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Essays on Western History in Honor of Elwyn B. Robinson

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ESSAYS ON WESTERN HISTORY
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in honor of

Elwyn B. Robinson

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SIoux BOOKS
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When word of Professor Elwyn B. Robinson's retirement reached the historical profession, a former student of his suggested that he should be honored in a significant manner. Since history's most distinguished practitioners are honored with the publication of essays written by former students now in the profession, Professor Robinson's students decided to honor him with this festchrift. It does not represent the work of all his students; such would be a multi-volume effort. The seven essays, however, speak words of appreciation and honor for all those who have grown toward historical maturity with his guidance.

The contributors owe a debt of gratitude to Professor Robert P. Wilkins who served as project coordinator, general editor, and author of the appreciative sketch; to the University of North Dakota Press for its skilled workmanship, and to benefactors whose financial support made the volume possible.

Elwyn B. Robinson: An Appreciative Sketch

ROBERT P. WILKINS

Elwyn Burns Robinson was born on a farm near Orange, Geauga County, Ohio, not far from the Lake Erie metropolis of Cleveland, on October 13, 1905. When he was nine years old the family moved to Chagrin Falls, outside Cleveland, where the father operated a photographer's studio. At nearby Oberlin College he majored in English, having had in high school a strong interest in literature, including poetry. The history courses he took were English and European, including some taught by Frederick Arzt. But he did not study American history. The appeal of sports was great; he played much tennis and handball and was proficient with the rifle. In his senior year he won his class numerals for football.

Upon graduation in 1928 he served as principal of a five teacher high school at New Lyme, near Ashtabula, Ohio. In addition to administrative duties and his teaching of English, he coached basketball, track and field, and baseball. One year his New Lyme team won the Ashtabula County Class C baseball tournament. In 1930 he went to the Old Trail School in a suburb of Akron, again to teach English. However, having read Mark Sullivan's Our Times: The United States, 1900-1925, and putting aside the thought of a degree in the history of fine arts, he decided to do graduate work in history. As the Great Depression deepened he entered Western Reserve University. Having prepared a thesis, "John W. Forney and the Philadelphia Press," he received his M.A. in 1932. Arthur C. Cole, his thesis director, then working on a volume in the History of American Life, was interested in American journalism and recommended that Robinson continue study of Philadelphia newspapers for the doctorate. With his course work completed and a first draft of his dissertation nearly completed, Orin G. Libby employed him as an instructor in the Department of American History at the University of North Dakota. Within a year he completed his dissertation, "The Public Press of Philadelphia during the Civil War," receiving his Ph.D. in June, 1936.

At the University of North Dakota the teaching load was fifteen hours—three or four sections of the survey course and one or two advanced courses. He and Libby taught the sections of the course titled Economic Development of the United States. On Libby's suggestion he
taught, to senior students preparing for public school teaching, the course known as Survey and Review of American History.

With Libby's retirement in 1954, Professor Robinson took over the Recent United States course. It was only at this time, after ten years in the state, that he developed an interest in the history of North Dakota. In 1947-48 he prepared forty quarter-hour radio talks on personalities in North Dakota history. Recorded at the University's station KFJM, the "Heroes of Dakota" series was broadcast in numerous communities across the state. His preparation of a North Dakota history well launched by the work done on the "Heroes" talks, he began teaching a course about the state. The shape of the projected book and its great distinction grew out of the outstanding public lecture "The Themes of North Dakota History" in November, 1957, inaugurating the gala, year-long observance of the 75th Anniversary of the University's founding. In it he developed six propositions about the state and its people, including the "Too-Much Mistake," which some persons, viewing it as an attack on the pioneers, resented. By 1964 he completed the manuscript of the first scholarly history of the state. Published in the fall of 1966, The History of North Dakota was well received by reviewers, sold handsomely, and provided North Dakotans with the first serious, interpretative treatment of their home. In the intervening years it has been recognized as a model for works of its genre.

Professor Robinson's contributions were not limited to writing. As an elected member of the University's Graduate Committee and of the University Senate he was a doughty champion of high academic standards and of innovation in the pursuit of them. Indeed, his cogent argument for both contributed much to the progress made by the University after 1945. His skill in the classroom won recognition; in 1959 he received a Distinguished Teacher Award and in 1967 was designated University Professor of History—a high distinction. During 1963 and 1964 he served as chairman of the department. In 1948 he was appointed to the Mississippi Valley Historical Association's committee for the preservation of historic sites in the Missouri valley where great dams were being built. His service on the Association's membership committee culminated in his chairing it during the 1963-64 year. The figure for new members, 1,370, was hundreds greater than in immediately preceding years. The annual meeting resolution thanking the committee—"and in particular Chairman Robinson"—for its work was unusual in singling out the chairman for special praise.

Recognition by the campus community and by national professional organizations, including the Award of Merit of the Association for State and Local History, was a source of satisfaction to Professor Robinson, his colleagues and students. But friends and students alike will as often remember, and relish, his "infectious laughter . . . high spirits . . . [and] soft spoken enthusiasm about many facets of life." The essays in this Festschrift are by a few of his former students upon the occasion of a retirement which we all regret. They are acknowledgment of the debt of scores of graduate students and hundreds of undergraduates, whom he has disciplined toward achievement while cheerfully extending that encouragement without which apprentice scholars sometimes falter.

George B. Winship: Progressive Journalist of the Middle Border

EDWARD C. BLACKORBY

George B. Winship, founder of the Grand Forks Daily Herald, played a variety of roles in the development of Dakota Territory and of the state of North Dakota. Although, as was traditional for editors on the Middle Border, he promoted immigration and settlement, he was less than traditional in his refusal to ally with the political establishment. Rather than accept the favors which might have been his, he challenged Alexander McKenzie, the generally recognized political mastermind of the region; James J. Hill, the railroad magnate known far and wide as the "Empire Builder"; and others with similar vested interests, incurring their enmity and paying a price for independence.

Like so many who left their mark on the West, he was a Westerner by adoption. Born in 1843 in Saco, Maine, Winship moved with his family to Le Crescent, Minnesota, ten years later. His formal education was limited to elementary school, and he frequently interrupted it with work in brickyards, stone quarries, and the local print shop. His early working experiences, together with exposure to McGuffey's Third Reader and McNally's Geography, and his Yankee Protestant heritage—only a generation or two removed from England—influenced his formative years.

In 1867, after service in the Second Minnesota Cavalry during the Civil War, he engaged as a teamster on an Idaho gold-mining expedi-

tion. When fear of Indian troubles halted the expedition at Fort Abercrombie, Dakota Territory, Winship contracted to take a load of goods by flatboat to the post trader at Fort Pembina, where he obtained a job as clerk in the sutler’s store. He interrupted this employment by a brief period of newspaper work at Winnipeg. Later he formed a partnership with William Budge to operate a stage station at the point where travelers to and from Pembina crossed the Turtle River, some fourteen miles north of the present site of Grand Forks. In 1873, after participating in an attempt to organize a county government in the Grand Forks area, he left Dakota Territory to engage in newspaper work, first in St. Paul and later in Caledonia, Minnesota. On December 3, 1874, he married Minshall of Le Crescent, Minnesota.

In 1879 Winship returned to Grand Forks, then a village of between 500 and 1,000 people, an important stage station and steamboat landing between points to the south and Pembina, which the railroad had transformed into a gateway for homesteaders. He moved his presses by wagon, a three-week journey from Caledonia, and on June 28 printed the first issue of his paper with the aid of one employee. The new venture faced competition from the Plaindealer, begun in 1875 by George Walsh, and other papers, including the News, edited by Henry C. Hansbrough, were established later. In spite of them, the Herald flourished, and by 1890 it boasted a circulation “larger than any other two North Dakota papers.” By 1900 it dominated its field; it was not until the Evening Times appeared that any significant competition threatened its leadership.

Several factors contributed to the success of the Herald. In clear and forceful prose, Winship examined many of the issues of the day. His reading habits were reflected in the frequent summaries of articles from the North American Review and references to Harper’s, Century, London Saturday Review, Edinburgh Review, and other periodicals. Typical articles included discussions of Darwin’s theories, Eugene Debs’ views, and Richard Ely’s proposals.

His editorial positions were those of an ideological liberal. He opposed Jim Crow laws, expressed sympathy for the Jewish victims of Russian pogroms, objected to the violence of the Klux Klan, defended Catholics against Klan attacks, and objected to provisions which would abandon voluntary support and bring compulsory support of religious educational institutions. The Winships attended the Methodist Church, and his emphasis on voluntary support of churches was associated with his reaction to the Klan of the 1920’s appearances in the issue of May 18, 1923.

Winship was an early advocate of state-owned hail insurance. At times he displayed jingoistic naiveté, reminiscent of the spirit of manifest destiny; yet he commented on European affairs with understanding. He saw that the contrast between Wilhelm II and his father Frederick I meant that the accession of the former to the throne of the new German Empire would be an unsettling factor in world affairs.

Throughout his public life he advocated civil service reform and opposed corruption at all levels of government. In the 1880’s, before many had recognized the conflict of interest involved, Winship criticized the use of railroad passes and insisted on paying his own fare for the many occasions he traveled. He advocated temperance and opposed the alliances of public figures with either gambling or saloon interests. He was an early opponent of trusts and monopolies and, when private business served the public poorly, advocated municipal ownership. He was also an early advocate of state-owned hail insurance. At times he displayed jingoistic naiveté, reminiscent of the spirit of manifest destiny; yet he commented on European affairs with understanding. He saw that the contrast between Wilhelm II and his father Frederick III meant that the accession of the former to the throne of the new German Empire would be an unsettling factor in world affairs. As early as 1886 he reported on affairs in Herzegovina and indicated awareness of the potential for future trouble. His explanations of England’s sudden friendliness to the United States in 1895 was perceptive.
Although these details reveal both his ability and a consistent personal and political philosophy, they do not indicate his response to the changing issues during the years when the area achieved statehood and met the problems inherent in its semi-colonial situation. These several phases of Winship's public career are clearly delineated in the columns of the Daily Herald.

During the 1880's he divided his attention between the struggle to lessen marketing injustices to farmers and the effort to win statehood for the northern half of the Dakota Territory, this latter a possibility he believed menaced by the removal of the Territorial capital from Yankton in the southern part of the Territory to Bismarck in a more central location. His quarrel with McKenzie over relocation of the capital, intensified by the corruption which Winship alleged accompanied McKenzie's coup, merged with his assistance to farmers in solving their marketing problems.

Winship, Dr. W. T. Collins, and others led the Grand Forks Chamber of Commerce in calling a convention of farmers. From this meeting developed the Northwest Agricultural and Commercial Association, a movement which eventually combined with the Farmers Alliance which was strong in Dakota. The monopoly of elevator sites, provisions forbidding loading grain except through the elevators, grain-grading abuses such as later exposed by Professor Edwin F. Ladd of the North Dakota Agricultural College, and shipping regulations that often drove Dakota prices below those paid for grain in Manitoba at Brandon, Emerson, or Winnipeg were among the practices he attacked. Winship not only editorialized but he also himself served as a delegate to and at regional meetings. He urged his Western Minnesota readers to support the bid for a Congressional seat then being made by Ignatius Donnelly, whom many regarded as being beyond the bounds of respectability.

In his newspaper columns he described the Minneapolis Robbers' Association as "the Minneapolis Robbers' Association, ... those livered graduates of the sty," with the same vigor that enabled him to speak of "a certain railroad president [Hill]" and his bulls. He denounced the railroads' "lack of system and common courtesy," reasoned rates were but lowered, and suggested that the solution was to "legislate reasonably," he described George Walsh, politician and publisher of the

Plaintdealer, as "the railroad ringster ... the frosted wheat candidate." Winship and the other leaders of the movement sought to elect a Territorial Council which would enact regulatory legislation. It would be no easy task, Winship complained, because of the voting in Dakota Territory by Minnesotans, repeaters, and transients; the skill and power of the "ring" in the use of free passes; the "packing" of conventions; and the outright stuffing of the ballot box. It was an experience which prepared Winship for later discipleship in the La Follette effort to reform the electoral process. The "old gang" or "ring" could have provided Winship no better illustration of the need for election law reforms and for the necessity of replacing conventions with primary elections.

In 1887 the farmers and independent merchants won control of the Territorial Council, only to find themselves no match for the professionals who passed bills with crippling amendments or unnoticed loopholes, and even stole one before it reached the Territorial governor. The reformers succeeded finally in passing legislation establishing a railroad commission, only to have the governor appoint such men as William Budge and Alexander Griggs. Winship regarded both as allies of the interests.

The corruption in the 1888 voting for the Territorial Council Winship cited as being especially serious in Lakota, Nelson County, in the Traill County community of Caledonia, and in the third ward of Grand Forks. These abuses and the parceling out of institutions on a spoils basis by the Constitutional Convention especially offended Winship. His editorials urging honesty in elections and rejection of the Constitution gained him overwhelming public support in the area served by the Daily Herald and resulted in a Grand Forks County vote against ratification of the proposed constitution for North Dakota. Majorities elsewhere in the state brought ratification, however. In the first election held under the new constitution, Winship was elected state senator by a 699 to 261 majority, and the candidate he favored for governor, John Miller of Wahpeton, was also elected.

Winship went to Bismarck in January, 1890, expecting to work for the Australian ballot and voter registration laws, measures he deemed necessary to break the power of the "ring," the railroads and the grain trade. However, another issue appeared to preempt his time and attention.

The Louisiana Lottery Company, ousted by law in its home state, sought support from McKenzie, and sent a former Alabama Senator, George H. Spencer, with an offer to make an initial payment to the State of North Dakota of $100,000 and an annual stipend of $75,000 for a charter and the right to use the state as a home base. The McKenzie organization agreed to secure the needed legislative approval but kept information that such a proposal was pending from the press and public. As late as February 3, there was no mention of the Louisiana Lottery in the Daily Herald. The measure granting a charter was brought

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19Edwin F. Ladd was employed in 1890 as Professor of Chemistry at the North Dakota Agricultural College.
20Grand Forks Daily Herald, Jan. 16, May 1, April 5, 1884.
21Ibid., Jan. 19, 1885; Robinson, North Dakota, pp. 263-264.
22Grand Forks Daily Herald, Sept. 8, 1884.
23Ibid., Nov. 4-10, 1884.
24Ibid., March 17, 1890.
25Ibid., Nov. 4-10, 1884.
26Ibid., Oct. 7, July 26, 1889.
27Robinson, North Dakota, p. 219.
28Grand Forks Daily Herald, Feb. 3, 1890.
before a committee chaired by Judson La Moure, a political boss second only to McKenzie and generally in collaboration with him. It was reported out immediately on February 4, with a do-pass recommendation.30

Once Winship learned of the action, he responded quickly. In the \textit{Herald}'s February 4 issue there were several editorials denouncing the Lottery. When Winship's indignation was aroused, every news story was an editorial—not the subtle editorializing of make-up distortion, omission, and word-slaughtering to influence the unwarmed reader but direct expressions of opinion. Winship's subscribers knew what he wanted them to believe. He boldly stated that he was offered money for support of the Lottery and referred to "John Morris and his checkbook," a tactic he had used previously in exposing the railroad "office car" on the siding in Bismarck during the railroad fight.30

As leader of the legislative opposition, Winship's strategy was to marshal sufficient votes to sustain the governor's veto should the measure pass the House. Whether it was true that the Lottery forces were responsible for a two-hour train delay at Sanborn to keep opponents from an important rollcall is impossible to prove or disprove; in any event the Lottery supporters revealed few inhibitions in their efforts to win. Evidence of numerous shady practices was gathered by a detective agency on Governor Miller's orders and information released in time to defeat the bill in the House of Representatives.31

The \textit{Daily Herald} explained that the McKenzie machine ceased to press for passage when "eleven senators [enough to block overriding the veto] signed a paper pledging themselves to vote against the passage of the bill over the governor's veto, and placed the paper in the hands of Senator Winship, the leader of the opposition."32

Winship did not emerge unharmed. The McKenzie organization gerrymandered legislative districts so as to prevent his re-election, and they attacked the appropriation bill for the University of North Dakota, located in Winship's home community. It was not only his opposition effectiveness in advocacy of railroad and warehouse regulation. In an 1887 session of the Territorial Council when all efforts to defeat or weaken such regulatory bills had failed, the last resort of the "old gang" had been to steal the bill before it reached the governor's desk. When R. N. Stevens stole the railroad bill in the 1890 session of the Legislative Assembly, Winship had a certified copy of the measure ready for the governor's signature.33

Winship did not abandon his sympathy for the agrarian interests, but he found their monetary proposals in the 1890's contrary to his convictions. At Bismarck he had supported the railroad regulatory bill; the Rochdale plan for cooperatives, advocated that farmers raise prices by building granaries to withhold crops, and agitated for a St. Lawrence Seaway. He was alarmed when Republican governor Andrew Burke,

30\textit{Ibid.}, Feb. 4, 1890.
31\textit{Ibid.}, July 1, 18, 1890.
32\textit{Robinson, North Dakota History} XXXIV (Summer, 1967), 208-223.
33\textit{Grand Forks Daily Herald}, Feb. 13, 1890.
34\textit{Ibid.}, Mar. 17, 1890; Geiger, \textit{University of the Northern Plains}, p. 88.

Miller's successor, vetoed a warehouse bill in 1891. Winship argued that to stay in office the Republican Party must serve farmers' interests.34

Winship was especially disturbed by the silver issue in the 1892 campaign. He had believed consistently in the gold standard, and he justified this belief by pointing to the success-of its resumption in the 1870's. He argued that free silver diverted the farmers from the marketing reform issue while at the same time promising unconscionable profits to silver-mine owners. Thus he could not have supported the Democrats during this campaign, even if he, as a veteran and GAR leader, could have forgotten their role as the party of secession at the time of the Civil War.35

He presented the leaders of the agrarian movement the terms which they must meet if he were to ally with them: no more support of free silver and talk about 2 per cent interest, and no efforts to form a third party. They would have to work within the framework of the Republican party if they expected his support.36 His opposition to a third party was consistent: for example, despite his hatred of the liquor interests, he refused to support third-party attempts of those advocating prohibition.

Winship's views on money ran counter to the reform currents of 1892. Agrarian leaders felt he was out of touch and agreed to a fusion movement with the Democrats, electing Eli C. D. Shortridge governor and gaining a dominant position in the Legislative Assembly.37 Farmers' support of Weaver for President contributed to the victory of Cleveland over Harrison and likewise widened the breach between Winship and the agrarian forces.

With Cleveland as President and Shortridge as Governor, McKenzie suffered a diminution of power, and hence seemed less dangerous than formerly to Winship. This was reflected in his news and editorial policies, and in a decline in his attacks on McKenzie. Winship felt that the Republican Party, having lost the election because of machine domination, might have learned its lesson, and would never again fall under the sway of McKenzie and his associates. There was even one notable, puzzling instance when the appointment of McKenzie as a railroad receiver was commented upon favorably.38

Although the \textit{Daily Herald} continued to attack the meat, insurance, and other trusts, the major editorial thrust of the paper during ensuing years was against free coinage of silver and in favor of the gold standard. Winship did not accept the "Crime of '73" thesis, and he held that the profits which free coinage would bring silver-mine owners would be

35\textit{Ibid.}, Mar. 22, 1893. In 1906, some fifteen years later, with the monetary question settled once and for all by the election of 1900, he could support John Burke, the Democratic candidate for governor.
36\textit{Ibid.}, Jan. 13, 1891.
37A long contest over re-election of Lyman R.-Casey to the U.S. Senate resulted in his defeat, the election of William N. Roach, and dissolution of the agrarian-Democratic coalition which had captured the legislature. See Glenn L. Brudvig, "The Farmers Alliance and Populist Movement in North Dakota, 1884-1896" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of North Dakota, 1956), pp. 173-75.
illicit gain. The leading North Dakota Silverite, Henry C. Hansbrough, he charged, shared ownership in a British Columbia silver mine. He early took the lead against Hansbrough and other Silver Republicans, insuring that the North Dakota Republican Party did not endorse free coinage of silver or nominate a Silver Republican ticket. Indeed, he was he had nominated another ticket and would have repudiated the national Republican platform.

North Dakota's support of McKinley and a Republican gold standard ticket was a vindication of Winship's position and a repudiation of Hansbrough's. As Winship understood the political rules, his should have been a position of political power in the state, one that would entitle him to influence with the incoming McKinley administration and the right to be consulted about North Dakota appointments.

In view of Hansbrough's and McKenzie's alleged personal interest in a British Columbia silver mine, Winship regarded them as corrupt and McKinley's support of them unscrupulous. He was angered too by spoils appointments such as the position of Consul-General in Australia reportedly offered to a Grand Forks businessman.

The McKinley administration did not totally ignore Winship's claims, however. Just as La Follette was offered and refused the position of Comptroller of the Currency in 1896, so Winship was assured he could have a significant appointment if he would but accept the harmony of the McKinley administration, a proposition that he, too, rejected.

There are other parallels between La Follette in Wisconsin and Winship in North Dakota. Just as La Follette sought the Republican gubernatorial nomination as a reform candidate in 1896, 1898, and 1900, Winship, a leading advocate in North Dakota of the La Follette electoral reforms, did likewise in the campaigns of 1898 and 1900. La Follette had found himself blocked by packed conventions, the use of railroad passes and other questionable procedures in Wisconsin, and Winship had comparable experiences in North Dakota.

However, there was one significant difference. La Follette was able to use the Republican Party as a vehicle for reform in Wisconsin while Winship was compelled to turn to John Burke and the Democratic Party to achieve reform in North Dakota. Reasons for the contrasting situation lay in the difference in style of La Follette and Winship, the vulnerability of Winship's business enterprise, and differing political circumstances.

In Wisconsin, Philo Farnsworth, a dominant figure in the regular organization, became fatally ill at an opportune time, while in North Dakota Alexander McKenzie remained alive and well, his vigor and political power but slightly diminished by the Alaskan gold mining scandals and his period in prison. A Senatorial aspirant in Wisconsin, whose ambitions were ignored by the Republican kingmakers, was a millionaire ready to make financial resources available to La Follette or anyone who would oust those in control of the Republican Party. In North Dakota there were disappointed Senatorial aspirants, notably Martin N. Johnson from Petersburg, but they were not millionaires, a significant difference.

In Wisconsin the national party leaders had counseled settlement of the factional quarrel and nomination of La Follette to insure the state's support of McKinley in the 1900 campaign against Bryan. In North Dakota there was little likelihood that Winship would support a free-silver candidate, there were fewer electoral votes at stake, and Theodore Roosevelt, a former resident of the Dickinson-Medora area, as Vice-Presidential candidate gave Republican leaders greater confidence that they could carry the state. Thus national leaders exerted less pressure upon McKenzie to accept Winship as a harmony gubernatorial candidate. Consequently it was not a Republican governor nor the Republican Party that brought the Progressive reform movement to North Dakota.

In 1898, when Winship's bid for the Republican nomination had been rejected in favor of Fred Fancher by the Republican state convention, Winship had commented that "the Republican ticket is a bad one."

41/Robinson, North Dakota, p. 265.
... [There is] nothing for self respecting Republicans to do about it... [but to] swallow the dose... or quietly register their disapproval at the polls. In 1900 the situation was different. Although the Republican convention had awarded the gubernatorial nomination to voting Democratic for fear of strengthening the Democratic Presidential candidacy of the free silver advocate, William Jennings Bryan.

Winship had failed in his effort to defeat the McKenzie-La Moure machine but sought to reassure himself that his efforts had some beneficial results. He observed of Porter J. McCumber's defeat of Martin N. Johnson that McKenzie had been compelled to choose him to defeat Johnson and that McCumber was "a man he [McKenzie] would rather not have had and a good man."

There were other contrasts in the situation of La Follette and that of his North Dakota disciple. The two men differed in talents, training, and occupation. Winship had a business enterprise to manage that could not be neglected for a time and subsequently rebuts, as easily as could a legal practice, nor was Winship as effective in campaign speeches. Yet had Winship been another La Follette, he would not have been the beneficiary of the sequence of events that assisted La Follette in 1900 and might not have been able to achieve the Republican nomination for governor.

Unsuccessful in bringing reform to the Republican Party and opposed in principle to third parties, the one alternative left to Winship and the other reformers was to encourage the Democrats to nominate a liberal. Success came in 1906 when the Democrats nominated John Burke, a strong candidate and a liberal, to oppose Elmore H. Sarles, the conservative Republican incumbent. Uniti with Burleigh F. Spaulding, Martin N. Johnson, and others and working through a Good Government League which had been unsuccessful in blocking Sarles' renomination by the Republican convention, Winship campaigned for the Democratic.

**Grand Forks Daily Herald,** July 26, 1898; for a complete discussion of the election of 1900 see D. Jerome Tweeton, "The Election of 1900 in North Dakota" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of North Dakota, 1937). Replaced by Lynn J. Frazier on March 4, 1923. He became chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee during the Harding administration. He was thought of as a conservative but supported vigorously reform legislation concerning pure food and drugs. He most strongly opposed the policies of the Wilson administration as to whether he would vote for declaration of war in April, 1917. He did vote for the League of Nations with or without reservations. See Robinson, *History Cumber and World War I, 1914-1917,* *North Dakota History,* XXIV (Summer, 1922), 192-207; Martin N. Johnson was a member of the House of Representatives from North Dakota, 1891-1899, and a United States Senator from North Dakota, 1940, until his death on October 21 of the same year. See Clement A. Lounsberry, *North Dakota* (Chicago: S. J. Clark Publishing Co., 1917), pp. 433-434.

*For full discussion of this election see Charles N. Glaab, "John Burke and the North Dakota Progressive Movement, 1906-1912" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of North Dakota, 1952).*

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George B. Winship

Aided by the temperance advocates, Winship and his associates succeeded in electing Burke, the only Democratic North Dakota governor in a forty-year period extending from the time Shortridge left office in 1895 to the inauguration of Thomas Moodie for a short-lived term in 1935. The election of Burke, aided by a large majority in Grand Forks County and an impressive showing in the entire area served by the *Grand Forks Daily Herald,* and his subsequent re-elections in 1908 and 1910 had numerous consequences. Burke's leadership led to the realization of Winship's major objective: the replacement of conventions by direct primaries in nominating candidates for state office as well as indirect primaries for the selection of delegates to national conventions. Other legislation introduced into the state standard reforms enacted by Progressives in other states and at Washington. Some of the more significant laws referred to railroad regulation and included anti-pass legislation. The creation of a public library commission, child labor regulation, anti-lobbying laws, a corrupt practices act, a legislative shield for cooperatives based on the Rochdale plan, juvenile courts, workmen's compensation, a tuberculosis sanitarium, conservation legislation establishing a game and fish board, and pure-seed laws were among other accomplishments during Burke's terms as governor.

Only the admission of North Dakota as a state and the subsequent defeat of the Louisiana Lottery could have been personal political triumphs equally gratifying to North Dakota's "Prairie Progressive," now approaching a premature end of his professional and public career, an event which in turn made easier the 1912 return of North Dakota to control by the conservative-dominated Republican Party. This conservative Republican triumph set the pattern for ensuing years except in those elections when the Nonpartisan League captured the party machinery and nominations from the conservatives, and until 1960 with the election of William L. Guy, whose four-year tenure of the governor's office was to exceed that of Burke.

*Burleigh F. Spalding was a Fargo attorney who served in Congress and on the North Dakota Supreme Court; he was later joined on the Supreme Court by Charles Fisk, a Grand Forks jurist whose rejection by the McKenzie organization angered many Republicans and caused them to support Burke for governor. See Robinson, *North Dakota,* p. 262; William W. Phillips, "The Growth of a Progressive" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of North Dakota, 1952), p. 79.*

*The first Presidential primary in the nation's history was held in North Dakota, the state continued them until after the election of 1932. During that period they affected the course of political events in the state and in at least one instance, the election of 1932, they may have had a determining effect in forwarding the candidacy of a candidate who was later elected President. During the 1930's the State failed to perfect its Presidential Primary laws as did Oregon but instead returned to a system even more susceptible to oligarchical control than the convention system that had prevailed prior to the adoption of the Presidential primary law. For Burke and the Democrats the primaries were self-defeating. The primaries permitted Republican liberals to win nominations in their own party and then proceed to defeat the Democrats in the general election. A notable instance was the victory of the liberal Usher L. Burdick in the race for lieutenant governor in 1910 over the Democratic candidate, W. L. Richards, a Dickinson businessman and rancher, one of the more influential citizens in North Dakota. Burdick's victory, made possible by primary elections, led to public careers for himself and his son, climaxd by the election of Quentin Burdick to the United States Senate in 1960.*
Much of the weakness of the Progressives within the Republican Party lay in the vulnerability of Winship's business enterprise. He controlled the Daily Herald and owned most of the assets. Ordinarily he should have been able to retire, transfer the management to others, retain an influential voice in its affairs, and insure that Republican liberals would have a daily paper to support their cause. Conservative business interests, however, did not permit this to happen. Recognizing Winship as a prime source of their difficulties, they launched a rival paper, the Evening Times. He then had to choose between comfortable retirement in California or continued publication of a progressive newspaper in circumstances made hazardous by the appearance of the conservative competitor. Although he was to live in comparatively good health until 1931, Winship realized the second alternative was at best an uncertain one and chose retirement. It was the price he paid for having refused to ally with the politicians who served the conservative business interests of the state and region. In 1911, at the age of sixty-eight, he accepted the proposal of Jerry Bacon and associates which assured him of one-third ownership and dependable retirement income but gave him no control of policy.

The opposition of business interests is one of the reasons given for the decline of the vigorous crusading journalism of the reform period, and the use of competition to effect the transfer of Winship's paper to Jerry Bacon's control supports this thesis. Elwyn B. Robinson credits North Dakota daily newspapers with exercising a "pervasive conservative influence upon the thinking of a population with a long tradition of radicalism." This judgment may apply after 1911 to the Herald but, as Robinson emphasizes, did not apply when under Winship it was the voice of the reform movement.

Winship's influence during North Dakota's formative period was significant. Lesser men have had more widespread recognition in the accidents by which surnames become famous names. Had the choice been his, the Republican Party rather than the Democratic Party would have become the liberal party and the vehicle for reform. And had he prevailed in this purpose, he himself, not John Burke, would have been the governor spearheading the reform movement. Finding the conservative "old gang" too firmly in control of the Republican Party, he used the Democratic Party to bring the primary elections and other electoral reforms. These changes later made it possible for the Nonpartisan League to challenge for a time the conservative leadership of the Republican Party until finally the NFL, too, turned to the Democrats.

This was not the only consequence of Winship's efforts. He played determining roles in the beginning of the agrarian movement and the defeat of the Louisiana Lottery. He forwarded the settlement and economic development of the area and either directly or indirectly was responsible for much of the political success of men such as McCumber, Johnson, Spalding, and Fisk. Moreover, as part of the cultural milieu in the years when William Lemke, William Langer, and other reform leaders of another day were attending the University of North Dakota, Winship's Daily Herald may have influenced the future political trends of North Dakota. Finally, his incorruptibility and fearlessness affected favorably the political climate of the state. With the one exception—his opposition to monetary proposals—his life was an exemplification of the reform movement of his time.

53Robinson, North Dakota, pp. 265-269.
54Grand Forks Daily Herald, Aug. 15, 1911.
56Robinson, North Dakota, p. 527.
Growing Up With the Country:
Asle J. Gronna’s Apprenticeship

WILLIAM W. PHILLIPS

Asle Jorgenson Gronna was born at Elkader, Clayton County, Iowa on December 10, 1858,1 the third of six children born to Jorgen Gronna and Guri Peters Gronna.2 Jorgen Gronna was born in the small village of Ness Hollingdal(h), Norway, in 1821. The Norwegian habit of failure to transfer the family surname in the male line generation to generation shrouds much of the early history of the Gronna family in mystery. Either Jorgen or his father acquired the name Gronna from an employer who had earlier taken it from the land. Gronna is a contraction of the word groningen, which means “first to green up.” The employer Gronna lived on a little patch of land at the base of a mountain; as the sun rose in the morning, this plot was the first part of the valley to “green up” and thus was known as groningen. Jorgen Gronna obtained a small piece of timber land in this same valley about 1850. As the timber was taken from the land, he converted the cleared areas, when possible, to the raising of agricultural produce. Little of his land was suited to such utilization, but he did manage to make a living. In 1855 he married Guri Peters, who was born in the same year and in the same village as her husband-to-be. By 1857 two sons, Knute and Ole, were born to this union. In the meantime the timber was all cleared from Jorgen’s plot, but, since so little of his land was adapted to farming, scarcely enough crops could be raised to feed the family. With the timber gone, Jorgen could no longer obtain credit from the storekeepers to carry him over the winter, so he and Guri decided to sell their land and use the money received for transportation to the United States.3 They made the trip in 1858 with a small group of immigrants and settled at Elkader, where Asle was born later in the year. Three more children, all daughters, were born in the succeeding years: Christine, Rachel, and Gudborg. Jorgen had chosen a poor tract of land at Elkader so he moved in 1860 to nearby Spring Grove, Houston County, Minnesota, where he purchased a more productive farm. Spring Grove was colonized almost exclusively by Norwegians, and the habits and customs of the parent country were followed so closely that the surrounding countryside was called “Little Norway.” One tale about the area has it that even the few Irish who happened to settle there joined the Norwegian Lutheran church.4

Little is known about the childhood of Asle. He was reared under a strong religious influence in a home where hard work and virtue were the tests of men and women alike. His father was not poor, nor was he rich. Food was always plentiful, but luxuries were few. Asle worked hard as a youth, and, like many settlers’ sons, he could handle a man’s work by the time he was twelve years old. As time permitted he attended the public schools of Houston county, but it appears that his education was secondary to his chores. When he was about fifteen his father permitted him to live with a cousin in Caledonia, Minnesota, and to attend the academy there. With no financial aid from anyone he earned his own way for four years. After graduation he taught school for two years at Wilmington, Minnesota. Becoming dissatisfied with his lot, he went, with his brother Ole, to southern Dakota Territory in 1879 to homestead near Clear Lake in Deuel County. To obtain funds to tide himself over the first unproductive year on his claim, Asle taught school during the winter of 1879-1880 in Moody County, fifty miles to the south. When he returned to his homestead the following spring he sold his preemption rights, and, rather than teach another year in the crude, one-room, sod school house, moved to Fargo where he worked that summer carrying wheat sacks onto Red River barges. In the fall, having secured another teaching position, he moved to Buxton in the northern half of Dakota Territory. During the term he began keeping books for a local merchant who had been drinking heavily and had gone far into debt. In time, his employer became a complete alcoholic and so involved financially that his creditors placed Gronna in charge of the business. Impressed with his management abilities they soon set him up in a small business of his own. Before long he was lending money to his former employer who shortly went bankrupt, and in 1884 Gronna took over that business also.

William W. Phillips, a native of Grand Forks, North Dakota, after serving as Lieutenant (j.g.) in the U.S. Navy during World War II, received his Ph.B. and M.A. (1952) degrees at the University of North Dakota. A holder of the Ph.D. from the University of Missouri, he taught at North Dakota State Teachers College in Minot before going to Arizona State University in 1958.
Meanwhile, in the summer of 1883, Gronna had returned to Spring Grove to marry Bertha Marie Ostby. They had grown up together and had unusually common backgrounds. Bertha's father, David, was born in Norway in the same year as Jorgen Gronna. The two Norwegians had married in the same year and in 1858 had been in the same group of immigrants coming to the United States. Very little is known about Bertha's mother, Johanna Hagan (Ostby), except that she was born in 1831 and accompanied her husband to America. The Ostbys settled at Spring Grove, when on March 11, 1862, Bertha was born. She attended the same ungraded school that Asle did, and they were both members of the Norwegian Lutheran Church of Spring Grove. They were married in this church on August 3, 1883. The ceremony was performed by the Reverend St. S. Reque, which suggests that French as well as Irish in "Little Norway" became Norwegian Lutherans.6

Everything went well for the young couple in Buxton. Their business prospered, and Asle's prestige began to climb. He was spoken of as a man to watch in the future, for it was assured that his business ability, coupled with tremendous drive and perseverance, would soon lead him to bigger things than the little village had to offer. His associates sensed an ambition that would not be satisfied with success as a small town merchant. In fact, it was suggested by one of his benefactors that even great wealth (as the term was used by people of rural Dakota Territory) would not satisfy him. The Gronnas' future was indeed bright when their first child, James David, was born on August 7, 1884. Nineteen months later a daughter, Grace Josephine, was born.7 Three more children, two daughters and a son, completed the family. They were Lillie May (May 6, 1889), Amy Beatrice (July 1, 1894), and Arthur Jackson (July 19, 1897). The children were a source of great pleasure to the Gronnas. Regardless of the urgency of other matters, Asle always arranged to find time each day to give attention to his family. In later years this often meant reading to them from the Bible.

The first indications that Gronna was everything his associates thought him to be came in 1886, when he purchased a mercantile store from A. A. Moen of Lakota, seventy-five miles northwest of Buxton. On a cold, windy day early in March, the Gronnas made the trip to their new home by train. Anxiety over what the future held and the work of caring for two small children in a drafty day coach made the trip anything but pleasant.

Gronna received his initial mercantile stock in Lakota on consignment from wholesalers whose confidence he had gained while at Buxton. Success in his new venture was immediate, almost automatic it seems, but pleasant. Everything went well for the young couple in Buxton. Their business prospered, and Asle's prestige began to climb. He was spoken of as a man to watch in the future, for it was assured that his business ability, coupled with tremendous drive and perseverance, would soon lead him to bigger things than the little village had to offer. His associates sensed an ambition that would not be satisfied with success as a small town merchant. In fact, it was suggested by one of his benefactors that even great wealth (as the term was used by people of rural Dakota Territory) would not satisfy him. The Gronnas' future was indeed bright when their first child, James David, was born on August 7, 1884. Nineteen months later a daughter, Grace Josephine, was born. Three more children, two daughters and a son, completed the family. They were Lillie May (May 6, 1889), Amy Beatrice (July 1, 1894), and Arthur Jackson (July 19, 1897). The children were a source of great pleasure to the Gronnas. Regardless of the urgency of other matters, Asle always arranged to find time each day to give attention to his family. In later years this often meant reading to them from the Bible.

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Gronna received his initial mercantile stock in Lakota on consignment from wholesalers whose confidence he had gained while at Buxton. Success in his new venture was immediate, almost automatic it seems, and before long he was able to clear up all his debts and begin expanding his interests. He added hardware and lumber to his line of merchandise in 1888. In 1890 he bought out his largest competitor, S. R. Mendelson, a pioneer Lakota merchant, and moved into the latter's big establishment.8 Gronna's good fortune in the world of business was no accident. It stemmed from several factors: his keen business sense, a policy of consideration for customers, and effective advertising. His engaging personality cannot be overlooked either. People have a tendency to buy from merchants whom they like, even though all other factors may not be equal. And Asle was universally liked.

Of course, a keen business sense might be viewed as the crucial factor, for it undoubtedly influenced and directed all the things which brought success to Gronna. His skillful supervision of the failing Buxton enterprise and the confidence he inspired at that time is only one example. The local Nelson County papers regularly announced that Gronna had installed this or that feature which was designed to reduce operating expenses. There were such innovations as storing rope in the basement but stringing it up so it could be measured and cut on the main floor, installing a wire cash-carrier, and connecting a pump which delivered exactly one gallon with each stroke from a large kerosene tank in the basement. Another example of his sound business judgment is found in his relations with his employees. He always paid just a little more than the going wages of the day. He thus secured the best help obtainable, and the few extra dollars for salaries were returned many times in added efficiency.

Customers were treated as though Gronna appreciated their patronage. The store had a homely atmosphere and the proverbial "por-bellied" stove furnished a meeting place for the town's politicians and oldtimers. Even children gathered to hear the latter spin their tales of Indian fighting and pioneering. Gronna herself was the center of many of these sessions. It was his ability as a story-teller that won the spotlight, although his political views were listened to with some respect also. Just as he was continually installing labor saving devices to lower operating expenses, he regularly added features which were designed for the customer's pleasure. The store was always attractively painted, and many windows and a skylight were added to brighten up the interior. Merchandise was displayed on neatly arranged counters. The establishment was clean and cheerful, which was not a little uncommon in the average North Dakota small town store of that day. Gronna often saved his farm customers the expense of overnight lodging by letting them sleep in the store, quite possibly to the hotel keeper's disgust. Sleeping at the general store, in fact, was a common occurrence, for a twenty or forty mile trip to town by buckboard was a two or three day ordeal.

Building a satisfied clientele was the best kind of advertising, but Gronna also used newspapers extensively and effectively. Judged by present-day sophisticated standards, many of his advertisements were crude, but it is not likely that the average, poorly educated farmer realized that he was being appealed to on a low level. Gronna also capitalized on current news items. For example he once used an advertisement carrying the large banner "War! War! War!," under which appeared: "Chile seems anxious to declare war on the United States, but we have already done so against high prices."9 The effectiveness of this appeal was increased by placing it on the front page, so that the banner appeared to be a news headline. He also made use of the general confidence reposed in "bigness" by stating that he had the largest stock of

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6From letter of Maurice J. McCauley, clerk of Third District Court, Caledonia, Minnesota, to writer, June, 1952. Julius H. Blekstad and Peter P. Voejin witnessed the marriage.

7Grace was to marry C. W. Lewis, for many years a resident of Grand Forks.

8Nelson County News, July 31, 1890.

9Ibid., January 7, 1892.
this or that in Nelson County, or that he carried forty to fifty thousand dollars worth of merchandise. "Stock too large to quote prices" appeared frequently. He was greatly aided in his advertising by a rivalry between the publishers of the various Nelson county papers for his business. They often inserted feature stories in their journals about the Gronna enterprises; "biggest," "best," "square deal," "confidence in Lakota and Nelson county," and "an eye to the future" are only a few of the glowing terms used in describing Gronna or his businesses. One such account surpassed all others by declaring that Gronna had a larger lumber stock than all the Fargo yards combined. The paper carrying that story was rewarded with the major share of the firm's advertising during the following six months. In 1900 Gronna entered the newspaper business himself, becoming the publisher of the Lakota American. Needless to say, as the owner of a paper he stepped up his advertising campaign; however, he did continue to do business with other Nelson county papers, although on a reduced scale.

Lakota's most successful merchant did not confine himself to retailing, but, early in the 1890's, began acquiring a considerable amount of land. Most of this was obtained as settlements for debts, but always by agreement, never by foreclosure.\(^{10}\) His purchases were large, especially after 1895-1896 when he lost most of his savings in bank failures. Until that time his desire to expand had been tempered by what he considered sound, conservative business sense, rather than overextend he built up a large bank account. This policy brought him to the brink of disaster when the Panic of 1893 started a chain reaction of bank failures. From that time on he decided to invest heavily in land, and, as land values in North Dakota rose steadily until the early 1920's, it was a wise and profitable decision. By 1902 he possessed something over ten thousand acres, and by a conservative estimate he held as much as twenty thousand by 1920, of which over one-half was cultivated.\(^{11}\) The near-disaster of 1895-1896 also prompted Gronna to change his business transactions to a strictly cash basis, causing the Grand Forks Plaindealer to observe, "It's business, but can it be done?"\(^{12}\) The question was a pertinent one, for Gronna relented and began extending credit again, but probably more out of sympathy for his customers than from business necessity. A more significant effect of the bank failures on Gronna was a lessening suspicion of the currency and banking systems, which was to be important later when he became a United States Representative and Senator. Nevertheless, he entered banking in 1905 when he secured a charter for a state bank at Brocket. Five years later Gronna, Oliver Hanson, and Fred Goodman organized the Farmers' and Merchants' National Bank of Lakota.\(^{13}\) James D. Gronna, who since 1908 had looked after his father's "gigantic private business enterprises,"\(^{14}\) became its cashier. His father's enterprises were widespread and proper supervision entailed much travel. While most of Gronna's holdings were in the Lakota-Brocket-Michigan area, he also owned as far away as Brooten, Minnesota, three hundred miles to the southeast, and at Bagley, Minnesota, 150 to the east. In retrospect, the bank failures of 1895-1896 were a boon to Gronna. From that time on he always kept his money working for him, with the result that he expanded faster than he had ever thought possible. Before many years had passed, he had accumulated a fortune of unknown size and, in the eyes of his contemporaries he was an immensely wealthy man. An incident that occurred during the second session of his first term as a Congressman indicates that his wealth was great enough to insure his financial independence. At that time he spoke against a measure to raise Congressmen's pay from $5,000 to $8,500 per year—$10,000 for approximately ten months work, he said, was adequate, especially in view of the high honor that accompanied the office.\(^{15}\)

During his three terms in the House of Representatives, Gronna continued to acquire land as well as starting two banking ventures. None of these enterprises, however, was directly managed by him. Between Congressional sessions he investigated their operation and offered suggestions, but in general his relation to them was that of a stockholder to a corporation. As his legislative duties became more time consuming, he decided to liquidate some of his businesses. By May, 1904, he had sold his lumber and coal yards to the Robertson Lumber Company of Grand Forks. Later that summer when he received the Republican nomination for Congress, this sale was cited as evidence that his selection was no last minute decision of the delegates after all, but a well-laid plan many months in the making.\(^{16}\) Evidence does not bear out this charge. It appears that Gronna's interests were getting too extensive for him to manage personally, as he was still trying to do at this time, and when the attractive offer by the Robertson Company came along it was a way to lighten the load. Gronna was basically a conservative businessman, and as such he wanted to supervise personally all operations that involved his own money. Furthermore, he wished to spend more time with his family. Liquidation would satisfy both of these conditions, and he could easily afford semi-retirement, because though not quite fifty years old, he had already made a fortune. Finally, his policy of investing much money in land was working wonderfully well. Not only was it a less hazardous investment than business, but it was also more pleasant and simpler to supervise. Consequently, in 1905 and 1906 he disposed of many lots that he owned in Lakota, and in August of the latter year sold a half interest in his general store to James L. and William O. Larson of Michigan, North Dakota.\(^{17}\) Two years later the partners sold out to L. E. Foss of Brooten, Minnesota. It was at this time that Gronna acquired the eight hundred acre farm near that Minnesota village.\(^{18}\)

\(^{10}\)Careful inspection of the Nelson County Herald, August 22, 1895, to December 31, 1899, the Nelson County News, September 11, 1888, to March 27, 1895, and the Lakota Herald, January 1, 1900, to August 10, 1906, revealed no instance where Gronna foreclosed on land or homes; however, a few cases of his foreclosing on chattel mortgages were discovered.

\(^{11}\)Interview with James D. Gronna on May 8, 1952.

\(^{12}\)Quoted in the Nelson County Herald, April 9, 1896.

\(^{13}\)Congressman Gilbert N. Haugen of Iowa was also reported to be in on the planning of this organization which was incorporated with fifty thousand dollars capital stock; Nelson County Observer (Lakota), February 11 and April 7, 1910.

\(^{14}\)Lakota American, March, 1906.

\(^{15}\)U.S. Congressional Record, 59th Congress, 2nd session, p. 387.

\(^{16}\)Nelson County Observer, May 27, and August 1, 1904.

\(^{17}\)Lakota American, August 2, 1906.

\(^{18}\)Nelson County Observer, November 27, 1908.
His growing affluence was reflected in more than his business ventures. Remembering his childhood as a son of the Middle Border, he was anxious to provide a few luxuries for his family. So in 1891 an indoor bathroom, one of the first in Lakota, was installed in the Gronna home. Thirteen years later he built a large, twelve-room frame house that was described as an ornament to the town and is still the largest dwelling in Lakota.

Gronna found time to enter many activities in spite of his many and widespread business enterprises. In 1889 he was a member of the last territorial legislature, and throughout the 1890's was active in the Young Men's Republican League of Nelson county, serving as its president in 1895-1896. From 1889 to 1893, he was a member of the Kane district school board, and during part of that period he was president of the Lakota board of trustees. In the fifteen years preceding his election to the United States House of Representatives in 1904, he participated in the proceedings of the Lakota Business Men's Union and the North Dakota Grocers' and Retail Merchants' Association. He belonged to at least two social societies, the Elks and the Independent Order of Odd Fellows; of the latter he was district deputy grand master in 1907.

Recognition of his growing prominence in public as well as business affairs came in March, 1901, when Governor Frank B. White appointed him as a member of the board of trustees of the University of North Dakota. At the first meeting he attended the board approved the establishment of German and Spanish departments, and changed the name of the Scandinavian department to the Norwegian department, voted to increase the number of law instructors, and decided to build a new science hall. Gronna was instrumental also in the founding of a Scandinavian library at the University. In a speech at a Norwegian Independence celebration some time in 1904, he presented the library idea and collected, on its behalf, the sum of $2,500. At his suggestion, the trustees matched this amount, and the total was duly presented to the university to start the proposed library. In addition to all these activities, Gronna was always extremely busy with church matters.

The Buxton men who in the early 1880's had predicted big things for Gronna were better prophets than they realized at the time. It is significant that he was elected a member of the last Dakota Territorial legislature only three years after his arrival in Nelson county. Newspaper accounts give few indications of just what his political beliefs were beyond his membership in the Republican party. Whether he campaigned on a reform or a standpat platform is unknown, and his record in the legislature throws little light on the subject, for he cast his lot at one time with the standpat organization of Alexander McKenzie, the "boss of North Dakota," and at another time with the crusading Territorial Farmers' Alliance. However, it is known that he was a member of the Alliance and was generally sympathetic to that organization's objectives, yet for some reason he was not identified as an Alliance man in the legislature. It is also known that he endorsed its sub-treasury and free silver schemes, although he dropped the latter before 1896. He aligned himself with the McKenzie machine in defeating a rules committee scheme whereby any measure introduced at the request of the Alliance could be called up ahead of its regular order. Early in the session he introduced a bill that smelled suspiciously of "reform," as the machine interpreted that word. The proposal was to extend the time of payment of taxes for the year 1888, and it had all the earmarks of a relief measure until exposed by John D. Lawler, the territorial treasurer. Shortly after Gronna introduced the bill Lawler revealed that the only taxes due the territory were those of the Northern Pacific, the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul, and the St. Paul, Minneapolis, and Manitoba railroad companies. Unfortunately the House Journal does not record debate, so Gronna's intentions in the matter are unknown. Perhaps he was the unwitting tool of the machine, but in view of his keen mind it is doubtful that he could have been that naive; it is more logical that he realized what McKenzie, the Northern Pacific's man in Dakota Territory, had in mind. In any event, the episode had the effect of branding him as a minion of the "interests." Another confusing issue came up later in the form of a bill permitting cities to bond themselves to aid in railroad expansion. Naturally the railroads favored the passage of this bill, and, in view of earlier Midwestern experience when local governments had disastrously over-bonded themselves for this purpose, the issue, at a cursory glance, appears clearly to have been one of "the people versus the interests." Closer scrutiny of the affair, however, suggests that perhaps this was one of those rare instances when the interests of the people and those of the machine and its corporate backers coincided. In 1890 North Dakota had only 1,940.64 miles of railroad, much less than the 5,311.33 miles it had by 1920. In the absence of contrary evidence, it is not illogical to assume that the people, probably unaware of the unfortunate experience of older Midwestern communities, favored the bonding proposal. If so, Gronna's vote for the passage of the bill tells us little, but the fact remains that his affirmative vote, in the eyes of some of the reformers at least, was further evidence of his allegiance to the machine. On the other hand, he expressed sympathy for the reform cause by voting for bills requiring the railroads to provide loading platforms, authorizing counties to issue bonds to provide seed wheat for needy farmers, and making counties give notice before executing tax deeds. Again opposing the machine, he voted for a law declaring certain trusts and combinations unlawful. The wording of the bill drew the same distinction between the good

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19Lakota Herald, April 12, 1901; Journal of the House of the Second Legislative Assembly, 1891 (Bismarck, 1891), pp. 574-575.
20Grand Forks Daily Herald, May 18, 1906.
21Interview with James D. Gronna, May 8, 1952.
23Ibid., p. 41, 51-52.
24Ibid., 960.
29Ibid., p. 463.
30Ibid., p. 769, 996.
Gronna's record in this session naturally raises the question of whether or not he was a member of the McKenzie machine. The most satisfactory answer seems to be that he was, but for some reason he failed to receive its endorsement for re-election. Inadequate accounts from the journals of that day do not reveal the reason. Perhaps he did not want another term, but in the light of later events one might wonder if the machine may not have dropped him to teach him a lesson.

Beyond Nelson county Gronna passed from the public eye in political matters for several years following the expiry of the territorial legislature. He did remain active in the Young Men's Republican League, however, and in 1895 was elected president of that organization. In June, 1896, Gronna attended a national convention of the YMRL in Cleveland. Upon his return he worked hard in the Bryan-McKinley campaign; armed with literature which obviously had originated in the Republican national headquarters and aided by good crops, he helped guide the party to a sweeping victory in Nelson county in the fall election. Thereafter he rose steadily in the regular party machinery. In 1901 he was appointed to the board of trustees of the state university; the following year was elected chairman of the Nelson County Central Committee and sent to the state nominating convention where he did outstanding organizational work in the stalwarts' interests. Another Republican sweep in Nelson county in the fall of 1902 resulted in Gronna's re-election as central committee chairman in the spring of 1904. Later that year he led an eleven-man Nelson county delegation to the state nominating convention in Grand Forks and was able to deliver the notes of all but one of its members to McKenzie's machine. The lone dissenter was Martin N. Johnson, and this convention began a political feud between the two which ended only with Johnson's death later. The Grand Forks Evening Press and Plaindealer, a Democratic paper, welcomed the delegates and then sarcastically reminded the ticket of its endorsement for all but one of its members to McKenzie's machine. The lone dissenter was Martin N. Johnson, and this convention began a political feud between the two which ended only with Johnson's death five years later. The Grand Forks Evening Press and Plaindealer, a Democratic paper, welcomed the delegates and then sarcastically reminded them to follow "Aleck's" every whim. In the following issue, the Plaindealer revealed the machine's intentions of dumping Congressman Benjamin F. Spaulding and correctly named Gronna as the new candidate. In fact, the entire list of Republican nominees was unerringly forecast by the Democratic newspaper the day before they were chosen. Apparently Gronna's nomination came as a complete surprise to the delegates, nine-tenths of whom, according to one account, were prepared to support the incumbent. It seems that Gronna knew nothing about the nomination until the morning of the nineteenth just before the Plaindealer announced it. Speculation ran rife as to why he was selected. Three reasons suggest themselves: McKenzie was impressed with the organizing ability Gronna had shown during the 1902 convention; his territorial legislative record could easily be twisted to suit the reformers; and the Scandinavian Republican League supported him. This league had been formed in the spring of 1904 ostensibly for the purpose of getting the party convention to endorse a primary election plank, but their real aim was to secure the election of Scandinavians to public office. On the morning of the day the convention met, the League threw its support to Gronna, and this was enough for McKenzie. Whatever went on behind the scenes, Gronna claimed the nomination came to him completely unsolicited and unsought. This may have been the case in the Lakota normal nomination, but certainly he had something greater than county central committee chairman in mind as the reward for eight years of faithful service. Actually, his selection should not have been a complete shock, because in addition to the Plaindealer's announcement on the day before the nomination, the Devils Lake News as early as February had been suggesting him for Congress and had attracted a considerable following. Without a doubt, Gronna was politically ambitious and desired high office. Spaulding was later quoted as saying of the convention, "There are three kinds of politics. Good and honest politics. Dirty politics. Dirtier politics." He added that it was the third variety that beat him. From that time on he was unalterably opposed to the Old Guard.

Gronna campaigned hard that fall. He stressed mainly national issues as he would do in all succeeding elections (except that of 1910), and called attention to the fact that the Republican party, state and national, had faithfully fulfilled all its past platform promises. As expected, he rode to victory in a Republican sweep, running second in Nelson county only to President Roosevelt who led the ticket in the state. Gronna ran about one thousand votes behind the straight ticket but still defeated his Democratic opponent, A. G. Burr, by more than three to one. Roosevelt led with 52,596; ten other candidates polled over 48,000, and Gronna followed with 47,648. He was the only winning contestant except railroad commissioners to receive fewer than 48,000 votes. There is no readily apparent reason why Gronna should have trailed the ticket. His equivocal position on reform had little or nothing to do with it, as the stalwart candidate for governor, Elmore Y. Sarles, led

31bid., p. 971, 984, 996.
32bid., p. 650.
33At the time of his election as president, Gronna was thirty-seven years old, hardly a youth. This is typical of the problem young men's groups in sparsely populated areas.
34Interview with A. M. Christianson, North Dakota Supreme Court Justice, Bismarck, February 14, 1952.
35Grand Forks Evening Press and Plaindealer, July 18, 1904; hereafter cited as Plaindealer.
Gronna. Similarly, neither nationality nor religion were factors, as Thomas J. Marshall, the Republican candidate for the other seat in the House, for instance, led Gronna by slight margins in counties dominated by Canadians, Germans, and German-Russians, as well as by Norwegians, cutting across religious and nationality lines in the state.

With his election to the lower house of Congress, the forty-six year apprenticeship of Asle Gronna ended. The decades spent in business, agriculture and politics—growing up with the country—had culminated in his transfer to Washington. His new role in national affairs brought him under the spell of Robert M. LaFollette, the great Wisconsin progressive. With Gronna’s elevation to the Senate in 1911, he was closely associated with “Fighting Bob” in the battle for progressive legislation. With him he played a major part in the losing fight against American participation in World War I.

The success or failure of a single-purpose economic organization depends, in part, on the effectiveness with which it propagandizes its membership. The independent American farm has been the target of many specialized publications, some of which have attempted to enlist participation in an economic panacea for agricultural problems. The Wheat Grower, official paper of the North Dakota Wheat Growers Association, was published from 1923 to 1931 with the single-minded intent to promote a seasonal wheat pool as the method by which farmers should market their grain.

Pooling received widespread attention during the 1920’s as one of many proposed solutions for the crisis in American agriculture. Advocates of pooled marketing attempted to organize the fruit growers, tobacco raisers, cotton farmers, wheat farmers, and other commodity producers. Businessmen such as Bernard Baruch, politicians like Governor Frank Lowden of Illinois, and a host of promoters joined with farmers in the movement.

The single-commodity pool, organized on a cooperative basis, attempted to obtain control of a significant portion of one crop through marketing contracts with the farmers. The goals were to handle enough of the produce so that it could be merchandized to buyers over a period of time; to withhold from markets when prices were too low; to prevent the accumulation of a surplus in commercial channels; and, in many cases, to obtain a monopoly of the product. By controlling the supply, the pool hoped to exert a significant effect on the basic price level. The expenses and proceeds of handling the crop were divided at the end of the pool period in proportion to the commodity contribution of the farmer.


Wesley A. Waage, a native of Noonan, North Dakota, received his B.A. from St. Olaf College and the M.Ed. (1954) from the University of North Dakota. As a doctoral candidate at the University of North Dakota, he entered college administration at North Dakota State College, Ellendale, and is president of the Minnesota State Junior College at Fergus Falls.
Wheat pools were formed during the 1920's in all the states from Minnesota to Washington and from North Dakota to Texas. The state organizations were allied with each other in several confederations, and the officers maintained communication with similar groups in Canada, Australia, and other countries. The North Dakota Wheat Growers Association was incorporated in January, 1922, after a year of preliminary organizational effort. It pooled wheat for its members through the 1930 crop season, after which it went bankrupt in the increasingly severe agricultural depression of the 1930's.

During the first two years, farmer members of the North Dakota Association received the *Wheat Growers Journal*, the organ of the National Wheat Growers Association with offices at Kansas City, Missouri. For a period of time in 1922 and 1923, North Dakotans also received *The Producer* which was published at Portland, Oregon, by the Northwest Wheat Growers' Association representing pools in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Montana. As a result of difficulty in paying for the subscriptions and because of rivalry between the National and Northwest groups, the North Dakota officers decided to issue their own publication. The first issue of the North Dakota paper, *The Wheat Grower*, was printed on September 1, 1923. Publication continued without interruption until July 15, 1931, when the parent organization ceased to function. The first editor, Mandus Bridston, worked in the publicity department of the Association until the paper started. His writing was colorful and blunt, and he caused no little difficulty for the officers of the Association. While in the publicity department, Bridston had written articles for "The Spark Plug," a mimeographed newsletter that went to Association fieldmen. "Spark Plug" attacks on the organized grain exchanges came to the attention of members of the Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce and they objected vigorously. The critical articles continued with the advent of *The Wheat Grower*, and during 1924 the pool officers were forced to consider discharging their editor.

Attacks on "the grain trade" from North Dakotans were nothing new. The special difficulty for the Wheat Growers Association arose from their application for membership on the Minneapolis and Duluth grain exchanges. The Association needed the memberships in order to make direct sales of the wheat in the pool, but the Chamber hesitated to admit the poolers to membership while such articles were being published by a potential member.

See correspondence between George Duis, President of the North Dakota Wheat Growers Association, and George Cutting, Editor of the *Wheat Growers Journal*, File 3, 13, Wheat Growers Collection.

The troubles with Bridston came to a head in early 1925. He was forced to surrender the editor's chair as well as ownership of the Wheat Grower Publishing Company in return for a modest financial settlement. The paper continued under the sponsorship of the Association with two Association officers as President and Secretary-Treasurer of the Publishing Company.

A new editor, Vernice M. Aldrich, began her duties with the May 1, 1925, issue. She had graduated from the University of North Dakota with a major in English in 1923; in 1924 she received an M.A. degree in Geography from the University after completion of a thesis on the relationship of climate to crop production in North Dakota. The daughter of a Red River Valley farmer, she was elected to Phi Beta Kappa and was active in other University organizations. While serving as editor of *The Wheat Grower*, she was also Associate Editor of the *North Dakota Historical Quarterly* from 1926 to 1930.

Aldrich served as editor through the October 1, 1930, number. The Association terminated her employment at that time because of the financial difficulties which it was undergoing. It also reduced the number of issues being published and made a drastic cut in the subscription list to include only members who were actually pooling their wheat. Sidney A. Papke, a long-time employee of the Publicity Department, was appointed editor for the final ten months of publication. The last issue appeared under a July 15, 1931, dateline.

*The Wheat Grower* carried the designation, "Official Organ of the North Dakota Wheat Growers Association" throughout its entire life. The first ten bi-monthly issues included sixteen pages in an eight by eleven-inch size. From February 1, 1924, the paper, ten by fifteen-inches and usually with sixteen pages, began to describe itself the "Largest Farm Paper in North Dakota." Circulation went as high as 30,000 copies, the addressees including poolers, business subscribers, as well as individuals, and organizations that the Association wished to influence.

The paper did not attempt to become a means of bringing its readers general news of North Dakota and the world. When it dealt with state and world events they related, like the rest of the material, in some manner to the purposes of the Wheat Growers Association. Within such limitations, however, the materials were of broad interest. Consistent features included a women's page ("Just for Womenfolk"); letters to the editor ("From Other Pens"); humor columns sections; poetry (sometimes by Vernice Aldrich); some serial stories; cartoons; news of the events in the local councils of the organization; and, biographical material on the officers, directors, and other prominent participants in the pooling movement. The paper carried business advertising at times, and there was always a classified advertisement section.

The main body of material was devoted, of course, to the wheat pooling movement, cooperatives and cooperative marketing, articles of general farm information, editorials about the interests of farmers, news of the progress of the Association, and instructions to members. In all these the paper displayed one of the characteristics of the leadership general news of North Dakota and the world. When it dealt with state and world events they related, like the rest of the material, in some manner to the purposes of the Wheat Growers Association. Within such limitations, however, the materials were of broad interest. Consistent features included a women's page ("Just for Womenfolk"); letters to the editor ("From Other Pens"); humor columns sections; poetry (sometimes by Vernice Aldrich); some serial stories; cartoons; news of the events in the local councils of the organization; and, biographical material on the officers, directors, and other prominent participants in the pooling movement. The paper carried business advertising at times, and there was always a classified advertisement section.

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of the Wheat Growers Association—an almost universal optimism about the size, effect, and future of the pooling movement. It would appear that the over-optimism harmed the parent organization because there were so many occasions on which the positively-stated expectations were not actually reached in practice. More realism might have served the cause better.

The Wheat Grower maintained a reasonable degree of neutrality on political issues although the editors did not hesitate to endorse candidates and programs that seemed to hold the promise of help for the farmer. Office-seekers from both parties found approval when, in the judgment of the paper, their inclinations would benefit the farmer. Promises not followed by performance resulted in blunt criticism, so the reader might find the paper apparently favoring a candidate or an issue with a subsequent reversal of sentiment. The statement of editorial policy which appear in the March 15, 1924, issue was followed in most respects:

It is not the policy of The Wheat Grower to discuss matters concerning politics, for it represents a body of men organized for strictly economic purposes, but we think it is within our province to discuss issues of vital interest to the people of our state, inasmuch as legislative matters have a direct bearing on things economic. Therefore, we think a brief outline of the various issues of this election is fit and proper, and might contribute to a better understanding and thus a more intelligent vote by the people.7

Editorializing was never confined to the two pages which were usually reserved specifically for that purpose. Any page, and every issue, might include reference to groups such as "slackers," "knockers," "enemies," and "contract-breakers"; and to "boosters," "cooperators," and "sunshine poolers." Frequently, material was as trite as "The Non-Pooler’s Daughter":

She was only a non-pooler’s daughter,  
But her heart, it was made of pure gold,  
She was sorely distressed that her papa  
Had not in the Wheat Pool control.

"Oh, father, dear father, please listen!  
"Your daughter on bent knees implores—  
"Oh, join, father, join with the poolers,  
"Prepare for the day when it pours."8

The most enthusiastic member, no matter how hard-pressed he might be to make his farm a paying enterprise, could have been impressed by such doggerel.

On the subject of cooperative marketing, The Wheat Grower struck its most messianic tone. Commodity-based groups (whether in the cotton states, the fruit regions of California, the tobacco areas of the middle South, or the wheat regions) received attention in large articles and small notes. The progress and prospects were glowingly described. "Cooperation" appeared to be a goal in itself, although those cooperatives that were in conflict with the principles of the commodity pooling movement were treated derisively. Vernice Aldrich accurately character-ized the content of the paper, as well as the ultimate collapse of the movement, when she wrote the following observation shortly after she had lost her position in 1930 because of the paper’s financial difficulties:

Have I not been actively engaged in propagandizing co-operation for years? Have I not urged it as a moral duty, a spiritual necessity, an economic obligation, a sociological problem, an historical precedent, a mathematical solution for an abstruse problem? Even now I urge it as the solution for a personal unemployment problem of my own. Verily, co-operation is the magic panacea of our world, but we have found it too uncuous for our good.9

Although her unflattering description of the content and editorial policy of The Wheat Grower was uncomfortably close to the truth, the paper was an important element in holding together the Association’s membership. With readers as independent as North Dakota farmers, having every right to be suspicious of solutions for their problems, the publication was an absolute necessity if the pooling movement was to have any chance of success. The ultimate failure of the North Dakota Wheat Growers Association must be attributed to economic causes, not to any shortcomings of The Wheat Grower.

1Wheat Grower, March 15, 1924, p. 4.  
2Wheat Grower, March 1, 1925, p. 5.  
3“The Cooperative Crusade is Responsible” (unpublished manuscript in Aldrich Papers, Wheat Growers Collection).
The Paradox of California Populism

RALPH J. KANE

Born of two decades of agricultural depression, the Populist movement of the 1890's had the Middle West for a focal point. The movement flourished elsewhere, but John D. Hicks, largely because of the excellence and scope of his study *The Populist Revolt* published in 1931, helped fix the impression that Populism was mainly an experience of the Midwestern farmer. Since 1931, Southern Populism has been thoroughly analyzed, and as a result, some earlier assumptions have been challenged; but for some reason Populism west of the Rockies has been largely neglected. No doubt the feeling exists that an investigation of Far West Populism would only amplify prevailing conclusions. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Populism in California was vital and flourished to a degree not commonly recognized. In the early 1890's more than thirty California newspapers devoted their pages to the Populist cause. More significant, however, were the roots from which Populism in California grew. Because conditions in that state differed so radically from those of other areas of agrarian protest, the opportunity to reconsider the many assumptions surrounding Populism is obvious.

The rhetoric of California Populism contained all the clichés, but the conditions that inspired the rhetoric is another matter. In his posture toward the railroads, the labor movement, and schemes to induce inflation, the California farmer differed from his Midwestern counterpart.


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Most curious of all, the California farmer faced the prospect of continued prosperity at the very moment of his greatest agitation.

H. D. F. Kirke, noted English classical historian, has said that people of the land are "traditional and conservative." This axiom applies to ancient Greece, Mesopotamia, and modern Kansas. How then did it happen that the most viable radicalism of the second half of the nineteenth century owed its inspiration to agricultural America? One axiom deserves another, so it might also be said that people of the land tend to become restive if not radical when the holding of land becomes meaningless or is in danger of becoming meaningless. The second axiom helps explain the Populist revolt on the great plains in the 1890's as well as the discontent of the Southern farmer of the same period. In the Midwest and in the South the small margin of profit taken from the land made its value doubtful and liens clouded its futurity. But in California land was never meaningless.

At first the California farmer saw little to distinguish himself from his Midwestern brethren. As in the Midwest, the land lay before him ready for immediate use. There was no need to cut timber, to effect drainage, or to fertilize; so he did what came naturally—he grew wheat. In taking this step, he inherited the ills attending all wheat growers. He found himself trapped in a one-crop economy facing brutal competition in the international market. Worse still, his transportation problems seemed insurmountable. As one observer noted in 1875, the rate for wheat shipped from New York to England was five to seven dollars per ton while the rate per ton of wheat shipped from San Francisco to England was nearly twenty dollars. The wheat growers who attended the Farmers' Union Convention, which met in San Francisco that year, were warned solemnly that wheat in California was doomed.

Wheat in California was not doomed, however, and the story of the California grain grower departs dramatically from the pattern established east of the Rockies. Bigness became the answer for the California farmer. Because the profit per bushel was small, he expanded his acreage. While the Midwestern farm was generally defined by preemption and homestead laws, the California farm was apt to be gigantic. The Jones ranch, southeast of Tulare, had 11,000 acres, while J. J. Cairns, in the nearby Lindsay district, had 22,000 acres under cultivation in one season.

Coupled with the great size of individual farms, the scarcity of labor inspired an agricultural technology not matched anywhere else in the world. The California farmer devised and built the largest agricultural machines ever known, before or since; and size did not preclude mechanical sophistication. Stocon Berry's remarkable steam tractor could move huge combines, and if the occasion demanded, it could drag twenty-five plows. The California wheat grower was often an entrepreneur, a worthy successor to the cattle baron who preceded him. He bore little resemblance to the Kansas "hayseed." In 1878 an expert witness testified

5*ibid.*, p. 102.
before a special committee on Chinese immigration that "I hardly know a farmer in California such as we have in Indiana or Iowa."8

Other factors worked to the advantage of the California wheat grower. For two decades after 1877 the state was without a serious drought with the average yearly rainfall in San Francisco being about twenty-five inches.9 Transportation rates responded to the great volume of wheat. In 1882 even the Central Pacific reduced its rates on grain shipment. From Goshen to San Francisco and from Goshen to Stockton the rate per ton was reduced by fifty cents;10 and by 1894 it was reported that the average charge per ton on wheat shipped from San Francisco to England had reached a moderate ten dollars.11 Also it was discovered that the hot, dry Central Valley produced a brittle, dehydrated kernel that made it eminently suitable for movement over great distances. In the early years it had been assumed that England was the logical destination for American wheat, but in ensuing years markers opened in Asia which offset somewhat the disadvantages the California farmer suffered in commerce with Europe. So despite great universal forces working against profitable wheat production, the California farmer prospered.12

In the end bigness could not save wheat in California. A glutted world market and the farmers' own indifference to soil maintenance were important factors in its decline, but it was irrigation and the breath-taking prospects it held that closed the great era of "King Wheat." By 1894 production dropped to 23,000,000 bushels, and after the turn of the century California became an importer of flour and wheat.13

In the 1880's lakes, streams, rivers, and artesian wells provided the basis for another dramatic shift in California agriculture in the 1890's. At the very time that farmers east of the Rockies tightened their belts and turned insurgent, the California farmer was caught up in a more pleasant kind of revolution. Boom or bust, California land values had only one place to go and that was up. The long-finger-like ditches of water that stretched in all directions had the gift of Midas. The value of farm property in Tulare County, for instance, increased from $812,900 in 1870 to $20,287,801 in 1904.14 As one student of California agriculture expressed it:

At age thirty he [the farmer] could sit on the porch of his ranch house and look out over his herds of cattle. At age forty he could look out over his huge grain fields from the same house. At the age of fifty, sitting on his farm house porch, he might look over his peach orchard and grape vineyards.15

It is also significant that the Lucerne Valley, the Musse Slough area, the scene of a tragic chapter in history of wheat in the 1870's, could boast of the largest raisin grape vineyard in the world in 1891, and that in 1897 the great flour mill at Wheatport could quietly retool to accommodate the sugar beet.16

For some time, Californians had resented the tremendous acreages of wheat controlled by single farmers. As one man expressed it:

The combined harvester has reversed the law of labor-saving machinery, and is depopulating the State. It came at the wrong time for California; and proved a boon to the large land holder, but a bane to the State. ... Wheat growing cannot populate the State or increase its prestige and importance, or add to its wealth, and this point is more than verified by the fact that our wheat-growing regions are still sparsely settled.17

The advent of widespread irrigation renewed the old hopes for a population of small, independent yeomen in the Jeffersonian tradition.18 In keeping with this hope, many large holdings were broken up. In Tulare County the number of farms increased from 1,125 in 1880 to 2,212 in 1900, and in 1890 the average size of the irrigated farm in the county was 131 acres.19 However, as the Land of Sunshine repeatedly pointed out with pride, ten to twenty acres of irrigated land could support a family in a decent fashion; 131 acres is another matter.

Not the small independent yeoman, but a new breed was produced by irrigation. The new farmer, to be successful, had to be a skilled agronomist, an astute businessman, a speculator, and a careful manager dependent upon a source of cheap transient labor.20 At the very time when the California farmer was stretching to touch his eastern brethren in common interest through the People's Party, economic facts were drawing them apart—perhaps forever.

The preceding account would be remiss, however, if it led the reader to believe that hardships did not exist in California agriculture in the 1890's. In San Luis Obispo County, for instance, where wheat raising persisted, a harassed farm population could be found during the depression. But Elwood Cooper, president of the State Board of Horticulture, was able to report late in 1893 that "the fruit growers have probably suffered less than those engaged in other industries."21 If a generalization is to be made on the subject, perhaps that of Donald Walters, student of California Populism is apt. He wrote: "We may note first of all the absence of any spontaneous farmer insurgency arising from especially burdensome pressure of agriculture."22 Amplifying this observation, Walters also noted that "much of the California political rebelliousness was less a product of poverty than it was a mutation of restlessness, a restlessness associated with prodigious wealth and a feverish exploitation of that wealth."23 After recognizing the California farmer

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13Ibid., p. 200.
15Ibid., p. 75.
23Ibid., p. 1.
for the creature he was, it would appear that any basis of genuine radicalism in California Populism would have to come from external sources. While economic conditions distinguished the California farmer from American farmers in general, so did at least one tradition. Dating back to the Greenbacker period, agrarians had been addicted to schemes to increase and inflate currency. The cry for silver was another manifestation of his addiction. California, however, never generated much enthusiasm for fiat money for obvious reasons. Indeed, almost all the Pacific coast reacted with aversion to the greenbacks that filtered in after the Civil War.24

Because of California’s great wealth of gold and silver and because there were no banks of issue, people in the state happily conducted their commerce with hard money—this at a time when many Easterners used neither gold coins nor silver dollars.25 For Californians, whose supply of currency was bounteous, monetary schemes to raise prices had little attraction. The scarcity of skilled labor seemed to guarantee good wages, and the fall in farm prices was offset by the appreciation of land values. Debtors in California who tried to pay off their obligations in greenbacks were boycotted. San Francisco newspapers, in a gesture of contempt, printed the names of those who had forced greenbacks upon unwilling creditors.26

The *Alta California* in 1865 declared with acerbity that “if two or three millions of dirty, defaced and counterfeit shipplasters, raked out of the gutter of New York can be thrust into the hands of the hard working people of this state in exchange for their gold, a very handsome profit can be realized under the cry of Loyalty to the Government.”27 Apparently this sentiment was widespread as the Greenbackers in California polled only a total of forty-seven votes in the election of 1876.28 Greenbacks dropped in value to thirty-five cents on the dollar and then literally disappeared from California commerce.29

In the eyes of Californians, thefree coinage of silver was another matter, however. Mining interests understandably supported silver proposals, and large segments of both major parties shared, to a lesser degree, the miner’s enthusiasm. Democrats such as Stephen White and James McGuire and Republicans such as Cornelius Cole all championed silver. It is true that many farmers, especially members of the People’s Party, joined in the demand for coinage of silver, but it is doubtful that their loyalty to silver was much greater than that of the general public. Farmers had had a long standing quarrel with hydraulic miners over water rights;30 also the antipathy for banks and monopolies which had been engendered in the farmer since the Granger period must have worked against the huge mining interests so intimately connected with California banks. Marion Cannon, twice president of the California Farmers Alliance and one of the few successful Populist candidates, urged prominent Californians, such as Cornelius Cole, to oppose the Sherman silver measure.31 In 1891 Cannon reported somewhat erroneously in the Los Angeles *Alliance Farmer* that “we don’t care much for silver coinage in our state.”32 When Cannon entered Congress, he joined the Cleveland forces in reprisals against silver.33

While the California Populist of the interior joined quite willingly in the agitation for “free silver,” the urban Populist, who had socialist leanings, was apt to anathematize the advocates of silver, who he felt distracted attention from the fundamental issue—the reshaping of society. As the rift between these two factions in the Populist Party grew, insurgent farmers, who generally wanted only to tinker with the economy, saw that their strict adherence to silver was a device to shake off the more radical elements in the party that felt that free silver was a meaningless obsession.34

Free silver was not distinctively a Populist idea, but the Midwestern farmer grasped for the nostrum of silver as as cure-all. His faith was touching. In California, which lacked a tradition of agitation for monetary inflation, however, free silver was an issue to be casually manipulated and exploited for political purposes. The easy manner in which Republican and Democratic papers in California switched sides on the silver issue in 1896 suggests that their interests in silver lacked a philosophical commitment.35 The loyalty of the silver interests remained constant, of course, and they gave their support to Populism. With some cogency, Richard Hofstadter has said that “the free-silver Populism of the mountain-states variety was not agrarian Populism at all, but simple silverism.”36

The attempts of the California farmer to close ranks with labor also had its unusual aspects. In most centers of Populist activity, industrial development was relatively slight. As a result most agrarian overtures to labor represented academic and philosophical exercises. The California Populist was not afforded this luxury of detachment. In 1890 California may have ranked high in agricultural production, but she was also among the more urban of states.37 If there were to be a viable third party in California, town and country, laborer and farmer had to meet in common cause.

In early years before the California farmer had absorbed the facts of his economic identity, he could refer to himself as a “laboring man.”38 He could see himself as part of the increasing subdivision and specialization of labor. He could commiserate with the “long-suffering industrial

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classes" because he believed himself to be a member in good standing. By 1890 this illusion had been badly bruised; over the years contact between labor and farmer had too often been abrasive.

In 1879 Grangers joined with the Workingmen's Party in urging the adoption of the new constitution. Apparently farmers found that the provisions for the Railroad Commission and the Board of Equalization justified their support. After this one instance examples of cooperation are difficult to find. Indeed, we find the Workingmen's platform of 1879 specifically denouncing the spirit of "agrarianism" [sic]. The eagerness of the Kearneyites to tax land, to remove tariffs on raw materials, and to abolish prison labor also must have given many farmers pause.

In the early 1870's hard-pressed grain farmers had complained bitterly about the high price of grain sacks. In response, the Patrons of Husbandry advocated that convict labor at San Quentin and Folsom be utilized in their manufacture. This proposal was directed against the middleman, but it was not calculated to win sympathy of labor. Many of the proposals of the Kearneyites were designed to please the farmer, but other considerations dampened their appeal. Whether the farmer recognized it or not, he was essentially middle-class sharing many of the appropriate attitudes. He was shocked by the disorder and violence of the Kearneyites. The strident cry "the Chinese must go" did not excite the fears of the farmer as much as did the violence of the "San Francisco Irish" on the sand lots. Besides, the farmer was often an employer of Chinese. Over the years, the rural population of the south and interior nourished a hostile image of the corrupt and predatory city.

Also, as the California farmer increased his holdings, and became an employer of some substance, his attitude toward labor came to be colored by class prejudice. In 1876 Col. W. W. Hollister, a large landowner, spoke for his kind:

I can remember a time, forty years ago, when the American, that is the laborer, in the country was a kindly working man, when he was willing to perform his labors in a kindly, submissive, good way. . . . There is no such man in the state of California that I know of, with very few exceptions.

Perhaps the most graphic instance of urban radicalism meeting the country mentality came when Arthur Vinette, labor leader and city Populist, led a contingent of Coxey's army from Los Angeles into the interior. Ostensibly with Populist support, Vinette left Los Angeles on April 2, 1894, with 160 unemployed workers, their destination being Washington, D. C. Marching on foot, Vinette's little band earned the respect and help of the people on the route by its "exemplary" conduct until it reached the farming communities of San Bernadino and Colton. The frantic overreaction of the mob can only be explained by deep-seated fears and suspicions of city radicalism harbored by the rural mind.

Also in 1894 the bitter strike of the American Railway Union helped deepen the gulf between labor and farmer. All in all, the California farmer viewed the action of the strikers with dismay. Apricots and peaches were left to rot at car sidings, and the secretary of the State Board of Horticulture estimated that the loss exceeded a million dollars.

Contributing to the separation of labor and farmer was the peculiar nature of the California labor movement itself. In California, as elsewhere, the success of the Populists in gathering a following from the ranks of organized labor depended upon whether the workers' loyalty was given to the "older and more distinctly American philosophy of labor reform" or the more exclusive doctrine of trades unionism. Unfortunately for Populism, trades unionism flourished in California in a manner unequaled in other sectors of industrial America.

The labor movement in California, notably in San Francisco, prospered in a salubrious climate. Shortly after the Civil War, general prosperity and the scarcity of labor encouraged generosity on the part of employers. Isolation from other industrial centers made the importation of strike breakers a difficult task. As a result, employers responded favorably to labor's demands and labor in turn became attached to the moderate goals of trades unions. Largely eschewing the more radical Knights of Labor, the worker sought satisfaction in a program of gradualism. He had no scheme to remake the world, and as he occupied a position of strength, he had little need to enter the political arena to achieve his ends. In short, he was poor clay from which to fashion a radical movement.

The thinking of California labor was best represented by Frank Roney, San Francisco's most illustrious labor leader. Respecting authority, abhorring secrecy, and steering clear of both radicalism and politics, he promoted trades union autonomy in the 1880's. Another expression of this desire for autonomy came from Samuel Gompers who declared that complete "cooperation or amalgamation of the wage workers' organizations" with the People's Party was impossible because it was "unnatural." Farmers were employers and workers were employees, and that was that.

Even when the depression of the 1890's ended the halcyon days of

49Ibid., p. 152.
40Davis, Political Conventions in California, p. 396.
41Ibid., pp. 374-402.
42Carr, Patrons of Husbandry, p. 96.
47Ibid.
labor, trade unionism managed to weather hard times by holding a remarkable proportion of its membership. As a result, California Populism attracted, for the most part, militant socialists and radical misfits from the periphery of the labor movement. Ironically, the more conservative trades unionists, who in spirit and purpose resembled the middle class Populist farmer, remained aloof, while visionaries and labor leaders such as Arthur Vinette and the erratic Burnette Haskell helped provide the ingredient of radicalism to California Populism.

In Populism there were two foundations upon which to build an ideological bridge between farmer and labor. These were antimonopolism and the labor-cost theory of value. These two facets offered the best hope for an independent farmer-labor alliance in politics.

The antimonopolism of the California farmer was specifically directed at the railroad. At first when confronted by the tyranny of the railroad, the farmer opted for regulation rather than nationalization. Only when the much vaunted Railroad Commission failed to achieve the farmer's purpose of regulation, did they advocate government ownership of the railroads. The farmers' attitude toward the railroad was expressed by Edward Berwick of Monterey County in a speech he gave in 1894:

... I want most emphatically to assure you that I have no sympathy with anarchy; that I am no incendiary, and that I value my own property too highly to advocate the confiscation of another's. Nor do I cherish any animosity against any member of any corporation. On the contrary, I have intense respect and admiration for the enterprise and energy exhibited by the builders of our pioneer railroads, those monumental works of the nineteenth century. I have no wish to undervalue or belittle their achievements, and no desire to deprive them of one jot of their just reward. The builders of the Southern Pacific Railroad system (Heaven rest their souls!) are almost all dead, but California fruit growers should never forget that Mr. C. P. Huntington and his late associates rendered possible that present vast development of horticulture, which today is the pride and glory of our State.53

But Berwick continued:

You can sum up transportation figures and the whole present transportation system in five short words—words too familiar to all present, "all the traffic will bear."

What does all this mean but that you are to be the eternal bond slaves of a vast corporation.... Let us face the alternative boldly!...

Shall the railroads own the people, or the people own the railroads.54

He then presented his rationale:

But is there aught revolutionary in the nationalizing of railroads? I claim there is nothing.... It has ever been one of the first functions of good government to provide means of intercommunication among its citizens.55

Here we have evidence that the farmer did not consider himself a revolutionary. Indeed, his aim was to preserve. For him the object of government ownership was the shoring up of competitive capitalism and small enterprise.56 He held that government should be an active agent in the struggle for equality and justice, and that government should be flexible enough to achieve its ends. Rather than destroy the capitalist system, he strove to restore a balance within that system. There has been a tendency to divorce the Populist revolt from the progressive movement that followed, but here we have a California farmer cogently espousing the best tenets of progressive thought.

The urban Populist, on the other hand, saw the nationalization of railroads as the first step toward a "brave new world." It was logical to him that the first sector of the economy to subvert was the communications system, and for this reason he tended to lump the telegraph with the railroads.57 As one can see, the country Populist and the urban Populist worked at cross-purposes. Their basic premises as well as their ends were in conflict. A permanent alliance of the two was impossible.

In 1894, because of prior successes, the young party seemed on the verge of becoming a genuine farm-labor party and optimism swelled through Populist ranks. But even with good prospects at hand, conflict was close to the surface. On February 20, 1894, members of Farmers' Alliance were invited to the State Labor Congress in order to establish agreement on principles. The farmers were dismayed when "fiery labor leaders" and "socialists" called for the nationalization of all the means of production and the distribution of land. E. M. Wardall, a prominent Populist, spoke plaintively for the farmers: "The convention wanted the earth with a fence around it. Well, the Farmers' Alliance don't want it and if this goes on the Alliance will draw out."58 Indeed, the California farmer had no intentions of creating an "earth with a fence around it." A "fence" around the railroad would have suited him.

If antimonopolism as an issue to ally farmer and worker in California was fraught with problems, so was the other foundation of possible alliance, the labor-cost theory. The Midwestern and Southern farmer tended to accept the labor-cost theory, not because he had read Marx, but because the doctrine seemed consonant with the hard realities of his life. For the farmer east of the Rockies, the small profit that he eked from the earth seemed in direct ratio to the sweat of his labor. The California farmer, on the other hand, tended to be a capitalist who thought as a capitalist, whether he owned up to it or not. He measured his profits in terms of his total investment rather than his labor. J. V. Webster of San Luis Obispo, an old Granger-Populist, angered the unions when he announced publically that a farmer could not pay more than thirty dollars a month for labor.59 For Webster, labor was another commodity that must conform to the dictates of the market place.

As can be seen, the ideological basis for a labor-farmer alliance was flimsy. Although Populism left its mark on the California labor movement, labor leaders such as Michael McGlynn were successful in directing labor away from political involvement in spite of serious unemployment.

53Destler, American Radicalism, p. 27.
54Carr, Patrons of Husbandry, p. 95.
56Ibid.
57Ibid., p. 257.
59The Weekly Nationalist (Los Angeles), September 27, 1890, p. 3.
61San Luis Obispo Reasoner, June 14, 1894.
ment. There is also evidence that Populism made little impact on the cities in general. J. V. Webster, a Populist candidate in 1894, ran well in the distressed rural areas of San Luis Obispo County but lost the county because of his poor showing in the towns of San Luis Obispo and Paso Robles. On the other hand, it is generally accepted that much of labor’s difficulties in Los Angeles stemmed from the hostility to unions of the “farming folk” who settled in that southern city. Historians have often noted that the union of farmers and workers in the Midwest was tenuous because of basic contradictions. But the gulf between the two groups in California was so wide that one wonders why they ever attempted to join forces in the first place.

It is generally argued that the Democrats swallowed up the People’s Party in California. Certainly many of the Populists believed that fusion with the Democrats in 1896 had brought destruction to their cause. But in retrospect, it appears that the hope that Populism could ever compete with the older parties was illusory. Had the Populists rejected fusion, it is certain that their party would have collapsed from internal contradictions.

So we see that many considerations vitiated the Populist movement in California. Perhaps a moderate prosperity did much to restrict its growth. It is true that workers in the cities suffered in the 1890’s, but agricultural prospects remained good throughout the depression. The collapse of the land boom in Southern California in 1888 brought great disappointment to many, but in spite of a national depression, the *Land of Sunshine* could report in 1895 that land values in Los Angeles were generally as high as they had been during the height of the boom.

Even the relationship between the farmer and the railroad, if not cordial, had improved by the time the Populist party was organized. In 1886 the completion of the Santa Fe Railroad into Los Angeles brought competition to the Southern Pacific and some relief from high rates. Although it took until 1898 to construct another major railroad through the San Joaquin Valley to compete with the Southern Pacific there, the mere prospect of a new railroad brought a sense of great relief which helped take the sting out of anti-railroad sentiment.

Also there is evidence that the Southern Pacific made many concessions to the fruit grower. Catering to this growing source of revenue, the railroad invested in new, specially equipped cars for improved transportation of fruit. Most startling of all, the Southern Pacific over which helped take the sting out of anti-railroad sentiment. 65 The California farmer had no need to invent a conspiracy to explain his difficulties. His *bete noire* was the Southern Pacific, whose naked power displayed itself close at hand. The farmer had little need to contrive an artificially scapegoat with such a worthy villain under his very nose. Thus we find little of the rhetorical anti-Semitism that existed in other areas.

It is true that Arthur Vinette could occasionally speak of giving the “Shylocks their pound of flesh,” and that Marion Cannon once advised against accepting Catholics into the Farmers’ Alliance. 66 It is also true that many members of the nativistic American Protective Association considered themselves Populists, and it is also true that virtually no “foreign names” can be found on the rosters of Populism. 67 But it should be remembered that the 1890’s were not years of tolerance. The relatively enlightened Senator Stephen M. White, who because of his Catholicism had felt the bite of the bigot, could describe the Chinese as an “alien race incapable of virtue and unappreciative of vice.” 71 It also needs to be remembered that it was the farmer who fought against the exclusion of Orientals, although the logic of his stand might be questioned. At one time, the Populists printed Spanish translations of their publications hoping to attract Mexican-Americans to their cause. 72 Also one of the most successful Populist candidates of the day was Adolph Sutro, a Jew, who, as Arthur McEwen, the acid-penned editor, pointed out, “lost no votes because of his blood.”

What California Populism was can easily be stated. Why it came about is more elusive. Here economic determinists should take pause. The average value of a California farm in 1900 was $10,980 while in Kansas the comparable figures was a modest $4,992. Oklahoma farms averaged $2,966. In 1900 the average farm in California consisted of 397 acres. Only in Wyoming and Nevada was the average farm larger and there special conditions obviously prevailed. 74 Any attempt to explain California Populism solely in terms of hardship courts frustration. It might help to remember that man first rebelled in Paradise.

The fact that California has long been good soil for extremism might

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64February, 1895, p. 46.
68The Weekly Nationalist, July 5, 1890, p. 4.
69Walters, “Populism in California,” p. 149.
70 Ibid., p. 150.
72Walters, “Populism in California,” p. 151.
73Arthur McEwen’s Letter, June 8, 1893, p. 2.
help explain Populism. Also there is no doubting that mild depression in the California cities in the 1890's contributed to the movement. There was also a restlessness on the part of the farmer, who faced a perplexing future complicated by dropping agricultural prices, rising land values, and a revolution in land utilization. Also, many farmers had had their patience exhausted by the major parties which seemed immune to the demands of agriculture.

For labor leaders with socialistic leanings, Populism offered a political arena. For some, such as T. V. Cator, who lusted for political office, Populism offered an opportunity. Cator had been a Prohibitionist, an Anti-Monopolist, a Nationalist, a Reform Democrat, as well as a member of the American Party. When Populism collapsed beneath him, he turned in disillusionment to the Republican Party and a dismal acceptance of Social Darwinism. None who has examined the career of Cator has dispelled the charge of blatant opportunism that clouds his reputation. Other Populists, no doubt, felt as did J. S. Dore who "had honestly forewarned allegiance to his old party as one of corruption."

It is difficult to document, but it seems that California Populism was more closely akin to the Progressivism of the next century than other varieties of Populism. California Populism was eminently middle class, and if we accept Russel B. Nye's judgment that Progressivism "simply meant that the rule of the majority should be expressed in a stronger government, one with a broader social and economic program and one responsive to popular control," California Populism fits neatly within its prescriptions. Julian Ralph, correspondent of the rather stuffy Harpers Weekly, on an assignment to San Francisco in 1895, reported that "California is undergoing a great awakening. Morally, politically, and commercially the whole state is aroused." Adolph Sutro had been elected mayor of San Francisco on a Populist ticket. At the time, Arthur McEwen noted carefully that Sutro's support came from a broad spectrum of indignant citizenry. What Julian Ralph sensed in California was reformation, not revolution; it was progressivism not radicalism. It is significant that Hiram Johnson cut his political eyeteeth as a practicing Populist.

In at least one important respect, the California Populist had an effect that was common to Populism in general. By fusing with the Democrats, they precipitated an extensive realignment of the major parties. Conservative Bourbon Democrats left the party in droves never to return. As J. A. Graves, prominent Los Angeles banker, succinctly put it when describing the State Democratic Convention of 1896: "The action of that convention so disgusted me that right there and then I kissed the Democratic Jackass goodbye." 78

Can the historian learn from the historical novelist? Can the novelist working with historical materials present an historically true interpretation of those materials in a narrative, which also succeeds as a work of art? Can the historical novel tell a kind of historical truth that cannot be told in any other way? Although it is no easy matter to determine what constitutes historical truth, I believe that the answer to all of these questions is, "yes." I further believe that the sources of the validity of the novelist's approach are the emotional and moral components of human experience. Finally, I suggest that this approach has a special appropriateness for the study of the westward movement in American history.

It is surely not news that human beings are emotional creatures and that their actions are as often emotional as rational in origin. The historian in particular prides himself on his deep awareness of this fact, hence his skepticism toward game theorists, model builders, systems analysts, and others of his brethren in the behavioral sciences, who, he feels, place exaggerated emphasis on the more cerebral aspects of human behavior. Yet the historian often seems vulnerable to the same charge since he relies primarily on documents which are themselves products of those most rational of human activities, thinking and writing. Granted, the historian learns to criticize the rationales of his informants frequently showing them to be rationalizations instead. He also learns to "read between the lines" and to develop empathy and verstehen, which supposedly enable him to understand more acutely the emotional quality of his historical actors' experiences. He may even attempt to put himself...
in the place of an historical agent or to re-enact his experience in his own mind, but his success in this attempt seems dubious, and, compared to the novelist, his efforts seem almost comically inadequate.

There is a reason for this. The historian's heart isn't in it. Whatever lip service he may pay to such an imaginative enterprise, with his emphasis on objectivity and reasoned conclusions resting on verifiable fact, the historian in the end recoils from such a subjective undertaking. Trained to restrain his own emotions in assessing historical evidence, he strives to give a cool and dispassionate presentation of relevant facts and a cautious, reasoned interpretation of them and their significance. Whatever the merits of such an approach, it seems obvious that it does not enable his reader to "feel" the experience being studied, because feeling is an emotional exercise, and the historian is trained to keep his emotions firmly in check, not to give them free rein.

The novelist, however, does the opposite. Art, whatever else it may be, is a product of the emotions, and the historical novelist deliberately filters his facts through his own emotions in an attempt to discover how the events felt to the historical actors who experienced them. Granted, he may err because he lives in the present rather than the past, but the historian likewise labors under this handicap. If the historian truly desires to learn about the feeling of an historical experience he would do well to consult an appropriate historical novelist whose business it is to know that very thing. The historian is after all an eclectic and if he can to consult an appropriate historical novelist whose business it is to know to the novelist, his efforts seem almost comically inadequate.

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It is also a commonplace that human beings live in a moral universe and conduct much of their life, especially their emotional life, on the basis of ethical considerations. Most of day-to-day living consists of doing things we "ought" to do or failing to do them, or doing those things which we ought not to do and experiencing the corresponding feelings of guilt or shame. As we can confront the same environment the novelist may have a deeper awareness of this moral dimension of the settings in which the Westerner did to the environment, and much of the Western history consists of stories of this kind, but he is largely silent about what the environment did to the Westerner. This is, of course, not surprising because the records with which the historian works tell primarily of things said, thought, and done, whereas the environment was primarily something felt. And these feelings were usually recorded only obliquely, if at all. As previously noted, the novelist is well qualified to deal with such feelings, especially since he can confront the same environment as that faced by the historical actors and draw upon his emotional reaction to it in constructing his narrative. Consequently, the forces of nature in Western novels tend to play a dominant role in the narrative of events, frequently overshadowing the characters or taking on the attributes of an independent character in the story itself. Anyone familiar with the role of the "Great Plains" in Rolvaag's *Giants in the Earth*, for example, is acquainted with this device. Again, the historian seeking to come to grips with the powerful yet elusive forces of the natural environment in Western history can consult the Western novelist with considerable profit.


2 I realize that in saying this I part company with Collingwood who asserts that the thought of an historical actor has an actual existence independent of the sensations surrounding it, and that such thought can be apprehended by the historian in his own mind, whereas the sensations (emotions) are transitory and cannot be so apprehended. *Ibid.*, pp. 300-302. I argue, conversely, that both the thought and the accompanying emotions are transitory and both have to be recreated in the historian's consciousness.  

3 A. B. Guthrie, *Essays on Western History* (New York: Free Press, 1969), pp. 271-73, 277-78. I mean simply the presentation of a sequence of events which any historical work must partly consist of in order to be called history at all.

4 Admittedly the Western environment has changed enormously since the days of the wilderness, but it is nevertheless still there, and that portion of it dealt with in this paper is probably in a more pristine state than almost any other.

5 Good introductory treatments of the question of moral judgment in history can be found in Henry Steele Commager, *The Study of History* (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1965), pp. 60-71 and Hans Meyerhoff, ed., *The Philosophy of History in Our Time* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor, 1963), part III.

6 I do not necessarily refer here to traditional narrative history which has come under heavy attack by modern behavioral historians. See for example Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr.'s *A Behavioral Approach to Historical Analysis* (New York: Free Press, 1969).
One of the ablest and most rewarding of Western novelists in this respect is A. B. Guthrie, Jr. The literary merits of at least the first two novels in his monumental trilogy on the trans-Mississippi westward movement are well established and need no elaboration here. Their value as historical works, however, seems less widely appreciated. This is especially true of the concluding novel, which of the three has been the one most sharply criticized on literary grounds. The purpose of this essay is to balance the judgment on both counts. In *The Big Sky* Guthrie deals with the mountain men as ironic harbingers of civilization in a land that is still a wilderness. Ironic because the mountain men, as typified by the central character, Boone Caudill, hate civilization and love the wilderness, but nevertheless aid in its destruction and prepare the way for settlers. The story is thoroughly researched and historically sound,6 but the author is also masterful in working the texture of wild nature into his narrative and, more importantly, into the psychology of the protagonist to such an extent that the environment becomes a key to his motivation. Fleeing the hated confines of civilization which has made him a misanthrope at the age of seventeen, Boone finds in the upper Missouri River region an open country, bold and open, without an end. It spread away, flat now, and then rolling, going on clear to the sky. A man wouldn’t think the whole world was so much. It made the heart come up. It made a man little and still big, like a king looking out. It occurred to Boone that this is the way a bird must feel, free and loose, with the world to choose from.7

It is a country in which “there was more sky than a man could think,”8 and in it the unthinking Boone acts out an historical and personal tragedy that is gripping in its intensity.

The key image in the nature theme, as the book’s title suggests, is the sky itself. It is a symbol of absolute freedom, and for Boone and many of his historical counterparts the lure of the wilderness was the promise of an anarchic escape from all civilized-moral restraints. Despite the ethereal quality of the sky image, however, Boone is no Tennysonian Sir Galahad whose “spirit beats her mortal bars.” Rather his wilderness experience makes him empty and numb with the learning except for the quick angers in him. He let the sun shine on him and the wind blow him and sights come to his eye and sounds to his ear, and never thought beyond. He was like a dumb brute, with yesterday lost behind him and tomorrow dim ahead and just this here, just this now counting with him, just the sun and the wind and the river and trees and hills.9

Caliban rather than Galahad is the end product of this flight to the wilderness. The effort at escape, moreover, is doomed to failure, for, despite his rejection of civilization, Boone brings to the wilderness many of the hatreds and “hang-ups” which civilization has given him, and at the climax of the novel he murders his best friend for a very “civilized” reason—the suspicion, wrong in this case, that he has been cuckolded.

This fateful act separates Boone from his Indian wife whom he loves, from the other Indians, and from his wilderness companions, especially his other friend, Dick Summers. In the end he stands as a tragic isolate with even his beloved wilderness receding from him, partly owing to his own actions in contributing to its destruction. The closing scene of the book in which Boone glimpses the distinction between his part in the collective historical crime against nature and his personal moral crime against humanity is powerfully done. The entire book serves to proclaim a moral precept about a set of historical events. This lesson is that movement westward could not purify civilization by offering man an escape into the “sky.” Such an escape merely debases man and makes the wilderness vulnerable to the corruptions of a civilized society which is already unhealthily estranged from nature. The subsequent novels indicate that only if the Western man comes “down to earth” and brings his appreciation of nature into the mainstream of human society, as that society is being reconstructed in a wilderness setting, can he bring about any social and moral improvement in civilization itself.

The prospect of moral and social improvement through harmony with nature is introduced in the second novel, *The Way West*. Here the characters are not mountain men, but their despised successors, the overland migrants and settlers on their way to Oregon. The leading figures, moreover, Lije Evans, farmer and eventual captain of the wagon train, and Dick Summers, ex-mountain man and friendly mentor of Boone Caudill now serving as a guide, are not misanthropes but positive, realistic individuals whose intelligent regard for their fellows is matched by their deep appreciation of the landscape. In this novel, also, the terrain exerts a powerful influence on the imaginations of the characters and upon the course of events. The following passage depicts the arrival of the party on the open plains of Nebraska:

Evans had heard about the Platte. He had pictured it in his mind. He thought he knew what he was going to see, but now that his horse stood on the summit, he couldn’t believe. He couldn’t believe that flat could be so flat or that distance ran so far or that the sky lifted so dizzy deep or that the world stood so empty. He saw old Rock chase a badger into a hole, saw a bunch of antelope drifting, saw the river sluiced and the woods rising on its islands and the sand in a great grey waste, but it was something that he couldn’t put a name to that held him. He thought he had never seen the world before. He had never known distance until now. He had lived shut off by trees and hills, and had thought the world was a doll’s world and distance just three hollers away and the sky no higher than a rifle shot.

He said, "By God, Dick! By God!” and Dick nodded knowing how it was with him and the silence stronger than any sound closed in on the words as if he had broken the rules by speaking.
This tableau, typical of Guthrie's style in its controlled lyricism, encapsulates much of the book. The natural surroundings awaken feelings of awe in travelers of sufficient sensitivity, which in turn heightens their respect for each other. This is especially apparent in the second paragraph quoted above. Furthermore the environment presents both a threat and a promise. The obstacles are formidable and difficult, perhaps impossible to overcome, but those who accept the challenge and struggle manfully but respectfully with nature to achieve their objectives in the end will somehow become "great" in the process. This is what happens in the story. Lije, a good man at the outset of the journey, accepts the adversities of the trail under Dick's tutelage, and emerges a great man at the journey's end.

But there is more to the story than this. The struggle which Guthrie describes is not merely one of man against nature but also one of man against man. Sound as usual in his historical research, Guthrie knows that the overland wagon trains were made up of ordinary persons, not heroes, and were consequently riven with petty internal jealousies, suspicions, and rivalries which impaired the unity of the group and weakened their inclinations to struggle against the obstacles of nature. At times their pettiness becomes humorously absurd, such as during the buffalo chip crisis in which the men hold a secret meeting to decide how to break the delicate news to their wives that they will have to use buffalo dung for fuel. Furthermore, Lije finds that part of his struggle is with himself, especially when he forces himself to accept the marriage of his young son to the trashy Hank McBee's daughter, Mercy, who is already pregnant by another member of the train.

But on the whole Guthrie avoids the temptation to treat the westward movement as farcical or absurd, and the story is mainly concerned with the elevation of Lije to the capaincy of the train, his development into an effective leader, and the transformation of a heterogeneous and contentious group into an efficient company of migrants and a viable social unit. The "way west" is seen as an essentially wholesome process, and although the story ends with the arrival of the party in the Willamette Valley of Oregon, the promise seems bright that the new society to be recreated there will be somehow freer and better than the old.

In These Thousand Hills, the final volume of the trilogy, we see this process of the reestablishment of society itself. Although this book has aroused less favorable commentary from the critics, it is from the viewpoint of the historian the most important of the three, and warrants a more extended treatment. It is the story of Lat Evans, Lije's grandson, in the 1880's some forty years after the events recounted in The Way


... Feeling rose in him, a shudder of feeling that left the skin cold and grained. "I never knew it would be like this," he said aloud but still to himself. He was humbled and set up at the same time and proud now with a fierce, unwor ded pride that, he had put out for Oregon. It wouldn't be easy. It wouldn't be what people called fun. Great was the name for it, the only name he could find in his mind.

"...
Like Ramrod, he'd own cattle, and by the thousands, and have range for them in the new land of Montana, and men would come to him and ask advice, all brands and breeds of men including some who wouldn't go to Pa; and Pa would smile a proud, small smile, and say, "We knew it from the first, son," and Ma would bake an apple pie remembering how he had loved it before he fared so high and Grandpa would break into a song.\textsuperscript{15}

Nevertheless, Lat is strongly attracted to the happy-go-lucky, harum-scarum life of the itinerant cowboy. He forms strong attachments to "Ram" Butler, the trail boss; Mike Carmichael, an "old hand" whose relationship to Lat is similar to that between Dick Summers and both Boone Caudill and Lije Evans; and Tom Ping, a "juvenile delinquent" of the cattle trail but one whose heart is right and who becomes Lat's close friend despite the enormous differences in their upbringing and outlook. Most importantly, he becomes deeply involved with "Callie," a prostitute and eventual madam, who returns his affection honestly and helps him get his start in the cattle business, thereby widening the gap between them and intensifying the hopelessness of her position.

If Lat's attitude toward human society is ambivalent, however, his feeling about the landscape of Western Montana are not. Arriving in the Fort Benton area, he thrills to the

\ldots giant spread of land, this plain on which the herd had spilled out from the hills. Everywhere but to the mountainous west it flowed forever. Farther than a man could think beyond buttes blued by distance, floating in it, the earth line tipped the sky. And hardly anything, any living thing to see. Wolves, coyotes, prairie foxes, gophers and the like of these which didn't count. Now and then a bunch of antelope. No buffalo so far. Cattle to be counted on the fingers except back on the Sun when early ranchers had scattered a few. Beyond them, here, just emptiness and open sky. Air like tonic, days like unclaimed gold. And grass and grass. Grass beyond the earth line, which wasn't any line but just the farthest reach of the eye. World without end, that was it. Ma, reading from the Book. "World without end."\textsuperscript{16}

In the same place where Boone Caudill had seen "more sky than a man could think," Lat sees more land "than a man could think," and the difference in perception indicates that Lat is a creature of earth whose relationship to his environment would be appreciative and personal, but practical. Like his grandfather before him, he is awestruck by his first sight of the "big country," but whereas Lije had seen it mainly as a challenge, Lat sees it as opportunity noting the absence of cattle and the abundance of grass and expressing the time-is-money concept in the phrase "days like unclaimed gold." Furthermore, while Lije's reverent feelings are vaguely articulated in the ejaculation "By God!" Lat is able to quote a specific portion of scripture which supposedly sanctions his enterprise.\textsuperscript{17}

This practical approach to the wilderness enables him to make intelligent decisions which help assure his success. He locates his ranch in the hills farther back toward the mountains where the chinook winds are "sweeter" and the winters therefore less severe; he fences his land to prevent overgrazing; and he puts up hay which enables him to save his cattle through the terrible winter of 1886-87, which bankrupts most of the other cattlemen. Furthermore, his driving ambition and industry along with his essential good humor and friendliness gain him the friendship and services of the other cowboys, because as Mike Carmichael puts it, "a man with a purpose don't lack for a party." With this combination of talent and energy, Lat is an obvious "comer" in the new society being formed in the Montana cow country.

But there is another side to the story, and Lat knows it. His rise in legitimate society is mirrored by his rejection of the illegitimate society of itinerancy and whorehouses. Although he recognizes the virtues of both worlds, he faces a moral dilemma when he realizes that he cannot choose one without doing personal injury to the inhabitants of the other. He gets his first stake to invest in the cattle business by winning a horse race in which he has bet heavily on himself, and the money which he bets has come from Callie's earnings and other even more questionable sources. He cannot openly acknowledge his debt to Callie, however, and their intimate relationship which fostered it without sacrificing his rising prospects in polite society. Likewise when Tom Ping, oblivious to such social niceties, decides to marry one of the other prostitutes and wishes Lat and Callie to be witnesses at their wedding, Lat prudishly refuses and immediately converts his close friend into an implacable enemy.\textsuperscript{18}

Although Lat continues his relationship with Callie while he is making good in the cattle business, he does so only on the sly and only until a 'nice' girl, Joyce, appears on the scene. He then stops seeing Callie, marries Joyce, starts raising a family, becomes an active member of the Methodist Church and a director of the school board, and allows his name to be considered for nomination to the territorial senate. He also participates reluctantly in the lynching of some cattle thieves, and when one of them turns out to be Tom Ping he allows him to escape and thereby deepens Tom's hatred of him for having put him in his debt. Finally when his ancient and disreputable grandfather, the trashy Hank McBee, shows up like a ghost out of the past, Lat allows McBee to blackmail him in return for McBee's concealment of their kinship.

All of this causes Lat to take on the appearance of a Babbit in cowboy boots or a shallow horse opera hero, and several critics have denigrated the book on those grounds. Time, with characteristic pseudo-

\textsuperscript{15}A. B. Guthrie, Jr., These Thousand Hills (New York: Pocket Books, Cardinal edition, 1957), p. 12. Permission to quote has been granted by the copyright holder, Houghton Mifflin Company. Ramrod is the trail boss, "Ram" Butler. He, too, is hard working and hopes to own his own ranch, "God and all little god-almighties willin'." But, true to the trail ethos, he puts as much faith in chance and luck as he does in perseverance and industry. "He knew where he'd locate there in Texas. Just let those pasteboards act right once!" ibid., pp. 11, 26.

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid., p. 34.

\textsuperscript{17}The title of the novel itself is probably a reference to the Fiftieth Psalm, tenth verse: "For every beast of the forest is mine and the cattle upon a thousand hills."

\textsuperscript{18}Lat's refusal stems not only from his fear of what people will say, especially his pious parents, but also because he doesn't wish to appear a wastrel and never-do-well in the eyes of a local banker who has just agreed to lend him money. These Thousand Hills, pp. 146-48.
meaning and significance of this work. And a much more trenchant critic has recently charged that the book, unbeknown to the author, is "actually a story of ingratitude." Such an interpretation seems unwarranted on a close reading of the book. Certainly, Callie is no saint, although she is a genuine person, honestly loving Lat and hoping desperately to hold him. When in the end her hopes are crushed by Lat's friend, Mike Carmichael, she reveals her "heart of gold" in the following fashion:

"It's always the men!" she cried. "No one else counts. It's always the goddam men!" Her whole face seemed one twist. "Shut up and go home, you goddam man!"

Nevertheless, Lat is partly responsible for Callie's plight and he recognizes it. When she is likely to be formally charged with murder, because a brutal rancher is slain in her establishment, Lat agrees to testify as a character witness in her behalf thereby jeopardizing his career and his family life. Although Carmichael induces her to flee rather than stand trial, Lat by that time has already confessed his past relationship with Callie to his wife who nearly collapses from the shock. Hag ridden by the fear that he has destroyed his wife's love for him which he has grown to find infinitely precious, he also realizes that he bears more responsibility for Callie's predicament than he had thought. The murdered man was "Whey Belly Hector," an enemy of Lat's whom Lat had beaten in a fight the day before. Furious, Hector assaulted Callie because of her known affection for Lat, and was in turn then slain by Happy, Callie's negro servant. Callie at first tried to cover for Happy but then fled with him, leaving Lat to contemplate her sorrowful situation:

There they were, Evans thought, a white woman and a black man, held together in innocence by the one true attachment either had ever found. There somewhere they fled, without funds enough maybe, with only what cash had been ready to hand, without friends by the way, without a place to go or call home. That was how it was at the last. Out of the many, the friendly, the high and unconcealing times—this!

The awareness that one can do wrong to society's outcasts by merely being a part of that society may come slowly to Lat Evans, but it comes very strongly in the end.

This realization also enables him to meet the next two crises which confront him: the return of Grandfather McBee and the standoff with Tom Ping. Like a bad penny McBee returns at this time seeking more hush money. Lat, however, now realizing the folly of attempting to conceal one's past from society and especially from oneself, refuses to pay and publicly acknowledges his kinship to him. Even McBee's brutal revelation that Lat's mother had "birched a bastard," forty years earlier fails to move him. By now he is aware that all people are riddled by defects of character, including his parents and himself, and that the social rewards offered by polite society are not worth accepting if they stand in the way of man's seeing himself as he really is.

For this reason the final confrontation in this supposedly conventional Western novel is utterly unlike any other. The scene is set for a shoot-out, but it doesn't take place, because Lat refuses to participate. Tom Ping, just returned from assisting Callie and Happy in their escape, confronts Lat and calls him a "son-of-a-bitch." Instead of giving the Virginian's retort, Lat simply walks away, even though he could kill Tom and even though he realizes that he is forfeiting his political career by laying himself open to the charge of being a coward. Society is making an unjust demand upon him, he realizes, by pressuring him to follow an absurd code of avenging insults by killing, especially when society formally abjures such a practice but is nevertheless fascinated by it. If one deliberately chooses one code one cannot revert to another for illicit gratification or in response to social pressure. "To be right, he told himself, but to be right for the right reasons! To square himself with himself." With these moral objectives in mind Lat Evans is no longer in danger of becoming a high country hypocrite. He is off his social high horse. He is down to earth, and perhaps his embryonic society of which he remains a willing part can benefit by his example.

The works of A. B. Guthrie, Jr., appear to be of enduring value for anyone seeking to understand both the inner and outer meanings of the westward movement in American history. His novels are historically accurate, aesthetically pleasing, and morally sound. What else does one want in an historical novel? Or in any novel, for that matter?

19Time, November 26, 1956, p. 118.
20James K. Folsom, The American Western Novel (New Haven: College and University Press, 1966), p. 75. That this author, able as he is, has only a superficial grasp of the details and plot of this novel is indicated by his statements that "Lat's pride is humbled when he discovers that he is an illegitimate child ... and his reputation in the community is compromised when it is revealed that he had at one time been a vigilante." Since the illegitimate child in question is Lat's deceased older brother and Lat's activity as a vigilante had been successfully concealed, one can rightfully question Professor Folsom's grasp of the meaning and significance of this work.
21Ibid., p. 259.
22Ibid., p. 266
Progressivism Discovers the Farm: The Country Life Commission of 1908

D. JEROME TWETON

During the last year of his administration, Theodore Roosevelt briefly turned his attention from urban and foreign issues to the question of rural life in America. He and Sir Horace Plunkett, Ireland’s minister of agriculture, had talked about country life problems as early as 1905 and 1906. Roosevelt expressed keen interest in Plunkett’s pamphlet, *The Problem of Rural Life in the United States*, in which the Irish agriculturalist called for a study of American country life conditions. Gifford Pinchot, Chief Forester in the Department of Agriculture, revealed Plunkett’s role in promoting such a study when in 1908 he wrote: “Some of these days it will be known that you [Plunkett] are the man who stirred up the whole movement in America.”

Roosevelt’s address “The Man Who Works With His Hands,” delivered at Lansing, Michigan, in 1907 indicated the President’s concern for farm matters other than the actual production of crops. In it Roosevelt pointed to the need for better agricultural education, the application of science to farming, and a more professional attitude toward the vocation of farming. The most significant aspect of the address was his assertion that “the United States Department of Agriculture has been dealing with growing crops. It must hereafter deal also with living men.” His letter which in 1908 would inaugurate a commission to study rural life was an expansion of this theme.

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At about the same time that Roosevelt delivered the Lansing speech, Pinchot and Plunkett apparently were attempting to establish a bureau of rural life in the Department of Agriculture. Although the plan had Roosevelt’s support, Secretary James Wilson was cool to it. That his concept of the Department’s purpose did not include the solution of rural life problems is indicated by his comment to Senator Johnathan P. Dolliver: “The President broke some new ground, and wants me to take up the question of the family as well as the farm. I have been thinking that the Christian church was doing that pretty well.” Wilson was not interested in the President’s new idea, and his opposition to the scheme brought it to an abrupt end. Later Pinchot wrote to Plunkett that “unfortunately the President’s attempt . . . to get the new point of view translated into action in the Agriculture Department had no valuable result. Secretary Wilson simply does not see it.”

Thwarted in this effort, Pinchot turned to the popular Rooseveltian approach to national problems, the investigating commission. Just as a commission had served a useful purpose in studying the public lands in 1903, so in 1908 one would be used to examine rural problems. Organization of such a group, however, turned out to be a slow process. In the early spring, 1908, Roosevelt met with Pinchot and Plunkett and decided to call together a commission “as a means for directing the attention of the nation to the problems of the farmer, and for securing the necessary knowledge of the actual conditions of life in the open country.”

Pinchot served as the chief architect of the commission. Although he was overburdened with the work of his Division of Forestry, he carried out the task of organization and selection of the membership. In this he was aided by Professor Liberty Hyde Bailey of Cornell University who had long been interested in farm conditions. The Pinchot-Bailey friendship went back several years, and both men had worked together on a commission which investigated the duplication of research by the state and federal experiment stations. Bailey had expressed his concern for the problems of rural life as early as 1896 when he stated the need for a study of the question: “It is impossible really to extend the Experiment Station and the University impulse to the people . . . without first studying the fundamental difficulties of the farmer’s social and political environment.” In 1906 with several colleagues, Bailey carried out an intensive study of Tompkins County, New York, in which they surveyed such matters as size of farms, the abandonment of farms, the role of farm women, the education of farm children, and various other rural life conditions.

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3No existing correspondence relates directly to this question. Letters which indirectly refer to it are: Pinchot to Plunkett, December 3, 1907, May 29, 1908, and Liberty H. Bailey to Pinchot, March 14, 1908, Pinchot Papers.

4Wilson to J. P. Dolliver, June 3, 1907, Papers of the Secretary of Agriculture, Record Group 16, National Archives.

5May 29, 1908, Pinchot Papers.


7Liberty H. Bailey to David Starr Jordon, April 2, 1907; to Pinchot, April 23, 1907, Pinchot Papers.

8Cornell University Agricultural Experiment Station, *Bulletin*, No. 112 (December, 1896), 534.
labor problems. Bailey fully sympathized with the idea of a Country Life Commission and was a "natural" to work with Pinchot in its organization.

Correspondence between Pinchot and Bailey concerning the organization of the commission began in March, 1908, when Bailey agreed to help Pinchot and expressed his support of the commission concept. "The more I think over the commission matter," he wrote, "the more I think it to be the wisest move that can be made at the present time." In an attempt to move quickly toward organization, Pinchot and Bailey met with the President on April 10. At this conference it appears that Bailey volunteered to serve as chairman of the commission. The three agreed that Pinchot and Kenyon Butterfield, President of the Massachusetts Agricultural College, would be on the commission along with "a couple of members . . . to be chosen, one from the South and one from the West."12

By the end of June the commission had still not organized. Pinchot apologized to the President for not having "ghost written" the Presidential letter of call to the commission and for his delay in selecting the other members of the group. At this time he also expressed concern that "if the Commission were allowed to consist of the three men [thus far] named, it would . . . be too academic in character to get the proper kind of recognition."13 A month later at the suggestion of Secretary Wilson, the "genuine farm touch" was added to the membership of the Commission with the appointment of Henry Wallace, editor of Wallace's Farmer of Des Moines.14 To round out the membership Pinchot advised the addition of Walter Hines Page, southern-born editor of World's Work, a magazine which regularly discussed rural problems.15 Thus, with the membership list completed, on August 10th Roosevelt summoned his commission of experts to begin its task of investigating American farm life.

In the letter which inaugurated the new study group, the President acknowledged that American farmers were "better off" in 1908 than they ever had been. The problem, thought Roosevelt, was that the "social and economic institutions of the open country are not keeping pace with the development of the nation as a whole."16 Elaborating upon the question facing "not only agriculture but the nation" the President explained that

practically the whole of this effort [work of U.S.D.A.] has hitherto been directed toward increasing the production of crops. Our attention has been concentrated almost exclusively on getting better farming. In the beginning this was unquestionably the right thing to do. . . . But

When this has been secured, the effort for better farming should cease to stand alone, and should be accompanied by the effort for better business and better living on the farm. . . . Good crops are of little value to the farmer unless they open the door to a good kind of life on the farm.17

He viewed the new Commission as a fact-finding and advisory body, and charged it with the task of reporting "upon the present condition of country life, upon what means are now available for supplying the deficiencies which exist, and upon the best methods of organized permanent effort in investigation."18 Emphasizing the importance of the Country Life Commission's work, he asserted that "with the single exception of the conservation of our natural resources, which underlies the problem of rural life, there is no other material question of greater importance now before the American people."19

In a surprising move, however, Professor Bailey torpedoed the President's plans by rejecting the invitation to serve on the commission. He explained this unexpected action, which caught both Roosevelt and Pinchot off guard, in a letter to the President:

I can not possibly accept service on the Commission. I do this with exceeding regret because I know how important the work is; but there are good men on the Commission and I am not at all necessary to the work. . . . It is now only two weeks until the advanced lot of students will begin to come in and I must be here to take care of them. I have been obliged to cancel all outside engagements for the next year.20

Although the Cornell professor gave the fast-approaching school year as the excuse for his action, the causes appear to have been more fundamental. Bailey was a scientific-minded botanist and horticulturist who viewed the investigation of American country life as a serious fact-finding mission. He may well have been concerned about the superficiality of investigating such a mammoth question in just two months. Later correspondence between Bailey and Pinchot also indicates that the publicity which the Commission would receive worried him. Both Roosevelt and Pinchot, for their part, believed that "one of the principal attentions of our work must be to attract public attention to the needs of the situation."21 Bailey sharply disagreed with this emphasis upon publicity, averring that

the publicity end of it does not appeal to me as it apparently does to you. Personally I shrink from the publicity of such matters as this. I do not see how the publicity in the newspapers could be of any service to the Commission. I am inclined to think that it might be quite the reverse.22

His philosophy conflicted with that of the President, for Bailey believed that the work of the Country Life Commission should be a scientific experiment. On the other hand, the President thought that the scientific experiment would fail if it did not focus the attention of the nation on the problems of rural life.

9Cornell University Agricultural Experiment Station, An Agricultural Survey of Tompkins County, New York, Bulletin, No. 295 (March, 1911).

10Bailey to Pinchot, March 14, 1908, Pinchot Papers.


12Pinchot to Plunkett, May 29, 1908, Pinchot Papers.

13Pinchot to Roosevelt, June 29, 1908, ibid.

14Roosevelt to James Wilson, August 5, 1908, ibid.

15Roosevelt to Pinchot, August 15, 1908, Pinchot Papers.


17Ibid.

18Ibid.

19Ibid.

20Bailey to Pinchot, August 12, 1908, Pinchot Papers.

21Bailey to Pinchot, August 12, 1908, Pinchot Papers.

22Pinchot to Bailey, September 1, September 4, 1908, ibid.
Both Pinchot and Roosevelt applied pressure in an attempt to change Bailey's mind. Pinchot sent to Bailey a letter which he termed "as strong a letter as I know how to write."\(^2\) He believed that Bailey would reverse his earlier decision because "he is too big a man to allow the overstrain from overwork to cloud his judgment to that extent."\(^2\)

The Cornell professor's refusal disappointed Roosevelt. To bring Bailey into line, the President impatiently waved his "big stick" at him:

Yes, my dear Mr. Bailey, by your action you are doing all you can to hurt this great opportunity. You have no right to do it, my dear sir. It is imperative from the standpoint of the work that you and I have so much at heart that you should accept the chairmanship of this commission. . . . I certainly expect that you will serve.\(^2\)

Just as Japan and Russia had come to terms in 1905, the coal mine operators and the miners in 1902, so now Bailey succumbed to the "big stick." Within a week he notified the President that he would serve as chairman.\(^2\)

Still another problem arose to delay the work of the Commission. Several Southern newspapers attacked its makeup; it contained no Southern representatives. A Dallas newspaper lamented that "the one weak point about it is that all of them [do not have] any acquaintance with the discouraging conditions in the very part of the country in which such investigation is most needed."\(^2\) The politically-sensitive Roosevelt immediately advised Pinchot: "I think it very important that we should put on a real southern man, and that he should be a farmer and not the president of a university. . . . Better a Georgian or North Carolinian than a man from further north."\(^2\) The President later ordered Pinchot to "not hereafter put down Walter H. Page as Editor of World's Work, New York. Let it rest as Walter H. Page of North Carolina."\(^2\)

In accordance with Roosevelt's request that the Commission's membership be broadened, in early November, C. S. Barrett, President of the Farmers' Educational and Co-operative Union from Union City, Georgia, was added to represent the deep South.\(^3\) At the same time, William Beard, the editor of Great West Magazine of California, joined the group giving the Far West a voice in the study.\(^3\) At last, after eight months, the Commission was ready to begin its work.

Perhaps worried about farm acceptance of his body of "experts," Roosevelt decided to brief the Commission once more on its objectives and functions. In the last communication between the President and its members, the Chief Executive stressed that "it is essential that the farmers . . . should feel a sense of ownership in this Commission,

\(^2\)This "strong letter" does not appear in the Pinchot files. See Pinchot to Kenyon Butterfield, August 21, 1908, ibid.

\(^3\)Pinchot to Kenyon Butterfield, August 21, 1908, ibid.

\(^4\)Roosevelt to Bailey, August 14, 1908, Roosevelt Papers.

\(^5\)Bailey to Roosevelt, August 20, 1908, Pinchot Papers.

\(^6\)Dallas Semi-weekly News, August 13, 1908.

\(^7\)Roosevelt to Pinchot, September 1, 1908, Pinchot Papers. See also, Roosevelt to Pinchot, August 15, 1908, Roosevelt Papers.

\(^8\)Roosevelt to Pinchot, November 12, 1908, Pinchot Papers.

\(^9\)Roosevelt to C. S. Barrett, November 11, 1908, Roosevelt Papers. C. S. Barrett to Roosevelt, November 17, 1908, Pinchot Papers.

\(^10\)Roosevelt to William Beard, November 11, 1908, Roosevelt Papers. William Beard to Roosevelt, November 20, 1908, Pinchot Papers.

should feel that you gentlemen in a very truth represent them and are responsive to their desires and wishes, no less than to their needs."\(^3\)

Roosevelt asserted that the Commission must "get in touch with the farmer." He reminded the members:

Your purpose is neither to investigate the farmer, nor to inquire into technical methods of farming. You are simply trying to ascertain what are the general, economic, social, education, and sanitary conditions themselves, and how the government can help them. To this end your especial desire is to get in touch with and represent the farmers themselves.\(^3\)

With the President's words of advice ringing in its ears, the Commission boarded the train for College Park, Maryland, the first point of investigation.

In order to complete its work within the two months allotted by the President, the Commission devised three techniques of investigation. One method relied on a questionnaire to secure farm opinions on the main aspects of country life. The Commission mailed over a half million to names furnished by the Department of Agriculture.\(^3\) The questionnaire was designed to secure information on the condition of farm homes, rural education, the economic return to farming, the adequacy of railroads and highways, telephone and postal service, business and banking services, the role of the farm wife, the supply of farm labor, sanitation, and rural social life.\(^3\) By the end of the Commission's study, over 115,000 persons had replied "mostly with much care and with every good faith."\(^3\)

The public hearing served as a second mode of investigation. The Commission held hearings in 30 cities from Boston in the East to Los Angeles in the West, from Minneapolis in the North to Athens, Georgia, in the South. The Commission attempted to keep these hearings informal and encouraged any and all people interested in agriculture to testify. Although most of the persons in attendance were farmers, country doctors, ministers, postal men, and school teachers contributed to the discussions. In some cases governors and other high state officials testified at the hearings.\(^3\) The editor of the Northwestern Agriculturalist who spoke at the Minneapolis hearing, commented upon the excellent attendance and praised Bailey's handling of the hearing. He was convinced that this technique would "open the way to more thorough forms of study."\(^3\)

\(^3\)Roosevelt to Henry Wallace, November 9, 1908, Roosevelt Papers. Identical communications were sent to all the members of the Commission.

\(^4\)Ibid.

\(^5\)Bailey Statement, October 3, 1908, Pinchot Papers.


\(^7\)Ibid., 27.


\(^9\)Northwestern Agriculturalist, XXII (December 19, 1908), 10.
A few farm papers expressed qualified support of the work of the Commission. The *Northwestern Agriculturist* accepted the concept of the commission, but believed that the problem could not be studied in two months. The *Nebraska Farmer* cited the need for a study, but hoped that "Uncle Henry" Wallace would not use his position on the commission to benefit his own farm journal. The Nebraska editor did not desire to be scooped by his nearest competitor, *Wallace's Farmer*.

Only a small part of the agrarian press frowned on the Roosevelt approach to farm issues. The *Maine Farmer* disliked what it termed an "act of class distinction." "It was a mistake," protested its editor, "that the farmer should have been singled out as a class for special reformatory work . . . and be held up in the public eye as being in ignominious need of missionary reclamation." In a similar vein, an Ohio journal insisted that the city needed investigation more than the farm, observing that "it does not seem necessary to shed very many tears of sympathy and commiseration over the supposedly disconsolate and woebegone condition of the American farmer." *Farm, Stock and Home*, published in Minnesota, joined the assault on the Commission when it described its report as "futile," and "not profound." Its editor maintained that the investigators did no more than "skim the surface, making no effort to find the cause of the present conditions of farm life." To this Minnesota rural spokesman, it was "like putting a bunch of hens to work to move a large hill." City observers were also divided in their opinion of the Commission and its report. One city spokesman sarcastically quipped that since Roosevelt was preparing for a voyage to Africa "any farmer whose barn roof leaks, or whose daughter finds compound fractions too hard . . . ought to write to Washington at once. The time is short." A cartoonist depicted the Commission wearing Prince Albert coats milking cows in the country.

In spite of occasional urban barbs, the idea of an expert investigation of an ailing American institution captured the imaginations of urban progressives. To them the Country Life Commission was the essence of progressivism. In an era of criticism and change, the examination of an entire segment of the population was appealing. From these reform-minded citizens came words of support and pages of advice. The Twelfth Annual Playground Congress of America meeting in New York City complimented the President for his insights into rural questions and hinted that the real difficulty with farm life was the "lack of recreation and pleasure." The National Education Association approved

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Note:
2. Bailey wrote to Roosevelt that the President should proclaim a national holiday for nationwide discussion. The President replied: "We must not expose ourselves to the danger of having the Commission laughed at." *November 7, 1908,* *ibid.*
4. *Independent Farmer and Western Swine Breeder* (St. Louis), August 13, 1908.
5. *Nebraska Farmer,* August 26, 1908.
7. *Texas Farmer* (Dallas), quoted in *Literary Digest* *XXXVII* (December 26, 1908), 965.
8. *American Cultivator* (Boston), quoted in *ibid.*
9. *North Dakota Farmer* (Fargo), October 1908.
11. *Nebraska Farmer,* November 18, 1908.
12. *Maine Farmer,* quoted in *Literary Digest* *XXXVII* (December 26, 1908), 965.
13. *Farm and Fireside* (Springfield, Ohio), quoted in *Literary Digest* *XXXVII* (December 26, 1908), 965.
14. *Farm, Stock and Home,* November 15, 1908.
15. *ibid.,* March 1, 1909.
19. *Luther Gulick to Pinchot, August 11, 1908,* *Pinchot Papers.*
the work of the study group and urged "the union of all forces which are working for the betterment of the country school and country life."\textsuperscript{58} Both the New York Tuberculosis Society and the Maryland Medical Association "heartily join[ed] the movement for the betterment of the sanitary and social condition of the farmers."\textsuperscript{59}

Such diverse groups as the New York Merchants Association and the Immigrant Association of Missouri lent their full support to the President's Commission.\textsuperscript{60} As one might expect, Arthur Jackson, President of the National Good Roads Association, maintained that "the unsatisfactory condition of the farmer is owing more to bad roads than to all other causes combined."\textsuperscript{61}

Many well-intentioned city dwellers advanced their own plans for the salvation of the American farmer. An irate Colorado consumer weary of paying high food prices contended that "the only remedy I can see is to erect ... warehouses and stockyards for the farmer, let him sell direct to the consumer and not to the speculator who fleeces in the fall the farmer and the balance of the year the whole population."\textsuperscript{62} These government-owned marketing facilities would "keep our public money in circulation instead of flooding it all into one or a few men's pockets."\textsuperscript{63}

A New York City resident proposed one of the more interesting plans of action. This friend of the American farmer suggested that the country be divided into agricultural zones to be administered by "farm engineers." A zone would be of such size as to permit the farm engineer to visit each farm in it at least once a month. The engineer would "not be an inspector but a friend and adviser" who would be available at all times for consultation. The plan called for the appointment of these engineers by the President with the state and federal government sharing the salary. According to its author, this scheme was "the key which will unlock the chain which now binds the farmer a helpless slave to the dreary tasks in which he works unhappily, without hope."\textsuperscript{64}

As the Commission traveled from city to city in its quest for information on rural life, the urban newspapers gave the Commission both publicity and sympathetic understanding. While in Denver, the Roosevelt study group was the subject of a full page spread in the \textit{Denver Post}. The paper included not only the usual press releases explaining the goals and work of the Commission but also special stories by staff writers. In exploring the drab life of the farm wife, one writer's story was headed "Why Insane Asylums Contain So Many Females."\textsuperscript{65} The Post's editor was too concerned with the problems of city government to comment upon the Denver visit of "Roosevelt's Wise Men."\textsuperscript{66} In similar manner, the \textit{Deseret Evening News} publicized the visit to Salt Lake City. While its front page carried headline news about the work of the Commission, the editorial section lent its support to the task of the group. The editor believed that the investigation by the body of experts would have rewarding results. The problem, he declared, "converges finally to one point—the need of a better education and of a higher appreciation of the beauty and value of farm life."\textsuperscript{67}

Although the \textit{Morning World-Herald} of Omaha greeted the Country Life Commission with front page headlines and "the glad hand of welcome,"\textsuperscript{68} its editorial column raised doubts as to the value of the Commission for Nebraska farmers.\textsuperscript{69} It asserted:

\begin{quote}
We can't help thinking that, if the Nebraska farmer stands in need of a federal commission to help make their lives tolerable, what a lot of commissions ought to be instituted to help those millions of unfortunate who are not Nebraska farmers. No disrespect is meant to the honorable commission or to Mr. Roosevelt's intentions. But we had been under the impression that the Nebraska farmer was about the last man on earth in need of the paternal care of the federal government.\textsuperscript{70}
\end{quote}

At the same time, however, the Omaha editor admitted that the findings of the Commission would lead to the solution of problems in less fortunate areas than Nebraska.\textsuperscript{71}

The Commission began, carried out, and concluded its task with the general support of the American public. Although some urban and farm papers expressed reservations about the work of the Commission, the great majority of city and farm writers and spokesmen lauded the creation of the Commission and the President's concern for rural problems. Most Americans agreed with Mr. Dooley when he commented: "... farmers' wives are not happy, an' Tiddy Rosenfeldt proposes to see about it. Th' idee iv an'body bein' unhappy makes him feel bad. He would like to see th' whole wuruld inj'yin itself."\textsuperscript{72}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{58}National Education Association Statement, February 22, 1909, \textit{ibid.}
\item \textsuperscript{59}H. M. Simmons to Roosevelt, August 18, 1908; E. G. Routzahn to Pinchot, October 21, 1908, \textit{ibid.}
\item \textsuperscript{60}Edward Hatch to Pinchot, November 18, 1908; John Curran to Roosevelt, August 24, 1908, \textit{ibid.}
\item \textsuperscript{61}Arthur Jackson to Roosevelt, August 12, 1908, \textit{ibid.}
\item \textsuperscript{62}Frederick Herman to Roosevelt, September 20, 1908, \textit{ibid.}
\item \textsuperscript{63}\textit{ibid.}
\item \textsuperscript{64}Frank Carpenter to Roosevelt, 1908, \textit{ibid.}
\item \textsuperscript{65}The \textit{Denver Post}, December 7, 1908.
\item \textsuperscript{66}\textit{ibid.}, December 6, 1908.
\item \textsuperscript{67}\textit{Deseret Evening News}, December 3, December 5, 1908.
\item \textsuperscript{68}Morning \textit{World-Herald} (Omaha), December 10, 1908.
\item \textsuperscript{69}\textit{ibid.}, December 11, 1908.
\item \textsuperscript{70}\textit{ibid.}, December 10, 1908.
\item \textsuperscript{71}\textit{ibid.}
\item \textsuperscript{72}F. P. Dunne, "Mr. Dooley on Uplifting the Farmers," \textit{American Magazine}, LXVII (November, 1908), 96.
\end{itemize}
The decade of the 1920's was a paradoxical one in the United States. Offhand—with its "Red Scare," the executions of Sacco and Vanzetti, the Scopes trial, the rapid rise of the Ku Klux Klan, the Teapot Dome scandal, and widespread bigotry, graft, and corruption—it appears to have been a period of unrelieved reaction. But an examination of the more palatable features of the era shows that it was also a decade of slow but definite forward growth which made possible revolutionary socioeconomic changes at home during the 1930's and the defeat of the Axis powers abroad during the 1940's. Part of this growing progressive movement was the support given by Protestants in the United States to the revolutionary Mexican government in its conflict with the feudal-minded Roman Catholic Church during the period 1926-29.

Anticlericalism had been part of the Mexican liberal and revolutionary tradition since the founding of the Mexican Republic. The Revolution of 1910 had supported the anticlerical provisions of the liberal Constitution of 1857—which had not been enforced during the thirty-odd years of reaction under Porfirio Diaz preceding the Revolution—and these provisions had been broadened and made part of the Constitution of 1917. But by early 1926 the Church felt that it was strong enough to challenge the government and attempt to regain its special privileges of former years, and in a series of newspaper articles it declared its intention to combat the anticlerical clauses of the Constitution. One of these articles reads in part:

The Code of 1917 wounds the most sacred rights of the Catholic Church, of Mexican society and Christian individuals, proclaims principles contrary to the truth taught by Jesus Christ, which forms the treasure of the Church and the best inheritance of mankind; it destroys those few rights which the Constitution of 1857 (accepted in its basic principles as the fundamental law by all Mexicans) recognized in the Church as a corporation and in Catholics as individuals.

The Mexican government was not slow in responding to the challenge of the Church, and soon foreign clerics were being expelled from Mexico on orders of President Plutarco Elias Calles for violations of the anticlerical clauses of the Constitution. Among the first persons to leave Mexico were two citizens of the United States, Mother Margaret Semple and Mother Mary Evans, who preferred to leave the country rather than operate a school under their care in accordance with the Constitution. The issue was now joined, and in a short time Protestants and Catholics—their ranks augmented by U.S. oil interests, absentee landlords, liberals, radicals, Masons, and numerous other concerned organizations and individuals—were bitterly attacking each other in the press.

Despite their support of the Mexican government, many Protestants considered the anticlerical clauses excessively severe, but they were in general agreement with Dr. G. B. Winton, author of Mexico Today, who wrote: "If some of the provisions are drastic, it must be recalled that the disease for which they were meant to be was a mortal sickness." Methodist Bishop George A. Miller, one of the leading liberal churchmen of this period, was frankly elated over the difficulties of the Church. "The Mexican government," he said, "has never interfered with the exercise of the Catholic religion and is not doing so now." He enjoyed the complaints of the Church saying: "It is delicious to hear our tormentors pleading for religious liberty and tolerance." He continued: "The only people who have real reason for anxiety concerning ecclesiastical matters in Mexico are those who refuse to comply with the laws of the land . . . Mexico is making an honest-to-goodness effort to deal with a desperate situation in what seems to her officials the only practical way."

The editor of the Missionary Review of the World, a non-sectarian Protestant missionary periodical, in a general review of the situation stated that there were nineteen American Protestant missionary societies operating without difficulty in Mexico at the beginning of the conflict. This editor—like many others, Catholic and Protestant—condemned press reports on the conflict as inaccurate and misrepresenting the facts. "The Government of Mexico," he wrote, "is not conducting an anti-religious crusade, but it is endeavoring to secularize her schools and to nationalize her churches so as to free her people from the abuses that

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3George A. Miller, "Is There Religious Persecution in Mexico?" Christian Century, April 1, 1926, p. 411.
have grown up under the domination of the Roman Catholic Church." He said that the Protestant mission boards recognized that all church property belonged to the nation and that Protestant missionaries—unlike the Catholics—stood ready to cooperate with the government and to obey the Constitution. He reminded his readers that the Mexican government was not unfriendly to Protestant work, that Moisés Sáenz of the Mexican Department of Education was a graduate of a Protestant college in the United States, that the Minister of Foreign Affairs was also Protestant-educated, and that President Calles himself had two wards studying in an American Protestant mission school in Mexico.

The expulsion that attracted the most attention during this period was that of George J. Caruana, Archbishop of Sebaste and Apostolic Delegate to Mexico and the Antilles. Although born in Malta, Caruana was a naturalized American citizen. He had quietly entered a government . was not unfriendly to Protestant work, that Moisés Sáenz of the Mexican Department of Education was a graduate of a Protestant mission school in Mexico. Caruana's expulsion was considered a severe blow to the Church by both Mexican and American Catholics. Evidently it had been expected that his status as Apostolic Delegate with United States citizenship would have made it possible for him to intimidate the Mexican government. "The delegate's expulsion," declared an editorial in the Jesuit organ America, "caused intense grief among Mexican Catholics who had hoped his visit would have done so much to overcome the difficulties under which the Church is laboring in Mexico." So great was the activity of the pro-Catholic press in support of Caruana that Consul-General Arthuro Elias was forced to release to the press photostats of the declaration made by Caruana when he entered Mexico. These photostats showed that he had described himself as a Protestant and a tourist—but Caruana denied that the signature on the photostated document was his. Commonsweal ridiculed the photostats as clumsy forgeries. Former Judge Alfred J. Talley, a prominent Catholic layman of New York, repeated the charge that the photostats were forgeries. Consul-General Elias insisted that they were genuine. The charge was repeated and denied, thrown back and forth, and the public was left in the dark.

Caruana, in a lengthy letter to U.S. Secretary of State Frank B. Kellogg, complained that his treatment by the Mexican government called for "a policy and action more precise and energetic than was exercised by my [the U.S.] government in my case. . ." Just what Caruana meant by "precise and energetic action" was not made clear, for throughout the entire conflict American Catholics insisted that they did not want the United States to intervene in Mexico. But the editor of America felt that the United States could have prevented the expulsion of Caruana. He did not say what steps should have been taken, but he suggested that the United States should be "strong like Britain" in cases of this kind. He reminded his readers that Britain was respected because "her unflailing defense of her subjects deserves respect." He repeated the Catholic line of nonintervention:

We are not asking for intervention. On the contrary, we protest that there has been too much intervention already. But as American citizens who cherish the principles of civil and religious freedom, we ask that the Government stand aloof from a government which in the fundamental law has declared its intention of destroying these principles.

Dr. E. Saguntius, in an anticlimactic article in the August 1926 issue of Columbia, the monthly organ of the Knights of Columbus, commenting on the illegality of Caruana's expulsion, declared:

Archbishop Caruana proceeded to Mexico on a mission in no way conflicting with the so-called Constitution of 1917, a crazy-quilt patched together by a gang of sectarians who met that year in Querétaro. . . . Archbishop Caruana had a right to be in Mexico. That being the case, it was nobody's business whether or not he had a passport.

Caruana had not been expelled for nonpossession of a passport and the statement was consequently not pertinent, but it does reflect the attitude of Catholics toward what they considered the rights of their leaders.

In July 1926 President Calles published in detail the anticlerical laws implementing the Constitution of 1917. The essence of the laws was as follows: Foreigners were forbidden to exercise the religious profession in Mexico; religious instruction was forbidden in official schools of all grades and in private primary schools; clerics were forbidden to direct or establish primary schools; private primary schools were to be operated only under the supervision of the government; monastic orders were outlawed; all persons were forbidden to induce minors to take religious vows; clerics were specifically forbidden to incite anyone to disavow or disobedience of the laws; clerics were forbidden to criticize the laws or the authorities; political association of clerics was forbidden; the official validating for academic credit of studies in religious institutions of higher learning was declared illegal; religious publications were forbidden to comment on political affairs; no political organization having a name suggestive of religion was to be formed; political meetings were not to be held in churches; religious ceremonies were to be performed only in churches; clerics were not to wear clothing or insignia indicating their calling; churches were to be operated only with the permission of the government authorities; the acquisition or administration of real estate or real estate securities by clerics was forbidden; a
penalty was provided for the damaging, destruction, or concealment of church property; the last of the eleven articles provided penalties for officials who refused or failed to carry out the laws. Furthermore, the laws also declared all church property nationalized, defined ministry of a cult, and granted all persons the right to denounce transgressions and offenses against the laws. These laws were to become effective on August 1, 1926.17

The response of the Church was immediate: Effective July 30, all religious services by Roman Catholic clerics were to be suspended throughout Mexico. At the same time, Catholic lay organizations inaugurated a nonconsumption boycott in an effort to cripple the nation economically and thus bring the government to its knees. These actions were in accordance with instructions contained in a pastoral letter from Pope Pius XI to the Mexican Church which ended: "It would be a crime for us to tolerate such a situation; and we would not wish that there should come to our recollection when we appear before the tribunal of God the sacrilegious words of the Prophet: 'Vae mihi quia tacuisti.' Woe is me, for I did not speak."18

During the last few days of July preceding the termination of religious services, thousands of persons flocked to the churches for baptisms, confirmations, and other religious needs. On July 30, 8,000 persons were confirmed and 3,000 baptized in the great cathedral in Mexico City.19 So great was the demand for services by the clergy that marriages were performed en masse.20 In one church two children were killed in the crush.21 Minor riots occurred in which three persons were killed and a number wounded, while firemen rushed from place to place quelling disorders.22 Nor were the times without their miracles: the cross atop church property; the last of the eleven articles provided penalties for officials who refused or failed to carry out the laws. Furthermore, the laws also declared all church property nationalized, defined ministry of a cult, and granted all persons the right to denounce transgressions and offenses against the laws. These laws were to become effective on August 1, 1926.17

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The Roman Catholic press in the United States had little to say about events in Mexico immediately following August 1, but shortly before the cessation of services the Jesuit publication America had hopefully remarked that the Calles "degrees" might result in the nation being placed under an interdiction.25 For awhile it appeared that the wishes of the fact that Calles had the backing of "all the irreligious forces in the country, Masons, Radicals, Socialists, and Communists."27 America declared that in Mexico the reign of constitutional democracy had come to an end, but, like America, Commonweal was confident that in the end the Church would emerge the victor because that was her destiny. "But until she does," boasted Commonweal, "there will be neither peace nor prosperity in strife-ridden Mexico."28

Protestant publications in the United States were generally in favor of the Calles decrees. There were four reasons for this: first, simply because the ancient enemy had been dealt a stunning blow; second, because Calles was favorable to Protestantism; third, because a competitor had been eliminated; and fourth, because the Protestant churches—for all their conservatism—were less conservative than the Roman Catholic Church.

The anticlerical laws were severe—as most observers in the United States agreed—but the editor of the Christian Advocate, a Methodist publication, seemed to express the opinion of all his colleagues when he commented:

If some of these enactments seem harsh and hostile to religion, it must be remembered what Mexico has suffered since she cast out the hands of a foreign Church, insatiably greedy of wealth, and niggardly of service to the people, performing few of the duties incumbent upon it as the representative of Christianity, the salt of the earth, and the intolerant persecutor of all who sought to introduce the Bible and the simple teaching of Christ. After long experience with a Church of this type it would not be strange if Mexico should take extreme measures to curb the offending organization, even at the risk of distressing many innocent people.29

Methodist Bishop James Cannon, who had supervised Methodist missionary work in Mexico for eight years and had learned from bitter experience that the Roman Catholic Church was the most determined of all enemies of religious freedom, in an article in the Moody Bible Institute Monthly, a Protestant evangelistic periodical, declared that "whenever and wherever the Vatican has had the power it has permitted no freedom of religious worship .... Nothing would be more hurtful to Protestant aims and activities and to religious liberty in Mexico than a victory led by the Vatican in the present conflict."30

One of the staunchest supporters of Calles was the American Friend, a weekly publication of the Quakers. This magazine was probably the most objective of the religious periodicals of the 1920's; certainly it was the most tolerant one. Immediately following the cessation of services by the Church, it took its stand:

President Calles has been discriminating, fair, and firm in all his public utterances. He is willing for any man in Mexico to hold to any form of religion that he may desire. He is not opposed to religious teaching and to the conducting of religious services; he takes the most generous and kindly attitude toward all who have conformed to the requirements of the Constitution. He is vigorous and determined,

and rightly so, in his opposition to all who are seeking to bring the State under the domination of the Catholic Church.31

Unlike most of the Protestant publications, the nonsectarian Christian Century, a periodical that should be classified as liberal-religious in its point of view, neither feared Roman Catholic domination in Mexico nor gave its full support to the Calles Government. The editor of Christian Century believed that there was virtue on both sides of the conflict. He praised the Calles Government as "one of the most enlightened labor governments in the world,"32 but he considered the anticlerical laws excessively harsh. "Religion is not only purged," he declared, "but it is reinforced by persecution."33 He considered the laws impossible to enforce and believed that the persecution of the Church would lead to a religious revival in Mexico that would strengthen the Church. His conviction was that Calles would learn from experience what the Bolsheviks in Russia had learned: that religion thrives on persecution.34

But the sober truth is that the Church was not thriving on persecution. The economic boycott, for one thing, was a miserable failure. It could not succeed for the simple reason that for the great majority of Mexicans living standards could not be lowered beyond the bare subsistence level at which they already existed. Only the affluent—and they were few indeed—were in a position to forego their accustomed luxuries, and most of these persons lacked the willingness or the enthusiasm to lower their standard of living for a dubious and perhaps hopeless cause. And like the economic boycott, the cessation of religious services soon showed itself to be of limited importance. The church buildings themselves were kept open, as was the tradition, and the great mass of religious-minded Mexicans continued to use them as they always had as places for prayer and meditation without assistance from the clergy—and, it might be added, at considerably less cost to themselves.

Intervention had from the earliest days of the conflict been one of the means by which the Roman Catholics had hoped to crush the Mexican government. Agitation for intervention by the United States was carried on by Catholic and pro-Catholic groups in the Congress of the United States, in the press, and by means of mass meetings in the larger cities. The principal argument of the interventionists was that Mexico was a Bolshevik nation under the control of Russia and that through Mexico the Bolsheviks in Russia had learned: that religion thrives on persecution.35

Outside Congress the work for intervention was carried on primarily by the Knights of Columbus and the Association for the Protection of Religious Rights in Mexico, the latter being an ad hoc lay organization under the leadership of Judge Alfred J. Talley. In a red-baiting press release shortly after the beginning of the conflict, Talley denounced the government of the United States for allowing itself to be intimidated by Calles and declared:

It seems to me that the time has arrived for all Americans who believe in religious freedom, not only for themselves but for all people of the earth, to make known their sense of outrage and to demand that our Government declare that Mexico is unfit to be longer regarded as worthy to be included in the family of nations.36

Much more important in the conflict than Talley's organization was a Catholic fraternal organization, the Knights of Columbus, that adhered strictly to the Vatican line. With a membership of 800,000 and a strong press, this was probably the most effective organization at the disposal of the Church. Columbia, the official organ of the Knights, was conspicuous for its red-baiting. Its October 1926 issue was a propaganda master-piece designed to appeal to the small minds of its readers. At the top of its front cover in large red letters were the words RED MEXICO. Below, also in red, was an appropriate quotation from a recent Knights resolution. This quotation was bordered by an arrangement of flags, cannon, bayonets, and stars—all in blue—the whole forming a very "patriotic-looking" display. In this issue Columbia again denied that it wanted intervention but it declared that the Mexican government officials, "beloved comrades of the Soviet oligarchs, devoted apostles of Bolshevism," were seeking "not merely to destroy the Catholic Church but to establish communism in the western world."37 This issue was devoted to attacks on neutrals as well as supporters of the Mexican government in 1917 [sic] was a mistake... Until Mexico revises her present constitution in certain vital respects, establishes a government of law and order and ceases to offend against everyday considerations of decency, the United States should withdraw recognition extended prematurely in 1917.38

This call for withdrawal of recognition was largely ignored by other members of Congress, but hearings were arranged for the House Committee on Foreign Affairs which served as an excuse for the disgruntled Catholics to air their grievances. Aiding Congressman Boylan in the House was Representative James A. Gallivan of Massachusetts, who declared in a long speech before the House:

. . . Civilization is almost in mourning. Mexican Jacobins have pronounced the sentence of death on practically all the churches in that country. They have determined to tear out of the very hearts of Mexican society every trace of religious ideas which do not conform to their constitution literalism. The spectacle of these churches in the rags of their poverty, starving, and with but a breath of life remaining fills the devout among the Mexicans with terror as would an awful apparition at night to one whose conscience was distressed by remorse for a crime committed.39

It is time to act, and in a way that will assure Mexico of our determination to protect American rights and citizens. It is time our official attitude toward Mexico became that which has characterized the official attitude toward all other countries. . . . Civilization is almost in mourning. Mexican Jacobins have pronounced the sentence of death on practically all the churches in that country. They have determined to tear out of the very hearts of Mexican society every trace of religious ideas which do not conform to their constitution literalism. The spectacle of these churches in the rags of their poverty, starving, and with but a breath of life remaining fills the devout among the Mexicans with terror as would an awful apparition at night to one whose conscience was distressed by remorse for a crime committed.39

1926 Representative John J. Boylan of New York in a long speech in the House had said:

The time for temporizing with the present Mexican Government has passed. Further argument with Mexico, I am convinced, will prove fruitless; it is time to act, and in a way that will assure Mexico of our determination to protect American rights and citizens. It is time our official attitude toward Mexico became that which has characterized our relations with the soviet... Our recognition of the Oregnon

33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
government. History was disregarded, and the Mexican Revolution of 1910, the first social revolution since the French Revolution of 1789, was attributed directly to the Russian Bolsheviks.

*Columbia's* "Red Scare" continued in the November 1926 issue. Individual portions of the lengthy editorial were headed: "In Dark Places," "Mud and Carcass," "Corruption," "The Obvious," "Delusion," and "The Red Tide." The editorial, "is light and inspiration to all communists, brutalists, and revolutionary agitators. . . . Radicalism at last has a foothold in America. . . . One day it may be this Mexico which, directly or indirectly, shall be the cause of our destruction."40

The "Red Scare" conducted by *Columbia* was accompanied by a successful scheme to trick Secretary of State Kellogg into a position supporting the Catholics. This was accomplished by having Assistant Secretary of State Harold E. Olds call a meeting of a small, select group of newspapermen and give them copies of a document by Kellogg entitled "Bolshevik Aims and Policies in Mexico and Latin America."41 This document contained little of importance, but it was hoped by the Church that the prestige of Kellogg would give a boost to their cause. The Philadelphia *Public Ledger* headlined the story: "Mexico is center of Bolshevist plot against the United States; object is world revolution, Kellogg declares."42 The New York *Herald-Tribune* headline read: "Mexico base of red war on the United States, Kellogg charges."43 Olds himself publicly stated: "It is an undeniable fact that the Mexican Government is a Bolshevist Government. We cannot prove it, but we are morally certain that a warm bond of sympathy, if not of actual understanding, exists between Mexico City and Moscow."44 This created quite a furor, but many prominent persons did not take it seriously. Included in this group was Senator George W. Norris, who ridiculed Kellogg's Red Scare in a parody of a familiar children's poem:

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Once there was a Bolshevik,
Who wouldn't say his prayers—
So Kellogg sent him off to bed,
Away up stairs,
An' Kellogg heerd him holler,
An' Coolidge heerd him bawl,
But when they turn't the kivvers down,
He wasn't there at all!
They sought him down in Mexico,
They cussed him in the press;
They sought him round the Capitol,
An' everywhere, I guess,
But all they ever found of him
Was whiskers, hair, and clout—
An' the Bolsheviks 'll get you
If you Don't
Watch Out! 45
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Despite the sound and the fury created by the Catholics, they were clearly losing ground from the beginning of the conflict. More drastic action was deemed necessary by the late summer of 1926, and the next plan in the strategy of the Church was put into effect: armed revolt. But it is difficult—and not impossible—for the historian to separate genuine armed Roman Catholic action against the government in this conflict from similar action on the part of other armed groups operating in the field at the same time. Every armed uprising in Mexico—and perhaps in all countries—has been a combination of warfare and banditry. Mexican revolutionists and counterrevolutionists have traditionally been aided by bandit forces. The Catholic or *cristero* revolt of 1926-29 undoubtedly attracted to its ranks persons who had little or no interest in the religious issues at stake but who were concerned only with the possibilities of looting under the protection of the Church. At the same time, there were bandit groups operating independently who posed as Catholic rebels. The existence of these groups made it possible for the Church to escape blame for atrocities and other untoward incidents of the revolution by laying them at the feet of the bandits.

The Mexican Episcopate encouraged its armed supporters in the field in a pastoral condemning the *Calles Government* which ended in these words:

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Venerable brothers and dearly beloved sons, do not lose faith. Do not permit your strength to fail. Do not unfold to the world and to Heaven the sad spectacle of a soldier who is a traitor to his flag and surrenders to the enemy. Do not imitate the unnatural son who abandons his mother in the moment of danger.

On the contrary, imitate the true lovers of liberty, who in all ages of history have known how to stand squarely in the breach until they have died or won.46
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Despite its open support of the *cristeros*, as the Catholic rebels were called, the Episcopate officially denied all responsibility for all armed Catholic action that had taken place. It asserted that the Church did not oppose armed revolt as such, but it should be resorted to only after all peaceful means to obtain redress of grievances had been exhausted. It declared that if individual Catholics felt that the time for armed revolt had arrived, the Church would not intervene. But at the same time it declared that it was the Calles Government, not the Church, who must shoulder the responsibility for the bloodshed and destruction that would follow.47

The most spectacular act of the *cristeros* was the attack on the Guadalajara-Mexico City passenger train on April 20, 1927. According to the newspapers, about 500 armed men attacked the train near Limon in the state of Jalisco, a stronghold of the *cristeros*. The train was detailed and the coaches locked and set afire with the passengers and an armed escort inside. Over a hundred persons were reported to have been killed or burnt to death. The dispatch said that the attack was led by three priests named Vega, Pedroza, and Angelo, and a lawyer named Loza, who was a commissioner of the National League for the Defense of Religious Liberty, commonly called the *Liga* in Mexico.48

40 *New York Times*, Sept. 8, 1926.  41 *ibid.*, Nov. 2, 1926.  42 *ibid.*, April 21, 1927.
Archbishop Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores denied responsibility for the deed in the name of the Episcopate, saying: "Those are responsible who have brought about this situation and have given and are giving an example of similar attacks." José Tercero, an official high in the leadership of the Liga, disclaimed all responsibility, although he admitted—or claimed—that his organization was leading all cristero forces in Mexico. This train incident received little attention from the editors of American religious publications. They seemed reluctant to comment on it, perhaps because they could not quite accept it as an act of the Church. Commonweal appeared to sense this doubt in the minds of the Protestants and in its comment on the incident stated:

The recent ghastly train hold-up in the mountains of Jalisco was executed by ferocious bandits who, if we are to credit the news, showed no quarter to women and children. To the lane and halt it is always evident that the Church is the source of lawlessness and violence in Mexico but even Protestant missionary forces in the United States no longer quite believe these established truths.

In a later issue, Commonweal dismissed the incident with the remark that the train attack simply "afforded the Government an opportunity to accuse Catholics of rebellion and outrage."

The editor of the Christian Century commented on the incident but he handled it cautiously. He reduced the number killed to forty-seven while admitting his belief that the attack was by cristeros and that the Church was indirectly responsible for the outrage.

An important result of the Jalisco train incident was the deportation of the few bishops remaining in Mexico at this time. Since the first of the year, deportations of Church leaders had been stepped-up and by the middle of May 1927 Archbishop Orozco y Jiménez was said to be the only high churchman left in Mexico. The Government made many attempts to capture him, but he managed to remain at large. He stayed in Mexico, probably in Jalisco, until after the conflict had ended.

Increasing cristero activity eventually led the Mexican government to take steps to end the rebellion as quickly as possible. The area in Jalisco where the rebels were most active was declared a forbidden zone. Special couriers were sent by the military and all villages in the forbidden zone were destroyed, a procedure which had been followed with success in the cruel campaign against the luckless Yaqui Indians in Sonora. The campaign in Jalisco was a relentless one and by the end of July 1927 the cristeros were partly under control, although there were still some 20,000 of them under arms in the mountains of Jalisco and surrounding territory. As late as the early 1960's a regiment of horse cavalry continued to be stationed in Ameca, a cristero stronghold in Jalisco, in case of further trouble. A writer in Commonweal called the success of the government campaign "a triumph of brute force and corruption over idealism, youth, and purity."

On July 17, 1928, President-elect Alvaro Obregón was assassinated. He had made himself a target for destruction by announcing that he would continue the anticlerical policies of President Calles. His assassin was José Léon de Toral, a twenty-three-year-old student and active member of the League for the Defense of the Catholic Religion. Posing as an itinerant artist, he shot Obregón in a public restaurant on the outskirts of Mexico City. He was a member of a group that had previously bombed the election headquarters of Obregón as well as the Mexican Chamber of Deputies. This desperate act—understandable as it was—solved nothing. Toral was sentenced to death after a thorough investigation which convinced Calles that the Church itself was not implicated in the deed. Before his execution, in a letter to a co-worker, Toral declared: "Every man that dies for the cause is another step toward our goal." Shortly before facing the firing squad, he is reported to have said: "I shall die without uneasiness, with the unalterable conviction that I am going unto unity with God. I have suffered continuously and today I finish my Calvary."

Protestants as well as Catholics in the United States were shocked by the assassination of Obregón. The editor of the Christian Century praised Obregón for his role in the development of Mexico, saying that his enemies down through the years—Pascual Orozco, Pancho Villa, Emiliano Zapata, and Venustiano Carranza—had been to his credit. This editor had at first believed that Obregón had been killed by political enemies not connected with the religious conflict, but he later admitted that although there was no proof of Church involvement, the attitude of the Church toward the government had fostered such doubts.

Samuel G. Inman, a Protestant authority on Mexico, also placed the blame for the murder indirectly on the Church. "The assassination of President-elect Obregón," he wrote, "is not the crime of an individual. It is society itself that must answer—the kind of society that has been allowed to exist in Mexico and its next-door neighbor, elements that would play fatally on the passions of the masses who have been kept ignorant, degraded and superstitious, that they might better be exploited."

57Max Jordan, "Whither Mexico?" Commonweal, March 27, 1929, p. 593.
60Marie Elena Sodi de Pallares, "Historia del último conflicto religioso," México D. F. Jueves de Excelsior, March 20, 1932, p. 11.
61Editorial, Nation, Nov. 21, 1928, p. 538.
62Sodi de Pallares, "Historia del último conflicto," p. 11.
65Ibid.
Protestants in general had high praise for Obregón and were greatly disturbed by his loss. The editor of the Christian Advocate declared: "General Obregón was easily the leading citizen, a man of great courage and large administrative ability, a soldier of unusual military skill, a wise leader of those revolutionary forces which have been operating since the long despotism of Porfirio Diaz."67

The editor of the Biblical Recorder praised Obregón as a "one-armed soldier who showed he loved his country and wanted to bring it out of its chaotic condition." "Our country," he declared, "had confidence in General Obregón and looked to him to lead our disturbed neighbor into a better condition. Just what the future holds is hard to say."68 Certainly, there was much truth in these articles but they showed only one side of Obregón. No one care to comment on the cowardly destruction of the Yaquis by this "one-armed soldier who showed he loved his country." Apparently "his country" did not include the Yaquis.

Desultory fighting between bands of cristero guerrillas and government forces had continued despite the government victories in 1927, but in early June 1929, General Enrique Goroztietza, described as an old Diaz general and the leader of the cristeros, was killed by federal troops. It was now clear that the cause of the Church was hopeless, and by late June of that year the Church had come to terms with the government.

Government planes flew over the rebel areas dropping leaflets and newspapers announcing the cessation of hostilities, and the rebels laid down their arms.69 On July 14, the National League for the Defense of Religious Liberty, the organization that had been most active in support of the revolt, issued a manifesto to its followers and the nation declaring that they considered the agreement arrived at between the government and the Church as only an armistice,70 not the end of the conflict. But despite these brave words, the conflict was finally at an end and the Church was never again to dominate Mexico as it had in the past.

Progressives in the United States were understandably pleased with the victory of the Mexican government over a Church that had been the chief aid and comfort of reaction in Mexico since the landing of Cortez in 1519. Thoughtful Protestants saw the government victory as a forward step in the ages-old conflict between Church and State—as it truly was. But as the years went by it became sadly apparent that while the Mexican masses had escaped from the domination of a corrupt Church, they had only exchanged one master for another; and by the end of the 1960's events in Mexico had demonstrated that the State, now without opposition, was perhaps an even greater menace to individual freedom than the Church had been at the height of its power.

70Ibid., June 25, 1929.


**BOOK REVIEWS**


WHAT would happen if all the wheat grown in North Dakota was marketed in one day? What would happen if all the wheat grown on the entire continent was marketed in the very short period of 24 days?

The latter is what the Chicago Board of Trade alone did in the month of March, 1925.

As one of the nine primary markets of the world it sold 2,651,892,000 bushels of wheat—all the world needs, for bread in a year—and the price fell 51 cents a bushel in 15 days.

Can the farmer ever expect to get a fair return of the cost of production of his grain, to say nothing of a profit when the non-producers sell millions of bushels of wind-wheat every year?

Wide swings in wheat prices cannot lead to a balanced agriculture. Ordinarily marketing is the solution which will eliminate conditions which have prevailed during the past few months. You know the success which you have had this growing your grain. Tell your non-member neighbor about it. Let him read your trade paper, he may find something which will change his present uninterested attitude.

And the bigger the pool, the more impossible does it become for violent market fluctuations to occur.