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The Farmers' Alliance and Populist Movement in North Dakota (1884-1896)

Glenn Lowell Brudvig

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THE FARMERS' ALLIANCE AND POPULIST MOVEMENT
IN NORTH DAKOTA (1884-1896)

A Thesis
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty
of the
University of North Dakota

by
Glenn Lowell Brudvig

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Master of Arts

August 1956
This thesis, submitted by Glenn Lowell Bruivig in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, is hereby approved by the Committee of Instruction in charge of his work.

Chairman

John L. Kanneberger

Raymond P. Harris

Dean of the Graduate School
ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The writer wishes to thank the staffs of the State Historical Society of North Dakota and the University of North Dakota Library, especially Dr. J. B. Ashton and Caroline G. Lybeck, for their assistance in finding materials; Dr. Louis G. Geiger of the University of North Dakota History Department, who suggested the topic and provided valuable criticism and guidance; and the writer's wife, Myrna Michael Bruvig, for her tireless efforts in the writer's behalf.

G. L. B.
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The territory of Dakota had a remarkable growth in population between 1879 and 1886. During this period much of the territory was settled; previously it had been almost uninhabited by white men. The population of northern Dakota increased by 66 per cent between 1880 and 1885. During the next half decade the population increased by only 20 per cent. Settlement came too rapidly to permit "thoughtful and deliberate adjustments". It took years before the problems of markets,


2 Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, Population, Vol. 1, Part 1, 2; Briggs, 93. Following are the exact figures:
Increase of Population, 1870-1900

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Dakota, North and South</th>
<th>North Dakota</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>14,181</td>
<td>34,896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>135,177</td>
<td>152,199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>415,610</td>
<td>182,719</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>720,716</td>
<td>319,146</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 John D. Hicks, The Populist Revolt (Minneapolis, 1931), 2.
inance, and government could be adjusted to the needs and nature of the new territory. The economic distress which followed the sudden development of the region led the people to look for relief through such organizations as the Farmers' Alliance and the People's Party.

The growth of the Dakota territory would have been very low indeed if the railroads had not led the way. The rapid development of the territory corresponds to the rapid increase in railroad mileage. In 1880 there were 399 miles of railroad in Dakota, by 1885 there were 2,759 miles, and by 1890 there were 4,726 miles of which 2,085 were in North Dakota. Although settlers at times preceded railroads in areas where preliminary surveys had been made, extensive settlement usually took place one to three years after the railroads came.

Although railroads played the principal role in the settlement of Dakota, other factors also had a large part in the

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4 U.S. Department of the Interior, Census Office, Statistical Atlas of the United States Based upon the Results of the Eleventh Census (Washington, 1898), plate 6. The county lines of his map are based on Illustrated Historical Atlas of Traill and Steele Counties, North Dakota (Mayville, 1892), 4 - 5.

5 Hicks, 2.


7 Briggs, "The Great Dakota Boom", 85.
development of the territory. Dakota was in the hard spring heat belt. Before the 1870's this wheat sold at a discount.

The more humid states produced a soft variety of wheat to which milling processes had been adapted. The millers could not make hard wheat into good flour since it was necessary to run millstones at high speeds and under great pressure, thereby generating heat which discolored the flour. Although bread made from this flour was light in texture, hard wheat sold at a discount of from five to thirty cents a bushel.

In the 1870's two milling improvements resulted in a drastic change in milling methods. The invention of the La Croix purifier enabled more efficient use of hard wheat to produce a superior grade of white flour. The introduction of the roller milling process from Europe eliminated the excess heat in hard wheat milling and made possible the production of a fine grade of flour from it. This fine flour quickly came into favor in the United States and the United Kingdom. When the boom in the Dakota territory began, rolling mills had come into general use and hard spring wheat was in great demand; it now sold at a premium. The prospects of good profits in raising this wheat

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Robert W. Bahmer, "The Economic and Political Background of the Non-Partisan League" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1941), 17.
provided a great incentive for the settlers moving into the Dakota Territory.

The level Dakota fields were ready for the plow. Eastern farmers faced with rising land values and taxes were lured to the new frontier of cheap land and promising returns. Foreign immigrants saw great opportunity in Dakota's virgin land. The railroads, vitally interested in settlers, did their utmost to advertise the territory. The Northern Pacific Railroad sold its lands at prices that were set more to attract settlers than to make a profit. In 1871 Dakota established an immigration bureau to encourage and promote the permanent settlement of the territory. The bureau was inactive during the height of the boom, but during its periods of activity it carried out a vigorous publicity campaign for the territory. It advertised in various newspapers, published monthly bulletins, and distributed maps and posters, all painting the climate, soil, and resources in a most favorable way. Dakota was pictured as a health resort, and its waters were said to have medicinal qualities.

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11 Dakota Department of Immigration and Statistics, Resources of Dakota, 1887 (Sioux Falls, 1887), passim.
What probably did more to advertise Dakota than anything else was the success of the bonanza farms. In 1875 Oliver Dalrymple and his associates established the first bonanza farm of thousands of acres in the Red River Valley. In 1876 a bumper harvest brought great profits. The success of the enterprise was widely advertised. Other bonanza farms were established and their success paved the way for the "Great Dakota Boom" which was under way by 1878.

During most of the boom period rainfall was ample and crops were good. The prospect of profitable farming drew settlers into the Red River Valley and on to the prairies in great numbers. A settler who filed for a homestead and resided on the land for five years could obtain one hundred and sixty acres for no more than a few dollars in fees. The Timber Culture Act of 1873 enabled a settler to obtain an additional tree claim of one hundred and sixty acres by meeting the tree planting requirements of the law. Under the right of preemption a settler could purchase up to one hundred and sixty acres of government land after proof of one year's residence on the land and payment of $1.25 an acre or $2.50 an acre if it was within

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13 Resources of Dakota, 1887, 280.
the limits of the Northern Pacific land grant. A homestead and a preemption could not, under the law, be taken up at the same time; however, many individuals were able to take up both by securing the deed to one before filing for the other. Thus by exercising all three rights a settler could secure up to four hundred and eighty acres of government land. The lands of the Northern Pacific grant were almost as attractive as government lands. Agricultural lands were sold for $3 to $6 an acre, and a settler after making a small down payment had five to ten years in which to pay the balance.

Nevertheless, the newcomer needed a considerable sum of money to start farming, if he wanted to do it right. If he were to obtain the necessary machinery for grain farming, the cost would come to around $375; a good team of horses with harness would be about $300; a house would cost from $100 to $350 more; and the other tools, plus milk cows, seed, and the cost of living until the first crop was in would make the total beyond the means of many pioneers. The Bureau of Immigration in 1887 recommended that a settler who was the head of a family should not have less than $500, and even then it would require

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13 Resources of Dakota, 1887, 230.
14 North Dakota Statistical, Historical and Political Abstract, 1889 (Aberdeen, 1889), 80.
15 Resources of Dakota, 1887, 310.
plenty of hard work and resourcefulness in order to succeed. But most pioneers, with little cash and plenty of fortitude, built a sod house, broke a few acres, and got themselves established with a comparatively small cash outlay. Farm wages were good and a poor man could save enough as a farm laborer to take up a homestead and build a little house. In his spare time he could do breaking and other work for his neighbors to earn extra money.

The settler, short on capital, had to secure the needed cash by concentrating on cash crops and by borrowing. During the boom years, wheat was the money-maker. The yields, especially in the Red River Valley, were large and wheat prices were high. Wheat averaged twenty-five to thirty bushels per acre in the Red River Valley in the early boom years and its market price around $1.00 a bushel. The Grand Forks Herald in 1882 estimated that it cost 40¢ a bushel to raise wheat. By allowing twenty-five bushels per acre at $1.00 a bushel,

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16 Ibid., 312.

17 In the early 1880's during the time of the boom, the population of North Dakota was largely in the Red River Valley. See map page 2.


19 March 16, 1882.
profits of $1400 for one hundred and sixty acres of wheat could be visualized. All available land was put into wheat with other crops taking a minor place. Many farmers raised nothing but wheat and had to buy everything else. The "one crop" farmers became hard-pressed when the crop was poor or the price low. Although more livestock and other crops were raised when agriculture became established, the transition period from a "one crop" system to diversified farming was not without considerable hardship to many.

The Dakota settlers seldom had enough capital to meet their needs. It was necessary for many to borrow as much as they could to get themselves established in farming. The good crops and high prices in the early years encouraged many farmers to go heavily into debt to increase their holdings in land and equipment. By so doing they could raise more wheat, and with continued good times they hoped to be able to pay off the debt in a few years. With credit short, interest rates were high. The high interest rates were an adverse factor in the development of the territory. Although the legal rate was fixed at 7 per cent per annum by territorial law, higher rates were often charged since the rates could be set by mutual agreement.
Farmers could generally secure a mortgage on their real estate after they had secured the title and made improvements. The extent of real estate mortgages in North Dakota is shown in the federal census figures of 1890. There was one mortgage to every two people twenty-one years of age and over. Kansas was the only other state that had a ratio as high. The per capita real estate debt in force in North Dakota in 1890 was $275. The high debt of the Dakota farmers had developed largely during the optimistic period of the boom.

By 1885 the peak of the boom had passed. In the following year its end was forecast by a partial crop failure. The period of ample rainfall had come to an end and it was not until 1891 that there was again enough rainfall to insure a full crop throughout North Dakota. The failures of 1886 ended the optimism of the early 1880's and a period of financial reaction and deflation began. Loans became difficult to obtain and interest rates rose. Those farmers who had overmortgaged during the boom years now faced foreclosure proceedings. The railroads'
expansion slowed down considerably; no longer did they desire to push ahead of settlement, partially because by the time the boom came to an end most of the best lands had been taken up and the Red River Valley was well settled.

From 1885 to 1890 the low yields per acre were coupled with low prices. In 1886 and 1887 the drought was localized; some areas were hard hit while others had good crops. In addition, the cattle ranchers of western North Dakota suffered enormous losses during the severe winter of 1886–87. Entire herds perished and only a few pitiful survivors remained of the great herds that roamed the prairies the summer before. The

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Coulter, 612. The yields of wheat are illustrated by the following figures:

Wheat Production in North Dakota, 1885–1891

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>Bushels</th>
<th>Average Yield</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>1,800,000</td>
<td>25,341,585</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td>2,117,000</td>
<td>35,997,619</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888</td>
<td>2,161,429</td>
<td>20,676,311</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>2,655,991</td>
<td>22,101,445</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>2,676,314</td>
<td>27,554,611</td>
<td>10½</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>2,845,502</td>
<td>64,713,328</td>
<td>22½</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

State Commissioner of Agriculture and Labor, North Dakota: A Few Facts Concerning Its Resources and Advantages (Bismarck, 1892), 25. Also see Appendix A.

crop of 1888 was seriously damaged by rust and a severe frost which hit North Dakota on August 16. The grain harvested that year was small, shrunken, and not fit for milling purposes, and it sold for a fraction of the regular price. The crops were poor in 1889 and the crop of 1890 was still worse. The crop of 1890 was average in the Red River Valley but very bad west and north of Devils Lake, and nearly a complete failure in the south central counties: Sargent, Dickey, and McIntosh. In 1891 the crop the farmers were hoping for arrived. Some farmers got up to fifty bushels an acre of wheat that year. Prices which had been declining took a temporary turn upward and the hopes of many discouraged and struggling farmers were revived.

After two or more crop failures many people had retraced their steps eastward. The exact number that departed could not be estimated since a good many had come and gone again before

25 Dakota Euralist (Aberdeen), November, 1888.

26 First Report of the Commissioners of Agriculture and Labor to the Governor of North Dakota, 1890 (Bismarck, 1890.) 21, 76.

27 Interview with Mr. Martin Lee, pioneer farmer near Aneta, North Dakota, January 1, 1956.
the census taker could count them. Those that stayed and fought against crop failures, low prices, and burdensome debts formed a class of discontented farmers whose growing grievances found voice in the Farmers' Alliance and Populist movement.

Agriculturists of North Dakota, as well as those in the rest of the United States and even in the rest of the world, were in a period of decline. The declining prosperity of the farmers did not at first seem to affect the economy of the rest of the nation. Railroads, banks, manufacturing enterprises, cities, towns, and almost everything else except agriculture seemed to flourish and prosper. "The farmer had good reason to believe, as he did believe, that he worked longer hours, under more adverse conditions, and with smaller compensation for his labor than any other man on earth."

The farmer could see that his lack of prosperity was due to the low prices he received for the commodities he had to sell. North Dakota farmers received high prices for wheat until 1883, but in 1884 the price of hard spring wheat fell sharply. In November, 1882, hard wheat sold for $1.25 a bushel at Grand Forks.

Hicks, 35.

Ibid., 54 - 55.
a year later it sold for 53% a bushel. In 1885 wheat prices rose a bit; 71% was the price quoted in November at Grand Forks. But the price rise did not hold. During the marketing season of 1886 the price of wheat per bushel was down to 55% and it was about the same in 1887. In 1888 it was quoted at the unrealistic figure of $1.02 at Grand Forks. This price was for No. 1 hard wheat of which there was very little on the market because of rust and severe frost; most of the wheat crop consisted of low frosted grades fit only for feed. During the 1889 marketing season wheat prices were still low (63%), but in the fall of 1890 the price was up to 87%. The bumper crop of 1891 sold at prices below those of 1890 but higher than the preceding

30 Grand Forks Herald, Nov. 15, 1882; Second Annual Report of the Commissioners of Railroads to the Governor of North Dakota, 1891, (Bismarck, 1892), 459.

31 Second Annual Report of the Commissioners of Railroads to the Governor of North Dakota, 1891, 459.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.
ears. At 77¢ to 81¢ a bushel farmers had a prosperous year, but they did not enjoy the full benefits of their bumper crop. The price of hard wheat in London, where the price of wheat in the world market was set, had risen from a usual price of from 45¢ to $1.28 to $1.38 a bushel; yet the price of wheat in the local market did not rise correspondingly. In 1892 the price fell to 43¢ and in 1893 to the lowest point in history, selling for 30¢ a bushel in some localities. During this period of declining prices, yields were also declining while the cost of producing a bushel of wheat remained almost constant. The result, therefore, was hard times for the farmer.

Accurate statistics on wheat prices that the farmer actually received are almost impossible to obtain. Prices quoted for No. 1 hard wheat and most wheat was sold at lower grades with a corresponding lower price. Dockage for dirt and burrries also lowered the price per bushel. Local prices

Ibid.

Ibid., 458. This rise in the world market price was largely caused by the small crops of 1889 and 1890, the failure of the wheat crop in Russia, and the serious grain shortage in Europe. W. Jett Lauck, The Causes of the Panic of 1893 (New York, 1907), 79 - 80.

Interview with Mr. Martin Lee, June 18, 1956.
price remained relatively stable showing a gradual decrease from 1884 to 1887 with a rise in 1888 and another in 1890 and 1891. The variation of the wheat prices at Grand Forks between 1884 and 1891 was 50% while during the same period at London the variation was 33%. The local wheat prices declined in the fall during marketing time and generally went up the following spring.

The average farmer usually had to sell his crop shortly after harvest when prices were lowest. Most farmers were in debt and had to meet their obligations in the fall when they came due. Funds were needed to pay debts contracted for supplies and machinery, harvest and threshing expenses, taxes, and obligations to bankers and loan companies.

Few farmers had storage facilities of their own. They were compelled either to sell their crops or store them in public elevators as soon as they were threshed. Either way provided a large visible supply of wheat which served to depress prices. The over-supply of wheat in the fall of the year glutted the market, blocked mills, and sometimes completely blocked marketing facilities. Storage rates until the wheat could be made into flour were high and this partially explains lower prices in the fall. Speculation in the grain trade also served to lessen the profits of the farmer. Speculators bought heavily when the prices were low and sold when prices were high. The farmers

See Appendix A.
charged that the price of grain was deliberately depressed during the times when they must sell and pushed up when the grain was in the terminal elevators of the big grain buyers. The North Dakota Board of Railroad Commissioners estimated in 1887 that grain dealers could buy the same grade of wheat in a glutted market for 10% to 15% less than they could six months later. The commissioners recommended that farmers build private granaries and place wheat on the market gradually. Many farmers wanted to hold their wheat for better prices, but the only way they could do so was to borrow money at a high rate of interest to pay their debts.

During these unprosperous years the farmers wanted to get all for their wheat that it was worth. They were aware that the price was set in the world market but felt that the difference between the world price and the local price was too great. If they could get a fair share of the price of wheat, they believed they would be prosperous enough. The Jamestown Capital estimated in 1886 that Dakota farmers received 50 per cent to 60 per cent less per bushel of wheat than it was worth in the British market. It was also estimated that Dakota wheat

39 Third Annual Report of the Railroad Commissioners of the Territory of Dakota, 1887 (Bismarck, 1887), 296.

40 April 20, 1888.
producers during the years 1882 to 1887 received an average of
12% less per bushel than farmers of other states. Estimates of the
difference between the British market and local market were made at
various times. These estimates were used to show that farmers were
being robbed somehow of from 10% to 33% between North Dakota and
Liverpool; however, the North Dakota Board of Railroad Commissioners
reported in 1891 that profits between Grand Forks and London varied
from nothing to 32% a bushel during the years 1884 to 1891.

The price of wheat was closely watched by the farmers. They urged
publication of the price of wheat at Liverpool together with the local price
and all other charges between the two points so they could calculate
the profits made on their produce.

The depressed condition of agriculture, it was argued, was
cased by over-production, contraction of currency, or both.
Over-production was generally held as the root of the evil.
Wheat production increased greatly not only in the United States but also in Russia and Argentina. The greatly increased supply

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41 Dakota Heraldist, May 18, 1889.

42 North Dakota Independent, August 13, 1891; March 24, 1892.

43 Second Annual Report of the Commissioners of Railroads to the Governor of North Dakota, 1891, 439.
of wheat and other farm products was in excess of the demand for them and the result could only be a decline in prices. Newspaper editors, politicians, and others urged the wheat farmer to employ diversified farming practices. Meat and dairy production were often suggested. It was often pointed out that the wheat producer should not expect six months occupation to support him for the rest of the year.

The farmers and their friends did not consider the overproduction theory as a valid explanation of the low prices for agricultural products. They were generally more inclined to use the contraction of currency theory as an explanation for the depressed agricultural conditions. The farmers could not see why the thousands of underfed people could not consume the products of their "overproduction". The answer was obvious: they could not pay for it. Therefore the situation became a currency problem rather than an overproduction problem. North Dakota's Senator Henry C. Hansbrough considered that the price of wheat was low because "... the masses of the world were unable to buy all the bread they need..." because of the withdrawal of money from circulation. This theory found a wide acceptance among those North Dakota farmers who studied the situation.

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44 Devils Lake Inter Ocean, undated, quoted in the North Dakota Independent, November 16, 1893.
Farmers came to believe that they were being exploited and deprived of profits that were rightly theirs. North Dakota farmers, as others in the west, blamed many of their troubles on the railroads upon which they were entirely dependent for shipping their products to market. They could easily see their profits being eaten up by exorbitant freight rates. The evils of grain speculation and market manipulation were distant and not clearly understood, but the high freight rates were close and well known. Some farmers in North Dakota had to pay half the value of their wheat to get it as far as Chicago. The principal cost for transporting North Dakota wheat to European markets was that of shipping it to Lake Superior. The northern Red River Valley region had to ship its wheat through Minneapolis in order to reach Duluth until a direct rail line was built from Grand Forks to Duluth. In 1881 wheat shipped from Grand Forks to Duluth via Minneapolis cost 12¢ to 15¢ more per bushel than wheat shipped directly from Fargo to Duluth on the Northern Pacific Railroad. When Grand Forks did obtain a direct line to Duluth, the freight rates dropped to 13.8¢ per bushel, the same as for Fargo. In 1888 the rate to Duluth

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45 Hicks, 60.

46 Grand Forks Herald, December 29, 1881.

47 Second Annual Report of the Commissioners of Railroads to the Governor of North Dakota, 1891, 459.
went down to 11.4¢ a bushel and in the following year it declined to 10.8¢ a bushel. Even at these lower rates statistics show that it often cost as much or more to ship a bushel of wheat from Grand Forks to Duluth than it did from Duluth to Liverpool.

Discrimination in freight rates against North Dakota shippers was a continual grievance against the railroads. Long hauls between points in North Dakota and St. Paul or other cities east were much cheaper than hauls over equal distances within North Dakota. This discrimination in rates, as a Legislative Committee on Railroads reported in January, 1890, affected the prosperity of the entire state. The committee collected and compiled rates for freight showing that rates from St. Paul to a point in North Dakota, say Lisbon, were much less than the combined rates from St. Paul to, say, Fargo and from Fargo to Lisbon. Evidence which was collected also showed the same was true of rates quoted to Grand Forks, Bismarck, Jamestown, and Wahpeton and from these cities to points in North Dakota. Other compilations made by the Committee on Railroads proved that rates from St. Paul to certain stations in Minnesota were much less than rates over the same distance in North Dakota. The evidence obtained by the committee showed

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49
See Appendix A.

50
First Annual Report of the Commissioners of Railroads to the Governor of North Dakota, 1890, 63 - 69.
that the shippers of North Dakota were "... discriminated against in the matter of freight rates and that such discrimination is in favor and tends to the building up of cities in other states." The committee believed:

That this system of freight rates will materially retard the growth and prosperity of our State. That it is the intention of the railroad companies to prevent, and that their action is preventing the building up of towns and cities within our State; and that without the upbuilding of such trade centers, with their corresponding tax paying power, we shall ever remain a weak dependency of adjoining states...52

It was quite generally held that while farmers were suffering "the railroads ... were ... prospering and piling up large surpluses." Railroads were identified with eastern capitalists who cared nothing for this region and whose chief purpose was to plunder it. The monopoly of the railroads over the transportation system of most North Dakota communities enabled railroads, as it looked to the farmer, to collect what-

51 Ibid., 63.
52 Ibid.
ever rates they chose. The railroad officials came to the
defense of the freight rates on their lines. They argued that
railroad traffic was nearly all one way, and that the light
traffic in thinly settled areas could not pay the expenses of
operation no matter how high the rates were. North Dakota's
vigorous climate, it was asserted, made the cost of operating
the railroads more expensive than in other areas. The Dakota
Commissioners in 1886 stated that "... few of the railroads of
Dakota, if operated as independent lines, would pay running
expenses..." However, the railroads did reduce rates
voluntarily, possibly because great pressure was put on them to
do so by farmers, editors, politicians, and an aroused public
opinion in general. James J. Hill declared that the railroads
were reducing rates as rapidly as possible. The railroads,
attempting to reduce rates and improve service, tried to
economize by cutting out daily train service on some lines,
eliminating some stations, and using part-time agents when
possible. These practices only added to the grievances
against the railroads, especially in the areas affected.

In North Dakota the railroad problem was closely related to
the elevator problem. There were three main types of elevators
operating in North Dakota: independent elevators owned by

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Second Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners to the Territory of Dakota, 1886 (Grand Forks, 1886), 21.
individuals or local companies, farmers' cooperatives owned by a corporation of stockholders who were usually farmers, and line elevators owned and controlled by big corporations which operated a string of elevators up and down the entire length of a railroad line. The large line elevator companies built better and larger houses than the others, were more efficient in doing business, and were favored by railroads. The railroads found it a "... matter of economy, profit, and convenience to receive large, frequent, and easily regulated shipments under contracts with a small number of shippers rather than bother with small and irregular shipments from many different sources."

The railroads, by giving preferential treatment to the larger, more efficient elevators in the matter of granting elevator sites and furnishing freight cars, aided them in eliminating competition in the grain trade. The railroads prevented the erection of new elevators when they considered that the old elevators were adequate by refusing sites on the right of way. When pressure was brought on the railroads to provide additional elevator sites, they were able to prevent it by fixing conditions

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56 Hicks, 67 - 68.
that were difficult to meet. A regulation on the Great Northern railroad prevented the erection of any elevator with a capacity of less than thirty thousand bushels. Thus by refusing sites, the railroads were able to protect established elevators from competition and limit the number of elevators to a few large ones.

During the first years of settlement in the state, the grain business was highly competitive. Local grain buyers would bid on the farmer’s grain, and the farmer could feel he was getting a fair price when he sold to the highest bidder. These dealers did not buy by grades or dock for dirt or impurities; they set a price they thought it was worth and if it was too bad they just would not take it. These buyers operated small warehouses or shipped their grain by loading it directly into cars. The local grain buyer who shipped his grain directly could purchase grain at higher prices than the elevator companies because of little investment and overhead. When the larger elevators were built, usually by line companies, it became highly desirable for them to have the competition of these independent dealers eliminated.

The elevator and railroad companies were able to force the independent dealers out of business in a short time. The line

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57 Ibid., 67.
58 Interview with Mr. Martin Lee, Jan. 1, 1956.
Elevator companies helped eliminate the competition of the local grain buyers by agreeing not to ship to any terminal that purchased from independent dealers or others who shipped grain directly. The railroads effectively forced direct shippers out of business by refusing cars to any shipper unless he could show his grain first. This of course could hardly be done unless an elevator or warehouse was built and, as was mentioned, the railroads had absolute control in the granting of elevator sites. Technically, railroads were required to furnish cars to all who wanted them. Some roads did this to a certain extent, but during periods of car shortages only the elevators were able to obtain them. Farmers who wanted to ship grain directly to the terminals found it almost impossible to do so because of the uncertainty and delay in obtaining cars.

The grain trade ceased to be competitive, and the elevator companies by mutual agreement eliminated competition among themselves. The grain trade had become big business managed from central headquarters by eastern interests. At each station having more than one elevator, each would quote the same price. The commissioners of railroads reported in 1891 that where there were three to five elevators at one station one buyer would handle the buying for all. The elevators would be practically

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all closed except for one, the one being filled. Then the buyer would open another until it was full and so on. The commission declared that this was "... the rule, and not an exception".

Under such a system, the farmers were deprived of a free competitive market. Many farmers believed that since the elevator men had a monopoly, they could pay any price they wanted to. Actually, the price of wheat in Minneapolis and Chicago was public information; railroad rates were also known. Therefore, the elevator companies quoted as good a price as possible or else they would be subject to severe criticism. The elevator companies secured their real profits, therefore, by grading the farmers' wheat lower than it would be at the terminals and by deducting more for dirt, weed seeds, and other impurities in the grain than was actually warranted. Besides the practices of undergrading and overdockage, some elevator men were also charged with weighting of grain to the farmers' disadvantage.

Some enterprising farmers and farm groups attempted to bypass the local elevators by shipping directly to the terminal markets. They immediately encountered the opposition of railroads who refused the farmers' cars and made it difficult for farmers' cooperatives to secure sites for elevators and warehouses. The farmers were unable to force the railroads to

60 Second Annual Report of the Commissioners of Railroads to the Governor of North Dakota, 1891, 461.
furnish them with cars and elevator sites. The Railroad Commissioners were often appealed to, to force railroads to supply cars and to grant sites. The Commission, almost as powerless as the farmers, could do little to force the railroads to comply with the demands made against them.

A criticism against elevator companies that accounted for over half the complaints received by the Railroad Commission in 1888 was

... the practice of compelling the owners of high grade wheat to sell it at low grade prices. This result is brought about by combination of buyers at a given point... who stock their

Following is a typical example of the complaints that filled many pages of the Railroad Commissioners' reports:

Claremont, Dakota, September 7, 1887

To the Board of Railroad Commissioners of Dakota, Bismarck, Dak.

Gentlemen: The farmers in this vicinity complain against the St. Paul, Minneapolis & Manitoba Railroad Company that they neglect and virtually refuse to furnish us grounds on their right of way for a farmers' grain warehouse in order that we may ship our own grain, and not be at the mercy of the elevator companies. Also, that they pulled the empty cars away from this station when there were orders in for them by individual farmers and independent buyers, thereby forcing farmers to store or sell wheat at the elevators. Have we any remedy through your commission?

Please let us know at once and oblige many farmers.

Yours truly,

George D. Wood

elevators and warehouses with inferior grades of wheat, and then refuse to buy a superior grade unless the owner will consent to its sale at the price of the poorer grain. The excuse offered by the purchaser for this high handed outrage is the flimsy one that they have no room for separate handling of good wheat, and must mix it with the lower grades… 62

The hard spring wheat producers of North Dakota felt that they were not getting the full value of their wheat because it never reached eastern and European markets in its original way. If North Dakota hard wheat could reach its destination without being mixed with softer varieties from more southern points, it would bring a better price, it was argued. It was estimated that North Dakota farmers lost 3% to 5% a bushel on all of their best grades by such practices. The farmer believed that if these practices which deprived him of much of his profit were eliminated, his prosperity would be improved.

The farmers, while they were forced to sell their grain at low prices, were compelled to purchase the commodities they needed at high prices. The farmer blamed the high prices for the things he had to buy on "trusts" which existed for the sole

62 Ibid., 56.

63 Fifth Annual Report of the Commissioners of Railroads to the Governor of North Dakota, 1894 (Jamestown, 1894), 460.
purpose of getting all for their product that was possible. The farmer was faced with trusts in all the principal purchases he had to make. The coal, lumber, twine, and machinery trusts controlled the prices of the products most needed by the farmers. The twine trust came under the severest attack from the farmers. Twine prices continued upward while wheat prices were going downward. The farmers charged that a "trust" was responsible for the higher prices. Twine became so high that farmers began to abandon its use. They began to purchase headers instead of binders to harvest their grain, to cooperate in making large purchases of twine, and to hold serious discussions to consider manufacturing twine from flax.

The protective tariff was also vigorously criticized as a means of fostering high prices for manufactured articles. All North Dakota farmers, however, did not oppose the protective tariff, probably not even a majority of them. Farmers complained that while they bought in a protected market, they were forced to sell in a free market. The tariff raised the price of the goods they had to buy while no tariff, no matter how high, could influence the price of farm products that were exported.

One of the deepest grievances of many farmers was the fact

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64 One explanation advanced for the high price of twine was that a shortage of hemp was created by the expanding navies of the world. Letter to the editor, Dakota Ruralist, April 20, 1889.

65 A Farmers' Alliance convention in 1889 defeated a resolution against the protective tariff.
that they were heavily in debt. Mortgages made during the good years of the early 'eighties became an intolerable burden when the prosperity of the farmer began to decline. Interest rates which were already high rose still higher. The farmer who needed a small loan to tide him over to another season or to meet some pressing obligation had to pay interest rates as high as 50 per cent or higher. An early settler related that in the late 'eighties the limit for a small loan on personal property was about $25. If a farmer got a $25 loan, he only received $20 in cash and had to pay $12 interest, or in other words it cost him $17 to borrow $20 until his crop was harvested.

Those farmers who were heavily in debt saw the profits that they felt should have been theirs going to someone else. Rates of interest charged were sometimes more than the entire profits on a farm. The indebted farmer lived in fear of losing his property. During hard times foreclosures came thick and fast. In one 1886 issue of the Grand Forks Plaindealer, fifty-five mortgage sales were advertised. Many farmers did not go through the foreclosure proceedings; they simply let their land revert to their creditors and moved away.

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66 Interview with Mr. Martin Lee, January 1, 1956.

67 March 4, 1886.
Taxation also added to the burdens of the struggling farmers. The farmers felt that they paid more than their share of taxes. The railroad and elevator companies were able to escape from heavy taxes and by so doing shifted the burden of taxation to the farmers. The railroads of Dakota paid taxes at the rate of 3 per cent of their gross earnings. To the farmers, such a system almost exempted the railroads from taxation. The elevator companies were able to escape taxation by emptying their elevators before taxes were assessed on the first of April. A system which allowed the main corporate interests to escape convinced the farmer "that he was the helpless victim of unfair, unreasonable, and discriminatory taxation."

The government of the Dakota Territory and North Dakota after 1889 was strongly influenced by eastern corporate interests. Such a government was more sensitive to the wishes of the corporations than to those of the farmers. The eastern interests were represented by Alexander MacKenzie and his political machine. These interests included the "... railroads, banking and insurance companies, the milling and elevator companies, and the large lumber firms that did business in North Dakota." Of these the railroads undoubtedly had the most

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68 Biennial Message of Louis K. Church, Governor of Dakota to the Legislative Assembly, 1889 (Bismarck, 1889), 12-13.

69 Hicks, 86-87.

70 Nelson, 253.
influence in the affairs of the state government. Railroad lobbyists were present at every legislative session to see that measures unfavorable to them were eliminated. Railway passes were probably the most effective method used by railroads to extend their influence. Members of the legislature received passes and pocketed the mileage they were allowed by the state. The governor and all other state officials received passes as well as many prominent people who helped to form public opinion.

The farmers' grievances were real even though some were exaggerated. When the long hours and hard work of the farmers could not produce a prosperous livelihood from the fertile North Dakota soil, then something was wrong, something needed to be corrected to put the farmers of North Dakota in balance with the rest of the nation. The farmers were not content to sit quietly while others absorbed the profits that should be theirs. "Hence rose the veritable chorus of denunciation directed against those individuals and those corporations who considered only their own advantage without regard to the effect their actions might have upon the farmer and his interests."

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71 Hicks, 95.
CHAPTER II

THE FARMERS' ALLIANCE

The farmers of North Dakota, from almost the very beginning of extensive farming in the state, showed a definite tendency to organize for the relief of their grievances. The first farm organization to make its appearance was the Grange. Although it had little influence in North Dakota, its strength in older settled areas provided men who were later to settle in North Dakota with some knowledge and experience in farm organization. The first Grange in the Dakota Territory was organized near Vermillion, South Dakota, in 1872. The Grange grew to fifty-six local chapters in Dakota, but its membership was largely confined to the southeastern corner of the territory. A local chapter of the Grange was formed at Fargo but was out of contact with those in the south. In 1874 attempts were made to organize a local Grange at Bismarck. Burleigh County was not an agricultural area at this time and the local group was not successful. In 1875 the Grange in Dakota began to decline and by 1878

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1 Herbert S. Schell, "The Grange and the Credit Problem in Dakota Territory", Agricultural History, Vol. 10, No. 2 (April, 1936), 59 - 83; Harold E. Briggs, Frontiers of the Northwest (New York, 1940), 545 - 547.
it was practically extinct. The Grange failed to revive in the eighties when conditions were again favorable to an agrarian movement. The Grange headquarters at Minneapolis tried to encourage the farmers to organize local chapters again in Dakota Territory, but their attempts met with little response.

During the boom years of 1880 - 1883, farmers, optimistic with the good times, tolerated the high freight rates and elevator abuses with some grumbling but no open agitation. However, direct evidence, talk, and newspaper articles about unfair treatment of the farmers stimulated them into open and organized protest when the price of wheat began to decline in the fall of 1883 and especially when it dropped still lower in 1884.

George Winship, editor of the Grand Forks Herald, was one of the first in North Dakota to publish vigorous protests against the abuses of the railroad, elevator, and financial interests. Beginning in 1881, Winship kept up a continuous battle against those who were exacting more than their share from the profits of the agriculturalists. In the fall of 1883, at a time when there were no farmers' organizations in Dakota other than local groups, protests from the farmers and others

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2 Ibid.

3 In 1914 the Grange reappeared in North Dakota in the newly settled areas west of the Missouri River.
grew loud and numerous. The farmers, having no organization to give voice to their protests, found in the Herald a sympathetic defender of their right to demand a rectification of the abuses piled on them.

The Grand Forks Chamber of Commerce late in 1883 appointed a committee of three of which Winship was a member to investigate the charges made against the elevator and loan companies. The committee found reliable evidence to support the charges that were made. It reported that the elevator and the milling monopoly had resulted in undergrading and unfair weighing practices in the purchase of wheat to the extent that "the prosperity of the region was threatened." The farmers, the committee reported, were unable to meet maturing and over-due obligations and "... shylocks were extorting 50 to 150 % per annum." Such a situation caused the landed possessions to "pass into the hands of a few rich." The committee called for a convention of farmers and businessmen of North Dakota to meet at Grand Forks on January 30, 1884, to discuss these problems and to suggest remedies for them. Farmers and businessmen were advised to call meetings and to send earnest men as representatives to the convention. The committee also advised that

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4 Grand Forks Herald, January 15, 1884

5 Ibid.
evidence of all cases of abuse in the purchase of wheat and lending of money at exorbitant rates be secured and brought to the convention.

The farmers' convention which convened at Grand Forks on January 30 contained delegates from Grand Forks, Walsh, Ramsey, Pembina, and Traill counties. Many of the delegates that attended the convention were townspeople. Evidence presented proved that the grievances of the farmers were real. The discussions that were held dealt with the elevator monopoly, the relation of the railroads and the elevator monopoly, grain inspection plans, and plans to obtain a cheaper transportation outlet north by river and south by railroad. A committee of ten was appointed to present a list of grievances to the Manitoba (Great Northern) Railroad at Minneapolis and request that the railroad end its fostering of the elevator monopoly. The committee obtained some vague promises from the railroad officials to reduce freight rates and to reduce the minimum capacity for elevators constructed along the railroad's right-

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6 Ibid., Jan. 30, 1884. Many people in Dakota, especially in the Red River Valley, took an interest in an outlet through the Hudson Bay. It was often discussed in the Farmers' Alliance as a means of cheaper transportation for their grain. The Manitoba farmers hoped that their government would improve the Nelson River, this would enable barges loaded with grain at Fargo to be shipped to Liverpool breaking bulk only at the mouth of the river. Grand Forks Herald Feb. 26, 1884; June 22, 1885.
of-way. However, the railroad actually did reduce rates within the following year, although it is not known if this was in response to the arguments of the farmers' committee.

The convention attempted to secure permanent organization by forming a general association consisting of township councils for farmers and businessmen. It was not successful, however, probably because the farmers were reluctant to join an organization dominated by townspeople.

Other mass meetings in 1884 - 1885 were held by farmers at Valley City, Fargo, and Hillsboro. They too voiced the grievances of the farmers and helped to stir up further agitation for organization. The Hillsboro convention organized the "Traill County Agricultural Society" which received the support of the principal farmers in the area. The latter was especially praised by Winship who urged an agricultural society in every township. Beginning in 1883 and continuing until the Farmers' Alliance became a potent force in the territory, the Herald "... almost ceaselessly rang into the ears of the farmers the necessity of organization if they want honest government and desire to protect themselves from fraud and unposition."

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7 Ibid., Feb. 20, 1884.
8 Ibid., July 17, 1885.
9 Editorial, Grand Forks Herald, July 17, 1885.
"Organize!", "present a solid front", "strength inheres in compactness" were found in the editorial column of the Grand Forks Herald. And organize the farmers did.

During the year 1884, especially in the fall, farm organizations of various types began to appear. Such organizations as the Ellendale Farmers' Mutual Protective Association in North Dakota and the Beadle County Farmers' Protective Association in South Dakota were typical of those that were formed. These farmers' organizations engaged in cooperative selling of farm products and buying of commodities such as twine and coal. A few farmers' cooperative warehouses and elevators were built and the successes of these enterprises were widely advertised. Savings of 5¢ to 10¢ per bushel were reported for the first farmers' elevators and warehouses.

Also during the year 1884 local Farmers' Alliances were being quietly organized in various parts of the territory. Nelson and Richland counties were two of the first in North Dakota to have a local Alliance. The first Alliance in South Dakota was organized at Clear Lake in the fall of 1884 by Henry L. Loucks, who later was to become the leading Alliance-man in the territory and one of the leading ones in the nation.

10 Ibid., January 23, 1884.
11 Dakota Huronite, December 4, 1884.
At the time interest in the Farmers' Alliance began in Dakota the National Farmers' Alliance was in a period of decline. The first effective Alliance had been founded by Milton George, a Chicago farm editor, in Cook County, Illinois, April 15, 1880. He had popularized the organization in his journal, the Western Rural, and the idea caught hold and requests for charters began to come in. On October 14, 1880, a meeting of Alliance chapters and other farm groups organized the movement on a national basis. The organization grew rapidly during the first two years of its existence. In 1882 Alliance activities in Minnesota were given wide and favorable coverage in the Grand Forks Herald. But in 1883 interest in the Alliance movement began to wane; so few attended the 1883 national convention that none was held in 1884. It looked like the organization was doomed to a short life. But interest in the Farmers' Alliance revived greatly throughout the Northwest in 1885, largely because of the low wheat prices in the fall and winter of 1884–85. In the fall of 1884 the Alliance in Dakota had begun to grow quite rapidly. Demands were made by the local groups for organization of a Territorial Farmers' Alliance.

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12 Hicks, 98.
13 March 18, 19, 1882.
14 Hicks, 101.
The Dakota Farmer, founded at Aberdeen in 1879, took a great interest in the Farmers' Alliance and did much to get the movement for a Dakota Alliance started. The organization which provided the machinery that enabled the Dakota Alliance to be formed was the Beadle County Farmers' Protective Association at Huron. The formation of this organization illustrates the almost spontaneous reaction of farmers faced with declining prosperity to unite to defend their interests. In the fall of 1884 a group of influential farmers met at Huron to discuss grain markets and the rights of farmers generally. Also discussed was the formation of an organization of the farmers of the county, and a committee was appointed to call a mass meeting to consider this matter. It was called for September 11, 1884, and a man from each township was appointed as a member of a rallying committee to get out the farmers.

At the meeting the major questions discussed were the advisability of an organization or corporative association to provide for sale and storage of farm produce and to secure needed commodities at lower prices. It was agreed to form a permanent organization known as the Beadle County Farmers' Protective Association with a capital stock of $50,000 of which

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15 Dakota Huronite, September 4, 1884.
$5,000 was to be subscribed in cash. The main object of the association was to build elevators and secure better prices for grain. Political activity was definitely ruled out. Another meeting was held in November. Within little over a month more than half of the capital had been subscribed. The association decided also to deal in coal as well as grain; it was hoped that a saving of $2.00 a ton could be effected. This association led by W. F. T. Bushnell of the Dakota Farmer also moved to bring about the formation of a Territorial Farmers' Alliance. A call was issued for a meeting of delegates from ... every Farmers' Alliance, Grange, or farmers' association of any kind whatever in Dakota ..." to meet at Huron on December 19, 1884.

M. E. Reed, one of the principal organizers of the Beadle County Farmers' Association, called the meeting to order and was elected chairman. The meeting did not have a large attendance; delegates present represented only Central South Dakota, but the meeting was "... noticeable for the intelligence of its participants." A general discussion was held on the kind of

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16 Ibid., Supplement, Sept. 25, 1884.
17 Ibid., Nov. 20, 1884.
18 Ibid., Nov. 27, 1884.
19 Ibid., Dec. 25, 1884.
organization necessary. Almost everyone favored the Farmers' Alliance and no one was opposed to it although some did not understand its objectives. Those present who were Farmers' Alliance delegates perfected the territorial organization and elected officers. There were about sixty Alliances in the territory at this time but many were not represented at the meeting. Officers elected were W. C. Houghton, president, and W. F. T. Bushnell, secretary. The Dakota Farmer was made the official paper. Resolutions that were adopted called for equal taxation of all property, prohibition of railway passes for government officials, regulation of transportation rates by the legislature, and a share of legislation for the farmers. The political nature of these resolutions forecast the later political nature of the Alliance. A political platform, the farmers later discovered, could not be successful without direct political action.

The next meeting was called to meet again at Huron on February 4, 1885, to further perfect the organization. Meanwhile, the increased publicity of the Alliance led to the formation of many local chapters. Between the December and February meetings, about twenty applications came in to the

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20 Ibid., Feb. 12, 1885.

21 Ibid., Dec. 25, 1884.
newly formed organization for charters. After a slight delay of the national secretary in forwarding the necessary documents, 22 charters were granted in an ever increasing number.

The formation of a local Alliance is best illustrated by looking at the development of the Whiteside Farmers' Alliance in Beadle County, South Dakota. A local news column, Whiteside Whittlings, appeared monthly in the Dakota Huronite depicting the happenings on the local scene and containing regular comments on the local Farmers' Alliance chapter. Beginning in December, 1884, the news column mentioned the first gathering of farmers to consider organizing a Farmers' Alliance. In the words of a local news writer:

Our citizens, to the number of about fifty, met in one of our new school houses last Saturday night, to "get acquainted." This is the first public social gathering ever held in our township. The time was spent in hand shaking and social conversation until a late hour. The ladies served a bountiful repast, which was enjoyed by all. We adjourned, to meet again in two weeks, at which time we expect to organize a Farmers' Alliance. The farmers adjacent to Wessington are strongly in notion of organizing for their financial good. Still the demand is not so urgent as at Huron, for we get from three to six cents more per bushel.

### Alliances in the Dakota Territory, 1884 - 1889

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of wheat than Huron pays, and we get coal a little cheaper -- so much to the credit of independent dealers. 23

At the next meeting the Whiteside farmers formed a club which soon became a Farmers' Alliance chapter. The club immediately elected two delegates to attend the Alliance organizing convention at Huron on December 19. The delegates were instructed to get all the information possible and report on a plan of organization at the next meeting. The club thereby became a Farmers' Alliance chapter.

In the following March the local news writer reported that the energetic local Alliance "... is very prosperous and is reaching out in many directions looking to the financial good of the township." 24 The local chapter had organized an Alliance in a neighboring township and was planning to operate a creamery.

The next month the Alliance was making plans for the purchase of farm machinery. At a joint meeting with a neighboring Alliance, agents of various companies were present to put in their sealed bids for binders. To the consternation of the Alliance members, all made the same bid, the regular price. The Alliance members viewed this as evidence of the intention of the machinery dealers to break the Alliance. But the Alliance members were

23 Dakota Huronite, Dec. 4, 1884.
24 Ibid., Mar. 5, 1885.
not deceived. Another agent, not then present, had presented an earlier bid, much lower than the regular price. The low bid gave the company orders for twenty-four binders; others, seeing the advantages, increased the number to thirty-eight plus some other machinery. "Thus in one transaction the farmers have saved more than the Alliance will cost in a lifetime" reported the Whiteside news writer. With the success of their first enterprize, the farmers began making plans to combine in the sale of grain and purchase of coal. The Alliance grew, as others in the territory, and continued to do so as long as its activities benefitted all of its members.

After the groundwork for the Dakota Farmers' Alliance was accomplished at Huron in December of 1884, it became necessary to perfect the organization to include all of the Alliance chapters in the territory in an efficient organization. This was accomplished in a series of three meetings: two in 1885 and one in 1886. On February 4, 1885, at a Huron meeting, the organization of the Dakota Farmers' Alliance was completed. Officers were elected and a constitution was adopted. J. L. Carlisle was elected president with Bushnell continuing as secretary. This convention, like the first, consisted largely of delegates from Central South Dakota: none of the forty-three delegates were from North Dakota. The next convention, held on

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September 9, 1885, contained a larger representation of the Alliances in the territory. There were now one hundred sixty-three Alliance chapters in thirty-six counties with an estimated membership of five thousand. The convention at Watertown on January 28, 1886, marked a turning point in the Territorial Alliance. By then it had ceased to be a floundering organization and was its way to becoming a strong and powerful factor in the territory. This convention is also notable in that it elected Henry L. Loucks president. Loucks continued as president of the Dakota Farmers' Alliance, receiving overwhelming support from its members, until the territory gained statehood, at which time he continued as president of the South Dakota Farmers' Alliance.

Loucks was born in Ontario, Canada, in 1846. He came to the United States in 1877 and became a naturalized citizen. He was well qualified for leadership in the Alliance, being both a practical farmer and a college graduate. He was a very active and energetic Alliance organizer, speaker, and writer. Loucks was also active in the National Farmers' Alliance. In January, 1889, he was elected vice-president of the National Alliance and in the following year he was elected president. Later, he resigned as president of the Northern Alliance, as the National Farmers' Alliance was called, believing that the methods of the
Farmers' Alliance and Industrial Union or Southern Alliance to be more effective. He thereupon became vice-president of the Southern Alliance in 1891, and was elected president in 1892, and was re-elected again in 1893. His state as well as North Dakota had joined the Southern Alliance in December, 1889. This will be discussed later.

When Loucks became president the Alliance took on a new vigor. This was partly due to his tireless efforts, but largely due to the hard times that had set in. The Alliance grew tremendously in the territory after the "Dakota Boom" collapsed in 1886. Wheat prices slid downward, crop failures multiplied, and the Alliance grew stronger. Between 1887 and 1890 the Alliance was in its greatest period of growth. The year 1889, when the territory was being divided for statehood, was the high point of Alliance activity. By 1890 few areas where agriculture was fully established failed to feel the influence of the organized farmers. In December 1886, there were 256 alliances in the territory and by the same time in 1887 the number had increased to 468. There were approxi-

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29 Jamestown Capital, Dec. 23, 1887.
HENRY L. LOUKS

From THE ARENA, VOL. V, NO. XXIX (APRIL, 1892) facing 592.
nately 11,000 Alliance members in 1887, and by 1888 there were 20,000 members in 744 chapters. Statistics are unavailable for 1889, but the growth must have been just as remarkable for in 1890 North Dakota alone had a membership of 40,000.

Although North Dakota and the Dakota Territory did not have an Alliance until 1884, several years after other states in the west had their first Alliance chapters, the rapid growth of the Dakota Alliance after 1886 corresponds with the similar growth in other western states.

The Farmers' Alliance was open to all "practical and 32 operative farmers". Any farmer who desired to organize an Alliance chapter could do so by getting together at least seven of his neighbors, holding a meeting, electing a president and other officers, voting on application to the Dakota Farmers' Alliance, and then applying to the territorial headquarters which was permanently located at Aberdeen after July, 1887.

Many Alliance chapters were aided in organization by other


31 Usher L. Burlick, History of the Farmers' Political Action in North Dakota (Baltimore, 1944), 41. This figure is either overestimated or else it includes honorary members (wives and members of the family).

32 North Dakota Farmers' Alliance Constitution reprinted in the North Dakota Capital, Dec. 6, 1889.
chapters and by officers of the Territorial Alliance. When this done, a meeting would be arranged, usually with the support influential farmers of the area, to discuss organizing of a Territorial Alliance chapter. The objectives and successes of other Alliance chapters would be pointed out as would the benefits were derived by organization. The Alliance, the farmers told, would provide a channel for successful co-operation. Aid in establishing a chapter was requested by farmers aiming to organize, and usually only slight effort was enough get a movement for organization in motion. In areas where energetic local Alliance set an example for neighboring farmers and worked to establish Alliance chapters, other chapters springing up around it. In addition to establishing local chapters, Alliance also grew by absorbing some of the farmers' associations established before the Alliance had appeared.

Northeastern North Dakota was one of the most active Alliance areas in the territory. Pembina and Walsh County farmers were among the first in North Dakota to organize effec-
Alliance chapters. In the fall of 1885 farmers in northern
Forks County, influenced by the successes of the Farmers' Alliance in Walsh County, became interested in the movement. Farmers at Gilby, Inkster, and Elkmount formed local chapters.

January 1886, these three organized the Grand Forks County Farmers' Alliance which grew to include nine chapters before the
When a county had three or more chapters, a county Alliance could be formed which would consist of delegates from the local Alliances, one for each ten members.

Pembina County led the territory in the number of Alliance chapters in 1887, having twenty-four. The next leading county had fifteen and the county in North Dakota that was closest to Pembina was Dickey with eleven chapters. This was in 1887 and the number of Alliances in the territory had nearly doubled by 1889. At this time Cass County had eighteen, Grand Forks slightly more, with Walsh and Pembina still leading in the total number of Alliances. The Red River Valley and adjacent areas was the stronghold of the Farmers' Alliance. However, Alliance chapters were established in areas as far west as Burleigh and Morton Counties, the former having six chapters and the latter four.

Local Alliances were required to report to the Alliance headquarters once each year on the number of members, their names, and similar information. If a local Alliance failed to

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33 Grand Forks Herald, Feb. 4, 1886.

34 Jamestown Capital, Dec. 23, 1887.

35 These counties may have had a few more chapters since statistics on the Alliance are fragmentary.
report for one year it forfeited its charter. Yearly membership dues of a dollar which later were increased to a dollar and a half provided the local and territorial Alliances with their financial support. The Alliance was handicapped by a shortage of funds during its first year of existence. A motion at the second state convention in 1885 to send a delegate to Bismarck to look after Alliance legislative interests was defeated because of lack of funds. Receipts for 1885 were a meager $180. When the Alliance consolidated its organization and established an effective system of dues in 1886, the receipts shot up to $1,200 and in the following year increased to $3,000. It now had sufficient funds to operate effectively. Although figures are not available on the financial affairs of the Farmers' Alliance after 1887, the amount must have been considerable with the enlarged membership.

The Dakota Alliance advocated friendly cooperation with other farm and labor organizations. Members of farmers' clubs were welcome at Alliance meetings, and delegates were permitted

36 Jamestown Capital, Feb. 24, 1888; North Dakota Capital, Dec. 6, 1889.
37 Dakota Huronite, Sept. 24, 1885.
38 Jamestown Capital, Dec. 23, 1887
to speak up on any question at the meetings of the Territorial Alliance. Other farmers' groups at this time had the same aims as the Alliance, but none was as encompassing of the farmers' interests as the Alliance. At the annual Farmers' Alliance convention held at Jamestown on December 11, 1888, a resolution was passed favoring "... immediate steps ... toward unity and concert of action between the National Alliances, National Grange, Knights of Labor, and others." Also during this session, friendly exchanges were made with the state Grange of Illinois which was also in session. Beginning in 1888, the cooperation of the Knights of Labor in Dakota was solicited. They were invited to the Alliance conventions of 1889 and 1890 and were granted seats. A special committee of the Alliance was formed at these conventions to handle matters concerning cooperation with other groups. The Farmers' Alliance hoped that the domination of the monied interests could be broken by cooperation of all producers and laborers as well as farmers.

The Alliance in North Dakota attracted many influential farmers and politicians, and other prominent people. Oliver Dalrymple, who established the first successful bonanza farm in North Dakota, was the most widely known of those influential

39 Ibid., Dec. 21, 1868.
farmers who took an interest in the Alliance. Dalrymple gave a speech before the annual Alliance convention in 1888 which, unlike most convention speeches, dealt with practical farming. In fact, Alliance leaders in North Dakota were nearly all highly successful farmers.

Many men who were prominent in the political affairs of North Dakota were interested in the Farmers' Alliance. Martin N. Johnson, who was active in Alliance affairs, served in the United States House of Representatives from 1890 to 1898 and in the Senate for a short time before he died. Johnson settled near Petersburg in Nelson County in 1882 and in a short time became a large farm owner. In 1884 he organized the first Alliance in Nelson County at Petersburg and was its president for several years. Johnson, a graduate of the University of Iowa, had been very active in politics since he was a young man. He had served in the Iowa House of Representatives and Senate, was district attorney for Nelson County, and delegate to the North Dakota Constitutional Convention (1889) before being elected to Congress. Although he had not held office in the Territorial or North Dakota Farmers' Alliance, Johnson took an active interest in Alliance activities, especially at Alliance

40 George W. Kingsbury, History of Dakota Territory (Chicago, 1915), II, 1540.
conventions. He was a staunch Republican and also the "acknowledged leader of the Scandinavian element" in North Dakota. When the Alliance entered politics openly in the election of 1890, Johnson, loyal to his party, broke with the Alliance. The loss of his influence was keenly felt.

Lyman R. Casey, another North Dakota politician who was an active Alliance member, served in the United States Senate from 1889 to 1893. Casey's part in the Alliance movement is not certain. He was, however, active at the Fargo Alliance convention in June, 1889, being a member of a committee to ascertain the practicability of using artesian wells for irrigation.

Frederick B. Fancher, who was Governor of North Dakota from 1899 to 1900, was probably the leading Alliance man to rise on the political ladder while remaining in the Republican Party. Fancher came to North Dakota in 1881, took up a homestead seven miles from Jamestown, and soon became a large farmer. He took an early interest in the Alliance movement. In July, 1886, he was elected vice-president of the Territorial Farmers' Alliance, an office he held until 1889 when the Dakotas were admitted to the Union. In the newly formed North Dakota Alliance, he organized the hail insurance department and was

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\[41\] Grand Forks, Herald, Aug. 1, 1890.

\[42\] North Dakota Capital, July 5, 1889.
elected its first president. He held this position until 1895. Rancher was very active in organizing Alliance chapters and extending Alliance activities. "The farmer orator", as he often was called, spoke a great deal before farm groups, mainly of the accomplishments, benefits, and future of the Alliance. His activity in the Alliance often led to charges that he had political ambitions. In any case, his popularity led him into the political limelight. He went to the North Dakota Constitutional Convention in 1889 and was elected president of the convention in a contest with Johnson. The prestige he gained by presiding over the Constitutional Convention greatly aided his political future. In 1894 he was elected insurance commissioner and remained in that office until 1896 when he was elected governor.

Prominent men who took an interest in Alliance affairs, but who were not qualified to be members, included editors, ministers, college professors, and others. Editors George Winship of the Grand Forks Herald and J. C. Warnock of the Jamestown Capital were strong believers in the principles of the Farmers' Alliance but withdrew their support when they could no longer uphold its political ideas. Homer Sprague, president of the University of North Dakota, was also interested in the Alliance, speaking at many Alliance meetings and gatherings.

Jamestown Capital, April 13, June 1, 1888.
The president of the Agricultural College at Brookings and other faculty members took an active interest in the Alliance and the college in turn was strongly supported by the Dakota Alliance. The North Dakota Agricultural College was established too late (1890) to take part in the activities of the Territorial Farmers' Alliance, however, H. E. Stockbridge, first president of the Agricultural College, was very interested in the Populist movement.

When the Territory of Dakota was divided into two separate states in 1889, the Farmers' Alliance also deemed it necessary to separate. The prelude to the division of the Alliance took place at two special Alliance meetings held at Huron on June 18 to 20 and at Fargo June 26 to 28. They were called mainly to consider the best means of promoting Alliance interests in the new state governments. Although delegates from both North and South Dakota could attend either, their attendance, except for Alliance officers and a few others, conformed to the new state boundaries.

The final meeting of the Dakota Farmers' Alliance took place at Aberdeen on November 19, 1889. The Alliance of South Dakota were well represented at the convention, but those of North Dakota were not; none from northern North Dakota were reported present.

44 *Jamestown Capital*, June 1889; *Fargo Argus*, June 27, 28.

45 *North Dakota Capital*, Dec. 6, 1889.
After a formal meeting of the Dakota Alliance, representatives from each state met together to form an Alliance for their respective states. Representatives from North Dakota, in forming a state Alliance, elected as president their acknowledged leader and spokesman, Walter Muir, of Cass County.

Muir was born in Scotland on April 22, 1836. His father, a ship-builder by trade, brought his family to America in 1847, living first at New York and moving to Chicago in 1852. Muir left Chicago as a young man, going first to Pike's Peak at the time of the gold rush, to Denver, and then to Fort Kearney where he established a ranch and ran a store. In the fall of 1860 he returned to the trade of his father becoming foreman of the dry-docks at Chicago. Young Muir was studying law when the Civil War broke out. He enlisted in the army and served in Missouri before being transferred to the navy on the lower Mississippi. He rose quickly through the ranks and became an officer. He was mustered out in June 1865. After the war he purchased a farm in southern Minnesota where he lived for fifteen years. He took an active interest in politics and was a

Other officers elected:

James Dobie Pembina First vice-president
Andrew Slotten Richland Second vice-president
M. D. Williams Stutsman Secretary
S. W. Ungenholtz Morton Treasurer
Ira S. Lampman Barnes Lecturer
F. F. Fancher Stutsman Insurance dept. president

North Dakota Capital, Dec. 6, 1889.
member of the Minnesota legislature from 1876 to 1879. He moved to North Dakota in 1879 when the "Dakota Boom" was getting under way and took up a homestead near Hunter in Cass County.

Muir entered the Farmers' Alliance in 1887 and in a short time became one of its most ardent spokesmen. Besides being active in the Hunter chapter, he served as president of the Cass County Alliance and held the position of lecturer for northern Dakota in the Territorial Alliance. In this position it was his duty to visit local Alliances, help organize new chapters, and suggest ways to make Alliance meetings interesting and beneficial. Muir was well qualified for this position. He was described as being "... one of the deepest thinkers among Alliance members." He was well read on a wide variety of subjects. In addition to Alliance affairs, he wrote and spoke on tariffs, the money question, politics, and practical farming. His ability and background made him greatly interested in political matters, more probably than other Alliance leaders. Muir was often ridiculed by the press for his political ideas; but his strongest critic, the Fargo Argus, described him as a "great


48 Editorial, Dakota Ruralist, March 30, 1889.
WALTER MUIR

From Usher L. Burdick, History of the Farmers' Political Action in North Dakota, frontispiece]
statesman" and "a great dignified presiding officer." Although Muir was North Dakota's leading Alliance member, he did not take an active part in the National Farmers' Alliance other than to serve as delegate to national conventions.

The North Dakota Alliance, when it was formed, was a part of the National Farmers' Alliance or the Northern Alliance as it was called since its greatest strength was in the Northwest. The National Farmers' Alliance and Co-operative Union, or Southern Alliance, which had had a similar course of development in the south, was entirely separate from the northern order. The Northern Alliance was a non-secret and loose association of state orders while the Southern Alliance was a highly centralized and unified organization which employed the use of secret methods. The Northern Alliance considered any person reared on a farm to be a farmer, and this allowed non-agricultural people to become members. But the Southern Alliance allowed only farmers into its membership. The Southern Alliance was also more interested in financial and business cooperation than the Northern Alliance which was chiefly concerned with the railroad problem.

Plans were laid for the unification of these two organizations into one national organization when both held their national conventions at St. Louis in December, 1889. 50

49 Editorials, Fargo Argus, May 2, June 6, 1890
50 Hicks, 119.
The Southern Alliance, the stronger of the two, agreed to make some concessions but would not agree to the admission of Negroes into the organization and differed with the Northern Alliance on matters of secret work. The Southern Alliance agreed to change its name to the National Farmers' Alliance and Industrial Union. Consolidation of the two orders could not be achieved, probably due in no small way to sectional prejudice. The Southern Alliance thereupon invited the other states not in the order to join it. This invitation was accepted by the Kansas and South Dakota delegations who claimed full authority to make such a decision. The North Dakota delegates, although not having the actual authority, followed the seceders into the Southern Alliance. Walter Muir was seated as a "fraternal delegate" from North Dakota. Immediate approval of this move was expected from the North Dakota Alliance members. The seceders hoped that the example they set would be generally followed by other states but it was not. Meanwhile the two national organizations continued their efforts toward unification with no results. The Northern Alliance, already much weaker than the Southern Alliance, now became

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51 Ibid.
52 Ibid., 122
insignificant on the national level compared with the unified strength of the Southern Alliance.

A special North Dakota Alliance convention, called partly to consider the question of joining the National Farmers' Alliance and Industrial Union, met at Jamestown on June 4, 1890. The Alliance men of North Dakota gave Muir their approval for his action at the St. Louis convention. In June, 1890, therefore, North Dakota applied for a state charter and was admitted to the National Farmers' Alliance and Industrial Union, i.e., the Southern Alliance.

The action of Kansas, which was the first to join the Southern Alliance, is easily explained because in that state a strong southern order existed side by side with the northern, and a union of the two was very desirable. In the Dakotas, on the other hand, it was the difference in methods that attracted them to the southern order. The Southern Alliance, as was mentioned, was more interested in business cooperation than the northern, and the Dakota Alliance was one of the leaders in forming cooperative enterprises. (This topic will be discussed in the next chapter.) Another probable reason for the action

54 Hicks, 126.

55 North Dakota Capital, May 9, June 13, 1890.

56 Hicks, 121 (footnote).
of the Dakotas was their strong desire to unify all farm organizations. The centralized southern order with its ties of secrecy may also have been a factor in influencing the decision to secede from the Northern Alliance. The Dakota Alliance had made changes in its constitution in 1888 which made for greater secrecy in its work. After that all its business meetings were held behind closed doors, and members were pledged by oath not to divulge any private affairs of the organization.

Although the North Dakota Alliance joined the Southern order in June 1890, a new constitution conforming to the National Farmers' Alliance and Industrial Union was not adopted until the annual Alliance convention was held at Fargo on November 29, 1890. The new constitution provided for greater secrecy and for greater centralization of the state Alliance. North Dakota was divided into six Alliance districts with a vice-president for each who was also a member of the state Alliance executive committee. Muir was re-elected president at the convention, and vice-presidents were elected for the four districts represented.

57 Grand Forks Herald, Nov. 26, Nov. 29, 1890.

58 Other officers elected:
Ell C. D. Shortridge    Grand Forks    Vice-president
Ira S. Lampman        Barnes        Vice-president
E. J. McInnis         Traill        Vice-president
N. D. Witham          Dickey        Vice-president
K. D. Williams         Stutsman       Secretary
Smith Stimmel         Cass          Treasurer

Grand Forks Herald, Nov. 29, 1890; LaMoure County Chronicle, Dec. 5, 1890.
The Farmers' Alliance openly entered the election of 1890 with a ticket of its own. But in the following year a reaction set in among many Alliancemen against the political activity of the North Dakota Alliance. The Alliance had become more radical than many wanted it to be. In the election of 1890, Muir was nominated for governor by the Independent Party which was organized and led by Alliancemen. After the November elections of 1890 the Farmers' Alliance, because of its political action, received a setback, losing some of its prominent members plus many others who were against its political activity.

One result was that among some prominent Alliance members, a desire was manifest for an Alliance president who was not a politician. A practical farmer, a level-headed business man, and a successful manager were some of the qualifications that some Alliance members wanted in their next president. 59 At the North Dakota Farmers' Alliance convention held at Grand Forks on June 25, 1891, Muir was not nominated for president. Candidates named for the presidency were Smith Stimmel, Ira S. Lampman and Eli C. D. Shortridge. Stimmel and Lampman had been very active in political matters while Shortridge,

59 Lisbon Star, undated, quoted in Grand Forks Herald, June 19, 1891.
60 Grand Forks Herald, June 26, 1891.
61 Although Alliance business meetings were held in secrecy with guards at entrances, the Grand Forks Herald somehow managed to have a reporter present during the election of officers.
although also active in politics, was conservative in his views. Lampman declined the nomination and gave his support to Shortridge who received 126 of the 193 votes cast. The election of Shortridge appeared to be a retreat from politics but actually it was a triumph of conservatism. Muir and the other radicals were opposed by those who were against independent political action and by those who were more conservative in their political ideas. The union of these two groups enabled the conservative element to gain control of the Alliance. This, however, did not deter the move toward greater political action. Shortridge, in accepting the election, keynoted the political character of the Alliance when he said "... we will make it hot for both parties in '92".

Shortridge was born in Cabell County, West Virginia, on March 27, 1830. When he was three, his family moved to Missouri

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42 Ibid. Other officers elected:

- E. C. Hagen: Vice-president
- E. J. McInnis: Secretary
- Ira S. Lampman: Lecturer
- J. F. Currie: Treasurer

The system of vice-presidents for each district was replaced by an executive board whose members were:

- Walter Bain (chairman): Three year term
- I. B. MacGowan: Two year term
- C. S. Rogers: One year term

A judicial committee was installed consisting of K. D. Hare, H. H. Hipson, and James Dobie.

43 Ibid.
near Bismarck where he grew to manhood. In 1882 he moved to North Dakota and settled eight miles north of Larimore near McCanna. Shortridge was a successful farmer who was very active in farm matters. Although an energetic local Alliance man, he did not become active in the Dakota Alliance until the territory was approaching statehood. In 1889 he was a member of the Alliance executive committee, in 1890 he was a vice-president, and in 1891 he became president, which position he held until June 1892 when he was succeeded by R. D. Williams.

The Alliance became more of a political organization after its participation in the election of 1890. This overshadowed the social, educational and business activities of the Alliance. The political activities of the Farmers' Alliance have been a topic of considerable concern while the other Alliance activities have been almost ignored; to this the following chapter is devoted.
ELI C. D. SHORTRIDGE

[Courtesy of the North Dakota Historical Library, Bismarck]
CHAPTER III

SOCIAL, EDUCATIONAL, AND BUSINESS ACTIVITIES

The function of the Farmers' Alliance according to Henry L. Loucks were "first, social; second, educational; third, financial; fourth, political." This is the order in which the activities of the Alliance seemed to move.

The Alliance provided the farmers with the opportunity to meet in friendly neighborhood gatherings. Local Alliance chapters held meetings at least once a month and often twice. A few chapters had their own building where they held their meetings; most met in such places as above the local store, in school houses, or in the homes of their members. In some communities the Alliance members with their families would gather at the homes of their members. After lunch was served, the men would retire to the barn where they would consider Alliance business affairs.

Wives and members of the family below twenty-one were considered honorary members. Later (1891) the constitution of the

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North Dakota Alliance was revised so women could become members without the payment of dues. It was thought that the Alliance would be socially more successful if women were admitted to the order. Social get-togethers were important to the isolated North Dakota farmers and their wives and families. The neighborhood gatherings helped to alleviate the monotony and hard life on the North Dakota prairies. They were expected to help 'keep the family united'; by keeping on the farm discontented sons who wanted to leave for better paying jobs and excitement in the towns and cities.

The early settlers had few opportunities to really get together in public gatherings; the Fourth of July was about the only opportunity many had. By holding picnics and rallies the Alliances brought the farmers and their friends together at some nearby grove to hear speeches, music, and sometimes poetry; to partake in serious discussion; and to enjoy the friendly atmosphere. Sometimes a county Alliance would hold a grand picnic that would be attended by hundreds of people. Prominent speakers and Alliance leaders would be present to address the crowd. Politicians were generally available for such occasions.

The Farmers' Alliance was always concerned over the welfare of its members. In cases of sickness or distress, the Alliance—
men would co-operate in giving aid and comfort to afflicted members. During times of widespread hardship, the territorial state Alliance would take part in giving relief to needy members. In 1889, 1890, and 1891 the Alliance did all it could to help needy farmers to obtain seed wheat. After the bad crops of 1890, many farmers, especially in the south central counties, were in dire straits. The North Dakota Farmers' Alliance organized the Alliance Aid Association in the fall of 1890 to handle relief measures in counties where destitution prevailed. A aid commission consisting of three of the leading Alliancemen in North Dakota was appointed to direct the efforts to supply needy members with seed wheat, food, and other supplies.

The activities of the Alliance met many social needs, but, more important, they provided worthwhile educational experiences for the farmers. Each local Alliance usually had an officer called a lecturer whose duty it was to suggest topics for discussion and take the lead in discussing them. The farmers earned how to express themselves in public and gained experience in parliamentary tactics, training that enabled many to anticipate successfully in political affairs.

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2 Grand Forks Herald, Nov. 29, 1891; Jan. 31, 1891.

4 These commissioners were Smith Stimmel, Eli C. D. Hortridge, and R. B. Richardson.
The Alliance provided a means of disseminating practical scientific farming information. Alliancem en not only advised each other on better farming methods, but also received formation from Alliance headquarters and from visiting Alliance officers and lecturers on such matters as crop rotation, seed selection, crop diversification, new machinery, and many other topics of practical value. The needs of farmers for new farming methods led to the organization of farmers' institutes by the Dakota legislature. Farmers' institutes were held for alliances and other farm organizations and groups. They introduced new and better farming methods and strongly urged diversified agriculture. The Farmers' Alliance was strongly in favor of farmers' institutes and urged the legislature to make more funds available for their use. It also urged the legislature to provide the Dakota Agricultural College with sufficient funds to enable it to expand its services.

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6 Ibí.
The Dakota Farmers' Alliance had an official Alliance paper from the time it was founded in December 1884. The first official paper of the Territorial Alliance was, as has been mentioned, the Dakota Farmer, a leading farm paper published at Aberdeen. In December 1887, the Dakota Ruralist, also published at Aberdeen, was made the official organ of the Territorial Alliance. One section of the Ruralist, called the Alliance department, was edited by Loucks and the officers of the Farmers' Alliance. George G. Grose, editor of the Dakota Ruralist, was also president of the Farmers' Alliance Company (see below). The Ruralist continued as the official paper for the Dakota Alliance until the territory attained statehood, at which time it became the official paper of the South Dakota Alliance.

The North Dakota Farmers' Alliance chose the Jamestown Capital as its official organ in April 1889. The Capital was the leading advocate of the principles of the Farmers' Alliance in North Dakota, but within one year its official status in the Farmers' Alliance was ended. The Capital editor disagreed with the Alliance executive committee on policy. This difference

*Grand Forks Herald*, Dec. 28, 1887.

*Jamestown Capital*, Apr. 12, 1889.
centered largely around politics. The Dakota Ruralist again became the official paper for the North Dakota Alliance. It was embarrassing, however, to have as its official paper one that was in another state, so plans were made to establish an organ in North Dakota that would faithfully represent its views.

At its annual convention in November 1890, the North Dakota Alliance established two official papers: The Normanden and the North Dakota Independent, both of Grand Forks. The Normanden was a Norwegian paper, and the newly created Independent was published on the same press and by the same editor. The Independent, first published in February 1891, was directly controlled by the Farmers’ Alliance executive board. Every Alliance member obtained a subscription to either the Independent or the Normanden. Their combined circulation was close to ten thousand subscribers. The Normanden had about seven thousand subscribers.

Walter Mair became editor of the Independent when he retired as president of the Farmers’ Alliance in June 1891; he was paid a salary of five hundred dollars a year by the Alliance. The Independent was the leading advocate in North Dakota.

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10 Labour, Progress and Chronicle, Dec. 5, 1890; Grand Forks Herald, Nov. 29, 1890.
11 North Dakota Independent, Aug. 27, 1891; Mar. 3, 1892. The Dakota Posten and Scandinavia were by far the most widely read Scandinavian papers, however.
12 North Dakota Capital, July 3, 1891.
Dakota for independent political action by the farmers and laborers of state and nation. The Independent became more like the official paper of the Populist party than the Farmers' Alliance. In March 1892, the Independent ceased to be called the official Farmers' Alliance paper, and Muir ceased to be its editor. In 1893 the paper moved to Fargo and consolidated with the Fargo Commonwealth, another small Populist newspaper.

The official newspapers of the Farmers' Alliance were made available to all members either by subscription or through the local Alliance. Local Alliances obtained Alliance literature, papers, and recommended books for use by its members. Local Alliances after 1890 were required to have for their members' use at least two copies of the National Economist, the official organ of the National Alliance and Industrial Union. The educational function of the Alliance benefited all of its members but this did not provide an immediate alleviation of the hard times.

The farmers were able to realize immediately savings by using the Alliance as a means of co-operating in making large purchases. Alliance chapters from the very beginning of their organization had undertaken co-operative purchasing, especially in twine and coal. Local or county Alliances would estimate

13 North Dakota Independent, Mar. 3, 10, 1892.

14 The Fargo Commonwealth was formerly the Bismarck Commonwealth. Copies of this paper could not be located.
the amount of twine, coal, or other commodities needed by their members and then accept bids from local merchants or wholesale companies in supplying them. In local Alliances a committee could generally handle the buying, and if a county Alliance was organized a county purchasing agent would co-operate with representatives from the local chapters in making large orders. Sometimes Alliances found it difficult to secure certain products at reduced prices; dealers would refuse to sell to them other than at regular prices.

In 1887 the Dakota Farmers' Alliance appointed a purchasing agent to take orders from local Alliances and make large orders directly from manufacturers or wholesalers. It was thought that manufacturers would be eager to sell to an organization of ten thousand members. Such was not the case. Few manufacturers or wholesalers would give any quotation on prices. The Alliance as told "We [dealers] have done business before with farmers' organizations and we have found in many cases more trouble than he trade was worth." During the first year the Alliance made little progress in its purchasing department. It did, however, 

\[\text{15} \quad \text{The manufacturers and wholesale dealers told the Alliance representatives that they would gladly trade with them if the}\]

\[\text{15} \quad \text{Loucks in the National Economist, Vol. 1, 20.}\]

\[\text{16} \quad \text{Ibid.}\]
The Alliance organized a joint stock company with sufficient capital behind it to give them the assurance that the Alliance would fulfill their contracts. So after a year of unsuccessful business efforts, the Alliance executive committee decided to form a joint stock company. The Dakota Farmers' Alliance company was incorporated at Huron at a meeting of the Alliance executive committee on July 20-21, 1887. Besides handling the purchases for the Alliance, the company planned to help farmers to sell their farm products, negotiate loans, and handle any other business interests of the Alliance. George G. Grose, editor of the Ruralist, was elected president of the company, together with other officers and a board of eleven directors. Only three of the eleven directors were from North Dakota; one was a rancher.

The company had an authorized capital of $200,000 -- 20,000 shares at $10 each. With 28,000 members in the Alliance it was thought that the necessary money would not be too hard to raise. Circulars were sent out to all local Alliances giving the plans of the company and its need for financial support.

17 Ibid.
18 Kingsbury, II, 1501 - 02.
19 Jamestown Capital, July 29, 1887.
20 Ibid.
Twenty leading Alliancemen helped to solicit subscriptions of stock. Only Alliance members could be stockholders, and a stockholder who failed to pay his dues or keep up his Alliance membership forfeited his stock. Alliance members could buy a $10 share for only $1 in cash and the rest in an interest-free assessable note. This was later increased to $2 in cash when capital proved to be slow in coming in. The company had considerable difficulty in getting enough stock subscribed to begin business which was to commence when $20,000 in stock was sold. Many farmers did not want to buy stock until they could see if the company would be successful.

The Alliance Company opened its office for business on January 1, 1888, at Aberdeen. J. B. Walgemuth was in charge of the purchasing department and a warehouse at Aberdeen was secured. The company sent notices to all Alliances to send in estimates of supplies needed so contracts could be made. But some manufacturers and dealers refused to sell to the company. Some were afraid to trust the Alliance at first; others belonged to organizations that forbade it. For example, the agricultural implement dealers of the Northwest organized and refused to sell

Ibid.


the Alliance Company. Although some farmers could not get one of the various kinds of machinery that they wanted, this did not seriously hinder its success. An illustrated catalogue was prepared and sent out to all Alliances showing the products available which included the main items needed by farmers.

The Alliance Company took orders from purchasing agents appointed by the local Alliances. When the local Alliance bought such things as coal and twine in carload lots it was shipped directly to the Alliance by C.O.D. When the smaller shipments were ordered they were shipped out from Aberdeen warehouse. If the farmer paid cash for the commodities ordered he got it at wholesale, with freight and expenses added. If he bought on time he had to give his note for the amount of the retail price, and if it was paid promptly a rebate was given.

During the first year the Alliance Company did a good business but it was handicapped by a lack of capital. At the meeting of the Alliance Company stockholders in January 1889, after one year of business, plans were made to improve the efficiency of the company. When the company first began business, it sold only to those members that held at least one share in the company. This policy was changed and every Alliance member was


permitted to buy. The result was that applications for stock fell off almost entirely. The stockholders thereby decided that benefits of reduced rates would be given only to those members holding stock; the others would have to pay the regular price. The farmers had used the Alliance Company to force regular retail dealers to lower their prices to the same level. Thereby others outside the Alliance were able to get the same benefits. By limiting benefits of the Alliance Company to stockholders only it was not only hoped that stock subscribers would increase, but also that stockholders would keep the prices secret so retail prices would remain the same. The Alliance Company stockholders also changed the number of shares that could be held by one person from ten to fifty.

The most important improvement in the Alliance Company that was made at the January stockholders' meeting was the consolidation of purchasing agents. Previously the Alliance Company worked through local purchasing agents of which there were about five hundred. Under such a system it was necessary to send out orders from Aberdeen in small lots and this was expensive. It was decided to have only one purchasing agent for each county. The local Alliances in each county would select a station and a paid agent would be appointed. He was given samples of goods

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26 Ibid.
27 Ibid., Dec. 15, 1988
handled by the company and was required to furnish storage room. Orders could then be shipped to the county agents in mixed lots with large savings in freight rates. In North Dakota most counties having Alliances organized for work with the Alliance Company, and some built warehouses to store goods and keep samples. After the system of county agents was established most Alliance purchases were sent directly to the county stations without passing through the Aberdeen warehouse.

Even though the Alliance Company operated on a small amount of cash the first year, its volume of business was considerable. The company transacted $353,097 worth of business in 1888. Binding twine made up about one-third of the cash value of all products handled by the Alliance and amounted to about seventy-five carloads of which slightly less than half went to North Dakota. The Alliance Company sold twine at an estimated one-third below the regular price. The company handled about two thousand carloads of coal, eleven carloads of barbed wire, and

29 Ibid., Jan. 26, 1889.
31 Sioux Falls Press, undated, quoted in the Jamestown Capital, July 6, 1888.
a wide variety of machinery. A source of pride was its "Alliance buggy" which was made especially for it. Two hundred of these were sold during the first year. A five year contract was drawn with a plow company to handle its plows for the entire territory. With the closing of this deal Alliancemen boasted that the plow combination had been broken.

After the successes of its first year the Alliance Company made plans for enlarged operation. The manufacturers who were afraid to trust the Alliance to begin with now had their agents visit the Alliance offices. In the spring of 1889 the Alliance erected a large warehouse at Aberdeen. The annual catalogue and reference book included a wider variety than before of commodities needed by the farmers. Copies of this catalogue were sent to all Alliance secretaries for distribution to members wanting them. Advertisements were placed in various farm papers and exhibits erected at the state fairs at Fargo and Aberdeen in 1889. The success of the Alliance Company was attributed largely to the "efficient and hard working management."

The business of the Alliance Company also included the negotiating of loans to its members. The company obtained money from Sioux Falls capitalists which it lent to farmers on real estate


33 Ibid.
at a straight 9 per cent interest. The Alliance was only able to supply about half of the demands for loans. This amounted to $43,000 in 1888. Late in 1889, the Alliance Company tried to make arrangements to obtain money from parties in England expecting to obtain it at a lower rate of interest but was unsuccessful. At the meeting of Alliance Company stockholders in January 1889, it was decided to call in $3 on each share which had been purchased with a $2 down payment by December 1, 1889. This would leave $5 due on each share which was to be called in by December 1, 1890. The money obtained was to be used to manufacture twine and those items which manufacturers refused to sell to the Alliance directly. Watertown granted land to the Alliance Company for a site for its planned manufacturing establishment. Twine manufacturing was given the most consideration. A committee at the Farmers' Alliance convention at Huron in June 1889, reported on plans to manufacture twine from hemp and flax. The machinery for the plant was to be imported at a cost of $10,000. Since funds were unavailable the committee urged every delegate to push the item in his locality. But

34 North Dakota Capital, Dec. 6, 1889; Dakota Ruralist, Mar. 2, 1889.
35 Dakota Ruralist, Jan. 26, 1889.
36 Ibid.
37 Jamestown Capital, June 26, 1889.
38 The establishment of twine, farm implement, and potato starch factories in the Red River Valley was the principle subject at a farmers' convention (non-Alliance) held at Casselton in March 1889. Fargo Argus, March 12, 31, 1889.
the Alliance Company, even after the collection of stock assessments in December of 1889, still did not have enough capital to start manufacturing goods. It was planned to obtain half of the needed capital from sources outside the Alliance, but this was also unsuccessful.

The Dakota Farmers' Alliance set an example for other states in business activities. At a meeting of Alliance business agents of the Northwest held at Des Moines in March 1889, reports of the seven states and territories represented showed that Dakota led in the amount of business done. At this meeting plans were made to unite the business efforts of the Alliances in the Northwest. Crose, president of the Dakota Alliance Company, was made permanent chairman of the association that was formed. After 1890, information on the Alliance business activities is fragmentary, but in April 1892, Crose was with the National Union Company located at Chicago. This company sent out catalogues of the farm commodities it handled to each local Alliance secretary in North Dakota. The company shipped directly to the purchaser, with twine being its biggest item.

When North and South Dakota became separate states the Alliance Company continued to serve both. The North Dakota

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39 Dakota Ruralist, Mar. 23, 1889.

40 North Dakota Independent, Apr. 14, 1892.
Alliance established a general supply agency at Casselton which was a branch of the Alliance Company, and a state business agent handled the Alliance purchases for North Dakota. In 1890, the North Dakota Alliance organized district Alliance agencies instead of county agencies in order to permit larger stocks of commodities. District agencies could not be operated as efficiently as was expected so the Alliance returned to a system of county agencies. In areas where there was no county agent, the state purchasing agent accepted orders from local Alliance agents.

The Dakota Farmers' Alliance was also a leader in the nation in insurance activities, and it was probably in this field where it attained its greatest success. The insurance department of the Farmers' Alliance was made up of three parts: fire, hail, and life. Each was separate and independent from the other, but all were conducted in the same office and by the same officers, agents, and clerks. Thus expenses could be reduced and efficiency increased.

Grieved with the high hail insurance rates and unsatisfactory loss adjustments of the insurance companies, the Alliance decided in December 1886, to organize the Alliance Hail Association, to provide good, safe, reliable insurance to farmers at reduced costs. It was incorporated under the laws of the territory in February 1887, and began business in March of that year.

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year. Alonzo Wardall was elected president of the insurance department which had its home office at Huron. Wardall, one of the men who organized the Dakota Farmers' Alliance, had been active earlier in the Iowa Grange and was familiar with the problems of agricultural business enterprises. Wardall's work in the Dakota Alliance was devoted chiefly to business activities.

The Alliance Hail Association met with "violent opposition" from the insurance companies. Farmers were warned to be careful of such a scheme. But such warnings were not heeded for during its first year the company was very successful, paying all losses in full. The old insurance companies charged from 50% to 75% an acre for hail insurance while the Alliance insurance company charged an average of 21% an acre with assessments limited to 25% an acre. Savings of from 40% to 50% an acre were thereby obtained. During its first year it insured over 50,000 acres for its over 2,000 policy-holders and paid all losses promptly. In 1888, nearly 600,000 acres were insured

42 Dakota Ruralist, May 4, 1889.
46 Dakota Ruralist, Jan. 12, 1889; Resources of Dakota, 1887, 249.
for nearly 8,000 policy holders, and the company did over $100,000 worth of business.

Local insurance agents were employed by the company to handle the work of not only the hail insurance department, but also for the fire and life insurance departments. There were 273 local agents working for the company in 1889. These agents also helped to organize new local Alliances, to revive old ones, and to collect dues. In 1888, 103 local chapters were reported organized by the Alliance insurance agents.

When the Dakota Farmers' Alliance divided in 1889, the insurance department remained centralized. A branch office of the hail insurance department was established at Jamestown which was the headquarters for the North Dakota Farmers' Alliance. Fancher, who was an organizer and officer of the Alliance Hail Association, was elected president of the North Dakota branch which was under control of the state Alliance. The North Dakota Farmers' Alliance convention held in June 1891, decided to organize a separate hail insurance company for North Dakota. The Alliance Hail Association of North Dakota was incorporated

47 Dakota Ruralist, Jan. 12, 1889.

48 Ibid., May 4, 1889.

49 North Dakota Capital, Dec. 15, 1889.
on May 18, 1891, and commenced business on May 26 under the able
management of Fancher. Meanwhile, the South Dakota Hail
Association was having difficulties, and charges of improper use
of funds led to the investigation of its business affairs. The
Alliance hail business suffered a set back by this bad publicity.
When the North Dakota Alliance established the Hail Association,
Alliance insurance business was at its lowest point. At the end
of 1891 the North Dakota Alliance Hail Association reported
receipts of only $7,660. But the next year volume was up to
over $21,000. The Alliance Hail Association survived the panic
of 1893 and the depression which followed. Fancher managed the
Hail Association until 1895 when he was elected state insurance
commissioner. The Hail Association continued to do business
long after the Farmers' Alliance had ceased to exist in North
Dakota. On February 11, 1924, the Alliance Hail Association of
Jamestown withdrew from business.

As has been mentioned the Farmers' Alliance also operated
fire and life insurance under the same office as the Hail

50 North Dakota Independent, May 11, 1893.
51 Fargo Argus, Jan. 14, Apr. 11, 1890.
52 North Dakota Independent, May 11, 1893.
53 Ibid.
54 Twenty-Second Annual Insurance Report by the Commissioner
of Insurance of North Dakota, 1924 (Bismarck, 1925), 3.
Association. The fire insurance company of the Alliance was organized in the spring of 1888 with capital stock of $100,000 to comply with the laws of the territory. The fire insurance company insured on the usual plan and rates but only collected half of the premium, the balance being a non-interest bearing note which was due in one or two years. The company only insured isolated property which lessened the risk involved. All profits over the necessary expenses and losses were returned as dividends to the policy-holders. In 1891, the Fidelity Fire Insurance Company, as the Alliance fire insurance company was called, went into receivership. The company could not comply with the South Dakota laws requiring a paid up capital of $100,000 of which 20 per cent was to be cash on hand. Its liabilities were many thousand more than it was able to pay.

The Farmers' Alliance life insurance department was the last to be organized and was intended to be national in character. At the annual Farmers' Alliance convention in December 1888, Wardall, president of the insurance department, recommended a life insurance branch to be known as the Alliance Aid Association. The Farmers' Alliance favored the plan and voted for


56 Grand Forks Herald, July 1, 3, 1891.

its adoption. The Alliance Aid Association, which began business on January 1, 1859, provided for a maximum policy of $2,000 life insurance for members of the Farmers' Alliance in the Northwest. Any Alliance member between the ages of eighteen and fifty in good health could become a member of the association by paying a $5 membership fee. On the death of a member, $1 to $2 would be assessed for each member. Assessments were due within thirty days after notice was mailed. Failure to pay assessments in thirty days suspended a policy, and non-payment for one year cancelled a policy. Life insurance branches were established in North Dakota and Minnesota under the direction of the state Farmers' Alliance. The insurance examiner of North Dakota complimented the Alliance Aid Association as being "comprehensive", "economical" and having a "prospective future."

The Dakota Aid Association was presented to the National Farmers' Alliance in the spring of 1889 for adoption on a national scale. The National Alliance approved the plan, and Wardall and the directors at Huron were given the central supervision over it. In March 1890, Wardall opened an office in

58 Jamestown Capital, Jan. 11, 1889, letter to the editor, Alonzo Wardall; Dakota Ruralist, Dec. 22, 1888.

59 By-laws of the Alliance Aid Association, quoted in the Dakota Ruralist, Mar. 2, 1889.

60 Letter of C. W. Meny, Insurance Examiner of Department of North Dakota, quoted in National Economist, Vol. II (March 1, 1890), 377.

Washington, D.C., to conduct a mutual life insurance company on a nationwide basis. The plan was limited to members of the Alliance with an insurance department in each state working under the auspices of the state Alliance. The life insurance plan which had been so successful in Dakota did not have the same success on a national basis, however, and soon collapsed.

The Farmers' Alliance saved the farmers some thousands of dollars in the purchase of needed supplies if the figures given are correct. But buying at the lowest prices was but one method employed to enhance the prosperity of the farmers. The other was to enable farmers to sell their produce in the highest possible market. Co-operative buying benefited many farmers, but co-operative selling benefited few. The expense, problems, and hostility of railroads and elevator men made it difficult for farmers to ship their grain directly to the terminal elevators.

Elevators and warehouses were built by various farmers' shipping associations and a few Alliance chapters as early as 1884. Savings of 5% to 10% a bushel by the first farmers' elevators and warehouses prompted other farmers to join together to ship their grain. In 1886 the Grand Forks Herald reported

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62 Ibid., Vol.II (March 29, 1890), 28.
63 Dakota Phronite, Dec. 4, 1884.
that over thirty Farmers' Alliance warehouses were operating in the territory. However, the Board of Railroad Commissioners reported only one Alliance warehouse for the same year and nine farmers' elevator companies. The exact number is probably somewhere between the two figures. Obviously there was more than one considering the numerous references made to them in the newspapers of the time. In 1887 the Board of Railroad Commissioners reported twenty-five farmers' elevators, and in 1888 they reported forty-two, eleven of which, according to their titles, were Farmers' Alliance elevators.

The farmers' elevators, as previously noted, were subject to discrimination of all kinds. The elevator companies attempted to eliminate a market for them by refusing to sell to any commission houses that purchased from them, however, two companies in Chicago dealt with farmers' elevators. The difficulties that farmers encountered by attempting to sell directly to the terminal markets led to increased demands that the farmers' gain control of terminal facilities for their grain.

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64 Mar. 27, 1886.
65 Second Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners of the Territory of Dakota, 1886, 39.
68 Possum, 20 - 21
In the fall of 1887, plans were being formulated by the Dakota and Minnesota Farmers' Alliances to build and operate terminal elevators at Duluth and Minneapolis. Plans were also discussed to build a warehouse at every station where there was an Alliance. Early in 1888 a farmers' elevator company was incorporated at Minneapolis. Although this company was not purely an Alliance company, it was controlled by the Alliance. It was planned to unite every independent warehouse and elevator in Minnesota and Dakota with the Alliance. Loucks was elected president of the company with other officers, all Alliancemen from Dakota and Minnesota. The company began making arrangements for taking care of the wheat crop in the coming fall.

Optimistic reports were made on the amount of money farmers would save if the wheat marketing facilities were operated in their interest. It was asserted that as much as 50 percent of the price of wheat was lost by large margins in buying, shortage in weights, heavy dockage, undergrading, and depreciation by mixing with inferior grain. The farmers' elevator company planned to eliminate these abuses by furnishing established Minnesota grades of wheat for each warehouse, furnishing tests for dockage, posting daily market reports, and providing fair compensation for handling.

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In the spring of 1888 Loucks met Gautlo de Ste. Croix, a representative of English millers, at Minneapolis. Ste. Croix came to see if it was practical to get hard wheat of the Northwest through to Liverpool without adulteration with soft or inferior grades. He was instrumental in forming the Scandinavian Elevator Company which replaced the original farmers' elevator company formed earlier in the year. Ste. Croix guaranteed the necessary capital that would be needed to get hard wheat to England in its purity. The English millers backing the plan wanted to build up a large flour trade in England and Europe on a hard wheat brand.

The Scandinavian Elevator Company was incorporated in April, 1888, with a capital of $2,000,000 in shares of $10 each. English stockholders were to furnish half of the capital. The company was under control of the Farmers' Alliance but was not composed exclusively of farmers. Loucks was elected president of the new company, and C. C. Wolcott, owner of independent line of county elevators, was elected secretary. A board of five American directors was chosen, and it was also proposed to have a board of five directors in England to represent the stock there.

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73 Grand Forks Herald, April 24, 30, 1888; Grand Forks Weekly Plaindealer, July 19, 1888.
The American board of directors included Loucks and Fancher of the Dakota Alliance, and David Dotty and Eric Olson of the Minnesota Alliance, together with Wolcott. It was planned that the English board would have a representative who would attend the American board meetings and who would have the right to refer any decision to the English board for their veto or approval.

The Scandinavian Elevator Company planned to ship Minnesota and Dakota wheat directly to English millers through a chain of elevators at Minneapolis, Duluth, Buffalo and Liverpool. The company immediately secured control of an elevator at Duluth and made plans for another at Minneapolis. The profits of handling the wheat from the farmers to the millers would go to the stockholders, who in this country were to be mainly farmers.

The elevator company got off to a good start but soon received a setback from which it never recovered. Wolcott, secretary of the Scandinavian Elevator Company and owner of thirty-two independent elevators which were taken into the company, brought the company into disrepute by his own financial failure. He lost $20,000 while dealing in wheat in Minneapolis; to make up for this loss he borrowed $9,000 from Dotty, treasurer of the Scandinavian Elevator Company, and $11,000 from the

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company itself. Wolcott then sailed to England to seek financial investors for the elevator company. The capital of the company was small, and when the financial affairs of its secretary and treasurer were revealed, the directors of the company were summoned to settle the matter. The situation that arose was given wide publicity. The Minneapolis millers reported it to the English millers in such a way as to make it sound as though the company had failed. The result of this report killed any chances of British financial support for the company. In explaining the affair, Fancher said that the financial failure of a stockholder (Wolcott) did not affect the standing of the association, and that the company would continue to do business on a smaller scale, hoping to obtain financial support from the English millers the next year. The Grand Forks Herald, which favored the elevator company, warned only two months before that "everything depends upon the integrity and ability of the officers."

After the failure of Wolcott, Loucks took personal charge of the Scandinavian Elevator Company. Loucks believed he

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75 Grand Forks Herald, July 6, 1888; Grand Forks Weekly Plain Dealer, July 19, 1888.
76 Grand Forks Weekly Plaindealer, July 19, 1888.
77 Ibid.
78 Editorial, May 5, 1888.
could satisfactorily straighten out the Wolcott difficulties and float the necessary stock to carry out the original aims. Loucks, whose office was in the Chamber of Commerce building at Minneapolis, applied for membership in the Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce. When his name was presented for membership, he was "blackballed", because he represented the farmers. This helped to advertise the new movement, but the farmers remained suspicious.

Charges were made and fostered by those opposed to the movement that Scandinavian Elevator officers were "lining their pockets." Although a commission appointed to investigate the company reported favorably, the bad reputation stuck. At a meeting of the directors of the elevator company held in August 1887, it was reported that $25,000 of stock had been subscribed, a long way from the planned $500,000. At the request of the National Farmers' Alliance and because of the fact that no stock was sold in England, the title of the company was changed to the Farmers' Alliance Elevator Company. The articles of incorporation and by-laws were amended, eliminating the part that referred to its European connections. The stock put aside


80 Dakota Ruralist, June 29, 1889.

for promoting the enterprise in England was converted to common stock. The August meeting reported a saving of 5¢ to 10¢ a bushel for its first year for those farmers who sold their grain through its channels. Plans were made at this meeting to build a number of local grain elevators at once. Loucks was re-elected president and Fancher was elected vice-president; the secretary and treasurer elected were affiliated with the Minnesota Farmers' Alliance.

The Alliance Elevator Company, even with its new name, could not raise the necessary capital needed to operate on such a large scale. Early in 1891 the company failed. The chief reason for its failure was probably the Wolcott affair. The fact that elevator and commission men refused to deal with an organization outside the recognized channels made it difficult for the company and may have had some part in bringing about its failure.

When the Farmers' Alliance Elevator failed or when its failure became imminent, a similar farmers' movement outside the Alliance appeared to accomplish the same purpose the Alliance had failed to do. The Farmers' Elevator Company that was

82 Ibid., Dakota Huralist, Sept. 7, 1889.

Organized did not have as ambitious plans as the Scandinavian Elevator Company. It planned only to erect a terminal elevator at Superior. This plan received the support of Eli C. D. Shortridge, then president of the North Dakota Alliance, and also the Board of Railroad Commissioners. The board had at its disposal an elevator site at West Superior which it offered free to the Farmers' Elevator Company. The company sold some stock but went bankrupt during the financial crisis of 1893. The farmers with their limited resources were unable to establish terminal marketing facilities. The expense and difficulties encountered by those farmers who attempted to ship their grain directly led to increased demands that the government correct the abuses in the transportation and marketing systems. The farmers began to look more to the state to give them a free and open market than to their own resources.

54 Second Annual Report of the Commissioners of Railroads to the Governor of North Dakota, 1891, 461.
55 Fossum, 41.
The Farmers' Alliance had certain political aims which it sought to accomplish within the existing political parties. Political action on the part of the Alliance was not something that developed after the Alliance was formed, but it was as much a part of the movement as any policies that have been discussed. The constitution adopted by the Dakota Farmers' Alliance when it was organized stated:

The object of the organization shall be to unite the farmers of the Territory for their protection against class legislation; and the encroachments of concentrated capital and the tyranny of monopoly; to oppose, in our respective political parties the election of any candidate to office, County, State or National, who is not thoroughly in sympathy with the farmers' interests; to demand that the existing political parties shall nominate farmers or those who are in sympathy with them; and to do anything, in a legitimate manner, that may serve to benefit the producer.¹

¹ The Dakota Farmers' Alliance Constitution, Article II, Section 1, quoted in the Dakota Huronite, February 12, 1885; North Dakota Capitol, December 6, 1889.
The purpose of the Alliance, according to its constitution, seemed to be more political than anything else. Political matters within the Alliance became more important as its membership grew and as its strength in political affairs was realized.

From the time it was first founded in Dakota the Farmers' Alliance put forward its political demands at every convention that it held. These demands included a large variety of reforms intended to benefit the farmers. Stated briefly, the Alliance platform included:

1. Necessary legislation to give us a free market for our produce.
2. Equal taxation of corporate with other properties and just taxation of interests in property.
3. The enactment of a law that will prohibit usury.

A free market was the most important objective of the Farmers' Alliance. The railroads and elevator companies in the early 'eighties had a virtual monopoly over the grain trade. The Alliance wanted legislation that would compel railroads to furnish cars to all shippers without discrimination and furnish sites on the right-of-way to those who wanted to erect elevators and warehouses. Legislation demanded by the Alliance centered on a large degree on control of the railroads. Governor

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2. The farmers wanted taxation of all mortgages and exemption of mortgaged property from taxation to the amount of the mortgage.

Nehemiah G. Ordway in 1881 warned the railroads to make proper adjustment of rates on farm products and coal; otherwise, a Board of Railroad Commissioners might be necessary to "protect the people against extortionate charges for transportation."

The railroads did not heed the Governor's warning, and freight rates continued high; the railroads also continued to foster the grain monopoly by discrimination in granting cars and sites.

The increased farmer agitation in 1883 and 1884 together with the newly formed Farmers' Alliance spurred the Dakota Legislature of 1885 to take action on the matter of railroad regulation. Several bills were considered to regulate the railroads and the grain market. The main features of these bills were combined to form the "Free Market Act" which became law on March 6, 1885. This bill established a Board of Railroad Commissioners consisting of three members appointed by the governor for a term of two years. The commissioners were to have "general supervision of all railroads in the territory" and control over the grain trade. Railroads were required to

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4 First Biennial Message of Nehemiah G. Ordway, Governor of Dakota Territory, to the Legislative Assembly, 1881 (Yankton, 1881), 26.

5 General and Special Laws Passed at the Sixteenth Session of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Dakota, 1885 (Yankton, 1885), 133 189.

6 Ibid., 133.
furnish cars to all shippers and to build track connections to elevators built along the railroads. The backers of the law confidently believed they had broken the grain buying monopoly in the territory. For all its good points, the law failed to live up to its expectations. During the closing days of the session of 1885, the power of the railroad commissioners was taken away. That part of the original bill giving the commissioners the power to regulate railroad rates was stricken out. Moreover, the law did not provide the board with the authority to enforce its decisions. Although the railroads seldom openly violated the law, they established regulations that were difficult to meet. A regulation compelling the direct grain shippers to load a car within a certain number of hours made it impossible except for those farmers close to the station to ship their grain directly. After one year of ineffective enforcement, the railroad commissioners reported that the law was "largely experimental" and "... Dakota yet lacks very much of having perfected legislation ... " on regulation of railroad corporations.

7 Ibid., 189.
8 Second Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners of the Territory of Dakota, 1886, 31.
9 Ibid., 10. The commissioners appointed by the Governor were often more sympathetic to the railroads than to the farmers' problem.
The Farmers' Alliance, one of the strongest advocates for a Board of Railroad Commissioners and legislation insuring a free and open market, saw little in the "Free Market Act" of 1885 that could be considered an accomplishment of their objectives. The influence of the railroads in the territorial legislature had prevented the enactment of effective legislation regulating railroad corporations. The Alliance, seeing its legislative interests thwarted, became more determined than ever to use its influence to send men to the legislature who would represent the interests of the Alliance and work in its behalf.

The Farmers' Alliance played a role in an election for the first time in 1886. Loucks called a special session of the Alliance to meet at Aberdeen on July 7 for the purpose of securing increased representation in the Territorial Legislature in the coming election. At this convention was adopted a platform calling for the election of railroad commissioners, establishment of maximum railroad rates by the railroad commissioners, taxation of corporate property the same as farm property, taxation of all recorded mortgages, revision of insurance laws to protect farmers from dishonest agents, establishment of maximum rates of interest at 10 per cent, prohibition of railroad passes for government officials, and legislation that would secure a free market. The Alliance urged

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10 Grand Forks Herald, June 30, 1886; Grand Forks Weekly Plaindealer, June 24, 1886.

11 Grand Forks Herald, July 10, 21, 1886. See Appendix A.
all farmers and laboring men to attend the primaries in their
districts so as to nominate men who represented its views, and
to pledge every nominee to the Alliance platform. The Alliance,
both on the local and territorial level, had previously
appointed political committees to watch the political events.
These committees investigated and examined claims of candidates
and checked their voting records and backgrounds to ascertain
if candidates were entitled to the support of the Alliance.

The Democrats adopted the Farmers' Alliance platform
while the Republicans ignored it, many calling it ridiculous.
The Democrats, being a minority in the territory, hoped to gain
strength by adopting the Alliance platform, and apparently they
did, for they polled more votes than was expected.

During the campaign of 1886, some farm groups on the local
level entered the political field with a ticket of their own.
A farmers' convention held at Larimore in July 1886, nominated

12 The Insker Farmers' Alliance appointed a political com-
nittee in March 1886, to look up all laws that needed changing
for the benefit of the people, especially the farmers, to check
the records and background of men farmers could support for the
next legislature, and to obtain copies of votes cast on all
bills to see if men elected to the legislature worked for or
against the farmers. Grand Forks Herald, Mar. 27, 1886.


14 Kingsbury 11, 1449.
a farmers’ ticket for Grand Forks County. The Cass County Farmers’ Alliance also nominated a similar legislative ticket. These farmers’ political conventions endorsed those candidates in either party (mostly Republicans) who were considered best qualified to represent the farmers’ interests. If candidates in neither party were satisfactory to the farmers, they would nominate a candidate of their own.

The political activity of the farmers was noticeable in the election results. In the Legislative Session of 1885, there were seven members classified as farmers while in 1887 there were twenty-five. George Cross, editor of the Dakota Ruralist and a leading Alliance man, was elected speaker of the House of Representatives. The objectives of the farmers in the Legislature of 1887 was the same as in the previous one, namely regulation of the railroad and elevator companies. The Alliance wanted the re-enactment of that part of the "Free Market Act", of 1885 that repealed the power of the Board of Railroad Commissioners. The farmers also wanted proper legislation that would protect them against unfair grading, weighing, and docking by the grain elevators.

The grain and warehouse law passed by the Legislature of 1887 was intended to provide the regulation of grain elevators

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16 Jamestown Capital, July 5, 1889.
that the farmers demanded. The Board of Railroad Commissioners
was given supervision over the grain trade and the power to
establish all rules and regulations for weighing and inspection
of grain. All elevators or warehouses were declared to be pub­
lic and subject to government regulation, they were required to
obtain licenses and to have their buyers bonded. Pooling of
business and fixing of prices in the purchase and storage of
grain were prohibited. Warehouse receipts stating the quantity
and graded fixed were required to be given to all farmers
storing grain in public houses. These receipts entitled the
holder to an equal amount of the same grade upon return of the
receipt. The railroad commissioners were required to establish
"Dakota grades" to correspond with Minnesota grades, to publish
the grades established, and to provide samples of them to the
warehousemen.

The Law of 1887 could not be effectively enforced, however.
The original bill contained an appropriation of $5,000 to cover
expenses of the commissioners in enforcing it, but this was
striken out through the influence of those opposed to it. The
railroad commissioners could not properly enforce the laws with­
out the needed funds. The law was faulty in other ways, parts

17 Laws Passed at the Seventeenth Session of the Legislative
Assembly of the Territory of Dakota, 1887 (Bismarck, 1887),
of it being too indefinite to be enforced, especially the section defining public warehouses.

Nevertheless, the railroad commissioners attempted to enforce the law. A standard set of grades for grain was established giving the weights and conditions of each. Elevators were licensed and bonds for grain buyers were fixed. This regulation gave farmers assurance that grain stored in public warehouses was safe; previously, if an elevator failed, the farmer lost his wheat which he had stored in it. The law was ignored by certain firms and the commissioners were helpless to do much about it. Without proper funds the commissioners could not collect evidence or take action to enforce the provisions of the law. Those men who could provide competent testimony against the elevator violators refused to do so because

... They did not care to invite the inconveniences threatened by these warehousemen and their agents, who declared that they would not accept for storage or buy grain from those who should have the temerity to testify against them on behalf of the territory. These threats were actually enforced against parties who made complaints to the commission.19

Faulty though it was, the grain and warehouse law was still the only legislation demanded by the Farmers' Alliance that was

18 Third Annual Report of the Railroad Commissioners of the Territory of Dakota, 1887 (Bismarck, 1887), 4, 54.
19 Ibid., 55 - 56.
passed. One of the strongest demands of the Alliance, the
prohibition of usury, not only failed to be enacted into law,
but the penalty for the usury law then in force was repealed.
The usury law in force fixed the rate of interest at 7 per cent,
but higher rates of interest could be fixed by mutual agreement.
The repeal of the usury penalty served more to incite the
indignation of the farmers than anything else. All railroad
legislation failed to pass the legislature. The farmers'
representatives saw no real opposition to the legislation regu-
ling railroads until the closing hours and then all railroad
legislation was lost. Two important railroad bills disappeared
in the last hours. The representatives of the farmers did
not have "... the experience to cope with the representatives
of the corporations."

The Farmers' Alliance, again seeing their legislative
interests defeated by a territorial legislature that was under
the domination of the corporate interests, began making plans to
elect enough men to the next legislature to control it in the
interests of the farmers. A meeting of officers and leaders of
the Territorial Farmers' Alliance met in the fall of 1887
mainly to discuss political matters. A series of bills was
considered to be submitted at the next legislative session.

20 Session Laws, 1887, 365.
21 Editorial, Grand Forks Herald, Mar. 16, 1887.
They embodied the Alliance demands for effective regulation of railroads and the grain trade, prohibition of usury, and taxation of railroads and mortgages. A committee of five, consisting of Loucks and four lawyers, was selected to prepare bills and have them ready to be considered at the next annual Alliance meeting on December 13.

The convention devoted much of its time to the consideration of political matters. The committee of legal advisers appointed previously presented the bills that they had prepared for consideration by the convention. E. E. Erickson prepared the revenue bills covering equal taxation of corporate and private property and division of taxation on mortgaged property between the owner and the holder of the mortgage. P. J. McCumber prepared the railroad bills, Judge T. B. Bangs prepared a memorial to Congress on land grants, and Judge S. J. Conklin prepared a usury bill. These bills were closely studied before adoption for presentation to the next legislature. The Conklin usury bill was given the most attention. It fixed the legal rate of interest at 7 per cent per annum. 

As to tactics, the Alliance planned to remain independent of both political parties but to secure a majority in the next session of the legislature in order to carry out the demands of

22 Jamestown Capital, Nov. 4, 1887.

23 Jamestown Capital, Dec. 9, 22, 1887; Grand Forks Herald, Dec. 23, 1887.
the farmers. Members were urged to support those candidates from either party who would pledge themselves to support the Alliance bills without change or amendment, and who could be depended upon to carry out their pledge. If candidates from neither party were acceptable to the Alliance, then the farmers were urged to select candidates of their own. The farmers had the power, the Alliance believed, to elect a majority of the next legislature if they stood together.

During the campaign of 1888 various farmers' conventions were held which nominated legislative tickets. The farmers' tickets consisted of endorsement of those candidates in either party acceptable to them and the selection of candidates of their own for those that were not. The farmers of Grand Forks County again called a convention at Larimore in October to nominate a legislative ticket. The People's ticket, as it was called, nominated Eli C. D. Shortridge, who had already been nominated by the Democrats, for the House of Representatives and George H. Walsh for the Council; candidates for other positions consisted mostly of those nominated by other parties and endorsed by the farmers. The resolutions adopted by the farmers' convention were almost the same as those of the Farmers' Alliance. In Pembina County the Farmers' Alliance and prohibitionists joined together to nominate a legislative ticket.

\[\text{Sources: Grand Forks Herald, Oct. 16, 17, 1888; Grand Forks Weekly Plaindealer, Oct. 16, 25, 1888.}\]
ticket. The Alliance in Traill, Barnes, and Cass Counties, and possibly a few others, also nominated a legislative ticket.

The movement was strong enough to induce both the Democrat and Republican parties to adopt the Alliance platform (an open market, equal taxation, and a revised usury law). The Democrats nominated an Allianceman, J. W. Harden, as delegate to Congress, while the Republicans nominated A. G. Matthews, a lawyer. The Alliance professed non-partisanship in the election contest for a congressional delegate, but the leaders of the Alliance openly supported Harden who was on the executive board of the Farmers' Alliance. The Democratic party was more receptive to the demands of the Alliance than the Republican party, and in return the Democrats received considerable support from the Alliance. The Alliance, thereupon, was charged as being a "Democratic Aid Society." The results of the election, however, showed that the Republicans had little to fear from the Democrats; Matthews was elected delegate to Congress by an almost two to one majority over Harden.

25 Kingsbury, II, 1529, 1532.

26 Address by H. L. Loucks, quoted in Dakota Muralist, Dec. 15, 1888.

27 Appleton's Annual Cyclopedia and Register of Important Events, 1886 (New York, 1887), 263. The exact election figures are: Matthews, 70,215 votes and Harden, 40,846.

Letter to the Executive Board of the Territorial Farmers' Alliance from Ramsey County Alliance, undated, quoted in the Dakota Muralist, Mar. 23, 1889. The entire northern part of the territory was reported to have suffered during the campaign of 1888; every official of the Ramsey County Alliance had quit during the campaign.
The election of 1888 was the first election in which the Farmers' Alliance played a large part, even though it was largely on the local level. The farmers succeeded in electing a majority to both houses. However, during the campaign of 1888, the Alliance in some areas suffered; many of their members resigned. In some cases the loss of a few influential members meant the collapse of the chapter. Opposition within the Alliance to political action grew during the election because of the disruptive effect which political questions had on the Alliance. The experience of the Grange was cited as proof of the danger of entering politics. Even though the Alliance suffered during the campaign, it revived with even more vigor in the following spring; this sequence was repeated after each election until 1892 when the Alliance did not revive again.

During the annual convention held at Jamestown on December 11, 1888, the political furor created by the election had not yet died down. A resolution from Alliance No. 701 was read protesting against the political activity of the officers of the Territorial Alliance. This resolution was regarded as a rebuke by President Loucks, for he wanted a full discussion of the resolution so that if anyone had any fault to find with him they could do so. A lengthy discussion followed on the subject, but it ended in unanimous endorsement of the action of the Alliance officers. A resolution was adopted urging Alliance
members to set aside all the questions in political issues and remain loyal to the Alliance.

The Jamestown convention, the largest yet held, considered a wide variety of legislative reforms that were not merely limited to those benefiting farmers. Resolutions were adopted which favored legislation that would provide for the election of the Board of Railroad Commissioners with increased powers and would require railroad companies to furnish cars to all shippers, to provide connections at all crossings of railroads so as to enable freight and passengers to be transferred, and to grant elevator sites without discrimination. The previous demands for equal taxation were reiterated together with revision of the laws concerning delinquent taxes, tax sales, and tax deeds to the advantage of the indebted farmers. The two great national issues favored by the Alliance were government ownership of railroad and telegraph companies, and government control of coal lands. The Alliance also demanded the Australian or secret ballot to prevent corruption and fraud which were possible under the system then in use. A resolution in favor of prohibiting the sale of liquor was adopted without dissent. It was in the farmers' own interests to favor pro-

29 Kingsbury, II, 1539; Jamestown Capital, Dec. 21, 1888.
hilitation; laborers going to town and getting intoxicated were an annoyance and expense to the farmers. These resolutions were drawn up with the belief that they would receive the united support of the agricultural interests.

During the Jamestown convention, a legislative committee was appointed which included eight prominent Alliance men who had been elected to the next Territorial Legislature. The legislators-elect declined their appointment, desiring instead to have other farmers make up the committee so they could know what the farmers wanted. The legislation was considered with the expectation that it would be successful in the coming legislature, for now for the first time the farmers of Dakota had a majority in both houses.

When the Legislative Session of 1889 met, the farmers' representatives in the Council were able to elect one of their own members, Smith Stimmel, as president by a good majority. Stimmel, president of the Cass County Alliance and a leader in the Territorial Alliance, was elected to the Council as a


31 These members were J. H. Patten, Smith Stimmel, James A. Woolkeiser, David H. Wellman, Hugh M. McDonald, C. A. Soderberg, George H. Walsh, and Oscar C. Potter. Ira S. Lampman was elected to the House of Representatives. Dakota Ruralist, Dec. 15, 1888.
candidate of the Farmers' Alliance over the Republican candidate. He appointed the legislative committees, and by so doing the Farmers' Alliance obtained a controlling representation on most of them.

Although the farmers had a majority in both houses of the legislature, the legislation demanded by the farmers fared little better than before. An act passed on March 6, 1889, to provide for fair distribution of cars to all shippers proved to be ineffective. The law provided that all shippers were to receive cars upon request, and if cars were short, each shipper was to receive one and thereafter according to need. The matter of granting cars was largely in the hands of the station agents who granted cars at their own discretion. The law fell short of its objective, but it was a slight advance. The Legislative Session of 1889 restored the provision of the usury law repealed by the last legislature. This did not meet the requests of the Alliance, but it was a step in the right direction. The bill providing for the use of secret ballots in elections passed both houses but was lost or stolen in the closing days of the session. The bill providing for prohibi-

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32 Kingsbury, II, 1552 - 53.
33 Bahmer, 109. The session laws for the Legislative Assembly of 1889 were not immediately available.
34 North Dakota Capital, May 31, 1889.
35 Dakota Ruralist, Apr. 20, 1889; Jamestown Capital, Apr. 5, May 15, 1889.
tion of the sale of liquor also passed both houses but was vetoed by Governor Louis K. Church. Other Alliance supported bills met a similar fate, either being sidetracked or vetoed. The Alliance members in the legislature lacked a unity of action among themselves to accomplish the objectives of the Alliance; some were too radical in their views and some were too conservative. The Alliance legislators and the movement as a whole divided along these lines. The Alliance was able to obtain concert of action on its broad objectives, but when it came to the details of definite legislation such as the regulation of railroad rates, agreement on unified action within the legislature was often difficult to obtain.

When the last Dakota Territorial Legislative Session adjourned in March 1889, attention turned to the coming constitutional convention. Congress approved the admission of the Dakota Territory as two states and President Benjamin Harrison


signed the bill on February 22, 1889. On May 14, 1889, elections of delegates to the constitutional conventions were held in North and South Dakota. The election in North Dakota was held without the strong partisanship of previous elections. North Dakota elected seventy-five well qualified men to meet at Bismarck on July 4, 1889, to form a constitution and a state government.

The Farmers' Alliance was well represented at the constitutional convention. Alliance leaders present were F. F. Fancher, H. N. Johnson, R. B. Richardson, Andrew Slatton, E. D. Wallace and L. B. Bartlett. The strength of the Alliance at the convention is shown in the contest for presiding officer; two Alliance men, Fancher and Johnson, contested the position. Fancher won easily after Johnson withdrew. The Farmers' Alliance took the lead in "...writing into fundamental law their antipathy for the railroads and other corporations, their distrust of state officials, and their sundry demands for reforms."

38 Dakota Ruralist, Apr. 20, 1889; Kingsbury, II, 1873 - 78.
40 Fargo Argus, July 5, 1889; Lounsberry, 393.
41 Hicks, 149.
The lawyers, of whom there were nearly as many represented as farmers; expected to take the lead in the discussions, but some of the ablest debaters were farmers; Fancher, Bartlett, and Wallace of the Farmers' Alliance were among the best.

Johnson, chairman of the committee on corporations, had a part in writing into the constitution the provision for popular election of the Board of Railroad Commissioners. Johnson also had a part in the shaping of legislation on prohibition. The prohibition clause, submitted separately from the constitution for ratification by the people, was favored by only a small majority (18,552 to 17,393). The Farmers' Alliance also wanted the constitution to contain provision for women's suffrage but was unsuccessful in obtaining it; however, the legislature was given the authority to enact a law granting women the right to vote which would go into effect upon approval of the electorate.

The year 1889 was one of North Dakota's most active political years. Beginning in January, the Dakota Legislature was in session; in the spring, elections were held for delegates to the constitutional convention; in the summer, the constitutional convention was held; in the fall, ratification of the constitution took place and officers and legislators were elected for

42 Black, 127.
43 Kingsbury, II, 1921.
he new government; and with the approach of winter, the North Dakota Legislature convened for the first time. During this time the Alliance was also very active to obtain the best advantages in the new government that it could.

Shortly before the constitutional convention convened, the Farmers' Alliance held a special session at Fargo on June 6–28, 1889, to consider the best means of promoting the interests of the Alliance in the new state. President Loucks urged the farmers to capture the state government, to have the governor, lieutenant governor, a majority of the railroad commissioners, and all members to Congress. The farmers then would be able to correct "every evil where law could correct." Loucks called for broad reforms which keynoted the change that had been taking place in the Alliance. The Alliance had become a reform movement that was no longer limited to those reforms that would provide direct relief to the farmers. The convention adopted a platform and a series of resolutions which called for, in addition to past demands, the

44 Fargo Argus, June 26, 27, 28, 1889; Jamestown Capital, July 5, 1889; Kingsbury, II, 1882–83.

45 Kingsbury, II, 1883.
popular election of senators, courts of arbitration, minimum
use of proxies, and women's suffrage. The Farmers' Alliance
had held also a special session at Huron shortly before the
Fargo convention. The Alliance platforms of the two Dakotas
were substantially the same. The main difference was that the
South Dakota Alliance favored direct issuance of money to the
people instead of through the banks, while the North Dakota
Alliance did not include this in its platform. —Walter Muir

46 Fargo Argus, June 27, 28, 1889; Jamestown Capital, July 3, 1889.
Following is the Alliance platform which was regularly
printed in the Alliance department of the Dakota Ruralist in the
spring of 1889. Loucks, editor of the Alliance section, un-
doubtedly wrote it for his speech at the Fargo convention em-
odied the same principles.
All public necessities should be owned or controlled by the
Government, and managed in such a way that no class should be
allowed to exact unjust rates for the use thereof.
Our railroads should at the earliest possible date be
bought by the government, and operated in the interest of the
whole people.
Our government having reserved to itself the sole right to
issue money should issue sufficient money at a reasonable rate
of interest, for all honest and legitimate pursuits. Therefore,
we demand that the Government issue the money direct to the
people, in payment for services rendered, or loaned, on absolute-
ly good security.
Equal and just taxation of property.
Prohibition, State and National.
Election of United States Senators by the direct vote of
the people.
Courts of Arbitration, that justice not precedent may
govern.
The Australian system of voting.

in commenting on the Alliance platform referred to it as a vanguard of the "... great social, financial and political revolution which will sweep eastward and southward from the Dakotas ..." and help return the control of the government to the people.

Controversial political matters occupied lengthy discussions at the Fargo convention. Strong arguments were made against the Alliance making politics its prime motive, but politics was the main purpose of the meeting and political topics were the order of the day. Loucks urged the Alliance to work with the political parties, and then, if the Alliance failed, to try a third party in the next election. A resolution was adopted and passed requesting that the Republican and Democrat central committees call state conventions between September 1 and 12 so farmers could be able to attend.

The Republican central committee, contrary to the wishes of the farmers, called for a state convention on August 21 when farmers were busy. This set off a wave of indignation among the farmers, who saw this move on the part of the Republican party as an attempt to exclude them from political affairs. Farmers attending the Griggs County Farmers' Alliance picnic

48 Letter to the editor from Walter Muir, undated, quoted in Dakota Ruralist, July 20, 1889.
49 Fargo Argus, June 28, 1889.
held at Jesse on August 11, prepared a resolution requesting the central committee of the Farmers' Alliance of North Dakota to meet at Jamestown not later than September 12 to nominate 50 candidates for state offices and for Congress. Third party action on the part of the farmers was first discussed during the election of 1888, and by 1889 sentiment in favor of independent political action by the farmers was widespread. The farmers wanted complete control of the new government but felt that the political parties controlled by the monied corporations would deny them the opportunity.

The farmers of North Dakota looked towards the new state government to relieve them from the adverse legislation under which they suffered. The feeling of the North Dakota farmers is expressed in the following poem, "The Farmers Must Rule North Dakota", which was written by S. A. Fisher and sung to the tune of "Red, White and Blue".

The farmers are under oppression,
And cursed by monopoly's hand;
This combine will soon take possession
Unless we united shall stand;
They refuse to concede one iota
But cannot conceal their alarm --
That farmers will rule North Dakota,
Success to the sons of the farm.

Resolution of Griggs County Farmers' Alliance picnic, Aug. 11, 1889, quoted in Dakota Ruralist, Aug. 17, 1889. In November 1889, the Griggs County Alliance again resolved for independent political action.
Chorus
Success to the sons of the farm,
Success to the sons of the farm,
The farmers must rule North Dakota,
Three cheers for the sons of the farm.

The farmers have born without a murmur
The hardships of many a trust,
The watchword is now to "stand firmer --
We know that to conquer we must --"
"We know that our duties impel us
Together to stand to a man --
We know that our foes will compel us
To bow to their will if they can."

Chorus
Party rings have managed conventions
And governed by fraud and deceit,
But with all their cunning inventions
We have them at last at our feet.
Let them see that justice will ever
The doers of wrong overtake;
That they who would govern must never
The cause of the farmer forsake.

Chorus
We are pleading for voters at election
To banish the traffic in rum,
That this stinging, blighting infection
May ever an outlaw become;
We plead for the ballot for woman,
A weapon to shield her from harm;
To deny it we should be inhuman,
Success to the girls of the farm.

Chorus
Success to the girls of the farm,
Success to the girls of the farm,
Make them equal with man in Dakota,
Three cheers for the girls of the farm.

51 Jamestown Capital, Sept. 6, 1889. See also Appendix C.
Similar feeling that the farmers would control the new government is also expressed in the following anonymous poem, "The Farmers' Soliloquy":

Methinks I hear the usurer cry:
    "My day of grace is passing by --
To other lands I now must fly.
    And find new birdies,
Or Dakota farmers I fear, O, my!
    Will whack my hurdies.

If longer in this land I tarry
    My well-laid schemes will all miscarry,
For Alliance men are bound to carry
    The anti-usury slate:
So, why longer linger here to worry
    O'er my sad fate.

I'll pack my grissack, board the train,
    And hasten from this rich Domain,
Where many thousand I have slain
    By usurious greed,
And that without one pang of pain,
    Or just remedie.\(^2\)

During the election of 1889, the main contest in the selection of the state officers for North Dakota took place at the Republican nominating convention held at Fargo on August 21. At this time a nomination by the Republican party was almost equivalent to election. There were two factions present at the convention, the Farmers' Alliance led by John Miller from Richland County, and that part of the Republican party that had been in control of political affairs in the territory for many

\(^2\) Dakota Ruralist, Apr. 13, 1889.
years. The purpose of the Farmers' Alliance faction was to name a ticket that would not be controlled by the former dominant faction. Sides were about evenly divided at the convention, and it was presumed that the old Republican faction would be successful because of their experience. But the farmers, uncompro­mising and aggressive, managed to elect M. W. Johnson in a close contest to the key position of permanent chairman and were thereby able to control the convention. John Miller was nom­i­nated for governor and Henry C. Hansbrough of Ramsey County for congressman. Walter Muir was reported to have said in an interview that if the farmers had not gotten a victory at the Republican convention, a mass convention would have been held at Jamestown, and the farmers would have nominated a ticket of their own.

The North Dakota Democrats met at Fargo on August 30, 1889, to nominate a state ticket. The Democratic platform declared that it was "... the duty of the state to guard the prosperity of the farmers." William N. Roach of Larimore was nominated for governor and Daniel W. Maratta of Fargo for congressman.

54 Bismarck Tribune, undated, quoted in Fargo Argus, Nov. 2, 1889.
55 Fargo Argus, Sept. 18, 1889.
In the election held on October 1, the entire Republican ticket was elected by about a two to one majority over the Democrats. On November 4 the state officers took the oath of office, and immediately the governor called the legislature to meet on November 19 for the purpose of electing two Senators. The first North Dakota legislature that convened contained a majority of farmers, many of whom were Alliance men. Among those considered for election to the Senate were three leading Alliance men, Fancher, Johnson, and Muir. The Edgely Mail in backing Muir for Senator wrote:

The people of North Dakota are by necessity radical in their views, as may be witnessed by the platform of the Farmers' Alliance, and they should be represented in the United States Senate by men who will do justice to these views.

In the senatorial contest which followed, Gilbert A. Pierce, ex-governor of Dakota Territory, was elected as one of the United States senators from North Dakota by receiving the unanimous Republican vote. In the election of the second senator, Johnson was the leading contender but was unable to secure the necessary votes. The election went to Lyman B. Casey who was also a member of the Farmers' Alliance, which claimed the credit for his election.

57 Quoted in Fargo Argus, Oct. 30, 1889.

During the legislative session from November 1889 to April 1890, a large number of bills regulating railroads and the grain trade were considered. The farmers encountered little opposition to their program; the legislature accepted every bill that was introduced. Many of the bills were conflicting in various parts and apparently little effort was made to correct conflicting provisions, probably because the opposition which was a minority desired to see the farmers defeat their own purpose by allowing ineffective laws to pass. There was a total of ten bills enacted into law governing railroads and the grain trade that were designed to benefit the farmers.

The Farmers' Alliance demanded that railroad companies be required to construct loading platforms on the right-of-way to enable farmers to ship grain and livestock directly to the terminal markets. This was enacted into law and became effective February 17, 1890. The law read:

Every railroad company or corporation doing business in this State, shall within sixty days after this act shall go into effect, upon notice from the Commissioners of Railroads, build, erect and complete one or more platforms for the transfer of live stock, grain and other commodities from wagons or otherwise to cars at each and every station designated in said notice. 50

59 Laws Passed at the First Session of the Legislative Assembly 1890 (Bismarck, 1890), Chapters 122 - 26, 173, 187 - 70. Hereafter cited as Session Laws, 1890.

60 Ibid., 365.
Penalties for non-compliance were set, but the commissioners were not given the proper power to enforce them. The wording of this law was such that it could be interpreted to mean that a railroad company could only be required to build platforms for the first sixty days after its passage. The commission received a total of fifty petitions for railroad platforms in 1890 and notified the railroad companies of the requests. The Northern Pacific Railroad complied with the law, building seven platforms during the first year. The Great Northern, on the other hand, delayed construction and in many cases refused to build platforms at stations which it claimed had ample facilities.

The legislative session of 1889 - 90 also complied with the Farmers' Alliance demands that railroad companies be required to grant elevator sites. The elevator site law required railroad companies to provide sites for any firm or association desiring to build warehouses or elevators along the railroad right-of-way. This law could not be effectively enforced.

An examination of the Report of the Attorney General to the Governor of North Dakota, 1890 (Bismarck, 1890), reveals that no formal opinion by the attorney general was made giving this interpretation; however, the attorney general apparently held that the law could not be enforced after the sixty day period had passed. First Annual Report of the Commissioners of Railroads to the Governor of North Dakota, 1890, 73.

Ibid., 61 - 62.
because it contained no penalty for refusal to comply.

Another law which was aimed partly at aiding the farmers was the requirement that railroad companies at all crossings with other railroads provide connections for transfer of freight and passengers. The provisions of this law were not only difficult to enforce, but were in conflict with provisions of another law passed by the same session.

The first legislative session of North Dakota also attempted to define the duties of the commissioners of railroads and prescribe the means of regulation for railroad companies. According to the law, railroads were required to furnish cars to all shippers without delay, to equalize the rates for long and short hauls, and to give no preference to any person or company in the matter of service or rates. The commissioners of railroads were given the power to reduce any rates that were unequal or unreasonable. The powers of the commissioners were defined and procedures were prescribed for enforcing the provisions of the law. This law conflicted in part with two other laws that were passed during the same session, and certain sections were ambiguous. The law was faulty, difficult to enforce, and did not receive the full support of the commission-

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63 Session Laws, 1890, 540 - 42.
64 Ibid., 360 - 70.
65 Ibid., 249 - 64.
ers of railroads; yet, it did come closer to the Farmers' Alliance goal of effective regulation of railroad corporations.

The legislation passed by the first legislative assembly that caused the most confusion and difficulty were those laws regulating elevators and the shipment of grain. The warehouse act of March 8, 1890, defined public warehouses, provided for bonds and licenses for warehouse operators and for regulation of grain storage, established maximum rates for grain storage, and gave the commissioners of railroads the authority to supervise the regulation of the grain trade. Another warehouse act passed shortly after duplicated some of the features of the previous law. This law provided for the regulation of warehouses and the inspection, weighing, and handling of grain. It was intended to eliminate the elevator abuses of undergrading, underweighing, overdocking, and mixing about which the farmers had complained for so long.

The laws regulating the grain trade were so conflicting and complicated that the commissioners of railroads and the attorney general could not determine how to enforce them. The elevator companies disregarded the laws and threatened to close their doors if they were enforced. The elevator men contended

66 Ibid., 525 - 29.
67 Ibid., 539 - 40.
that storage rates established were too low, the laws on licenses were in conflict, and that the grading system established was unreasonable. The commissioners of railroads, believing that the elevator and grain warehouses laws were impossible to enforce, agreed to discuss the legislation with the elevator men in the hope of working out a solution to its conflicting provisions. The commissioners and elevator men met at Minneapolis on August 13, 1890, and came to an agreement on the provisions of the law concerning licenses, bonds, and storage rates and receipts. The agreement was extra-legal, but it had the approval of the attorney general.

The legislative session of 1889–90 established maximum rates on coal mined in North Dakota, its provisions to be enforced by the commissioners of railroads. The railroad companies contended that the law was unconstitutional and brought the case to court, which ruled that the coal rate law was repealed by the provisions of another railroad law passed by the same legislature. The commissioners of railroads had made no attempt to enforce the law before the court decision.

68 First Annual Report of the Commissioners of Railroads to the Governor of North Dakota, 1890, 29.

69 Ibid., 29.

70 Session Laws, 1890, 357–9.

71 First Annual Report of the Commissioners of Railroads to the Governor of North Dakota, 1890, 57.
Other Farmers' Alliance backed bills passed by the first legislative assembly included one revising the usury law and another regulating the use of proxies. Usury was defined, the legal rate of interest was set at 7 per cent, and rates up to 12 per cent could be established by mutual agreement. Agreements or contracts containing usury were void, but penalties for usury were not provided. The use of proxies in state, district, and county nominating conventions was regulated. The farmers hoped this law would help break the control that machine politicians had at nominating conventions.

Much of the Farmers' Alliance legislation passed in the 1889-90 legislative session was faulty and ineffective. The farmers' purpose was defeated by their own enthusiasm for legislation controlling the corporations and their inexperience in enacting it into law. The experienced politicians backed by the corporate interests did not strongly oppose the farmer legislation, but instead helped to add to the ambiguity and complicate the legislation which the farmers enacted.

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72 Session Laws, 1890, 518-21.
73 Ibid., 330.
CHAPTER V

THE RISE OF THE POPULISTS

The Farmers' Alliance blamed the failure of farm legislation in the first North Dakota legislative session on the treachery of the established political parties. Sentiment grew among the farmers that only by organizing on class lines and taking unified and independent political action could they escape from the domination of the old parties, which they believed were controlled by the monied corporations. By 1890 the farmers had become more interested in the Farmers' Alliance as a political organization than as a social one.

Walter Muir, president of the North Dakota Farmers' Alliance, was the leading advocate of independent political action on the part of the farmers, and has been called the

"father of North Dakota Populism". Other North Dakota Alliance leaders held similar views. The Alliance executive committee decided to call a special meeting to be held at Jamestown on June 4 - 5, 1890. It was called partly to consider the action of the last legislature, but mainly to decide whether the Alliance should continue to divide its political

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1 Loaneberry, II, 798.
The convention that convened at Jamestown contained many who favored third party action. The sentiment concerning the last legislature was well expressed in a resolution submitted by a local Alliance which stated that "... interests fared no better in the last legislature than would a flock of sheep in a convention of wolves." The question of independent political action was the essence of the convention. As yet, no other state Alliance had adopted third party action.

The question of entering directly into politics was argued first in the committee on political action. A report favoring a third party was prepared, but F. B. Fancher, a strong Republican, argued the committee out of it. The committee submitted a report recommending that the Alliance continue to work within the old parties and, if the party leaders refused to accept the Alliance program or name proper candidates, then the Alliance should take independent action, but not before. A minority report calling for the Alliance to nominate a state ticket was also presented before the convention. A lengthy discussion

2 North Dakota Capital, May 9, 1890.

3 Pioneer Press (St. Paul), June 5, 1890

4 Fargo Argus, June 6, 1890.
followed. Fancher gave a brilliant speech urging the Alliance members to work within their party and to drop the third party idea. Fancher's influence forestalled a complete break, and the Alliance voted to continue working within the old parties. However, a committee was appointed to determine whether the candidates nominated by the political parties should be supported by the Alliance, or if an Alliance ticket should be nominated. The Alliance reiterated its previous demands and passed resolutions favoring the unlimited coinage of silver and also passage of the sub-treasury bill by Congress. Prohibition, which went into effect upon ratification of the state constitution, was strongly reaffirmed and Congress was urged to pass laws preventing the importation of liquor into the states which prohibited it. Governor John Miller was heartily endorsed for his stand, during the last legislative session, against the bill, backed by the Republican machine politicians that would establish the Louisiana or state operated lottery.

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5 Ibid., LaMoure County Chronicle, June 13, 1890; Pioneer Press, June 6, 1890.

6 North Dakota Capital, June 13, 1890; Grand Forks Herald, June 7, 1890. The sub-treasury plan for the relief of agriculture was a scheme whereby government warehouses would be established providing for the storage of certain basic crops. Farmers would be able to store their products in the government depositories and receive in return legal-tender paper money equal to 80 per cent of the current local value of the products. The farmer would also receive a certificate of deposit showing the amount and quality of the product. These certificates could be sold whenever the current market prices suited the farmer, the farmer receiving only the difference between the price agreed upon and the price already paid by the sub-treasurer. When these storage certificates reached the miller, he could get the product by paying the sum of money originally advanced plus interest and storage charges. If the product was not redeemed in one year it could be sold at public auction. Hicks, 187 - 38.
scheme in North Dakota. The Grand Forks Herald, a strong opponent of the Louisiana lottery and a supporter of the Farmers' Alliance, ran the Alliance platform in its columns for many days. The Herald was opposed to third party action and complimented the Alliance on its decision to remain in the established parties.

The South Dakota Farmers' Alliance had held a convention at the same time as the North Dakota Alliance. The principle purpose of the convention was also to decide the matter of forming a third party. Loucks was in favor of a third party, and after long deliberation the convention decided on independent political action by a vote of 496 to 82. The Alliance convention adjourned, and a committee to take political action was organized at once. The following day, June 7, a new party was organized and called the Independent party upon Louck's suggestion. The South Dakota convention was held several days before a comparable convention in Kansas; therefore, South Dakota, not Kansas, was the true birthplace of Populism.

7. Grand Forks Herald, June 7, 1890.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid., June 11, 1890; National Economist, Vol. 3 (June 21, 1890), 224.
10. Hicks, 147.
Later the Independent party met and nominated a state ticket headed by Loucks for governor. The action of the South Dakota Alliance in adopting independent political action strengthened the third party advocates in North Dakota as did a similar movement by the Minnesota Farmers' Alliance. During the summer of 1890, the spirit of revolt against the existing political parties grew.

George Winship in the Grand Forks Herald urged the Republican party to nominate good candidates which were acceptable to the Farmers' Alliance; otherwise the Alliance would separate from it. The Republicans met at Grand Forks on July 9 and nominated a state ticket headed by Andrew Burke for governor and K. H. Johnson for congressman. The Democrats also met at Grand Forks and nominated state officers on July 16. William N. Roach was named as candidate for governor and John D. Benton for Congressman.

On August 27, 1890, Walter Muir, acting with the authority of the state Farmers' Alliance central committee, issued a call for a convention to meet at Grand Forks September 25 - 26 to consider endorsing candidates already named by the Republican and Democratic parties or to nominate new ones. It was Muir's

11 Ibid., July 3, 1890.
12 Ibid., July 27, Aug. 1, 1890.
13 Ibid., June 25, Aug. 7, 1890.
14 Ibid., Sept. 4, 1890.
intention to form an independent political party at this con-
vention. The farmers, Muir asserted, could not support candi-
dates who favored both "lottery and whisky."

Let this convention show to the world that
the farmers, prohibitionists and friends of reform
generally in North Dakota no longer can be driven
by political bosses and ringmasters in the state.

The Farmers' Alliance was strongly in favor of prohibition,
and many of the leaders in the Alliance were among the leading
Prohibitionists in the state. It was logical, therefore, that
the two groups should combine their political forces. The Pro-
hibitionists called for a convention to meet at Grand Forks on
the same day as the Farmers' Alliance convention, September 25.
The convention was to elect delegates to confer with the
Farmers' Alliance and to "... Nominate and endorse a state
ticket acceptable to farmers, prohibitionists and laborers." "All who favor an independent movement ... were ... requested
to be present."

The Prohibition convention met first and quickly decided to
form an Independent party of North Dakota. The Prohibitionists
would endorse candidates already nominated by the other parties,

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15 Letter to the editor from Walter Muir, Sept. 2, 1890.
16 Walter Muir quoted in Grand Forks Herald, Sept. 16, 1890
17 Grand Forks Herald, Sept. 11, 1890.
18 Ibid.
provided they were opposed to the controversial subject of re-submission to a popular vote the constitutional amendment prohibiting the sale of liquor. A committee was appointed to confer with the Farmers' Alliance and the meeting adjourned.

The Farmers' Alliance convention contained many delegates who were opposed to joining the new party. Shortly after the meeting was called to order, a heated discussion ensued over the question of political action. Muir and the Independents, however, were in the majority, and the farmers agreed to join the Independent party.

On the evening of September 25, the Alliance and Prohibition groups met in joint session. The Independent party of North Dakota was organized, and a state central committee was appointed. The Prohibitionists agreed to support the Alliance platform, and a state ticket was nominated. The ticket selected

19 Ibid., Sept. 25, 1890.
20 Ibid., Sept. 25, 26, 1890. This meeting was held in secret, and the details of what went on during the session are unknown. Alliance business meetings were held in secrecy after June 1890, when the North Dakota Alliance joined the Southern Alliance.
21 Ibid., The Independents in North Dakota never used People's party or Populist party as official title; however, the term Populist was always applied to them, even by themselves. Throughout this study the words Populist and Independents are used interchangeably.
was headed by Walter Muir as the nominee for governor. Nominations for seven out of the twelve state offices were filled by endorsing candidates already nominated; three were Democrats and four were Republicans. The Independents nominated candidates for the positions of auditor, treasurer, attorney general, and one railroad commissioner. Andrew Slotten, vice-president of the Farmers' Alliance, was nominated as one of the three railroad commissioners by the Republicans and of course received the endorsement of the Independents. George Walsh, on the other hand, who was also an Alliance man, was nominated by the Republicans for a railroad commissioner but was not endorsed by the Independents. M. N. Johnson, nominated for congressman by the Republican party, was endorsed by the Independents.

The platform of the North Dakota Independent party called for free coinage of gold and silver, government loans on the basis of real estate security, the sub-treasury, revision of the tariff laws, income taxes, state prohibition of the sale of liquor, government ownership and control of railroad and telegraph companies and coal mines, women's suffrage, Australian ballot, and the direct election of United States senators, the president, and the vice-president. Unlike previous Alliance

22 Ibid., Sept. 26, 1890

23 Ibid. See Appendix D.
platforms, this platform did not contain those planks which
called for specific legislation by the state in the interests
of the farmers. The platform of the Independent party could
largely be attained only through the national government.

In the election on November 4, 1890, all Republican candi-
dates for state offices won. The Independent ticket cut into
the majority of all the Republican nominees except those that
were endorsed by the Independents. Muir received 4,821 votes,
Burke 19,053, and Roach, 12,604. The Independents, however,
elected eight members to the state legislature -- six to the
House and two to the Senate.

The North Dakota Farmers' Alliance held its annual con-
vention at Fargo shortly after the election on November 24 - 26,
1890. Faith in the farmers' cause was reaffirmed. New planks
called for free and uniform textbooks, rigid economy in all
government departments, and the establishment of primary
electrics. The sub-treasury plank was defeated. The farmers
called on the state legislature to clear up existing elevator
legislation.

24 North Dakota Capital, Feb. 12, 1892;

25 Other Alliance men were also elected through the old
parties.

26 Grand Forks Herald, Nov. 29, 1890; LaMoure County
Chronicle, Dec. 5, 1890.
The Second Legislative Assembly of North Dakota which convened in January 1891, contained a fair proportion of farmers, five of whom were classified as Farmers' Alliance representatives and three as Independents. The Republicans had complete control over both Houses, having a majority of eleven in the Senate and sixteen in the House. Muir was present as a Farmers' Alliance lobbyist and was a senatorial candidate. He received the support of the Democrats at one time, receiving thirty-one votes out of a necessary forty-seven. The senatorial election went to a candidate supported by the Republican political machine, Henry C. Hansbrough.

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27 Journal of the House of the Second Legislative Assembly, 1891 (Bismarck, 1891), 1; Journal of the Senate of the Second Legislative Assembly, 1891 (Bismarck, 1891), 1.

28 Ibid.

29 The Farmers' Alliance had had members present at every legislative session since 1887, acting as lobbyists. The Alliance lobbyists, always looking for intrigue on the part of railroad and corporation representatives, were referred to as detectives by those hostile to the Alliance, a word which at that time did not carry a very good connotation.

30 House Journal, 1891, 135
One of the most important things the legislature had to do, as far as the farmers were concerned, was to straighten out the confused elevator legislation. A joint legislative committee was appointed to revise laws relating to grain trade. Attempts were made to prevent passage of the bill presented by the committee. It was held up in the Senate until the close of the session and amended before being returned to the House. It was too late for the House to remove the amendments and they had to accept them. The bill, which became law upon the governor's signature, eliminated the confusion in grain and warehouse legislation. The law gave the commissioners of railroads full power to supervise the grain trade and make necessary rules and regulations. All grain elevators and warehouses were included under the provisions of the law and maximum rates for grain storage were established.

The warehousemen were not going to accept the elevator legislation of 1891, especially the storage rates, and threatened again to close their doors if the law was enforced. However, now the law was explicit. Furthermore, the Board of Railroad Commissioners now contained two Alliancemen; Andrew

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\[31\] Laws Passed at the Second Session of the Legislative Assembly, 1891 (Bismarck, 1891), 221. Hereafter cited as Session Laws, 1891.

\[32\] Behmer, 124.
Slotten and George Walsh, and it was not as inclined as previous commissions to yield to the elevator interests. The railroad commissioners, at a meeting at Grand Forks on July 14, 1891, conferred with representatives of the elevator association and Farmers' Alliance to work out a set of rules and regulations that would be acceptable to the farmers and the elevator men alike.

The elevator legislation of 1891 contained no loopholes that would enable the elevators to escape regulations. The elevator men were especially grieved over the storage rates that were established. In the fall of 1891, a test case was brought into the District Court of Ramsey County, which ruled that the legislature had the power to fix storage rates for public elevators. The grain men appealed to the Supreme Court of the United States claiming that the legislation violated the first and fourteenth amendments. On April 26, 1892, the Supreme Court decided against the elevator companies, stating that the state legislature could fix elevator rates.

The Legislature of 1891 passed other bills demanded by the Farmers' Alliance. The "Australian Election Law", one of the

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33 Second Annual Report of the Commissioners of Railroads to the Governor of North Dakota, 1891, 396; Grand Forks Herald, July 16, 1891.

34 Zahmer, 125 - 26, Hennessy, 214.
leading demands of the Independent party, was passed. It provided for secret ballots and regulation of voting at all elections. A usury law was passed which made usury a misdemeanor and provided a penalty for it. Two bills to regulate railroads were also passed; one gave the railroad commissioners the power to equalize any unreasonable rates, and the other made it unlawful for railroads to charge more for short hauls than for a comparable distance by a long haul.

The railroads had not been complying with the platform law of the previous legislative session; a few platforms, however, were built especially by the Northern Pacific Railroad. The farmers wanted the platform law to be amended so railroads could be compelled to build platforms on request. A bill to amend the platform law was passed by the House but was killed by the Senate. The platform bill amendment, together with an enforceable elevator-site law, was desired by the farmers to break the control which elevator companies had over the grain trade.

Representative Fred Dennett, Republican from Cavalier

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36 Ibid., 313.
37 Ibid., 259 - 60.
38 House Journal, 1891, 262; Senate Journal, 1891, 415.
County, introduced a bill into the house that would require railroad companies to grant sites on the right-of-way without discrimination to anyone wanting to erect an elevator or warehouse. The railroad companies would get one dollar annually for rental. The Dennett Bill passed the House by a unanimous vote and an almost unanimous vote in the Senate, but it was vetoed by Governor Burke. Burke contended that the bill was unconstitutional, even though the attorney general reported that in his opinion it was not. The North Dakota Independent, the official Farmers' Alliance paper, gave as the real reason for the veto "... that elevator men do not want any more competition, especially if farmers or private parties could erect warehouses." The Independent declared that "... the representatives of the corporations doing business in this state are a power greater than the majority of our legislature." Burke's veto greatly aided the Independents' cause; the veto was used as evidence that corporate interests controlled the old parties, and only by independent political action could these injustices be corrected.

The movement towards independent political action on the part of the farmers grew throughout 1891. Those opposed to the...
Farmers' Alliance predicted that the movement would vanish with one good crop. However, the good harvest and prices during 1891 did not deter it. The farmers were determined to rid the government of the state and nation of the corruption and inequities that had resulted when the monied interests gained control of the machinery of the government.

The Populist movement in North Dakota was handicapped by a hostile press. Very few newspapers supported the movement; those which did had a small circulation. Hostility to the Farmers' Alliance began around 1889 and arose largely because of its political activity. The Jamestown Capital and Grand Forks Herald favored the Alliance until it broke with the old parties and formed a party of its own. George Winship, editor of the Grand Forks Herald, wrote that he would support the Alliance if its members would not "assume all of the other classes are against them", and if they would not support unlimited coinage of silver and government loans on real estate at 2 per cent.

Winship wanted the Alliance to control the two major parties rather than form a third party. J. C. Warnock, editor of the North Dakota Capital, held the same view as Winship regarding the new party and government loans; he was also against the Alliance demands for government ownership of railroads and the sub-

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June 23, 1891.
treasury scheme.

The Independent party and its leaders were ridiculed and abused by many of the newspapers. Name calling of the lowest order was resorted to by some. The North Dakota Independent carried a regular column called "Lies about the Alliance", in which it answered and repudiated any charges made against it. The Independent charged that "... misrepresentation, ridicule, abuse ... against the Alliance and its leaders were signs of weakness in the Republican press ..." which was "... unable and afraid to discuss the demands of the producing class."

The attacks against the Farmers' Alliance, the farmers' only voice, probably had as much to do in inciting the farmers to greater political action as anything favorable that they could have said.

During the summer of 1891, the third party movement became national in scope. A national meeting of various farm organizations and reform groups was held at Cincinnati in May 1891.

43 North Dakota Capital, Nov. 20, 1891.

44 Of all the newspapers examined the Fargo Argus was the most hostile to the Farmers' Alliance and the Independent party.

45 Feb. 11, 1892.

46 The North Dakota Farmers' Alliance was not officially represented at the convention, no provision being made for expenses of delegates or election of them.
The National Union Conference, as the meeting was officially called, contained many who were ready to form a new party, but such action was deferred until election year. It was decided to hold a later meeting at St. Louis on February 22, 1892, to consider forming a new national party. In the interim, steps were being taken to form the new People's party.

The St. Louis convention attracted a mass of reformers of every kind. They drew up their demands, which were little more than a restatement of earlier Farmers' Alliance programs.

Ignatius Donnelly's preamble to the St. Louis platform drew a depressing picture of the conditions of rural and urban labor. The platform dealt with money, transportation, and land. The demands included a safe, sound, and flexible national currency, free and unlimited coinage of silver, a graduated income tax, economy in government, postal savings banks, prohibition of alien ownership of land, and government ownership of railroad, tele-

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47 Hicks, 211 - 15.

48 The prohibition of alien ownership of land was not part of the North Dakota Farmers' Alliance program. It was strongly urged by other states, and the North Dakota Alliance accepted it even though it was inconsistent with earlier sentiments. The Dakota Farmers' Alliance had opposed a United States bill in 1888 to restrict the ownership of real estate to American citizens. This bill, it was argued, would prevent foreign capital from seeking investment in real estate, and therefore limit the amount of capital available in Dakota and would increase interest rates. Letter of H. L. Loucks to Hon. O. S. Gifford, Dakota delegate to Congress, Apr. 19, 1888, quoted in Jamestown Capital, May 11, 1888 Report of the Governor of Dakota to the Secretary of the Interior (Washington, 1888), 56.
graph, and telephone companies. The North Dakota delegation, as well as others from the Northwest, wanted the platform to include women's suffrage and national prohibition of the sale of liquor, but the Southerners were opposed to it believing that they could not win with either of these. The North Dakota Independent called the St. Louis platform "The Declaration of Independence."

The St. Louis convention called a National People's party nominating convention to meet at Omaha on July 4, 1892. The date was set after the Republicans and Democrats held their conventions to give them a chance to meet some of the major demands of the St. Louis platform. The convention suggested that all those in sympathy with the platform hold local meetings in late March to ratify the platform and take steps to organize preparatory to electing delegates to the Omaha convention.

The North Dakota Independent party and Farmers' Alliance delegation to the St. Louis convention was led by H. D. Williams. Williams was elected chairman of the Independent state central committee when the Independent party was organized at Grand Forks on September 25, 1890. He was born in Pennsylvania in 1849, taught school for ten years, farmed in Kansas from 1879 - 82, 

49  Hicks, 435 - 39.

50  Mar. 3, 1892.
homesteaded in Stutsman County in 1882, and became a large farmer. Williams was secretary of the North Dakota Farmers' Alliance from November 1888, when it was organized, until June 1891. When the conservative element headed by Shortridge took over the Alliance in June 1891, Williams was elected to a lesser position, becoming a member of the judiciary committee.

On March 8, 1892, an Independent party convention was called by the Prohibition faction to meet in Grand Forks. The state Prohibitionists wanted the convention called to elect delegates to the National Prohibition convention. The convention was attended by Farmers' Alliance delegates, although they were not as well represented as the Prohibitionists. The Alliancemen contended that the convention was not supposed to be called and charged the Prohibitionists with attempting to take over the Independent party. The Prohibitionists intended to elect delegates to the National Prohibition Convention, but the Alliancemen would not stand for this. They charged that it would disrupt the united forces of the Prohibitionists and Farmers' Alliance. When the Prohibitionists presented a petition for each member present to sign stating that prohibition of the sale of liquor was the main issue and pledging the signer to support the National Prohibition ticket, the Alliance.

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Compendium of History and Biography of North Dakota (Chicago, 1900), 215-16.
members refused and withdrew from the meeting. The Prohibitionists thereupon elected delegates to their national convention and nominated presidential electors, but decided to await developments before nominating officers.

The Alliance men, meanwhile, had met separately. Williams, Muir, and other members of the Independent central committee who were Alliance men called for a delegate convention of the Independent party to meet at Valley City on June 16, 1892, to nominate a state ticket, congressmen, presidential electors, and to elect twelve delegates to the People's party convention at Omaha. The Farmers' Alliance convention was set to meet at the same time and place.

The North Dakota Democrats held a convention at Grand Forks on March 24, 1892, to elect delegates to the national convention. The early convention was largely due to the efforts of Grover Cleveland's supporters, who assumed that he was the favored candidate early in 1892, and in North Dakota he was. A resolution asking the delegation to vote for Cleveland was

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52 North Dakota Independent, Mar. 10, Apr. 7, 1892; Grand Forks Daily Plaindealer, Mar. 8, 1892.
53 Jamestown Alert, May 11, 1892.
54 George Harmon Knobs, The Presidential Campaign and Election of 1892 (Stanford University, 1942), 25.
carried unanimously. Besides reaffirming the national Democratic platform, the convention favored a reduced tariff, a limitation of capitalistic practices, and an amendment which would provide for popular election of senators, president, and vice-president. The Independents could readily support these resolutions.

It was rumored that the Democrats and Farmers' Alliance planned a fusion of their forces in the six northwestern states which were expected to go Republican. But the North Dakota Democrats did not openly discuss such a plan, at least not at the convention. According to the alleged plan, the Democrats would get the electoral vote and congressmen, or most of them, and the Populists would get the state and legislative offices.

The North Dakota Republicans met at Grand Forks on May 3 to elect delegates to the national convention and to organize for the coming election. They endorsed President Harrison and declared in favor of sound money. E. F. Spaulding, chairman of the Republican state central committee, had taken a poll of the state previous to the convention, and the results must have frightened the Republicans for they began making vigorous plans for the coming campaign. The National Republican party sent

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55 Grand Forks Daily Plaindealer, Mar. 24, 31, 1892.
56 Ibid., Jan. 22, 1892.
57 Ibid., May 5, 1892.
large sums into North Dakota to keep it in the Republican column. Campaign literature was distributed showing the "danger and foolishness" of some Alliance demands such as the sub-treasury and government ownership of railroads.

The Independents were not inactive. Though they had little money, they carried on a vigorous campaign which they called "a contest between money power and the people." The Independents charged that the "old, worn out, dead issues" of the old parties provided no relief for the people who wanted "something new and vital that proposes an alteration of present hard conditions." The indictment of the Populists against the existing order was that the government was maintained for and by the corporations, the press was operated in the interests of the wealthy, the party ruled and not the people, combines robbed labor of its reward, Congress gave away public domain to private corporations, national banks managed the people's money to their own advantage, silver was demonetized to increase the purchasing power of gold, poverty was blamed on the producers' incapacity, lies were spread, sixty-five per cent of all farms were mortgaged, legislators were bribed, and the elevator

58 Knoles, 211.
59 North Dakota Independent, Mar. 17, 1892.
60 Ibid., Apr. 7, 1892.
61 Ibid., Mar. 10, 1892.
site bill was vetoed. Such were the charges that filled the Populists' newspapers. The campaign of 1892 was going well by spring even before any nominations were made.

Meanwhile, a commission which had been appointed by Governor Burke to compile the laws of the state on April 23, 1892, discovered that there was no law providing for the election of presidential electors or for the canvassing of the electoral votes. When these facts were reported, people throughout the state demanded an immediate special session to correct this oversight so that the people of North Dakota would be able to vote for a president in the first election of its kind in North Dakota. Governor Burke was hesitant to call a special session. Since the legislative session could not be limited as to its length and its enactments, he feared that he would be blamed if a prolonged session resulted and also for any legislation that was passed, and that this might cost him the governorship in the coming election.

Governor Burke, in response to the demands of the people, called a special meeting of the state legislature to convene on

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62 Ibid., Mar. 24, 1892.

63 Grand Forks Daily Plaindealer, Apr. 1892; Clement A. Lounsberry, Early History of North Dakota (Washington, 1919), 425.

64 Grand Forks Daily Plaindealer, May 12, 1892.
June 1, 1892. The special legislative session did not fulfill the governor's fears but quickly accomplished its purpose in three days. This session gave the Republicans a chance to appease the Populists by meeting their demands for an enforceable platform law. The Republicans hoped to quell the growing sentiment towards the Populist movement, but the farmers were not satisfied with the rectification of a single law. A half-way measure only served to accentuate the many grievances of the farmers and to whet their appetite for more concessions.

The North Dakota Farmers' Alliance met at Valley City on June 16, 1892. A short business meeting was held and officers were elected. H. D. Williams was elected president of the Alliance replacing Shortridge. The Farmers' Alliance and Independent party were now almost synonymous with Williams heading both. The convention voted again to follow independent action and then adjourned.

The Independent party convention convened immediately after the Alliance adjourned. The Democratic state executive committee attended the convention to urge fusion with their party, but the Independents were hostile to the idea. The convention

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65 Laws Enacted by the Legislative Assembly, Special Session 1892 (Bismarck, 1892), 14.

66 North Dakota Capital, June 24, 1892.

67 LaMoure County Chronicle, undated, quoted in Grand Forks Daily Herald, June 30, 1892.
adopted the St. Louis platform with a prohibition plank added. The resolutions were again passed that were aimed at providing the farmers with a free and open market. They included the same things that the farmers had been demanding for eight years, namely, equal railroad facilities for the farmers in the way of cars, track privileges, and warehouse sites. A resolution calling for the construction of track scales at every regular station was added to the previous demands. Other resolutions were passed by the convention asking for state fire and life insurance, equal suffrage, uniform free textbooks, and a reduction of tariffs. A full state ticket was nominated. Shortridge was named for governor, Willaim H. Standish for attorney general, Elmer D. Wallace for lieutenant governor, and M. O. Teigen for congressman. Three presidential electors were nominated, M.D. Williams, A. P. Rondesvedt, and W. J. Barrett. Walter Muir was nominated as a presidential elector; he declined but he and his wife were elected as two of the twelve delegates to the Omaha convention.

The Omaha convention of July 4, 1892, officially launched the People's party as a full fledged national party. The platform drawn up was practically the same as the one in St. Louis.

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68 Jamestown Alert, June 17, 18, 1892.
69 Ibid.
and included resolutions asking for the Australian ballot, restriction of immigration, abolition of the Pinkerton detective agency, shorter hours for labor, the initiative and referendum, popular election of senators, and the cessation of government subsidies to private corporations. James B. Weaver, an ex-Union general from Iowa, was nominated for president and James G. Field, an ex-Confederate general from Virginia, for vice-president. Meanwhile, the Republicans and Democrats had nominated Benjamin Harrison and Grover Cleveland as their candidates.

The North Dakota Republicans held their state convention at Fargo on August 2, 1892. The Farmers' Alliance element which remained with the Republican party wanted a candidate for governor who would more faithfully represent the agricultural interests, and they supported Roger Allin for nomination. Allin, a farmer from Walsh County, had been supported by the Independents in the election of 1890, when he ran for lieutenant governor on the Republican ticket. The North Dakota Independent considered that Allin was "one of the good men" among the Republican leaders. Allin's nomination obviously would have

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70 Hicks, 438 - 44.
71 Ibid., 231 - 37.
73 March 17, 1892.
weakened the Independents, but the Republicans took no official notice of recent developments and renominated Andrew Burke for governor, thereby enabling the Independents to make a campaign issue out of Burke's veto of the elevator site bill. M. N. Johnson was nominated for congressman and F. B. Fancher, president of the Alliance Hall Association, was nominated for commissioner of insurance.

The North Dakota Democrats held their state nominating convention at Fargo on September 7. J. F. O'Brien was nominated for congressman and John D. Benton and William Roach for presidential electors. Rondestvedt, who had been nominated by the Independents as a People's party elector, was endorsed by the Democratic convention, as were the rest of the Independent nominees, most of whom had been Democrats. Fusion between the Democrats and Independents did not extend to the legislative or local candidates, however.

The Democrats practically threw themselves on the Independents, who were not especially eager for fusion. The Democrats knew that their own party would not poll more than five thousand votes in a three party state election; therefore, by combining with the Independents they would have an opportunity.

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74 Grand Forks Daily Plaindealer, Aug. 4, 1892.

75 Jamestown Alert, Sept. 7, 1892; Grand Forks Daily Plaindealer, Sept. 8, 1892.
to defeat the Republicans. Shortridge had been a long time Democrat and was active in the party before becoming an Independent. He was not considered a radical, and the Democrats were not opposed to giving him their support. Fusion between the Democrats and Independents was made almost complete when Benton and Roach, the two Democratic electors, resigned. It was understood that no names would be substituted in their place. The Democratic plan was to throw the votes of the party to the Independent electors who would, if elected, cast their votes for Weaver and Field, and thereby keep the three votes of the state out of the Republican column.

Evidence of the Independent coolness to the Democrats was their action when M. O. Teigen, Independent candidate for congressman, withdrew from the campaign. H. A. Foss, editor of the Normanden, was nominated in his place. This disappointed the Democrats who hoped the Independents would endorse their candidate, O'Brien, after Teigen's withdrawal.

76 Ibid.
77 Jamestown Alert, Oct. 6, 1892.
78 Fargo Argus, undated quoted in the Grand Forks, Weekly Plaindealer, Oct. 13, 1892; Hillsboro Banner, undated, quoted Oct. 6, 1892.
The Prohibitionists, who had previously nominated presidential electors, supported the Independent nominees except for congressmen and secretary of state. For these two positions they supported the Republican candidates, M. N. Johnson for congressman and C. M. Dahl for secretary of state.

The election of 1892 was one of the hottest North Dakota had yet seen. The Independents, campaigning on the platform of the Farmers' Alliance, promised the farmers a state-owned terminal elevator at the head of the Great Lakes. The idea of a state-owned elevator had been considered at various times in the past but was not seriously considered until the Farmers' Alliance Elevator Company failed. The Independents took hold of the idea and made it a campaign issue; the Republicans dared not come out against it.

During the campaign, Shortridge was charged with being a southern sympathizer and a guerilla in Missouri during the Civil War. Burke, on the other hand, was built up as a loyal Union veteran. But this was North Dakota, not some eastern state, and such campaign tactics were of little avail. Shortridge was well known in North Dakota farm circles. In the

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79 Grand Forks Weekly Plaindealer, Oct. 20, 1892.

80 Grand Forks Herald, Nov. 4, 1892.
spring of 1892, he and Ira Lampman, state Alliance lecturer, had visited almost every Alliance in the state. These Alliance meetings, usually open to the public, were more like political rallies than anything else.

William Standish was one of the strongest campaigners the Independents had. He had long been associated with the reform principles of the Farmers' Alliance and, although he was not eligible for membership, he was considered the legal head of the Farmers' Alliance in North Dakota. Standish was born in New York in 1843 and was a direct descendant of Miles Standish. He attended college in New York, studied law, served in the Civil War, and after his discharge he was admitted to the bar in Ohio. He practiced law at Cincinnati until 1874. He then moved to Chicago, from there to Polk County, Minnesota, in 1879, and in 1883 he moved to Bartlett in Ramsey County, North Dakota. It was at Bartlett where he first gained a reputation as an anti-corporation attorney. James J. Hill, president of the Great Northern Railroad Company, had ordered the Bartlett depot closed. Before this was accomplished Standish had obtained a court order against the railroad company preventing the closure of the station and saved his town. In 1888 Standish moved to Dakota in Nelson County. He was elected state's attorney in

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North Dakota Independent, Mar. 3, 17, 24, 1892.
1890, succeeding M. N. Johnson in the position.

Standish was well known throughout the state of North Dakota as a strong advocate of free and unlimited coinage of silver, national conservation of forests, streams, minerals, coal, and public lands; and control of the railroads and elevator companies by the state and national governments. Few people in North Dakota cared to debate with Standish on the subject of free and unlimited coinage of silver. He even prepared a bill for making gold contracts payable in gold, silver, or greenbacks which was introduced in Congress by Henry C. Hansborough. While still living at Bartlett, he had prepared and had introduced in Congress, bills for the conservation of the virgin forest in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan; for government operated sawmills to provide cheap lumber for the early settlers; and for the prevention of lumber corporations from exploiting timber on public lands. When Standish requested a railroad pass to go to Bismarck to explain his pines land bill to the state legislature, George Winship, a close associate of his, reported in the Grand Forks Herald that it was probable that "if the legislature gets word that he is

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82 Compendium of History and Biogrophy of North Dakota, 753; 

83 Wene, 3.

84 North Dakota Independent, Apr. 12, 1892.

85 Wene, 2.
coming ... it will adjourn till he is chloroformed. Although Standish was considered an erratic individual by many in North Dakota, his principles of reform endeared him to the Populists.

Shortridge, Standish, and other leaders carried the campaign across the state from schoolhouse to schoolhouse. The Populists may not have been good leaders, as their critics charged, but they had a lot of common sense, and they were honest and sincere in their beliefs. The Populists, Democrats, and dissatisfied Republicans referred to themselves as the opposition. They campaigned as representing the people who deserved a voice in the government and who were now going to be heard.

November 3, 1892, saw the election of the entire Independent state ticket with the exception of the candidate for secretary of state.

86 Jan. 11, 1887.

87 State Officers Elected for the 1893-94 Term

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Office</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Governor</td>
<td>Eli C. D. Shortridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lieutenant-governor</td>
<td>Elmer D. Wallace</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secretary of State</td>
<td>Christian M. Dahl</td>
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<td>Auditor</td>
<td>A. W. Porter</td>
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<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>Knud J. Komland</td>
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<td>Attorney general</td>
<td>William H. Standish</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supt. of Public Instruction</td>
<td>Laura J. Eisenhuth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commissioner of Agriculture</td>
<td>Nelson Williams</td>
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<tr>
<td>and Labor</td>
<td>James Cudbie</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commissioner of Insurance</td>
<td>Cameron, Stevens, and</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commissioners of Railroads</td>
<td>Rasmussen</td>
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Shortridge received a majority of 1,759 out of 36,000 votes cast. C. M. Dahl, nominated by the Republicans and endorsed by the Prohibitionists, was elected secretary of state. If it had not been for the vote of the Prohibitionists, Dahl most likely would have lost since his majority was but 710 and the lowest Prohibition vote was 855. Dahl was also the only candidate who was of Norwegian birth, and this most likely helped in his election. The Republicans also elected a congressman, M. N. Johnson. His election was largely due to a split in the Independent and Democratic vote and also to the fact that Johnson was of Norwegian descent and a leader of that element in North Dakota. Ironically, Fancher, who was one of North Dakota's leading Alliance men but not a Populist, was defeated for insurance commissioner.

In the popular vote for president, Harrison received 17,519 votes and Weaver received 17,667 votes or a majority; there were no Cleveland electors on the Ballot. The vote for presidential electors was so remarkably close that two People's

88 Lewis W. Crawford, History of North Dakota (Chicago, 1931) 372.
89 Grand Forks Herald, Dec. 18, 1892.
90 Fossom, 165.
party electors, Rondesvedt and Barrett, and Republican Wamberg, were elected. The election of Wamberg and Barrett was contested before a commission, which consisted of the Chief Justice of the North Dakota Supreme Court and two disinterested district court judges with the secretary of state acting as clerk of the court. Wamberg was declared elected on technicality which gave him a plurality of only eight. Wamberg

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91 Votes Cast for Presidential Electors

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<th>Elector</th>
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<tr>
<td>Rondesvedt, People's party</td>
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<tr>
<td>Williams, People's party</td>
<td>17,520</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wamberg, Republican</td>
<td>17,519</td>
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<tr>
<td>Barrett, People's party</td>
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<td>17,506</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yeager, Republican</td>
<td>17,463</td>
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</table>


93 Jamestown Alert, Dec. 20, 1892.
voted for Harrison and Williams for Weaver, but Rondesvedt voted for Cleveland. Rondesvedt, an old line Democrat, had been nominated for presidential elector for the People's party by the Independents in June. But when the Democrats endorsed his nomination in September, Rondesvedt declined the nomination of the Independents. They continued to give him their support, however. He, therefore, was elected as a Populist elector but cast his vote for the Democratic candidate, Cleveland. North Dakota became the only state in the history of the United States that ever split its electoral vote three ways.

Although the Populists won the state offices, the Republicans maintained complete control of both Houses of the legislature. They had a majority of nine over the combined Democrats and Independents in the Senate and a majority of two in the House. The Independents elected four members to the Senate and fourteen to the House.

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94 Ibid., Jan. 12, 1893.
96 Journal of the Senate of the Third Legislative Assembly, 1893 (Bismarck, 1893), I; Journal of the House of the Third Legislative Assembly, 1893 (Bismarck, 1893), I.
The Independent victory made the farmers feel confident that they would at long last be able to achieve the legislation which they desired. However, their high hopes were short-lived for they were to experience many disappointments during the Shortridge administration.
CHAPTER VI

THE SHORTRIDGE ADMINISTRATION AND THE LEGISLATIVE SESSION OF 1893

Eli C. D. Shortridge, profoundly earnest in his desire to bring about needed reforms in government and political affairs, as no single-minded radical advocating revolutionary measures only in the interests of the farmer. His inaugural address was centered around the theme of economy in government and plain, definite, enforceable laws. Shortridge did not make specific reference to the terminal elevator scheme in his address but recommended "... such legislation as will be constitutional and give us a free and open market." Other Populist demands, except the Australian ballot amendment, were left out of his message. Shortridge stated, however, that all trusts and monopolies threatened the best interests of the state and that the legislature should determine how to deal with them.

Press comments on the Governor's address were very favorably. The Bismarck Tribune described it as "... vigorous and timely and evidently coming from a sincere man." The Grand Forks

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1 Governor's message, House Journal, 1893, 32.

2 Jan. 3, 1893.
Herald considered it "... healthful advice to the legislature in the way of economical points ...". The laudatory comments of the Plaindealer described the address as being "... an able "ate paper" which "opened the eyes of the people."

The Populists, young and inexperienced, came in with the intention of showing the people how much a few men could do. They alone could not accomplish their objectives, but with the Democrats and the Republicans who sympathized with their demands they hoped to put through needed reforms. They found the House of Representatives more responsive to their needs than the more conservative Senate. In the House, 74 per cent of the members classified themselves as farmers while in the Senate this percentage was 58. Only 18 per cent of the representatives had any previous experience while 75 per cent of the senators had served in the legislature before. The Populists were the most inexperienced of all; only three of their eighteen members knew their way around on the first day.

The Republican senators showed their contempt for the Populists by going into caucus and not only naming candidates

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3 Jan. 5, 1893.

4 Jan. 5, 1893.

5 House Journal, 1893, I; Senate Journal, 1893, 1.
for every position in the Senate, but also appointing the committees as well. Previously the committees had been appointed by the lieutenant governor who served as president of the Senate. Since this position was now filled by Elmer D. Wallace, a Populist, the Republicans would not allow him to make the appointments. As a result the Republicans controlled all the important committees. Most of the Republican Senate leaders were placed on the appropriations committee. The House Republicans did not have to resort to such methods since they elected their own presiding officer and he in turn appointed the committees.

The election of a United States senator was the first task of the new legislature. Trouble was foreseen long before the first ballot was cast. United States Senator Lyman R. Casey, supported by Alex McKenzie, was the favored Republican candidate. He had been elected previously by a broken caucus, and about fifteen eastern legislators stated that under no circumstances would they support Casey. Actually they would not support any candidate backed by McKenzie. They refused to enter caucus for fear McKenzie would control it and nominate Casey.

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6 Jamestown Alert, Jan. 7, 1893; Grand Forks Herald, Jan. 15, 1893.
7 Senate Journal, 1893, 17.
Balloting for a senator began on January 17; the Republican re split among several candidates while the Democrats united behind William N. Roach and the Independents behind Walter Muir. The election was deadlocked from the very beginning. The anti-McKenzie forces, led by the Cass County delegation, would not support any candidate favored by McKenzie, but McKenzie and his supporters were determined to have a candidate of their choice elected. In later ballots the Democrats and Independents united in supporting one man and then another hoping to win over Republican votes. They would not vote for a Republican fearing that they would be charged with selling out if they did. On January 25, on the twenty-second ballot, Cass County Republicans changed to Colonel John D. Benton, Democrat from Fargo, and came within two votes of electing him.

The senatorial contest pushed legislative business into the background. The determined opposition of the Republican minority to McKenzie's candidate made it evident that either William N. Roach of Larimore or John D. Benton of Fargo, the two leading Democrats of North Dakota, would be elected. Otherwise the governor would have to appoint a senator, which he had

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9 Ibid., 178 - 79.
the right to do if the legislature failed to elect on before March 4. On February 20, the Grand Forks Republicans, fearing Benton's election, switched to Roach; others followed and the election was his after sixty-one ballots had been cast.

The long senatorial contest was viewed with great indignation throughout the state. Forty-eight days of the session had been consumed and only two bills had reached the governor. The most important work was crammed into the twelve remaining days. The long senatorial contest brought discredit on the legislature for which the Populists were blamed, since they controlled the administration. The Republicans, it appears, had not actually planned to hold up and prevent Populist supported legislation by a prolonged senatorial contest, but many welcomed the result and did more to prolong the election than to end it.

10 Ibid., 486 - 90. If the Populists had cooperated with the Republicans in electing a senator, the Populist senators would have held the balance of power in the United States Senate. By helping the Democrats elect Roach, the North Dakota Populists made the Democrats independent of any coalition with the Populists in the United States Senate. Grand Forks Herald, Mar. 10, 1893.

11 Grand Forks Herald, Feb. 9, 1893; Grand Forks Daily Plaindealer, Feb. 8, 1893; Inkster Tribune, Feb. 9, 1893.

12 No evidence was discovered of a plan on the part of the Republicans to purposely hold up the election. Evidence to support the above conclusion is found in the Democratic paper, Grand Forks Daily Plaindealer, Jan. 19, 26, Feb. 11, 13, 23, 24, 1893.
After the senatorial election was out of the way, appropriation bills became the most important legislation considered. Large appropriations were made for all state purposes. Appropriations provided for additional buildings at the Agricultural College, for completion of the Deaf and Dumb School, Mayville Normal School, and the Capitol building, for improvements at the penitentiary, Soldiers Home, and Valley City Normal, and for erection of a reform school and an executive mansion. Other appropriations besides normal running expenses included a large appropriation for the world's fair, a wolf bounty, and a subsidy to encourage potato starch manufacturing. Meanwhile, a $100,000 appropriation for a terminal elevator was being considered.

The state-owned terminal elevator bill was introduced early in the session. Largely the work of Attorney General Standish, it provided for the erection of a state owned elevator at Duluth or Superior which would be maintained for the exclusive use of North Dakota Grain Growers. The elevator was not to be built until the state in which it was to be located ceded to North Dakota entire control over the property on which the elevator was to stand, as a state is required to do for a federal building. This purpose of this provision was to enable the application of North Dakota grading and inspection laws.

12 Laws Passed by the Third Session of the Legislative Assembly, 1892 (Bismarck, 1892), 75 - 92. Hereafter cited as Session Laws, 1892.
and to prevent the elevator from being closed by the Minneapolis elevator combine. A board of grain and warehouse commissioners consisting of the lieutenant governor, chairman of the railroad commissioners, and the commissioner of agriculture and labor was to be created to select and purchase the site, provide for purchase or building of the elevator, and to supervise its operation. The board was also empowered to make arrangements for elevator facilities at Buffalo, New York, or other points and to do anything necessary to enable North Dakota wheat to reach its ultimate destination unmixed. The bill provided for an appropriation of $100,000, but it did not provide the treasury with the necessary funds. The money was to come out of any funds in the state treasury not otherwise appropriated.

The farmer element in the legislature hoped to cut down appropriations for various institutions by about $100,000 and use the fund to build the elevator. The elevator bill, first introduced in the Senate, passed with only four dissenting votes. In the House, it was passed in its original form with seven

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voting against it. The reason this controversial measure passed so readily was that it seemed to be well understood that there was not one dollar available. Appropriations already exceeded anticipated revenues.

Standish took great pains to see that his "pet" bill would not fail. He traveled to St. Paul and Madison to appear before legislative committees in behalf of bills to give North Dakota exclusive control of a site for an elevator. The grain and warehouse committee of the Minnesota legislature agreed to recommend passage of the bill but it went little further than that. The Wisconsin legislature indefinitely postponed a bill granting ten acres of land to North Dakota. Superior was eager to have the elevator; the Superior Telegram wrote that North Dakota could buy all the land it wanted, and the government of Wisconsin would not intervene.

Governor Shortridge hesitated for several days before signing the bill. Standish reaffirmed its constitutionality and Shortridge, not desiring to disappoint his supporters, signed the bill on March 17, although by that time he had come to favor the recently organized Farmers' Elevator Company which planned to build a terminal elevator.

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Grand Forks Herald, Mar. 9, 1893.
The deficit that resulted in the state treasury during the depression that struck in the spring made it impossible to carry out the terminal elevator bill and it became a dead letter. Even if revenues had been sufficient it is doubtful whether the elevator bill could have carried to its successful completion. The bill provided that the state in which the elevator was to be built had to cede the land on which it was built to North Dakota and this was not done. Shortridge, in his biennial message, stated: "The state elevator bill vetoed itself by reason of its unlawful provisions." He did not, however, state what he considered these unlawful provisions to be.

Most of the farmers' legislative demands were crowded into the closing days. Memorials and resolutions to Congress expressing the Populists' demands received the support of stalwarts who saw in them an opportunity to delay legislation still further. They knew that Congress, dominated by Cleveland Democrats, was not to be feared. The resolutions and memorials included requests for a graduated income tax law,

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17 Biennial Message of Governor E. C. D. Shortridge to the Fourth Legislative Assembly, 1894 (Jamestown, 1894), 7.

18 Votes on memorials and resolutions passed by the legislature are not recorded in the journals.
submission of an amendment providing for the election of United States senators by direct vote, removal of the duty on binding twine, passage of a good roads bill, government ownership of telegraph lines, and others. As was expected Congress ignored these requests.

Legislation regulating railroads made up a large part of the farmers' demands. Some of the best measures were effectively blocked in the closing legislative "log jam". Those which were passed and became laws benefitted the farmers little. A bill requiring all railroads to run daily trains on all lines and branches was so amended that it lost its effectiveness. It gave the railroads the right to determine whether they should provide daily service instead of the railroad commissioners and the courts. A law fixing the maximum freight rates on coal mined in the state successfully weathered the legislative storm only to be declared void by the attorney general because it discriminated in favor of a native product. Other railroad

19 Session Laws, 1893, 295.

20 Ibid., 227.

21 Ibid., 226; Letter of William H. Standish, attorney-general, October 29, 1894, to R. N. Stonea, Editor of the Bismarck Tribune, Biennial Report of the Attorney-General to the Governor, 1894, 227.
legislation which was passed consisted: a law requiring one railroad to permit another to cross it and connect with it, 
a law providing for transfer of freight at railroad crossings, 
another making railroads liable for prairie fires, one 
granting railroads a right-of-way through public lands, and 
another preventing railroad tickets from being bought and sold by individuals for profit. The last was strongly supported by the railroad companies. These laws, it can be seen, were not passed solely for the benefit of the farmer.

Enforcement of railroad laws was left up to road supervisors, county commissioners, sheriffs, or state's attorneys rather than the railroad commissioners. In many cases the legislation was never enforced because officials did not want to risk an expensive lawsuit.

Passage of some of the most important railroad legislation was prevented by its being postponed until the closing hours

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22 Session Laws, 1892, 225.
23 Ibid., 228.
24 Ibid., 229.
25 Ibid., 224 - 25.
27 Fifth Annual Report of the Commissioners of Railroads to the Governor, 1894 (Jamestown, 1894), 454.
when it was lost in the final flurry. A bill to provide wider application of the platform act passed both houses but was stolen during the closing hours. Another bill to end railroad discrimination in granting sites for elevators was passed and sent to the governor, but it was discovered after the legislature had adjourned that it lacked the signature of the lieutenant governor. A bill compelling railroads to furnish cars to shippers on demand was passed first by the House and then by the Senate in the late hours. While it was being returned to the Senate in the last few minutes to be signed and enrolled, the Senate adjourned. Other railroad bills on passenger rates, taxation, and station houses were effectively blocked.

Other Farmers' Alliance supported legislation had better success. A public scales law was passed that empowered county commissioners to provide, upon petition, public scales at

28 Senate Journal, 1893, 436 - 37, 541; House Journal, 1893, 730; Grand Forks Herald, Mar. 4, 7, 8, 1893. Stealing of bills had taken place in both previous legislative assemblies.


30 House Journal, 1893, 709 - 10; Senate Journal, 1893, 557; Grand Forks Herald, Mar. 10, 1893; Grand Forks Daily Plaindealer, Mar. 13, 1893.

31 Grand Forks Herald, Mar. 4, 7, 1893; Daily Plaindealer, Mar. 10, 13, 1893.
suitable railroad stations. Usury was defined and legal interest rates were established. Time for payment of taxes in some cases was extended, and the Australian ballot law was amended to make voting easier and simpler.

However, some of the best measures were lost during the closing days and hours. The introduction of a resolution to resubmit the prohibition clause of the constitution to a new vote and the resolution submitting the women's suffrage question to a popular vote resulted in a struggle that prevented much consideration of agrarian legislation. The Populists tried hard to keep the resubmission resolution out of the legislative debates. The resolution was introduced early in the session, came to a vote towards its close, was passed in the House, and defeated in the Senate only to be recalled and reconsidered by the Senate on the last day. Precious time was wasted before it was again narrowly defeated.

Meanwhile, the Populist supported women's suffrage resolution was successfully used by the opposition in the closing hours to block agrarian legislation. It was first introduced

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23 Senate Journal, 1893, 469; House Journal, 1893, 546, 678.
and passed in the Senate as a joke on the House, with the expectation that the representatives would wrestle with it and defeat it. A two hour discussion, loaded with heavy irony, ensued in the House on the last afternoon. Several amendments to the bill were introduced. One was to exempt women from menial duties except building firebreaks, stacking hay, and shoveling snow when the thermometer registered forty below. Another proposed to make women subject to military service, jury duty, and a poll tax. One exempted women from the prohibition law and another was to allow only the women of the state to vote on the measure. The amendments were all voted down, and the measure was sent back to the Senate, although the Speaker of the House had refused to sign it.

During the evening session before the midnight adjournment, a double game of bluff took place between the Senate and the House. The House wanted to recall the suffrage bill to reconsider it; the Senate refused and threatened to force the Speaker of the House to sign the bill. Meanwhile, the bill was supposed to have been sent to the governor. Instead, 

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34 Grand Forks Herald, Mar. 4, 1893. House Journal, 1893, contains no record of the proceedings on the women suffrage bill; the record was expunged.

35 Senate Journal, 1893, 562.
Jasper W. Stevens, Independent and author of the bill, gave it to the postmaster of the Senate who either hid or lost it. Stevens probably did this to prevent the Senate from wasting any more time over it since its defeat was certain anyhow. The Senate had voted to recall it from the governor when the janitor walked in with a bill he had found. By that time midnight had arrived and the Senate adjourned. Before adjournment the House voted to expunge the proceedings recording passage of the women's suffrage resolution.

The inexperience of the farmers had enabled the opponents of reform to lead them into a futile legislative struggle. Some of the bills in which the farming interests were deeply concerned were thereby eliminated. The farmer legislation if successful would have enabled a farmer to weigh, load, and ship his grain directly to a terminal elevator that would accept, grade, and insure him of a fair price. When the smoke of the legislature cleared, the farmer found that he had gained very little. He was still at the mercy of the railroads and elevators. The platform law of 1892 enabled him to ship directly, but the uncertainty of getting freight cars made this a risky business.

Ibid., 354 - 55; Jamestown Almanz, Mar. 7, 1893.

Grand Forks Herald, Mar. 4, 1893.
A total of four hundred and forty-nine bills were introduced in both houses of the legislature. Almost twice as many were introduced in the House as in the Senate. A total of one hundred and fifty-eight reached the governor; one hundred and eleven of these were forwarded on the last day. The sending of most of the legislation to the governor on the last day made it impossible for him to consider them until after adjournment. It left no opportunity for the legislature to take further action if it was desired. The governor was faced with the problem of cutting down excessive appropriations. Actually not knowing the needs of the various state institutions, he cut appropriations very little. Later, during the financial crisis of the depression of 1933, he was blamed for not cutting them further and thereby was held responsible for the deficit that resulted in the state treasury.

The Senate had delayed the confirmation of the appointments made by Governor Shortridge until the last day. The Senate approved all of them except the appointments of trustees of the Agricultural College and the penitentiary. They were not confirmed, it was charged, because of the personal relationship

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38 Biennial Message of Governor Shortridge, 1895, 7.
39 Grand Forks Weekly Plaindealer, May 10, 1894.
of Senators C. B. Little and John E. Haggart, two stalwart Republicans, with the trustees who were to be removed. Shortridge commissioned all his appointees including those whom the Senate refused to confirm, the latter to serve until the next legislative session. The old boards of these institutions refused to recognize the new members. There were enough old members on the boards to make a quorum and they had possession of the records. The old board of the Agricultural College removed all their books and important papers from the college and moved them to a bank vault. The state auditor for a time refused to issue warrants on the audited bills of the old boards. The governor met and acted with the new members, and the question arose as to which was the legal board. The old officers, legal or not, could on application obtain a court order compelling the auditor to issue warrants to meet accruing expenses. In May, the new penitentiary board brought suit against the old one to determine which was the legal board. The district court in which it was filed declared in favor of the old board. The state Supreme Court, on appeal, reaffirmed the lower court's decision.

40 Letter of W. E. Stockridge, President of the North Dakota Agricultural College, Mar. 7, 1893, to Governor Eli C. D. Shortridge, Shortridge Letters.

41 Grand Forks Herald, Mar. 7, 1893.

42 Ibid., May 13, 1893.

43 Reports of Cases Decided in the Supreme Court of North Da-
The governor removed all the trustees of the Agricultural College on September 7, 1893, for cause and appointed new ones. The old board obtained injunctions against the new appointees preventing them from interfering with the college. The college and the penitentiary were investigated by the state examiner and negligence, incompetence, and misconduct on the part of the trustees were revealed. H. E. Stockbridge, President of the Agricultural College, had previously reported "continual crookedness in expenditures under the present management."

In September, suit was filed against the old Agricultural College trustees attempting to remove them for cause by court order. The court again decided in favor of the old board and on appeal the supreme court again reaffirmed the lower court's decision. The court decisions, in effect, made the adminis-

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44 Hennessy, 214; Bismarck Tribune, Nov. 21, 1893.

45 Fifth Annual Report of the State Examiner to the Governor, 1894 (Grand Forks, 1894), 19 - 21, 14 - 15.

46 Letter to Governor Eli C. D. Shortridge, Mar. 8, 1893, Shortridge letters. Stockbridge, who had defended Governor Shortridge, was dismissed later in the year when the old Board of Trustees won in its fight against the governor.

47 Reports of Cases Decided in the Supreme Court of North Dakota, 1894, III, 433 - 46.
istration powerless to control state institutions. The North Dakota Independent reported: "It means that the board is greater than the governor -- they can hold office forever."

Meanwhile, the depression of 1893 had struck and farm prices tumbled to their lowest point in history. A pioneer farmer told of hauling two loads of barley to Northwood that all. At 13¢ a bushel he received a total of $26 and this as considered a good price; most were getting only 9¢ a bushel. Wheat sold for 27¢ to 33¢ a bushel and oats brought 4¢. Crops throughout North Dakota were short. Severe drought hit many localities and wheat smut reached almost every county in the state. Many people were unable to pay their taxes and a heavy indebtedness existed.

A deficiency in the state treasury was threatened towards the end of 1893. Early in the following year it became evident that something had to be done to meet existing obligations. Borrowing was no solution, since the debt limit set by the state constitution had already been reached. Attorney General Mandish declared that since appropriations exceeded what could

48 Editorial, Nov. 23, 1893.

49 Interview with Dr. Martin Lee, Jan. 1, 1956.

50 Annual Report of the Commissioners of Railroads, 1894, 348.

51 Fourth Annual Report of the State Examiner to the Governor, 1892 (Grand Forks, 1894), 7.
be raised, they were in part void. State institutions were warned by the attorney general that, even though they kept within their appropriations, part of it was void. The administration, powerless by supreme court decision to control the state institutions, was unable to prevent the state boards from expending their appropriations. The boards expected to secure warrants from the state auditor on their bills, but the auditor was advised against issuing warrants to anyone unless there was money in the treasury to meet the warrants when they were issued. Unpaid claims accumulated on the auditor's desk.

By January 1, 1895, claims amounting to $127,800 against the state were not paid for want of funds. The in-coming administration inherited this financial problem. But by August, the claims were paid, but Governor Roger Allin was forced to make enormous cuts in all appropriations made that year, except those fixed by the constitution. The state institutions, especially the schools and colleges, received the brunt of these cuts.

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53 Sixth Annual Report of the State Examiners to the Governor, 1895 (Jamestown, 1895), 5.

54 Ibid., 5.
The Shortridge Administration came under severe attack by the press throughout the state. Even the North Dakota Independent turned against the governor. About the only newspaper that gave Governor Shortridge full support on all that he did was the Bismarck Commonwealth, a small Populist newspaper. Shortridge, honest, sincere, and hard-working, was not a radical. He was too conservative for most Populists; yet, because he himself was a Populist, he could not get the full support of those with similar views who were outside his party. Shortridge was not a politician, as he himself admitted, and a politician was needed to carry through some of the Populist measures. Standish took over much of the political leadership of the administration and his political views were quite different from those of Shortridge. Shortridge was unable to unite the Populist party under his leadership, and it was doubtful if any other Populist leader could. The schism that developed within the Populist party seriously handicapped its effectiveness in North Dakota politics.

55 North Dakota Independent, May 25, 1893.

56 A. M. No. C. Beedle, "Do You Want a Repetition of the Shortridge Administration?", Public Opinion (Bismarck), May 19, 1916.
CHAPTER VII

DECLINE AND SIGNIFICANCE

The election of 1894, coming in the wake of a severe financial crisis and during a depression, swept the Populists out of office. The depressed economic condition put the administration, both state and national, in an indefensible position. The national government, controlled by the Democrats, was held responsible for the depression by many people. The Populist administration of the state government also came into disfavor with the electorate, largely because of the economic conditions. There were other factors, however, that led to the defeat of the Populists.

The Legislative Assembly of 1893 was severely criticized not only for what they did but also for what they failed to do. Appropriations were in excess of expected revenues, the terminal elevator failed to materialize, the elevator site bill was not passed nor was the one to provide wider application of the platform act, and the law to compel railroad companies to run daily trains failed to accomplish its objective.¹ The legislative

¹Shortridge contemplated an extra session to reduce appropriations, and the farmers demanded a session to pass an
session wasted so much time in electing a senator and in a futile struggle over women's suffrage and resubmission that little consideration could be given to reform measures. The farmers expected this legislature to do those things which other sessions had failed to do but were disappointed when its accomplishments differed little from previous ones. Even though the Republicans actually had a wavering majority in the legislature, it was assumed that the Populists and Democrats had control since they controlled the administration; therefore, it was generally believed that the Populists and Democrats were to blame for this failure on the part of the legislature, and this idea was fostered by the Republicans.

The Republican press gave the administration bad publicity at every opportunity; this may have been a factor in bringing about the defeat of the Populists in 1894. The disputes between Shortridge and the state boards made him appear weak in the eyes of many. The deficit in the state treasury that resulted during 1894 was blamed on the administration. It was charged that the elevator site and platform law. Standish even started a petition asking the governor to reconvene the legislature. Letter of John Burke to Governor Shortridge, April 25, 1893, Shortridge letters; Letter of William H. Standish, attorney general, to William E. Dodge, attorney for Great Northern Railroad Company, April 27, 1893, quoted in Biennial Report of the Attorney General to the Governor of North Dakota, 1894 (Jamestown, 1894), 25-26.
governor should have reduced the excess appropriations which were made by the legislature.\(^2\)

The tactics of the political parties during the campaign of 1894 also had a part in determining the election results. The Republicans undoubtedly were able to increase their majorities by a wise selection of candidates for governor and congressman. The Democrats and Independents, on the other hand, divided their political forces in nominating a governor, although they did support the same candidate for congressman.

Late in 1893 the Republicans were reported to be planning the unification of the party by bringing in the reform element. This tactic was expected to break up the Independent party.\(^3\) Before the Republicans held their nominating convention, sentiment among the party members favored the choice of Roger Allin for governor and M. N. Johnson for congressman. These two men had wide support among the farmers. Allin, who had been the choice of the Farmers' Alliance element in the Republican party during the election of 1892, was expected to draw considerable support from the Alliance; Johnson was expected to do likewise.

\(^2\)The expression of public opinion in favor of the governor's vetoing excess appropriations of the legislature may have been a factor which influenced Governor Allin's action in cutting appropriations made by the legislature of 1895. The severe cuts made in the appropriations for state institutions forced some schools, especially the University, to resort to an appeal to the public for funds to continue operation.

\(^3\)Editorial, North Dakota Independent, November 23, 1893.
During the Republican nominating convention held at Grand Forks on July 18, 1894, Allin and Johnson received uncontested nominations for governor and congressman. F. B. Fancher, who was defeated for insurance commissioner during the election of 1892, was renominated to this office. He had been president of the Alliance Hail Association since 1889, a position which he held until he took office in January, 1895.

The Independent party, meanwhile, had held their nominating convention at Jamestown on June 15, 1894. As on previous conventions of the Independent party, the Farmers' Alliance held its convention first. The Alliance at this time declared that the North Dakota Independent and the Normanden were no longer the official Alliance organs, an empty gesture since these papers had already ceased to call themselves such. The Normanden had been taken over by Republican interests, and the Alliance had lost its control over the Independent. A platform was adopted which contained no new planks but stressed a reduction of the tariff and an income tax. Officers who were elected did not include those earlier leaders who had done so much to organize the Farmers' Alliance in North Dakota and make it a powerful political factor. The Farmers' Alliance, after a short session, adjourned for the main event to take place, the nomination of a full state ticket by the Independent party.

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4 Grand Forks Herald, July 13, 1894.
5 Ibid., June 16, 1894.
The Independent convention, containing 250 delegates, was divided as to who should head the party in the coming election. Standish, Muir, and other more radical members were "bitterly opposed" to the renomination of Shortridge. This group was also opposed to fusion; the Shortridge faction favored it, but they were in a minority. Shortridge had declared previous to the convention that he was not a candidate for re-election. In an honest and sincere speech given at the opening of the convention, he formally withdrew as a candidate. A resolution to endorse the governor's action was passed. An entire state ticket and a congressman were nominated without regard to the overtures of the Democrats to agree on a plan for division of the nominees between the two parties. Elmer D. Wallace, lieutenant governor during the Shortridge administration was nominated for governor and Walter Muir for congressman. Standish was renominated for attorney general; most of the other incumbents were also renominated. The platform that was adopted added planks calling for retrenchment in state expenses and the referendum. William Roach and Henry Hansbrough were endorsed for their stand for silver in Congress.

In the November election all Republican candidates were elected; however, the Independents still kept thirteen members in

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6Ibid., June 14, 1894.
7Ibid., June 14, 16, 17, 1894.
the legislature, some of which were holdover senators who had been elected in 1892.\(^8\) With the reform movement beaten, the 1895 legislative session considered little agrarian legislation and was the quietest session since the Farmers' Alliance began its political activities.

In the election of 1896, fusion between the Democrats and Populists, which had become common on the state level, extended to the national level. The issue which united the two parties on a common candidate was that of free silver — unrestricted coinage of silver and gold at the ratio of 16 to 1. Free silver formed a common plank for the North Dakota Democrats and Populists in the election of 1894. By 1896 it had become a national issue. The Democratic party at its national nominating convention at Chicago was taken over by the advocates of free silver who nominated William Jennings Bryan of Nebraska. The People's party met at St. Louis on July 22 and endorsed Bryan as their presidential candidate.\(^9\) The Democrats by taking over part of the Populists' platform succeeded in taking over part of that party. The part that remained, the "middle-of-the-roaders", were never able to regain the strength they had lost and were eventually absorbed by the Democratic party.

Meanwhile, in North Dakota, the Democrat and Independent leaders agreed on fusion before convention time. The

\(^8\) Legislative Manual, 1911 (Bismarck, 1912), 169.

\(^9\) Hicks, 366.
Independents met first on August 7 at Fargo and nominated a partial ticket leaving the rest for the Democrats. R. B. Richardson, a leading Alliance man and farmer politician from Drayton, Pembina County, was nominated for governor. The Independents were unanimous in their support of Bryan for president. The Democrats met shortly after the Independents, on August 12, and nominated what was left of the ticket. This included a congressman for which office John Burke was nominated.\(^\text{10}\)

The Republicans, meanwhile, had met at Grand Forks on July 22 and nominated Frank A. Briggs for governor. M. N. Johnson and F. B. Fancher were renominated for congressman and insurance commissioner respectively. The Republican convention voted 18 for and 164 against free coinage of silver.\(^\text{11}\)

The sides on the silver issue were thereby clearly drawn in North Dakota. The Independents and Democrats made it their main campaign slogan. W. H. Harvey's book, *Coin's Financial School*, which had done so much to popularize the idea, was used as campaign literature in North Dakota. This book, clearly written and widely read, won many converts for free coinage of silver. It was the "best school book we ever got" was the description given by a North Dakota farmer who read it as a young

\(^{10}\) Darrel DeLong, "The Election of 1896 in North Dakota" (Seminar paper, University of North Dakota, 1956), 30.

\(^{11}\) Ibid., 26.
But free silver coinage was not able to bring a victory for the Democrats and Populists. Bryan was defeated by the Republican candidate, William McKinley. Except in the northern tier of counties, North Dakota voters gave McKinley their overwhelming support (Note the map on the following page). All Republican candidates were elected in North Dakota but not with as large a majority as in 1894.

The Populists and Democrats continued to lose strength in the following elections. In 1898 the Republicans nominated F. B. Fancher for governor who was able to defeat the united Independent Democrat party with the largest majority any Republican governor had received since 1889. In the election of 1900, the Populists lost their identity by a permanent fusion with the

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12 Interview with Mr. Martin Lee, June 18, 1956.
13 Legislative Manual, 1911, 211.
14 Percentages of Vote for Governor, 1889-1900

<table>
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<th>Year</th>
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<td>U. A. Wipperman, Fusion</td>
<td>39.5 60.5 Frank White</td>
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Democratic party. The coalition of Democrats and Independents was complete both for state offices and legislative parties during the elections of 1898 and 1900. By the election of 1902, the Independents had completely disappeared from the political scene; however, there were three holdover fusion senators present at the legislative session of 1903.

In a period of less than twenty years the Farmers' Alliance and Populist party rose and disappeared again in North Dakota. Beginning in 1884, the Farmers' Alliance grew as wheat prices declined and crop failures became more frequent. The farmers were unable to pay their debts and make a decent living. They had a right to expect a fair degree of prosperity but it was denied to them. They came to believe that something was wrong somewhere. It was only natural for the farmers to blame the railroad and elevator companies, manufacturers, money lenders, and all those who were prospering by their toil while they themselves were suffering. They were helpless to alleviate their

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Legislative Manual, 1901 (Bismarck, 1902), ix.

Legislative Manual, 1911, 266-74.
hard-pressed conditions as individuals, but by organizing they could get results. The Farmers' Alliance provided the means whereby they could obtain direct relief by co-operative purchasing and selling and indirect relief through the government.

In order to correct the abuses from which they suffered, the farmers had, first, to gain control of the government which was in the hands of the monied interests. The Alliance entered politics by working within the old parties. The farmers had some success in obtaining the legislation which they wanted, but it was a slow process in which they encountered many obstacles. The effectiveness of the old party machines, the hostility of those they were attempting to regulate, and the inexperience of the farmers prevented immediate legislation that would remedy the abuses from which they suffered. The farmers looked to third party action hoping to obtain quick results thereby.

When the Farmers' Alliance formed the Populist party, or the Independent party as it was called in North Dakota, it lost the support of those middle class people and townspeople, including the press, who had given it such strong support previously. When the Alliance organized the Independent party, one could no longer be a good Alliance member without being a Populist. The result, therefore, was that some of its most influential members and some of its leaders left the Alliance to maintain good standing in the Republican party. Probably the best
example of an Alliance leader who did not back third party action was Fancher. Although he remained in the Alliance after it formed the Independent party, he no longer had as great an influence in it. M. N. Johnson and Roger Allin are two others who had great influence among the farmers but whose support was lost by third party action. The Populists had always professed to put principle before party, and when the other parties took over part of their program, many returned to the old parties. Many voters went over to the Democrats via the Populist route, but in North Dakota most returned to the Republican party.

The decline of the Farmers' Alliance and the Populist party was undoubtedly hastened by the depression of 1893. Most Farmers' Alliance business enterprises failed. These failures seriously demoralized the movement. The Alliance leaders who were involved in these failures lost the confidence of those members whom they were serving. During the depression, the farmers could no longer point to their own hard times and compare them with the prosperity of the rest of the economy; everyone was hard pressed. Even the railroad companies failed (the Northern Pacific in North Dakota) as did numerous other businesses. The Alliance managed to hold together through the depression, at least in name, but it did not revive with the return of good times. With better prospects for the future rather than only bad ones as in the 'eighties, the farmers were less apt to organize, and the Alliance disappeared.
When the Farmers' Alliance and Populist party were powerful organizations in North Dakota, two general goals were desired—one, reform of the government to give the people a greater voice in the government, and two, legislation that would work to the economic advantage of the farmer. The first goal was partially realized when the Australian ballot was enacted and the use of proxies at nominating conventions regulated. Things that were not accomplished but which were later to be obtained included women's suffrage, popular election of senators, initiative, referendum, and primary elections. Legislation demanded by the farmers that would be beneficial, directly or indirectly, included a wide range of measures. Those which were accomplished included the regulation of interest rates, partial regulation of railroad and elevator companies, and others such as revision of mortgage and tax laws that were intended to benefit the farmer. The farmers obtained the right to direct shipping by legislation. The elevator men, faced with the danger of competition, were thereby forced to stop many of their former unfair practices.

The Populist party introduced greater independence in voting. No longer were the people so apt to vote blindly on a straight ticket. In North Dakota the Scandinavian element had been strong Republican voters, but the Farmers' Alliance and Populist party caused considerable deflection. The support which the Scandinavians gave to the Alliance was evidence of greater political recognition, which is noted in the very nature of
Although most Scandinavians returned to the Republican party after the decline of the Populists, once political ties were broken it was much easier to break them again later. Perhaps this foreshadowed the support which many Scandinavians in North Dakota gave to the Non-Partisan League. Althouth the Farmers' Alliance and Populist party declined and disappeared, the principles for which they strove did not. The Populist way of thinking continued in North Dakota. It received a temporary set back upon the defeat of the Populists in 1894 but revived again in the progressive movement and especially in the Non-Partisan League. The League learned a lesson from the Alliance -- namely, not to form a third party but to work within the main one, the Republican party. By so doing the League did not lose the support of the press or influential people and was able to accomplish those things which the Populists failed to do. The terminal elevator is the best example of a Populist objective which the League accomplished. The state fire and hail insurance, state bank, and other League programs

17 The Scandinavian Union which was formed in 1889 strongly supported the Farmers' Alliance. This organization, purely political in nature, was aimed at securing greater representation in the state government. M. N. Johnson was its principal organizer and leader.

are further evidence of the similarity between the League and
the Populist party in North Dakota.

The Alliance and Populist movements did not accomplish all
of their objectives; yet, their efforts were not in vain for the
ideas which they planted were later to materialize and bear
fruit. They laid the foundation for the Progressive movement
which followed and finally the Non-Partisan League. Thus, the
Populist party, whose platform was at first considered so radical,
actually proved a vital stepping stone in the formation of
later political ideology in North Dakota.
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The principle research materials used in this study were the newspapers and documents of the Territory of Dakota and State of North Dakota. During the first four or five years of the Alliance movement, most newspapers gave favorable coverage of Alliance activities. From 1888 to 1890 the official Farmers' Alliance papers, the Dakota Ruralist, Jamestown Capital, and National Economist, were available and provided excellent information on the Farmers' Alliance. After 1890 information on Alliance activities in North Dakota is fragmentary. The North Dakota Alliance had adopted secrecy in its business meetings and released for publicity only those things it desired. Most newspapers beginning in 1890 became hostile to the Farmers' Alliance because of its political activities and refused to publish information that would benefit the organization. The official newspaper of the North Dakota Farmers' Alliance, the North Dakota Independent, began publication in February 1891, and is the only source that gives a complete coverage of Alliance activities at that time; unfortunately, only fifteen scattered copies of this paper are known to exist. The Independent was the most ardent pro-Populist paper in the state. All of the leading papers of North Dakota were hostile or indifferent to the Populist party except the Jamestown Alert which, although it was not considered a Populist paper, gave favorable coverage of Populist activities. The Bismarck Commonwealth, Normanden until 1893, and a few other small papers were pro-Populist but could not be located. After this study was completed, a collection of manuscripts of Eli. C. D. Shortridge, previously unknown to exist, were located at the State Historical Society Library at Bismarck.

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ARTICLES


BOOKS


UNPUBLISHED MONOGRAPHS


VITA

Glenn Lowell Brudvig was born October 24, 1931, in Kenosha, Wisconsin. His parents moved to North Dakota in 1937. He attended schools in McVille and Aneta and was graduated from Aneta High School in 1948. He attended the University of North Dakota from 1948 to 1950. His studies were interrupted for two years by service in the United States Army, during which time he served in the Korean War. He re-entered the University of North Dakota in September, 1952, from which institution he received a Bachelor of Science degree in Education in June, 1954. He then taught school at Mahnomen, Minnesota, and returned to the University of North Dakota to enter graduate school in September, 1955. He is a member of Theta Chi and Phi Alpha Theta, honorary history society. He is married and has two children.
### APPENDIX A

**WHEAT PRICES, 1884 - 1891**

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<td>10.8</td>
<td>.973</td>
<td>.125</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 2</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>.245</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.195</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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1. Second Annual Report of the Commissioners of Railroads to the Governor of North Dakota, 1891 (Bismarck, 1892), 458 - 459.
APPENDIX B

DAKOTA FARMERS' ALLIANCE PLATFORM, JULY 1886

Whereas, It is a matter of prime importance that the next legislature of the Territory should be controlled by men who are thoroughly in sympathy with the Alliance movement, its aims and purposes, and

Whereas, In the past the farmers have left the management of political affairs almost entirely in the hands of professional politicians, and

Whereas, They have generally ignored the wishes and interests of the agricultural classes, legislating in their own interests, until the burdens upon the agricultural interests have become too grievous to be borne, and the profits of labor are absorbed by the manipulations of monopolies already gorged to plethora, from the unjust extortions wrung from honest toil through the machinery of such legislation, and

Whereas, Our only hope of relief from these evils is by securing members of the next legislature who by ties of personal interest are in full sympathy with our movements; therefore be it

Resolved, As the sense of this convention, that every member of the Alliance and all practical, operative farmers, mechanics and laboring men should consider it their duty to

1From the Grand Forks Daily Herald, July 21, 1886.
attend the primaries in their districts and use all their influence to put in nomination men who represent our views, and also to pledge every nominee upon the following points:

1st. To favor a railroad commission elected by the people.

2nd. To favor giving to the railroad commissioners full power to fix maximum rates of fare and freights, provided that such rates be not reduced below a point to yield reasonable dividend on actual investment in such roads when rates are equitably divided over the full length of said road.

3rd. To favor taxing all corporate property in this territory at the rates that farm property is taxed.

4th. To favor taxing all mortgages recorded in this territory, and exempting so much of the mortgaged property from taxation as shall equal in value the mortgage.

5th. To favor revising the insurance laws so that our citizens may be fully protected from the practices of dishonest insurance agents.

6th. To favor prohibiting the collection of attorney's fees upon any notes or mortgages.

7th. To favor fixing the maximum rate of interest at 10 per cent., and no agent to be allowed more than two per cent. for negotiating, and to make it a misdemeanor punishable by fine and imprisonment to violate these provisions, and proof of usury to be a bar to the collection of any part of the debt or interest.
Resolved, That any person nominated for a legislative office who shall refuse to subscribe to these pledges is unworthy of the suffrage of any member of this order or the laboring or producing classes of this territory.

Resolved, That we will not consent to any motion looking toward the repeal or lowering of our present exemption laws.

Resolved, That we are in favor of such legislation as will secure us a free market for our produce.

Resolved, That we favor the passage of a law prohibiting, under penalty of fine and forfeiture of office, the acceptance by the members of our legislature and state and county officers and of members of the judiciary, of passes over railroads.

Resolved, That we request our delegate to congress to urge the passage of the Standish bill, unanimously recommended by our last legislature, for the protection of our timber and mineral lands.
APPENDIX C

A Farmers' Alliance Poem

The following poem which could be sung to the tune of "John Brown's Body" was first read at a Valley City Farmers' Alliance picnic held at Minnie Lake in Barnes County on July 24, 1889.

FARMERS STAND FIRM
by S. A. Fisher

There is music at the Capitol, there's "music in the air."
We'll have music at election, too -- and music everywhere,
The farmers are triumphant -- let monopolists beware,
Our cause is marching on.

The delegates at Bismarck gave monopolists to know,
That in our constitution -- they would have but little to show --
And they told the railroad lobby that they might have leave to go
For truth is marching on.

The alliance is advancing it has proved a grand success,
Although reviled by usurers and slandered by the press,
These fellows bow and scrape to us -- for office now I guess,
As we go marching on.

1Dakota Ruralist, Aug. 10, 1889.
Let not the farmers flattered be by any such pretense --
Let us keep our eyes wide open and act with common sense --
Let us scan the records closely of the fellows "on the fence,"
As we go marching on.

Let us work and act together with a due respect for laws,
Let us choose our ablest workers to represent our cause.
Let us say to all monopolies "just loosen up your claws,"
For we are marching on.

We have a farmer leader who presides with jealous care,
Whose rulings are conceded to be always just and fair,
Let us have him for our Governor -- the first to fill the chair,
As we go marching on.

Let us study up the outlook and seek for further light.
Let us deal in simple justice and be noble in our might,
Let us realize the principle, that might does not make right
For God is marching on.
1st. We demand the free coinage of gold and of silver, and that the silver dollar, or silver certificate issued by the government upon silver bullion shall be legal tender for the payment of all debts, both public and private, thereby restoring silver to its time-honored place in our monetary system under the constitution.

2. We demand that the government loan money direct to the people upon demand at a low rate of interest and take as security therefor real estate, said amount loaned not to exceed one half of the assessed value of said real estate, when free from all incumbrance. We believe that American lands are the best security for American money.

3. We demand that the government establish sub-treasuries for the use of the agricultural districts for the storage of grain, cotton or tobacco, and loan the owners 80 per cent of the value of all produce that they have in store at 2 per cent per annum under rules and regulations established by the treasurer.

4. We demand the repeal of the war tariff tax, which has been and is a grievous burden upon the producers of the wealth

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1From the Grand Forks Daily Herald, September 26, 1890.
of the nation, and that we favor a tariff upon all articles of luxury only be imposed, to pay the current expenses of the government honestly administered and that a graduated tax be levied upon all incomes in excess of $2000 per annum.

5. We demand the continuance of prohibition in the state, and favor national abolition of the liquor traffic.

6. We demand government ownership and control of all railroads, telegraph lines and coal mines in the interest of the people.

7. We demand equal suffrage.

8. We demand that our state adopt the Australian system of conducting elections.

9. We demand that the constitution of the United States be so amended that the United States senators, president and vice president can be elected by the direct vote of the people of each state.

Resolution:

Resolved, That we call upon our legislature to submit to the people an article in our state constitution forever prohibiting the chartering of any lottery in the state of North Dakota.