

THE INFLUENCE OF POPULIST LEGISLATORS UPON  
AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY, 1892-1898

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## INTRODUCTION

The last decade of the nineteenth century witnessed the climax of industrial change in the United States. It was closely paralleled by political and social upheaval which evidenced the growing demands for empire and led to the Spanish American War. These domestic discontents go far to explain the nature of American diplomacy in the years before the war, and also the secular revivalism which supported the "Holy War of 1898." Democratic idealism was the ideology of the constantly expanding industrial economy of the post Civil War years. It generated the rationalization for a vigorous advocacy of American imperialism.<sup>1</sup>

This desire was buttressed by the common perversions of Social Darwinism and the Gospel of Wealth, which lent a faulty logic to the extension of an "informal empire."<sup>2</sup> But the missionary zeal of American policy makers was an outgrowth of their conflicting economic desires and fears. Expansionists demanded military strength. Some of their arguments were strategically valid, but to bolster their influence they applied their doctrines to the economic and idealistic aspirations

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<sup>1</sup>Louis M. Hacker, "The Holy War of 1898," American Mercury (New York), XXI (November, 1930), 316-326.

<sup>2</sup>The phrase is from an article by H. S. Ferns, "Britain's Informal Empire in Argentina, 1806-1916," Past and Present (London), Number 4 (November, 1953), 60-75.

of other Americans. Thus the national interest, far from transcending current problems, was defined and interpreted in response to them. As the basic economic crisis of the country came to endanger their political, economic, and social control of society, conservative American leadership defined "national interest" in terms of foreign expansion. That expansion began as commercial penetration and culminated with military occupation.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>The basic character of the 1890's may be reviewed in the following literature: E. P. Brown and Sheba Hopkins, "The Cause of Wage Rates in Five Countries," Oxford Economic Papers, New Series (Oxford), II (June, 1950), 226-96; C. Hoffman, "The Depression of the Nineties," Journal of Economic History (New York), XVI (June, 1956), 137-64; Simon S. Kuznetz, "Foreign Economic Relations of the United States and Their Impact Upon the Domestic Economy," Economic Change (1955), 303-17; J. Gallagher and R. Robinson, "The Imperialism of Free Trade," The Economic History Review (London) 2nd Series, VI (August, 1953), 1-15; Richard C. Hofstadter, Social Darwinism in American Thought, 1860-1915 (Philadelphia, 1953). Samuel Reznick, "Unemployment, Unrest and Relief During the Depression of 1893-97," Journal of Political Economy (Chicago), LXI (August, 1953), 324-45; Albert T. Volwiler, "The Early Empire Days of the United States," The Ohio Alumnus (Athens), XXXII (January, 1954), 8-11; B. Weber and S. J. Hatfield Jones, "The Variations in the Rate of Economic Growth in the United States, 1869-1939," Oxford Economic Papers, New Series, VI (June, 1954), 101-31. See also Robert E. Osgood, Ideals and Self Interest in American Foreign Relations (Chicago, 1953); Charles A. Beard, A Foreign Policy for America (New York, 1940), 10; James P. Warburg, Foreign Policy Begins at Home (New York, 1944).

For a classic example of the desire to couple missionary activity with economic gain see John W. Foster's characterization of American policy in the Orient as a "record of a hundred years of honourable intercourse with that region [which] will be a safe guide for the conduct of affairs. Its task will be well done if it shall aid in giving the world a freer market, and to the inhabitants of the world a Christian civilization." John W. Foster, American Diplomacy in the Orient (New York, 1903), 438.

Albert K. Weinberg, Manifest Destiny (Baltimore, 1935), 382-412; Alfred T. Mahan, The Interests of America in Sea Power, Present and Future (Boston, 1898), 18, 280; E. V. D. Robinson, "War Economics

The Populist Party became the political instrument of agrarian demands for economic expansion. The party was an outgrowth of the rapid industrialization of the United States, and strengthened its position as agrarian interests battled for control of the major political parties in states heavily influenced by eastern financial and political power. By contrast, southern and western agrarian leaders and mining spokesmen controlled the Populist Party. Thus the entire program of Populism bespoke the efforts of the minority groups within the Populist Party to promote their own particular economic well being.

Earlier agrarian protest movements had originated in the mid-west while that area could still be classed as frontier, but as the frontier advanced, and the character of production in the middle west turned from grain to dairy farming and manufacturing, that section of the United States slowly became reconciled to the changing nature of the economy, and its locus of power. Even within what some authors have termed the agrarian "radical" movement a spirit of restraint marked middle western sentiments.<sup>4</sup>

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in History and Theory," Political Science Quarterly (New York, XV (December, 1900), 581-628; John W. Masland, "Missionary Influence upon American Far Eastern Policy," Pacific Historical Quarterly (Los Angeles), XI (September, 1941), 279-296.

<sup>4</sup>Theodore F. Saloutos, "The Agrarian Problem and Nineteenth Century Industrialism," Agricultural History (Chicago, Baltimore), XXIII (July, 1948), 156-174; see also the numerous Populist Party platforms for the commercial nature of these expansionist demands. This writer cannot agree with Ray A. Billington who in spite of the close correlation of the third party strength with grain and cotton areas of the

The basic aim of improving their economic status underlaid the Populist Party's position on foreign affairs. Commercial, political, and agrarian interests intensified their drive for world-wide markets after 1880, during a time when the fear of surplus productivity haunted American businessmen. Farmers of the southern and Granger states at first attempted to solve their economic troubles in more localized efforts to halt the exploitation practices of a depressed and over-capitalized railroad system, and attempted also to preserve their natural resources against depletion by eastern interests. But such efforts failed, and the farmers finally turned to the government for a redistribution of wealth. They gained support from utopian reformers and that portion of labor which had not yet adapted itself to business practices. Meanwhile, the earlier attempts of commercial interests to extend their domination matured as the industrial leadership of the

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United States comments that "only Republican domination of the West accounted for that section's imperialism." Ray A. Billington, "The Origins of Middle Western Isolationism," Political Science Quarterly, LX (March, 1945), 49.

"By 1879 the North Central states had become the great cereal surplus producing region of the world and by 1889 Kansas replaced Iowa as the heart of the cereal belt." Louis B. Schmidt, "The Westward Movement of the Wheat Growing Industry in the United States," Iowa Journal of History and Politics (Iowa City), XVIII (July, 1920), 396-412; William G. Carleton, "Isolationism and the Middle West," Mississippi Valley Historical Review (Cedar Rapids), XXXIII (December, 1946), 377-90. Carleton notes that middle western senators were "compelled" to support expansionist demands "or pay the political penalty." Mody C. Boatright, "The Myth of Frontier Individualism," Southwestern Social Science Quarterly (Austin), XXII (June, 1941), 14-32.

country gained political power.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>"They were called radical in their day. In many respects they were not so radical as the corporate monopolies to which they were opposed, the truest embodiment of the social and economic order. . . . Their radicalism consisted largely in their use of government and public policy as a means to their ends." Alfred W. Griswold, Farming and Democracy (New York, 1948), 145; Solon J. Buck, The Agrarian Crusade (New Haven, 1921); Weinberg, Manifest Destiny (Baltimore, 1935), 365.

But Populists contemplated no important changes in the structure of government. Only in the sense that they wished to become a powerful vested interest, and as such would attempt to manipulate government for their own immediate purposes does the term "radical" apply.

Of particular interest are the following: Charles S. Campbell, Special Business Interests and the Open Door (New Haven, 1951); United States Congress, Labor and Capital. Report of the Senate Committee on Education and Labor. IV Vols. (Washington, 1885). The fifth volume of the series was not printed. Volume four of the report provides detailed information on the developing of southern industries and their needs. Mary W. Williams, Anglo-American Isthmian Diplomacy, 1815-1915 (Washington, 1916); Lawanda F. Cox, "Tenancy in the United States, 1865-1900," Agricultural History, XVIII (January, 1944), 97-101; Sylvester K. Stevens, American Expansion in Hawaii (Harrisburg, 1945), 154, in which both Bradstreet's and The American Manufacturer are quoted as calling for commercial expansion. "Business groups generally saw overseas trade as the critical factor. . . ." Herbert Guttman, correspondence with the author, April 17, 1955. Mr. Guttman's citations cover the period 1875-1878, and include evidence that William Everts took the arguments of American expansionists quite seriously. In 1878 five states claimed over 100 organizations, but little regional organization was apparent. See Illinois, Kansas, Iowa, New York, and Ohio in James T. Adams (ed.), List of Agricultural Societies and Farmers Clubs. United States Department of Agriculture, Report No. 12 (Washington, 1876), 1-63. James G. Blaine and William Frye proposed an international silver standard for the stimulation of trade intermittently after 1880. Alice F. Tyler, The Foreign Policy of James G. Blaine (Minneapolis, 1930), 166, 174, notes 15, 16, 17.

Benjamin Harrison, speech at El Paso, Texas, April 21, 1892. Harrison's public speeches held a note of desperation. The dilemma he faced in attempting to keep his "businessman's administration" acceptable to workers and farmers newly conscious of their position as social classes complicated Republican efforts to break the political and economic lockout in the South by aligning Bourbon interests. Harrison's solution to a major social crisis in the United States reveals his preference for conformity to principles rather than adjustment to political facts. Thus, in the spirit of enlightenment, Harrison pointed

Commercial interests formed the nucleus of a new business elite in the years following the Civil War, and they met little effective opposition prior to 1890. The American radicalism which might have opposed them remained predominantly agrarian and Whiggish in nature, in its middle class stability and respect for a higher natural law, and in its rationalized faith in social contract, which evidenced a strong tradition of classical liberal thought.<sup>6</sup>

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to the training of the public school system as a force that needed support in order to unite the populace and stabilize the democratic process. But his appeals for votes were couched in economic arguments varied to suit his audience, and his remarks stressed a policy of commercial expansion. See for example, Charles Hedges, The Speeches of Benjamin Harrison (New York, 1892), 334, 383. Harrison and Blaine held the same hopes about a "tough" foreign policy as early as 1884, when Harrison derided "over-conscientious businessmen who fear that their money getting will be disturbed. . . . No one ever accused Mr. Blaine of being a fool." Quoted in Lewis Wallace and Murat Halstead, The Life and Public Service of Benjamin Harrison (n. p., 1892), 303.

Thomas Bayard also laid a firm foundation for American overseas expansion. While Germany attempted to secure Samoa for herself "Mr. Bayard strenuously objected to the predominant control of any one power. . . . Congress made an appropriation of half a million dollars for the protection of American interests. . . . Secretary Bayard's plan was adopted in principle. . . ." Foster, American Diplomacy, 391. See also Charles C. Tansill, The Foreign Policy of Thomas F. Bayard (New York, 1940); Stevens, American Expansion in Hawaii, 184; James M. Klotsche, "The United Front Populists," Wisconsin Magazine of History (Madison), XX (June, 1937), 378-89; John B. Sanbourn, "Some Political Aspects of Homestead Legislation," American Historical Review (Durham), VI (October, 1900), 19-32.

<sup>6</sup>John C. Appell, "American Labor and the Annexation of Hawaii: A Study in Logic and Economic Unrest," Pacific Historical Review, XXIII (February, 1954), 1-18; "The Unionization of the Florida Cigar Makers and the Coming of the War with Spain," Hispanic American Historical Review (Los Angeles), XXXVI (February, 1956), 39-49. See also the invitation issued by Thomas F. Bayard for the Pan American Conference of 1889, called to consider, among other resolutions, "the

Inherited attitudes and acquired grievances became manifest in periodic rebellion during periods of economic depression. The radicals evidenced both a desire and an eagerness to share in the coming wealth of the new industrial society. But federal and private leadership

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adoption of a common silver coin. . . ." Thomas F. Bayard, quoted in Gantelbaum (ed.), The Evolution of Our Latin-American Policy, A Documentary Record (New York, 1950), 53. Benjamin Harrison and James G. Blaine, 1892-93. Memoirs of the American Philosophical Society, XIV (Philadelphia, 1940), 243, 121; Donald M. Dozier, "Benjamin Harrison and the Presidential Campaign of 1892," American Historical Review, LIV (October, 1948), 47-77 reviews the forces which led to Harrison's defeat. Yet Harrison was conscious of popular desires. "Many things, for public and private reasons, cannot be unfolded until the real makers of history cut the wrappings and the actors are dead." Harrison's memo on his relationship with Blaine, May 22, 1893, in Volwiler, Correspondence, 349. See also Robert Seager II, "Ten Years Before Mahan: The Unofficial Case for the New Navy, 1880-1890," Mississippi Valley Historical Review (December, 1953), 419-512; Arthur W. Dunn, From Harrison to Harding, I (New York and London, 1922), 97. Certainly the possibilities inherent in his solution to the economic middle of the nineties should have been evident to William Windom, Harrison's first Secretary of the Treasury. Harrison thoroughly disagreed with his Secretary of State and Treasury and directed his own administration on a conservative course despite the Congressional stampede to diminish the treasury reserve. The combination of log rolling and reduced revenues (which came about through the enactment of the tariff of 1890) placed the Republican Administration in such a precarious position that plates for the issue of bonds were already printed when the Democrats came to control in 1892. For Windom's financial plans see Alfred D. Noyes, Thirty Years of American Finance (New York, 1898), 142.

I am indebted to my thesis adviser, Dr. W. A. Williams, for the observation of similarity between liberal of many generations, made at a time when the writer's concentration dwelt, perhaps too keenly, on their differences. The development, however, has been my own. Also helpful to an understanding of the tenets of the liberal and conservative tradition have been John E. Acton, Essays on Freedom and Power (Meridian Book edition, New York, 1955), Russell J. Kirk, The Conservative Mind, From Burke to Santayana (New York, 1953), and a work concerning an earlier period of American history which proved nonetheless stimulating, Clinton L. Rossiter, The First American Revolution (New York, 1953).

pushed industrial development to the exclusion of agricultural interests wherever possible. And the generally depressed state of farm prices during the years of the "long depression" brought no returns to agriculture comparable with those made by industry. In consequence the advocates of the Pendleton Plan, Greenbackers, and National Grange provided a continuity with the silverites of the nineties. The continuity, however, could be broken; the program and attitudes of agrarian liberalism were transformed to slogans at the hands of men who sought to satisfy the craving for participation in government with the lure of economic gain.

Some economic gains could be made. But the political returns to the industrialist wing of both major American political parties were disappointing. Their original scheme combined an international silver standard with high tariff walls. Consequently supporters of the McKinley Act anticipated an acceleration of industrial activity. But the Democrats, in search of a campaign issue, promoted the interpretation that high tariff inevitably caused economic miseries. Their strategy was successful. In the off-year elections of 1890 they swept into control of Congress. The Harrison Administration, concerned with its own attempts to support economic and ideological expansion in the Western hemisphere and elsewhere, and bedeviled by the problems of preventing a party split and containing the growing domestic unrest, could only stress the necessity for "commerce based upon a stable social order." This was the conservative answer to those rebels who,



having espoused the cause of silver, became increasingly active in Congress.

Under increasing social tensions, however, the Republican cabinet was reported, as of 1892, to favor war against Chile. Attempts to secure naval outposts in the Caribbean, and to coerce Canada, at least into commercial union, met with little success. The treaty of Hawaiian annexation languished in Congress. "I am sure that war would prove of no advantage," concluded James G. Blaine in a note to President Harrison. Then Blaine, thinking better of his conclusion, struck it from his letter. War, however, remained at best a negative solution to political problems, and the President chose to blame his subsequent political defeat on current labor difficulties. The commercial and military expansion of the United States which marked the administration of Benjamin Harrison proved timid when contrasted with the Democratic Administration which succeeded it.

Despite political rivalries, the diplomatic objectives of the Cleveland and Harrison Administrations were the same. The effective leadership of both parties resorted to the use of force to further American economic expansion. Though there are indications that some Democrats favored expansion by means of diplomacy rather than military coercion, Democratic policies were limited by the financial and political problems of a conservative administration.

Thus the early resurrection and settlement of the Mora and La Abra claims stimulated the revival of a favorable balance in American

foreign trade, and brought relief to the national treasury. Likewise, the policy of limiting official intervention of the United States in Cuba must be considered in conjunction with the Venezuelan controversy and the financial problems of 1895. But gunboat diplomacy continued to support penetration into South America. Finally, the limited efforts toward intervention should not be confused with the Cleveland Administration's active efforts to effect the de facto commercial annexation of Cuba and the Hawaiian Islands. The withdrawal of the Hawaiian Treaty from Congress was in full accord with the administration's view of expanding commercial interests, and such an interpretation in no way threatened American economic supremacy in the islands. The bipartisan-ship of Republican and Democratic activities became evident in Richard Olney's prompt and efficient protection of the economic penetration of the islands by American interests.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States (hereinafter cited as For. Rel. followed by year and page), 1894, 423, 432, ibid., 1895, 1170, 1174.

It is here suggested that the usual interpretation of Walter Gresham's diplomacy as the result of his benevolent idealism is insufficient, or at least incomplete. Gresham and Grover Cleveland were close friends; given that friendship and a similar attitude as to the nature of American interests, Olney and Cleveland shared an expansionist viewpoint with Gresham. In view of the intimacy of Cleveland and Olney in later years, and Cleveland's reflections on their policies, it seems reasonable to conclude that both Cleveland and Olney favored commercial penetration as an alternative to annexation. See Matilda S. Gresham, The Life of Walter Q. Gresham, II (New York, 1919), 738-776, 785; Theodore Roosevelt to Henry Cabot Lodge, December 26, 1896, in Elting E. Morrison (ed.), The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt (Cambridge, 1951), 249; James, Olney, 243, 158; James A. Barnes, "The Gold Standard Democrats and Party Conflict," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XVII

Continuity of policy also linked the Cleveland and McKinley Administrations. The preference for granting recognition only to stable governments, a tendency which was strengthened under Harrison, became more clearly associated with commercial penetration. Curiously, stable governments seemed to be those which agitated for, or were involved in, economic development by the United States.

In a similar way, the interpretation of neutrality developed by Harrison and Cleveland matured in William McKinley's justification of the Spanish-American War. The Republican sponsorship of the international arbitration treaty of 1897 completed the Democratic interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine, and provided an easy transition to later Republican diplomacy, as the provisions of the treaty elevated national honor to a recognized position for disagreement between nations. Its compromise foreshadowed and aided the development of policies pursued by Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft. The economic cooperation of the Open Door notes the intervention by the United States to adjust South American governmental affairs became accepted policy. And John Sherman found it convenient to re-emphasize a continuity of

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(December, 1930), 441; For. Rel., 1895, 365-450; 1933, to Richard Olney, February 16, 1898, 494, and January 16, 1898, 492; Allen F. Nevins (ed.), The Letters of Grover Cleveland, 1850-1908 (Boston and New York, 1933); Richard Olney, "International Isolation of the United States," Atlantic Monthly (Boston), LXXXI (May, 1898), 577-88, and George H. Knowles (ed.), "Grover Cleveland and Imperialism," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXXVII (June, 1950), 303-304. See also Gresham's attempt to "demand" concessions for foreign landholders. For. Rel., 1895, 1236. Henry White urged annexation of Cuba upon Olney. Henry James, Richard Olney and His Public Service (Boston, 1923), 243.

policy in his support of Richard Olney's decisions.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>John Hay assured the British Foreign Office that there would be no change of policies. Hay to Olney, July 3, 1896, James, Olney, 248; James L. Laughlin and H. Parker Willis, Reciprocity (New York, 1933), 311-414; Nelson W. Blake, "The Olney-Pauncefote Treaty of 1897," American Historical Review (January, 1897), 228-243; John W. Burgess, "The Recent Pseudo-Monroism," Political Science Quarterly, XI (March, 1896), 44-67; John B. Moore, "The Monroe Doctrine," ibid., 129. Richard Olney's careful defense of executive power rested on the fear that his own interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine would be used against the Executive in the struggle over Cuban belligerency. England's attempt to settle the Venezuelan controversy through arbitration was opposed by Olney, who successfully dodged arbitration for all but selected issues. Anglo-phobia also played its share in the treaty's death. Among those most rabid for its defeat were two leaders of the jingo and silver forces, Senators Morgan of Alabama and Jones of Nevada. See the New York Times, January 23, 1897. The escape clause of Congressional consent could not accomplish the passage of the treaty, nor could it quell Senatorial opposition. Based in agrarian fears of economic restriction and the general desire for an isthmian canal, Senate opposition carried the treaty to defeat. The McKinley Administration revived the treaty, possibly to stimulate the growth of Anglo-American friendship, but as it finally passed Congress, it constituted little but a good will agreement. W. Stull Holt, Treaties Defeated by the Senate, Times, January 2, 1897, 160; Richard Olney to Sir Julian Pauncefote, April 11, 1896, For. Rel., 1896, 225. For Sherman's support of Olney see the correspondence regarding the Cerruti claims, For. Rel., 1897, 245-267, particularly the letters of Senior Renzifo to Olney, March 3, 1897, and to John Sherman, May 15, 1897; James, Olney, 169-70.

The American position on arbitration of outstanding disputes backslid even further during the McKinley Administration, when the Czar of Russia, hoping, perhaps, to gain from the settlement after the Spanish-American War, offered the Hague Conference to his competitors in the far east as a vehicle for the settlement of outstanding disputes among nations. But upon accepting the Czar's invitation to the Conference, the United States made it clear that its rights of settlement with Spain must remain outside the area of mediation. For. Rel., 1898, 543.

The renewal of the Republican program of reciprocity also reflected and fostered expansionist activities. Appeals to the Monroe Doctrine were fused with humanitarianism in order to justify economic gain, as when William McKinley aimed at the "settled purpose of opening trade" and a "short and decisive war." But special interests constantly hampered the diplomacy of expansion. Only as time and political maneuvers harmonized these factions did American imperialism become the basis for social and industrial peace. Then the dissention which remained concerned only the method of maintaining an empire, not its nature or establishment.

Grover Cleveland failed in diplomacy because of the silver heresy; William McKinley succeeded through adroit manipulation of the tariff, monetary policy, and foreign expansion in diverting Democracy and the remnants of the Peoples' Party as he established an empire.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Thomas A. Bailey, "The United States and Hawaii During the Spanish-American War," American Historical Review, XXXVI (October, 1930), 552-560. It is, of course, impossible to name an exact date, or event from which a change, or acceleration toward aggression may be marked in public sentiment. Yet certain witnesses have borne testimony to an increasing tempo of jingo sentiment. The activities of Christian Socialists were most bitterly attacked in 1894. And the well-known clergyman, Lyman Abbott, was expelled from the pastorate of his church for "liberal political activities." In the October 28 issue of the New York Times Stephen Crane reported that "Howells Fears Realists Must Wait." The thoughts of the American realist, William Dean Howells, and his interviewer are remarkable:

"Mr. Howells," said the other man suddenly, "Have you observed a change in the literary pulse of the country within the last few months? Last winter, for instance, it seemed that realism was about to capture things, but then recently I have thought that I saw coming a sort of counterwave, a flood of the other-- a reaction, in fact. Trivial, temporary, perhaps, but a

As an instrument of expansion, the tariff served both Republicans and Democrats. Harrison and Blaine deliberately aimed at commercial penetration of Europe and South America through tariff manipulation. They justified their policies in terms of national honor and political necessity; but such were the major benefits to American production, that their policy were desired by industry.

The producer whose power and efficiency enables him to control his domestic market, and can also undersell foreigners, has no fear of reciprocity, indeed, it gets his products into new markets. Consequently, two policies, the emphasis on reciprocity arrangements which would import the needed raw materials for industry, and avoidance, wherever possible, of importing manufactured goods, found favor with industry. High tariffs and recovery from the panic of 1893 did much

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reaction, certainly." Mr. Howells dropped his hands in a gesture of emphatic assent, "What you say is true. I have seen it coming. . . . I suppose we shall have to wait." Grover Cleveland, from the White House, also watched, and waited. James C. Dombowski, The Early Days of Christian Socialism in America (New York, 1930), 10, 172; Times, November 1, 1894; Stephen Crane, Stories and Tales (New York, 1955, Vintage Edition), 163-66; A. F. Nevins, Grover Cleveland, A Study in Courage (New York, 1933), 535; Hans J. Morgenthau, "The Mainsprings of American Foreign Policy: The National Interest vs. Moral Abstraction," American Political Science Review (Baltimore), XXXIV (December, 1950), 833-854; Thomas I. Cook and Malcom M. Moos, "Foreign Policy, the Realism of Idealism," American Political Science Quarterly, XXXVI (June, 1952), 342-56, for varying interpretations of motivation; William S. McKinley, Speeches and Addresses, March 1st, 1897-May 30, 1900 (New York, 1908), October 30, 1897, to the Commercial Club in Cincinnati, 781, 743. Edward F. Atkins, Sixty Years in Cuba (Cambridge, 1926). Ida M. Tarbell, The Tariff in Our Times (New York, 1915), 141.

to consolidate and stabilize American manufacturers' position in the home market. In spite of the financial stringency which confronted the administration and the conflicts between special interests which hampered diplomacy, the principle of reciprocity could be effectively employed by expansionists.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>As a general rule, reciprocity does not change the character of foreign trade. The type of "tropical reciprocity" employed gave a natural advantage to manufacturers. The whole problem of the reciprocity treaties and tariff policy is well reviewed in Laughlin and Willis, Reciprocity. Brazil, for example, imported little American flour after expiration of its reciprocity treaty, and American exporters keenly felt the loss of Brazilian markets. After 1894 exports to Brazil showed a slow increase. Free entry of sugar from Hawaii, to cite another example, would result in America monopolizing the crop. The effect in the islands was to draw most of the sugar plantations into American ownership. This resulted in the domestic political quarrels between the islanders and American interests which climaxed in the Hawaiian revolution. The Havermeyer interests which combined with Atkins and Company of Cuba in 1889, objected strenuously that the loss of sugar bounty combined with low profits would ruin their holdings. Cane sugar was "fighting for its life," as it faced the additional competition of domestic beet sugar, thus aggravating the southern refiners' problem. Grover Cleveland remained unsympathetic, though John Carslile, his Secretary of the Treasury, put forth some effort to adjust the tariff schedule of 1894.

Thus the effect of Cleveland's policy was to keep Hawaii in the commercial orbit, and add to the revenues paid by Cuban sugar interests, who were also the principal source of Spanish duties. But even with reduction to a "flat 40 per cent rate on refined sugar" the effect of the later Dingley revision was to almost double the percentage of revenue on Cuban sugars, as prices declined steadily throughout the nineties. Edward Atkins finally resorted to revolutionary activities in Cuba, hoping to gain autonomy for the island, and thus eliminate Spanish trade restrictions and revenues. Within the United States, meanwhile, Cleveland desperately clung to all available income, and, while Carslile attempted to adjust the sugar schedule, Atkins noted that his influence on American diplomacy was "exaggerated."

Under the Cleveland Administration, Atkins reported regularly to the State Department on conditions in the islands, and received an introduction to the succeeding administration from Charles Francis Adams. In April of 1897, when Atkins, then a business partner of J. D. Morgan,

But discontent manifested itself once more in the Cuban rebellion and in the struggle over recognition of Cuban belligerency. Only upon the election of a Republican Administration did the pressure for intervention in Cuba quiet temporarily. The cooperation of the Executive and Congress resulted in the prompt passage of the Dingley tariff, and with the assurance that sound financial policies would be maintained, the issue of Cuban intervention again rose to prominence.<sup>11</sup>

Tariff policy also deepened the sectional animosities between the South and the West. The traditionally protectionist midwest erupted quickly into conflict with southern free trade forces,

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appeared in Washington to fight for the autonomy of the island, he was told that intervention in Cuba would mean annexation of the island. In the course of his lobbyist activities, Atkins appealed to Nelson Aldrich. Aldrich's attitude in turn, enraged Sidney B. Elkins, who insisted that "You assume to know about the tariff, but your knowledge is limited . . . you don't know about the broad commercial considerations. . . ." Rage might well have been Elkins' reaction, for Aldrich proposed to "create a balanced system. Equalize . . . the conditions in competition with similar industries in competing countries." Quoted in Nathaniel W. Stephenson, The Life of Nelson W. Aldrich (New York, 1930), 82. See also Frank G. Taussig, "The Tariff Act of 1894," Political Science Quarterly, IV (December, 1894), 606; Richard D. Weigle, "Sugar and Hawaiian Revolution," Pacific Historical Review, XVI (February, 1947), 41-58; Lincoln Hutchenson, "The Results of Reciprocity with Brazil," Political Science Quarterly, XVIII (June, 1903), 228; Barnes, Carlsile, 474; Edward A. Atkins, Sixty Years in Cuba (Cambridge, 1926), 281, 171, 156, 57, 120; Taussig, Free Trade, The Tariff, and Reciprocity (New York, 1920), 309.

<sup>11</sup>Dunn, From Harrison to Harding, I, 224. Joseph E. Wisan, The Cuban Crisis as Reflected in the New York Press, 1895-1898 (New York, 1934), 99.



particularly when the tariff revision of 1894 hindered southern expansion. On the Pacific Coast, meanwhile, the hope of silver monetization and an increased Oriental trade, coupled with fear of cheap Oriental competition, served to defeat the free trade forces. Political allegiance further complicated the conflict over policy. The New South as an industrial economy might well be attracted to the party of protection, and it was the constant effort of eastern Republicans to effect an alliance with Bourbon Democracy. But the Venezuelan note came too late to prevent the Democratic Party schism, and Republican industrialists successfully interpreted the struggle of 1896 as one for prosperity rather than monetization of silver. Yet Democratic attempts to make the South and West "flop together" almost succeeded. Within this framework the efforts of both major parties to win Populist support by blaming the other for hard times served to increase expansionist strength.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>The farmers became particularly concerned because India's rivalry in the international exchange put them at a disadvantage in wheat and cotton sales. Their argument had great effect as the issue of free silver coinage gained momentum. It ran as follows:

"Our prices for wheat and cotton are regulated largely by the European market. India and the United States compete for that market. Other things being equal, the market is ours.

If Asiatic bills of exchange fall below par, the East Indian has the advantage . . . free coinage would bring it to par."

Congressional Record, Vol. 23, pt. 4, 3863 (hereinafter cited as Cong. Rec. followed by volume, part and page). See also American Bimetallic League, Facts About Silver (Washington, 1891), 37; William J. Bryan, October, 1891, quoted in Barnes, Carslile, 433; Chauncy M. DePew, My Memories of Eighty Years (New York, 1924), 150; Wisan, The Cuban Crisis as Reflected in the New York Press, 37.

Professional jingoism contributed much, of course, to the furor over American expansion. An active and rabid newspaper press excited the public temper to the point where it became politically impossible for the Republicans to avoid intervention in Cuba. Opportunism triggered the mechanics of acquisition, and the policies of the McKinley Administration. Henry Cabot Lodge, Theodore Roosevelt, and Alfred Thayer Mahan meanwhile anticipated, and helped create, popular desires. The formation of American foreign policy thus paralleled the physical expansion of the American frontier.<sup>13</sup>

The protestations of concern, and demands for partition made by other powers were handled by formalizing John W. Foster's earlier informal open door policy in China. Japan and Germany found their more obvious attempts to gain foothold in Hawaii, Samoa, and the Phillipines defeated by a combination of de facto control, mutually shared jealousies, and Anglo-American sympathy. In such a manner the

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<sup>13</sup>Marcus W. Wilkerson, Public Opinion and the Spanish American War (Baton Rouge, 1932). No large-scale study of the activities of the small group of American diplomats, senators, and civil servants who did so much to promote war with Spain has yet been written. The biographical material available on these men is often incomplete. But for the relationship of Brooks Adams to the imperialists see William A. Williams, "Brooks Adams, and American Expansion," New England Quarterly (Brunswick), XXV (June, 1952), 217-32. An address of Adams' before the American Economic Association also deserves attention. See the "Meaning of the Recent Expansion of Foreign Trade in the United States," American Economic Association, Papers and Proceedings (New York, 1899), 80-96; William A. Williams, "The Frontier Thesis and American Foreign Policy," Pacific Historical Review, XXIV (November, 1955), 379-95; Lee Benson, "The Historical Background of Turner's Frontier Essay," Agricultural History, XXV (April, 1951), 59-64.

diplomacy of the Spanish-American War led to the markets of Asia.<sup>14</sup>

The Spanish-American War strengthened the annexationists, and made present policy of their cautious desires to acquire territorial as well as commercial control of the Pacific. Such worried thought and limited vision as were exhibited ill fit the pattern of conquest. The American dream of worldwide democratic institutions conflicted, apparently, with constitutional government and vested interests. The interests, however, could be reconciled, and Cleveland's South American policy became the logical extension of Blaine's earlier intervention,

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<sup>14</sup>Thomas A. Bailey, "Japan's Protest Against the Annexation of Hawaii," Journal of Modern History (Chicago) (March, 1931), 40-51; ibid., "Dewey and the Germans at Manila Bay," American Historical Review (October, 1939), 59-81; James K. Eyre, "Japan and American Annexation of the Philippines," Pacific Historical Review, XI (March, 1942), 539-62; Harold W. Bradley, "Observations Upon American Policy in the Philippines," ibid., XI (March, 1942), 43; Thomas A. Bailey, "Russia and American Acquisition of the Philippines," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXVIII (March, 1942), 539-62; John D. Bickford, "The Contemplated Anglo-German Alliance, 1890-1901," Political Science Quarterly, XLI (March, 1927), 1-57; Alfred Vagts, "Hopes and Fears of an American-German War 1870-1915," Political Science Quarterly, LIV (December, 1939), 523; Dana G. Munro, "American Commercial Interests in Manchuria," Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science (Philadelphia), XXXIX (January, 1912), 154-68. For the growth and shifting emphasis of American trade to the orient see James C. Malin, An Interpretation of Recent American History (New York and London, 1926), 61. The per cent of increase between 1890 and 1900 doubled the total of American foreign trade in Asia and more than tripled it in Africa:

<u>Area</u>	<u>1890</u>	<u>1900</u>
Asia	2.30	4.60
South America	4.52	2.79
Africa	.54	1.79

The export of the gross national product of the United States increased steadily from 12.48 per cent in 1881 to 23.14 per cent in 1895.

as well as that of Benjamin Harrison. The constitution, too, proved itself adaptable to the democracy of the expansionists. And so most of the critics were silenced. And an election year loomed ahead. Since desire remained stronger than conscience, the votes of 1900 were not cast upon the issue of imperialism. Constant variants on a policy of expansion brought a climax to tensions which had mounted since the end of the Civil War.<sup>15</sup>

Studies of the Populist Party have acknowledged, even stressed, its economic basis, but little effort has been made to trace the economic activities which led to the decline of Populism. It is generally assumed that the collapse of the movement was nearly complete after 1896. But a necessary distinction between the Populist Party and the Silverites must be made. Truly, silver was "the cowbird of the reform movement," but after Mark Hanna successfully reinterpreted prosperity to the farmers in 1896, there remained the problem of providing the promised returns. Populists and their political

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<sup>15</sup>Thomas A. Bailey, "Was the Presidential Election of 1900 a Mandate on Imperialism?" Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXIV (June, 1937), 43-52; *ibid.*, "The United States and Hawaii During the Spanish-American War," American Historical Review, XXVI (April, 1931), 552-60; Joseph W. Ellison, "The Partition of Samoa," *ibid.*, VIII (September, 1939), 259-281; Leslie W. Walker, "Guam's Seizure by the United States in 1898," Pacific Historical Review, XIV (November, 1945), 1-13; John C. Appel, "American Labor and the Annexation of Hawaii: A Study in Logic and Economic Unrest," *ibid.* (February, 1954), 1-18; Fred H. Harrington, "The Anti-Imperialist Movement in the United States, 1898-1900," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXII (September, 1935), 211-30.

representatives did not suddenly vanish from the national scene.<sup>16</sup>

A combination of factors suppressed Populism. New gold discoveries stimulated international trade, and the United States adopted a funded currency as the alternative to international bimetallism. The Spanish-American War distracted reformers and professional patriots. Certainly no student of the period will attach final responsibility to any one of these causes to the exclusion of others. Nor are certain key individuals to be held solely responsible for the collapse of the reform movement. The years 1890-1900 marked a major

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<sup>16</sup>The definitive work on the party remains John D. Hicks, The Populist Revolt; A History of the Farmers' Alliance and the People's Party (Minneapolis, 1931). One is inclined to doubt the acceptability of the thesis present by such historians as Hicks that the gold discoveries played a significant part in the alleviation of domestic discontents. Any fair amount of research into the period of the nineties reveals an almost pathetic eagerness on the part of conservatives of both major American political parties to stabilize American domestic politics. Extended use of instruments of credit to quiet the rapid liquidation of foreign assets remained impossible until 1897, but as investment outlets became problematical in late 1897 and 1898 it does not appear that a new gold supply became a crucial factor in American domestic recovery. There is, in addition, the consideration as to whether the new gold, became immediately available as circulating medium within the economy in such quantity and for such purposes as to appreciably affect the per capita ratio of circulating specie. See the accompanying bibliography of this thesis for various state studies on Populism; H. D. Lloyd, quoted in Caro Lloyd, Henry Demerest Lloyd, I (New York, 1912), 264. The 55th Congress held the largest number of Populist Senators and representatives yet to appear in national legislative rolls, the majority of them from western and middlewestern states. See also Joseph A. Schumpeter, "Money and the Social Product," International Economic Papers (New York, 1956), 192-94, 198, 199.

consolidation of commercial leadership and American politics, and so the older conservative tradition was brushed aside. Populists accepted the new order and traded their identity as a party for a program of imperialism. The thesis of this study, then, is that the foreign policy adopted by the Populists in the years 1892-1898 led them back to the folds of the Republican and Democratic parties.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>"Wheat growers were dependent for about 30-40 per cent of their gross annual income upon the export market, cotton growers for about 70 per cent, pork and pork products for about 15-23 per cent." Richard C. Hofstadter, The Age of Reform (New York, 1955), 52, note 5.

In reference to legislators, the term "Populist" as used in this thesis will refer to members of the Populist party. Thus it will exclude Republicans and Democrats favorable to the principles of Populism, unless they held political office by virtue of fusion with Populism, considered themselves Populists rather than Democrat or Republican, and were accepted as Populists by other third party legislators on that basis.

## CHAPTER I

### A PROBLEM OF POLICY, 1891-1893

"Why Mr. Chairman, we are driven from the markets of the whole world!"

Jerry Simpson

Foreign policy remained a mystery to most Populists. The provincial environment of farmers, who comprised the bulk of the party, and an almost superstitious distrust of activities which took place outside their immediate observation, limited their understanding of the objectives of diplomacy. So they seized upon explanations, often erroneous or incomplete, which seemed valid in the light of past experience. Only a few intellectuals became Populists, and these either bolted in violent disgust or turned party activities to their own political advantage, finally convinced that statesmanship must give way to popular passion. And for many reformers who joined the party with hopes of effecting social changes in America, Populism became a transient alliance. These people had no immediate interest in foreign affairs.<sup>1</sup>

The Populists considered themselves to be reformers of the American party system. They chose, therefore, to publicize the

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<sup>1</sup>For example, William V. Allen directed the party toward fusion with the Democrats, while Henry Demarest Lloyd and Eugene V. Debs became Socialists. Tom Watson reverted to demogogy.

democratic basis of their movement. In the early years of its existence, Populism embraced Democrats and Republicans, Westerners and Southerners, white and colored, laborites, socialists, single taxers, free-traders, and protectionists. But conservative farming interests dominated later machinery and program of the party. Contemporary observers of the movement often labeled Populist radicals, but the western and southern agrarians who bolted both major political parties to follow the leaders of Populism might more accurately be termed conservative, even reactionary, in their domestic policies.<sup>2</sup>

To advocates of industrialism and its accompanying changes in post Civil War American society, the Populist seemed radical because he hurled his challenge at the Gilded Age with demands for specific political and economic rewards which might regain for agrarians some semblance of equality with the new industrial society. The farmers openly acknowledged their role as a vested interest. Economic gain became the basis upon which their political representatives won elections, and it provided the grist for their contentions. Christian Protestant morality, national honor, and class consciousness helped to mold their opinions of current issues. The farmers' grievances, both fancied and real, fostered their highly critical attitudes toward

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<sup>2</sup>J. Martin Klotsche, "The United Front Populists," Wisconsin Magazine of History (Madison), XX (June, 1937), 378-89. An excellent example of contemporary reaction to Populism is Frank C. McVey, "The Populist Movement," American Economic Association, Economic Studies (New York), I (April, 1896), 133-209.



both major political parties. International relations became important because the farmers worried about crop markets.<sup>3</sup>

While the world market remained relatively stable, domestic staple crop prices tumbled throughout the eighteen seventies and eighties. A marked centralization of agriculture, and the limited employment of new technological aids combined with the cultivation of an ever increasing amount of marginal land to swell the volume of production in major export crops. These factors in turn aggravated lagging prices. The European move toward independent national economies shrank still further the markets already seemingly inadequate to absorb the expanded production. Foreign rivals threatened to supplant the usual trade channels.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>In the course of debate upon one of the numerous veterans' appropriation measures, Senator William A. Peffer estimated that Kansas claimed at least 60,000 Civil War veterans. The frequent references by Peffer and other Populist congressmen to their Civil War legacy lends strong support to the idea that much of the western agrarians' bitterness at their lot may be traced to their migration after the Civil War, establishment on homestead land, and willing drudgery in the hopes of a prosperous future. William A. Peffer, Cong. Rec., 23:4:2070, ibid., 23:5:4214.

<sup>4</sup>Fred A. Shannon attests to the impossibility of obtaining accurate and complete statistical data for the period 1896-1900 on mortgage holdings and agricultural prosperity. Information entered into the Congressional Record by Populist legislators often seems to be primarily an expression of the intensity of agrarian grievances. But the conservative estimates by the Bankers' Magazine and Statistical Register and the conclusions drawn by editorial writers of the Commercial and Financial Chronicle certainly indicate a decline in the attractions of rural life. This writer has relied mainly upon the contemporary accounts of the aforementioned journals, and on the secondary accounts by Fred A. Shannon, The Farmers' Last Frontier--Agriculture 1860-1897 (New York, 1945), ibid., "The Status of the Midwestern Farmer in 1900," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXXVII (December, 1950), 491-510. See also a series of articles by Benjamin H. Hibbard, "Tenancy in the North Atlantic

In the western, grain producing area of the United States, political action became the death struggle of the homesteader's dream. Mortgage-burdened farmers considered themselves the victims of middle-men and bankers, of eastern plutocrats, and railroad financiers. They became increasingly angry that the myth of their prosperity should be

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States," Quarterly Journal of Economics, XXVI (November, 1911), 105-17, ibid., "Tenancy in the North Central States," ibid., XXV (August, 1911), 710-19, ibid., "Tenancy in the Southern States," ibid., XXVII (May, 1913), 482-96, ibid., "Tenancy in the Western States," ibid., XXVI (February, 1912), 363-86.

None of the Populist legislators appear from their early debates to have understood the relationship between railroad expansion and crop expansion. Admittedly the curbing of speculation might have halted the construction of competing and overcapitalized railway lines, and in turn might have delayed the tilling of poorer farm land. Theoretically, however, this would have worked to confine agriculture, rather than to expand its position. In reality the percentage of farm land added to cultivation declined steadily after 1870, though as a result of inroads on the public domain "the proportion of new farms started as free patents under the Homestead Act from 1860 to 1900 barely exceeded one-eighth, and the proportion of farms in tenancy rose to 35 per cent," according to Griswold, Farming and Democracy, 141. During the eighteen nineties, cotton exports increased, though net agricultural exports declined. A precursor of the Farmers' Alliance was the Louisiana Farmers' Union, organized in the previous decade to stimulate cotton prices. Louis B. Schmidt, "Some Significant Aspects of the Agrarian Revolution in the United States," Iowa Journal of History and Politics, XVIII (July, 1920), 385, 86, Alex M. Arnett, "The Populist Movement in Georgia," Studies in History, Economics, and Public Law (Columbia University), CIV (New York, 1922), 72. Erastus Wyman estimated land cultivation increased as follows:

<u>Period</u>	<u>Additional Cultivated Land Over Former Period</u>	<u>Percentage of Increase</u>
1871	7,500,000	8.1
1875	8,240,000	6.8
1880	6,400,000	3.9
1890	2,100,000	1.4

See Erastus Wyman, "The Farmer on Top," North American Review (Boston), CLIII (July, 1891), 17. Robert P. Brooks, "The Agrarian Revolution in Georgia, 1865-1912," University of Wisconsin Bulletin (Madison), III (1914).

fostered by politicians of both major political parties, who were kept in office by the patronage of these eastern interests. Sectional rivalry flared, as the agrarians, finding the economic weapons of the cooperative movement and railroad rate regulation ineffective, took up their ultimate weapon, the vote, to fight eastern financial manipulation of crop prices. Thus by 1892 the national elections returned two senators and nine representatives who shortly designated themselves Populist.<sup>5</sup>

Particularly was the South drawn to Populism by its economic needs. The Civil War crushed many an independent yeoman farmer, as well as his aristocratic slaveholding peer. And the grim poverty of reconstruction left a well of bitter hatred from which Southern Bourbons dipped repeated victory at the polls, but little was shared with the southern middle class agrarians. Ambitious southern poor whites nurtured the suspicion that they were again betrayed in their hopes, and roused themselves to political activity. And in the West the early leaders of Populism were self-made men, determined to resist adversity, unconvinced that the analyses of their poverty which they received from their elected representatives were honest explanations of their

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<sup>5</sup>Hicks, Populist Revolt, 404, 423. Some doubt has been cast on the Populist charge that mortgages fed eastern capitalists. Research done at the University of Wisconsin on the development of one frontier area, Trumplow County, indicated no great financial debt owed by that section to eastern interests. Merle Curti, remarks concerning the "Trumplow County Project," Eugene, Oregon, April 15, 1955; Cong. Rec., 23:1:7; Official Congressional Directory for the Use of the United States Congress. 52 Congress, 1 Session (Washington, 1892), 210-77.

difficulties. The primary concern of both western and southern Populists became the alleviation of their immediate problems. Consequently they developed a highly pragmatic approach toward problems of government and finance.<sup>6</sup>

The intensity of middle class southerners' needs, the rigidity of caste within their own Democratic Party machinery, and so simple a factor as the growing population density in agricultural areas stimulated the agrarian revolt in the South. Regional Farmers' Alliances in both South and West were transformed, in 1892 into the political alliance, Populism. Discontent thus culminated in the formal adherence of the farmers of the two sections to a common body of principles. John D. Hicks has outlined the story of the doubts and difficulties which beset the agrarians preliminary to their entry into the political arena. Once this bold step was taken, however, the Populist Party,

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<sup>6</sup>William B. Hesseltine, "Economic Factors in the Abandonment of Reconstruction," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXII (September, 1935), 191-210, Arnett, "Populist Movement in Georgia," 18, 19, 130. In spite of the price decline, what capital was available was still being poured into the development of southern cotton. "From 1870 to 1890 capital invested in the cotton industry rose 150 per cent," while New England retained leadership in manufacturing, with 76 per cent of the spindles in 1890, as compared to 77 per cent in 1870. Victor S. Clark, History of Manufacturing in the United States (New York, 1929), II, 393, 416. See also the remarks of John W. Lapsley, Labor and Capital, IV, 177. Roscoe C. Martin, "The People's Party in Texas, A Study in Third Party Politics," The University of Texas Bulletin (Austin), Bureau of Research in the Social Sciences. Study No. 4. CLIII (July, 1891), 5-12; Hallie Farmer, "The Economic Basis of Frontier Populism," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, X (March, 1924), 406-27. One of the most complete accounts of post-Reconstruction southern problems is presented by C. Vann Woodward, Origins of the New South, 1877-1913. Vol. IX of 10 vols. in A History of the South (Baton Rouge, 1951).

newly born and possessed of few traditions, attracted reformers of many creeds and purposes.<sup>7</sup>

Though labor leader Samuel Gompers held little hope for any permanent rapport between the labor movement and Populism, labor was "well represented" at the early St. Louis and Omaha conventions of the Populist Party. Still, the contrast between "employing farmers" with wage earners proved as unnatural a combination to the agrarians, for the reception accorded labor delegations seemed lukewarm. But Populist leaders early recognized their need for a wider base of political support if the party were to maintain itself, and played upon labor discontent in an effort to gain popular influence. Thus they took care to

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<sup>7</sup>Willie D. Halsell, "The Bourbon Period in Mississippi Politics," Journal of Southern History, XI (November, 1945), 519-37, C. Vann Woodward, "Bourbonism in Georgia," ibid., XVI (October, 1939), 23-35; Hicks, Populist Revolt, 205-37. John D. Hicks has also evaluated the heritage and legacy of Populism in domestic politics: "The Legacy of Populism in the Middle West," Agricultural History, XXII (October, 1949), 225-37, ibid., "The Persistence of Populism," Minnesota History (St. Paul), XII (March, 1931), 1-20, ibid., "The Third Party Tradition in American Politics," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XX (June, 1933), 1-28. The continuity of agrarian discontent with the growth of the reform movement is traced by Arthur S. Link, "The Progressive Movement in the South, 1870-1914," North Carolina Historical Review (Raleigh), XXIII (April, 1946), 172-95. Seymour Lipset summarizes the economic and social trends which have in part accounted for the secondary importance of the agrarian revolt. See Seymour M. Lipset, "The Background of American Radicalism," in Seymour M. Lipset and Richard Bendix (eds.), Class, Status, and Power (Glencoe, Illinois, 1953), 554-67, and Orin G. Libby provides a summary of the post Civil War inflationists in "A Study of the Greenback Movement, 1876-84," Wisconsin Academy of Science, Arts, and Letters: Transactions, XII, Pt. 2 (Madison, 1900), 530-43. Other special studies which stress the growth of agrarian political activities are included in the bibliography of this thesis. See particularly Chester M. Destler, "The Origin and Character of the Pendleton Plan," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXIV (September, 1937), 171-84.

identify agriculture and labor as equal branches of industry. And the rapidly declining Knights of Labor could hardly afford to ignore chance that it might find association with Populism a temporary reprieve from total collapse.<sup>8</sup>

Socialists found the alliance more difficult. Agrarians who bolted their former parties when they could not control them sought recognition in the existing political system, and aimed at the limited reconstruction of government policies to meet their specific demands. The activities of agrarians of the middle and southwestern states who operated grain storage and selling cooperatives in businesslike fashion, and who were not averse to joining with other commercial interests in the promotion of private enterprise, repudiated any hope that they might work to overthrow contemporary society. It was socialism, always an anathema to the agrarians, which provoked the major fight within the party, and provided the opponents of Populism with one of their most

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<sup>8</sup>George H. Knowles, "Populism and Socialism with Special Reference to the Election of 1892," Pacific Historical Review, XII (September, 1943), 295-304. The intra-party fight over the subtreasury scheme is the most obvious example of contention over the policy of government competition in private enterprise. For details of the opposition to government granaries, see Hicks, Populist Revolt, 200-204. The agrarians cooperated in business ventures which, though they were based on the elimination of the middleman, could certainly not be termed public ownership, or even profit sharing. See Ralph A. Smith, "Macunism, or the Farmers of Texas in Business," Journal of Southern History, XIII (May, 1947), 220-44, and Henrietta M. Larson, "The Wheat Market and the Farmers in Minnesota, 1858-1900," Studies in History, Economics, and Public Law, CXXII (1926), 197.

effective, if misdirected, public criticisms of the movement.<sup>9</sup>

Socialists began to abandon the party after agrarian leaders failed to respond to the economic effects of the depression of the eighteen nineties with any broad or comprehensive plan for social reforms. The deepening class and sectional antagonism of the years 1893 and 1894 threw the limitations of the Populist program into bold relief, and even the loyal efforts of such men as Henry Demarest Lloyd and Eugene V. Debs could not disguise its true conservatism.

So the farmers ruled the party they created with iron determination to better their condition and often, their critics jeered, with

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<sup>9</sup>The printed essays and public addresses of Henry Demarest Lloyd are disappointing to a reader in search of the philosophy which propelled so active and able a man as Lloyd in his lifelong search for social justice. For the phrases as well as the thoughts are pedestrian, and if one is to judge the thinker from the incomplete record of available public addresses, Lloyd looked to a utopian future for all mankind, as well as for his countrymen. The memoir of her husband by Caro Lloyd is of equally little help to an understanding of Lloyd's position. But the Secretary of the American Free Trade League clung to Populism until 1896 in the hope that it would prove the vehicle of social progress which he envisioned, though he, like Debs, advocated public ownership of basic industries. A critical study of Lloyd's social philosophy would prove a most useful addition to our understanding of radicalism in the United States. See also Chester M. Destler, "The Consumation of the Labor-Populist Alliance in Illinois," in Chester M. Destler (ed.), American Radicalism, 1865-1901 (New London, 1946), 108, and Ray Ginger, The Bending Cross (New Brunswick, 1949), 187. Ginger's work includes a detailed account of the attempt at labor-Populist fusion. Caro Lloyd, Henry Demarest Lloyd, 1847-1903 (New York and London, 1912), Henry Demarest Lloyd, Men, The Workers (New York, 1909), ibid., Mazzini and Other Essays (New York and London, 1910).

wooden heads as well.<sup>10</sup>

A resurgent faith in democracy and democratic processes marked the Populist protest. The major parties limited their remedies for the excesses of the Gilded Age to threats of new intra-party alliances and demands for civil service reform. But Populist legislators countered by demanding full partnership in the economic future of the country. Yet in spite of their seemingly blind faith in the popular will, the formulation of policy within the Populist organization devolved to a few party leaders. Several of these men, among whom William V. Allen and Marion Butler were prominent, exerted influence to guide and direct Populism by virtue of their stature as national legislators.<sup>11</sup>

These Populist congressional leaders failed to achieve the equality of prosperity with industry which they sought in behalf of their constituents. Between 1890 and 1898 none of their major proposals became law. If there were gains for agriculture, these gains resulted from the tremendous increase in national wealth, which in turn raised the level of agrarian economic life.

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<sup>10</sup>Ginger, The Bending Cross, 189, 162, 163.

<sup>11</sup>After the election of 1892 William Allen and Marion Butler seem to have assumed responsibility for Populist strategy in Congress. The rise of Butler and Allen to congressional prominence coincided with the rise of the silver coinage issue. These two senators were most often able to gain the floor to address their colleagues, and it was they who openly worked with silver partisans of both Republican and Democrat allegiance. In the House of Representatives Tom Watson fulfilled a comparable role until his defeat in 1893 when Representatives John Davis and William A. Harris seem to have inherited his leadership. B. Webber and S. J. Hanfield Jones, "Variations in the Rate of Economic Growth in the United States of America, 1869-1939," Oxford Economic Papers, New Series, VI (June, 1954), 108.



The "New Freedom" and "New Nationalism" of the early twentieth century progressives transferred much of the Populist philosophy to the urban middle class, but even the enactment of some of the major Populist demands failed to realize the agrarian objectives. For the Populists fostered the rising spirit of nationalism in the United States by emphasizing the need for equal economic opportunity for all sections, interests, and classes. They considered the sectional agricultural interests of wheat and cotton which they represented to be of paramount importance as mainstays of the prosperity of the middle class. Equality of opportunity Populist legislators defined as opportunity to obtain a greater share in the national prosperity. Barring the elimination of private wealth proposed by socialists, equality of opportunity thus implied opportunity for growth, intensive (concentration), and extensive (expansion).<sup>12</sup>

The concentration of wealth and power in the hands of manufacturers stimulated the agrarian protest. Populists refused to accept the limitations for agriculture which seemingly paralleled the rapid trends toward centralized government and the concentration of industrial life in the United States. Thus both logic and reality pushed

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<sup>12</sup>Appeals to history and patriots of earlier periods studded Populist oratory. Occasionally even the memory of Daniel Webster stood service. The works of Stanley Jevons, Nicholas Montcretien, and John Stuart Mill became standard references in most Populist discussions of monetary theory, but strangely, Populists drew no direct analogy between their own predicament and that of agrarians during the English enclosure movement. See, for example, Cong. Rec., 23:4:3009, 3113; ibid., 23:3:2534, 137; ibid., 23:3:2841, 2843, ibid., 22:Appendix:62-63.

the Populists, along with other agrarians, toward agricultural expansion, at the same time that it gave a corresponding impetus to commercial activity.<sup>13</sup>

Populist legislators consciously expounded a policy of decentralization in government and in economic life. Equating agriculture with industry and commerce seemed to them vital to preserve the development of the nation along traditional lines. When the complexity of urban industrial life increased the volume of governmental functions, Populists reacted by condemning government activity per se. Indeed, the agrarian legislators felt that without the special intervention of the state in behalf of industry, agriculture would stand in a position of power nearly equal to the machine civilization, if not superior to it.<sup>14</sup>

Populists formulated their policies accordingly. They endeavored to shape legislation to their own advantage for their version of the national interest. At the same time they remained free to criticize and obstruct the development of national policies which would not directly benefit them. The seeming oscillation of Populist legislators from their expressed desire for a strong and benevolent central government to their attempts to repress the most elementary

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<sup>13</sup>See, for example, the contention of John Davis that a "nation grows through the accumulation of wealth in commerce." Jerry Simpson agreed that "surplus must seek foreign markets," and William McKeighan feared "industrial paralysis." Cong. Rec., 23:3:3109, ibid., 23:3:2105, ibid., 23:Appendix:612.

<sup>14</sup>Cong. Rec., 23:4:3866, ibid., 23:3:3004.

governmental functions is best understood in this light.<sup>15</sup>

Populist legislators saw in the tariff the scapegoat for many ills which beset their constituents. Though elected to a national legislative body, the farmers and small town lawyers who served the new party gave their primary allegiance to local interests. Hence the tariff of 1890, protective to industry and prohibitive to the importation of cheap foreign manufactures, drew sharp and persistent criticism from Populist representatives. During the Harrison Administration and into the early months of 1893 the case made by Populists against the tariff placed emphasis on the farmer as a consumer of protected domestic manufactures.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>The pressure for government control of monetary policy coupled with demands for tariff reduction is an obvious example of Populist tactics. William Peffer phrased the problem bluntly: "Someone will always benefit. The question is who." Cong. Rec., 23:5:4211. In the period under consideration some Populist legislators repudiated government subsidies as unwarranted paternalism. For example James Kyle and William Baker opposed subsidies, while William Peffer favored extending the bounty system to agriculture. This division of opinion could hardly be termed a sectional one, since all three men represented the West. Cong. Rec., 23:4:3894-95. See footnote 20 for other evidence of Peffer's attitude prior to 1893.

<sup>16</sup>Cong. Rec., 23:4:3108. Whether or not one agrees with the theoretical argument that the tariff must be paid by the consumer of protected articles, it is true that "food prices went steadily up" during the first fifteen months of the McKinley tariff. Prices for coal, lumber, and tin also jumped. Tarbell, Tariff in Our Times, 210, 11, Graham B. McAdams, The Protective System: What It Costs the American Farmer (n.p., 1880), 36. The choice between free trade and protection offered to voters by the Democratic Party in 1892 disguised the fact that under the tariff of 1890 the admission to this country of raw materials free of duty "increased from 119 million dollars in 1890 to 149 in 1891 and to 156 million in 1892, and to 176 million in 1893." Edward C. Stanwood, American Tariff Controversies in the Nineteenth Century (Boston and New York, 1903), 304; Cong. Rec., 23:4:3821.

The tariff existed and was employed as a convenient device to force consumers to pay the prices demanded by domestic manufacturers, alleged the agrarians. Since powerful manufacturing and financial interests prevented the operation of the tariff simply as a revenue measure, it must be abandoned entirely to permit the unrestricted operation of the law of supply and demand. To the farmer, contention between the two major political parties over tariff rates since Reconstruction had become a "sham battle." Republican and Democratic politicians, under the sway of the business community, debated tariff policy to the exclusion of any immediate aid to the farmer.<sup>17</sup>

The tariff battle remained, then, a "mythical issue":

Republicans say they are in favor of protection as a principle, yet through reciprocity they are trying to avoid it as a practice, while the Democrats say that free trade as a governmental principle is thoroughly right, but they do not adopt it as a rule of action.

Yet ardently as they pleaded for a return to a system of idyllic competitive capitalism, the agrarians limited the area to which they would apply their classical doctrine of free trade. For though the jealous farmers noted that they would gain nothing through the development of larger home markets in dairy products, cotton, wheat, beef, or pork, which were produced in such quantity as to be principally exports, and the price for which was determined largely on the world market, still they envied industrialists and manufacturers their influential position in government, which prompted the Republican Administration to

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<sup>17</sup>Cong. Rec., 23:3:2838; ibid., 22:4:3109.

penetrate foreign markets in behalf of the manufacturers.<sup>18</sup>

But protection for the farmers' products failed to satisfy Populists. Since the importation of agricultural staples was negligible, there existed little prospect that a protective tariff could aid the farmer, as it did the manufacturer. (Beet sugar seems to have provided an exception to the rule, but not until 1897 did Populist legislators seriously discuss the possibility of diversified farming. At that time the agrarians fought to maintain tariff preferences for beet sugar interests. But during the early eighteen nineties, though domestic beet sugar production took giant strides, Populist legislators seem not to have appreciated this effect of the tariff on agriculture.) Admittedly, "under certain conditions of competition" tariff manipulation became an acceptable device for the promotion of production. But for the agrarians of the wheat and cotton belts, where Populism thrived, these conditions did not exist.<sup>19</sup>

Consequently, "the scheme of reciprocity" instituted by the Harrison administration appeared to the distrustful farmer politicians to exist "for the manufacturer, not for the farmer." But the representatives of the farmers' party, though they made uniform demands for free raw materials and minimum tariffs on the "necessities of life," often

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<sup>18</sup>Cong. Rec., 23:3:2838. Tom Watson stressed the dangers of promoting protection for "a certain class of industries," manufacturers. See also William A. Peffer, The Farmer's Side (New York, 1891), 138.

<sup>19</sup>Albert Shaw, "William V. Allen, Populist," Review of Reviews (New York), X (July, 1894), 37.

weakened their case against the use of tariff policy as an aid to industrial expansion when they made assertions which implied agreement with, rather than opposition to, Republican policies. For example, even the colorful Jerry Simpson, who considered himself "a free trader, absolute" could be baited into the admission that he feared the competition and effects of foreign labor upon the prosperity of this country.<sup>20</sup>

Moreover, the free trade sentiment was far from unanimous among the farmers themselves. The southern and gulf state farmers who led the agrarian movement remained in many instances "ardent protectionists." And Republican electioneers of 1892 found it worth their while to stimulate interest in the "Knights of Reciprocity" among western farmers whom they hoped were "tired of the Alliances." Necessarily, the Populist

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<sup>20</sup>Cong. Rec., 23:4:3108. If one considers the problem of tariff rates to be one of free trade versus protection he is easily misled as to the Populist position. Western Populists backed their southern colleagues' demands for free raw materials, and southerners centered these demands around items such as jute bagging, twine, and metal finished products. It is therefore more accurate to emphasize special interests, rather than sectional alignment within the party. William Peffer freely admitted that he voted for the sugar bounty of 1890 "because that is the best way in the world to build up an industry quickly." Certainly no complaints were heard from Populists that the cotton duties stifled free trade, yet under the tariff of 1890 cotton importation was difficult. William A. Peffer, quoted from the Boston Herald in Public Opinion (Washington, D. C.), XVII (July 5, 1894), 311, Tarbell, Tariff in Our Times, 190.

legislators' position on tariff policy was a pragmatic one.<sup>21</sup>

The agrarian legislators understood the advantage of identifying their interests with those of industry. By doing so they might claim a voice in the development of governmental policies, though their minority position denied them any right to formal control of the national government. And though they protested vehemently against the rapid transition of the country to a predominantly industrial society, they found in the labor theory of value the concept to serve their

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<sup>21</sup>The "Knights of Reciprocity," founded in 1892, organized "laboring men, and farmers who are tired of the Alliances, for Blaine and a protective tariff." New York Times, January 10, 1892. William D. Sheldon, Populism in the Old Dominion (Princeton, 1935), 397. It was the southwestern and gulf states which led the agrarian revolt. C. Vann Woodward, Origins of the New South, 188. Howard R. Smith has re-evaluated the position of American farmers relative to tariff policy. His conclusion is that they have aligned themselves on the side of protection. See Howard R. Smith, "The Farmer and the Tariff; a Re-Appraisal," The Southern Economic Journal (Chapel Hill), XXI (October, 1954), 152-165. Anna Rochester explains the omission of any tariff plank from the Ocala Platform of the Populist Party was due to the general disgust of the agrarians with the presentation of the tariff problem to the public. Such an explanation seems illogical in view of Populist willingness to take issue with their opponents upon the formulation of arguments designed for public consumption. It seems more accurate to conclude that the Populist position on the tariff appeared ambiguous because the agrarians desired to attract labor's support, and labor seemingly required protection from foreign competition. The McKinley bill engendered hatred among the farmers because of its high rates on textiles and metal products. These industries often demanded protection. This analysis is borne out by the testimony of Populist legislator Benjamin Clover, who deplored the farmer's need to compete "along cheap free trade products of other countries, often made cheaper by reason of reciprocity schemes and other free trade devices." Cong. Rec., 23:Appendix:31, and ibid., 23:3:2838-41. See also Anna Rochester, The Populist Movement in the United States (New York, 1943), 77, Wilfred E. Binkley, American Political Parties, Their Natural History (New York, 1943), 524.

purposes.<sup>22</sup>

Thus they asserted that labor might "be divided into two great departments--one employed in producing property, the other in handling it." And producers were "divided into two classes, as they have, or have not, a voice in the disposition of their products." Significantly, the proposition defined farmers as entrepreneurs, rather than as laborers. An affinity with labor might be explained on the ground that "that which is the capital of today was nothing but labor yesterday" as the Populist leader Tom Watson urged. Such accrued labor held legitimate rights to profit, since its function was production.<sup>23</sup>

But Populist legislators refused to admit that overproduction might be responsible for the economic miseries of which they complained. Instead, Populist Senators from Kansas and North Carolina looked eagerly to the development of markets "with our neighbors to the East of us"; and, in spite of the competition offered to this country's products by the agricultural imports of South America, cotton state Senator Marion Butler expressed himself as "much gratified" that his erstwhile political allies of the Republican Party were "enlarging their economic vision somewhat and reaching out to South America and Canada and other parts of the world" for markets. He sought for his fellow southerners

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<sup>22</sup>Cong. Rec., 23:3:2435, ibid., 23:3:2531, ibid., 23:4:3107; Peffer, The Farmer's Side, 43, 44, 63; Thomas W. Watson, "The People's Party's Appeal," Independent (New York), LVII (October 3, 1904), 829-32.

<sup>23</sup>Peffer, The Farmer's Side, 46, Cong. Rec., 23:2:1250-51.



new market prospects "in the countries south of us, in South and Central America, and in Africa." Even more vehemently, a Kansas Populist protested the effect upon agriculture of the preferential treatment accorded manufacturers: "Why, Mr. Chairman," cried he to the presiding officer of the House of Representatives as he ended a critique of Republican policies, "we are driven from the markets of the whole world." In response to their criticisms, the Republican Administration made belated efforts, as the discontent of the insurgent agrarian became apparent to them, to open new areas of trade to American agriculture, whenever it was possible to do so without detriment to the position of American manufactures abroad.<sup>24</sup>

Had the Populist revolt been limited to the expression of discontent by a few western and southern farmers, it might well have died in the halls of the Congress with the impassioned speeches of a few elected agrarians. But domestic political considerations and world economic conditions gave rise to the protests, and these factors worked to stimulate the success of the new party. World agricultural prices remained depressed, and were doubtless aggravated in this country by the tight money policy pursued by President Benjamin Harrison, who refused to coin silver, or to issue either long or short term paper to stimulate the international exchange and the domestic

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<sup>24</sup>Cong. Rec., 23:4:2838, ibid., 23:4:3109.

economy.<sup>25</sup>

In vain did the Department of State attempt to offset this agricultural surplus crisis by opening other markets. While J. C. Morgan publicized the new grain markets in Russia open to this country because of the failure of the European grain crop, the United States minister to Moscow received his orders. He must impress upon the Czar the cordial wish of "the American people" to extend their help. But nothing came of the venture, which was so little understood by Populist

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<sup>25</sup>The efforts of commercial interests to stimulate silver coinage before 1893 seem to have been generally ignored. But in early January of 1892 the New York Board of Trade proposed an "Address to commercial organizations of Great Britain and other countries with the view to give gold and silver legal equality at a uniform rate." Times, January 17, 1892. At the same time Jesse Seligman journeyed abroad on a "silver question tour" to be followed shortly by Secretary of the Treasury John W. Foster. Conditions seemed favorable to the establishment of an international silver coinage agreement until Germany and Austria announced plans to demonetize the metal. In England Foster's conference with Chancellor of the Exchequer George W. Goschen gave equally little satisfaction. The Chancellor hedged. He was not "well enough informed to say" whether a monetary conference would actually settle the silver question. When the English press openly deplored all suggestions for increased silver monetization, the French editor of Le Temps sullenly admitted that "nothing can be done without England's co-operation." Times, January 4, January 19, January 11, March 8, May 6, 1892.

The failure of these early Republican monetization schemes proved a relief to election-minded Democrats. Conservative Republican President Benjamin Harrison indicated his preference for maintaining the status quo. The New York Times noted with relief that the "silver craze" seemed to have abated in May, 1892. It must be noted that during this period demands of the agrarians were not limited to silver coinage. For example, though Tom Watson and William McKeighan demanded silver coinage, Representative John Otis demanded merely an increase in currency. Cong. Rec., 23:5:4211, 12, ibid., 23:2:2433, ibid., 23:4:3004, 3868. See also Volwiler, Correspondence, James G. Blaine to Benjamin Harrison, August 23, 1890, 118, ibid., August 15, 1890.

Congressmen that they refused to vote relief shipments of grain to Russia on the grounds that such an appropriation involved aid to middlewestern millers at governmental expense.<sup>26</sup>

James G. Blaine's prophecy that Republican policies could "whip the Alliances in six months" proved highly inaccurate. Drawn by the nature of the economic problem which they faced to consider the relations of the United States with other countries, Populist legislators soon advanced a wholesale criticism of Republican policies. Though it cannot be said that there evolved for the agrarian legislators any comprehensive body of doctrine for the conduct of American foreign relations during these years, their constant questioning often helped to clarify the meaning and intention of Republican activities.<sup>27</sup>

The agrarians insisted that measures to promote domestic prosperity must take precedence in national policy. But, like the founding fathers before them, they had trouble resolving the dilemma of mercantilism: today's necessity or tomorrow's expansion. A false

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<sup>26</sup>Times, March 1, 2, 4, 7, 12, 16, 1892. For. Rel., 1892, 542, ibid., 1893, 546; Cong. Rec., 23:1:111.

<sup>27</sup>Volwiler, Correspondence, Blaine to Harrison, September 23, 1891, 193; Times, January 23, May 23, June 25, June 27, 1892. Before the elections of 1892 ex-Senator Sabin of Minnesota warned conservatives that he could "not think of any time when so unsubstantial a party had gained so substantially." Cong. Rec., 23:4:4009, ibid., 23:3:2841, ibid., 23:2:1297. See also Ignatius Donnelly, Caesar's Column (Chicago, 1892), 197. Donnelly's nationalism led him to advocate the formation of an international organization to "lift up the oppressed and save society and civilization. It should work through government instrumentalities." In spite of these noble sentiments, Donnelly's work is an example of the Victorian novel at its worst. For the relationship of silver to international peace see Chapter II of this thesis.

economy asserted itself in the Populist veto of Republican proposals to join North and South America by railway, and thus gain direct access to the markets of South America. Promoters schemes dissolved in a wrangle over "Carnegie's scheme," and in the opposition of southerners, who feared the competition of South American agriculture.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> An analysis of Populist votes cast upon major United States Army and Navy appropriation bills reveals no significant differences among western Populist legislators who united in their opposition to these expenditures. One southern legislator, Populist Representative Benjamin Clover of Georgia, consistently abstained from voting. But he assigned no reason for his unwillingness to cast his ballot. Clover was joined in his silence occasionally by westerners William Baker and Omer Kem. In the Senate, William Pepper refused to approve a proposal to open the American coastal trade to ships of foreign registry built with American capital.

Though Jerry Simpson insisted that "so far as I am concerned, I do not believe we need a navy at all," Tom Watson did not care to phrase the opposition "quite so strongly." Watson himself urged caution because "economy must begin somewhere." Similarly, William Baker balked at attempts to "increase the navy" because he feared domestic taxation to be the price of the undesirable foreign conquests which might follow military expansion. But the opposition of Populist legislators to military and naval expansion was never rooted in any desire to isolate the United States, or to curtail the commercial sea power of this country. *Cong. Rec.*, 23:4:3399; *ibid.*, 6:3956, 5623; *ibid.*, 7:5516, 6015, 6187; *ibid.*, 23:7:6542; *ibid.*, 23:2:1091, 1096, 1099; *ibid.*, 5:4084; *ibid.*, 6:6015. See also *Cong. Rec.*, 23:4:3801, 3230; *ibid.*, 7:6541; *ibid.*, 2:1036-37; *ibid.*, 24:1:152; *ibid.*, 23:6:5851-52; *ibid.*, 23:4:3894-95; *ibid.*, 23:4:3728.

Populist legislators and other expansionists conceived of mercantilism and free trade as supplementary systems under which the home market was to be reserved to domestic producers, while overseas commerce brought wealth to this country. Were the United States to pursue a policy of free trade, it seemed likely that agriculture might remain the bulwark of overseas commerce, and that European industrial competition would work to limit development in this country. Populist legislators often felt pressed to deny the validity of the latter premise, and so they resorted to wild and extravagant praise of the ingenuity, resourcefulness, and ability of domestic producers, whom they alleged were equal to all threats of foreign competition. *Cong. Rec.*, 23:4:3728, 3361, 3664; *ibid.*, 23:3:2843; *ibid.*, 23:4:3868.

Populist legislators insisted that the uses to which the national government encouraged financiers to put capital were in reality hostile to peaceful commercial activities. With credit and specie so badly needed for domestic purpose, government expenditures should be cut, and only minimal governmental services retained, even at the cost of reducing American economic activities abroad. From this logic came the determined Populist opposition to early Republican attempts to expand and improve the United States Consular Service. Overseas economic power for expansion constituted war power, the farmers insisted. Thus they sought, by block voting against military and commercial appropriation measures, to control "the power of the purse and the power of the sword." It seemed apparent to them also that the concerted plans of the Republican Party to build naval power aimed at aggression, both foreign and domestic. Furthermore, an acute class consciousness underscored Populist fears that the rising spirit of militarism would, if fostered, be used by the administration to forestall domestic economic and social reforms.<sup>29</sup>

But Populist legislators resolved their theories about the legitimate functions of government with practical politics. They joined in the scramble for sectional economic benefits. The fear that the position of agriculturalists was being reduced to that of a renter class as

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<sup>29</sup>Cong. Rec., 23:2:1036; *ibid.*, 23:4:3230, *ibid.*, 23:6:5623; *ibid.*, 23:7:6542; *ibid.*, 23:4:3399, 3231; *ibid.*, 23:3:1080; *ibid.*, 23:4:3009; *ibid.*, 23:4:3661; *ibid.*, Appendix:619. See also Cong. Rec., 23:4:3109, 3361; *ibid.*, 23:5:4199; *ibid.*, 23:6:5858; *ibid.*, 24:1:33-34, 51.

a result of exploitation by the owners of capital stimulated agrarian efforts to obtain economic concessions. And though they professed a fear of military might, it was not so much militarism itself of which they seemed apprehensive, as it was their inability to influence the extent and purposes to which military power would be used.<sup>30</sup>

Thus when, in 1892, the economic expansion of the United States into the Carribbean resulted in the threat of war with Chile, Populists opposed any extended naval activities by this country in the Carribbean as being unwarranted, and unnecessary to national defense. And on the basis of the available evidence, Populist legislators seem to have been ambivalent toward the efforts of the Harrison and Cleveland administrations to extend the territorial holdings of the United States. They expressed no sympathy for the treaty of Hawaiian annexation submitted to Congress by Harrison.<sup>31</sup>

After the Hawaiian revolution of 1893, President Grover Cleveland withdrew the pending treaty from the consideration of Congress, and sponsored a special investigation into the role of United States officials and military forces in precipitating revolution in the islands. At that time Populist Senator Marion Butler opposed the reading of the findings of the Special Commissioner as a "waste of time." He did not specify why. The publicity given to Cleveland's

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<sup>30</sup>Cong. Rec., 22:1:99-100 presents William Baker's petition for a military post at Pierre, South Dakota. See also Cong. Rec., 24:2:880 for Peffer's bill to facilitate promotion in the navy.

<sup>31</sup>Cong. Rec., 23:4:3230; ibid., 3360-61.

condemnation of American intervention in Hawaiian affairs and the President's stand against annexation stressed the anti-imperialistic position of the United States. But this served only to confuse the issue. For the President clung to John Tyler's doctrine of expansion for Hawaii: "It is desirable that the ports of a country so near to Japan and China should be open to our trade and to the convenience of such vessels of our navy as should be in those waters." On this Butler agreed with the President. Hawaii must remain within the American orbit. Further, the Senator urged annexation if it could be achieved "properly." Other Populist senators showed even greater expansionist sympathies.<sup>32</sup>

Senator Allen in his turn introduced a resolution favoring annexation. It remained noncommittal as to the circumstances surrounding the island revolution. Butler approved a substitute measure which called for the noninterference of this country in the affairs of other nations, but which left the diplomatic door ajar for recognition of the new pro-annexationist Hawaiian government. His predilection for popular government caused William Peffer to oppose this proposition, and Senators Allen and Davis, though they withheld comments upon it, joined Peffer in his negative stand upon the latter proposition.<sup>33</sup>

Populists in the House of Representatives vetoed Hawaiian

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<sup>32</sup>Times, February 27, 1894. Butler disapproved of any dickerings with the Dole government, which he considered illegitimate.

<sup>33</sup>Cong. Rec., 26:2:1967, 68, ibid., 26:6:5500, ibid., 26:7:7041.

annexation, and condemned American intervention there. For true independence, they maintained, the islands must remain free of American pressure.<sup>34</sup>

Although the problem of Hawaiian annexation was intimately connected with markets for both the South and West, Populist legislators refused to be drawn into any intra-party sectional struggle which might weaken their unity. But it must be noted that the tariff of 1890, by removing the favored position of Hawaiian sugar growers in the United States, contributed much of the impetus to the Hawaiian revolution, and worked also to draw Cuba closer to the American commercial orbit (despite Spanish attempts to maintain a closed commercial system between Cuba and Spain through the use of preferential tariff rates with the mother country and other restrictive economic devices). Harrison and Blaine used the threat of concessions to German sugar growers to compel Spanish acquiescence to a short term reciprocity treaty between the United States and Cuba. Similarly Cleveland found it advantageous to accept the advice of his Attorney General, Richard Olney, upon American-Hawaiian affairs. One of the "practical considerations" of maintaining the revolutionary Hawaiian government as Olney urged, would be the

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 26:2:1967, 26:7:7041.



leverage which the administration could exert to promote the Cuban trade.<sup>35</sup>

But the attempts of the Harrison and Cleveland administrations to quiet domestic economic tensions through diplomatic maneuvers failed, largely because of the conservative financial policies of both administrations. Thus the agrarian critics of Republican policies could find no comfort in the succession of conservative Democrat Grover Cleveland to the presidency. To Populist legislators, who fumbled for a way to combine economic expansion with anti-colonialism, currency inflation seemed to provide a ready solution to their difficulties. Even within the Democratic Party the opposition to the Cleveland Presidential nomination in 1892 centered about the need for financial reform.

As the election approached, the activities of the former governor of New York, David B. Hill, commanded attention. Hill toured the South, bringing to industrial and agricultural interests there the

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<sup>35</sup>Richard D. Weigle, "Sugar and Hawaiian Revolution," Pacific Historical Review (February, 1947), 41-58. Republicans later summarized the objectives of the Harrison Administration: "Shortly after Mr. Blaine became Secretary of State, in the administration of Benjamin Harrison, it was the subject of consideration whether Spain could be induced to acknowledge Cuba as independent should the United States guarantee the sum to be paid by Cuba for the relinquishment of all Spanish rights to the island. This movement was made by the sugar planters, and it was thought that the entire sugar industry would support it. Mr. Blaine announced himself warmly in favor of the project, but after long conferences it was ascertained that the consent of Spain could not be obtained." Compilation of Reports of the Committee on Foreign Relations. United States Senate, 1789-1901. Diplomatic Relations with Foreign Nations. Affairs in Cuba. VII (Washington, 1901), 23; Volwiler, Correspondence, 120, Blaine to Harrison, July 21, 1890; John W. Foster, Diplomatic Memories, II (Boston, 1909), 8. Sylvester K. Stevens, American Expansion in Hawaii, 1842-1848 (Harrisburg, 1945), 185.

promise of unlimited silver coinage and prosperity. Unity among the silver forces in the South and East remained the primary accomplishment of Hill's campaign for the Democratic nomination. So powerful an interest favorable to the free coinage of silver consolidated within both major parties that Edward Atkinson, a northern industrialist who quite understood the logic employed by his commercial brethren in their campaign for silver, and who appreciated the possible consequences of the formation of a silver party, pamphleteered, cajoled, and threatened, in behalf of the conservatives.<sup>36</sup>

If the tide of revolt could not be stemmed, it might be channeled with the proposal that silver circulate within the country at par with gold, and that all foreign silver be taxed in the amount equal to the difference between its current value and gold. Such an ingenious means of preserving the home market to American producers Atkins hoped would not be necessary. Yet so prevalent had the silver heresy become by the time of the Democratic National Convention that press reports rumored the Democratic Platform Committee, comprised of "a silver majority," could be restrained from inserting a formal promise of bimetallism only by "wait and see" promises. Campaign strategy saved Democracy from silver by the narrowest of margins. Thus the Populist Party ticket offered voters in 1892 the single opportunity of expressing themselves in favor of the "free and unlimited coinage of silver at the ratio of sixteen to one." And for the first time since 1860 over a

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<sup>36</sup>Times, March 15, 1892; ibid., June 25, 1892.

million popular votes were cast for a third party presidential candidate, Populist James B. Weaver.<sup>37</sup>

The analysis upon which the Populist plea for an inflationary currency hinged emphasized three important views: (1) that a contraction of circulating specie had occurred spasmodically throughout man's recorded history, induced by the manipulation of currency by ruling classes for their own advantage; (2) that the apparent contraction was in reality not a diminution of the currency fund, but appeared so because of the steadily rising world price level with which the expanding currencies of national governments had not kept pace; and (3) that the scarcity of circulating media was due chiefly to the withdrawal of specie from domestic circulation for the uses of international finance.<sup>38</sup>

Propagandists explained the "crime of 1873" in terms of currency manipulation for private advantage. To them it appeared that an international conspiracy of bankers combined to wring from the fruits of other men's labors all that cunning might extract. This retroactive theory of conspiracy proved, apparently, a powerful weapon of persuasion among the less astute of the reformers. But the conspiracy theory does not appear to have been given much credence or circulation by Populist Congressmen before the panic of 1893. After the panic the approaching national elections rendered the sincerity behind such charges questionable. Generally the agrarians attributed short range contractions to

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., June 24, 1892, Hicks, Populist Revolt, 267.

<sup>38</sup>See for example: Cong. Rec., 23:5:3862-65, 68; ibid., 23:7:612; ibid., 22:3:2433-37, 23:2:1829.

the refusal of financiers to back further the unsound expansion of railroad and mercantile interests.<sup>39</sup>

International exchange rates became a principal target for attack among Populist monetary theorists. Vehemently they insisted that silver coinage would stimulate the international export market and so work to offset the high interest charges paid by this country on the foreign market for seasonal advances on crop exports. They further offered silver coinage as a means of equalizing transportation costs between the United States and those countries favored by their geographical position in relation to overseas markets.<sup>40</sup>

Populists were quick to point out that under the existing gold standard international exchange rates favored Asian purchasing power at the expense of American agricultural exports. Furthermore, India coined silver freely, and Indian silver, traded at a lower value than American silver ore, commanded a greater quantity of gold than did an equal weight of silver offered in the exchange market by this country. The advantage thus provided to the exchange balance of the British Empire worked to the detriment of the United States, the agrarians insisted.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>See for example Cong. Rec., 23:3:2433-2437.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 23:4:3853.

<sup>41</sup>"At the present time England buys 32 cents worth of our own bullion and converts it into rupees worth 48 cents and with which she purchases from the Hindoo 48 cents worth of wheat." James Kyle, Cong. Rec., 23:4:3853, ibid., 23:3:2536; Fredrick E. Haynes, James Baird Weaver (Iowa City, 1919), 230.

Yet in spite of their suspicion that international bankers conspired to control the money market at public expense, a strong belief in the community of interest of all English-speaking peoples led Populist leaders to seek an international agreement which would prove favorable to Populist demands for an increase in the quantity of the world money supply. Little contention existed between silverites and gold standard advocates as to the necessity of maintaining a managed currency.<sup>42</sup>

It was Populist emphasis on the desirability of an increased use of silver in foreign trade that led Ignatius Donnelly to represent his party at the International Monetary Conference of 1892. Though the agrarians insisted that the supply of money should be regulated by the demand for its use, they ranked both silver and non-interest bearing, small denomination, negotiable government paper as highly acceptable additions to the circulating domestic currency. Unemployment and the

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<sup>42</sup> Thus the Populists were brought, by 1893, to the same position as that of the historian Brooks Adams. It seems reasonable to infer from the disjointed and oft paraphrased arguments of Populist legislators, none of whom approached Adams in scholarship, that the influence of his ideas sparked much of the Populist appeal to history. Though nowhere in the Congressional Record during the period under examination is Adams quoted directly by Populist legislators, he worked with party representatives in the American Bimetallic League. It is possible, too, that his influence may have permeated the agrarian movement at an early date as a result of pamphleteering in behalf of bimetallism by Adams and his close associate, economist Francis A. Walker. See Brooks Adams, The Law of Civilization and Decay (New York, 1943), ibid., The Gold Standard; An Historical Study (Boston, 1894), Francis A. Walker, Bimetallism; A Tract for the Times (Boston, 1894), ibid., International Bimetallism (New York, 1896), 219, 283.

domestic tensions aggravated by the panic of 1893 stimulated this conviction of the farmers and their friends that international bimetallism must succeed the gold standard. Meanwhile domestic politics, the continuing international depression, and a re-alignment of the major world powers combined to strengthen the position of the agrarians in Congress and throughout the United States.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 372-73, Carleton J. Hayes, A Generation of Materialism, 1871-1900, Vol. XVII of The Rise of Modern Europe, ed. William L. Langer (XVII vols., New York and London), 290-98. For Populist reactions to the panic of 1893 see Chapter II of this thesis.

## CHAPTER II

### SOME COWBIRDS OF REFORM

"Competing nations seek, along paths of least resistance, the means which give them an advantage in the struggle for survival. . ."

Brooks Adams  
The New Empire

The election of a Democratic president worked no special economic miracle for the United States. After 1892, both agriculture and industry continued their plunge into a deeper cycle of depression. The liquidation of foreign securities progressed until rates for loans on call rose to 186 per cent in New York. In desperation, Grover Cleveland announced that he would convene Congress for the purpose of repealing the Silver Purchase Act of 1890, the continued operation of which, he contended, threatened public confidence in the ability of the government to maintain the nation's credit.<sup>1</sup>

Some business journals laid blame for immoderately heavy withdrawals of gold from this country on the contraction of the overexpanded American railroad system. Still others saw what they came to consider the dangerous relationship between American prosperity and dependence

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<sup>1</sup>Francis S. Philbrick, "The Mercantile Conditions of the Crisis of 1893," University of Nebraska Graduate Bulletin (Lincoln), II (1902), 299-320, Allan F. Nevins, Grover Cleveland, A Study in Courage (New York, 1932), 524, Frank P. Weber, The Background of the Panic of 1893 (Washington, D. C., 1929), 4.

upon foreign investment capital. And, in truth,

Our abnormal imports of merchandise from Europe from 1866 to 1890 represented for the most part capital invested by Great Britain in negotiable American securities. The demand for capital following the Baring failure of November 20, 1890, caused American securities to be thrown on the market . . . during the first half of 1891, 70,000,000 in gold was shipped abroad.

The brief respite provided by the sale of seasonal crops could not promote recovery, and the cyclical increase of speculation could not promote trade. Rather these phenomena encouraged the hoarding of funds which were formerly available.<sup>2</sup>

When gold withdrawals "strikingly increased" in late 1892 and early 1893, "foreign investors in American securities had grave apprehensions" for the safety of their investments. But the determination of the President to repeal the Silver Purchase Act of 1890 faced such opposition within the Democratic Party that the Democratic Administration resorted finally to the lever of political patronage in order to collect sufficient congressional votes for repeal. Republicans exhibited no more unanimity than Democrats in support of the gold standard. "No Republican President could have secured the repeal of the Sherman Act," reflected powerful Republican Senator Allison of Iowa. But partisan attacks upon the Democratic Administration served to distract

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<sup>2</sup>See for examples: "The Financial Situation," Commercial and Financial Chronicle, LV (July 30, 1892), 160, and "Prospects of Trade," Bankers' Magazine and Statistical Register, XXXIV (July, 1889), 3; Weberg, ibid., 4, Montgomery D. Anderson, "An Agricultural Theory of Business Cycles," American Economic Review (Ithica), XXI (September, 1931), 434, Times, October 20, 1892.



from the split among eastern Republican financiers over the wisdom of maintaining conservative policies. Liberal western Republicans such as Charles G. Dawes, later Comptroller of Currency for the McKinley Administration, spoke favorably of a "short term asset currency." And even Samuel Gompers called for a five million dollar issue of paper.<sup>3</sup>

The spasmodic gold withdrawals further paralyzed the already depressed domestic economy. Severe social tensions, highlighted by strikes, riots, and the estimated unemployment of three million men, greatly facilitated the efforts of the silverites to force the public treasury to adopt a silver standard. A steady flow of Greenbacks into the Federal Treasury accelerated the depletion of the fast sinking gold reserve. To sell their produce, western grain growers were forced to accept prices set on the Chicago market, in lieu of engaging in the usual speculative practice of holding their grain until they received price increases. When the market price for grain fell below transportation costs, the farmers burned their crops. From Georgia, the Democrat Governor related a similar tale: "Our cotton is now ready for market. There is not sufficient money to handle it. Farmers are compelled to sell, and the price is necessarily reduced." Dependent on grain

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<sup>3</sup>Grover Cleveland, Presidential Problems (New York, 1904), 132, Nevins, Grover Cleveland, 603-06, Richard C. Hofstadter, The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It (Vintage edition, New York, 1954), 182, Samuel Reznick, "Unemployment, Unrest, and Relief in the United States During the Panic of 1893-97," Journal of Political Economy (Chicago), LXI (August, 1953), 325, 27, Nevins, Cleveland, 653, Horace S. Merrill, Bourbon Democracy in the Middle West (Baton Rouge, 1953), 240.

freightage for the maintenance of his railway empire, James J. Hill verified reports that "few farmers have any money, and the local banks seem unable to help" the agrarians.<sup>4</sup>

To the financial crisis the West and Northwest contributed sixty one per cent of all banking failures, and fifty nine per cent of all liabilities incurred. Southern states suffered thirteen per cent, and the far pacific states fifteen per cent of these losses. The less speculative nature of their investments and a greater command of liquid assets combined to hold the eastern and central states to eleven per cent of the total banking failures. By June of 1893 New York banks had shipped twenty three million dollars in gold to the West. But in the period of economic consolidation which accompanied the bank panic of 1893, it appears that the agrarians received scant help from the banks.<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps it was because money and credit were in use elsewhere. For the combination of depressed prices for American securities and the panic precipitated by the decline of the United States gold reserves

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<sup>4</sup>Charles S. Vevier, The United States and China, 1906-1913 (New Brunswick, 1955), 19, Horace S. Merrill, William Freeman Vilas (Madison, 1954), 200, Reznick, "Unemployment, Unrest and Relief," 325, Times, October 20, 1892. See also Herman C. Nixon, "The Economic Background of the Populist Movement in Iowa," Iowa Journal of History and Politics (Iowa City), XXI (July, 1923), 387, and the statement of Mr. C. G. Jones, representing the Southwestern Winter Wheat Millers' Association before the Committee of Ways and Means, in Report of the Committee of Ways and Means Concerning Reciprocity and Commercial Treaties. House Report 22603. 54 Cong., 1 Sess. (Washington, 1896), 203-209. Iowa suffered less severely than many midwestern states, yet the change from grain to dairy farming occasioned by the poor grain market worked still another hardship upon Iowa farmers.

<sup>5</sup>Philbrick, "Mercantile Conditions," 106.

offered American financiers an opportunity to effect the transfer of the American railroad system and much of the American productive plant to American ownership and control at prices they could afford. First they acquired the railroads. The rapid consolidation and expansion of industry followed:

As late as 1896, except for some railroads, there were probably fewer than a dozen American corporations capitalized at ten million. By 1903, again excepting the railroads, there were more than three hundred corporations capitalized at ten million or more, approximately fifty at fifty million or more, and seventeen at one hundred million, or more.

Thus pools, trusts, and combinations, many of them born during the period, grew to become the new economic giants of American industry. But farm tenancy stood at 34 per cent in 1895 as against 26 per cent in 1880, and never during the crisis did the rate of increase in real wages match industrial gains. Of the effect of these injustices upon their way of life the Populist legislators continued to complain bitterly.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>After 1875, "except for the years 1888, 1889, and 1893, there was a favorable balance of trade in merchandise" with cotton and breadstuffs the leading exports. But the United States remained a debtor nation during these years. James C. Malin, An Interpretation of Recent American History (New York and London, 1926), 59, Edward G. Campbell, The Reorganization of the American Railroad System, 1893-1900, Studies in Economics, History, and Public Law (Columbia University), CLXXXIV (New York, 1938), William L. Miller, "American Historians and the Business Elite," Journal of Economic History (New York), IX (November, 1949), 188, Webber and Jones, "Variations in the Rate of Economic Growth," 102, 103, 118. A detailed record of the growth in steel and manufactured exports may be obtained from records published in the Times of May 20, July 2, July 16, September 4, 1893; ibid., July 16, November 30, 1894; ibid., January 1, March 1, March 18, June 2 and November 14, 1895.

When India abandoned silver coinage, prominent American financiers agreed that the United States had little choice except to repeal the Silver Coinage Act or face bankruptcy. No longer would the heavy silver production of the United States find a ready market in the British Empire. Superabundance of the metal might force its domestic price down within the United States, but the chances seemed slight that producers would increase the supply at diminishing returns to themselves to the point where silver would command a market value equal to, or less than, the cost of its coinage, and thus facilitate its use as a subsidiary domestic currency. There existed, too, the problem of stabilizing the value of the metal at this low point. Conservatives insisted that it could not be done, their inference being that private silver interests would restrict production to control the price of the metal.<sup>7</sup>

Holding to such beliefs, Perry Belmont interpreted private information available to him as indicating that "the race between the United States and India to get on dry ground first is all in favor of

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<sup>7</sup>William P. St. John, President of the Mercantile Bank of New York, and financier A. Foster Higgins favored silver monetization. But other leading New York bankers insisted upon repeal, since the further accumulation of silver would further depreciate its value, making it "easy for the Bank of England to reinforce itself in this way." Jim Hill advised Cleveland to "listen carefully" to Jacob Schiff, who constructed a plan to coin silver until the gold reserves fell below a stipulated figure. Meanwhile, the international bimetallicists proceeded with their efforts to effect an international ratio, conferring with the British Foreign Office in an effort to establish rapport. *Times*, May 8, July 7, 1893; February 28, February 30, April 9, September 20, 1894; July 30, 1895. For details of the bimetallic scheme see the summary of a speech by Pennsylvania Senator Don Cameron, *Times*, September 20, 1893.

India." Should the United States become, however inadvertently, the nation upon which the world silver supply was to be dumped, silver coinage could ruin the opportunity presented to the United States to gain financial control of its economy. Populist legislators were not moved by this logic. They continued to demand an international agreement to coin silver, and pleaded that United States possession of nearly one half of the world silver supply must result in this country's ultimate control of both market and monetary values of the metal.<sup>8</sup>

To the end of the congressional battle over the Silver Purchase Act, Populists resisted its repeal as ably as they could. Still, the special session of the United States Congress called for the purpose of effecting the repeal served another purpose, for it revived the question of silver coinage before election time. Populists took full advantage of their opportunity to belabor the Democrats. But the major concern of the Populists was not to prevent the repeal of the Sherman Law. Rather, they exploited the battle between the major parties in order to "get a good place for silver." What Populist legislators most desired was not simply the circulation of silver, nor an inflated paper currency, but a combination of these two schemes, the circulation of a silver-backed paper currency. Silver funding would stimulate the international trade balances, and paper might relieve the contraction of specie within the United States. Furthermore, the agrarians contended

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<sup>8</sup>Nevins, Henry White, 102, 107, 109, Matthew P. Josephson, The Politicos (New York, 1938), 530, Stephenson, Aldrich, 107, Cong. Rec., 25:3:Appendix:322, 3863.

that the United States would take its rightful place as the leader of democratic nations throughout the world by adopting such a plan. World peace and stability would result if the misery of debtors were alleviated, and tension between classes would disappear.<sup>9</sup>

All this could be accomplished, the agrarian legislators insisted, if the United States would fearlessly take the lead in monetizing silver. Under the constitution the authority to coin money was vested in Congress. The United States possessed abundant silver for trade purposes. And the declining value of silver in relation to gold need not deter the United States from silver monetization, for coin which serves as a medium of exchange ought not to be intrinsically dear. But Populists who hoped to swap their version of silver monetization for the repeal of the Sherman Act failed to effect any compromise with President Cleveland. When their failure became apparent, they balked at all efforts of the Democratic Administration to repeal the Silver Purchase Act. In a final, dramatic gesture, William V. Allen filibustered to prevent repeal by reviewing the agrarian protest against both the gold standard and the conservative policies of the administration.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>A complete exposition of the Populist case for bimetallism was made by William Allen, Cong. Rec., 25:Appendix:293-330. See also Cong. Rec., 23:2:1829, ibid., 23:5:4214.

One of the most complete analyses of the financial policy of the Cleveland Administration is made by Alexander D. Noyes, "The National Finances, 1893-97," Political Science Quarterly, XII (June, 1897), 189-211.

<sup>10</sup>Cong. Rec., 25:Appendix:181, 185, 289, 291, 330. Times, July 2, 1893.

For a short time India continued to import silver, though her mints remained closed to its coinage. But as the demand for the metal declined, its price on the international market tumbled rapidly. Meanwhile, overlapping the fight for silver, another issue regarded by Populist legislators to be complimentary to an increased money supply soon took their attention. Tariff reform was in the air. Grover Cleveland apparently thought to calm irritated silverites while honoring his campaign promise to lower the tariff. But Populists were again disappointed in their hopes, for the authors of the tariff of 1894 aimed at "temperate reform." And considering the circumstances of the panic of 1893, and the low point of the depression in 1894, the less than ten per cent average reductions provided by the final tariff schedule were moderate indeed.<sup>11</sup>

It seems quite apparent that the framers of the tariff act of 1894 worked to promote the revival and further consolidation of American industry, rather than to relieve immediate economic distress by stimulating imports and thus promoting competition to reduce consumer prices. Democrats were "by no means united" on any supposed agreement to pass a revenue tariff. The final product of these Democratic efforts supplied free raw materials, such as coal, iron, wool, and lumber to industry but still protected American manufacturers from foreign competition. Even reciprocity was abolished. Grover Cleveland's scathing

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<sup>11</sup>Stanwood, Controversies, 307, Merrill, Vilas, 203, Frank G. Taussig, Free Trade, The Tariff and Reciprocity (New York, 1920), 291.

letter to Democrats, deploring their efforts to maintain high duties on foreign manufactures, earned him no more than a withering reply from the leaders of the Democratic opposition.<sup>12</sup>

But for political purposes, the passage before the election of some form of tariff legislation seemed a Democratic necessity. And there was a good chance that Populists might support the tariff to get the income tax provision which it incorporated. To conciliate southern agrarians, tariff schedules included free cotton ties and binding twine. Southern agriculturalists of course favored the provision for free jute and bagging included in the final act. There was a possibility, too, that middlewestern Populists might be persuaded to look favorably upon free wool as leading to a reduction of imported woolen garments. Tariff schedules designed to include raw, semi-processed, and finished materials embarrassed Populist legislators, who found it necessary to decide between their preference for free necessities and the exclusion of competing products.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Nevins, Cleveland, 282, 581, United States Congress, Comparison of the Tariffs of 1897, 1894, and 1890. Senate Document 3568, 55 Cong., 1 Sess. (Washington, 1897). See also Laughlin and Willis, Reciprocity, 250.

<sup>13</sup>Cong. Rec., 26:7:7136, *ibid.*, 26:Index:217, *ibid.*, 26:1:Index: 116 for the amendments to the tariff introduced by Representative John Davis and William Hudson. One contemporary analysis of votes cast in Congress on the Wilson Bill distorts both the rationale of the voters and the construction of the tariff. See William Hill, "A Comparison of Votes on the McKinley and Wilson Bills," Journal of Political Economy (Chicago), II (March, 1894), 291-93. Hill's conclusion that "no sort of comparison or analysis of this vote can be made to yield encouragement to the Protectionists" does not seem warranted. There is certainly no statistical measure which will show to how great a degree the income tax provision of the tariff may have offset features disagreeable to the



Populist preferences could not be interpreted as purely sectional biases. Jerry Simpson had strong backing when he attacked the high rates of the bill during the intra-party wrangle which preceded its passage. The Indianapolis Non-Conformist, a Populist organ, went further, arguing that the tariff was a minor issue, and concluding that it could be settled intelligently only after the return of prosperity. James H. Kyle accepted the challenge to sell free wool on the world market, and William Peffer agreed with Ben Tillman of South Carolina that a bounty system for agriculture might be both desirable and feasible. Henry Demarest Lloyd, Secretary of the American Free Trade League, joined Populist congressmen who fought the bill.<sup>14</sup>

Though it abolished the bounty paid to domestic sugar growers, the tariff legislated, Lloyd insisted, "the right to tax the people untold millions a year." Jerry Simpson agreed, and explained that he voted for the passage of the new rates only because a slight decrease in some areas seemed preferable to none at all. But William Peffer

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agrarians. One must further consider the tariff schedules in relation to depression prices to obtain an accurate notion of the degree of protection afforded by the schedules. Certainly Populist congressmen did not consider the tariff acceptable. This is chronicled at length in the debates of the Congressional Record. Populists emphasized the need for lower rates on all manufactured articles. In reality their emphasis on a moderate, or revenue tariff worked against their own program in 1894, because a revenue tariff might have stimulated imports, built the treasury reserve, and further limited the possibility of attaining the silver standard.

<sup>14</sup>Public Opinion (Washington), XVII (September 27, 1894), 618, Henry Demarest Lloyd, "The Revolution is Here," in Destler (ed.), American Radicalism, 216, Peffer quoted in Public Opinion, XVII (July 5, 1894), 311, Francis B. Simkins, Pitchfork Ben Tillman (Baton Rouge, 1944), 356. See for example the petitions of the citizens of Kansas against the Wilson Bill, Cong. Rec., 25:Index:116, 217.

accepted the Republican theory of protected home markets "to build up an industry quickly." The best that Populist legislators could do, faced with such intra-party differences, was to insist upon the desirability of a revenue tariff. With the single exception of William Peffer, the Populists succumbed to the lures of sectional economic benefits and the income tax provision appended to the Wilson Bill when they voted for the passage of the final act.<sup>15</sup>

But Jerry Simpson left no doubt that Populists understood the intentions behind the activity of the House Committee of Finance, which replaced the duties upon iron, coal, raw sugars, and silver ores, which Congress earlier abandoned. He understood that any attempt to rely upon a revenue sugar tax could be dangerous both to American designs upon Cuba, and to the gold standard. For Spain was rapidly flooding Cuba with silver, "forced upon the market in place of gold." Such specie, collected by Washington as taxes upon the output of American owned refineries, and absorbed as payments in trade with Cuba, would push the ratio of silver to gold in the treasury even higher. It did indeed seem apparent that an administration so determined to preserve the gold standard that it refused to coin the seignorage of the treasury for fear of incurring silver monetization would design its tariff legislation most carefully. And certainly the policy of the Cleveland Administration

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<sup>15</sup>Lloyd, "The Revolution is Here," 216-17, Public Opinion, XVII (July 5, 1894), 311, Cong. Rec., 26:2:1796, ibid., 26:7:1136.

avored American noncolonial expansion.<sup>16</sup>

For a short while the income tax offered hope to advocates of an inflated national currency that their program might prevail. If an expanded currency could not be achieved directly, by legislation to coin silver or to issue notes redeemable in silver as well as in gold, perhaps the inflationists might induce the acceptance of their program by passing the necessary legislation in a sequence less obviously calculated to arouse the ire of gold standard advocates, who opposed any further diluting of the national reserves with silver. But the tortured logic of the Supreme Court decision in Pollock vs. Farmers' Loan and Trust put an end to this indirect approach when, less than a year after the passage of the Dingley Tariff, its entire income tax section was

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<sup>16</sup>Cong. Rec., 27:2:1514. The Senate resolution to send the sugar schedule to the Finance Committee received favorable votes from Populist Senators Marion Butler, James Kyle, and William Peffer, who presumably cooperated in hopes that the sugar schedules would be revised to lower the duties, and so result in less governmental revenue. Some indication of Populist sentiment at the time may be gained from Populist votes upon a resolution to censure Thomas Bayard, American minister to the Court of St. James. Bayard had delivered an address condemning the "form of protection known as socialism." Two motions stood before the House of Representatives, one to censure Bayard for the address, another a condemnation of partisanship by an official representative of the United States. Populists refused to censure the Ambassador, but favored the second resolution. Cong. Rec., 26: 8:8566; ibid., 28:4:3035, Times, May 8, 1892, Stanwood, Tariff Controversies, 328.

adjudged unconstitutional.<sup>17</sup>

Thus under the administration of Grover Cleveland the foreign policy of industrialism received what appeared to be a temporary setback. Although Cleveland and his Secretaries of State, Walter Gresham and Richard Olney, endeavored to meet the criticisms leveled at the conservative policies of their administration by recourse to the time honored weapons of military expenditure and aggressive diplomacy, they refused to commit the United States to the coinage of silver, the financial policy ardently desired by growing industrial and commercial, as well as agricultural interests. To Americans who viewed the combination of relatively high tariffs and demonetization of the gold dollar as an instrument of domestic oppression, Cleveland became an heroic figure, staving off disaster and possible social revolution with fortitude and honor. In their eyes, threats to the stability of the American domestic social structure offset the attraction of prosperity to be

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<sup>17</sup>Alfred H. Kelley and Winifred A. Harbison, The American Constitution, Its Origins and Development (New York, 1948), 564-73. Blake, "Background of Cleveland's Venezuelan Policy," 260, 61, 62, 65, For. Rel., 1895, Message of the President, xxxviii. In a pathetic attempt to ward off the wrath of the farmers Cleveland explained that he distrusted the motives of the silverites. His earlier effort to meet the criticisms of agriculturalists by initiating a survey of agricultural markets and products failed miserably. In 1894 Cleveland also sought to elaborate upon Mexican-American relations by intimating that the best solution for Mexico to border raids such as the Garza Revolution of 1892 would be a Mexican-American commercial treaty. When Mexico spurned the treaty Cleveland focused attention on the relations of the United States with the Ottoman Empire and with Germany. This was perhaps unwise, for expansionists advocated intervention in Turkey. But Cleveland's policy toward both Germany and Turkey seems to have been more an expression of American nationalism than one of calculated hostility. For. Rel., 1895, xxxviii, ibid., 1894, xxxvii; ibid., 1894, xi, ibid., 1895, xxxv.

gained by temporary stimulus to industrial productivity and expansion through silver monetization.<sup>18</sup>

These objections seemed to imply a pessimistic view of human nature, as well as a short run view of economic good. But there existed the possibility that the gamble would fail. The already shaky international exchange balance would be immediately and drastically slashed. If the productive capacity proved incapable of shoring up the damage; if international recovery should prove so incomplete as to restrict the volume of American sales abroad; if the governments of foreign nations should undertake to protect themselves from the American invasion of their markets, then the resulting liquidation of the economic assets of the United States would be ruinous.

To many producers, caught in the low tide of economic depression in 1894, Cleveland was the villain who refused to take the daring step which would prime the pump of national production. They reasoned that

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<sup>18</sup>The literature and propaganda dealing with tariff reform and silver monetization is voluminous. But, designed for public consumption, the appeals to the national prejudices, local preferences and sectional interests are a sad example of the distortions popularized for political reasons. The important question of whether the issues of the tariff and monetary policy were geared to operate as a system during the eighteen nineties is often ignored. But important positive evidence linking the plans of the silverites to the high tariff policy of the Republican Party is offered by Don Cameron in a letter to Andrew D. Humphery, Secretary of the National Republican League. The letter, dated June 11, 1894, is to be found in United States Congress. Senate Misc. Doc. 262, 53 Cong., 2 Sess. Gold and Silver Prices (Washington, 1894), 7-10. See also Blake, "Cleveland's Venezuelan Policy," 260-65, American Bimetallic League, Facts About Silver (Washington, 1891), and the bibliography of this thesis for additional references.

the President refused to render their position and consequently that of the nation, prosperous once more. It was a craven fear of foreign economic interests, alleged these propagandists, that prevented silver monetization.<sup>19</sup>

Cleveland and his economic advisers must have smiled at the wildest of the calumnies. These men were conservatives in economics and politics. They, and their friends in Congress, considered not only the morality of the American position, but the means of promoting the economic welfare of the country, upon which their own welfare remained contingent. As statesmen they were no less interested in the amelioration of economic misery and the prevention of domestic revolution than were the wildest of the silverites. More than this, the policies of the Cleveland administration aimed at transferring the American productive plant from foreign to domestic ownership. Congressional debates between the closing of India's mints to silver in 1893 and the beginnings of the American business revival in 1895 reveal the clear outlines of the Cleveland policy.<sup>20</sup>

Populist fusion tickets with the major parties of Alabama, Michigan, Iowa, and North Carolina in the elections of 1894 offered

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<sup>19</sup>Cong. Rec., 23:2:1252-53, ibid., 23:3:2434.

<sup>20</sup>Complete and detailed expositions of this period of American history are provided in James A. Barnes, John G. Carlisle, Financial Statesman (New York, 1931), and Nevins, Grover Cleveland. Matthew Josephson, The Politicos, offers a broader synthesis from the end of Reconstruction to 1896. But none of these works contains the intimate picture offered by the Congressional Record.

additional testimony, if such were needed, that a "renewed interest in silver" swept the country as the election year approached. But the Democrat-Populist fusion of Kansas was not renewed. The alacrity with which Kansas Democrats embraced Populism alarmed gold-standard Democrats who declined another alliance, convinced that fusion, even to defeat the Republicans, "proved a mistake."<sup>21</sup>

Meanwhile Cleveland urged a naval building program to serve as a counterweight to tariff reform and domestic unemployment. But silver coinage Populists, who condemned the President for resorting to the Morgan-Belmont bond sales to maintain the gold standard, became even more recalcitrant toward the military program. One gains a better understanding of Cleveland's position by reviewing the conduct of American diplomacy during the controversy with Great Britain over arbitration of Venezuelan boundaries in 1895. It is a commonplace of American diplomatic history that the domestic unrest prevalent in the United States explains Cleveland's aggressive demand for arbitration as an attempt to divert social unrest by appealing to the anglophobia of the silverites, and thus clear the "populistic" pus from national politics with a patriotic gesture. Cleveland may indeed have hoped to pacify exporters and industrialists in the months before the national presidential election by extending the Monroe Doctrine to cover trade, as

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<sup>21</sup>Times, November 29, 1895.

well as colonization in South America.<sup>22</sup>

Consular representatives of the Cleveland Administration pushed the development of South America by United States firms, and even arranged a tour of the continent for the New York Chamber of Commerce in 1895. Moreover, the mouth of the Orinoco River, the critical area embraced in the difference of interpretation between the Venezuelan and British boundary claims, provided a key to the future economic development of that portion of South America perilously close to the projected route of the trans-isthmian canal in Panama, over which American diplomats persistently asserted their complete control.<sup>23</sup>

In this light, Cleveland's offer to buy Cuba from Spain is not as "ironic" as Samuel Flagg Bemis suggests. It seems, rather, a crucial factor in the fulfillment of Blaine's earlier attempts to make the Caribbean the American lake. Fully aware that the Pacific Ocean leads to Asia, the Cleveland Administration refused to allow cancellation of the Panama concessions of the United States' Maritime Canal Company, despite the company's nonperformance of its contracts. One cannot

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<sup>22</sup>For. Rel., 1893, Message of the President, xxviii, *ibid.*, 1895, xxvi. Nelson M. Blake, "The Background of Cleveland's Venezuelan Policy," *American Historical Review*, XLVII (January, 1942), 274; Harold D. Cater (ed.), *Henry Adams and His Friends* (Boston, 1947), 352.

<sup>23</sup>The consensus of American Consuls in South America was that the South American trade could best be gained by establishing branch banks and branch distributing houses abroad. They repeatedly warned American producers against handling goods on a consignment basis. One of the most complete sources on the extension of United States trade abroad was the monthly Consular Report. See the bibliography of this thesis for pertinent Reports.



dismiss lightly the diplomacy of an administration which envisioned so much, and at the same time countered manifestations of British colonialism on an adjacent continent. The Cleveland Administration must be termed expansionist, though it eschewed, for the very purposes of expansion, the coinage of silver. The debate was over means, not ends.<sup>24</sup>

Henry Adams expressed amazement at the rapidity with which Secretary of State Richard Olney assimilated the conclusions drawn by Henry's brother, Brooks Adams whose researches into the tendencies of history had for several years been the subject of discussion among Boston intelligentsia, and were shortly to be summarized by Brooks in the Law of Civilization and Decay. Upon the publication of the volume in 1896, Henry distributed copies to Supreme Court justices and Cabinet members. And certainly ample opportunity existed for at least indirect contact by Olney with the younger Adams' thoughts about history and national affairs before the publication of the Law. For example, both men had a common acquaintance with Theodore Roosevelt, and with Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, whose preoccupation with foreign affairs must have brought him into frequent contact with the Secretary of State. And presidential adviser William C. Whitney provided close liaison between the President and the Adams clique in the period of the second

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<sup>24</sup> Samuel F. Bemis, A Diplomatic History of the American People (3rd ed., New York, 1950), 450, For. Rel., 1894, Message of the President, xiii; ibid., 234-363.

Cleveland Administration.<sup>25</sup>

By May of 1895 financial reviews commented upon the "heavy London purchases in Railways at good prices" in the American securities market, a development which doubtless helped to explain the plummet in industrial securities occasioned by Cleveland's assertion (in the note written by Olney and himself) that the United States would always consider the protection of its own interests a matter "beyond all question of International law." Roosevelt voiced his pleasure in this diplomatic stroke to William Rockhill, Assistant Secretary of State: "In spite of your Democratic policies, I have to be proud of Olney and yourself." Cleveland's diplomacy doubtless pleased Brooks Adams as a welcome change from the relatively tame gunboat maneuvers in South America undertaken by Harrison and Cleveland, for Adams favored the entry of the United States into war as early as 1892.<sup>26</sup>

The younger Adams stressed the concentration of economic energies as the key to the development of civilization and placed emphasis upon the need for an expanded currency during periods of expanded trade. And one of the numerous ramifications of his thoughts and activities was the establishment, in February of 1894, of an organization to promote international bimetallism. Numbered among the charter members were

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<sup>25</sup> Cater, Henry Adams and His Friends, 382, Brooks Adams, The Law of Civilization and Decay (Vintage ed., New York, 1955), 273-84, William A. Williams, "Brooks Adams and American Expansion," New England Quarterly (Brunswick), XXV (June, 1952), 220, Times, February 28, 1894.

<sup>26</sup> Times, July 30, 1895, For. Rel., "Venezuelan Message," 1895, Howard K. Beale, Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World Power (Baltimore, 1956), 23, 37.

such prominent citizens as economist Francis A. Walker, Boston banker Henry Higgenson, and members of the Aggisez family, as well as Brooks and Henry Adams. According to Moreton Frewen, an English bimetallicist and close friend of Henry, this group first agitated for the appointment of a special monetary commission by President Cleveland for the purpose of arranging an international bimetallic standard. Frewen asserted that plans for the establishment of the commission were formulated at a dinner in 1894 attended by Walker, Senator Oliver H. Wolcott, Brooks Adams, William S. Whitney, and Frewen himself. Thereupon "one of the Americans urged upon the President the appointment of such a commission." But the President had other plans.<sup>27</sup>

Olney's note would tide the country over the critical period between the Belmont-Morgan support of the international exchange rates, and the expiration of the relief which would be afforded to American commerce by foreign credits derived from agricultural crop sales in the fall of 1895. To avert the threatened rupture in Anglo-American friendship, the English Foreign Office aimed to conciliate the American State Department. Reports favorable to the American proposals for control of the Inter-American Isthmian Canal emanated from the British foreign office at this juncture, while at the request of Lord Salisbury the Liberal cabinet minister expressed to Ambassador Bayard in London his fervent hope that the Venezuelan controversy "be promptly settled in an amicable manner." To the truculence of the American position, and

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<sup>27</sup>Adams, Civilization and Decay, 273-84, Times, July 30, 1895.

Olney's refusal to assent to a conference of the major powers for the purpose of exploring the applicability of the Monroe Doctrine, must be attributed the languid negotiations toward settlement of the Venezuelan dispute which followed.<sup>28</sup>

Yet the prominence of the bimetallists in the development of American economic policies during the critical years before 1898 can not be underrated. Their ideas gained wide support in Congress where they attracted, for various reasons, the support of so diverse a group as Henry Cabot Lodge, Matthew Quay and Don Cameron. Cameron and Lodge operated in close political liaison with the bimetallists and thus found themselves well qualified to plead the case for bimetallism to their more conservative colleagues. At that time, Henry Adams, still in agreement with his brother, wrote an historical justification of American intervention in Cuba for the use of Senator Don Cameron and other Cuban interventionists. To Cuban intervention the English foreign office eagerly assented, and hastened to reassure the American ambassador that they remained "anxious for settlement" of outstanding disputes with the United States.<sup>29</sup>

If it be true, as Henry Adams charged, that Olney deserted his friends when he refused to exact international bimetallism as the price

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<sup>28</sup>Times, November 3, 1895, ibid., December 6, 1896, James, Olney, 229.

<sup>29</sup>United States Congress, Compilation of Reports of the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 1789-1901. Diplomatic Relations With Foreign Nations. Affairs in Cuba, Senate Report 1160. 54 Cong., 2 Sess. (Washington, 1901), VII, 40-64; James, Olney, 244.

of peace with England, the charge must be examined in a larger framework than that of purely immediate interests of the United States. Although he approved the scheme for bimetallism, Olney admitted that his fears of radicalism narrowed his appreciation of the struggle of the radicals for silver coinage.<sup>30</sup> Yet Olney, and Gresham before him, attempted to gain through diplomacy what the radicals wanted to get by devaluating the currency. In years past, the operation of United States traders in Samoa had climaxed in a joint protectorate over the island, shared between Germany, England, and the United States. Former Secretary of State Thomas R. Bayard successfully resisted a three way partition of the island proposed by Germany by objecting that German influences at work in the island did not "have the interests of the natives at heart." James G. Blaine followed up Bayard's policy for Samoa by attempting, during his term as Secretary of State, to secure exclusive rights for the United States to the Samoan harbor of Pago Pago. Failing this, the Harrison Administration continued to favor joint control of the island by the three powers. British and German proposals for harbor concessions which might limit the possibility for eventual American predominance were thus abandoned for a time.<sup>31</sup>

The Cleveland Administration continued the diplomacy of Republican predecessors. The President recommended to Congress that

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<sup>30</sup>Worthington C. Ford (ed.), Letters of Henry Adams (Boston and New York, 1938), II, 166, James, Olney, 309.

<sup>31</sup>Foster, Diplomatic Memories, 395, Times, May 2, November 4, 1894.

steps be taken to withdraw this country from the joint government in Samoa. Restrictions imposed upon the freedom of action of the United States by continued joint occupation Cleveland characterized as "the first departure from our traditional and well established policy of avoiding entangling alliances with foreign powers in relation to objects remote from this hemisphere. . . ." When the German Ambassador countered with a request for suggestions from the United States as to the manner in which permanent disposition of Samoa might best be assured, Secretary Olney limited his reply to the cautious statement that the United States had for the moment "no better plan" for the government of Samoa. Freedom of action was the objective, sole control of the harbors the ultimate goal.<sup>32</sup>

Deeper into the Pacific, a treaty of Amity and Commerce with Japan brought more favorable results. There, by the terms of the Japanese treaty, the United States unburdened itself of extraterritoriality restrictions, and assured this country a growing share in the Pacific trade. But relations with China were doubtless hampered by the affinity of the United States with Japan, China's traditional enemy. Thus, though the good offices of this country were offered to the belligerents during the period of the Sino-Japanese war, no appreciable stimulus to Chinese-American good will resulted from the venture. The United States accepted the Japanese invasion of Waiwei hai as an opportunity for the dispatch of three warships to the East to protect her

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<sup>32</sup>For. Rel., 1896, 534.

interests. The Administration's broad application and rigid interpretation of the Geary Act, which prohibited the immigration of Chinese laborers and restricted the travels of Chinese merchants within the United States, compromised friendly relations between the two countries, and did little to gain a friendlier reception for American businessmen in China.<sup>33</sup>

Closer to home, Walter Phelps formally asserted the doctrine of Mare Clausam on behalf of United States' sovereignty in the Bering Sea, and an American naval survey of the Cuban harbor of Guantanamo, unauthorized by Cuban and Spanish officials, illustrated direction of expansionist activities. Republicans urged the annexation of Cuba "rather wildly." "Our frontier is almost gone, Professor Turner tells us, and we are getting land hungry again," commented the New York Times. More than land appeared involved, however, for the State Department shortly appointed a commission to survey the proposed route of the Nicaraguan Canal, and Walter Gresham dispatched American naval units to Hawaiian waters to back the pro-annexationist government he once threatened to spurn. Populist Senator Allen interpreted these extensions of American influence as "wise and enlightened policy." He and his colleague, Marion Butler, further agreed that the laying of a Hawaiian telegraphic cable by the United States constituted a legitimate use of governmental powers. Butler's earlier teamwork with Senator Kyle against the expenditure of funds for a naval survey of Pearl Harbor thus gave way to more

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<sup>33</sup>U. S. For. Rel., 1895, 103.

expansive views. For American trade at the end of 1894 showed a level of activity approximating that of 1891, and Populist legislators, intent upon attaining prosperity, became willing converts to a more forceful policy of naval expansion.<sup>34</sup>

But the threat of silver coinage blighted the efforts of the administration to make peace with its critics, and the harassed Democratic President found it necessary to remind his countrymen that no nation could "hope to control the trade of any considerable portion of the world" until it gained the willing cooperation of sister nations. To liberals as well the narrowing vision of reform which focused on the single issue of silver coinage after 1893 spelled disaster. Henry Demarest Lloyd accurately dubbed silver the "cowbird of reform." Likewise, silver coinage became the principal facet of expansion through which Populist legislators might revive their sagging political fortunes.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>When the German Minister to the United States inquired as to the reason for favoritism to Hawaii, it was explained to him that the United States granted exceptional advantages to Hawaii because of "geographical propinquity." But in 1895 reciprocity by law no longer existed. For. Rel., 1895, Times, July 5, 17, 1893. The division of opinion among Populist Senators on military appropriations shows the changing Populist attitudes. The first is a bill for naval appropriations, on which yea votes were cast in the Senate by Peffer and Allen; nay by Butler, and Kyle abstained from voting. The second bill is for an increase of the appropriation. Nay votes were cast by Allen, Kyle, and Peffer, Butler abstaining. On the last bill to pass the appropriation for 1895, yea votes came from Allen, Kyle, and Peffer, Butler again abstaining. Cong. Rec., 26:4:3049, ibid., 26:3:3092, ibid., 26:3:3124. Cong. Rec., 26:6:5434, ibid., 27:2:1277, 1820.

<sup>35</sup>Henry Demarest Lloyd, "The Populists at St. Louis," Review of Reviews (New York), XIV (September, 1896), 298-303.



For when the silver fever mounted in the major parties, the popular vote for Populist candidates staggered to a halt. In dire need of contributions with which to revive their fortunes, the party leaders were driven to confer "with the silver men about funds." Control of state governments might assuage the pride of the worried rebels, but the decline in party power could not hide from members of the Populist National Committee the implications for the future. They feared the strength of the silverites within the major parties.

We must recognize the fact that if a new party is organized and they make the money question the great issue, we will receive no more recruits, except a few socialists and communists, and that many of our best men in the west will leave us to join the new movement, and we will simply become the forerunner of a great third party that is to be organized,

warned the National Chairman. And when it appeared that party survival became contingent upon fusion with the silver forces, Populist legislators took the lead in formalizing the alliance which already existed on a limited and informal basis in Congress, and substituted silver for reform.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>Hicks, Populist Revolt, 337-38, Ignatius Donnelly Papers, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota. Herman E. Taubneck to Ignatius Donnelly, July 7, 1892, July 8, 17, 1893.

## CHAPTER III

### THE PRICE OF A PARTY

"We don't need population, we don't need wealth, we don't need well dressed men on the streets, we don't need cities on the fertile prairies; You bet we don't!"

William Allen White

"What's the Matter with Kansas?"

Long before the election of 1896 the American Protective Tariff League attempted to turn the threat of a Treasury reserve deficit to its own advantage with an appeal to Populist "patriotism" by inviting Populist support for its proposal to restore a 15 per cent duty on woolen goods which was cut from the schedule by the Wilson tariff. And as foreign economic recovery advanced, Representative Dingley in turn proposed a flat 15 per cent horizontal addition to tariff rates to be effective until December, 1898. Populist legislators continued to express their opposition to such proposals to protect the home market until after the election of 1896, and continued to deal with tariff legislation in conjunction with their demands for financial relief. Then, although it seemed improbable that either major party would undertake tariff adjustments before the election of 1896, Marion Butler unhesitatingly proffered "six votes to the body which will stop the further issue of bonds," and William Allen offered his support for prohibitive tariff rates if these

were "coupled with free coinage."<sup>1</sup>

But, instead, the Democrats attempted to promote commercial activities in other areas. Richard Olney indicated a strong interest in the nature and extent of American trade in Martinique, only to be deterred by France's assumption of a protectorate over the island, and the subsequent cancellation of all non-French concessions there. Washington moved to counter this loss by publishing the consular reports of James H. Mulligan, American Consul in Samoa, who called for the abrogation of the Berlin Treaty, and abrogation of tripartate control of the island if the United States planned to obtain the harbor of Pago Pago.<sup>2</sup>

The visit to this country of Li Hung Chang, Viceroy and Foreign Minister of China, proved of equally consuming interest to Democrats. Though the American Minister to China, Charles Denby, reported the Chinese-American trade to be flourishing, Li's errand appeared such that he could be only informally received. But the President, Secretary of State, cabinet members, and railroad financiers proved greatly solicitous, and eager to cement commercial intercourse

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<sup>1</sup>Times, January 6, 1898; Cong. Rec., 28:5:4720, ibid., 27:3:2441.

<sup>2</sup>For. Rel., 1895, 335-58; ibid., 361-82. Times, May 24, 1896.

between the United States and China.<sup>3</sup>

The narrow margin of Republican victory at the polls in 1896 indicated that the wisest course for the Republicans would be postponement of all controversial legislation until the next regular session of Congress. Senator Allen, doubtless sensing the difficult position of the new Republican Administration, attempted to introduce tariff legislation into the Senate in December of 1896. Senator William Pepper followed suit by proposing that a commission be set up to study monetary amendments. Though they successfully avoided Populist tariff bait, the Republicans could not avoid the problems inherent in their accession to power. A special session of Congress met in March, 1897, to map tariff

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<sup>3</sup>The American Minister to China, Charles Denby, sought the establishment of American banks, newspapers, and mercantile interests in China. Times, August 22, 23, 29, 30, and September 3, 1896. Viceroy Li's visit followed closely upon the conclusion of the Sino-Japanese War, and the ignoble defeat of China by Japan. Apparently the Chinese Viceroy hoped to obtain some assurance from America and England that they would work against a possible partition of China or Korea by Japan. Li's conferences with American railroad financiers hint of an offer by which China might counterbalance Japanese expansion on the Chinese mainland with concessions to other foreign nations. Minister Denby worked steadily to obtain American Railway concessions during this period in the hope that the United States might gain "complete control" over "national progress" in China. Concessions were demanded for the Baldwin Locomotive Works and the American-China Development Company on the grounds that other major European nations had been "rewarded" for "securing peace in China" after the Sino-Japanese War. It was the American-China Development Company which pressured the State Department for a change in policy when concessions failed to be forthcoming. For. Rel., 1897, 58-59, ibid., 1896, 426-27, Charles S. Campbell, Special Business Interests and the Open Door, 27-31.

legislation.<sup>4</sup>

Borrowing a page from the record of an earlier Republican Administration, the House Committee on Ways and Means promptly undertook an examination of the success of the reciprocity policy which Democrats had abandoned. Undoubtedly the favorable conclusions of the examining committee can be explained in part by party loyalty, yet the statements of representative exporters from a cross section of the American economy attest to the popularity of reciprocity legislation with manufacturers and cereal producers. From the hotbed of the agrarian revolt the Kansas Millers' Association emphatically asserted that reciprocity agreements "would do more than any action taken in a long time" to restore prosperity. Head of the Lakes Millers' Association declared itself "heartily in favor of presidential authorization" for reciprocity arrangements, as did the Farmers' Headquarters of Clarindon, Iowa, the National Livestock Exchange of Chicago, and the Michigan State Millers' League. An exceptional objection of the Gainesville, Florida, Board of Trade held reciprocity to be ineffective: "Diplomacy be blowed. Dig the Nicaraguan Canal and give us free ships." But milling interests replied by citing the decline of their Cuban trade after the expiration of reciprocity treaties as a cause of their

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<sup>4</sup>Times, December 10, 1896, December 11, 1896, ibid., January 1, 1896, January 15, 1896, Cong. Rec., 28:3:2103, ibid., 2151.

market decline.<sup>5</sup>

Exporters maintained that discriminatory practices aimed at the products of the United States could be dealt with handily with the weapon of trade agreements. The much maligned tariff of 1890 became desirable in retrospect: it had effected reductions of up to  $37\frac{1}{2}$  per cent on cereals exported by the United States to Germany. Now, by contrast, transportation costs and wharfage rates put the United States at a disadvantage even in England; and continental countries openly discriminated against these American products which managed to survive the restrictions upon their importation from this country.<sup>6</sup>

Those who did not infer the conclusion stated it in forthright fashion. The United States must adopt reciprocity as a means, not so much of securing raw materials, but of gaining access once more to the markets of Europe. With evident satisfaction the House investigating committee concluded:

It will be observed that there is a remarkable unanimity in the sentiments expressed concerning the value and results of the reciprocity arrangements negotiated with

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<sup>5</sup>Report of the Committee on Ways and Means, 152, 162, 173, 182; ibid., 159, 303, 162, 224, 230. The Brass and Iron Works of Fostoria, Ohio, called for "a protective tariff, fair reciprocity, and the coinage of only American silver." Ibid., 241.

The reciprocity schedule with Spain for Cuba arranged by John W. Foster in 1892 proved unsatisfactory to manufacturers because, while some duties were reduced, "the number of articles which must still go from Spain" increased, under the terms of the treaty, preserving the animosity between rival Spanish and American mercantile systems. Times, July 7, 1892.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 153-59, 256-59.

certain countries and colonies under the authority of section 3 of the tariff act of 1890 and the disastrous effects of their repeal. It will also be noticed that the commercial and industrial interests of the United States, as thus represented, without political distinction, are almost without exception anxious that such arrangements shall be renewed and negotiated with other nations, and the reciprocity policy be permanently adopted in future legislation affecting the tariff and foreign commerce of this country.

Manufacturers still received preferential attention in Washington.

But the failure of the United States to avoid restrictions upon the admission of American cattle abroad by shipping them across Canada rankled, when contrasted to the Republican Administration's successful cattle shipments to England two years earlier and settlement of a similar dispute with Britain at that time. Secretary of Agriculture Levi P. Morton replied to critics that governmental policies must be designed to benefit "all commerce," not merely agricultural interests.<sup>7</sup>

Commercial activities might be further stimulated by the acquisition of a naval base in Greenland, Henry Cabot Lodge contended, and John W. Foster urged the annexation of Hawaii as "the white man's burden." The revival of a project to acquire Santo Thomas also appeared imminent at the same time. The extension of American patent rights in Japan and Turkey, and retaliatory action against German trade

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 5, 9. In 1893 the American Ambassador to England, Henry White, understood that "political considerations" made the removal of English restrictions upon American agricultural products extremely unlikely. For. Rel., 1896, 34, Times, January 16, 1896, January 18, 1896; ibid., December 1, 1896, April 3, 1896; For. Rel., 1896, 426-37.

restrictions upon American goods pointed up Andrew D. White's toast to "commerce and diplomacy" before the New York Board of Trade.<sup>8</sup>

Their votes on naval appropriation bills revealed Populist legislators still intent upon limiting naval expenditures to defense requirements. But they were expanding their concept of the defensive perimeter of the United States. The reappearance of Jerry Simpson in Congress after a term of absence was marked by his apparent conversion to the use of the navy for the "protection" of overseas commerce. The increased settlement of this country might necessitate naval expansion, he conceded. Further, Senator Allen openly bid for shipbuilding contracts on the Missouri River in return for Populist votes. They still bickered, as in former years, over appropriations for the military and naval academies of West Point and Annapolis, but the agrarian legislators refused to quibble on the larger issues. Jerry Simpson maintained, in a pointed reference to the high tariff policy of both major parties, that if Congress found protection and the home markets more profitable than

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<sup>8</sup>New York merchants undertook a campaign to stimulate their trade which remained depressed after other urban areas began to exhibit steady economic recovery. And it was New York which felt the effects of depressed cotton prices as the center of the cotton exchange shifted to that city. At the request of the American Cotton Oil Company, William Buchannan, United States Consul in Argentina, undertook to widen the cotton oil market there. The New York Chamber of Commerce also sent a representative delegation on a commercial tour of South America, and the next year organized a home market association in an effort to stimulate trade. Times, July 1, 1896, July 12, 1896.



free trade, it ought not to foster naval expansion.<sup>9</sup>

Only Senator Peffer remained adamant. If American railway transportation were to join the entire hemisphere, as was proposed, he once lightly remarked, certainly the United States would require no foreign shipping. He continued to advocate hemispheric commercial solidarity, and the internal development of the United States as the alternative to naval construction. Yet even he added his name to the final endorsement given to naval appropriations by Populist legislators.<sup>10</sup>

Meanwhile, the continued Populist attempts to obstruct all revenue bills made imperative some adequate provision for the collection of additional funds if the United States were to meet its current obligations. And a strong suspicion existed in American circles that if the United States could hold to the gold standard for but a short time longer, all would be well for the nation. In the course of re-evaluating the trade statistics of the United States, a task undertaken by economist-historian Worthington G. Ford upon his appointment to office as chief of the Bureau of Statistics in the Treasury Department, it was discovered that the relative position of the United States in world trade had been greatly undervalued. Ford's corrections indicated that the United States would soon command a volume of industrial exports which would surpass Great Britain if the rate of growth in

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<sup>9</sup>Cong. Rec., 27:3:2241. For Populist reaction to the naval program see also Cong. Rec., 28:5:4511, 4721, 4725, 4733, 4856; ibid., 28:7:6085, 6195.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 28:5:4720.

production and exports could be maintained. In such an eventuality it would be possible to undersell the chief commercial nation of the world. Commerce and industry in the United States would then reap benefits identical with those projected by the bimetallists, even greater because competitors would be denied the stimulus afforded to American enterprises.<sup>11</sup>

During the second week of October, 1896, the New York Times financial reports carried the assurances of New York bankers that, even allowing for the balance due this country for seasonal crop sales on the international market, imports of gold into the United States followed "the natural course of trade." The announcement climaxed wide publicity given to the Ford reports, which were, of course, pointed up by the Times before the election of 1896. James A. Barnes, reviewing the "Myths of the Bryan Campaign" has called for other explanations for Bryan's defeat than those most often accepted so uncritically by American historians. Though special studies of the phenomenon are lacking, it is here suggested that an inquiry into the behavior and rationale of the business community, where the clamour for bimetallism tapered off in the months immediately preceding the election, would prove helpful to a more

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<sup>11</sup>Times, April 4, May 4, June 14, June 27, July 7, July 23, July 24, July 28, 1896. From London, Henry Adams calculated an overdraft of "at least twenty million" by J. P. Morgan and his American banking associates. The lack of investment opportunities for British capital resulted, apparently, in an indefinite extension of credit to the American banking consortium. Cater, Henry Adams and His Friends, 342, 43, 44, Times, May 4, 1896.

critical analysis of the Republican presidential victory.<sup>12</sup>

The close margin of victory for gold standard advocates in 1896 prompted Grover Cleveland to attempt the arrangement of some basis for a compromise between "gold bugs" and silverites of all parties before the President retired from office. The plan advanced by Cleveland in his December, 1896, Message to Congress retained the original Cleveland proposal, which Congress had earlier rejected, for the cancellation of all greenbacks. The President now added his suggestion that new bonds be issued to cover the silver coin which might come into circulation as the greenbacks were redeemed. But Cleveland's proposal did little to alleviate the silverites' distrust of the President or of bondholders. The bonds were to be, according to Cleveland's policy, redeemable only in gold.<sup>13</sup>

Readers of the final Presidential message must conclude that the progress of American diplomacy in alleviating domestic tensions preoccupied the departing President, although diplomatic relations with England no longer presented any problem. In the month following the financial victory of the United States over British rivals,

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<sup>12</sup>Times, August 20, August 26; ibid., October 4, October 10, 1896.

<sup>13</sup>For. Rel., 1895, Message of the President, xlv-liii, ibid., 1896, Message of the President, lviii-lx. Cleveland's proposals for currency reform offended in two respects. The President clung to his desire to cancel the greenbacks, and proposed to issue bonds to cover their replacement by silver coin. The argument that silver would replace greenbacks did little to remove popular distrust for bondholders, since bonds themselves were by Cleveland's policy valued in gold.

Britain's Lord Salisbury could be "very sure England's dispute with the United States with reference to Venezuela" was ended. But strained relations with the Ottoman Empire, a legacy of the Harrison Administration, plagued the President. Though he continued to press for the recognition and extension of the rights of American citizens in Turkey, the President satisfied interventionists who clamoured for American interference there with a display of naval power, participation in an advisory commission to the Sultan, and a public declaration of American concern over the brutality of the Turkish-Armenian clashes. From consideration of commercial relations with Germany and China, the President focused attention on the immediate problem presented to the United States by the resurgent Cuban rebellion against Spain.<sup>14</sup>

Cleveland's policy foreshadowed that of the McKinley Administration: "When the inability of Spain to deal successfully with the problem" of civil insurrection on the island appeared manifest, this country would act. And truculent though it might be, such a policy now offered no threat to Anglo-American relations. The Cleveland Administration refrained only from immediate intervention in Cuba, and from the prompt recognition of the belligerency of Cuban rebels. Intervention remained unwise while the treasury reserves were low, and recognition of the belligerent status of Cuban rebels carried with it the further danger of absolving the Spanish government from responsibility for

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<sup>14</sup>Times, November 19, 1896, For. Rel., 1895, Message of the President, xxiii, xxv, xxxvi; ibid., June 2, August 29, October 29, 1896.

damage to American property in Cuba.<sup>15</sup>

Though the United States remained to the end of the Cleveland Administration avowedly neutral, the diplomatic note of April, 1896, in which this country tendered its good offices to Spain for the purpose of ending the rebellion, reassured Americans who held, as the President noted, "from 30 to 50 million capital in Cuba." For, in response to Congressional prodding, Cleveland had already promised that "when Spain has failed, and the continuance of the conflict results in the utter destruction of the subject matter of the conflict, our duty to Spain will be superceded by a higher obligation." The President's Secretary of State, in his turn, defined this obligation as intervention "at a time not far hence."<sup>16</sup>

Before the adjournment of Congress in March, 1895, the Cuban rebellion assumed new importance in the thinking of Congressional bimetallicists. Senator Don Cameron announced his intention to submit a resolution to the next Congress calling for the recognition of the Cuban rebels as belligerents. But conservatives who considered "swapping off free silver for the Cuban question" derived little satisfaction from the subsequent introduction of Cameron's resolution or the debates upon it. During the early part of 1896 the Senate refused to pass bills designed to increase available revenue, while Congressional

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<sup>15</sup>For. Rel., 1896, Message of the President, xxxii, xxxv.

<sup>16</sup>Times, December 29, 1896; For. Rel., 1896, Message of the President, xxxix, xxv, Report of the Secretary of State, lxxxiii; Times, January 30, March 6, 1896.

appropriations continued apace. Populists lent their support to the passage there of a bill prohibiting the issue of government bonds without Congressional consent at a time when government expenditures showed an annual deficit of \$20,000,000.<sup>17</sup>

Their response to the belligerency resolutions indicated that the Populists hoped for the strongest possible action by the United States in Cuba. Senator Allen became sponsor of one resolution, which called for the recognition of the independence of Cuba from Spain. But Populist legislators would not oppose, as a group, any of the resolutions submitted. All showed a willingness to pass some form of legislation, though conservatives insisted that such matters of foreign policy might remain under the President's jurisdiction. Not one Populist consistently abstained from voting.<sup>18</sup>

Though the Administration successfully resisted the encroachments of Congress upon Executive authority, Populists attempted to extend Cleveland's interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine, which he had used with marked success during the American-British dispute over arbitration with Venezuela, to Cuba's dispute with Spain. Properly read, the Doctrine would justify American intervention in Cuba, and could be used to promote the "financial partnership" this country sought with Great Britain, the agrarians alleged. Party congressmen

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<sup>17</sup>William D. Sheldon, Populism in the Old Dominion (Princeton, 1935), 143, Times, May 26, 1896; ibid., May 24, June 3, June 5, June 7, 1896.

<sup>18</sup>Cong. Rec., 28:2:1448, ibid., 27:1:107.

in one breath applauded Cleveland's vigorous diplomacy in protecting the smaller western hemispheric nations against the aggression of England, but in the next they condemned the policy as "tardy, and therefore inefficient." A principle so "expansive, pragmatic, and flexible" would easily provide the impetus to American diplomacy for which the agrarians hoped. Senator Allen found justification for the annexation of both Cuba and Hawaii in his own corollary to the Doctrine of 1823:

Whenever territory is essential to the safety and security of this country we should not only insist that such powers should not acquire additional territory, but we should also insist that this government should have the right to such territory by purchase.

The interpretation appealed to both Pacific and Caribbean expansionists.<sup>19</sup>

As the fever of interest in Caribbean expansion mounted, Populists continued to press for the construction of an isthmian canal between the North and South American continents. In 1895, Thomas Bayard, then Ambassador to the Court of St. James, attempted, unsuccessfully, to delay the landing of British Marines in the Bluefields of South America by negotiating an American loan in Nicaragua's behalf so that country might satisfy the claims of British creditors and remove the threat of British occupation of the canal route. Congress, by then

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<sup>19</sup>Cong. Rec., 28:3:2556, 57, 59, *ibid.*, 28:4:3627. Senator Morgan, leader of the silverites in the Senate, candidly admitted that "we want a war with Spain or England. We shall need more money." Times, March 12, 1896. During this period Republican silver senators and Populists worked closely together, often caucusing before important legislation came to the floor of the Senate. See also Weinberg, Manifest Destiny, 393.

aroused to the need for sustained activity in South America if the United States were to secure permanent control of the proposed isthmian waterway, appropriated funds for a canal route survey.<sup>20</sup>

Populist legislators, still violently resisting appropriations for government aid to private commercial interests, contented themselves with a mild attack upon the survey proposal. It was certainly not the construction of the canal to which they objected. Populists advocated construction of the isthmian waterway to increase trade. But party legislators did object to the features of the survey scheme which authorized government support of the market value of bonds issued by the private development company which proposed the survey. Instead, Populists favored an outright survey of the canal route by an agency of the United States Government. If the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty, by which the United States agreed with England to refrain from the construction of an isthmian canal independent of joint English-United States control, prohibited such direct activity by the United States, then the treaty must be abrogated, Populist legislators insisted. But the agrarians deplored granting to a private corporation any power to conduct the business of the United States Government.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Times, March 24, April 29, 1895, Cong. Rec., 21:1:348. For the history of the canal diplomacy, see Mary W. Williams, Anglo-American Isthmian Diplomacy, 1815-1915 (Washington, 1916).

<sup>21</sup> Cong. Rec., 27:2:1101, 1341-48, ibid., 27:1:245, 246, 249, 250, 347-51, 438, 447, 448, 449.



Populist advocates of expansion into the Pacific, who favored the construction of the canal and feared British encroachment in South America, had another cause for concern. Eager to acquire the Pacific trade, they now began to fear the effect of the Geary Act upon American-Chinese friendship. Senator Davis anticipated that the new Chinese-Russian railroad might turn China's economics away from the United States. The flour market in China had, in fact, decreased steadily since 1892. Perhaps the public excitement over a Russian-American extradition treaty of minor importance worked upon the Senator's fears. But now, more than ever, Populists of the wheat belt had reason to fear Russian expansion into Asian markets.<sup>22</sup>

Once again silver monetization appeared to offer the solution to the problem. For China paid the amount of her indemnity to Japan in silver at the conclusion of the Sino-Japanese War and, were the United States to monetize the metal, a tremendous advantage would accrue to American traders in China whose operations would be facilitated by a ready supply of standard trade currency and the elimination of unfavorable exchange rates paid for British silver in China.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Cong. Rec., 26:4:3085, Campbell, Special Business Interests, 23, Times, December 10, 1894.

<sup>23</sup>Times, April 12, 1895.

Thus Populist legislators were intent, by election time, upon the monetization of silver by the United States. Populist leaders entertained no doubts as to the sentiments of the Democratic presidential nominee William Jennings Bryan after the Democratic National Convention at Chicago, but much public uncertainty existed as to the true position of the Republican nominee, William McKinley, on the monetization issue. McKinley aided James G. Blaine in his efforts to secure a silver trade dollar at the Pan American Conference of 1889, and voted for the Bland-Allison Act of 1878, which provided for a limited increase in silver coinage. The Manufacturers' Club of Philadelphia, a pro-silver organization, backed McKinley's "bimetallist" sympathies, and representative Francis G. Newlands of Nevada headed a "silver League for McKinley." Yet John Hay, "who held the confidence of the members of the coalition government," reassured his friends in the British Foreign Office of the Republican presidential candidate's sound money sympathies during the summer of 1896. At the same time, McKinley campaigned on the argument that the foreign trade of the United States was being "precipitately cut off" from abroad. Remembering that he had favored an increased currency in 1892, southern delegates to the Republican National Convention continued honestly to regard McKinley as "favorable to silver." And McKinley understood the need for a stable

currency.<sup>24</sup>

Senators Allen and Butler, who stamped the Populist national convention into the alliance with pro-silver Democrats, appreciated the strength of the silver forces within the Republican Party. Often they had allied themselves with Senator Don Cameron of Pennsylvania, and other proponents of bimetallism. They understood the position of the Republican presidential aspirant, McKinley, who, as a member of the Republican Platform Committee of 1888 helped to frame a plank friendly to silver. McKinley, the political representative of the state which had spawned "the Ohio Idea," a candidate pulled from obscurity by the industrialists of his party, was a symbol of their hopes to Republican expansionists. And he advocated the "widest possible use" of silver during the election campaign of 1892.<sup>25</sup>

Yet now McKinley seemed to turn his back upon silver, and the Republican Party platform of 1896 clung to the gold standard. By contrast, the silver coinage plank adopted by the Democrats seemed to offer the opportunity for the agrarian legislators to enact their silver funding scheme. And it seemed highly improbable that Populists

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<sup>24</sup>Times, May 11, May 14, May 25, June 30, 1896, December 29, 1896, Paxton F. Hibben, The Peerless Leader, William Jennings Bryan (New York, 1929), 179, William D. Sheldon, Populism in the Old Dominion (Princeton, 1935), 125, Bertha A. Reuter, Anglo-American Relations During the Spanish-American War (New York, 1924), 50, Dunn, From Harrison to Harding, II, 227-28.

<sup>25</sup>Destler, American Radicalism, 43, Times, May 12, 1892, Wilfred E. Binkley, American Political Parties, Their Natural History (New York, 1943), 330.

would achieve national victory at the polls, more so after Democrats and Republicans formed public battle lines over the issue of silver coinage. Therefore Populist silverites closed ranks with like-minded silverites in both major parties. Discontented reformers and laborites who hoped for the Populist nomination of Eugene V. Debs for President left the St. Louis convention of the Populist Party with few illusions about the objectives of Populist politics.<sup>26</sup>

Perhaps William Jennings Bryan's refusal to acknowledge the official support of the Populists stemmed from a foreknowledge of the intentions of the silverites within the party, especially after James B. Weaver, leader of the greenback wing of Populism, received the Populist Vice Presidential nomination. But the strategy of the Democrats could be summed up in the advice given to fellow Democrats by the editor of the Atlanta Constitution: "Advocate every principle of the Populist Party platform if it is necessary in order to keep the people inside the Democratic Party." Certainly the Democratic silver plank offered scant promise of silver funding unless silver could somehow be pegged at a legal exchange rate with gold. "Free and unlimited coinage" of silver as popularized by the Democrats was best described as gold standard politics. The chagrin and bitterness of Populist reformers who witnessed the collapse of their party as well as the failure to achieve international bimetallism after the election of 1896 can therefore easily

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<sup>26</sup>Binkley, American Political Parties, 333-34, 320, Lloyd, "The Populists at St. Louis."

be understood.<sup>27</sup>

Republican Party strategists aimed their own campaign at the "middle states" where the balance of power between the parties was decided. The campaign of voter education undertaken by the Republicans is well known. Literature and speakers poured into agrarian strongholds of silver coinage sentiment urging Republicanism and prosperity. By a margin of popular votes barely comfortable enough to insure victory, and in which an estimated 14,000 votes in seven middle-western states could have reversed the outcome of the election, the Republican Party carried William McKinley of Ohio to the presidency of the United States. Control of the middle states, the alleviation of urban-rural tensions and the Republican labor vote in agrarian districts accounted for Republican success.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Herman C. Nixon, "The Populist Movement in Iowa," Iowa Journal of History and Politics, XXIII (Iowa City), 85-86, Hicks, Populist Revolt, 247, 358, Ida M. Tarbell, The Tariff in Our Times (New York, 1911), 241, C. Vann Woodward, Tom Watson, Agrarian Rebel (New York, 1938), 290, Cong. Rec., 28:3:2150.

<sup>28</sup>C. Vann Woodward, Tom Watson, 280, Harvey S. Wish, "John Peter Altgeld and the Background of the Campaign of 1896," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXIV (March, 1930), 503, Times, July 11, July 14, 1896. A strong rural-urban split appeared in all sections of the country. Only in the silver mining "mountain states" did Bryan receive a majority of urban votes. Even the states of Kansas, Nebraska, Missouri and Tennessee, all of which were carried by Bryan, gave McKinley a majority of votes in their urban areas. And rural wheat growers favored Bryan with large majorities. William M. Diamond, "Urban and Rural Voting in 1896," American Historical Review, XLVI (January, 1941), 281-305, Barnes, "Myths," 392-93.

The oratory of the Republican candidate carried strains of patriotism and orthodoxy which echoed through his public utterances for the next four years. Themes of country, flag, and "only one class" offset the attractions of the seemingly indefatigable Bryan. The identification of Populism with the menace of communism "proved convenient" to campaigners of both major parties, who promised prosperity and the abolition of gross class inequality within the country, should they succeed to office. The Republicans won the task of fulfilling the promise.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Times, November 1, 1896, William S. McKinley, Speeches and Addresses, March 1, 1897-May 30, 1900 (New York, 1908), 86, 106, 107, 113.

## CHAPTER IV

### INTERLUDE

"Unless the thoughts of a nation run a common course,  
the affairs of a nation cannot run a common course."

Woodrow Wilson,  
Address to The Quill Club  
of New York City  
December 15, 1897

The agitation for silver coinage continued after the election of 1896. Bimetallists and silverites, who remained powerful forces in Congress and throughout the nation, renewed their efforts to secure an increased silver coinage. Indeed, John Wanamaker, Postmaster General of the McKinley Administration, early voiced his fear that if currency reform were not speedily effected "an outraged people" might turn "to those who can provide better times." In Ohio, the home state of the new president, a league of politically nonpartisan bimetallic clubs renewed its demand for an international silver coinage agreement. The Democrats of Ohio again pledged themselves to free silver. Orville Platt of New York attempted to make a free silver plank the "controlling force" in New York politics, while Senator Ben Tillman of South Carolina stumped New York State for the silver forces. In Iowa, meanwhile, silverites, Populists, and Democrats pooled their strength to struggle for an increased money supply. The Democratic State Convention of Maryland, under the leadership of Arthur Gorman, adopted a platform

calling for international bimetallism at a fixed ratio. Though the Populists of Michigan, Missouri, and Nashville, Tennessee, rejected free silver as too narrow a basis for reform, the expression of such discontent became infrequent. It was little wonder that William L. Buell, ex-President of the New York Stock Exchange, reported that "Europe is disgusted, and believes that in 1900 the United States is going on a silver basis."<sup>1</sup>

Another complication to the framing of a new financial legislation arose to hamper the administration. After 1895, though the industrial recovery of the nation progressed, a plethora of investment funds became available in the United States and Europe. From January 1896 to April 1897 the "visible gold supply of Europe" increased by £ 30,000,000, though Britain lost £ 5.6 million and France £ 1.4 million in gold reserves. During 1896 the balance of trade for the United States continued to shift until "more than a million of dollars for every working day" became credited "to the United States in international trade transactions." Industrial recovery, however, absorbed little investment capital. Consequently, investment rates in the United States plunged to a new-time low. Financiers turned abroad for investment opportunities which offered larger returns on capital than did this country. The interest rate of  $4\frac{1}{2}$  per cent offered in Germany thus attracted

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<sup>1</sup>Times, May 17, 1897; June 24, 1897, July 1, 1897; May 19, May 24, 1897; June 23, 1897; May 28, 1897; July 29, 1897; September 1, 1897; January 15, 1898; January 15, 1898, March 11, 1898, July 9, 1897.



American capital, since only 3 per cent was offered at home. To counteract these low rates, some Americans urged the employment of domestic investment capital in the further development of the natural resources of this country. But the days of wildcat exploitation and quick profits from American natural resources required markets. The spectre of a mature economy continued to haunt American investors.<sup>2</sup>

The Republican Administration clung to its belief that increased prosperity could best be realized through a change in the financial legislation of the country. The President's inaugural address stressed the need for currency reform. Such reform must take place along lines which, "without diminishing the circulating medium or effecting a premium for its contraction," would "present a remedy" for economic distress. McKinley's inaugural message to Congress centered around an analysis of American monetary problems as the key to future prosperity,

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<sup>2</sup>New York Times, April 20, 1897. Russia, which adopted the gold basis in 1896, absorbed £ 12,000,000 in gold during the time of a critical gold shortage in the United States. Austria absorbed £ 5,000,000 and New York £ 3,500,000 of the new supply, while the United States Treasury took £ 17,300,000. A continued loss by Britain and France during this time doubtless provided encouragement for the advocates of bimetallism. See also Times, January 1, 1897, and April 21, 1897. President Warner Van Norden of the National Bank of Commerce announced the existence of "plenty of money but no demand." "As soon as business picks up, however, and there comes a demand from trade sources, we will see better rates," he encouraged. Officials of the New York Life Insurance Company could not be so cheerful. One executive, Rufus J. Weeks, frankly warned of his company's concern over the lack of investment opportunities: "The truth," said he, "is forcing itself firstly upon custodians of trust funds and lastly upon the public." Times, January 3, 1898; ibid., January 2, 1898.

though he carefully omitted the presentation of any specific measures for the advocated reforms. The President did, however, note the research of the Indianapolis Monetary Commission, an independent organization of businessmen and economists who desired the stabilization of the currency. Further, the short range plan of the McKinley Administration became evident when all proposals for new financial legislation were delayed until the passage of the Dingley Tariff, which the administration hoped would provide an adequate revenue. The President's request for a congressional committee to study the currency blocked any immediate financial legislation. Secretary of the Treasury Lyman J. Gage explained that the administration, while intent upon ensuring a stable currency, "need not ignore the fact that there are many wounds to be cured, excited passions to be calmed, and many misunderstandings to be composed," before appropriate legislation might be enacted. The Senate Finance Committee promptly undertook consideration of the recommendations of the presidential message; but in the Senate itself opinion remained weighted in favor of silverites and inflationists. So in order to explain McKinley's program and to "secure the support" of the banking community, Secretary Gage was dispatched to New York for conferences with leading financiers. He returned to Washington armed with the "assured support of New York financial interests" for the President's

policy.<sup>3</sup>

All during the autumn of 1897, Secretary Gage and President McKinley consulted earnestly upon the President's second financial message which would be presented to Congress in December and which would elaborate the administration program. One proposal embodied a scheme for funding National Bank notes with Treasury bond receipts. This the administration rejected as inexpedient since it failed to provide for a necessary elasticity of the currency. Another tentative proposal to issue short term low interest gold bonds "as security for circulating notes, in substitution of currency previously deposited" drew such opposition, when made public, that Secretary Gage, through whom the arrangement was first given notice, offered his resignation to the President. The resignation was refused, but the administration retreated from plans to issue new government bonds. Meanwhile, the comptroller of currency, Charles G. Dawes, noted that "a portion of the financial press is already attacking the Dingley Law for its failure to produce the required revenue." The President continued to urge "the establishment of two policies: protection and the present gold

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<sup>3</sup>McKinley, Speeches and Addresses, 2, Inaugural Address, March 4, 1897; Times, July 8, July 28, 1897; July 25, 1897, "The Financial Situation," Commercial and Financial Chronicle, LXV (July 10, 1897), 64-65; Times, April 30, 1897.

Represented at the meeting with Gage were the following New York banks: Commercial Exchange Bank, Lincoln National Bank, Chase National Bank, Hanover National Bank, First, Third and Fourth National Banks, City National Bank, The American Exchange National Bank, The Bank of Commerce. Also in attendance were representatives of the First National Bank of New Jersey.

See also Times, December 3, 1897.

standard."<sup>4</sup>

For, with the favorable balance of exchange rates continuing in existence, the currency problem became, under the principle of the protective tariff, "simply a revenue problem." So the President stressed the "great evils" of maintaining the existing parity between the paper, silver, and gold in circulation, whereby all circulating specie must be accorded equality of redemption by the federal government. To break the endless chain of redemption of paper and silver in gold, which fettered the Republican Administration, McKinley proposed that "when any of the United States notes are presented for redemption in gold and are redeemable in gold, such notes shall be kept and set apart and only paid out in exchange for gold." McKinley's policy thus proved to be essentially that of his Democratic predecessor, Grover Cleveland.<sup>5</sup>

Public feeling ran high after the publication of the message, when it appeared that the President still determined to restrict the circulation of paper currency. The National Board of Trade, meeting in annual convention, considered that "probably there is no subject which is still of such importance as that of currency. There is still much to be desired in the way of prosperity. A spirit of unrest and dissatisfaction still exists . . . in New York and Nebraska the

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<sup>4</sup>Times, November 25, 1897, Charles G. Dawes, A Journal of the McKinley Years, edited by Bascom M. Timmons (Chicago, 1950), 166; Times, November 20, December 29, 1897.

<sup>5</sup>William McKinley, quoted in Dawes, Journal, 129; For. Rel., 1897, Message of the President, ix, x.

opinions of the dissatisfied are now practically the same as before the election." Prominent businessmen knew that "the moral and political atmosphere" had not been cleared of "revolutionary influences," while "some sections of the country" still clung "to the Chicago platform" and its free silver heresies.<sup>6</sup>

Upon the receipt of the presidential message, Populist members of the House of Representatives promptly caucused, then issued a joint resolution: "That we are opposed to and will resist all efforts to destroy our greenbacks and Treasury notes whether it be by direct legislation or by the subterfuge of refusing to reissue the same except in return for gold." They further unanimously opposed any extension of the power of note issue to "any bank, corporation or individual." Thus the compromise proposals embodied in the Report of the Indianapolis Board of Trade proved unacceptable to the Populists. The report, first published in January of 1898, became, in fact, the pattern for the monetary adjustments ultimately adopted by the Republican Administration. But while hopes of silver coinage lingered, no substitute reforms proved acceptable to the agrarians.<sup>7</sup>

But to show its good faith in the fulfillment of campaign pledges, and in the hope that true bimetallism might be secured, the Republican President fostered the activities of the silver coinage

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<sup>6</sup>Times, November 24, December 7, 1897, December 15, 1897; Times, December 17, 1897.

<sup>7</sup>Times, December 17, 1897, January 3, 1898.

advocates. Soon after his inauguration, the President, with the nearly unanimous consent of the House of Representatives, appointed a committee empowered to deal with foreign nations in preliminary negotiations to effect an acceptable international parity between gold and silver. The Wolcott Commission conferred with European statesmen and financiers from April until November of 1897. As in 1892, the early contacts of the commissioners indicated that some plan acceptable to England, Germany, France, and the United States might be arranged. Henry White, the United States Ambassador to the Court of St. James, met with the American Commission in France, and aided them in the drafting of a preliminary report for John Hay. Hay then approached the British government "informally, on bimetallism."<sup>8</sup>

France agreed to cooperate in maintaining an international bimetallic parity, and the commission obtained Germany's promise to enter the informal discussions looking to the coinage of silver. Yet the earnest efforts of the American silverites met with defeat. The passage of the Dingley Tariff in June of 1897 antagonized France. In early July, Germany, likewise irked by the adverse effect of the Dingley legislation on the export of German sugar and manufactures to

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<sup>8</sup>"I do not need to be reassured that you are using untiring energy and tact to help along two of the administration's greatest efforts: bimetallism and the Bering Sea negotiations," McKinley complimented John Hay, American Ambassador to the Court of St. James. Louis B. Sears, "John Hay," American Secretaries of State and Their Diplomacy, edited by Samuel F. Bemis (New York, 1927-1929), IX, 120.

the United States, replaced its representative to the Commission, sympathetic Chancellor Possadowski Wehner, with Baron von Thulmann, a statesman favorable to the gold standard. The next week, at a crucial meeting in the British Foreign Office attended by Lord Salisbury, Arthur Balfour, Sir Michael Hicks Beach and the French Minister of Finance Geoffrey, Senator Wolcott formally presented the American proposals to the British, French and German governments. The result of this, and subsequent meetings held by the representatives of the four nations, became the "final refusal of the British Government to accede to any of the proposals made by the Commission." Thus ended another attempt to obtain an increased coinage of silver, and to establish a permanent international bimetallic ratio.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Times, February 27, November 2, 1897; ibid., July 8, 1897. The British record, Correspondence Respecting the Proposals on Currency Made By the Special Envoys from the United States, is printed in Session Papers, CV (October, 1897), 601-17.

The tentative proposal of Britain to maintain one-fifth of her bank reserve in silver met with immediate objections from the British Bankers' Gold Standard Defense Association. Association members maintained that England in no way pledged herself to bimetallism simply through the adulteration of her gold reserve, and that such an adjustment in the reserve could result at best in only a temporary price rise, while England purchased or coined silver. British capitalists feared that American production would "ruin the market" and that silver prices must therefore fall again. In this country, Secretary Gage agreed that the holding of the proposed one-fifth of the English reserve in silver would prove too slight to raise the market price of the metal. The value of silver would climb on the exchanges only so long as England accepted it in the international market at an inflated value. Times, July 25, 1897; September 17, 1897; September 12, 1897. In the long run, however, Britain might conceivably have been brought to the silver standard had India's mints remained open to silver, and the British-Indian trade flourished.

The failure of the American commission's efforts in behalf of silver came as no surprise to the Populist Senator William Allen, who remained, as he said, "always satisfied that international bimetallism was a dream." To Allen's Populist colleagues the international dicker-  
ing over silver served only the useful purpose of determining "where McKinley stands in the financial question." Allegedly to the detriment of agriculturalists throughout the nation, the Republican Administration's conduct already foreshadowed plans to "retain greenbacks and substitute bank paper." Populists hardly expected that an international commission representing "the marts of trade" would now seek either "the money of the constitution" or "a fair chance in the markets of the world for all our industries." Thus, while they agreed not to press for the commission's final report to Congress, the apparent failure of the Republicans to provide for a government managed currency led Populist legislators to advocate silver coinage by the United States, independent of any other international agreements.<sup>10</sup>

The silver coinage legislation which Populists continued to support was always blocked. House and Senate Finance Committees simply refused to report such measures. Populists and silverites attempted to circumvent the committees to which their bills were reported by

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<sup>10</sup>Speaker of the House Thomas B. Reed refused to appoint new congressional committees, preferring to leave the direction of legislation in the hands of gold standard advocates, who continued in their previous congressional appointments. Reed's power of appointment doubtless helped to keep recalcitrant party members in line when a party vote was deemed desirable.



attaching the free coinage proposals as riders to general and consular appropriation bills. The opposition of ensconced interests, the agrarians alleged, made normal procedures impossible.<sup>11</sup>

For all their professed hatred of special privileges, which so often erupted in the clash over monetary policy, the agrarian legislators turned, in the course of framing tariff legislation, to a plan for governmental aid to agriculture. Populist opposition to the Dingley Act crystallized after a bitter struggle to secure a direct bounty to the producer of American agricultural products. The first of many bounty proposals, the Cannon Bill, a "result of a conference of Silver Republicans, Populists, and some Democrats" provided for payment of bounties to the exporters of rye, wheat, barley, corn, flour, and tobacco. Senator Allen, doubtless hoping to make the bounty provision attractive to advocates of American naval expansion, supported the additional provision that only those enumerated agricultural staples such as grain shipped in American vessels should be eligible to collect the award. But Marion Butler, as well as Allen, early voiced concern that the bill, as drawn, would benefit shippers rather than agriculture. The agrarians advocated payments direct to the farmers. Yet even Butler supported proposals for a wheat bounty of \$13,000,000 as a "good investment" although his constituents stood to gain little

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<sup>11</sup>For examples of the riders attached to legislation by the free silver advocates, see Cong. Rec., 29:1:370, ibid., 30:1:306 for amendments proposed by Senators Allen and John Bell.

from the measure. Thus while he opposed bounties "on general principles," Senator Kyle felt bound to support his colleagues because it became "necessary to benefit the farmer somehow." The bounty might promote diversified farming in the Mississippi Valley wheat belt, the Senator noted, and thus give relief to the hard pressed agrarians. But, in spite of Populist support of the bounty provision, Congress dallied with the proposals to aid agriculture only long enough to secure passage of other schedules in the Dingley Bill. Senator Allen's final attempt to secure a one-fourth cent bounty for domestic beet sugar "was pocketed" indefinitely.<sup>12</sup>

The framing of tariff legislation exerted a direct effect upon Populist attitudes toward American foreign policy. As the sugar schedules of the proposed tariff came under the scrutiny of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Senate, it became evident that a close connection existed between the agriculturalists' desires for a bounty upon beet sugar and their sentiments respecting the annexation of Hawaii.

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<sup>12</sup>Cong. Rec., 30:2:1631, 1241; Times, June 7, June 10, June 11, 1897; Cong. Rec., 29:2:1793, 94, ibid., 29:Index:171, ibid., 30:3:2392-93, ibid., 30:3:2255.

Californians, by then engaged in expanding their beet sugar production, exerted considerable effort to secure the proposed bounties. David Lubin worked through the Central Labor Union there to obtain grange and labor petitions favoring the bounty. A group of California clergymen also propagandized for the measure. Times, May 25, July 23, 1893. But Marion Butler's objections to bounties for the exporters of agricultural products foreshadowed similar objections of another maverick Republican, Senator William Borah, to the Fordney-McCumber measure of the 1920's. For Borah's objections to shippers' bounties, see Claudius O. Johnson, Borah of Idaho (New York, 1936), 223.

After an intensive propaganda campaign by such notable figures as Senator William E. Frye, John W. Foster, and Hawaiian President Sanford B. Dole, President McKinley announced his wish to annex the Islands "in accord with the established policy of the country." Hawaiian sugars previously enjoyed free entry into the United States, under a treaty of reciprocity with this country which would expire without a renewal of the reciprocity provision in the new tariff legislation. The rapidly expanding domestic beet sugar industry might then enjoy the natural advantages afforded by their proximity to home refineries and markets. This would tend to offset the competition afforded by both domestic and Cuban cane sugars. Such a renewal might antagonize American-owned sugar interests in Cuba, but was more than offset, in the eyes of Ways and Means Committee members, by the need to maintain strong commercial and economic ties with Hawaii, lest annexationist influences there be hampered. And had not the Spanish government once before, in 1890, capitulated to American demands for special tariff concessions in Cuba when threatened with the loss of markets for its sugars? True, Cuban insurgents had worked with good effect to destroy much of the normal crop in Cuba. Yet the effect of their destructivity further incited American sugar investors on the island against Spanish failure to afford adequate protection. Thus the tariff operated as an effective instrument of American diplomacy. Before presentation to the Senate, it was therefore carefully reviewed by the Foreign Relations

Committee of the Senate.<sup>13</sup>

When the sugar schedules of the new tariff came under the scrutiny of the Committee, that body obtained the elimination of the reciprocity provision enjoyed by Hawaii and Cuba under the old Wilson tariff, in order, it was stated, to benefit domestic cane sugars and to reserve the American market to the American producers. But meanwhile Japan protested against the American annexation of Hawaii, and Congress deferred its plans to annex the islands while the State Department negotiated settlements with both Japan and Russia. Then, as a move to insure continued American predominance in Hawaii, the House of Representatives insisted upon the retention of Hawaiian reciprocity provision in the Dingley Bill. A compromise provision between the House and Senate adjusted the sugar schedule by providing for tariff changes looking to an "increase on the higher grades" of sugar, which would "benefit producers incidentally," the primary purpose being to retain the reciprocity clause for Hawaii. But nothing could be done for domestic beet sugars under such an arrangement. Any hopes that the exclusion of Hawaiian sugars would enlarge the market for beet sugars disappeared.<sup>14</sup>

Populists adjusted their policies to the changing circumstances. Early in 1897, before the expiration of Hawaiian reciprocity became an important issue, the agrarians were "pretty generally supposed to be in

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<sup>13</sup>Times, April 30, 1897, June 17, 1897, Stevens, Hawaii, 284-85.

<sup>14</sup>Times, April 2, 1897; ibid., May 5, 1897, June 11, 1897.

favor" of annexation. Senator James J. Kyle, having suffered a sudden conversion to annexation after rumors of Japanese interference in the islands, could be termed a "zealous advocate" of annexation. Indeed, Republicans hoped to obtain the vote of the entire Populist congressional delegation for the annexation treaty.<sup>15</sup>

Yet something must be done for beet sugar. Senator Allen, who at first favored the abolition of the Hawaiian reciprocity clause because of an alleged agreement between Claus Spreckles and William Havermeier to divide the American sugar market between their respective cane fields, now rallied his colleagues to the cause of the agricultural bounty. They joined him in vigorous efforts to secure a bounty for the production of beet sugar.<sup>16</sup>

These efforts failed. When John W. Foster reported that agreements had been reached with Japan and Russia respecting the formal American control of Hawaii, Populist legislators deferred to the sectional interests which opposed annexation of the islands. But by early January of 1898 an informal Senate poll on Hawaiian annexation found Senator Allen opposed annexation because allegedly he feared the assimilation of the colored races into Anglo-Saxon America. Jerry

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<sup>15</sup>Times, June 15, 1897, January 2, 1897. Senator Kyle consulted naval strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan upon the values of the Hawaiian Islands to the United States. Mahan replied affirming their value. And the Senator thereafter urged the acquisition of Hawaii upon grounds of national defense. William E. Livezy, Mahan on Sea Power (New York, 1947), 172-73.

<sup>16</sup>Times, July 20, 1897; see also Cong. Rec., 28:Index:171, for a similar measure sponsored by Representative Maxwell of Nebraska.

Simpson twitted Republicans whom he charged would substitute "bananas for beefsteak" so recently promised to the voters of the Republican ticket. Fears of racial amalgamation and of the competition of a cheap labor supply explained much of the failure to annex Hawaii before the Spanish-American War. But another, and no less important, reason for the failure to secure the unanimous support of the Populist agrarians became the refusal of Congress to include some provision for an agricultural bounty in the Dingley tariff.<sup>17</sup>

Populists abandoned their pleas for moderate tariff legislation in 1897. In former years they assailed the proposals to "give the American market to the American producer" as of little benefit to consumers, and identified their protests with consumer interest. Now, by contrast, party legislators emphasized the function of agriculture as one of production, and stressed the need to protect all American producers. But the new emphasis did not absolve the framers of the Dingley Act from responsibility for agricultural prosperity any more than the previous tariff stood absolved from the blame for the high cost of

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<sup>17</sup>Times, July 7, 1897, Bailey, Japan's Protest Over Annexation, Times, June 19, July 12, July 18, 1897. New York Times, July 18, 1897. Times, June 17, 1897. Cong. Rec., 30:3:2430, 2411. Times, January 15, 1898. For annexation were Senators Harris, Kyle, and Turner, opposed, Allen and Butler. See also Times, January 13, 15, 1898.

Russian acquiescence to American control of Hawaii may well have been prompted by fear of Japanese expansion, and a desire to see Hawaii permanently removed from the ever-widening sphere of Japanese influences. The United States, still relatively weak in the Pacific, thus offered an ideal counterbalance to Japanese expansion.

living. Populists insisted that the proposed Dingley legislation could not be regarded as "national" in its scope since it ignored southern and western interests. True, the agricultural schedules of the Dingley Act remained identical with those of the McKinley tariff of 1890, but if the farmers' interest in the tariff must remain that of the consumer, tariff legislation simply provided "no remedies for the real issues," agrarian legislators contended.<sup>18</sup>

To Populists bent on securing some advantage from current legislation, it seemed that raw materials such as lumber, coal, and gypsum, articles which the farmer must purchase, bore the burdens of revenue which might with more justice have fallen on manufactured products had not the prohibitive level of the tariff rates discouraged foreign imports of these articles. But the reverse argument seemed no less true. On the raw materials of industry which the farmer produced, hides, for example, a tariff could be rightfully demanded, since the agricultural interests must not "be left out in the cold." And, finally, the agrarians advocated so much free trade as would secure the free entry of manufactured products widely used in agricultural production.<sup>19</sup>

Their increased emphasis upon production and exports as the keys to prosperity became evident as southern Populists John Skinner and

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<sup>18</sup>Nelson W. Aldrich, quoted in Times, May 26, 1897, Cong. Rec., 30:1:308, Stanwood, American Tariff Controversies, 380-81; Cong. Rec., 30:1:101.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 28:7:1542, ibid., 30:2:1202, ibid., 30:3:2664, 2868, ibid., 30:2:1873.

Marion Butler pleaded for the development of southern mineral resources. Senator Butler blandly asserted that import duties on one of these minerals, mica, "must be higher than if in competition with European countries" because the competition of the South came "from silver using countries" of the Orient, which held an advantage on the international exchange. In still another instance, the Senator accepted the logic of the opposition to prove his point. The existence of "free trade and cheap silver," the Senator insisted, could explain agricultural prosperity abroad. The rapid revival and concentration of foreign agriculture threatened American markets. But not even the remonetization of silver could put the United States abreast of those foreign nations which competed against this country with the advantages of cheap land and labor.<sup>20</sup>

The one choice which remained to the United States, if it were to revive agricultural prosperity, appeared to be the abolition of the protective system or institution of an adequate system of protection for all agricultural staples. Protection could best be effected through government bounties. Thus Butler advocated the restoration of high duties on broken rice because protection would "benefit the rice planters of North Carolina," who lost markets when lower duties were established. But the Senator also worked to effect the free entry of gypsum used in agricultural fertilizers because for the South it

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 30:2:1498, 1629.



constituted a southern agricultural "necessity."<sup>21</sup>

Westerners complimented the arguments of their southern colleagues. As spokesman for the West, Senator Allen stressed the inadequacy of the home market to absorb agricultural products. He ran the risk, Allen knew, of alienating Middle Western Populists if he advocated bounties for agriculture. The "middle of the road Populists" whose conservative views led them to oppose the liberal credit proposals of their own party, would doubtless look askance upon any plans to foster government paternalism. But the Senator felt compelled, "because of the failure of the government to relieve the people financially," to insist upon the bounties. In 1894, with the promise of an income tax to aid in the more equitable distribution of wealth, had he not, the Senator queried, voted against just such bounty proposals? The income tax having been declared invalid, government intervention must now in some new way provide the benefits which the farmers could not otherwise expect.<sup>22</sup>

Certainly no help could be expected from the new tariff, Populists maintained. The schedules of 1890 and 1897 looked like "Tweedle Dum and Tweedle Dee" to the agrarians. Both tariffs protected industry at the expense of agriculture. Further, Populists contended that tariff legislation provided no guarantee of the economic relief promised to agriculture by the Republican Administration. Agricultural

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 30:2:2117, ibid., 30:3:2446-47.

<sup>22</sup>Cong. Rec., 30:3:2394.

pursuits accounted for the occupation of forty per cent of the country's laboring class, but these people were denied the benefits of Republican legislation. Nor was it probable that benefits would accrue to the farmers under the proposed tariff rates. "A correct principle" of tariff construction would assess duties equal to the difference between American and foreign labor, thus protecting both labor and agriculture. The examples of Russia, Austria, Germany and France proved to the detriment of those countries, that high tariffs such as those proposed by the Republicans might be compatible with "the lowest wages in the world."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>The agrarians protested that drawback allowances for finished and re-exported raw materials constituted an unfair rebate to manufacturers who thus escaped payment of their fair share of the revenue. Some evidence does exist that American cotton manufacturers sought to move their plants directly to China in order to escape American taxation and doubtless also to tap the cheap labor supply. See U. S. For. Rel., 1897, 91-92. Secretary Olney stressed the introduction of American manufactures there rather than of raw materials.

Populists often attempted to amend the new rates by moving to insert the schedules of the old Wilson Bill into pertinent sections of the new tariff schedules. They maintained that the Wilson Bill would be adequate "with the few changes," and these changes frequently moved in the direction of high tariffs. See, for example, the comments of John MacDowell, who contrasted the wool schedules of the Dingley Bill with what he desired for the Ohio farmers. MacDowell's desire for a protective duty on raw wool in no way contradicted Populist attacks upon the protection afforded to manufactured and semi-refined woollens. See Cong. Rec., 30:Appendix:15-16. See also Times, July 20, 1897, Cong. Rec., 30:2:1793-94 for a similar argument in favor of duties on cotton cloth. See also Cong. Rec., 30:3:2410-41.

In reality, American diplomacy was put to considerable strain by the passage of the Dingley tariff. Despite much adverse publicity given to European nations against this country's products, the general tariff level had risen to a maximum of less than twenty cents on the dollar in 1894, an increase of less than ten cents in ten years. Nor did this country refuse to employ the methods of indirect discrimination which advocates of American retaliation offered as justification of United States policy. Competent analysts condemned the American policy in the face of the slow rise of the general customs tariff in Europe. The acrimonious debates on tariff policy indicated plainly that Populists remained critical of it as an example of class and sectional legislation.<sup>24</sup>

The agrarians still emphasized their contention that the tariff remained a secondary issue and presented no remedy for their problems. Although Populist legislators in their condemnation of tariff policy employed their usual arguments against special privilege, they now openly demanded a share in the high-tariff stakes. Anticipating the Populist failure to obtain any substantial concessions, Representative Vincent of Kansas summed up the position of his party. He desired passage of the Dingley tariff because he hoped it would "prove embarrassing to the administration," but "wouldn't be caught voting for the measure" in its final form. And, indeed, no Populist voted in favor of

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<sup>24</sup>See, for example, Worthington C. Ford, "A Menace to Trade," Nation, LXIV (June 24, 1897), 466, 67; Times, July 7, 1897.

the final tariff conference report.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup>Senators Allen, Kyle, and Harris voted against the final tariff report, while Senator Butler refused to cast his vote "since the tariff is a political football of two parties." For examples of this policy see Cong. Rec., 30:2:1592, ibid., 30:Appendix:98, ibid., 30:2:1590-91; ibid., 29:1:252-53, ibid., 30:Appendix:202, ibid., 30:3:2733-34; ibid., 30:3:2462-63, ibid., 30:1:101, Times, July 20, 1897.

Seldom could any conflicts of interest be attributed to the Populists, for those who might be expected to disagree simply abstained from voting. But for the examples of sectional disagreement over the tariff on rice, see Cong. Rec., 30:2:1589, ibid., 30:2:1590-91. Such disagreements were usually prefaced by the statement that the tariff remained a minor issue and constituted no remedy to the farmers' problems.

In early April Consul John G. Monaghan reported Germans "very much excited about the proposed new tariff in the United States. . . . Her hopes to extend and increase her exports have been built on other rates than reported. . . . She has greater fear of us in the future than anyone else." United States Congress, 55 Cong., 1 Sess. Consular Reports. House Document 11, pt. 3 (Washington, 1897), 394.

In addition to the protests of Germany and France, Austria and Japan entered objections to rates which adversely affected their exports to the United States. Japanese protests over the discrimination of the United States against Japanese silks were repelled by Under Secretary of State William R. Day, who anticipated that the Japanese bounties would prove a violation of the treaty of amity and commerce with this country. The treaty would not, however, become effective until 1899. Meanwhile, according to Section 30 of the tariff, an additional duty equal to the amount of the Japanese bounty was added to all Japanese silks imported here. Day charged that the object of the Japanese bounty was to consolidate Japan's twelve million dollar silk manufactures in the hands of Japanese middlemen. Since these middlemen were largely exporters, the inference plainly indicated Japanese desires to control the market. For. Rel., 1898, 449. Fears were also expressed in this country that Japan would turn to Russia for oil supplies if American discrimination against Japanese silk imports should continue. Times, July 13, July 15, 1897. For conflict with Germany over the rates, see For. Rel., 1897, 175-76, ibid., 179, Times, June 7, 1897.

Among domestic critics of the tariff, a committee of New York merchants including Gustav H. Schwab and Lewis Windmueller protested against the "high rates" established for raw materials, and urged "not free trade, but revision." Times, April 2, 1897. American lumber, too, met new restrictions in Germany, and Germans admittedly encouraged Russian oil imports to counteract the growing market of the Standard Oil Company. Times, June 7, 1897; For. Rel., 1897, 241, 248; Times, May 4,

Though, in the course of debates upon tariff policy, Populist legislators became enthusiastic over the Cuban rebellion, they refused

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1897.

Canada attempted retaliation by raising the rates for towing charges on the Canadian side of the Great Lakes. The Canadian government also attempted to obtain tariff concessions in return for an extension of the modus vivendi which the United States desired in the Bering Sea. While this country agreed to "treat reciprocity with the seals," admittedly the arrangement held "little promise of satisfactory results" for Canada. For. Rel., 1897, 324. Even had Canadian attempts to prevent the higher duties proved successful, Canada would probably have continued to suffer a net loss in its trade balance with this country. The export balance in favor of the United States grew after 1885 until by 1892 it favored this country by over 26 million dollars. Times, March 1, 1897.

South American delegates attending an international commercial conference in New York at the time of the Dingley Bill's passage went on record as opposed to any "Monroe Doctrine in trade." The Brazilian economic minister became particularly critical of the legislation. The high rates established for low grade sugars which Brazil exported to the United States presumably explained the strength of Brazilian opposition to the tariff. Times, June 4, July 19, 1897.

Hand in hand with the weapon of reciprocity upon which the Republicans relied so heavily to promote trade, there developed an interpretation of the "most favored nations" doctrine which sought to assure to the American export market equal trading rights with any other nation which held special favors with a United States treaty nation. The "most favored nation" clause, as interpreted by both the Harrison and McKinley Administrations, required the lowering of tariff barriers against the United States to the extent that any third party received special considerations not yet accorded to this country. But the interpretation placed upon the doctrine by the United States became a novel one. It emphasized the conditional nature of contracts between nations. The premises it asserted permitted a later withdrawal of the favors to others by the assertion that "a concession to a third country in exchange for value is not a favor, but bought and paid for." Thus similar concessions need not be granted as a right to sister countries holding "most favored nation" status. Thus the interpretation moved to control the concession which might be granted, and retain them as levers of bargaining power for the United States. Benjamin H. Williams, Economic Foreign Policy of the United States (New York, 1929), 290-91.

to believe that the policy of reciprocity advocated by Republicans would coerce Spain into a more liberal trade policy for Cuba. But they also failed to appreciate the Republican strategy of setting high rates for low-grade sugars. The hopes of the Republicans became obvious when Senators Thomas Platt and Nelson Aldrich defended such proposals. Senator Aldrich calmly admitted that "the legitimate result of the protective tax is to give the American market to the American producer. When this result is largely accomplished, the protective features of the tariff disappear." But agrarians who favored the development of the domestic beet sugar industry refused to support the reciprocity stratagem, which would admit refined Hawaiian sugars into the American domestic market.<sup>26</sup>

In a sense, Populists who railed against the special favors granted the sugar trust defeated their own purposes. Over one-third of the anticipated ninety million dollar revenue would be derived from the duties on sugar. Representative Dingley announced the twofold purpose of the tariff to be the encouragement of American industry and the accumulation of such a treasury reserve fund as would banish the spectre of silver coinage. But Populists continued to clamor against the high rates which would reduce imports and revenue even while they begged for free coinage. Thus the often blind and unreasoning distrust of special privilege, which even the more astute Populists made the core

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<sup>26</sup>Times, April 4, May 14, 1897, Cong. Rec., 30:2:1691-92, 1696-97, ibid., 30:3:2384, 86.

of their protest movement, led them to support an inconsistent and short-sighted policy.<sup>27</sup>

For their own purposes, the agrarians proposed American intervention in Cuba to restore peace to the island. Stressing the American heritage of democracy and personal freedom, Populists attributed their own demands for social justice to the Cubans who struggled against Spanish rule. Even after the Spanish government authorized the formation of a locally autonomous government for Cuba, Populists continued to regard the Cuban rebellion as essentially a battle for governmental self-determination. Thus Populist legislators identified the rebellion against Spanish rule in Cuba with their own contest to modify the prevailing direction of American life from its course of centralized industrial capitalism. Spanish military rule in Cuba was interpreted as evidence that economic domination led to militarism. The unhappy fate of Cuba would overtake this country, Populists charged, unless the domestic reforms which the party advocated should be speedily effected.<sup>28</sup>

This close personal identification with Cuban rebels re-inforced the crusading zeal of Populists who continued their demands for the enactment of specific domestic legislation designed to relieve agrarian discontents. In Congress, Senator Allen again, in 1897, spearheaded

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<sup>27</sup>Times, April 17, 22, 1897.

<sup>28</sup>Cong. Rec., 30:1:306. See for example Allen, Cong. Rec., 31:1:39-40. A more complete discussion of the question of political independence for Cuba is given in Chapter VI of this thesis.

his party's attack on Spanish rule in Cuba. He and his fellow Populist legislators, emboldened, possibly, by the increase in their number despite the loss of the silver crusade of 1896, advocated both American recognition and immediate political independence for the island. The Republican Administration must support such a measure, Allen contended, recalling that the Republican platform of 1896 favored Cuban independence. The Senator brushed aside all fears that international law might not sanction American intervention to secure Cuban freedom. American aid to Cuba became a moral duty to be undertaken for the relief of humanity as well as the fulfillment of a pledge to voters who cast their lot with the Republican Party on the faith that campaign commitments would be fulfilled. The energetic defense which Allen's case for intervention aroused in the Republican camp revealed that the double-edged thrust which called to public account the difference between the Republican theory and practice of politics, as well as their alleged moral hesitancy, found its mark among Republicans. Conservatives attempted to defeat the attack by extending the case made for Cuba by the agrarians to Greece, where American intervention in defense of that kingdom against Turkish aggression would doubtless have proved both profitless and impolitic. When baited with the issue of intervention in Greece, Allen held himself willing to extend the moral suasion of the United States throughout the world, but tactfully restrained his passion to export American liberties, limiting himself to the introduction of a motion formally expressing American sympathy for Greece. Thus the agrarians justified their support of American



intervention in Cuba by professing an allegiance to democracy, and a concern for humanity. Meanwhile, their desires to participate more fully in the determination of national policy and to become economically secure led them to support many of the measures they once condemned.<sup>29</sup>

While the tariff battle lines took form in Congress during May of 1897, the Cuban belligerency resolutions reappeared, offering Populist members of the Senate a more definite means of expressing their choice of policies for Cuba. Populist Senators Butler, Turner, Harris, and Heitfield favored the resolution which coupled American recognition of Cuban belligerency with the continued neutrality of the United States, but Senators Allen and Kyle abstained from voting. All Populist Senators, Allen excepted, voted against submitting the

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<sup>29</sup>Populist sympathy for the world's poor excluded the starving in India. The agrarians continued to oppose the shipment of relief wheat to India in American vessels throughout 1897, though shipments of Kansas wheat were contemplated, and later actually made. Attempts to liberalize American ship registry laws lurked behind the congressional battle over the relief shipments. The position taken by the Populists strengthened the hand of American naval expansionists, who insisted that an increase in the American merchant marine was preferable to extending permits for the coastal trade to vessels registered under foreign flags. Cong. Rec., 30:1:568, 69, Times, May 26, 1897, ibid., April 22, 1897, April 17, 1897; Cong. Rec., 30:1:794. Senator Allen saw the struggle between Greece and Turkey as one between the forces of Christianity and paganism, but Bradstreet's reported an increased demand for wheat in Greece and Turkey as a result of the war. The American State Department seized this moment of struggle to exert new pressures on the Ottoman Empire in order to obtain commercial concessions, and to secure indemnity for the massacre of American missionaries in Harpoot.

congressional resolutions to the Foreign Relations Committee for consideration. Again with the exception of Senator Allen, the Populists voted for report to Congress on Cuban affairs by the President, should diplomacy fail to secure the independence of Cuba "within a reasonable time." Allen's failure to register his vote upon the important resolutions seemed strange, in the light of his previous activities, but not so puzzling in the broader frame of Hawaiian annexation and agricultural bounties, two problems with which his constituency was greatly concerned. For the purposes of domestic politics, the Senator may well have wished to keep the good opinion of former Republican colleagues.<sup>30</sup>

The Populist brief for intervention in Cuba, an argument which sought to justify intervention in the face of steadfast Spanish refusal to accept American interference, in effect urged upon the Congress an act of overt hostility which would plunge this government and Spain into a war of last resort, this at a time when the financial structure of the government could hardly remain stable under the pressure of inflationary wartime spending. The premises of the agrarian case rested on several claims of doubtful validity. Populist legislators insisted that American citizens in Cuba who were allegedly persecuted by the Spanish government must be protected at all costs, lest national

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<sup>30</sup> Cong. Rec., 30:2:1252-53.

Jerry Simpson earlier indicated his willingness to vote for the legislation, and it would seem from the tenor of his remarks that the agrarians no longer feared the depressing effect of India's silver upon American wheat prices. In the Senate, Allen, Butler, Turner and Kyle abstained from voting, while Harris and Heitfield opposed the measure.

honor suffer. The knowledge that many of the rebels held only nominal allegiance to the United States did not mitigate the passion of these demands.<sup>31</sup>

Further, the violation of American treaty rights provided adequate basis for American intervention in Cuban affairs, agrarian legislators maintained. According to the interpretation placed upon insurgent activities by Populists, the arrests and summary trials of any and all American citizens became a violation of the Spanish-American protocol of 1877 which guaranteed to all citizens of the United States the right to trial in courts of United States jurisdiction unless they were captured, "with arms in hand," in the course of promoting insurrection.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Cong. Rec., 30:1:1201, 568, 69; Times, December 9, 1897, Cong. Rec., 30:2:1201, Times, April 1, 1897. Cong. Rec., 29:Index:241 contains a petition from the Nebraska Knights of Labor requesting the recognition of the Cuban belligerents. Ibid., 30:1:794-95, ibid., 30:2:1178, 80, ibid., 30:2:1186.

<sup>32</sup>Cong. Rec., 28:4:3078, 79, 80, ibid., Index:423 for the petition of Kansas citizens to recognize Cuban belligerency, ibid., 30:1:134, ibid., 28:4:3012, ibid., 30:2:1201-202; For. Rel., 1897, 751. Cong. Rec., 30:2:1201-02. The period of the eighteen nineties has as yet, to this writer's knowledge, escaped close scrutiny of administrative-congressional relations, most historians being content to note the influence of the Lodge expansionists in Congress. Closer examination reveals that one of the principal sources of the jealousy over prerogatives was a rivalry between land expansionists over the geographical direction of American land expansion. Still another issue was the form and degree of expansion deemed most desirable. The obvious example of such congressional-administrative disagreements was the difference of opinion between the Cleveland Administration and congressional land expansionists over the recognition of the Cuban belligerents, and Cleveland's subsequent financial as well as commercial expansion into South America. But Congressmen themselves held no simple, polarized set of beliefs favoring economic

Short of outright intervention, the agrarians insisted the United States ought at least to risk the recognition of Cuban patriots as belligerents. Congressional appropriations for Cuban relief could not atone for the failure of the administration to lend its moral support to the Cubans. Thus, when the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, who was known to be in close contact with the insurgent forces in Cuba, pleaded lack of information as the reason for the Committee's failure to recommend Congressional legislation for the relief of Cuba, and refused to report any of the several bills

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expansion, industrial or agrarian, against land expansion, hemispheric or global. Rather, the concept of land expansion complimented that of commercial and financial growth.

Much confusion appears to have ensued from the mistaken assumption that a denial of expansion in one geographical direction constituted denial of the principle of expansion (or specifically, of land expansion) in some other direction. The history of the principle of expansion, as it worked from 1890 through 1898 is most clearly understood as one of growth, industrial and financial, which climaxed in land expansion. Land expansionists demanded growth in many geographical directions--South America and the Orient--and sought the support of those advocating naval expansion in the Caribbean and Pacific Oceans to add a strength to their demands. Thus Henry Cabot Lodge propagandized the work of Alfred Thayer Mahan. Just as in the politics of sectionalism, there often arose conflict as to the vital importance of expansion in one direction at the price of temporary stalemate in another.

Equally important is the almost complete change in emphasis on immediate issues of foreign policy between 1895 and 1898 taken by Populist legislators. Groups which began the period as avowed domestic economic expansionists turned, in the course of time, to land expansion. Thus Populists found themselves by 1898 in the camp of the global industrial expansionists, and more immediately of the Pacific, rather than the Caribbean, interests. Such a view does much to explain the growth of sentiments favorable to naval expansion (in the Pacific) and the obliteration of many of the earlier terrors of financial diplomacy which haunted the agrarians. Indeed, their very willingness to risk devaluation after 1896 constituted a more sophisticated consideration of self-interest than had before been shown by members of the Populist Party.

before the Senate which proposed American intervention, Populist legislators readily supplied information and analysis to suit their convenience. To the legal defense of the Committee that no de facto insurgent government existed in Cuba, the agrarians replied by citing the precedent of French recognition of the Confederate States of America, which recognition was granted long before any perfected machinery of government existed in the Colonies.<sup>33</sup>

After the passage of the Dingley tariff, American intervention in Cuba became the dominant theme of Populist congressional orators. Demands for intervention accelerated after Germany seized Kaichow in November of 1897 and precipitated an open race for empire in the Orient. The appreciative laughter of his Senate colleagues greeted the remarks of Senator Allen when, in the first week of the new 65th Congress, he took occasion to depart from an analysis of the economic effects of a "porkbarrel" soldier's pension bill to comment on foreign affairs. "Fair prices," rather than currency contraction and spendthrift appropriations which smacked of public bribery would relieve the "crippled

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<sup>33</sup>Cong. Rec., 28:4:3078-79-80, *ibid.*, 31:1:763-64. Senator Allen exhibited thorough familiarity with the Cameron Report, and often paraphrased its arguments to bolster his own contentions. The report, a study of precedence by which the United States might justify recognition of the Cuban insurgents as belligerents, came from the pen of Henry Adams. Adams considered it not an expression of jingoism, but an overture for peace, designed to avert the possibilities of war with Spain. Populists who appealed for American intervention in Cuban affairs thus misconstrued the spirit of the document when they cited it favorably, for Adams hoped to satisfy the war hawks with recognition rather than military intervention in Cuba.

condition of the country," Allen averred. Thus, he continued, "whatever may have been our feelings on the Cuban question, however we have felt toward Spain and the Sagasta government, it is all over with us now, and it must be down with Spain and freedom for Cuba. I am in a hot rebellion against Spain." Thereafter the Populists pressed in a determined fashion for intervention. Words of "hot rebellion" against the military inactivity of the United States became frequent as agrarian legislators saw their European agricultural competitors work rapidly to effect the partition of the Chinese empire.<sup>34</sup> "I cannot conceive of any other result likely to be accomplished should our diplomacy progress backward as rapidly in the future as it has in the past," reflected Populist Senator Turner of Washington. "It was without shape and form . . . a void." The void must be filled, the Senator urged, with prompt recognition of Cuban independence, before the United States entered the conflict with Spain.

Throughout 1897 many public-spirited citizens continued to advocate naval expansion in the Caribbean and Pacific Oceans as the compliment to territorial expansion in Cuba, both to benefit the general economic recovery of the United States. To accomplish their purpose, expansion-minded legislators sought not only to enlarge the naval building program, but to convert the navy from its use of purely defensive vessels into a modern, two-ocean, battleship force. The uncertainties

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<sup>34</sup>Cong. Rec., 31:1:93, 95; ibid., 31:5:4069, 4098, ibid., 31:3:2615, ibid., 31:4:3827, 28, 29.

of international relations and the need for adequate defensive forces were readily advanced as justification for the enlarged naval program. The Cleveland Administration accepted the concept of hemispheric defense fully; and now the eager friends of naval expansion sought again to extend the boundaries of American interests, this time into the Pacific. In a closed world, the enlarging of any perimeter of defense necessarily requires expansion, often into another's perimeter. Populist opposition to schemes of the expansionists might well have centered around this obvious relationship between defense and aggression. But the farmers did not protest.<sup>35</sup>

Even the initial distrust of the estimated budget for the naval building program exhibited by Populist legislators might have been overcome in the excitement of patriotic fervor aroused by events in Cuba, had not the flagrant violations and abuses of governmental contracts by the armor plate industry aroused the ire of the agrarians against industrial interests. It was, however, the desire to ease the economic burden of their constituents by maintaining a rigid economy in government, rather than any deep-seated aversion to naval expansion, which hindered Populists from giving their immediate and unqualified support

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<sup>35</sup>Recent scholarship provides evidence that naval expansion was, however, not solely the product of jingoism, through naval expansionists certainly used the war scare to facilitate the construction of new ships. For a record of the early appeals of the expansionists, see Robert Seager, "Ten Years Before Mahan, the Unofficial Case for the New Navy," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXXIX (December, 1953), 491-512.

to the program of naval expansion sponsored by the Republican Administration. Many agrarians regarded the technological changes which so altered the position of agriculture within the structure of the world economy with wonder, if not respect. They remained understandably diffident, hesitating to enlarge a naval force which might, in the near future, be rendered obsolete, just as "the application of steam power to navigation" had revolutionized naval warfare for an earlier generation. Even such diehard advocates of economic retrenchment as Jerry Simpson showed an appreciation of the role of naval strength. Before the passage of the Dingley tariff, when Republicans tried to keep military appropriations at a minimum, Simpson interested himself in providing a naval coaling station at Pearl Harbor. He chided his Republican colleagues for their hesitation to advance along the course of naval expansion which they plotted so assiduously. The time had come, Simpson urged, "to move in that direction." At a later date Marion Butler agreed: "If we are to go into the land grabbing business, if we are to grab territory and to hold it, we must have a fleet as good and better than that of any country in the world."

Clearly, the temporizing of the agrarians resulted from their opposition to other special interests. The price paid by the American taxpayer for the new navy should be a reasonable one, Populists maintained. Until the Carnegie and Bethlehem Steel Companies supplied armor

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<sup>36</sup>Cong. Rec., 29:2:1202; Times, December 9, 1897, April 7, 1896, Cong. Rec., 29:1:93-95, ibid., 30:1:1205-206; ibid., 30:3:2557, ibid., 30:3:2651-52.



plate at lower prices, Congress ought not to purchase plate, agrarian legislators insisted. It seemed unreasonable to the farmers that the American navy must pay more for the armor than foreign governments paid to the same companies. It seemed unreasonable, too, that the United States should be expected to guarantee to the companies a profit margin sufficient to insure construction of the manufacturing plants, in addition to normal profits. Instead of guaranteeing and paying for the manufacturers' plants, the government might, at less expense, build its own plants, manufacture the armor, and break the monopoly of the armor trust. But if the price of armor plate remained exorbitantly high, then the United States did not require "a very large Navy," which some party members still suspected might become the tool of domestic oppressors. Even such a limited acceptance served as a prologue to advocacy. So the President, while he reassured Theodore Roosevelt of his intention to "go on building up the navy with battleships and torpedo boats," used the fleet-in-being to implement American expansion: counteracting German influence in Haiti and English pressures in the Bluefields, and, when Germany occupied Kaichow, dispatching an American cruiser there for the protection of the "large and growing interest" of the United States. The crisis of 1898 would find the agrarians among the friends of naval expansion.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 30:3:2525; Theodore Roosevelt to Henry C. Lodge, September 15, 1897, in Henry C. Lodge (ed.), Selections from the Correspondence of Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge, 1884-1915 (New York, 1925), 277. Times, November 18, December 23, 1897. The Department of Agriculture circular for July 19, 1898, set forth "the

Indeed, American intervention in Cuba became the focal point about which not only Populists but the major economic, political, and military factions of the country could be brought into harmony. And for Populists the Jacksonian Democracy, which remained the ideology of rural America, bespoke a craving for participation in government which military service would satisfy. The President, already embarked upon a policy of intervention in Cuba, understood how to satisfy his countrymen. "Responsible citizenship comes from direct participation in government," he observed. "If we could quicken and increase appreciation of this responsibility . . . it would go far toward improving our political and national life." National policy must comprehend class and sectional rivalries.<sup>38</sup>

Expansion, moreover, posed an alternative to continued domestic unrest. Democrat politicians worked inroads on Republican control of the national government in 1897. Pleased with the political victory of Nebraska, Democrats and Populist fusionists, flushed with their triumphs at the polls of New York, Iowa and Virginia, and further encouraged by the narrow margin of Republican success in Ohio and

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remarkable manner in which American exports of wheat" to China and Japan has increased "in the last decade," compensating for American losses in the European market. Times, July 20, 1897; ibid., November 5, 1897, January 9, 1898. William Jennings Bryan flitted from the question of silver coinage to the contraction of greenbacks, as his political future seemed to warrant expedient.

<sup>38</sup>McKinley, Speeches and Addresses, 52. Remarks to the Commercial Club of Cincinnati, Ohio, October 30, 1897.

Massachusetts, William Jennings Bryan and other powerful Democratic leaders now hailed silver coinage "as the issue of 1900." In such an uncertain domestic political climate, the Republican Administration could hardly feel secure. But the prospect of new markets and war-time spending would do much to revive the American economy and alleviate discontent. Thus subsequent events soon led to the Spanish-American War.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>National economic recovery from the depression was far from complete in the fall of 1897. Though industrial production boomed, and large grain shipments went abroad, the lack of new investments kept the stock exchange low. Alexander E. Orr reminded his colleagues of the New York exchange that "it is certainly not at all fair to claim that the prosperity of America is dependent upon prices for staples." Times, September 8, 1897, May 9, 1897, May 15, 1897, July 6, 1897. Investment declined steadily through 1897, reaching its low point in that year. See the excellent article by Charles Hoffman, "The Depression of the Nineties," Journal of Economic History, XVI (June, 1956), 140-56.

## CHAPTER V

### THE ADVENT OF WAR

"In civilian life the newspapers would have called it a grand, popular movement. It will never be forgotten as long as America has a military history."

Stephen Crane  
The Battle of San Juan

Two central themes characterize the work of American historians who review the causes of the Spanish-American War. The first of these emphasizes the role of abstract forces in American culture, and concludes that intellectual and emotional compulsions were largely responsible for the conflict between the United States and Spain. These historians present as crucial the individuals whom Sidney Hook calls "event making," men "to whom we can justifiably attribute preponderent influences in determining an issue or event whose consequences would have been preponderantly different" had they, the possessors of "outstanding capacities of intelligence, will, and character," not "acted as they did." Thus America's entry into the race for empire in the last years of the nineteenth century is understood as the result of the "self assertive egoism and altruistic idealism" of the American people, who "wanted war and got it" after a "popular clamour for war."

This concept of the "Martial Spirit" is complimented by another theme, which suggests that the influence of "a little group of young

Republicans" guided the country at one of its "Turningpoints." These bold planners, who wove the grand design of American expansion, sought "national power for its own sake." The "original imperialists," they were motivated solely by the "political possibilities of imperialism." Or, at any rate, so say some historians. The weakness of a key decision maker, President McKinley, who evidenced "no interest in international politics," and possessed "no policy of imperialism on which to stand or fall," played into the hands of more aggressive men. The strength of humanitarian sentiments, coupled with evidence of Spanish bad faith disgusted Americans, and the sinking of the Maine exhausted their patience according to oft-repeated accounts.<sup>1</sup>

The resulting implication that economic factors assumed little importance in the sequence of events which led to the Spanish-American War has been partially formalized by the thesis "American business did not favor the Spanish-American War." Such a thesis does not, however, invalidate the interpretation of H. U. Faulkner who stresses the prominence of economic causes for the war. The questions at issue between such prominent historians as Faulkner and Julius K. Pratt are two:

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<sup>1</sup>Sidney Hook, The Hero in History (Boston, 1955), 53, 54; Robert E. Osgood, Ideals and Self-Interest in American Foreign Policy (Chicago, 1953), 27, 43; John D. Hicks, The American Nation (New York, 1949), 312; Bemis, Diplomatic History, 443, 50; Walter Millis, The Martial Spirit (Boston, 1931); Oscar Handlin, Chance or Destiny: Turningpoints in American History (Boston, 1954), 121-42; Foster R. Dulles, America's Rise to World Power (New York, 1954), 39; Julius K. Pratt, Expansionists of 1898 (Baltimore, 1936), 230-316.

whether an economic basis for the Spanish-American War did, in fact, exist; and whether its strength was such as to accord it first rank among the causes which led to war. In connection with the latter point, the immediate motives of the business community become important to Professor Pratt's thesis that the business community did not favor the war.<sup>2</sup>

It must be acknowledged that, in the multiplicity of thoughts, motives, and desires which influenced the activities, purposes, and decisions, that ultimately resulted in war, the chain of causes might be pursued to infinity. Yet governments of men dealt with the problems and policies which led this country into armed conflict against Spain. And an inquiry into the attitudes and activities of agrarian Populist Party legislators in the United States suggests that economic considerations had much more to do with the coming of the war than is generally acknowledged by American historians.

At the center of a re-assessment of the importance of economic factors which led to war lies the major change in the pattern and the effects of recovery from business depression in the year 1897. Production in basic raw materials and machine tool industries revived much more quickly than did secondary and service industries, or the financial

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<sup>2</sup>Harold U. Faulkner, American Economic History (Sixth edition, New York, 1949), 568; Hicks, The American Nation, 113; Richard W. Van Alstyne, American Diplomacy in Action (Stanford, 1947), 628, Henry S. Commager (ed.), Documents of American History (New York, 1934), 345; Julius K. Pratt, "American Business and the Spanish War," Hispanic American Historical Review (Durham), XIV (May, 1934), 163.

sector of economy. Strong doubts were entertained as to whether the well publicized rise in agricultural prices which marked the pre-election crop season of 1896 would, or ought, to be maintained. And agricultural recovery, in terms of prices paid to agriculturalists for quantities sold, lagged, until the stimulus of industrial exports relieved the strain put upon agricultural credit in foreign trade. Early in 1897 American foreign trade began to show "phenomenal exports," and by the end of the year the flood of goods to foreign markets could be termed an "American invasion" of the overseas trade. Long jealous of England's productive capacity, spokesmen for American manufacturers became exuberant as this country's industrial output advanced. Production received a further stimulus through the passage of the Dingley Tariff, with the result that producers, now relieved of the dangers of foreign competition in American home markets, turned their chief attention to the expansion of international trade. The United States, editorialized trade publications, found itself engaged in a "war of extermination" with England for no less stake than control of the world's commerce.<sup>3</sup>

To be sure, industrial interests recognized that "we shall be obliged to compete for a proportionate share of the foreign trade of

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<sup>3</sup>Times, June 16, 1897, Alfred D. Noyes, Forty Years of American Finance (New York, 1909), 273, Engineering News (Chicago), LXIV (September 3, 1897), 618. See the bibliography of this thesis for trade journals consulted.

the world. If we are to be successful in the competition it must be carried out on scientific lines and on a liberal scale. No half measures will suffice; and it may as well be written down at once, that if we are ever to create and control markets on the vast scale that marks the opposition of Great Britain, we shall have to adopt her methods." But the hopes of even the most cautious were buoyed by the conviction that the ingenuity and native superiority of the American people could successfully overcome all opposition.<sup>4</sup>

But always there lurked in the minds of economic expansionists the fear that foreign buyers would prefer the development of their own colonial areas to the purchase of American goods. This very fear, therefore, prompted acclamations of delight when England brought "money to the United States, instead of to Spain or Africa," for the purchase of iron ore. Such transactions were interpreted as a conclusive

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<sup>4</sup>Scientific American (New York), LXXVII (July 24, 1897), 50. J. Stephen Jeans was a typical evangelist of the new overseas economic expansion. In lengthy and facile statements of faith, he assured readers of the Engineering Magazine that the United States might count upon its own "Future Supremacy in the Iron Markets of the World." England could not effectively maintain that leadership because, according to Jeans, "the insular prejudices and complacent self-sufficiency of the average Britain have long hindered him from understanding, or even admitting, the possibility of other nations ultimately occupying fields of industrial activity that he has for generations been accustomed to look upon as entirely his own." If proof of such contentions seemed necessary, one had but to point to the market price of steel, set by an American firm at a figure below that of British rivals in the very month Jeans' first article appeared. Engineering Magazine (New York), XIV (November, 1897), 196; Brooks Adams, The New Empire (New York, 1903), 199.



demonstration that the United States might successfully leap its geographic boundaries "into foreign markets after buying American stock." The results of the new productivity vindicated the hopes of the most optimistic. Dunn & Bradstreet reported that from August, 1897, to January, 1898, three hundred twenty million dollars in deferred credits accrued to New York banks alone.<sup>5</sup>

Thus it proved expedient for the American State Department to alert exporters as to the nature and extent of foreign markets for American products. The Department undertook to help producers "find markets for surplus productivity by getting and spreading information concerning them." The collection of a special series of Consular Reports on money and prices underscored the new overseas economic orientation of the United States.<sup>6</sup>

Yet this pattern forecast the triumph of the administration over its agrarian critics. For no new demands were presented by the Populists, whose principle concern now became to prevent retrenchment, rather than to demand further concessions. The agrarians were concerned lest the policy of gold redemption for greenbacks should further contract their money supply, and an inflationary issue of bank paper then completely entrap agriculturalists. These economic groups most heavily dependent upon the money supply would be forced, the agrarians insisted, to pay

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<sup>5</sup>New York Times, January 1, 1898, Bradstreet's quoted in Times, January 1, 1898.

<sup>6</sup>Times, November 18, 1897. See for example United States Congress, Special Report.

interest upon credit in order to meet their needs. To the distinction made by the administration between credit, to which was charged the function of maintaining financial elasticity, and the supply of money, which would serve as an independent and stable fund for transfer payments, Populists replied, as was their wont, that an insufficient money supply drove them to purchase money through credit, upon which interest was charged. Hence, they reasoned, banks could still charge for the use of money.<sup>7</sup>

It is significant that the final report of the Indianapolis Monetary Conference, submitted by J. Lawrence Laughlin, revealed sharp disagreement among the members of the Commission as to the wisdom of permitting the government to augment at will the available money supply by the purchase of bonds in return for United States Notes. This provision, section 14 of the Report, placed power in the hands of the Secretary of the Treasury to meet the demands of western and southern interests for relief from exorbitant interest charges. But the power remained permissive, not mandatory. And it was left to succeeding administrations to grant the wishes of the agrarians. Not until Woodrow Wilson established the Federal Reserve System were Populists rewarded in their attempts to secure the decentralization of governmental treasury deposits so as to provide more immediate government

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<sup>7</sup>Cong. Rec., 31:5:5751-52; 31:2:1167; ibid., 31:7:6747-48.

controls over the money supply.<sup>8</sup>

Meanwhile, the shift in emphasis from consumption to production entailed a further problem of distribution. Someone must purchase iron and steel and consumer goods. The home markets, which a combination of depression and the Dingley Tariff finally assured to American producers, threatened to prove an empty prize; an assured market barren of purchasers, or at least devoid of sufficient business to support with profit the newly rationalized industry which survived the period of depression. The Iron Age neatly summarized the thesis: "Bold as the assertion seems, the matter of declining prices is one that need not give us concern, since it is comprehended in that of satisfactory distribution." Likewise, agricultural exports agreed that the solution to overproductivity must come in cheaper prices and increased exports: "Wheat has got to go lower. It must sell at a price where exporters will take it, no matter what that price may be," concluded a leading grain speculator. And the large-scale returns from the purchase of American breadstuffs by England, which might have been realized in increased domestic farm prices, were instead reinvested "in paying off old debts and acquiring productive securities." The Populist Kansas City Star observed of the new expansion that "it is worth while to pay some attention to other than home markets . . . if energy was directed toward cultivating instead of restricting foreign trade, there would,

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<sup>8</sup>James L. Laughlin, Report of the Indianapolis Monetary Commission (Indianapolis, 1900), Preface, iii.

no doubt, be a good many orders . . ."<sup>9</sup>

Meanwhile, the financial interest welcomed the passage of the Dingley Tariff, which it hoped would stimulate new investment. But in spite of their hopes, Wall Street "remained blue." An accelerated transfer rate in securities reflected the growth of commercial and industrial, rather than new financial, activity. Throughout 1897 and into February of 1898, money remained cheap, bonds commanded average interest rates of only  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent, and "little other investment" took place. Already the new corporations were assuming an importance paramount to the financial power which spawned them.<sup>10</sup>

Moreover, the administration's estimate of increased government revenues in consequence of the new tariff legislation was also proved wrong. The prediction of a substantial increase had been based on the assumption that the level of "imports by article" would remain relatively constant to the level for the fiscal year prior to the passage of the tariff. If the error of this assumption was not obvious to the majority of the House Committee on Ways and Means which framed the legislation, it became apparent shortly after the passage of the Dingley bill. The Treasury deficit continued, and the import level on high tariff

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<sup>9</sup>Iron Age (New York), LXXVII (December 23, 1897), 20; Henry D. McCord, President of the New York Produce Exchange, quoted in New York Times, April 10, 1897. Kansas City Star, quoted in Iron Age.

<sup>10</sup>Times, November 28, December 26, 1897; January 3, January 14, February 3, 1898.

commodities declined relative to the ever increasing American trade.<sup>11</sup>

The additional stockpiling of goods by importers before the passage of the new tariff law still further discouraged imports. And the situation became further aggravated. By December, 1897, even the Bulletin of the American Iron and Steel Association reported that "prices for most manufactured goods have fallen so low in this country that a moderate tariff would protect" basic industries from the threat of foreign competition. Thus tariff rates originally pegged at non-prohibitive levels for the purpose of revenue collection became, in effect, prohibitive to foreign imports. But the administration in late August removed all immediate danger of further depletion of the Treasury reserve by its receiver's sale of the Union Pacific railway.<sup>12</sup>

Not until the end of the Congressional session did an opportunity present itself for debate upon the projected railway sale. No

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<sup>11</sup>McKinley, Speeches and Addresses, 29, remarks to the Philadelphia Museums and Manufacturers' Clubs, June 2, 1897; United States Congress, Proposed Revision of the Tariff--Revenue and Protection. House Report 1. 55 Cong., 1 Sess. (Washington, 1897), 1-8.

<sup>12</sup>Bulletin, quoted in the Nation (New York), LXV (December 6, 1897), 465, Times, September 1, 1897. The accumulation of a treasury surplus must have proved a relief to Speaker of the House Thomas B. Reed, who held jingo legislation in abeyance throughout 1897. Reed, who regarded the Cuban belligerency resolutions in the light of "a man who cannot get the Dingley appropriation through" noticeably relaxed his efforts to prevent debate upon the administration's conduct of foreign affairs. But the speaker still refused to permit any amendments to current legislation which might involve the United States militarily in Cuba. See also Times, May 21, 1897.

special place on the agenda appears to have been reserved for discussion of railway affairs, and it is notable that the Populists, long time critics of railway policies, abstained from the introduction of any legislation designed to prevent the sale, or to restrain the executive from disposing of Railway properties. Even the usual bills calling for Government ownership of railways failed to materialize, the usual dilatory tactics of the agrarians being all but abandoned. But in a last feeble protest against the Republicans, Senators Allen and Butler rallied to protest the sale upon grounds of public policy.<sup>13</sup>

Sale of the railways would divest the Federal government of its lien upon one of the major communications systems of the United States. The Senators protested that their party's insistence on settlement of the railway debt had never included such governmental relinquishment of claim to the lines. Populists instead envisioned governmental operation of the roads. Confident that governmental operation would prove more economical than private enterprise in this field of public utility, the agrarians proposed to use the economic administration of the Federal government to force down the rates of competing lines, as well as to provide the government with a steady and reliable source of income which would "in time" discharge the debt owing to the United States by the railway company. Government operation of the lines would thus "settle the question" of the practicability of Federal operation "by a fair test." And the procedure by which the Federal government advanced

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<sup>13</sup>Cong. Rec., 30:3:2618.

its prosecution of the railways drew further criticism upon legal grounds. By ordering the Attorney General to enter the United States as a party seeking legal redress against the railroad, the President placed the Federal government in the jurisdiction of a Federal court, which, it was intimated, would hardly refuse to permit bankruptcy proceedings when such a decision was clearly desired by the railways as well as by Congress.<sup>14</sup>

The agrarians presented no outright demands for a change of venue or of jurisdiction in the court action. But they did protest the valuation placed upon the road by the Federal Court, which accepted the figures of the reorganization committee. Figured on its original investment and interest accrued therefrom, the United States lost nothing. Calculated on the basis of contemporary capitalized values, the Populist Senators estimated that the United States would lose approximately fifty million dollars. The Senators deplored the unseemly haste with which the administration reduced the inflated valuation upon which private owners had for so long assessed profit.<sup>15</sup>

But revenues provided from the railroad sale became a necessary link in the financial stability of the McKinley Administration, and without this link, the embryonic policies of the administration could not mature. Contrary to the President's forecast that "with the passage of the tariff we will have business confidence and industrial prosperity" the tariff revenues of the Dingley Act proved insufficient to

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 30:3:2618, 2630.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

governmental needs. Caution, therefore, remained the byword of American policy with respect to military expansion into Cuba. "It may not reasonably be expected that a policy of mere inaction may be safely prolonged," commented the Secretary. "There lies the larger problem of intervention, which the President does not now discuss." But with a bankrupt railroad providing revenue for the Government, American policy makers moved quickly to drive Spain from the island. The United States delivered a verbal ultimatum to Spain demanding that she pacify the islands of Cuba upon American terms, and shortly thereafter, informed the major European powers of its intentions to effect the pacification with United States forces, should Spain fail to meet American demands.<sup>16</sup>

These demands precipitated the resignation of the Conservative ministry of Spain, and were in turn succeeded by the rise to power of the Spanish Liberal Party. The successors, in a desperate effort to forestall the intervention of the United States in Spanish affairs, presented a scheme of limited self-government to the Cuban rebels. All Spanish plans, however, called for Madrid to direct Cuban commercial policy. As part of the Spanish attempt to retain control in the island, and in order to halt the seemingly uncontrollable inflation in Cuba which resulted from the circulation of depreciating silver coin and silver-backed paper specie, the Spanish government at the same time entered into an arrangement with the quasi-governmental Bank of

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<sup>16</sup>For. Rel., 1898, 599, ibid., 568. See correspondence of July 16, 1897, and September 20, 1897; Dawes, Journal, 123.



Spain for the issue of one hundred million dollars in gold backed notes.

The branch bank of Havana demanded and received in payment for these services the management of the Cuban treasury and all public lotteries, including franchise for "other public concessions" in mining and transportation. In return, the bank undertook to withdraw from circulation silver-backed currency equal to the amount of gold notes issued. Such a measure would presumably stabilize Spanish exchange rates, and further assure control of Cuban commerce to Spain, counterbalancing the disequilibrium between American and Spanish currencies.<sup>17</sup>

Spanish attempts to stop inflation in Cuba met final defeat in early January, 1898, when the House of Rothchild, long time financiers of Spain, refused to extend further credit. The defection of the Rothchild allegiance was hardly surprising in view of an earlier intimate connection established between American representatives of the banking house and the Cuban revolutionaries. Rumors adrift in 1896 that "a group of New York bankers" had successfully effected the purchase of Cuban public utilities and trade concessions took added meaning when August Belmont and Company, Rothchild representatives, underwrote a special bond issue in the United States for the revolutionary

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<sup>17</sup>Times, November 13, 17, 1897, Nation, III (December 2, 1897), 429; Times, November 4, 1897. The extent of foreign trade channeled through Cuba may be judged from the following figures: During the fiscal year of 1897 the National Bank of Spain sent to Cuba £ 4,800,000 in coin, and £ 1,600,000 in bills on Havana. But this amount includes sums used in maintenance of Spanish troops in the islands. Times, March 22, 1898.

Cuban Junta.<sup>18</sup>

Though these bonds commanded an extremely poor market because of the uncertain financial conditions of the period, and sold at a price greatly below par, Belmont and Company compounded its risk by assuming the obligation for the unsubscribed balance of the issue. Thus in a period of poor investment opportunities, diplomacy and finance could well be served in Cuba by the American bankers, who held important rank within the Democratic Party. Benjamin Guerra, pro-autonomist

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<sup>18</sup> According to the provisions of the trade treaty proposed by Spain for Cuba, a re-export tax of 30 per cent would be assessed on all non-Spanish goods transshipped via Cuba, as well as upon all products "in which Cuba is discriminated against." Spain rejected the most favored nation policy of the United States in favor of the application of maximum and minimum tariff rates to all imported products. The Spanish government proposed to apply maximum rates to the products of all countries whose policies it classed as discriminatory. Thus the Spanish Minister's authorization to "make all concessions possible" to the United States proved a barren power. Retention by the United States of the reciprocity provision in favor of Hawaii would have placed the United States in the classification of a discriminating power. And additional proposed export tax upon Cuban tobacco aimed at curtailing the Cuban tobacco trade with the United States. There are indications that the Spanish embargo on the Cuban tobacco crop was an effort to cripple the insurgents financially. The bulk of the Cuban tobacco crop was absorbed by east coast cigar makers, whose trade suffered in consequence of the Spanish 1896 embargo on leaf tobacco. Cigar makers, many of whom were Cuban expatriates, worked diligently for the intervention of the United States in Cuba, and many Cuban employees in the industry rendered financial aid to the insurgents. New York Times, September 23, 1897, John C. Appel, "The Unionization of the Florida Cigar Makers and the Coming of the War with Spain," Hispanic American Historical Review, XXXVI (February, 1956), 38-49; Times, May 25, 1896, March 21, 1898.

leader of the Cuban Junta, alleged these "American financiers" so anxious to help Cubans that they were "willing to pay \$2,000,000 for \$10,000 worth of bonds." The refusal to grant Spanish credit became the logical extension of an understandable desire to promote Cuban autonomy by financial coercion rather than war so long as there remained any possibility that the correlary to armed intervention might be the monetization of silver.<sup>19</sup>

While Spain struggled to hold Cuba, the sequence of events in the Orient worked to crystallize American policy. German efforts to carve a permanent sphere of influence in China through the occupation of the strategically located and commercially valuable port of Kaichow stimulated the activities of those Americans who hoped to generate a corresponding policy for the United States. Furthermore, in early 1897, Japan laid plans to abandon silver specie and return to the gold standard. This financial about-face would do much to consolidate Japanese domestic industries, albeit at the expense of an immediate

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<sup>19</sup>Times, November 13, 1897, January 3, 1898. For example, four million dollars in silver coin were exported by Spain to Cuba "for war purposes." Among the recipients of these funds were Texas cattlemen who found markets for an average of five hundred head of cattle per week in December of 1897, with "more and larger orders expected" from the Spanish army. Times, December 26, 1897. Significantly, the United States representative of the Rothchilds was August Belmont and Co., the firm which earlier carried the Junta bond issue to successful conclusion, and with whose senior partners Edward Atkins remained on intimate terms. Leland H. Jenks, Our Cuban Colony (New York, 1928), 56, 138, 319, note 12, Times, April 19, 1896; For. Rel., 1897, 268, 69, United States Congress, Special Report, 323, 25.

contraction in Japanese trade and commerce with China. American State Department reports concluded that "no change in the value of silver has had an appreciable effect . . . it is noticeable that when silver has depreciated abroad, its purchasing power in China for articles of domestic production and its value for the payment of wages have not diminished. This is particularly noticeable in the cotton goods." It became obvious that the United States might profitably step into the void created by the temporary release of Japanese markets in China.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Germany's domestic consolidation as well as her foreign expansion caused alarm in the United States. Agents of the New York Life Insurance Company, which dealt extensively in northern Germany, suggested, in March of 1898, after an unsuccessful diplomatic bout with the German government in the course of which the American company and several of its associates were excluded from Germany, that all German shipping be banned from American ports as a retaliatory measure. Times, March 13, 1898. The exclusion seems to have been a part of German government policy which sought to limit the influence of all foreign interests as a complement to Germany's industrial boom.

American diplomats William V. Allen and Charles Denby differed radically in their opinions as to what strategy would best advance the interests of the United States in Asia. But both men exerted strenuous efforts to establish an American sphere of influence in China and Korea. As Minister to China, Denby skillfully reinforced the long established policy of the United States which favored a weak China on the theory that commercial concessions might be more easily coerced from a weak nation than from a major power. The United States, therefore, supported Japan against China, even while this country backed China against the European powers who would dismember the Empire. Allen sought to defeat Japanese designs on Korea, however, and to establish American supremacy there. Therefore, he proposed to lend the support of the United States to an autonomous Korean government, in spite of Chinese claims of sovereignty over Korea. To this end he attempted cooperation with Russia in order to limit Japanese power in Korea, but he succeeded only in provoking an official reprimand for his conduct. But for the efforts of both Allen and Denby to gain advantages from the internal turmoil of the Chinese Empire, see For. Rel., 1897, 75, ibid., 1898, 88. See also Fred H. Harrington, God, Mammon, and the Japanese; Dr. Horace N. Allen and Korean-American Relations, 1884-1905 (Madison, 1944). Consular Reports, January, 1896, 82, 83. Russia too resumed gold specie payments in January of 1898. Times, January 7, 11, 1898.

But the ascent of German influence there posed a threat to American ambitions. German trade with China expanded rapidly after the conclusion of the Sino-Japanese War, and continued to develop in "a far more favorable manner" than her trade with other colonial areas. Germany's bid for a sphere of influence in China was obviously strengthened by this notable increase in the German-Chinese trade. No less eager than Germany to expand her strategic and economic position, Russia, too, sought the prospective wealth of the Chinese trade, braving even the "pitfalls of financial diplomacy" to win the prize.<sup>21</sup>

In accord with traditional American policy, American diplomats in eastern Asia counteracted the threatened partitions of Asian markets among the European powers with vigorous efforts to facilitate American commercial expansion. Chinese markets became increasingly attractive to the United States as the productivity of this country mounted. Indeed, the reserve of natural resources in the Mongol Empire might supply requisite raw materials for the American productive plant under a plan which called for the proposal of exchanging American "overproduction" in trade, "if not in absolute sales." In an early report submitted to the McKinley Administration, researchers of the American State Department listed the apparent exhaustion of "certain raw products" available in the Orient as one of the principle causes of the business

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<sup>21</sup>Charles Vevier, The United States and China, 1906-1913 (New Brunswick, 1955), viii.

contraction of the nineties. Certainly free access to available sources of raw materials was vital to any production-gearred economy. Thus the United States continued to assert a vital interest in the future of China.<sup>22</sup>

It is necessary, at this point, to correlate American activity in Asia with the crisis over Cuba. For American policy makers, businessmen, and politicians alike were viewing both regions as vital to the drive for increased exports. For proponents of hemispheric economic expansion, for naval expansionists; for agrarians desirous of an isthmian canal, and for exporters covetous of the Pacific trade; for manufacturers in search of raw materials; for humanitarians bent upon the alleviation of misery; for politicians in search of the issue which might divert constituents from discontent with the representatives of democratic government, for all of these Cuba loomed suddenly as an important answer to their difficulties, and the President, upon the assumption of his office, promised to secure the island. A scheme of financial reform which would permit financial expenditure without disastrous inflation was almost perfected. The activities of foreign powers in Asia threatened American interests. All these factors worked to focus American interest on Cuba.

As the last weeks of 1897 passed the speed-up orders for naval armaments and surveys of Cuban fortifications and topography by the

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<sup>22</sup>United States Congress, Special Report, 211, ibid., Consular Reports, June, 1896, 95.

United States Navy constituted tacit admission that the McKinley Administration geared its policy to intervention in Cuba as soon as it became feasible. On November 5, a group of New York merchants petitioned Spanish officials in Cuba, demanding "improved trade relations" between the United States and Cuba. But three weeks later such petitions were unnecessary. The Produce Exchange of New York then abandoned plans to compile "the views of fifty New York merchants" on Cuban affairs for the ex-Spanish Minister of Finance. Andrew D. White openly justified American intervention in Cuba as requirements of "humanity and commercial interests." Christmas drew near. But in this traditional season of peace toward all men, even the American pleas for peace carried ominous overtones. A petition of the New York Chamber of Commerce called for the enlistment of four thousand additional artillery men in order to preserve national "defenses." Chauncey De Pew might perhaps have employed this additional defensive force in his search for "peace that may capture the markets of the world, peace that this country may find the places where its surplus products, not only of food, but of labor, may meet with a profitable return." From his vantage point within the McKinley cabinet, Charles Dawes found "the President's position on the currency and Cuba" widely endorsed by the press.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Times, November 3, 9, 10, 1897; ibid., November 5, 7, 11, 1897, December 6, 24, 1897, Dawes, Journal, 138, 46.

While the President and Congress bickered and dickered over the terms of monetary legislation, a new burst of activity in Asia resulted in the lease of Kaichow to Germany by China, and a tripartate agreement between Britain, Germany and Japan to apportion the authority over Chinese customs among the three powers. What seemed even more dangerous to the interests of the United States in the Orient, Britain appeared to abandon her policy of the Open Door after unsuccessful efforts to obtain an American alliance in Asia when British troops landed there to protect English interests. The United States countered this threat to partition eastern Asia by dispatching the Battleship Maine to Cuba. Subsequent events gave English diplomats ample opportunity to assert that they, like George Canning, called upon the new world to redress the balance of the old. The intervention of the United States in Asia became the high point of an informal alliance consummated at a time when the conflicting aims of American and British diplomacy could be reconciled to mutual advantage. Then the United States paralleled British imperialism with a claim to the Caribbean, and poised itself for war with Spain.<sup>24</sup>

The sinking of the Maine three weeks after it was dispatched to Havana harbor forced an amplification of American policy which the administration, because of the stalemate in its domestic financial legislation, remained loath to undertake. In favor of military action

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<sup>24</sup>John Hay reported that the "high point" of British-American friendship climaxed in May of 1898. The fluctuations in the British reaction to the American-Spanish War are chronicled in J. Fred Rippy, "European Powers and the Spanish American War," James Sprunt Historical Studies (Raleigh), XIX (1927), 22-52.



against Spain the administration bought time with the plea that war would be justifiable only when a complete report on the circumstances of the disaster should be obtained. A naval board of inquiry promptly commenced hearings to determine the nature of these "causes." The administration thus forestalled any immediate congressional declarations. The spur to domestic economic recovery provided by the appropriation, at the President's request, of fifty million dollars for defense purposes, to be "expended at the discretion of the President" offered temporary respite from congressional criticism. But far from distracting the congressional war hawks from their immediate objective of intervention in Cuba, the appropriation served instead to point up the correlation between domestic prosperity and military expenditures. Even Populists approved. The appropriations passed unanimously in the House of Representatives.<sup>25</sup>

Congressional activities during the month of January doubtless contributed to the anxieties of conservatives and expansionists alike. The last day scheduled for congressional debate over the recognition of Cuban belligerency, January 21, was the same day that the Congressional Committee ended its hearings on currency reform. But debate and Committee hearings were proving fruitless, for the stalemate in the House Committee on Banking and Currency which followed the President's second financial message again underscored the strength of the silver forces in Congress. Therefore to break the deadlock Senator Wolcott

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<sup>25</sup>Times, March 9, 1898.

at long last scheduled an official statement to Congress on the work of his late committee in its efforts to secure an international silver standard.<sup>26</sup>

From the inception of their efforts, the members of the President's special committee realized, Wolcott asserted, that "true bimetallism" would probably always remain "out of the question" for England. The group therefore had directed its efforts to the arrangement of a supplementary system of silver coinage paralleling that of the Latin Union. The Union, an international economic organization which after 1868 included the states of France, Belgium, Italy, Switzerland, and Greece, and whose policies attracted the informal adherence of "several South American states" as well, had, in spite of the decline in the bullion price of silver after 1873, maintained with considerable success the use of fractional silver currency.<sup>27</sup>

Treaty arrangement specified the ratio of silver bullion to be coined and honored among the member nations, while France, the most powerful financial nation of Union, lent her prestige to the stabilization of this intra-Union commercial currency by holding a specified fraction of the reserves of the Bank of France in silver bullion. Questions of policy had plagued the functioning of the Union, even as they plagued non-member nations. Debtor nations naturally preferred an inflationary currency, while creditors fought to keep currency dear.

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<sup>26</sup>Times, January 4, 1898, January 18, 1898, January 21, 1898.

<sup>27</sup>Times, January 8, 18, 1898; H. Parker Willis, A History of the Latin Monetary Union (Chicago, 1901), 228.

Adjustments were of necessity made from time to time with France, the creditor nation of the Union. Even so, member nations retained the use of commercial and fractional silver currency, and were for the most part relieved of the commercial paralysis which heretofore accompanied spasmodic contractions of the currency whenever the market relationship of gold and silver shifted significantly, or for any appreciable period of time.<sup>28</sup>

Certainly the United States proved a persistent advocate of an inflated currency. Wolcott and his committee sought in 1897 to persuade England, the recognized center of international finance, to prime world trade by funding a part of her reserves with silver, as had France, and then to enter into an agreement to honor the circulation of a specified amount of silver coin for commercial purposes. But still fearful lest devaluation of her gold reserves accompany such adulteration, England rejected all inflationary schemes. Considering the relative tendencies of American manufacturers to expand at a greater rate than those of Great Britain and the stimulus to American manufacturing which would result from such measures, the British refusal to pursue bimetallism in 1896 was hardly surprising. But Wolcott charged the defeat of his committee's purposes to the assurances offered abroad by Secretary Gage and other American financiers that, domestic ownership of this country's industries now being secured, "former sentiments" in favor of

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<sup>28</sup>Times, January 8, 1898, January 9, 1898.

bimetallism no longer existed.<sup>29</sup>

In an evaluation of United States policies since 1892, the Senator cited the British closure of India's mints to silver coinage, and the antagonism to American commercial activity occasioned by the passage of the Dingley tariff as major deterrents to international cooperation. Wolcott roundly condemned current proposals for a new issue of gold-redeemable government bonds, as an easy victory for monometallists, "not reconcilable with the administration's policies." But clearly the message was intended to write a final, if bitter ending to the program of silver monetization, and to pave the way for new compromise legislation.<sup>30</sup>

Meanwhile, Populists countered the gold bond legislation with demands for free silver coinage "supplemented by a safe national paper money." Their measure received prompt endorsement from Republican silverites, many of whom now vociferously echoed Senator Wolcott's condemnation of monometallism, and conveniently ignored the direction of the Senator's remarks. To less enlightened partisans, Jerry Simpson, for example, the President's promise that the public credit would be upheld "in the dearest money in the world" smacked of "dresscoat anarchy." Much more to the taste of all silverites and Populists were clearly drawn statements of purpose such as the Teller Resolution, which called for the payment of all interest on government bonds in

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., January 9, 1898.

"coin" as the sponsors of the bill deemed necessary. In spite of the unanimous advocacy of the latter proposal by congressional Populists, the bill met defeat in the House of Representatives through the refusal of that body even to consider its passage.<sup>31</sup>

But in the Senate, where the measure originated, the votes of Populist Senators helped to effect passage of the bond legislation over the opposition of conservatives. To defeat this purpose all Populists opposed the amendment that one dollar in gold be established as the equivalent to one dollar in silver. Though this amendment passed, the agrarians rallied to oppose the scheme of Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, which would have permitted the payment of interest on bonds "in gold coin or its equivalent." They also voted to table the proposal of Senators Matthew Quay and George Hoar, who submitted to a test vote of confidence the President's determination that payment be assured to bond holders in money at "the highest point in the world." Nor could a seeming compromise be effected by Senator Spooner, who sought a guarantee of gold redemption until an international silver agreement should come into operation. Yet all Populist senators consistently agreed to accept an issue of government bonds which would permit the administration to proceed with the measure it deemed necessary for the stabilization of national monetary policies if the limited commercial

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<sup>31</sup>Times, January 29, 30, February 1, 1898.

use of silver were accepted.<sup>32</sup>

Secretary Gage replied promptly to the critics of the Republican Administration. Speaking to the Chamber of Commerce of Cleveland, Ohio, shortly after Wolcott's message, Gage rejected the compromise bond bill. The adoption of a bimetallic policy by the United States, the Treasury Secretary insisted, would prove "dangerous in world trade" since any change in monetary values must cause a derangement of prices "not to our advantage" in the export trade. Gage further stressed the need for growth of the "South as a manufacturing agent" in order that a rational economic system for the country might be developed.<sup>33</sup>

Gage repelled the criticism of those southerners, who, offered the choice between northern industrial carpetbaggery and Bourbon rule, preferred the local tyrannies. The economic consequences of the investment of northern capital after the Civil War stood proof of the superior economic rewards of an industrial society, while the South now enjoyed, thanks to northern capital, a "greater prosperity than at any time since 1873," according to the Secretary. Thus it became clear that from the administration point of view the future of the South called for the development of a mixed economy in which the interest of northern industrial capital would wield predominant power. White House conferences

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<sup>32</sup>Times, January 29, 1898. It may be inferred that the stimulus of government bimetallicism under the "limping standard" would offset the contraction of greenbacks and national bank notes under the program for reform favored by the administration.

<sup>33</sup>Times, March 19, 20, 1898. The rise, growth, and effects of southern industrialization are brilliantly chronicled in Wilbur J. Cash, The Mind of the South (Anchor Edition, New York, 1954), 180-221.

with congressional leaders of the Foreign Relations and Finance Committees followed closely upon Gage's address, and within three days an administration-sponsored currency bill providing for the redemption of National Bank Notes along lines earlier suggested by the President was reported to the House.<sup>34</sup>

It was during the lull in congressional activity occasioned by the President's plea for time that Senator Redfield Proctor betook himself to Cuba in order to ascertain the opinions of influential Cuban leaders on the future of the island. But not until "sound" currency legislation had been introduced to the Congress did Senator Proctor make his report to that body on Cuban conditions. Of the responses to his inquiries, Proctor then noted that "most of my informants were businessmen. . . . I inquired in regard to autonomy of men of wealth, and men as prominent in business as any in the cities of Havana, Matanzas and Sagua, bankers, merchants, lawyers, and autonomist officials, some of them born in Spain but Cuban bred, one prominent Englishman, several of them known autonomists, and several of them telling me they were still believers in autonomy if practicable, but without exception they replied that it was 'too late' for that." Proctor's carefully prepared manuscript report urged the intervention of the United States in Cuba. In deference to the express wishes of the President, the Senator's appeals to humanitarian as well as economic consideration put the question of American intervention "on broader grounds than the

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<sup>34</sup>Times, March 23, 24, 1898.

question of responsibility for the disaster of the Maine."<sup>35</sup>

The intimate contact which Senator Proctor enjoyed with conservative Republican businessmen, and his status as ex-Secretary of War for the Harrison Administration leads many historians to infer that Proctor's public and widely heralded approval of intervention in Cuba constituted an open reversal of the former sentiments of the business community. And since first advanced by Julius K. Pratt, the thesis that American business "strongly opposed action that would lead to war with Spain," has been widely accepted. There is considerable evidence which contradicts this view, along with Pratt's own specific statement that "the only important business interests which clamored for intervention in Cuba were those directly or indirectly concerned in the Cuban sugar industry." Indeed, Pratt's major thesis can be and has been used as a device with which to exonerate the entire American

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<sup>35</sup>It seems apparent that this famous American ship, equipped with ladder, detonation apparatus, a volunteer crew, and the notorious coal bunker 16 is regarded by contemporary historians as a pet project of the United States Navy, perhaps of its equally notorious Under-Secretary, rather than as a reflection upon Republican policy. But the officers of the Naval Board of Inquiry on the sinking of the Maine refused to accept the entire credit for what might commonly have been regarded as a patriotic service to the country. At the conclusion of its deliberations on the physical causes of the sinking, the Board called upon Under Secretary of State William R. Day for testimony. The Board required of Mr. Day only the admission that the Maine was dispatched to Havana at the Secretary's direction, while he acted in his official capacity. For evidence of the Maine's peculiar vulnerability as well as for some evidence of foreknowledge of its condition, see United States Congress, Record of a Proceeding of a Court of Inquiry . . . Senate Document 207. 55 Cong., 2 Sess. (Washington, 1897), 9-293; Times, March 8, 9, 1898. See also Times, February 21, 1898, Henry B. Russell, The Story of Two Wars (Hartford, 1899), xlv, Dawes, Journal, 146.



business community of any responsibility for the Spanish crisis. Professor Pratt does not go that far, but it is only a step from his conclusions to the notion that American business did not favor, or even actively opposed, the Spanish-American War. A full critique of this interpretation is beyond the scope of this essay, but in view of the growing tendency among historians to lay the war at the door of the Populists, it is relevant to summarize the weaknesses of Professor Pratt's thesis.<sup>36</sup>

The first weakness which must be noted is the gap in Pratt's evidence. This evidence is drawn from contemporary trade publications, banking journals, investment publications, railroad gazettes, available biographical materials, and stock market records. But geographically these sources represent eastern and coastal opinion much more heavily than inland sentiments. And when industrial and manufacturing concerns

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<sup>36</sup>Julius K. Pratt, "American Business and the Spanish American War," Hispanic American Historical Review, XIV (May, 1934), 163-201. The article is adapted from materials which appear in Julius K. Pratt, Expansionists of 1898 (Baltimore, 1936), 230-78. For an example of the uncritical acceptance of this thesis see Hofstadter, The Age of Reform, 47, 87, 88, 90. Hofstadter's analysis of the relationships between the silver coinage campaign, jingoism, and expansion is uncertain and confused. For example on page 47 of his work, Hofstadter states that "Populism itself had a hard side, but it became less and less important as it changed to the silver panacea." In following chapters the author is forced to the admission that "Populism and jingoism grew together." Populism, he understands, "stood vanguard to the Spanish American War." Yet the author fails to explore the relationship between silver coinage and the rise of the war hawks in Congress after 1896, and ignores the predominantly business philosophy of the McKinley Administration.

are cited, they represent inland views only. Secondly, the thesis takes no account, in sequence of time, of the deliberate and repeated demands of the United States that Spain withdraw from Cuba which were made after the passage of the Dingley Tariff, and after the sale of the Union Pacific Railroads had relieved the treasury crisis.<sup>37</sup>

We know that Edward Atkins during the latter part of 1897, urged President McKinley to take Cuba. This directly contradicts Pratt's use of Atkins' material. Atkins held heavy sugar interests, it is true, but he was, in addition, a Morgan partner. Pratt himself referred, but only in a footnote, to the petition of "citizens of the United States doing business as bankers, merchants, manufacturers, steamship owners and agents of the cities of Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Savannah, Charleston, Jacksonville, New Orleans, and other places, who have for many years been engaged in the export and import trade to Cuba." This petition dated May 1897, called upon the President to bring about an "honorable reconciliation between the parties in conflict"-- words which can only be interpreted as a request for the intervention of the United States in Spanish-Cuban affairs. The New York Times reported this memorial in its issue of May 15, 1897, and quoted the memorialists as requesting John Sherman to "use his influence as President to have the United States interfere" to stop the war in Cuba-- another clear call for intervention. Copies of the petition circulated as far West as Saint Louis, where signatures were obtained. The Times

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<sup>37</sup>Pratt, Expansionists, 230-78.

commented editorially that "Wall Street does not appear so much opposed to this action as was at first believed."<sup>38</sup>

Pratt interprets the petition as one local in character, and particularistic in its demands. But prominent among the signers appears the name of August Belmont and Company, a firm clearly not dependent upon the local trade between the coast and Cuba for its prosperity. Several other groups of merchants from New York and Boston, holding interest in railways and mining, as well as sugar, also petitioned the president for "peace at once" because "80 per cent of trade depends upon the sugar crops" which were fast being destroyed in Cuba. Professor Pratt chooses to dismiss the relationship between the loss of trade and the loss of Cuba which the petitioners so clearly emphasized, in order to argue the legalist position inclusio unis, exclusio alternis, a proposition hardly contemplated by the petitioners, nor in this case borne out by much but Pratt's own theory.<sup>39</sup>

Analysis becomes redundant if, upon the examination of interests which engaged in manufacturing, shipping, and all manner of commercial activity, one concludes that those who favored intervention favored it because it was to their interest to do so. That much is usually granted in any study of pressure groups and their activities. Yet this is what Pratt concludes. A more thorough analysis might specify that the

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<sup>38</sup>Pratt, "American Business and the Spanish War," 175, 76, 77, Atkins, Sixty Years in Cuba, 281, Times, May 15, 1897.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 175, 78.

sugar-gearred economy of Cuba became of primary importance to American producers. And even the latter thesis must be supplemented with the admission that other pressure groups, the Florida cigar makers, for example, favored intervention in Cuba for economic reasons of their own.<sup>40</sup>

Moreover, Pratt's conclusion that Republican party leader Mark Hanna's aversion to war suffered no qualification ignores the Ohio President-maker's consistent support of those congressional resolutions designed to effect American intervention in Cuba without recognition of an independent Cuban government. And a review of the biographies upon which Professor Pratt's thesis is based indicates that neither the passage of time, nor a necessary discrimination between recognition of a Cuban autonomy and American control of Cuba entered into the analyses which Pratt has abstracted for his own purposes. Indeed, the absence of information is cited to verify the contention which Professor Pratt wishes to advance. By way of contrast, Thomas Beer in his researches found the "solidarity" of Wall Street "imperfect" in March of 1898. Yet his evidence is outweighed by Pratt's acceptance of equally imperfect biographical data.<sup>41</sup>

The erratic behavior of the stock market is used as evidence to verify the contention that speculators generally opposed the war. But

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<sup>40</sup>John C. Appell, "The Unionization of the Florida Cigar-Makers, and the Coming of the War with Spain," Hispanic American Historical Review, XXXVI (February, 1956), 38-49.

<sup>41</sup>Cong. Rec., 31:4:3992-93, 3988-89, 4018-19, ibid., 31:5:4041; Thomas Beer, Hanna (New York, 1929), 199-200, Pratt, Expansionists, 234, note 12.

evidence exists to disprove any necessarily valid relationship between the evidence and the conclusion drawn from it. Prominent merchants polled on the eve of the war forecast only a temporary sloughing of the market, which they predicted would be followed by a sharp increase in demand. Thus Evan Thomas, President of the newly organized New York Produce Exchange, averred that "the effect on American commerce wouldn't amount to a row of pins." Rather, a war might prove beneficial, "since demand would pick up." Similarly C. E. Wilmot of the Produce Exchange could foresee "no serious interference" with the market. Frank H. Cohn of the New York Stock Exchange agreed in the forecast that a decline in the market would prove only temporary, should war occur.<sup>42</sup>

The American Cotton Growers Association, organized to stimulate the cotton market when it continued "depressed despite McKinley prosperity," must have delighted in the prediction of F. H. Price of McCormack and Company, who heralded the possibility of war with the prediction that "cotton will boom, then settle." Two months earlier, in an effort to widen markets by cutting production costs and prices, the New Jersey and New Bedford cotton mills announced wage cuts of ten and eleven per cent respectively. These reductions, which put to idleness 30,000 mill workers, soon resulted in strikes and labor unrest which for a time closed most leading New England cotton mills. The agreement finally reached between the mill owners and their employees made full restoration of former wage scales contingent upon increased

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<sup>42</sup>Pratt, ibid., 234, Times, March 8, 13, 1898.

profits in the cotton textile industry.<sup>43</sup>

By early 1898 "businessmen connected with the cotton industry, with the American-China Development Company, and with certain other enterprises, had become convinced of the need, if the Chinese market was to be kept open, of fundamental changes in United States policy." Assisted by such prominent business organs as the Journal of Commerce, representatives of the cotton, oil, and steel industries organized "for the express purpose of effecting a change in Far Eastern policy." Before the war at least ten resolutions sprang from the work of the committee into the hands of the State Department, all of them demanding that the administration "maintain and promote" their export trade.<sup>44</sup>

As the administration continued to press Spain and Cuba, other resolutions and petitions evidenced a strong split in business opinion. While New Yorkers continued to complain of poor foreign trade recovery in their city, the New York Merchants' and Manufacturers' Board of Trade split upon the nature of a resolution it wished to pass. President C. C. Shayne upheld the McKinley policies, while a competing group, led by J. A. Heckman, desired recognition of the Cuban insurgents, but opposed "any continuance of diplomatic negotiations with Spain." The New York and New Jersey Boards of Trade called for continued support "of the executive policy in Cuba," but that bulwark of conservatism, the Union League, pledged its "active and unwavering support of the

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<sup>43</sup>Times, January 1, 17, March 13, 1898.

<sup>44</sup>Campbell, Special Business Interests, 12, 25, 26, 30.

President, in war, if need be." A resolution of the New York Chamber of Commerce applauded "the pacific policy so widely, nobly, and patriotically adopted by President McKinley." It demanded that Congress "sustain and aid the President in his patriotic endeavors." Yet New Jersey business groups were at the same time demanding the independence of Cuba "by peace, if possible, by war, if necessary." And instigators of a "peace" rally in Pittsburgh found their efforts stymied by the clamor for war. The exception proved the rule. From Boston, one time center of the now depleted Cuban trade, and home of Henry Cabot Lodge, the Boston Associated Boards of Trade "representing five thousand business firms," demanded the "President be upheld in his endeavors to settle peaceably the relations of this country with Spain" along prior lines of policy.<sup>45</sup>

Professor Pratt documents with repeated emphasis what he concludes to be these peaceful sentiments of the business community. But he lacks appreciation of the meaning of the "argument for peace," in the context of the repeated demands that peace be secured by intervention. The underlying assumption that the United States worked for peace in late 1897 and early 1898 attributes to the citations (as well as to Dr. Pratt's own conclusion) the supposition that the policies of the United States were calculated to bring about peace. No critique of,

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<sup>45</sup>Times, April 5, 10, 16, 1898; April 1, 6, 3, 1898. In a desperate search for markets to replace the loss of Cuban trade, the Boston Merchants Association even petitioned for renewal of Canadian reciprocity privileges. Times, November 17, 1898.

or departure from, this assumption is made by Pratt or the references which he cites. But since the policies of the United States resolved in the simple demand that Spain withdraw from Cuba, the formal plea for peace, in its most altruistic form, became support for the demands made by the President. Moreover, the citations offered to defend Pratt's thesis fall within a time when the uncertain financial legislation of the country made "peace" the byword of conservatives. This much the author admits. Yet he does not develop the policies of the business community except in relation to the alternatives of peace and war.<sup>46</sup>

Evidence exists that support for the Presidential policy was not lacking among Republicans or Democrats of inland states. In a carefully documented survey of middlewestern opinions, George W. Auxier concludes that editors of a representative cross section of the middlewest, though they divided in their attitudes regarding Cuban belligerency, "seemed primarily interested in assisting the President in bringing back domestic prosperity." Were they merely "engaged in the Cuban trade?"<sup>47</sup>

After the congressional appropriations for war purposes were made, trade journals candidly admitted that "certain limited industries," principally those engaged in the manufacturing of machine tools and

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<sup>46</sup>Pratt, "American Business and the Spanish War," 173, ibid., Expansionists, 229, 237, 241.

<sup>47</sup>George W. Auxier, The Cuban Crisis as Reflected in the Editorial Columns of Middle Western Newspapers, 1895-1898 (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Ohio State University, 1938), 21, 209; Pratt, "American Business and the Spanish War," 163-64.



electrical equipment, would benefit from the war. Among these, the electrical appliance industry, long depressed, received "great stimulus" from the "rush of orders" which preceded the war. The General Electric Company, which in January of 1898 "began with fewer orders than all past years" found itself in possession of a "larger list of unfilled orders than ever before." Boilerworks, engine manufacturers, and pump companies boomed, as American industry assumed a "belligerent basis."<sup>48</sup>

Furthermore, it seems inaccurate to conclude, as does Professor Pratt, that "railroads would lose more than they would gain" through the war. The completion of the Manchurian extension of the new Russian Trans-Siberian Railway, warned the Engineering News, would shorten the distance to Vladivostock by nearly five hundred miles, leaving "China free to Russia." Concrete evidence of the concern of American carriers was further provided by journals such as the Railway Gazette which editorialized from October, 1897 through January of 1898, upon the close relationship between profitable railway transportation and the export trade. Viewing American carriers as being highly dependent upon grain freight rates, the Gazette apprehended no good to come of the "new Russian grain rate" to Manchuria and China which must shortly prove "of considerable importance to a good many farmers and carriers in the country" who would now compete with the Russian grain market in Asia.

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<sup>48</sup>Railroad Gazette (Chicago), XXX (April 1, 1898), 237; ibid., XXX (May 7, 1898), 541, Electrical World (New York), XL (April 14, 1898), 282.

Chauncey De Pew estimated that the one-fifth of United States capital invested in railroads suffered a steady decrease in gross and net earnings per mile since 1880. Certainly, then, it is equally easy to believe that James J. Hill, who "did much to bring American attention to the possibility of Pacific trade," and to whom "an empty car was a thief," cast longing eyes at new markets. There is positive evidence that at least one railway magnate, Charles Francis Adams, worked to effect the intervention of the United States in Cuba.<sup>49</sup>

The rationale of another group of American merchants for their sentiments was expressed by Gustav H. Schwab, who introduced, early in February, 1898, before the New York Trade Division of the Chamber of Commerce the following resolution: "That there are important changes now going on in the relations of the European powers to the Empire of China, affecting the territory of that Empire, and to that extent affecting the privileges enjoyed under existing treaty rights by American citizens trading in and with China." After assurances of the sponsoring group's acceptance of the gold standard, this petition noted the growth of American trade in Hong Kong, and begged President McKinley "that in view of the changes threatening to future trade development of the United States in China, the Chamber of Commerce of the State of New York respectfully and earnestly urge that such steps be taken as will

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<sup>49</sup>See for examples, Engineering News (Chicago), XXXVIII (November 11, 1897), 308, Times, April 9, 1898, Vevier, The United States and China, 19, Railroad Gazette, XXIX (October 22, 1897), 748. Significantly, Pratt's assumption as to railroad losses is omitted from Expansionists. See also "American Business and the Spanish War."

commend themselves to your wisdom for the prompt and energetic defense of existing treaty rights of our citizens in China, and for the preservation and protection of their important commercial interest in that Empire."<sup>50</sup>

On March 21, 1898, Russia announced its formal ninety-nine year lease of Ta Lien Wan from China in return for abrogation of Russian demands for Port Arthur. Russia also obtained commercial concessions in Manchuria at this time. Dr. Pratt is forced to the significant conclusion that "by the middle of March" many organs of business opinion in the United States admitted war "might bring no serious disaster, and was inevitable." Though Theodore Roosevelt informed J. C. Morgan associate Bob Bacon that he considered intervention in Cuba without recognition of Cuban autonomy to be "a mistake," the die had been cast. In January of 1898, "while Lodge and White were considering with Balfour the possibility of America joining Britain to enforce the Open Door in China," Henry Cabot Lodge concluded, in a letter to his colleague, Henry White, that "some of our large mercantile bodies are also beginning to move in the same direction." Dr. Pratt's conclusions that "business sentiments, especially in the East, continued strongly anti-war at the close of 1897 and in the opening months of 1898" is qualified by the nature of the proposed war revenue measures under consideration by Congress. Again Pratt's conclusion undercuts the basic thesis he

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<sup>50</sup>Times, February 4, 1898, Engineering Magazine (New York), VII (February, 1898), 382.

advances elsewhere, even though he never makes a formal revision of his original formulation.<sup>51</sup>

As long as it seemed possible to obtain Cuba without recourse to force there continued to be good reason for a decline in securities whenever war appeared imminent. But as a matter of record, the "break" in the market occasioned by the declaration of war was slight. The downturn occasioned by the threat of war seems much more readily explained by the nature of legislation pending in Congress for the financing of the conflict, than by any fear of the adverse effects of war. As an alternative to the silver funding proposals, an administration backed measure called for special taxes on commercial paper and legal instruments. Offered such an unprofitable choice of programs for the display of patriotism, it remains little wonder that stocks reflected the concern of commercial interests. But there was no panic. The market proved buoyant as averages quickly resumed prewar levels, maintaining and exceeding these levels throughout the conflict.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>Beale, Theodore Roosevelt, 60, 178, Times, March 21, 1898, Pratt, 234. The commercial press followed the State Department line closely with regard to Cuba. An exception appears to have been the Mail and Express, which favored the recognition of Cuban belligerency as early as 1895. Meanwhile, organs such as the Railroad Gazette feared "Railroad Earnings in a Silver Country," but admitted that "broadly speaking, supply of transportation is in excess of demand." Railroad Gazette, XXX (May 27, 1898), 552, ibid. (May 13, 1898), 573, Wisan, The Cuban Crisis, 129.

<sup>52</sup>Times, April 9, 1898. The war tax assessed beer and tobacco as well, and legalized an increase in postal rates. United States Bureau of the Census, Historical Statistics of the United States, 1789-1945 (Washington, 1949), 345. Instrumental in framing the revenue measure were Senators Allison and Dingley, as well as Secretary Gage. Times, April 3, 1898.

Further, the access by foreign powers to the raw materials of China aroused the concern of many trade publications. Among these the Engineering Magazine pledged itself, in February of 1898, to publish news of "present European attempts to dismember China" because "the mineral wealth of the country becomes of interest to American mining as offering a new source of supplies to our European competitors."<sup>53</sup>

It is further contended by Professor Pratt that "American business had been either opposed or indifferent to the expansionist philosophy which had arisen since 1890." The term "expansionist" is an elastic one embracing many forms of growth, as the study of American history shows. Certainly the business community's extension of its controls and interests from the time of the panic of 1893 illustrates its active expansion. It is true that extension did not formalize in immediate demands for the annexation of new markets. But it may be observed that power exercised without responsibility tends to become as insidious to liberty as any dictatorship may be. As a matter of record industrial and commercial interests demanded new bases of operation. And they did so while they offered in exchange the newly rationalized productive system of the United States as the instrument for American economic recovery.<sup>54</sup>

An appreciation of the predicament of American producers prompted cautious warning from the administration that a declaration

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<sup>53</sup>Engineering Magazine, VII (February, 1898), 384-85.

<sup>54</sup>Campbell, Special Business Interests, 1-37, Pratt, Expansionists, 223.

of war by the United States would necessitate an issue of government notes in the absence of financial reforms. But what seemed to be a heaven-sent opportunity for Populists, greenbackers, and silverites to advance their interests by espousing war with Spain became only a remote possibility under the legislative program advanced by congressional leaders. Neither the administration plan for currency reform, introduced into Congress on April 5, nor the proposed war revenue measure introduced on April 9 contained loopholes through which inflationists might advance their hearts' desire. It mattered little that the war revenue bill made provision for popular loans of 300 to 500 million dollars "payable in coin" so long as the announced policy of the government remained gold redemption. The provision for coin payment was permissive, not mandatory and, in point of fact, would be used by the President to offset the popular hatred of bond holders. The administration authorized under the act an issue of "public" bonds to finance the war. But this blow to the hopes of inflationists was softened by the dispersal of the 50 billion dollar defense appropriation. By April 10, a scant four weeks after the appropriation was made, the fund was almost exhausted. When the coffers of the national treasury emptied, a committee of Republican leaders of the House of Representatives called upon the President once again to demand "prompt

and aggressive action in Cuba." Once again war seemed imminent.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Presumably these payments were made from funds made available to the Government by the railroad sale. On April 10, it was reported that the United States Treasury had at its demand 177 million dollars in gold derived from the sale. Additional work on contracts awarded by the army and navy, including the construction of several battleships, were authorized. See Times, April 1, 3, 6, 9, 1898; April 2, 1898. For Populist reaction to naval expansion see Chapter VI of this thesis.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONGRESSIONAL BATTLES

"Expansion seems to be regulated . . . by our own internal constitution."

William H. Seward  
The Funeral Oration of Henry Clay

While the British occupied Waiheiwai, and so apparently completed the allocation of spheres of influence among the major European powers along the China coast, the McKinley Administration moved hastily to assure the United States a favorable strategic position in the scramble for colonial possessions. Appraised of the approval of American intervention in Cuba by the majority of the interested European powers, the President scheduled his message to Congress upon Cuban affairs for the first week in April, 1898. Press reports acknowledged that McKinley favored the intervention of the United States to drive Spain from Cuba. And it was further reported, well in advance of the message, that an American naval task force would proceed to the Caroline Islands, adjacent to the Philippines, twenty-four hours in advance of the message to Congress. In the Senate, meanwhile, Henry Cabot Lodge once more placed upon the agenda a bill calling for the purchase of Santo Thomas. And the treaty for annexation for Hawaii was likewise resubmitted for consideration. The expansionists were ready



to make their big push.<sup>1</sup>

In the interval, Spain purchased the peace of native Philippine rebels and attempted to buy the Cuban patriots as well. But Spanish conservatives in Cuba worried over the obvious failure of the Spanish army to control the native population, and well-to-do Spanish citizens began to look to the United States for the protection which Spanish troops could no longer provide. Cuban patriots thereupon attempted to hasten the intervention of the United States in Cuba. Early in December of 1897, Berkeley Balch, Secretary of the Cuban League of New York City, petitioned the President "in behalf of the insurgents" for aid against Spain. "Autonomy is a foolish dream," ran the petition in part. "It is evident that neither side understand it, wishes it, nor can administer it." Conservative Spaniards in Cuba considered the advisability of asking for "a United States protectorate over Cuba within six months" of their mid-December meetings in 1897. Two weeks later the split of opinion within insurgent ranks was well known, for the insurgent leader Gomez contented himself with the rejection of Spanish offers for autonomy while the Garcia rebels continued to demand complete political independence. Worried about the fate of the Cuban patriots, Horatio Reubens, counsel to the Cuban Junta, insisted that the failure of the United States to allow political autonomy in Cuba would only substitute an anti-American uprising for the civil war against Spain being waged

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<sup>1</sup>Times, April 1, 5, 6, 9, 1898. Sanford P. Dole thereupon hurried to Washington to again urge the annexation of Hawaii.

on the island.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, though the President contented himself with a request for the forcible intervention of the United States in Spanish affairs, the issue of annexation versus autonomy for the islands could not be ignored. But the President moved on toward war, withholding from public knowledge the notice given by the Spanish Government that it would accept United States demands for Cuban autonomy. Working the other side of the street, the State Department released, in the week following the presidential message, consular reports emphasizing the horrors of the Cuban war. These were well calculated to inflame public opinion against Spain and, for that reason had previously been withheld from publication.<sup>3</sup>

In Congress, meanwhile, Populist legislators urged with increasing vehemence the intervention of the United States against Spain. They tied their demands for intervention to what they charged was a failure of the Republican Party to restore prosperity to the nation. Jerry Simpson, admitting himself to be "more concerned about the condition and prosperity of our own people" than about Cuba, concluded that "if an opportunity was offered, I, for one, would vote with the Republicans to help them fulfill their pledges in regard to Cuba." Simpson opposed, though, the annexation of the island, and resisted the idea of war to annex Cuba, since he regarded the natives as "undesirable citizens." For a short period early in 1898, Simpson opposed even the recognition

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<sup>2</sup>Times, October 19, 1897; November 16, 1897, November 28, 29, 1897; December 3, 14, 17, 30, 31, 1897.

<sup>3</sup>Times, April 12, 1898.

of the Cubans as belligerents, fearing as he did, that recognition would lead to war. Much more to the point, the Senator insisted, was the failure of the Republican Dingley Tariff to restore domestic prosperity. Current reports from the State of Maine indicated to the Senator that Republicans had failed "to buy prosperity," and apparently Simpson refused to be convinced that the Republican program would satisfy domestic requirements.<sup>4</sup>

Representative Castle joined in the attack upon Republican policies. Though he favored the recognition of belligerency, and decried the necessity for going "round Robin Hood's barn to talk Cuba under cover of an appropriation resolution," he agreed with Simpson that powerful bond holders directed the foreign policy of the United States to the detriment of this country. Cleveland Democrats refused to recognize the rebels in 1895 in order to save the gold standard, Simpson asserted, and Castle elaborated this indictment of the money power. "Belmont, Morgan and Company hold twenty million in Spanish bonds," insisted Castle. Should the Cuban patriots achieve their independence the market value of these bonds would depreciate. Hence the bond holders worked to prevent recognition of the rebels, he concluded.<sup>5</sup>

Castle and his Populist colleagues continued to urge silver coinage, and they sided with silverites of both parties in a common effort to obtain favorable silver legislation. They still insisted

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<sup>4</sup>Cong. Rec., 31:1:803, 804.

<sup>5</sup>Cong. Rec., 31:1:763, 764; ibid., 31:3:2099; ibid., 31:1:93.

that prosperity would be most easily obtained by stimulating prices through an increased money supply. Representative Ridgley attempted, in his turn, to append amendments providing for the issue of small denomination legal tender to naval appropriation bills. His colleague, Representative Bell, urged that if another bond issue became unavoidable all government bonds be made payable in "coin." Bell cited again, as a successful example of this technique, the financial arrangements of the Bank of France. Reserving to itself the option of redemption in gold or silver, the Bank "never depreciated the credit of the French Government, or militated against the credit of any nation," according to the eager advocates of silver funding. He further called for the geographic distribution of United States mints to keep specie "in the area where needed" by domestic commerce.<sup>6</sup>

Since the fifty million dollar congressional appropriation for national defense promised to stimulate the domestic economy, it drew a chorus of approval from Populist legislators. Representative Bell expressed his willingness to give the President the "widest discretion" for use of the funds; and in an effort to direct some of the money to his constituents he stressed, in several lengthy speeches, the patriotism exhibited by all political factions who supported the measure.<sup>7</sup>

Progress likewise sanctioned intervention. "I should oppose with all my powers any attempt to create a warlike spirit in our nation,

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<sup>6</sup>Cong. Rec., 31:2:1284, 85, ibid., 31:1:360, 61.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

or to extend our dominion by force of arms," proclaimed Representative Vincent of Kansas, "but Sir, the conditions now confronting us are of a most serious character. . . . I believe Almighty God planted our infant Republic on the shores of the western seas to carry forward and upward the standard of civilization and progress . . ." The "God given mission" of the country, Vincent believed, made it "defender of liberty for the whole western world."

Senator Allen offered a different analysis. Though Allen read into the Congressional Record the acknowledgment by William Jennings Bryan that defense appropriations would facilitate peace (since "prompt liberality would lessen the danger of war and therefore prove wise economy"), the Senator followed this with another statement given by the "Peerless Leader": "Yes, the time for intervention has arrived. Cuba lies within sight of our shores. War is the final arbiter between nations." And because Allen clearly understood the nature of the decision which would face Congress he fought the proposed waiver by the Senate of its right to appoint from the floor members of the special conference committee on Cuba. If the appointments were left in the hands of "Czar Reed" of the House of Representatives, Allen feared that the committee would be weighted against a decision in favor of Cuban independence. Allen, too, favored war. After the Presidential message on Cuban affairs, the Senator advised Populist Governor Holcomb of Nebraska to tender the services of the Nebraska State Militia to the

President "without delay."<sup>8</sup>

Senator Butler saw gloomy prospects ahead for the Cuban patriots. The presidential message expressed "bondholders greed, not freedom," Butler alleged. He argued that the defeat of the resolution calling for Spanish withdrawal from Cuba boded no good for the future of free Cuba. Allen agreed. Clearly, the presidential message was not "honorable," since McKinley bypassed a "chance to put war on the level of humanity and liberty." For his part, Senator Turner of Washington meanwhile emphasized the power of Congress to declare war. And Senator Harris justified the conflict by asserting that "a just war" would promote "all that is highest and best in national life." Senator Butler declared his support of a "firm and vigorous policy," but he remained suspicious of Republican strategy, and he refused to agree to the proposed delegation of the war power to the President.<sup>9</sup>

All Populist senators voted in favor of the Foraker-Turpie Amendment which called for the recognition of Cuban independence. Senator Butler vehemently denied that the influence of William Jennings Bryan had produced this unanimity. Butler insisted that "not a single Populist . . . not a single one, so far as I know, had any conference" with Bryan about Cuban affairs, even though Bryan was in Washington at the time. Butler's denial left Allen free to continue advocating the

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<sup>8</sup>Cong. Rec., 30:1:2615; ibid., 31:4:4023, Times, April 7, 1898.

<sup>9</sup>Cong. Rec., 31:5:4069, ibid., 31:4:3073, 3732, 33; Times, April 6, 1898. Representative Harris sponsored a resolution from Kansas citizens who called for the annexation of Hawaii in 1898. See Cong. Rec., 31:Index:269.

recognition of the insurgents despite a reminder from one senatorial colleague and fellow-silverite, Morgan of Alabama, that belligerency "now" meant war.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Times, April 20, 1898, Cong. Rec., 31:2:2073-75.

Senator Allen submitted again on February 24, 1898, a resolution, similar to an amendment to appropriation bill which he offered on February 9, 1898, calling for the recognition of Cuban belligerency. But the second resolution, being unattached to an appropriation measure, amounted to little more than a hostile gesture against Spain. The simple recognition of belligerency would never have provided much more than moral support for the Cubans.

It is to be doubted that William Allen, an astute member of the legal profession and later a Federal judge, remained entirely ignorant of the significant variations of his two amendments, particularly when his colleague, Senator Morgan, acknowledged that the recognition of belligerency could mean war only if appended to a diplomatic and consular appropriations measure. Before Proctor's trip to Cuba, Morgan himself advocated temporary postponement of any legislation which might prove offensive enough to Spain to involve the United States in war. New York Times, April 1, 1898, February 9, 1898, February 24, 1898; John B. Moore, "Maritime Law and the Spanish War," Political Science Quarterly, XV (September, 1900), 399-425. The modification of Allen's views occurred during a time when the strategy of Republican interventionists in refusing recognition to Cuban rebels was assuming new importance for many congressmen. It is doubtful, considering the financial measures supported by the Senator, that his failure to introduce a stronger measure reflected any sudden conversion to the financial policies of the administration. By Cleveland's declaration of neutrality, the United States was already barred from assisting either belligerent. The interpretation of neutrality espoused by the United States during its own Civil War proscribed sale of enumerated articles, "contraband of war," as well as the raising of funds and armies on foreign soil. This interpretation was ignored. Recognition of the belligerent status of the Cuban rebels would hardly have provided any additional advantages to their military conduct of the war, since the Junta solicited funds openly. The bazaars held by the Cuban-American league of New York City met no official opposition, though it was well known that the funds so gathered purchased ammunition for the rebels. One may infer that the lack of formal protest on the part of Spain was due, at least in part, to Spanish reliance upon American foodstuffs for the support of Spanish troops in Cuba.

Demanding a vote to recognize the independence of the island, Allen asserted that not even the sinking of the "Maine" would affect the position of the United States with regard to Cuba. Although the Senator withdrew his own motion to recognize the Cuban rebels late in February, he roused the Senate with jingo speech in which the sacredness of womanhood, freedom, flag, and national honor ranked in order when he resumed his efforts in March. In answer to a motion for adjournment, offered in mid-April to avoid voting upon recognition, the Senator insisted that the motion was debatable. It was his privilege to respect "but disagree" with the President. Thus he reiterated his demands and expressed irritation at the interference of European powers with the formation of United States foreign policy.<sup>11</sup>

Allen introduced a resolution calling for a Senate investigation of the sinking of the "Maine" only to withdraw it at the request, he noted, of Senate colleagues who felt that such a move "smacked of coercion." But the Senator made it clear that he distrusted the motives and the secrecy of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee which continued to operate as a closed and tightly knit group, an appendage to administration policy rather than as senatorial delegates.<sup>12</sup>

With the exception of Jerry Simpson, who voted against it, Populist representatives also favored the Foraker-Turpie resolution.

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<sup>11</sup>Cong. Rec., 31:2:2579, ibid., 31:2:2118, ibid., 31:4:3410-18; ibid., 31:4:3847, ibid., 31:4:3945,49.

<sup>12</sup>Cong. Rec., 31:2:1819, 1879.



And during the lengthy debates upon American policy in regard to Spain, all Populist legislators showed an increasing inclination to support expenditures for military purposes. Jerry Simpson urged the purchase by the Army of Kansas livestock as an economy measure. Marion Butler again offered an amendment to limit the price paid by the Government for armour plate while his Populist colleagues still favored the construction of an armour plant by the Government.<sup>13</sup>

The agrarians held few illusions as to the purpose of these expenditures. Representative Vincent bemoaned the failure to obtain fifty thousand dollars for improvements to Fort Riley, in his own state. It seemed "hardly fair," he murmured, "to draw the line on so small an amount" when of the fifty million dollars allotted to defense the congressmen who opposed Vincent gained three million for their own constituents. Senator Kyle's earlier request for a new army barracks in Kansas, estimated cost of seven hundred fifty thousand dollars, seemed much bolder. Contrasted with these sums the new agricultural appropriation bill provision for the distribution of free seed to impoverished farmers appeared of minor benefit, though Senator Allen voiced his pleasure with the act.<sup>14</sup>

Giving up on other approaches to recovery, Populists became reconciled to military expenditures, and grew increasingly enthusiastic

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<sup>13</sup>Times, April 14, 1898, Cong. Rec., 31:1:702.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 31:1:902, 1522; ibid., 31:3:2146; ibid., 31:2:1245, 46; Times, February 4, 1898.

over American naval expansion. The closed market bounty advocates, who had resisted the growth of American naval power in their free trade days (before the panic of 1893), now asked for assurances that American naval power would expand. War threatened abroad, and the agrarians who believed in "retributive justice where the welfare of the human family is concerned," felt themselves justified in war preparation. A battleship, if built, must be a "good fighting machine." But the construction of three new battleships for which the Republicans sought authorization was a long term measure.<sup>15</sup>

Because they desired the immediate strengthening of American naval power, Populists inclined to support demands for an increase in the number of small coastal vessels. This is not to say they remained small navy men. Jerry Simpson voiced the agreement of Populist legislators to "go on with the construction of these three battleships. That is all right. . . . I think we ought to double the number of torpedo boats and torpedo boat destroyers." Populist legislators went on record in favor of the appropriation measure which provided for the construction of both types of vessels.<sup>16</sup>

Although Populist legislators inclined toward Republican plans for naval expansion, they continued to obstruct the administration's plan for currency reform. The Republican proposal, introduced into the House of Representatives on April 6, 1898, was designed to prevent

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<sup>15</sup>Cong. Rec., 31:4:3211, ibid., 31:2:4237.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 31:4:3466, 67.

further depletion of the treasury gold reserve. Under the proposed act a separate reserve fund would be set up for the purpose of redeeming silver certificates. Notes so redeemed were to be cancelled. No sudden rush upon the treasury for gold payments of silver certificates, such as had occurred in 1893, could endanger the reserve fund. As a sop to the silverites, the temporary circulation of silver would be encouraged by a provision which permitted redemption of these silver certificates in silver. The silver might then be exchanged for gold, if gold were desired by the holder.<sup>17</sup>

Silver was thus still valued in terms of gold. Hence Populists opposed the plan, although the Republican measure provided for a possible future note issue to increase the money supply. The value of money, they steadfastly maintained, must be a function of circulation and exchange, not of the current demand for gold. In preference to the proposed gold standard legislation, Populists supported a resolution to coin silver "at parity with gold." The power to coin money remained a legitimate governmental function, Populists insisted, therefore no question of "cheaper money" payments to creditors was involved in their preference for silver monetization.<sup>18</sup>

Though Populist legislators differed from the Republican President in their methods of achieving the "broad American policy" of

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<sup>17</sup>Times, January 7, 1898, April 6, 1898, Cong. Rec., 31:1:417.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 31:2:1172, ibid., 31:2:1284; ibid., 31:1:1037, ibid., 31:1:1158, 59.

commercial expansion, the agrarians became increasingly sympathetic with administration efforts to drive Spain from Cuba. "The American in the White House commands our unqualified sympathy, confidence, and approval," John Skinner asserted, as the crisis with Spain drew near. "Divided as we may be politically, racially, sectionally . . . his policy shall be our policy." Cuban intervention offered these Populists an immediate opportunity to gain the objective for which they so long had struggled. It was not that the island would prove a source of natural wealth to the agrarians: on the contrary, its acquisition might prove a distinct disadvantage to western and southern sugar beet growers whose greatly expanded crops would again face the competition of Cuban sugars. And Populists deplored admitting to citizenship members of the colored races, whom they considered inferior to Anglo-Saxons. But intervention in Cuba entailed probable war. The administration itself acknowledged that war would necessitate an increase in circulating specie. Thus the policy of intervention in Cuba remained linked to Populist hopes for an inflated currency. And this, in turn, was their chosen vehicle to reach prosperity.<sup>19</sup>

Thus Populist legislators favored intervention against Spain in Cuba. Like his colleagues, John Skinner rationalized the shift in Populist tactics: "The policy we are sure will be humane." More than six years earlier, Ignatius Donnely and Thomas Watson had affirmed

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 31:4:3212.

their belief in the inevitability of human progress toward a time when "the old, rude way of trial by combat" would give way to a "higher and better development"; but these hopes appeared doomed when the congressional debates over the manner by which Cuban intervention was to be effected became so partisan that Democrats and Republicans in the House of Representatives resorted to fisticuffs to settle their differences.<sup>20</sup>

Excepting Jerry Simpson, Populist legislators in the House of Representatives voted in favor of the intervention of the United States in Cuba. Recognition of the Cuban patriots as belligerents no longer satisfied them, for they desired the direct participation of this country in the struggle against Spain. But when the Senate shortly thereafter expressed its preference for intervention without the recognition of Cuban autonomy, Populists recoiled, fearing that the annexation of Cuba would follow. Populist senators unanimously supported the minority resolution of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee to recognize the autonomist Cuban government as well as the independence of Cuba. To this bill Senator Davis promptly appended an amendment disclaiming any intention of the United States to exercise sovereignty over the island. But when Republican Senator William Frye countered with a move to strike out the clause acknowledging the right of Cubans to freedom and independence, Populists voted to table the entire motion in order to avoid its passage in the form presented. Senator Davis then proposed to substitute the Senate resolution for that submitted by the House of

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<sup>20</sup>Donnelly, Caesar's Column 132, Times, April 16, 1898.

Representatives, and all five Populist Senators favored this action. Along with the majority of other senators, they appeared deaf to the protests of Republican leaders Hanna, Aldrich, Hoar and Platt, who insisted that recognition of the Cuban autonomists ran "contrary to the Presidential message," and encroached upon the President's constitutional leadership in foreign affairs.<sup>21</sup>

A vote upon the Turpie amendment, which called for the recognition of the Cuban Republic by Congress, received Senate approval. All Populist Senators voted in favor of its passage. Similarly, they voted unanimously against accepting the first House resolution which called for intervention without recognition of the belligerents. And Populists voted in a body against the appointment of the Conference Committee after Senator Allen's motion to elect committee members from the floor was rejected.<sup>22</sup>

Far into the night of April 19 the Senate and House debated the relative merits of the resolutions presented, and awaited the report of the second meeting of the Conference Committee. In the interim, silverites among the Republicans clarified the reasons for their insistence upon diplomatic recognition of the Cuban government. It was not that they desired to avert an armed conflict with Spain, or even that they considered sovereignty an inherent right of the islanders. Rather, as their spokesman, Senator Teller insisted, the silverites desired to

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<sup>21</sup>Times, April 14, 17, 19, 1898.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., April 19, 1898.

escape responsibility for the bonded debt which hung like a weighty albatross about the necks of the islanders. Meanwhile, in the House of Representatives, Republican strategists Reed and Dingley conferred with other House Republicans as to the methods by which they might effect the passage of the House version of the intervention resolutions through the Senate as well.<sup>23</sup>

The agreement to hold a joint session to adjust the differences between the House and Senate bills marked defeat for the Republican pro-autonomists who sided with Populist legislators in opposing intervention without recognition of the Cubans. But the Senators stubbornly rejected a proposal to recede from their position on Cuba. When the House of Representatives in similar fashion refused to budge, a joint Conference Committee again undertook negotiations to settle the dispute. Sensing that the appointees would have power to frame legislation not to the liking of himself and his colleagues, Senator Allen again proposed that the Senate elect its conferees, instead of allowing them to be appointed by the committee chairman. Though Allen's Populist colleagues supported his efforts, the resolution was defeated.<sup>24</sup>

In the tug-of-war between the Republican-controlled House and Democrat organized Senate, each body refused to accede to the wishes of the other. But Populists voting in both houses were remarkably consistent. Populist legislators in the House of Representatives who voted

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., April 19, 1898.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., April 19, 1898.

with the minority of the Foreign Relations Committee for recognition of the Cuban government also refused, save for Representative Howard of Alabama, to support the first Senate bill for recognition of the belligerents, since this motion did not include any provision for the direct intervention of the United States in Cuba.<sup>25</sup>

Populists insisted that Presidential efforts to influence congressional legislation in effect deprived Congress of its constitutional power to declare war. But victory seemed no closer when another motion of the Senate to insist upon its own resolution carried that body. The second section of the resolution which authorized Senate participation in the Conference Committee also passed the Senate by a margin of one vote, although all Populist Senators opposed the measure. Populist legislators in the House meanwhile favored the motion of Representative Bromwell to recede from their stand, and agree to the Senate resolution, but Bromwell's test vote revealed that a majority of thirty-three representatives opposed recognition. On the final vote in the Senate, which carried that body to agreement with the House of Representatives, Senator Kyle went along with the administration against his five Populist colleagues, who voted for the last time against intervention without Cuban autonomy.<sup>26</sup>

Having agreed to recognize their agreement on the issue of war with Spain, Congress turned its attention to the passage of a war revenue

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., April 18, 19, 1898.

<sup>26</sup>Cong. Rec., 31:2:1037, Times, April 18, 19, 1898.



measure. It was here, rather than in the fight over Cuban autonomy, that the struggle with the Republican Administration became crucial to the future of Populism. For final disposition of the Spanish possessions must await the cessation of hostilities with Spain, but the nature of the revenue bill passed by Congress might revive, or permanently kill, the monetary reforms demanded by Populist legislators.

By April 19, the date on which Congress finally passed the intervention resolutions, Republican members of the Ways and Means Committee of the House of Representatives declared themselves "practically agreed" on a revenue measure to finance the war. The preliminary draft of the revenue bill combined a special stamp tax with "long term bonds" to raise an estimated 113 million dollars in additional revenue. Populists immediately voiced strenuous objections to the entire bill. They condemned the proposal to raise six hundred thousand dollars of the estimated requirements through another government bond issue. They further questioned the constitutionality of assessing particular articles of consumer goods, beer and hard liquors made from grain, to derive the balance of the revenue. Consequently, when the revenue measure was introduced into the House of Representatives, Populist legislators united to prevent its passage.<sup>27</sup>

The Populists objected strenuously to Republican charge that opponents of the revenue bill lacked patriotism. They fought back by asserting that the war with Spain was "being used as a pretext for

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<sup>27</sup>Cong. Rec., 31:5:4460, ibid., 31:6:5541; ibid., 31:5:4308, 4395, 4408.

carrying out a policy that has been slumbering" in the breasts of American financiers to revive "the national banking system" and the attendant evils of currency contraction to which agrarians since the days of John Taylor of Carolina had objected. The entire procedure was little more than a "scheme to destroy silver and substitute national bank notes for greenbacks." It appeared obvious to Populist legislators that a revenue to finance the war for an estimated two and one-half years became unnecessary when the conflict could be terminated in six months "if properly conducted." And the agrarian legislators further denied that a government issue of greenbacks or silver would result in an uncontrollable spiral of inflation. Greenbacks and silver coin might be "pulled back into the treasury" if the threat of overexpansion arose, by "leveling upon those best able to pay" the "proper taxation" of their incomes.<sup>28</sup>

Thus the income tax would become the method of controlling currency distribution under the Populist counter-proposal. The silver seignorage of the Federal Treasury must be coined, silver certificates issued upon the value established for the metal, and the lever of internal taxation used to insure the flexibility of the system. In addition to the advantage of ready paper and silver currency, Populist legislators insisted that the high interest charges accruing upon the bonded debt would be eliminated, and domestic interest rates lowered

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 31:5:4395, ibid., 4434, 35, 36; ibid., 31:5:4388, ibid., 31:5:4395.

when currency became available.<sup>29</sup>

This last major effort of the Populist legislators to afford relief to their constituents failed, even more miserably than had the crusade of 1896. A few Populist legislators, apparently worried by the aspersions cast upon their patriotism, found it safer to abstain rather than to cast their votes against the war revenue measure. Senator Turner of Washington, as well as Representatives Todd and Meekson, refused to cast their votes on the Republican revenue bill. All other Populists voted against the act.<sup>30</sup>

From two Senators and nine Representatives, Populists increased their congressional bloc to five Senators and twenty Representatives of the party in the Fifty-fifth Congress. But the six year term of office accounted in great part for the cumulative number of Populist legislators, and the strength of public sentiment in favor of the Populists in 1896 may be attributed largely to the popular desire for silver coinage. Consequently the election of pro-silver Populist legislators for a two year term proved no measure of success at the polls.<sup>31</sup>

Moreover, Populists fell prey to the Spanish-American War. The surge of patriotism which swept the United States in 1898 took its toll

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 31:5:4395.

<sup>30</sup>Cong. Rec., 31:5:4460, ibid., 31:6:5541.

<sup>31</sup>United States Congress, Official Congressional Directory of the 55 Congress. Senate Document 2. 55 Cong., 2 Sess. (Washington, 1897), 323-30.

among the agrarians once bent upon exercising vengeance against the controlling political alliances of the country. And factional quarrels split what remained of the national Populist organization. Though fifteen states still claimed Populist organizations, Spain gradually replaced the goldbugs as the foe of Populist patriots. The Populist Party of Kansas promised volunteer soldiers a "high appreciation of their patriotic duty to the country," and demanded that they be allowed to vote in the coming election. Michigan Middle-of-the-Road Populists favored the issue of full legal-tender paper money to pay the expenses of the Spanish-American War. True Populists still insisted "the money for carrying on the war with Spain should be obtained by the coinage of silver." The intra-party tariff feud also took its toll. Arkansas Populists favored tariff protection against "foreign pauper labor." In California, the Populist platform declared that the war with Spain "should be prosecuted with overwhelming vigor until the ends for which it was undertaken should be fully and satisfactorily achieved." The Colorado organization favored the "retention of all islands taken from Spain." Idaho Populists recognized "with pride" the achievements of the army and navy while Iowa members saw little use for Cuba, but pushed the construction of the Nicaraguan Canal. In Virginia, the advent of war "made farmers sure" of the return of prosperity, with the result that the Populist minority convention of 1897-98 became the

smallest political convention of Virginia annals.<sup>32</sup>

Upon three issues of foreign policy Populists based their hopes for future prosperity--the isthmian canal, control of Cuba, and lingering hopes of international bimetallism. Thus little difference existed between Populists and the two major parties after 1897 over the methods of achieving the ultimate objective, national prosperity. Democratic and Republican policies thus frustrated the efforts of the agrarians to build and maintain a political party. But the untiring efforts of Populist legislators to impress upon an industrial nation the need for a stable agricultural population helped agriculture assume a new status in the United States. The influence of Populist legislators upon American foreign policy contributed to this revival. Tariff adjustments, subsidies, and monetary reforms coincided with the emergence of agriculture as still another vested interest. This was the primary accomplishment of Populist legislators.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Tribune Almanac (1899), 52, 55, 60, 63, 64, 65, Sheldon, Populism in the Old Dominion, 139, 43.

<sup>33</sup>Tribune Almanac, 50-65.

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