.\(^{15}\)

\(^{13}\)New York Globe (Negro), April 7, 1883; June 16, 1883.

\(^{14}\)Fort Bend County Jaybird Association, Constitution and By-laws, in Jaybird Association Papers (University of Texas Archives, Austin); Grimes County White Man's Union Association, By-laws, ibid.; Letter to Dr. Charles Ramsdell from C. H. Chernosky, August 4, 1922, ibid.; Wharton, Fort Bend County, p. 195.

\(^{15}\)Wharton, Fort Bend County, p. 196.
Not only Negroes and populists complained of fraud in elections; an editorial in the Dallas Morning News declared there were "no safeguards in Texas against repeating and illegal voting, no checks against fraud and no speedy mode of investigating election frauds." The actual number of election frauds was, the editorial claimed, a "hundredfold greater than exposed" because few reported them and many covered them up. The editor added that the counting of the votes often took several days, leaving ample opportunity to stuff the ballot box.  

The Galveston Argus, a Negro newspaper, noted that since virtually one fifth of the Negroes were disfranchised, "no candidate for office thinks of the negro or negro rights in his struggle for election." In 1896, the Galveston Daily News estimated that in 1894, 20,000 Negroes in fourteen counties and several thousand white populists had no franchise because of illegal voting procedures.

State election returns from the black counties in Texas cannot be relied upon as true indicators of Negro rejection.

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16 Dallas Morning News, November 8, 1886.


of populism because of the prevalent corruption. To say that the Democratic Party was "successful in its efforts to marshal the Negro support of its candidates"\textsuperscript{19} in the black counties does not mean that Negro support was legitimate. The best indicator of Negro support for populism would be at the county level, since in the absence of a county Republican ticket the Negroes often voted for the populist candidate; yet, there is little reliable information available at the county level.

More revealing than election returns of the character and depth of Negro commitment to the People's Party of Texas are the election campaigns, party conventions, and platforms. They illuminate as well the populist's involvement with contemporary Negro issues: lynching, segregation, racial separatism, self-help, franchise guarantees, and Negro jury duty. The interaction of the agrarian reform movement with the Negro is to some extent evident in how much the People's Party of Texas was willing to support.

In the 1890's, as the Negro's political sophistication grew, he began to make greater demands for legal equality in such matters as jury duty. A good statement from the

\textsuperscript{19}Martin, \textit{People's Party of Texas}, p. 97.
Negro point of view concerning jury duty appeared in the case of a Negro tried in 1896 for burglary in the state district criminal court. The defendant's Negro lawyers asked the court to dismiss the indictments against the defendant because as a man "of color and African descent" he had been indicted before a grand jury and tried before a panel of petit jurors, both of which excluded Negroes "qualified to serve as jurors under the laws of Texas."

Moreover, the lawyers pointed out, Negroes comprised "one fourth of the regular voters of the city and county of Galveston and have been for a long time excluded from serving on the juries in Galveston because of their race." The defense asked for the Negro the same protection and benefit of the laws of Texas as the white man had. The court did not find for the defendant, claiming it had no jurisdiction over the selection of jurors beyond the question of fraud.20

The issue of Negro jurors came before the first convention of the People's Party of Texas held in Dallas on August, 1891. The small attendance of fifty delegates, most of whom were Alliancemen also attending the state Alliance Convention, included a few Negroes who participated in the

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20 Dallas Morning News, March 14, 1896.
convention proceedings. Melvin Wade, a well known black Republican from Dallas, asked that the party's position towards the Negro be clarified. When the chairman responded by saying the People's Party saw no difference between white and black citizens, Wade quickly challenged the statement.

When it comes down to practice such is not the fact. If we are equal why does not the sheriff summon negroes on juries? Any why hand up the sign 'Negro' in passenger cars? I want to tell my people what the people's party is going to do? I want to tell them if it is going to work a black and white horse in the same field.

Wade's pertinent questions received the non-committal answer that the People's Party offered the Negro a better alternative than the Republican Party, which while pretending to free him actually succeeded in enslaving him just like other working men. 21

R. H. Hayes, a Negro delegate from Ft. Worth, told the convention of the "colored brothers" desires and grievances. Unlike Wade and Cuney, who, he said, opposed "any third party," the Negroes in attendance at the convention as well as those in the "rural districts" wished "to bust up the old parties" and join "any party against monopolies in the

21 Ibid., August 18, 1891.
interest of the poor man." In response to Hayes, Chairman Ashby drew a parallel between the white and black both of whom he said had been ignored by the parties which traditionally attracted their loyalty.  

Negro support for the populist banner became an issue when the convention omitted Negro members from the executive committee. The absence of a Negro committeeman led Hayes to predict the party's defeat, especially in the south Texas counties heavily populated with blacks. "If you are going to win," Hayes lectured, "you will have to take the negro with you . . . the negro vote will be the balancing vote in Texas." When the convention offered the Negro various positions appointed by district chairmen, Hayes flatly rejected the offers as being a "second hand loaf." "We do not propose to be appointed by chairmen . . .; you must," he demanded, "appoint us by convention and make us feel that we are men." Hayes warned, "You will lose in spite of the devil and high water if you don't treat the negro square," or if you give reason for Cuney to say "there were a few niggers in that convention bob tailing to the whites and they were not recognized and amounted to nothing."  

22 Ibid.  
23 Dallas Morning News, August 18, 1891; San Antonio Express, August 18, 1891.
Before deciding on what representation the Negro should have, the white populists discussed why he should have it. The convention applauded when Chairman Ashby told them, "we do not propose to be governed by party regulations in the past;" unlike the Democratic Party that excluded Negroes "I am in favor of giving the colored man full representation." The "colored vote," Ashby claimed, would come to the populists by accepting the Negro as a "citizen just as much as we are." A delegate commented that "the colored man could have gone with the democrats years ago if they had been recognized."

While some whites remarked "we want to do good to every citizen", and the blacks "are in the ditch just like we are," both black and white understood the desire for the Negro vote as the primary motivation for granting Negro representation in the People's Party.  

The strong desire for the Negro vote by the white populists and the determination of the Negro delegates to win a seat on the executive committee culminated in the appointment of two Negroes to that committee. The Negroes were told "We do not wish to ostracize the colored people but they are poorly represented here. The only thing we can do...

24 Dallas Morning News, August 18, 1891.
in absence of representation is to elect a representative for the state at large." Hayes and H. J. Jennings, a Negro from Collin County who had received in his precinct more votes than Hogg, became members of the executive committee, which prompted a colored delegate to comment that "the lion and the lamb would now lie down together."25

Impressed by Negro participation in the Texas People's Party Convention, the Plaindealer printed a large portion of the dialogue between the Negroes and populists. The Negro newspaper complimented the Texas Afro-Americans on their display of "sturdy independence" and on their courage to speak freely in Texas, where men limited their speeches to "glorifying the lost cause and eulogizing its dead" and to "abusing Washington and Lincoln." The Plaindealer thought the People's Party was a "side issue" of "faction against faction among the Bourbons", which would open a wedge for greater free speech and political liberty for the Afro-American. It stated that if the Negro broadened his political base to include parties other than the Republican, more whites would be motivated to protect the Negro franchise.26

25 Ibid.
26 Detroit Plaindealer, September 18, 1891. For further support favoring the division of the Negro vote see the Washington Bee, October 15, 1886 and February 25, 1889.
However, the Plaindealer and Richmond Planet later complained that although the People's Party "has made a strong bid for the Afro-American vote, . . . the platform is hardly calculated to win any of them." The Planet commented that the populist platform merely rewrote Alliance demands and included a couple of planks to draw the labor vote, while "the colored people were practically ignored." Since the leadership and membership of the Populist Party came from the Alliance, where Negroes continued to be excluded from membership, by 1891, few Negroes had even heard of the People's Party; thus, when Lamb asked Wade at the People's Party convention in Dallas if he was a populist, Wade answered that "he did not know there was a People's Party."

The populist spirit spread rapidly among the Alliance-men who met in Dallas just after the People's Party convention. Four fifths of the Alliance delegates appeared sympathetic to the idea of a third party. One delegate told of the frustrations and disappointments that had led him to populism:

27 Detroit Plaindealer, July 8, 1892.
28 Richmond Planet, November 11, 1893.
29 Dallas Morning News, August 18, 1891.
He had voted the democratic ticket straight for thirty years and had never flickered yet, but he was going to give it one black eye next time. He was fooled last year, he said, by the cry of Hogg and the commission. Now they had both Hogg and the commission and he could see no relief to come from either. He was going to try a new deal now and see what come out of it. 30

Confronted with the disaffection of the Alliancemen, the Democratic Party leaders chose to make a drastic move, hoping to alienate the few Alliancemen supporting a third party from a majority of Alliancemen still loyal to the Democratic Party. Newton Webster Finley, chairman of the Democratic executive committee, judging the risk smaller in an off-election year, published in October, 1891, an open letter reading supporters of the sub-treasury out of the Democratic Party. 31

Finley's edict did not immediately push Alliancemen into the third party. Democrats favoring the sub-treasury met in February, 1892 and declared their loyalty to Alliance demands as well as to the Democratic Party. Calling themselves Jeffersonian Democrats, their platform, except for a recommendation that their demands be pursued through

30 Ibid., August 21, 1891; August 22, 1891.

31 Martin, People's Party in Texas, pp. 39-40; Cotner, Hogg, pp. 266-269.
Democratic clubs, was similar to the People's Party platform.  

Meanwhile, in the election year of 1892, the People's Party prepared for its political debut. In February, the party convened in Ft. Worth with 150 delegates in attendance to revise and endorse its platform as well as to select delegates to attend the national party's convention in St. Louis. The delegation to St. Louis had two Negroes: Jennings and Hayes.  

The entrance of a new political party into Texas politics during 1892 was like baptizing an infant under a waterfall. The political divisions and factions developed into a chaotic and confusing campaign. The Democratic and Republican Parties divided, making four parties instead of two. Then the black Republicans proceeded to ally with their sworn enemy the Bourbon element of the Texas Democracy, while the alliancemen-populists became the dedicated opponents of Governor Hogg whom they helped elect in the previous election. Three major contenders in the state election of 1892, the Hogg Democrats, the Clark (Bourbon Democrat)-Cuney

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32 Winkler, Platforms of Political Parties, p. 301.
33 Ibid., pp. 297-299.
coalition, and the People's Party canvassed for the Negro vote. Each ticket had some attraction for the Negro. Like the whites, the Negroes divided their loyalties among the parties. Cuney explained, "Negroes are human beings . . . . [In] their actions and manner of life they are prompted by very much the same motives actuating others of the human family." 34 Reverend R. F. Taylor, from Corsicana, wrote a perceptive letter to the Plaindealer on black and white politics in Texas during 1892:

There is an uneasiness among the dominating people. Four years ago Texas stood as solid as any state in the South, but today it is weighed in the balance and found wanting. They are divided among themselves on the State issue . . . there seems to be no compromise that can be affected . . . . The third party is growing very rapidly into favor and from all signs it seems to be the stone which shall break into atoms, the old Democracy and Republicanism of Texas, and take up . . . the power of government.

What is the position of the Afro-American in the political field of Texas? As the two branches of Democracy viz. Hogg and Clark democrats are equally divided and the third party equal to either of which this condition of affairs has placed the sceptre of power in the Afro-American's hand. For which ever side he cast his suffrage, that side, will dominate this state. But do they stand in a mass and vote the same? No, they are as fickle minded as the whites of Texas . . . . They are divided among these three parties neither of which will profit him much. 35

34 Maude Cuney Hare, Norris Wright Cuney (New York, 1913), p. 31.
35 Detroit Plaindealer, December 2, 1892.
Although the Democratic party made no concessions to win the Negro vote, Hogg's "valor in protecting negroes from the mob" won him support among some Negroes. Since holding office as District Attorney of Texas in 1886, his public record showed consistent opposition to lynching. His popularity with blacks increased after October, 1891, when he issued an executive proclamation offering a $1000 award for the arrest and conviction of each lyncher and $200 for accomplices.  

While admiring Hogg's fight against lynching, most Texas Negroes continued their traditional support of the Republican Party, which in 1892 split into two groups. In April of that year, a group of white Republicans formed their own party known as the "lily whites" or the "Reform" Republicans. The reason for the split, according to the blacks, developed because of white opposition to fusion, Negro leadership, and Negro office holding, but according to the "lily-whites" it sprang from a desire to disassociate themselves from the ignorant black.

36 Dallas Morning News, November 1, 1891, September 1, 1892.

37 Galveston Daily News, May 7, 1892; Dallas Morning News, February 22, 1892.
The exit of the "lily-whites," chief opponents to fusion within the Republican Party, left Cuney in control of most of the black votes in Texas and free to pursue a policy of fusion. Convinced that "the Republican Party by itself [was] impotent" in state politics, Cuney found fusion essential. Whatever party Cuney chose to fuse with would gain approximately 75,000 votes, most of them black.  

Obstensibly Cuney had three choices of parties to fuse with: the Hogg Democrats, the Bourbon Democrats and the People's Party; however, he, like most blacks removed from the development of the reform movement, had difficulty in distinguishing the Democrats from the populists, especially, since only two years prior Texas populists had enthusiastically campaigned for Hogg. Cuney observed "as between the third party and the Hogg people, I can find but little difference." The Plaindealer warned that a vote for the People's Party was "a half vote for the old enemy, the Democratic Party," and explained that the "People's Party caused disruption of the Democratic Party and as usual where thieves fall out

38 Hinze, Cuney, p. 35.
39 Dallas Morning News, September 15, 1892.
40 Detroit Plaindealer, September 9, 1892.
the different factions abuse and vilify each other."\textsuperscript{41}

A Negro Republican from Victoria, Texas, noted the alliances which developed between Democrats and populists:

> Look at Kansas. Look at South Dakota. The democrats are fusing with the people to keep alive the fires of hatred against the republican party. Two years ago the republicans of Kansas were in control. Now they were out. The democrats combine with the people's party to do this.\textsuperscript{42}

Known for his "political sagacity," Cuney made a surprising but politically astute decision to fuse with the Bourbon element of the Democratic Party. Cuney reasoned that since the Hogg Democrats and the Populists both came from the reform wing of the Democratic Party, they would split that vote giving the conservative Democrats and the Regular Republicans an excellent chance of victory. Cuney also remembered the previous failure of fusion between the Republicans and the Greenback reformers of the 1880's, which he referred to in 1892 as "greenback cranks" who thought "the government could stamp money on paper and it would circulate as coin."\textsuperscript{43} Fusion in support of George Clark, the leader of the conservative Democrats and advocate of

\textsuperscript{41}\textit{Ibid.}, July 8, 1892.

\textsuperscript{42}\textit{Dallas Morning News}, September 15, 1892.

\textsuperscript{43}\textit{Ibid.}
railroad and corporate interests and backed by the biggest newspapers in the state and powerful interests, presented to Cuney a strong possibility of Republican return to power in Texas.

As early as February, 1892, four months prior to Clark's bolt from the Democratic Party, Cuney said in an interview that in case of such a split "I should use my influence to have my party abstain from putting candidates in the field and would stump the state to secure the election of the reform candidate [Clark]."44 In September, the Republican Party endorsed Clark for governor and did not enter a state ticket; Clark, subsequently, accepted the endorsement but said "he had not sought it."45

At the Republican convention in September 1892, Cuney praised the conservatives and condemned the reformers. He explained to the black Republicans that their association with the Bourbons would earn them respectability. No one, Cuney said, could accuse the black who rescued Texas from Hogg of "making merchandise of himself." He charged Hogg with promoting "class legislation" and representing as

44Dallas Morning News, February 13, 1892.
45San Antonio Express, September 16, 1892.
Nugent did, "socialistic government and communism." At one point, Cuney spoke of possible Republican support for Nugent, telling the convention that if they wanted him they should say so, but he remarked further that "there is too much brains here to admit of such a preference."46

Both populists and Hogg Democrats attended the Republican convention trying to drum up support for their respective tickets. The Hoggites emphasized "the governor's great friendship for the poor, downtrodden colored man" and the rewards the governor had offered for prosecution of lynchers. Harry Tracey, editor of Southern Mercury, remained undaunted after witnessing the Republican rejection of populism, telling a reporter "the action of this convention secures Nugent's election."47

Additional optimism for the third party's future prevailed at the convention of the People's Party of Texas held in June, 1892, at Dallas. An attendance of one thousand delegates represented a phenomenal growth from the fifty delegates of the year before. The delegation to the national convention in Omaha included two Negroes, but the executive committee

46Dallas Morning News, September 15, 1892.
47Ibid.
no longer had Negro members. The meager but hard fought gains for Negro representation in 1891 had evaporated by 1892.\footnote{Winkler, \textit{Platforms of Political Parties}, pp. 314-316.}

Replacing those Negroes of 1891, who had asked pertinent questions and made demands, the populist convention in 1892 scheduled an accommodating seventy one year old Negro speaker. Having grown "tired of seeing the big fish swallow the little ones," he assured the delegates of his belief in the Ocala demands, the sub-treasury plan, and white supremacy; "all these white gentlemen are my superiors but they are all poor," he said. Referred to as "an apostle among the Negroes for their conversion" to populism, this elderly Negro appealed to the delegates for funds to continue organizing "colored populist clubs." He said, he could bring the populists 40,000 black voters none of whom would "vote the democratic ticket for a pair of shoes or a bottle of whiskey" and as for Hogg's "$1000 for whitecaps . . . he never cotched [sic] one of them yet."\footnote{\textit{Dallas Morning News}, June 24, 1892. The Negro speaker's name was reported as C. H. Jenkins, the name of a prominent white populist from Brown County; it was probably Jasper Crenshaw, a Negro from Collin County.}
After the convention, a reporter supposedly picked up in the platform committee room an unsigned letter, which the Galveston News published, from the People's Party of Texas to the "Colored Citizens of Texas." The letter urged the Negroes to "aid and assist your white brother farmers . . . to throw off the yoke of oppression, of corporate monopoly . . . enacted by both the old parties" by voting the populist ticket, since "all legislative enactment . . . that redounds to the weal or woe of the white farmer or laborer is equally beneficial or oppressive to the colored farmer." The letter warned the Negroes not to "go to the polls and vote away your own franchise and the franchise of the poor white man, as the colored people of Mississippi were persuaded to do." Ending with the plea "Will you help us?" they offered no help to the Negro for his problem.\(^50\)

Henry Clay Gray, a Negro Republican, frequently wrote letters to Texas newspapers condemning populism as "pernicious in every essential particular." Negroes, he wrote, should stay out of a white man's fight. The contest, he explained, between the populists, "disgruntled and petty politicians," and the "vested interests of the white men" changed nothing.

\(^50\) Galveston Daily News, July 2, 1892.
for the Negro. If the Negro, a vulnerable minority, risked playing politics with white men, Gray feared "calling down upon our heads a double portion of punishments." Gray said his deeper reason for fearing and distrusting the People's Party rested upon "racial considerations," stemming from the knowledge that the "People's Party nestles about trade unions, many of which outlaw the Negro" and fails to "offer the colored people . . . more than other parties." 51

Gray became the most visible Negro opponent to populism other than Cuney, but unlike Cuney, he did not always command the respect of some Negro leaders. In 1891, Gray published a letter in the Galveston News referring to the Negro as the "nation's lazar" and consequently aroused the wrath of the Negroes. He explained:

I call the negro the nation's lazar because in spite of all the churches teach about the brotherhood of man all the laws enacted about the equality of men, all men, (negroes included) deal with the negro as if he were lacking in the subtle universal something that makes men in the image of God. 52

The Colored Men's Convention in 1891 censured Gray and charged him with using his writing to "pervert his ability and prostitute his influence with the white race to

51 San Antonio Express, June 26, 1892; Galveston Daily News, June 19, 1892.

52 Galveston Daily News, October 19, 1891.
gain shekels and approbations for himself by exaggeration and calling the attention of the world to whatever is dis-picable in human character as the . . . peculiar characteristic of his race." Despite this criticism of Gray, which the convention later withdrew, his statements often drew the attention of the Negro community. 53

Gray, thoroughly disillusioned with politics and seeking answers to the Negro's problems in self-help, reflected contemporary thinking of articulate Negroes. He wrote that "average Negro politicians everywhere are supremely selfish, and I believe them the enemies of the aspiring colored youth even more than the white is." Negro politicians, Gray alleged, were corrupt and that their marshalling of the Negro vote only perpetuated race hatred. 54 Corroborating Gray's accusations, the Washington Bee published a scathing attack on Negro political leaders:

With but few exceptions the negro, politically in both parties have been failure as leaders.

Every man wants an office, no matter what valuable services he has rendered or of what benefit he has been to the party or his race.

53 Ibid., September 2, 1891, October 19, 1891.
54 Ibid., October 19, 1891.
Every man thinks he is a leader who happens to advocate on the stump election to office men in either party. As soon as the campaign is over he hunts for the successful man and demands the largest office ... but in most cases he gets down to his size and takes a messenger's place.

Quite a number of these men make all kinds of promises to their people until they get in and the moment they are successful they manifest no more interest in their race.

Gray declared "one hundred engineers upon our railways will be worth infinite more to us than an equal number in the legislature." 56

Some Negroes, like Melvin Wade, attempted to find political satisfaction by switching their allegiance back and forth from the Republican Party to the People's Party. Wade had attended the People's Party Convention in 1891, but as of March, 1892, he remained active in the Republican Party, participating in their convention as a member of the platform committee; 57 however, in September, 1892, the sixth ward in Dallas chose him as a delegate to the Dallas county populist convention. 58

55 Washington Bee (Negro), June 10, 1893.
56 Galveston Daily News, October 19, 1891.
57 Winkler, Platforms of Political Parties, p. 302.
58 Dallas Morning News, September 13, 1892.
At the Dallas county populist convention in September 1892 Wade, the only Negro delegate present, revealed his reasons for leaving the Republican Party:

He was encouraged in 1865 in the belief that the collar had been broken and that no more negroes would be sold. The republicans so boasted, but he noticed in the proceedings of the Ft. Worth [Republican] convention that a few aristocratic negroes proposed to carry on a very extensive slave trade. However, it would take more wagons to deliver the goods than those aristocratic negroes could furnish. There may be a few doctors, lawyers and scoundrels among the negroes who will vote for Clark, but the mass of the negroes will vote for Nugent.

Wade, a "colored Demosthenes," became a well known and welcomed speaker among both black and white audiences and emerged as an important campaigner in Texas for the populist cause. Of the black populists, his activities in Texas are the best known. The exact time and reasons for his joining the People's Party is recorded, and his association with populism, if not commitment, began with the origin of the populist party in the state.

Active in the Texas Republican Party until he joined the populists, Wade had often opposed Republican leadership and endorsed other political causes. For example, in 1884, he supported the white Republicans who entered their own

59 Ibid., September 16, 1892.
state ticket and became vice-president of the bolting "Straight-Out" Republicans. In 1889, Wade served on the executive and platform committees of the Eight Hour Convention composed of delegates from various trade unions, pledged to the support of favorable labor legislation and government ownership of the means of communication and transportation, but opposed to the national bank law. When the mayor failed to show up for a welcoming address, Wade remarked, "he doesn't think like we think, nor sleep like we sleep, nor eat like we eat. When he eats he knows where the next meal is coming from."^60

In September, 1891, the sixty Negro men who met in Dallas to select delegates to the Colored Men's Convention chose Wade as a delegate. The major issue of that Convention was the "separate car" law and whether to "denounce the law as it exists or demand its faithful execution." Cuney addressed the convention of men representing the "best heart and conscience of the Negro in Texas," and condemned the "separate car" law as did the majority of the delegates who passed a resolution to the effect that it was "class legislation" based on "race hatred." Wade delighted in provoking

black leaders and in the Dallas meeting challenged and questioned everything during the whole proceedings. He went so far as to say he was proud to be a Negro and favored separation of the Negro from the white on railroads as being an effective means of keeping white men away from Negro women.  

No party in the Texas election campaign of 1892 took up the Negro's cry for repeal of the separate car law, but the possibility of a "force" bill still stirred controversy. Thomas Nugent, the populist candidate for governor, ignored the "race question" as much as possible, and accused "the democracy" of obscuring the issues by trying "to resurrect the old worn out race prejudice," always "bellowing like the bull of Basham . . . negro, negro, negro." Nugent, convinced of the impossibility of a "force" bill, knew the Democrats used it as a smokescreen to obfuscate the real issues between the parties, and he declared that any man voting for Hogg because of an imminent danger of a "force" bill was a "traitor." The National Economist assured its readers of continued reform opposition to the "force" bill, and any implication otherwise,

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61 Dallas Morning News, August 29, 1891.
62 Ibid., September 6, 1892.
the paper said, was "wild talk," since "no leader of the party has ever remotely indorsed it . . . . Only conscienceless politicians, mad men and fools revive it." 63

Taking into consideration the failure of the People's Party of Texas to make concessions to the Negroes in its platform, the absence of Negroes in the higher echelons of the party, the limited number of black populist speakers and organizers, the opposition of the Republican Party which controlled most of the Negro vote, and the prevalence of voting corruption in areas densely populated with Negroes, the populist's failure to capture the Negro vote in 1892 was a foregone conclusion. Under considerable handicaps and with the Negro vote divided, the populists, however, made significant inroads into the Negro vote in Texas. In two counties, Nacogdoches and San Augustine, the populists captured the Negro vote, in numerous boxes they received from 20% to 50% of the Negro vote, and on the county and district level where the Republicans had no ticket many Negroes supported the People's Party. The populists who failed to capture the entire white farmer vote, could not reasonably have expected to capture the solid negro vote. 64

63 National Economist, November 5, 1892.
64 Dallas Morning News, November 9, 1892.
The backbone of the People's Party of Texas, the state Farmers' Alliance, continued to exclude Negroes, and in their annual meeting on August 17, 1893, the populists succeeded in "grabbing the order body and soul," but showed no intention of changing its racial policy. The populists secured a majority on the executive committee and a number of major alliance offices. A small minority of Alliancemen objecting to partisanship left and eventually consolidated with the Grange. 65

When the Alliance executive committee met in Dallas August 25, 1893, it developed that so many members were populists that "a full attendance of one . . . [was] about a quorum of the other." 66 The Southern Mercury criticized "zealous advocates of reform" who made a "fatal mistake" in thinking "that the day of usefulness of the Farmers' Alliance has passed." That newspaper described the People's Party, whose existence and perpetuation depended on the "propagation of Alliance principles," it explained, originated in the Alliance where greater flexibility existed than in a party committed to a specific platform necessary to make "the

65 Ibid., August 17, 1893; April 22, 1893.
66 Ibid., August 26, 1893.
popular demands into law." Thus, populist principles developed in an organization that excluded Negroes.

"A deeper feeling of confidence in the stability of the party and its chances of success" characterized the People's Party of Texas convention, which met the day after the state Alliance adjourned. Sentiment for "the democracy," desire for compromise, and "old time politicians" had disappeared. "Educated very fast on three to six cent cotton" and forced to seek a third party solution by "the logic of poverty," the Dallas Morning News reported, that the delegates consisted of "poor folk" with "hardly a man" able to "plank up anything like $1000 in ready cash to-morrow to save his neck."

Ignoring the Negro, the delegates occupied themselves with, as Nugent declared, "ways and means to prepare . . . for relief the republican and democratic parties have failed to give" by prosecuting "the work of reform." The only mention of the Negro at the convention was Ashby's comment that "war prejudices were dying out and race prejudices were dead," since even Governor Hogg now addressed the Negroes at

67 Southern Mercury, April 26, 1894.
68 Dallas Morning News, August 19, 1893; February 12, 1892.
political rallies as "my dear colored fellow citizens, ladies and gentlemen."

In the gubernatorial election of 1894, the possibility of the populists capturing the Negro vote seemed more promising. Dissension continued in the ranks of the Republican Party, and the Democratic Party, no longer divided, nominated for governor, George Culberson, more conservative than Hogg and considerably less attractive to Negroes.

Under these more favorable circumstances, the People's Party began in 1894 to court the Negro vote in hopes of luring him from the "Republican wigwam." Wade described the populist convention in June as having a noticeable absence of "representative citizens--tight breeches lawyer, the banker and other leading men usually seen in conventions," but he added there were numerous "boardin' bosses--the farmers, the men who furnish what feeds the world." The San Antonio Express noted that the "Anglo-Saxon brethren" behaved courteously towards the Negro, and even encouraged several Negro delegates, "intelligent and representative of their race . . . well equipped with argument and leaders among their people" to take an active role in deliberations.  

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69 ibid., August 19, 1893.

70 San Antonio Express, June 25, 1894.
By 1894, Wade of Dallas and John B. Rayner from Calvert had emerged as the two prominent Negro populist leaders in Texas. Rayner became a member of the populist state executive committee and Wade a member of the executive committee of Dallas County. Both men spoke before white and black audiences; Wade was known for his "wit and humour" and Rayner for his ornate language. Wade, "Black, black as negroes are made", had little trouble with his identity, but Rayner, looking "like a white man," frequently found it necessary to tell his audience he was against miscegenation, pointing out in the campaign of 1896 that his complexion was the result of "Democratic rule." While Wade, living in Dallas since 1860, derived his political experience from the Texas Republican Party, Rayner moved in 1881 to Texas from North Carolina, where as an active Republican he served as sheriff, constable, and magistrate. Neither man was a farmer; Rayner taught school and Wade worked as a carpenter. Although Rayner's populist activities were not apparent until 1894, he, like Wade, entered the People's Party in 1892, but whereas Wade objected to the "aristocratic Negroes" in the Republican Party, Rayner found the ignorant blacks in the party unacceptable, telling one such man: "we don't want any such niggers as you, a nigger has to have some sense
before he can become a populist." When Wade entered the party, he was relatively well known, while Rayner was somewhat obscure, having no public position other than Grand Marshall of the United Brothers of Friendship. Finally Wade manifested strong independence from both blacks and whites, whereas Rayner sought to accommodate the whites. 71

In Rayner's speech seconding the nomination of Nugent at the populist convention, he flattered the whites, declaring that the Negro "had endured 4000 years of savagery and 245 years of slavery only to find that the white man of the south is the Negro's first, best and firmest friend." To reassure his audience of farmers, not one of whom probably had ever owned a slave, that the white man would continue to be master and the Negro his servant, he said the black would "be as faithful . . . as he was to your wives and children when you were fighting the battles of your country." Contemptuous of the Negro politician and leaders, "dude school teachers

and long tailed preachers," he instructed the convention not to seek their aid.\footnote{San Antonio Express, June 21, 1894.}

"Keeping the delegation in a perfect roar of laughter," Wade was the "hit of the convention." He made no attempt to cajole the whites, but concentrated on the sins of the old parties, which he accused of treating all poor alike.

They hitch up the white man and nigger together and drive em together just like the man here in town I seen drivin' a white and black horse. If one of them stops and don't want to pull don't make no difference which one it is white or black, he lays on the whip. And then, for fear the other one will forget he just touches him up too.

Wade mocked men who voted Democratic because their father did; in that case, he said, he should be a slave because his father was. The Democrats, he alleged, supported only two planks, "I was born a Democrat and I want an office." The Republicans also received sharp criticism from Wade who charged them with treating the "nigger like an hunter treats his dogs, [sic] Snaps its finger and they jump and bark and then . . . they lay down for four years." Nonetheless, the convention made only insignificant concessions to the Negroes. Acknowledging a precedent set in 1891 but abandoned in 1892, the delegates elected the Negro Rayner to the executive committee as a member at large.\footnote{Ibid.}
Reflecting the general unity of the meeting, the platform contained no surprises and primarily restated previous populist demands. W. R. Lamb's suggestion, borrowed from the Montague County populist platform, that colored schools be "managed and controlled by colored teachers and trustees when practicable" evolved in the adoption of a plank, generally regarded as "peculiarly gratifying to the sons of Ham," which declared that "each race shall have its own trustees and control its own schools." The Negro community ardently desired this plank, but it was a relatively innocuous issue, and it did not commit the white populists to any radical departure from the contemporary status quo in race relations.

After the 1894 People's Party Convention, the populist word began to spread among the Negro community. Rayner wrote that "95% of the colored people in Hays County will vote the populist ticket," while the "colored" people of Walker County adopted the following statement:

1. We believe the people's party is the only party that offers any relief for the colored man.

2. That we will not vote for any man who will not support the same.

74 Dallas Morning News, June 22, 1894.
75 Southern Mercury, October 11, 1894.
3. That we will not vote for any man whose name is not on the ticket.

4. That we scorn and despise any man who will attempt to bribe us or secure our support by giving us whiskey, tobacco, money or any other means.\(^7^6\)

While Rayner and Wade stumped the state, trying to convert Negroes to the populist cause,\(^7^7\) Cuney fought to unify the Republican Party and maintain his leadership within it. Throughout the state the Republican Party divided into factions supporting or opposing Cuney. In Galveston, Cuney's hometown, the anti-Cuney factions won a strong majority. Dr. H. Wilkins, head of the anti-Cuney faction there, explained: "What we desire to do is to throw off the Cuney yoke. We want to get rid of the old executive committee and elect a new one. We want to infuse new blood into the party."\(^7^8\) Although Cuney managed to reach a compromise with some of his opponents and headed the delegation from Galveston to the state Republican Convention, others remained adamant in their opposition and formed a contesting delegation.\(^7^9\)

\(^{7^6}\) Ibid., October 4, 1894.

\(^{7^7}\) Dallas Morning News, August 18, 1894. At Belton, Texas, before an unusually large audience attending a Negro barbecue Rayner and Wade shared the platform with a Republican.

\(^{7^8}\) Ibid., August 3, 1894.

\(^{7^9}\) Ibid., August 21, 1894; August 25, 1894.
At the Republican Convention held in August, 1894 at Dallas, Cuney succeeded in unifying the "Regular" Republicans by agreeing to a compromise candidate for state chairman; however, Cuney recognized that the withdrawal of the "lily-whites" and fusion with Clark in 1892 had weakened the party as well as his authority within it. Consequently, Cuney made his opposition to fusion quite clear; "I am in favor of a straight republican ticket, head to foot and am unalterably opposed to any fusion whatsoever." The convention adopted a straight ticket, and it was endorsed by an "overwhelming majority."  

A minority, led by Negro leaders Charles Ferguson, a long time opponent of Cuney and supporter of fusion with the populists in 1892, and W. P. Mabson, desired fusion with the populists. When Mabson told the convention "whenever it was the advantage of niggers to fuse they ought to fuse," the convention broke into pandemonium and refused to let him continue.  

Mabson gives some clues as to the type of Negro interested in the populists, and what reforms he expected from them. Born

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80 Ibid., August 28, 1894; August 29, 1894.
81 Ibid., August 29, 1894.
in Wilmington, North Carolina and of light color, Mabson was an "intelligent man of agreeable address." In Princeton, North Carolina, he served as the first Negro mayor in the United States. In that state he had been a magistrate for four years, a justice of the peace two years, a school examiner two years, a United States gauger four years, a state representative two years, a state senator four years, and a delegate to the National Republican Convention in 1876, but in Texas he held no office.

Mabson claimed to represent 6,000 to 7,000 Negroes whom he had brought to Texas as an agent for planters in the Brazos River bottom. These Negroes had since prospered and, he said, they wanted reform.

What they mean by reform is they are tired of voting the Republican ticket continually without reward for their sons and daughters. The way things have been running, they rather favor Nugent for governor. In the past they have been traded and sold out by their colored leaders and they are tired of it. The straight white republicans have treated them well enough, but they complain of their colored leaders. We don't belong to the Cuney wing, the Moore and Ferguson wings. We are tired of ring rule and want to do away with it.

Other Republicans, interested as was Mabson in fusion with the populists, held a caucus on the evening of

82 Ibid.
August 28, 1894. One hundred and fifty people showed up, some of whom supported Cuney. Populists, "lily-whites," and Democrats attended, the latter dedicated to preventing a fusion of the populists and Republicans.

Sentiment to "stab Cuney" and "teach him a lesson" prevailed at the caucus. The speakers inveighed against "party bossism" and "ring rule," and opposed entering a straight ticket when the Republicans were not strong enough by themselves to elect their nominee. Lewis Burk, a Negro from Washington County, reviewed his frustrations before the caucus. He had been, he related, a

republican for sixty one years and he was opposed to a straight ticket, ring rule and a few men to run the convention. He wanted to defeat the democracy by voting for Judge Nugent .... We were sold two years ago to Judge Clark, but we were not delivered and cannot be delivered by the straight ticket fellows this time.

The opposition of dissident Republicans to Cuney as well as their condemnation of the fusion with Clark in 1892 makes it difficult to distinguish them from the Negro populists, and, perhaps, in recognition of this similarity the day after the caucus, Melvin Wade, "the great apostle of populism" sat in on the Republican convention. Cuney again clearly stated his position toward fusion with the populists, when he
declared: "As for the charge that I am advocating an endorse-
ment of the populist state ticket, that is untrue."\textsuperscript{83}

Evidently Cuney's control over the Negro vote did not extend to Nacogdoches County in east Texas, where in 1892 with Negro support the populists succeeded in electing a sheriff, county judge, and two jury commissioners; however, in the county election of 1894 strife developed between the populists and Democrats, which evenly divided the white vote, giving the Negro a decisive role to play.

In response to a letter written by a Negro from Nacogdoches to a district judge requesting Negro jury duty, the local Democrats let it be known that if elected they would call Negro jurors. In order to keep the Negro vote, A. J. Spradley, the populist sheriff, related that the populists had to call what they felt sure was, a Democratic bluff. The populist commissioners therefore called "five educated, sober, well qualified Negroes" to serve on a panel of jurors along with thirty one whites, but none, Spradley assured whites in a letter to the \textit{Dallas Morning News} had served. The populists apparently desired equality with the blacks no more than other whites.\textsuperscript{84}

\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., August 28, 1894; August 29, 1894; August 30, 1894.

\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., October 20, 1894, October 28, 1894; Saunders, "Southern Populists and the Negro, 1893-1905," pp. 240-261.
By 1894, all Texans, blacks, whites, reformers, and conservatives who were dismayed by election fraud, called for reform in that area. The Democratic Party went so far as to include in their platform a plank favoring a state law "regulating primary elections of political parties."\(^{85}\) J. M. Moore, a well known populist, commented that the convention was "impelled" to support such a proposal because the number of frauds in the primaries was "so flagrant and open," which caused the convictions of the majority to be "smothered because of political exigencies."\(^{86}\)

The Republicans of Smith County adopted the following resolution regarding fraud:

We believe in the equality of all men before the law and that in all elections by the people every voter should have the right to cast his vote freely as his better judgement dictates and to have it returned counted as cast . . . the election returns have been manipulated to count out those who have been elected to county and precinct offices . . . worst of all, the prosecuting officers, courts and grand juries have failed to take cognizance of the flagrant violations of the law . . . . We denounce the present system of election laws of Texas as an absurd mockery and are in favor of election laws that every scoundrel will fear and every honest man will be proud of.\(^{87}\)

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\(^{85}\)Winkler, Platforms of Political Parties, p. 341.

\(^{86}\)Dallas Morning News, August 21, 1894.

\(^{87}\)Ibid.
While admitting that the Negro vote figured prominently in election fraud, the Southern Mercury held "the democracy" responsible:

The outcome of it all in the south . . . is today precisely where it was in 1867--8--9 and 1870 under negro rule, the official oligarchy in these states occupying the same position the "carpet-baggers" occupied during those years. They are in office by the very same negro votes, the only difference being the negroes voted for the "carpet-baggers" while nobody believes they voted for the "democratic-oligarchy." 88

With fraud undoubtedly playing a role, the Democrats received most of the votes in the black counties, but the Populist carried the black counties of Gregg, San Jacinto, and Walker. 89 In the counties of Nacogdoches and San Augustine, populist sheriffs marshalled the Negro vote with the help of the persuasive speeches of Rayner. After his tour in these east Texas counties, known for their violent campaigns, he wrote of the bravery and tolerance there.

I have just finished a most glorious and successful canvass in the counties of Nacogdoches and San Augustine. The people in these two counties are patriotic and brave, and even the democrats are learning to be tolerant and considerate, for I broke up the democracy in these two counties, and painted despair on the cheeks of the county candidates. Not an unkind word was said to me while in these counties. The best

88 Southern Mercury, December 6, 1894.
89 Martin, People's Party in Texas, p. 97.
Sheriff in Texas is A. J. Spradley of Nacogdoches County; he is a full fledged populist brave as a lion, and as kind hearted as a woman.

After a vigorous campaign by black and white populists, Culberson, Democratic candidate for governor, defeated Nugent by over 50,000 votes, but Nugent gained 50,000 votes over 1892, with the new populist votes primarily coming from the Democrats but with some contributed by Republicans. Had the Republicans supported the populists, the victory would have been for the People's Party. The populists gained twenty two out of one hundred twenty eight seats in the state legislature. Although the populists did not capture the Negro vote, they continued to divide it and to make inroads especially within the Republican Party.  

Aware of Cuney's weakening position in the Republican Party, Rayner in 1895 hammered at its inadequacies. He compared the Republican Party, composed, he claimed, of teachers, preachers, barbers, and waiters, and which offered nothing to the worker, unfavorably to the People's Party, a party of the "yeomanry of the country"; moreover, Rayner pointed out that a vote for the Republican Party of Texas

90 Southern Mercury, September 20, 1894.

91 Winkler, Platforms of Political Parties, p. 646; Martin, People's Party in Texas, p. 212.
was useless, since the "only rights we negroes will ever enjoy will be the rights the Southern white man gives us." 92

In his "spicy letter" to the Southern Mercury, Rayner also attacked the "lily-whites" and "the democracy." The "lily whites [with their] blue veins, straight hair, and business sentiments," he said, had left the Republican Party not out of race hatred, but because too many ignorant black delegates made convention proceedings "ridiculous." The Democratic Party, he alleged, belonged to the past with "its sons of southern chivalry", which constituted a "patriarchal order of southern knighthood", which did not attempt to "capture the negro votes but [would] aim to capture the white republicans of the Cuney type." 93

During 1895, dissension between the "free silver" Democrats and "goldbug" Democrats concerned the Democratic Party more than did capturing the Negro vote. In 1894, the Texas Democratic Party dropped its plank advocating the free coinage of silver, but those still in favor of free silver met on August 6, 1895. Rayner described the numerous politicians in attendance as "chronic office seekers" with

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92 Southern Mercury, December 12, 1895.
93 Ibid.
"no political conscience or principles," and he sarcastically commented that "they will accept any platform to get a Democratic nomination and they jeer and ignore it if elected. The leaders . . . are populists . . . too cowardly to admit it." Rumors spread of fusion between the populists and "free silver" Democrats, but both sides dismissed the idea as absurd. The populists regarded the "free silver" Democrats as "looking for vacant knot holes in the populist platform to crawl through," and they hoped to catch a few.

Converting white men to populism was a white man's job according to Ashby, but he believed Rayner could do what "no white man could do" in persuading the Negro to vote the populist ticket. The Southern Mercury published a plea for "small donations" to sustain Rayner's summer canvass in the state, and Rayner declared that he could not "do much good unless I get the sympathetic help of the Mercury." Stumping for the "pops" lacked security, and Rayner on one occasion used the Mercury to thank some local men, "for they helped me when I was in need," he said. In his campaign among the Negroes, Rayner asked the whites to help the Negroes organize

94 Ibid.
95 Dallas Morning News, August 6, 1895; August 10, 1895.
rallies "so that I may have an opportunity of speaking to
my people on the issues of the day." 96

During a populist encampment in the summer of 1895,
Wade and Rayner shared the stage on Colored Day. Wade by
popular demand spoke to the whites as well. He took the
occasion to recite two poems, the first of which described
how the rich white man exploited the Negro for thirty years,
and now, Wade declared, the poor white man suffered as well:

The little bee sucks the honey bloom,
The big bee makes the honey;
Nigger works the tobacco patch,
And white man gets the money.

He then recited before an audience, which still reflected
white supremacy attitudes by setting aside special "colored"
days, a poem he said described the "present situation"
among poor white farmers:

I am a nigger and my name is Sam;
I'd rather be a nigger
Than a po' white man. 97

Once the People's Party had begun to dominate the
interests of the farmers, the numbers attending Alliance
meetings rapidly diminished so that by 1895 only eighty

96 Southern Mercury, June 13, 1895; September 15, 1895;
July 25, 1895; August 1, 1895.

97 Ibid., August 1, 1896; Dallas Morning News, August 16,
1896.
delegates attended the state Alliance convention. The Dallas Morning News commented that "the Alliance is not the populist party and the populist party is not the Alliance, but they are so thoroughly interwoven that despite the denials of some of the wool hat boys it means practically the same thing."98

Early in 1896, signs of the political dissension that would run rampant in that election year became evident in Texas. After Reconstruction, the Republican Party of Texas, possessed little power in state politics, the small amount it did exercise coming from federal patronage. The real power of the state Republican Party therefore rested in the hands of whoever controlled the Texas delegation to the National Republican Convention, which for a number of years was Wright Cuney. In 1896, however, Cuney who supported William Allison for president, met stiff opposition from those Texas Republicans favoring William McKinley.99

At the Texas Republican Convention in March, 1896, meeting for the purpose of selecting delegates to the National Republican Convention, Cuney succeeded in capturing the

98Dallas Morning News, August 21, 1895.
99Ibid., March 27, 1896.
temporary chairmanship, and although sixty per cent of the delegates favored McKinley, he ran the convention to suit his interest. Under his authoritarian parliamentary rulings, the delegates grew restless. When he tried to force approval of the Allison delegation, the convention dissolved into a "free for all," which marked Cuney's downfall and removed not only the most politically powerful Negro from Texas politics but also eliminated the chief obstruction to Negro support of populism via the Republican Party. A dramatic description of what happened after the motion to endorse the Allison delegation appeared in the Dallas Morning News:

The motion was quickly put to a vote and declared carried. Then there was a wild rush to the stand and the plan of the McKinley people was unfolded.

... They came with a precision that showed they acted in obedience to a prearranged signal ...

... There was a wild surge toward the table that Cuney occupied. This was the pinnacle of a volcano. Cuney was on one side and Flanagan [a white McKinley leader] on the other each unable to move for the human wall that shut them up. They rushed into the box like a bale of cotton into a press. A hundred men were pulling at Cuney and one hundred more were pulling on them.

Another wild mob was trying to boost Flanagan over the table.

A dozen men were beating at Cuney, some with their fists and others with their canes ... Those of Cuney's followers who could not protect him were beating those who were beating Cuney ...
Those in the mob were ground as if by millstones. The big mass swayed like a field of growing wheat before a summer wind. Every minute or so the general din was pierced by the cracking of a table which sounded like a rifle discharge.\textsuperscript{100}

The police ended the melee; miraculously, no one among the over one thousand delegates and reporters sustained injury, but Cuney became a political casualty. Calm and self-assured Cuney adjourned the meeting, but a substantial majority remained to endorse an alternate delegation of McKinley supporters to the national convention. When the McKinley-controlled credentials committee failed to seat Cuney at the national Republican Convention in June, his political power disintegrated.\textsuperscript{101}

After his defeats at the state and national Republican conventions, Cuney tried to regain state support by overcoming his reluctance to fuse with the populists. He publically favored a bizarre "triple alliance", which proposed that in return for support by the Republicans and "goldbugs" for the populist state ticket, the populists would vote for Republican electors "who will be for sound money."\textsuperscript{102}

\textsuperscript{100}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{101}Hinze, Cuney, p. 118.

\textsuperscript{102}San Antonio Express, August 3, 1896. For further evidence of Cuney's support to fusion with the populists see interview with "Gooseneck" McDonald, Galveston Daily News, October 6, 1896.
recognized that to champion fusion with the populists, desired by most Texas Republicans, was the only road open to recoup his lost political power and prestige.

Not all Negro Republicans found fusion acceptable. Bill "Gooseneck" McDonald, an ally of Cuney's at the state Republican convention in March, turned to the Democrats. "Gooseneck" told an interviewer, he "never did take to them pop fellows. Besides the leaders of Dallas wanted to fuse on county offices all along the line and that let me out." 103

John Grant, in 1896 the acknowledged white leader of Texas Republicans, along with other Republican leaders of Texas publically supported the populist state ticket on returning from the national Republican convention. 104 Both Grant and Cuney were in attendance at the populist convention held in August at Galveston, but whereas populist leaders conferred with Grant, they ignored Cuney. In any event, the populist leaders chose not to confront the populist convention already torn by dissension with the controversial issue of fusion with the state Republicans. 105

103 Galveston Daily News, October 6, 1896.

104 Ibid., August 2, 1896; San Antonio Express, August 2, 1896; August 3, 1896.

The dissension among the populists at their state convention in August, 1896, stemmed from the developments at the National People's Party Convention held in July, 1896, at St. Louis. While the national populist convention had endorsed the Democratic nominee William Jennings Bryan for president and nominated populist Tom Watson for vice president, the Texas delegation had refused to support such an arrangement. Subsequently, three factions developed among the populists: some supporting the national People's Party ticket of Bryan and Watson; some supporting only Tom Watson, and some supporting neither, adopting as the Texas delegation a "middle of the road" independent policy. In order to promote harmony the populist leaders decided to keep any resolution attempting to endorse or censure the actions of the Texas delegation at the national convention off the floor of the state meeting. 106

Although the white Texas delegates to the state populist convention in 1896 skirted the issue of fusion at the state and national levels, the Negroes did not. Wade, having left the Republican Party because of its fusion with Clark, told the convention that "whenever there is no straight populist

106 San Antonio Express, August 5, 1896; Galveston Daily News, August 5, 1896.
ticket this nigger is going home." He called those delegates who had endorsed Bryan at the national People's Party Convention a "complete set of cowards."\textsuperscript{107}

At noon, on August 5, 1896, a black caucus called by Rayner, met to discuss the Negro delegates' position on fusion, both national and state. Forty of the one hundred and fifty black delegates showed up. Of the thirty three voting, eighteen endorsed the resolutions which repudiated Bryan and his silver policy and supported the Republican Party national ticket. They declared that "we head our state tickets with the name of William McKinley and the Republican State Electors ... if the Republicans will vote for J. C. Kearby,"\textsuperscript{108} populist candidate for governor of Texas.

The resolutions passed by black populists make it difficult to distinguish between them and dissident black Republicans either in philosophy or political action. The black populists, favoring "McKinley's conservatism to Bryan's rash chimerical empiricism," desired to leave "the equilibrium of business" undisturbed, convinced that "the only way to

\textsuperscript{107}Galveston Daily News, August 6, 1896.

\textsuperscript{108}Galveston Daily News, August 6, 1896; Houston Daily Post, August 7, 1896. The ornate language of the resolutions bears the unmistakable stamp of Rayner.
reform the finances and industrial condition of the country is by gradual evolution." Furthermore, in their resolutions the black populists questioned the Texas white populists' acceptance of the free coinage of silver as a "panacea for our present financial stringency and industrial stagnation," describing Bryan's silver policy as "a political spasm, a financial blight . . . [that] if carried into operation will cause this country to pass . . . into a pelagic maelstrom of inky blackness of death and destruction."109 Wade, however, went on record as favoring the populist fiscal policy:

I am in favor of the free coinage of silver, the free coinage of gold and the free printing of greenbacks. Whatever Uncle Sam puts his stamp on is money. I am something like the old lady with her toddy; she wasn't particular what kind it was so long as it was strong, sweet and there was plenty of it.110

Unlike the white populists, the black populists had had more experience with political parties and political compromises. That blacks generally reflected Republican influence is understandable since most Negroes like Wade, Rayner, and L. M. Sublett, the Negro who nominated Rayner for the state executive committee at the populist convention in 1896, were renegades from the Republican Party. In 1894,

109 Houston Daily Post, August 7, 1896.
Sublett had headed a delegation from McLennan County, Texas, to the state Republican convention, but a contesting delegation took his place because in 1892 he had supported Hogg.

Neither white or black delegates had much opportunity to speak from the floor at the populist convention. Since populist leaders feared that any discussion on fusion would create dissension, they tightly controlled the delegates' deliberations, directing the convention's attention to the state platform and ticket. In a few instances, the Negro delegates succeeded in influencing the populist platform. At the instigation of one Negro delegate, the convention adopted an amendment to the plank providing for separate schools with separate trustees, and which also restricted the voters to participation in the election of trustees for their race only.

Another amendment introduced by Robert Allen, a Negro delegate from Burleson County, and adopted by the convention, established a minimum wage of fifty cents a day for state convicts. In pleading for the amendment, Allen revealed to the convention the group he represented as well as the factors he believed necessitated a minimum wage:

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Galveston Daily News, August 9, 1896.
I don't want to be talking about matters which the doctors, the professors and the lawyers are all posted, but I want to say that this convention will do nothing that will be of more material benefit to the colored man than to pass this resolution. I don't know how it is in other counties, but down on the Brazos there are men working for four bits a day, midnight to midnight. They haven't got any money, and when they are fined ten dollars it takes them three or four weeks to get free again. I am not here to help the mean and vicious man, but it is a hardship in many cases. The democrats trimmed it down to fifty cents and it would have been ten cents a day but for the existence of the third party. 112

Frank W. Thomas, another Negro delegate from Navarro, submitted an eloquent "Plea for Justice":

The colored people look to the people's party as the only hope of securing complete liberty and exact justice. They have trusted the republican party and been deceived; they have appealed to the democracy and have been scorned . . . . As a race they have been debarred from all participation in law making and law executing . . . . We have been practically disfranchised . . . . Concessions are made to secure the Irish vote, the German vote, the Mexican vote etc. and we are native born citizens at that . . . . If the great populist party, the friend of the laboring man, the haven of the poor and oppressed will guarantee justice to the negro they will as a body join hands to overthrow the Bourbon democracy. We ask only for justice between man and man. 113

The convention finally agreed to endorse a new vague and nonspecific plank favoring "equal justice and protection

112 Galveston Daily News, August 9, 1896.
113 Ibid., August 7, 1896.
under the law of all citizens without reference to race, color or nationality."\textsuperscript{114}

When the state Alliance met on August 20, 1896, with fifty delegates, it became apparent that fusion with the state Republicans was unacceptable to the rank and file, the Alliance president predicting such a fusion would lead to mass desertion:

A fusion of Texas republicans and Texas populist would necessarily mean a sacrifice of principle to members of both parties. The populists of this state have been noted for their adherence to what they estimated their duty . . . . They have opposed all fusions . . . . Were the leaders to attempt to make such a deal, I feel sure the rank and file would rebel in no uncertain way.

Since most Alliancemen-Populists came from the Democratic Party, "they had no desire to vote for a party they believed is as corrupt as democracy ever was."\textsuperscript{115} Gaining Republican votes without committing the populists to fusion necessitated considerable political finesse. The populists, fearful of alienating the rank and file, never publically supported fusion. The closest statement of a possible fusion with the Republicans occurred when Ashby, member of the state populist executive committee, referred to the Republicans as

\textsuperscript{114}Winkler, Platforms of Political Parties, p. 383.

\textsuperscript{115}Galveston Daily News, August 20, 1896.
"honest in their political convictions as it is possible for men to be" while emphasizing that the populists could not "sell, trade or barter" their followers. 116

Without any commitment to fusion and only minor concessions to the Negro in the populist platform, Rayner and Wade undertook to convert the Texas black to populism. In March, 1896, at the time of the Republican convention Rayner addressed a racially mixed audience at the courthouse in Austin. A member of Rayner's audience wrote to the Southern Mercury about his oratorical powers:

What crowds of people, what throngs of people by fours, by dozens, on foot; on horses, in buggies, in wagons above the roars of applause and clapping of hands, you hear the sweet music of the illustrious Rayner. Now like a wild tornado, now like a summer evening breeze, pointed, logical, sincere, yet soft and gentle, the spirit of God is plainly mirrored from his heart, carrying conviction at every breath. 117

Rayner explained the difference between black and white voters:

There is this difference . . . between a negro and white man. A white man votes from the head, he votes his mind; the negro votes from his heart; he is sentimental on the wrong occasions. If he likes a white man he will even vote for white democrat solely because he likes him. But . . . it will be a snowin' in hell whenever a white democrat votes for you because he likes you. 118

116 Ibid., October 6, 1896.
117 Southern Mercury, June 25, 1896.
118 Ibid., April 9, 1896.
Between October 19 and 24, Wade was scheduled to speak at Hempstead, Houston, Liberty, Beaumont, and Galveston, while Rayner during one month spoke in seventeen counties.

In an article for the Southern Mercury, in which he discussed the kind of man likely to get the Negro's vote, Rayner assured his readers that the Negro was not "naturally republican," and that he voted for the man, not the party. "Noise and ostentation," he explained, were "negro idiosyncracies"; therefore, Negroes admired most "only the southern white man who is full of push, dash and Southern chivalry."

In a letter read to a populist gathering in Dallas, Rayner approved Jerome Kearby, the populist standard bearer, as his "ideal man." In an attempt to have it both ways, Rayner referred to Kearby as the friend of the "common people," but "no enemy to any man because the man has wealth," and he pledged to the Populist candidate for governor, whom he called defender of "right and justice," 65,000 Negro votes.

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120 Abramowitz, "John B. Rayner," p. 165.
121 Southern Mercury, June 26, 1896.
Writing in the *Southern Mercury*, Rayner tried to convince his readers that the Negro's vote was not for sale, understanding full well that few populists had the funds to buy them:

Never try to get the negro vote and influence with money or bribes, because if you do you will fail, because when he gets away from you he will soliloquize thus: If its right for me to vote this ticket, it is wrong for that white man to pay me to do so and I am going to take his money and vote against him.¹²³

Rayner chose to ignore that most bribers had ways of knowing if the Negro voted as directed, but he continued to reassure the whites that "kind words and just treatment go further with the negro than money or promises."¹²⁴

Better than bribes in obtaining the Negro vote, Rayner wrote, were "negro reform papers . . . reform literature . . . negro speakers" and protection of the ballot box. "At every voting box we should have a campaign committee sufficient in numbers, zeal and intellect to see that the election is righteously conducted and the tickets are justly counted."¹²⁵

¹²³ *Southern Mercury*, June 26, 1896. ¹²⁴ Ibid. ¹²⁵ Ibid.
Throughout 1896, Rayner continued his campaign strategy of exposing the sins of the old parties rather than emphasizing the virtues of the new. He painted a picture of the patrician old parties, "permeated with greed, rotteness and incivism" versus the plebian People's Party, tied to "right and justice and the common people." The success of the old parties, he wrote, rested on intimidation. "The banker intimidates the merchant and manufacturer, and the merchant will intimidate the small farmer, and the farmer will bribe or intimidate the laborer and tenant farmer."  

Hogg, "the pineywood's parvenu," Rayner charged with creating "a useless and expensive railroad commission" and of engendering "hatred bitter and lasting . . . between the farmer and the railroads." The Democratic Party, Rayner wrote, was "in a supine position and comatose condition, and is sick and ready to die" and, he declared, even a "silver enema" or a "goldbug chathartic . . . cannot save it."  

The Republican Party, the "weakest party in Texas" Rayner noted was split between the "lily-whites" and "regulars"

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126 Southern Mercury, April 9, 1896.
127 Ibid.
because "too many of the half educated of my race are trying to make money out of politics, and this has caused the truly educated negro to become a political anchorite, and is driving the white men to the 'lily-whites'." Rayner stated the Republican Party was "in the hands of a conscienceless horde of political gourmands and they are fighting each other for a place at the federal pie counter." 128

The Republican Party of Texas met again in September, 1896, to decide on a state ticket, but the delegates' attention focused on Cuney's fight to capture the chairmanship of the executive committee. With a stubborn unwillingness to face his loss of power and realistically reevaluate his political assets, Cuney met with defeat in an anti-climactic denouement. The Republican Party's endorsement of the populist state ticket rather than to enter a state ticket of its own became a side issue to Cuney's downfall. 129

The populists in Texas lost the state election in 1896 by 60,000 votes with, however, a gain in populist votes of 70,000 over the previous election. The gain primarily came

128 Ibid.
from the Republicans carrying for the populists the densely black populated counties in the south. As to the fusion on the national ticket between Texas Republicans and populists, McKinley did receive 70,000 more votes in Texas than any previous Republican presidential candidate. 130

Although the People's Party of Texas elicited more votes for governor than it had before, it was the beginning of the end for the populist party in Texas. Weakened in 1896 by the fusion of the National People's Party with the Democrats and the implicit cooperation of the state Populist Party with the Republican Party of Texas, the People's Party of Texas continued for a number of years, but after 1896 it never gained ground again. By a twist of fate, in 1898 its backbone sat firmly in the Republican Party. 131

Since the People's Party of Texas originated in the hearts and developed in the hands of white farmers, their gospel of agrarian reform reflected the goals and aspirations of white men, wholly different from those of the Negro community. Lacking the educational indoctrination of the Grange and Alliance, the black farmers failed to convert to

130 Winkler, Platforms of Political Parties, pp. 645-646.
131 Martin, People's Party in Texas, p. 244.
populism, and the People's Party of Texas made no major effort to incorporate Negro demands.

Since most populists had been Democrats, the Negroes found it difficult to distinguish between the two. The methods used by both parties to capture the Negro vote were the same, and the People's Party's platforms made only minor concessions to the Negro. The difference between black populist leaders and dissident republicans also remained obscure. Both lived in the cities and possessed a similar background in political experience and philosophy. When eventually in 1896, the populists gained black support, it came through white leaders of the Republican Party making the black an exploited victim of just another party.

As other white Texans, the populist manifested no desire to alter the status quo in race relations. Generally, populists ignored the race question, fearing it obfuscated the real issues, but when issues with racial overtones arose, the white populists lined up solidly behind those trying to maintain "white supremacy."
While some historians contend, that "Negro farmers played a meaningful role in the agrarian upheaval of the 1880's and 1890's," and that the white agrarian reformers inaugurated a new basis for relationships between the black and white men of the south by regarding "the Negro as a political ally bound to them by economic ties and common destiny rather than as a slender prop to injured self esteem in the shape of white superiority," the Texas experience fails to substantiate such claims. The Negro farmer in Texas failed to develop the class identity necessary to exert political influence separate from the rest of the Negro community. The white populists of Texas, far from seeking an alteration in the status quo in race relations, only attempted to remove the "race question" from the limelight in order that attention could be focused on

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issues more critical to the immediate welfare of the white farmer.

"White supremacy" remained the watchword of most white Texans including the agrarian reformers; yet, Jack Abramowitz, one of the few historians to concentrate on the Negro and agrarian reform, maintains that the Colored Alliance presented "a serious challenge to the generally accepted theory that the re-establishment of white dominance in the South has never been seriously contested since 1876." Humphrey not only carefully acknowledged white dominance, but in Texas, the Colored Alliance never attained the political or physical strength to challenge much of anything.

Abramowitz's assertion, moreover, that the black Alliance members tried to influence and reform the Republican Party is completely without foundation in Texas where they played no role whatsoever in the Republican Party. Abramowitz assumes that the Negro community in Texas felt constrained to support Cuney, an avowed opponent of populism, because of "lily white" opposition. It cannot be deduced, however, that in the absence of a "lily white" movement, fusion between

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the Republicans and populists would have been more feasible. Had the "lily whites" remained in the party they would have constituted the strongest opposition to fusion. Nor did the Negro have to leave the Republican Party to find strong opposition to Cuney's leadership.

Furthermore, Abramowitz reveals an incomplete knowledge of Texas history when he states that "Texas the founding state of both the Southern and Colored Alliance, showed an early tendency toward Negro-white cooperation," citing as evidence the election of two Negroes to the state executive committee at the first Texas populist convention in 1891. Actually, the Texas State Alliance, prohibiting Negro membership, had nothing to do with the Colored Alliance. Unlike the close association that existed between the white Alliance and People's Party of Texas, there is no evidence that Humphrey or any black Allianceman attended this convention or any other populist convention in Texas.

Comer Vann Woodward, one of the first historians to write of the Negro and populism, also cites the 1891 populist

\[5\text{Ibid. Abramowitz refers to a coalition of the Jeffersonian Democrats and the populists in Texas when no such coalition existed. The Jeffersonian Democrats, constituting Alliancemen read out of the state Democratic party because of their support of the sub-treasury plan, but still loyal to "the democracy," survived for only a short time.}\]
convention in Texas as evidence that Negroes "were not put off with nominal duties and peripheral appointments, but were taken into the inmost councils of the party"\textsuperscript{6} failing to note, however, that in the following critical election year of 1892, the executive committee included no Negroes, and not one party platform made any significant concessions to the Negro. The denial of Negro membership in the white state Alliance, and the failure of the Texas populists to make major concessions to the Negro in their party platforms clearly indicates the inferior status of the Negro in the agrarian reform movement, which in itself is nothing extraordinary since it only reflected the established custom in Texas.

Including none of the major Negro demands in their platforms, the white populists assumed the position prevalent among white southerners that they knew what was best for the Negro. Thus Woodward's conclusion that with populism "for the first time in his political history the Negro was regarded neither as the ward of white supremacy, nor as the ward of military intervention, but as an integral part of southern society with a place in its economy"\textsuperscript{7} is misleading when

actually all the populists proposed to do was to become the new guardian of the Negro. Historians, like Woodward, taking their cue from Tom Watson of Georgia, who believed that since the white and black farmer had the same occupation they would have identical political interests, fail to recognize the singular interests and motivations of the Negro community. When Woodward declares that with populism it was "possible for the Negro to escape the dilemma of selling his votes to the Democracy or pledging it blindly to the Republican bosses,"\(^8\) he fails to understand that if the Negro community recognized this dilemma at all, they would not have looked to the People's Party for a solution.

Ignoring the unique demands of the Negro community, Woodward makes the questionable assumption that "it is altogether probable that during the brief Populist upheaval of the 'nineties Negroes and native whites achieved a greater comity of mind and harmony of political purpose than ever before or since in the South."\(^9\)

It is difficult to comprehend Woodward's explanation as to why this "comity of mind and harmony of political

\(^8\)Ibid.

purpose" terminated in the late nineties with "Jim Crow" laws. He states:

If the psychologists are correct in their hypothesis that aggression is always the result of frustration, then the South toward the end of the 'nineties was the perfect cultural seedbed for aggression against the minority race. Economic, political and social frustrations had pyramided to a climax of social tension. No real relief was in sight from the long cyclical depression of the 'nineties, an acute period of suffering that had only intensified the distress of the much longer agricultural depression.

In Texas, "Jim Crow" laws began to evolve in 1890, enacted by a legislature controlled by "the democracy." Moreover, since de facto racial segregation had always existed in Texas, it seems unnecessary to resort to psychological theory to explain laws, which were only the legitimazation of what was already customarily practiced. The question to be asked is why were these legal maneuvers employed? Apparently, the Negro in the nineties had grown more articulate and politically sophisticated and began to demand "equal protection of the law," and "the democracy," cognizant that the days of marshalling the Negro vote through intimidation, liquor, and money might be numbered, responded by enacting "Jim Crow" laws.

\[10\] Ibid., p. 81.
With regard to agrarian reform movement's more positive aspects relating to the Negro, historians persist in attributing to it far more than it intended to do or actually did for the Negro. Abramowitz declares that the "Texas People's Party was one of the most remarkable of all state organizations in its aggressive championship of the cause of decency and mutual respect in race relations," and more generally he credits the reformers with recognition of the "Negro as a fellow toiler worthy of equal treatment in the political and economic spheres and more equitable treatment in the realm of Southern social life."\(^{11}\) Woodward, moreover, maintains that Texas populism represented a "Neo-equalitarianism."\(^{12}\)

Historians of populism tend to take Woodward's and Abramowitz's evaluations of the Negro and agrarian reform literally and, as in the instance of Norman Pollack, manage to interpret them as indications that since the populists sought to extend political justice to Negroes and stand for policies which would benefit both races . . . populists were considerably advanced


of other social movements and political forces in the south throughout its history up to that time.\footnote{Norman Pollack, editor, \textit{The Populist Mind} (Indianapolis, 1967), p. 359.}

Texas history does not bear out Pollack's conclusion where white populists regarded the Negro with much the same opinions and attitudes as did their white contemporaries.

It is open to question whether or not, as Woodward states, that the reformers "to implement their promises ... went farther in the direction of racial integration than did the conservatives."\footnote{Woodward, \textit{The Strange Career of Jim Crow}, p. 63.} In Texas, the Republican party was racially integrated within its ranks whereas "the democracy" was not. The latter courted the Negro vote with Negro lieutenants, barbecues, and, in a number of instances, the vote was either purchased or marshalled with guns. The populists adopted the methods used by "the democracy" to capture the Negro vote, except for the purchasing of votes which they were unable to do because of their limited funds; instead, they adopted the Republican procedure of giving the Negro a position in the party machinery.

Although the positions the Negroes held in the Texas People's Party carried little weight either among the Negroes
or the white reformers, Pollack maintains that the sincerity of "the populist response to the Negro" cannot be questioned since any defense of the Negro's rights . . . could not have been made but at very great personal and political sacrifice . . . where not simply social ostracism but beatings and murder awaited the white person who challenged the existing system.  

In Texas, the populists made no attempt to defend "Negro's rights" (Pollack demonstrates some bias since the Negro only demanded the rights of all citizens), and they certainly demonstrated no desire to challenge the status quo in race relations. Even the conservative Democrats fused with the Texas Republicans in 1892, making it difficult for them to accuse the populists of being "nigger lovers" when they appointed two black men to their state executive committee. Undoubtedly, the white populists encountered physical dangers, but not because they challenged "white supremacy" but rather because they threatened to upset the whites in control.

Contrary to Pollack's supposition that "in very few instances anywhere in the South does one find indications that expediency rather than principle underlay the populist

response to the Negro, only political expediency can explain the populists' courtship of the Negro which began and ended at the polls. In Texas, the populists markedly abstained from endorsing any of the major Negro demands. Certainly, the populists sincerely believed that agrarian reform would benefit all farmers, white and black, but seeking equality for the Negro was not among their aims.

Robert Saunders, substantially agrees with the idea that populism presented no new alternative in race relations in the South; however, he claims that the most significant factor in rendering ineffective an alliance between the Negroes and populists was the prevalence of election fraud, concluding that without political power the Negro provided no incentive for the white to treat him "humanely," and that this was the "tragedy of the South in the early 1890's." While fraud did exist in Texas, the Republicans were still able to command a Negro vote that in a number of counties acted as a balance of power, but the Texas Republicans never succeeded in making any substantial political gains within the state after Reconstruction.

16 Ibid.
Actually the tragedy goes much deeper than the Negro's loss of franchise; it centers on the poor white farmer who, committed to "white supremacy," failed to recognize the necessity of elevating the black and, therefore, remained on the bottom with him. Thus "The stone which the builders rejected will yet become the cornerstone of the temple."
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