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THE UNION BIMETALLIC PARTY OF OREGON

1896 - 1898

by

LUDGER MOGGE

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS
in
HISTORY

Portland State University
1977

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF Ludger Mogge for the Master of Arts
in History presented July 28, 1977.

Title: The Union Bimetallic Party of Oregon, 1896 - 1898.

APPROVED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE THESIS COMMITTEE:

Gordon B. Dodds, Chairman

Victor C. Dahl

Richard L. Brinkman

On March 23 - 26, 1898, Populists, Democrats, and Silver Republicans of Oregon held their state conventions in Portland and agreed upon a common platform and a common state ticket for the elections of June 6, 1898. None of the available works on Oregon history explains that this fusion was the culmination of a two-year effort to unite the reform forces of the state. This thesis tries to fill the gap.

Because of the lack of secondary works on the subject, the thesis is based mainly on two sources: newspapers on microfilm, especially The Oregonian; and the unpublished correspondence of party chairman

Cooper (January, 1897 - February, 1898, in the Oregon Historical Society). It will be seen that the party was at first a local party, dealing especially with economic problems, and then broadened its scope to embrace Populist principles.

The first chapter deals with the national background. It briefly reviews the currency legislation since 1834 and the economic situation, especially of farmers, in the wake of the panic of 1893. The National Silver Party is discussed, because the Union Bimetallic Party of Oregon may have been intended as a state branch of this national organization. The terms "free coinage of silver" and "bimetallism" are explained, and the demand for direct legislation, arising in the early 1890's, is alluded to with special reference to Oregon.

In the second chapter the origin of the Union Bimetallic Party is traced to splits over the money question within the Republican Party of Yamhill County. After the new party had scored a complete victory in the county elections, it was expanded into other counties; the first state convention was held on July 9, 1896. The presidential election of November, 1896, and the "hold-up"-legislature of 1897 are dealt with as far as members of the Union Bimetallic Party were involved.

After months of inactivity the party was revitalized in the spring of 1897 and further expanded in the following months. Emphasis is laid upon the internal debate over union or fusion, e.g., whether the old party organizations should be dissolved or maintained. This question was decided in January, 1898, in favor of the latter solution

and the Union Bimetallic Party was thus reduced to a coordinating body and practically became superfluous.

The fifth chapter deals with several forces which were detrimental to the Union cause: the return of prosperity since the spring of 1897; the chronic lack of funds; the rumors about alleged secret deals with Mitchell Republicans and Pennoyer Democrats; and the resistance of Mid-road Populists.

The proceedings of the state conventions of 1898 are described. As far as the campaign is concerned, only the impact of the war with Spain is alluded to. On June 6, 1898, the Union forces suffered a severe defeat; some reasons for this defeat are given.

TO THE OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH:

The members of the Committee approve the thesis of
Ludger Mogge presented July 28, 1977.

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CHAPTER I

THE MONEY QUESTION AND THE DEMAND FOR DIRECT LEGISLATION

CURRENCY LEGISLATION SINCE 1834 AND THE PANIC OF 1893

A short review of the monetary legislation of the United States must go back at least until 1834. On June 28 of that year, a coinage act was passed¹ which provided for a silver dollar of 412½ grains. The coinage ratio by weight of silver in comparison to gold was about 16 to 1. But this was not an exact expression of the true value of the two metals towards each other; the ratio put too much silver in the silver dollar and too little gold in the gold dollar. The result was that silver, as the dearer of the two metals, went gradually out of production. The small quantities which still existed were swept out of circulation during the Civil War by the so-called greenback notes of 1862 and 1863.²

On February 12, 1873, Congress passed a new coinage act as a matter of routine and in a rather perfunctory fashion. In the belief that the silver dollar was no longer needed, a provision was included that the coinage of any new silver dollars in the coming years was

¹"An Act concerning the gold coins of the United States, and for other purposes"; U. S., Statutes at Large, IV, 699.

²See J. Laurence Laughlin, The History of Bimetallism in the United States (4th ed.; New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1898), pp. 60-73, 86-9.

to be discontinued.³ However, the output of silver in the United States began to increase just a few years later. Since the early 1860's, new mines had been opened up in several states, and after the completion of the first transcontinental railroad in 1869 the silver was channelled into the nation's trade. Besides, modern techniques allowed the usage of low-grade and refractory ores, which had previously been wasted. The world production of silver also increased, if on a much lower scale; but in these same years almost all European countries went over to a gold-standard basis. On the other hand, the production of gold, both worldwide and in the United States, began to decline after having reached a peak in 1877-78. The inevitable result of all these developments was that silver prices and the gold value of silver declined; the annual average market ratio stood at 18 to 1 in 1878.⁴

Quite naturally, the restoration of silver to its former status was soon demanded by groups which were hurt by the current monetary policy. Besides the silver miners of the West, this was especially true for the farmers. When they wanted to pay back their debts, they found that the gold dollar had become dearer in the meantime.

³"An Act revising and amending the Laws relative to the Mints, Assay-offices, and Coinage of the United States"; U. S., Statutes at Large, XVII, 424. For a discussion of the act and the background of its passage see Laughlin, op. cit., pp. 92-102; John D. Hicks, The Populist Revolt. A History of the Farmers' Alliance and the People's Party (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1931), pp. 302-3.

⁴See ibid., pp. 303-4; Laughlin, op. cit., pp. 161-75, 294; E. Benjamin Andrews, "The Monetary Conference of 1892", Political Science Quarterly, Vol. VIII, No. 2 (June, 1893), 197-8.

TABLE I

PRODUCTION OF GOLD AND SILVER, WORLDWIDE AND UNITED STATES, 1871-1885

Worldwide			U. S.	
Year	Gold	Silver	Gold	Silver
	kg	kg	fine ounces	fine ounces
1871			2,104,300	17,789,000
1872	173,904	1,969,425	1,741,500	22,244,100
1873			1,741,500	27,650,000
1874	(annual	(annual	1,620,563	28,849,000
1875	average)	average)	1,615,725	24,518,000
1876	165,956	2,323,779	1,930,162	30,009,000
1877	179,445	2,388,612	2,268,788	30,783,000
1878	185,847	2,551,364	2,476,800	34,960,000
1879	167,307	2,507,507	1,881,787	31,550,000
1880	163,515	2,479,998	1,741,500	30,320,000
1881	160,678	2,586,700	1,678,612	33,260,000
1882	153,817	2,733,100	1,572,187	36,200,000
1883	148,584	2,775,700	1,451,250	35,730,000
1884	155,748	2,910,300	1,489,950	37,800,000
1885	155,972	3,036,000	1,538,325	39,910,000

The figures for worldwide production are derived from Adolph Soetbeer and reproduced in Laughlin, op. cit., pp. 285-6. The figures for the U. S. are from "Report of the Director of the Mint on the Production of Precious Metals in the United States," printed in U. S. Bureau of Statistics, Statistical Abstract of the United States. 1901 (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1902), p. 51.

Whereas \$1,000 might have been worth 1,200 bushels of wheat at the time of contraction, the equivalent for the same amount of money might have risen to 1,500 bushels, when the debt was due. It was the creditor class which profited from the monetary system as it

existed, and the debtor class which had the worst of it. No wonder that soon a heinous conspiracy was being unveiled behind the coinage act of 1873, which became known as the "Crime of '73."⁵

A silver dollar was created again in 1878 through the Bland-Allison Act which was passed on February 28 over the veto of President Hayes.⁶ It required the Secretary of the Treasury to buy from \$2 to \$4 million worth of silver bullion each month at the market price. Yet hardly the minimum amount was bought in the following years, and the cheap silver dollar was not allowed to become the standard unit of currency. The act had only slight advantages for the silver miners, nor did the farmers profit in any way. The price of silver continued to decline, with the annual average market ratio reaching almost 20 to 1 in 1890.⁷

New currency legislation was enacted on July 14, 1890. The Sherman Silver Purchase Act⁸ ordered the Treasury to buy each month 4.5 million ounces of silver bullion at the Commercial price. In

⁵See Hicks, op. cit., pp. 304-5, quoting Ignatius Donnelly of Minnesota, one of the leading proponents of this theory.

⁶"An act to authorize the coinage of the standard silver dollar, and to restore its legal-tender character"; U. S., Statutes at Large, XX, 25.

⁷See Frank W. Taussig, The Silver Situation in the United States (reprint of 3rd ed., 1896; New York: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1969), pp. 2-8, 11-3, 18-48; also Laughlin, op. cit., pp. 211-6, 235-43, 298.

⁸"An act directing the purchase of silver bullion and the issue of Treasury notes thereon, and for other purposes"; U. S., Statutes at Large, XXVI, 289.

payment for the silver, legal tender treasury notes were to be issued, redeemable either in gold or in silver. The Sherman Act absorbed the entire domestic silver production; but only \$156 million in additional money was put into circulation in the next four years. The silver price, at \$1.21 in August, 1890, fell to 85 cents at the end of 1892.⁹ And the downward drive of the coinage ratio of silver towards gold accelerated, until it reached 33.9 to 1 in late 1894.¹⁰

Since the mid-1880's, foreign capital had poured into the United States in large quantities and had been invested in various business enterprises. These investments, however, were liquidated in growing numbers after 1890, partly due to the failure of the London banking house of Baring. Large amounts of gold were exported from the country, thus sharply reducing the specie available with which the Treasury could redeem its currency in gold. The gold reserves fell from \$190 million in early 1890 to below the \$100 million mark in April, 1893. This last amount was the mark regarded as critical by most financial experts.

There had been signs of alarm, like overspeculation, reckless investments, especially in railroads, and heavy money-borrowing on a short-term basis. With expenditures and investments continually rising, it could have been foreseen that the resources to finance all that would be exhausted one day. But the signs had been ignored.

⁹See Taussig, op. cit., pp. 49-55; Laughlin, op. cit., pp. 259-65, 299.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 294.

A general uneasiness and uncertainty about the currency situation gripped the country in the first months of 1893, and the general confidence in the monetary system was severely shaken. This latter point was regarded by many contemporaries as the most important factor causing the panic of 1893 and the subsequent depression.¹¹

Prices at the New York Stock Exchange dropped dramatically in the first days of May. By June, a run on the banks was under way, and credit was hardly to be obtained any longer. One bank failure followed another -- no less than 415 banks were forced to close their doors between January and September. Many railroads went into receiverships, including the Union Pacific, the Santa Fe and the Northern Pacific. More than 15,000 mercantile and industrial firms went bankrupt in this one year 1893. Silver miners in the West went out of business in growing numbers, until 99 out of 100 had shut down.¹²

Wages of workers had been cut occasionally in earlier years. This had happened, for example, in 1892 at the Carnegie steel plants in Homestead, Pennsylvania; and together with the refusal to grant the right of organization in unions and the calling in of Pinkerton detectives, it had led to a violent outbreak which left 13 persons

¹¹See Gilbert C. Fite and Jim E. Reese, An Economic History of the United States (2nd ed.,; Boston, New York, et al.: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965), pp. 306, 480-1; Harold U. Faulkner, Politics, Reform and Expansion, 1890-1900 ("The New American Nation Series"; New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), pp. 143-5; Taussig, op. cit., pp. 133-9; Laughlin, op. cit., pp. 273-6.

¹²See Fite and Reese, op. cit., p. 306; Hicks, op. cit., p. 310; Faulkner, op. cit., pp. 141-3.

dead at the scene. The panic and depression even aggravated the situation of the laborers. More than 500,000 workers were on strike in 1894. The most serious in a number of incidents in that year was the Pullman railway strike at Chicago, which was caused mainly by frequent wage-cuts. Federal troops were sent in to quell what had developed into a mob riot, and a dozen persons were killed, before the strike was called off.¹³

Thousands of unemployed workers marched in "industrial armies" towards Washington in 1894 to plead their cause at the seat of government. The total number of unemployed during the depression is not known; reliable estimates put it at nearly 3 million, comprising up to 20% of the total labor force, at its height.¹⁴

Agriculture in the South and the West had seen hard times well in advance of the depression of 1893. Rural wealth lagged more and more behind that of the cities. Whereas the percentage of the latter had accounted for 63% of the total wealth of the nation in 1870, it was at 72% in 1880 and at 75% in 1890.¹⁵ Many southern farmers lived under a system of peonage, being dependent upon local merchants who gave liens on prospected crops and sold necessary items of everyday life at sometimes exorbitant prices. Farm tenancy increased

¹³See ibid., pp. 132, 170-8.

¹⁴See ibid., pp. 142-3, 164-8.

¹⁵See C. F. Emerick, "An Analysis of Agricultural Discontent in the United States," Political Science Quarterly, Vol. XI, No. 3 (September, 1896), 439, explanation 440-9.

TABLE II

WAGES OR EARNINGS, ALL INDUSTRY, UNSKILLED LABOR, AND FARM LABOR
1890-1896

Year	All Industry average weekly earnings	Unskilled Labor average full-time weekly earnings	Farm Labor average weekly rate of wages
1890	\$ 12.32	\$ 8.82	\$ 4.49
1891	12.40	8.94	4.53
1892	12.51	8.88	4.58
1893	12.57	8.88	4.47
1894	12.20	8.76	4.12
1895	12.20	8.70	4.17
1896	12.33	8.76	4.24

U. S. Bureau of the Census, Historical Statistics of the United States, 1789-1945 (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1949), p. 67. In the first column, average hourly earnings have been multiplied with the average hours per week, which remained nearly unchanged.

considerably. Cotton growers were hurt by falling prices, until in the 1890's many of them operated at a loss.¹⁶

The 1880's had been a time of extraordinary expansion, investment and speculation in the West. A virtual craze for mortgages set in; in 1890 one out of two or three persons in Kansas, Nebraska, Minnesota, and the Dakotas was saddled with a mortgage. At the same time, however, prices for farm products declined, until sometimes the cost for growing grain exceeded the price obtained for it. The situation was aggravated by long droughts and chinch plagues in some

¹⁶See chapter on Southern agriculture in Hicks, op. cit., pp. 36-53; also Faulkner, op. cit., pp. 51-2, 55.

TABLE III

PRICES FOR SELECTED FARM PRODUCTS, 1881, 1885, 1890-1896

	Corn for all purposes	All Wheat for grain	Cotton	Oats for grain
Year	price per bushel	price per bushel	price per bushel	price per bushel
	Dec. 1	Dec. 1	Dec. 1	Dec. 1
1881	\$ 0.628	\$ 1.196	\$ 1.066	\$ 0.455
1885	0.322	0.772	0.839	0.279
1890	0.496	0.837	0.859	0.417
1891	0.398	0.831	0.724	0.306
1892	0.393	0.624	0.834	0.315
1893	0.361	0.534	0.700	0.289
1894	0.451	0.489	0.459	0.320
1895	0.252	0.505	0.762	0.193
1896	0.214	0.721	0.666	0.183

U. S. Bureau of the Census, Historical Statistics of the United States, 1789-1945, pp. 106-8. Prices are those actually received by the farmers.

Western states after 1887. Partial crop failures in some areas in 1893 were followed by almost total failures in the next year. By then the situation of many farmers in the West as well as cotton growers and farmers in the South had become truly desperate. Small businessmen, country merchants, and dependent customers followed them into ruin. More mortgages were foreclosed, and more debts accumulated, which had to be paid back in ever dearer dollars.¹⁷

¹⁷See Hallie Farmer, "The Economic Background of Frontier Populism," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, Vol. X, No. 4, (March, 1924), 406-22; Faulkner, op. cit. pp. 52-4; Hicks, op. cit., pp. 309-10.

To return shortly to the currency legislation: President Cleveland and the lawmakers in Washington acted in a way which was certain to rouse the ire of the hard-hit West and South. Called into special session, Congress repealed the Sherman Act on November 1 by a bi-partisan majority consisting mainly of legislators from the East.¹⁸

THE NATIONAL SILVER PARTY

The mood which gripped many Americans in 1893 was well expressed by a correspondent of Nebraska Senator Allen:

Never in the history of our Republic has there been so much anxiety made manifest in the minds of the whole people as at the present hour, and in the intensity of sentiment men are running hither and thither to catch onto a ray of hope. This is a life or death struggle for our Republic.¹⁹

In bimetallism and the free coinage of silver at a ratio of 16 to 1, a fast-growing number of Americans saw such a ray of hope. A national organization lobbying for the cause of free silver had been set up as early as 1889 on occasion of a conference at St. Louis; General A. J. Warner of Ohio served as chairman. Organization was perfected in May, 1892, at Washington, D. C., and the name

¹⁸"An Act To repeal a part of an act, approved July fourteenth, eighteen hundred and ninety, entitled 'An act directing the purchase of silver bullion and the issue of Treasury notes thereon, and for other purposes'; U. S., Statutes at Large, XXVIII, 4. For discussion see Laughlin, op. cit., pp. 276-7; Hicks, op. cit., pp. 311-2.

¹⁹John Batie to William V. Allen, Aug. 9, 1893, quoted in ibid., p. 310.

American Bimetallic League was chosen.²⁰ It was in the wake of the panic and depression of 1893 that the demand for free silver became a mass movement. An unsympathetic observer gave the following description:

It was a fanaticism like the Crusades. Indeed, the delusion that was working on the people took the form of religious frenzy. Sacred hymns were torn from their pious tunes to give place to works which deified the cause and made gold -- and all its symbols, capital, wealth, plutocracy -- diabolical. At night, from ten thousand white little schoolhouse windows, lights twinkled back vain hope to the stars. For the thousands who assembled under the schoolhouse lamps believed that when their legislature met and their governor was elected, the millennium would come by proclamation. They sang their barbaric songs in unrhythmic jargon, with something of the same mad faith that inspired the martyrs going to the stake. Far into the night the voices rose -- women's voices, childrens' voices, the voices of old men, of youths and of maidens, rose on the ebbing prairie breezes, as the crusaders of the revolution rode home, praising the people's will as though it were God's will, and cursing wealth for its inequity. It was a season of shibboleths and fetiches and slogans. Reason slept; and the passions -- jealousy, covetousness, hatred -- ran amuck; and whoever would check them was crucified in public contumely.²¹

In Oregon the frenzy was certainly not as marked as described in this paragraph which was written with special reference to the Midwestern states. But the cause won numerous adherents in that state as well. A first branch of the American Bimetallic League was founded in Portland in April, 1893, by attorney Glen O. Holman.

²⁰See William J. Bryan, The First Battle. A Story of the Campaign of 1896 (Chicago: W. B. Conkey Company, 1896), p. 153.

²¹William Allen White, quoted without source in Mark Sullivan, Our Times. The United States, 1900-1925, Vol. I: The Turn of the Century (New York and London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926), pp. 180-1.

The state was represented at the St. Louis convention in October of the same year, if only by one delegate. The league was established on a state-wide basis in Oregon in February, 1894. About 300 delegates were in attendance and drew up a free-silver platform. The League was essentially non-partisan, and no need to foreswear existing party affiliations was felt at that time; however, the possibility to do so was left open, pending future developments.²²

The forming of an independent silver party on the national level was being contemplated during the autumn of 1894 and principally agreed upon on occasion of a series of closed-door meetings, held in Washington, D. C., between February 22 and March 5, 1895. William J. Bryan, one of the vice-presidents of the League, and Senators Henry M. Teller of Colorado and William M. Stewart of Nevada participated in these meetings. It was decided to set up a tentative political organization for the states and territories and to form a national executive committee.²³

Such a committee must have been founded some time later, but not much else seems to have been done in the following months for the

²²See Joan Cross, The Populist Movement in Oregon (Master's Thesis; Salt Lake City: University of Utah, 1962), pp. 113-4; Cross erroneously states that the League on the national level had been started in February, 1892. See also Marion Harrington, The Populist Movement in Oregon, 1889-1896 (Masters Thesis; Eugene: University of Oregon, 1935), pp. 69-70.

²³See Paul M. Glad, McKinley, Bryan, and the People ("Critical Periods of History"; Philadelphia and New York: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1964), pp. 118-20; Stanley L. Jones, The Presidential Election of 1896 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), p. 31.

realization of the Washington plans. Towards the end of the year, however, activities were revitalized. On January 22 and 23, 1896, a conference, meeting again in Washington, reached an agreement that two new organizations should be set up: a non-political educational organization under General Warner, to be called American Bimetallic Union, and a political party, officially The American Silver Organization, referred to and known as National Silver Party. Dr. J. J. Mott of North Carolina was elected chairman of the provisional national committee of the new party. A lengthy resolution, probably from the pen of Nevada Senator John P. Jones, was also passed by the meeting.

Free silver, however, was only one in a whole series of demands raised by the populists, and it was believed that both the Democratic and the Republican Party would continue to be committed to the gold standard. So the delegates, in the hope of rallying all disgruntled free-silver elements in their new party, decided to hold their own national convention. It was scheduled to meet at St. Louis on July 22. Delegates were apportioned, with Oregon being entitled to a number of seventeen. The People's Party, represented by an observatory

committee, then called its own national convention for the same date and place, so as to ensure a maximum of cooperation.²⁴

The Republican Party was the first of the major parties to hold its national convention in 1896; it was scheduled to meet at St. Louis on June 16. In the preceding months Free-silver Republicans hotly debated the question whether they should bolt if the convention would declare for the maintenance of the single gold standard. Senator Teller assumed the unofficial leadership of this group, and towards the end of April he announced that he would indeed leave his party in such a case.²⁵

Some insurgent Republicans, southern Democrats, Populists, and representatives of the National Silver Party held several closed-door meetings during the spring and obviously arrived at some sort of agreement. The Insurgents would bolt at St. Louis and organize a Silver Republican Party; then an attempt would be made at the Chicago Democratic national convention in July to secure the presidential nomination for Teller. But whether this plan would succeed or not, at any rate Teller should be nominated by the People's and the National

²⁴For the last two paragraphs see ibid., pp. 86-7; Glad, op. cit., pp. 125-7; The Oregonian, Jan. 23, 1896, p. 1, and Jan. 24, p. 2. See also Elmer Ellis, "The Silver Republicans in the Election of 1896," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, Vol. XVIII, No. 4 (March, 1932), 521; Ellis gives the impression here that the populists first decided upon the date and place of their national convention, and the National Silver Party then concurred. This seems to be an error. There was, and still is, a good deal of confusion about the various silver organizations; see for example the short and partly inaccurate account in Bryan, op. cit., pp. 163-4.

²⁵See Jones, op. cit., pp. 97-8.

Silver Parties at St. Louis. As a result, pending the Democratic decision, either two or three major candidates would be in the field on November 3.²⁶

The first part of this plan was realized, when defeated free-silverites, led by Senators Teller and Frank Cannon of Utah, bolted the Republican national convention on June 18. The skeleton of the proposed new party was set up one day later, and an address was issued in which the nomination of Teller was urged to all free-silver forces. A similar call was issued by the representatives of the Populist Party present at St. Louis; party chairman Herman E. Taubeneck was among the signers and thus the address was given an official semblance.²⁷

Immediately after the Republican convention, the various free-silver groups began their campaign to persuade the Democrats to nominate Teller. The American Bimetallic Union and the National Silver Party joined in these efforts. Their interest, however, was more in the issue and not in the person of the Colorado Senator; if the Democrats would nominate a candidate from their own ranks, he would be acceptable, if only he supported the common cause.²⁸

When the Democrats chose Bryan and adopted a free-silver platform at Chicago in July, they left the promoters of the Teller

²⁶See Ellis, loc. cit., pp. 524-5.

²⁷See Jones, op. cit., pp. 171-3, 208-9; The Oregonian, June 20, 1896, pp. 1 and 2, and June 21, pp. 1 and 2. The address by Silver Republicans is printed in Bryan, op. cit., pp. 178-81.

²⁸See Jones, op. cit., p. 209.

candidacy in a rather puzzled state -- except for the leaders of the National Silver Party. They made it known immediately that their organization and affiliates would support the ticket of Bryan and Arthur Sewall.²⁹ The Colorado Senator himself, as well as a number of other leading Silver Republicans, soon joined in this course. Their followers found it difficult to accept their advice, but finally accepted it, reluctant though they were. The Populists were torn in factions about whom to nominate; Teller again used his influence to draw them into the Bryan camp.³⁰

The National Silver Party had quietly built an organization in the various states. But the outcome of the Democratic national convention rendered it well-nigh superfluous. Its main purpose now was to work for Bryan in the coming campaign, and The Oregonian hinted -- certainly not without any foundation -- that it might later even be absorbed either by the Democratic or the Populist Party.³¹

Nevertheless, the St. Louis convention was held as scheduled. It was hardly taken notice of. William P. St. John of New York, who was also treasurer of the Democratic Party, was elected permanent chairman. The delegates nominated Bryan and Sewall for president and vice-president and issued a platform dealing almost exclusively with financial and other economic problems. On the third day the

²⁹See ibid., p. 244; The Oregonian, July 11, 1896, p. 3.

³⁰See ibid., p. 244; July 19, 1896, p. 1, and July 21, p. 2; Jones, op. cit., pp. 244-9; Ellis, loc. cit., pp. 526-32; Bryan, op. cit., pp. 182-7.

³¹July 11, 1896, p. 3, and July 21, p. 1.

proposed conference committee with the Populists met, but did not achieve a common platform.³² The convention also took a poll of its delegates -- maybe to focus at least some attention on it -- and released their former party affiliations: the result was 528 Republicans, 134 Democrats, 47 Populists, 12 Independents, 9 Prohibitionists, and 1 former Greenbacker.³³

The National Silver Party retained the skeleton of an independent organization, probably because it could thus be more useful in the coming campaign and prevent its members from drifting back to the old parties. Charles D. Lane of California became party chairman, and A. Hofer of Salem represented Oregon in the national committee.³⁴ In Chicago and Washington headquarters for the presidential campaign were opened, and a very close liaison was being kept with both Democrats and Populists. Western silver miners lavishly funded the party which issued about 10 million pieces of campaign propaganda and organized speaking tours of prominent free-silver advocates. Besides, about

³²See The Oregonian, July 23, pp. 1 and 2; July 24, pp. 1 and 2 ("Might As Well Quit"); July 25, p. 2 ("Its Time Was Wasted"). Also Jones, op. cit., pp. 262-3, 391-2 n. 68; Bryan, op. cit., pp. 238-58, with text of the platform and of several speeches. The platform is also in Donald B. Johnson and Kirk H. Porter (comps.), National Party Platforms, 1840-1972 (Urbana, Chicago, and London: University of Illinois Press, 1973), pp. 103-4. It is interesting to note that one platform paragraph, the appeal to the people to step outside old party lines, is almost word by word identical with a corresponding paragraph in the platform of the Union Party of Oregon, adopted July 9: See below, p. 48-9.

³³Jones, op. cit., p. 263; Bryan, op. cit., p. 252, gives slightly different figures.

³⁴See Bryan, op. cit., p. 290.

5,000 silver clubs were established throughout the country. In Chicago, it may finally be noted, a Women's National Silver League was founded as an auxiliary organization.³⁵

THE MEANING OF "FREE COINAGE OF SILVER" AND "BIMETALLISM"

In the discussion about bimetallism and the free coinage of silver at a ratio of 16 to 1 hardly one argument imaginable, either in favor or disapproving, was left undiscussed. From the flood of material a few basic points may be called to attention here.

Free coinage of silver at a ratio of 16 to 1 meant that any person having 412½ ounces of silver, which in 1896 he could buy at a market price of 53 cents, could take this amount of silver to the mint and have it converted into a coin which had a value of one dollar in currency and was a full legal tender for the amount of one dollar in the payment for all debts, public as well as private.³⁶

Bimetallism can be defined in the following way:

Bimetallism is the concurrent use of the coins of the two metals, gold and silver, at a fixed relative value, as the standard of all other values, each metal being equally a legal tender for any amount. Under a bimetallic system the paper currency is a promise to pay either gold or silver at the option of the payer, and any debtor may pay his debt in either metal as he may choose.³⁷

³⁵Ibid., p. 292, giving a figure of 8 million pieces of propaganda; see also Jones, op. cit., p. 329-30.

³⁶Lyman Abbott, "A Summing-Up of the Vital Issues of 1896," The Review of Reviews. An International Magazine, Vol. XIV, No. 5 (November, 1896), 546.

³⁷Ibid., p. 545.

Free-silver advocates pointed to the considerable increase in population worldwide and in the United States, and to the fact that the businesses of the commercial nations had grown rapidly both in volume and in expedition. This multiplication of business transactions required a commensurate multiplication of the currency; but gold was too scarce and could simply not provide that.³⁸

Some hoped that a bimetallic standard would eventually be agreed upon on an international basis; even many gold monometallists could have accepted that. But such an international accord had not been achieved in 20 years, because Great Britain stubbornly refused to consent and the other European nations would not act without British concurrence.³⁹ Most American bimetallicists, therefore, were not willing to wait any longer, but favored independent American action. Resentment against Great Britain and the East coast interests and a rather curious form of patriotism were brought into discussion in this context.

Suppose we try to bring her [Great Britain] to terms by action. Let me appeal to your patriotism. Shall we make our laws dependent upon England's action and thus allow her to legislate for us upon the most important of all questions? Shall we confess our inability to enact monetary laws? Are we an English colony or an independent people? If the use of gold alone is to make us slaves, let us use both metals and be free. . . . I do not overestimate when I say that out of twelve millions of voters more than ten millions are waiting, anxiously waiting,

³⁸See ibid., pp. 544-6.

³⁹See E. Benjamin Andrews, "The Monetary Conference of 1892," loc. cit., pp. 204, 209-18.

for the signal which shall announce the financial independence of the United States. This Congress can not more surely win the approval of a grateful people than by declaring that this nation, the grandest which the world has ever seen, has the right and the ability to legislate for its own people on every subject regardless of the wishes, the entreaties, or the threats of foreign powers.⁴⁰

As was seen earlier, the debtor class had been severely hurt, because the dollar had lost considerably in purchasing power, and was thus "dishonest." An "honest" dollar, on the other hand, would keep its purchasing power as nearly as possible stable at all times:

A dollar approaches honesty as its purchasing power approaches stability. If I borrow a thousand dollars to-day and next year pay the debt with a thousand dollars which will secure exactly as much of all things desirable as the one thousand which I borrowed, I have paid in honest dollars.⁴¹

Since the value of the currency depended upon the volume of the money available, subject to the laws of supply and demand, an honest dollar could best be achieved if the money volume would be changed accordingly. Bimetallism was the best method to secure this crucial proportion:

In bimetallism the volume of money is derived from two sources -- the gold mines and the silver mines. Sometimes the gold mines increase in production, sometimes the silver mines do. But if the volume of money is fed from two sources, that volume is less changeable, and the value of the dollar is less

⁴⁰ William J. Bryan before the U. S. House of Representatives, Aug. 16, 1893; U. S. Congress, Congressional Record, 53 Cong., 3rd Sess., Vol. XXV, Part I, p. 405.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 401.

fluctuating than if the volume of the money is fed from one source, whether it be gold or silver.⁴²

The decline of farm prices was often attributed to the appreciation of gold. A depreciated and inflationary currency was believed to be in the interest of the farmer. It would lighten the burden of his debts and lead to increased farm prices and eventually to a better standard of living.⁴³ This latter point was so much taken for granted that it was hardly mentioned at all, let alone discussed in detail.

A hotly debated question was whether the laborers and wage-earners would also benefit from free coinage and bimetallism. The affirmative view ran, roughly, as follows: free and unlimited coinage of silver would lead to higher commodity prices and to higher business profits, as well as to more new enterprises and industries. Then more jobs could be created. With the demand for labor going up and the supply decreasing, wages would rise. Certainly the increase in earnings, leading to a heavier demand for goods, would also drive prices up; but it was firmly believed that prices would lag far

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William J. Bryan at Lebanon, Oregon, July 12, 1897; quoted from The Oregonian, July 13, 1897, p. 8.

⁴³See C. F. Emerick, "An Analysis of Agricultural Discontent in the United States," Political Science Quarterly, Vol. XI, No. 4 (December, 1896), 625-7, 629-32.

behind the increase in wages, and thus laborers and wage-earners would benefit.⁴⁴

The advocates of the single gold standard of course rejected all these beliefs. Their main objection seemed to be that silver would simply not be able to hold a parity with gold. For such a parity, the concurrence of other commercial nations would be necessary. However, more than three quarters of the foreign trade of the United States in 1896 was done with nations on a gold standard basis, and there was no sign whatever that an international agreement on bimetallism would be accomplished in the foreseeable future. It was feared that the gold reserves of the country would one day be absorbed, and the United States would become a silver monometallic country. In dealings with foreign nations, the country would be forced to use their medium of exchange. Ultimately, two prices would be established: a higher one for all imported articles, and a lower one for domestic articles.⁴⁵

Less and inferior money would be the ultimate consequence of free coinage. How could the farmers, how could the country at large ever become prosperous again on such a basis? Gold standard advocates predicted that free coinage would cause another financial panic, the destruction of credit, the stoppage of industry. They liked to cite

⁴⁴See Charles B. Spahr, "Would Free Coinage Benefit Wage Earners?," I. The Affirmative View, The Review of Reviews, Vol. XIV, No. 5 (November, 1896), 560-2; also The Oregonian, Sept. 9, 1897, p. 4; Ashland Valley Record, Oct. 29, 1897.

⁴⁵See arguments by sound-money Democrats, printed in The Oregonian, Oct. 24, 1896, p. 10; see also Abbott, loc. cit., pp. 545-7.

historical evidence that prices formerly climbed faster than wages; the standard of living would thus be reduced in the future also. It was furthermore denied that unemployment was due to monometallism; to the contrary, under the free and unlimited coinage of silver the unemployment rate was believed to increase even more. Instead of benefitting from such a system, labor would receive a crippling stroke.

But not only the wage-earners would suffer. Businessmen would be brought to the verge of ruin. Farmers would find that the higher prices for their products would be offset by even higher prices for other commodities. Not even the debtor would profit, because foreclosures of mortgages, increased interest rates and the diminution of income had to be reckoned with.⁴⁶

Doubtlessly the debtor class had severely suffered in the time when the gold dollar became ever dearer. Under the free coinage of silver the creditor class would be robbed instead. But could an old injustice be made good by another injustice?⁴⁷

Even in case the free coinage would double the value of silver, as was claimed, gold-standard advocates -- usually referred to as "gold bugs" by their opponents -- had one final objection:

⁴⁶See Richmond Mayo-Smith, "Would Free Coinage Benefit Wage-Earners?," II. The Negative View, The Review of Reviews, Vol. XIV, No. 5 (November, 1896), 562-4; idem, "Free Silver and Wages," Political Science Quarterly, Vol. XI, No. 3 (September, 1896), 464-77.

⁴⁷See Abbott, loc. cit., p. 547.

It is class legislation and favoritism of the most obnoxious character. If it has the advantages claimed for it, they inure immediately and chiefly to the owner of the silver mine and the silver bullion. It gives him an unearned advantage, and an important one, over his neighbor who has no mine or no bullion. It doubles his property. It is not equality, and therefore not democracy.⁴⁸

THE DEMAND FOR DIRECT LEGISLATION

The economic hardships which were inflicted upon groups like farmers, laborers, or small businessmen in the 1880's or early 1890's, quite naturally led to a wide-spread belief that "evil classes" -- manufacturers, trusts, bankers, railroads, middlemen, money-lenders, and others -- were at work here, depriving hard-working and honest people of the just remuneration of their endeavors to further their own selfish cause. As Ignatius Donnelly put it:

The fruits of the toil of millions are boldly stolen to build up colossal fortunes for a few, unprecedented in the history of mankind; and the possessors of these, in turn despise the Republic and endanger liberty. From the prolific womb of governmental injustice we breed the two great classes -- tramps and millionaires.⁴⁹

But how could the evils be rectified? Since the Director of the Census had declared the closing of the frontier in 1890, the safety-valve of free land somewhere along the frontier, giving a man a new chance in life, seemed to have passed. Americans became more

⁴⁸Arguments by sound-money Democrats, printed in The Oregonian, Oct. 24, 1896, p. 10.

⁴⁹Preamble to 1892 People's Party platform, quoted from Johnson and Porter, op. cit., p. 90.

alert to the wealth of others and asked themselves with increasing frequency how such fortunes had been acquired. "The end of free land," wrote Sullivan, "was the beginning of those political issues which had to do, in one form or another, with 'dividing up,' or with curbing those who had much."⁵⁰

More and more, reformers turned to the government for redress of their demands; through regulations and controls the selfish interests of the few had to be checked. Government, however, had fallen to an alarming degree into the hands of corrupt lawmakers and bureaucrats. In some states the railroads owned legislatures and dictated laws.⁵¹ None of the two great parties seemed capable of reform. To quote Donnelly again:

Corruption dominates the ballot-box, the Legislatures, the Congress, and touches even the ermine of the bench. The people are demoralized; most of the States have been compelled to isolate the voters at the polling places to prevent universal intimidation and bribery. . . .

We have witnessed for more than a quarter of a century the struggles of the two great political parties for power and plunder, while grievous wrongs have been inflicted upon the suffering people. We charge that the controlling influence[s] dominating both these parties have permitted the existing dreadful conditions to develop without serious effort to prevent or restrain them. Neither do they now promise any substantial reform.⁵²

Before any reforms could be achieved, it was therefore necessary to give the people control of their government again. Among the

⁵⁰Op. cit., pp. 141-2, 147-50; quote p. 148.

⁵¹See Farmer, loc. cit., pp. 424-5; Hicks, op. cit., p. 405.

⁵²Preamble to 1892 national platform, quoted from Johnson and Porter, op. cit., pp, 89, 90.

various measures proposed -- Australian, or secret ballot; direct election of U. S. Senators, President and Vice-president; direct nominating primaries; recall of officers -- one will be singled out here, because it will play a role in the further course of this paper: the demand for direct legislation through the initiative and referendum. Mentioned by the Populists in a resolution, which was not part of the platform, in 1892, it was included in their platform of 1896 and taken up in the same year by the National Party (Prohibitionists) and the Socialist Labor Party.⁵³

Oregon had the reputation of possessing quite corrupt and inefficient governments; the legislative body here was often organized in the interests of big corporations, especially railroads and timber companies. The Portland law firm of John H. Mitchell, Joseph N. Dolph, and Joseph Simon won special notoriety in that respect; Weinstein calls it "the virtual headquarters for state government."⁵⁴

Initiative and referendum were advocated in Oregon in newspaper articles as early as 1884-86.⁵⁵ Since the early 1890's an earnest move for the enactment of these measures was undertaken, with William

⁵³See ibid., pp. 101, 105, and 111; Hicks, op. cit., p. 444.

⁵⁴Esther G. Weinstein, William Simon U'Ren: A Study of Persistence in Political Reform (Doctoral dissertation; Syracuse, N. Y.: Syracuse University, 1967), p. 14, examples pp. 14-5. See also Cecil T. Thompson, The Origin of Direct Legislation in Oregon (Master's Thesis; Eugene: University of Oregon, 1929), p. 15, passim; Lincoln Steffens, "U'Ren, the Law-Giver," The American Magazine, Vol. LXV, No. 5 (March, 1908), 527, 534; Scott W. Reed, W. S. U'Ren and the Oregon System (A. B. Thesis; Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University, 1950), pp. 10-3.

⁵⁵See Weinstein, op. cit., pp. 13-4.

S. U'Ren as mastermind. U'Ren had been born in Wisconsin in 1859.

A blacksmith by trade, he turned to the law and practiced in Colorado from 1881 to 1887. Via Hawaii and California he came to Oregon in 1889 and settled finally at Milwaukie, where he became closely associated with the Luelling family and the Oregon Farmers' Alliance.⁵⁶

In 1892 there appeared a book by J. W. Sullivan on the initiative and referendum in Switzerland, in which the author arrived at the following conclusion:

Before any project of social reconstruction can be followed out to the end, there stands a question antecedent to every other. It is the abolition of the lawmaking monopoly. Until that monopoly is ended, no law favorable to the masses can be secure. Direct legislation would destroy this parent of monopoly. It gone -- class rule, ring rule, extravagance, jobbery, nepotism, the spoils system, every jot of the professional trading politician's influence.⁵⁷

Inspired by the reading of this book, the Milwaukie group associated with the Farmers' Alliance sent out invitations to other reform-minded groups, and in November, 1892, a Direct Legislation League was founded. The committee which was chosen consisted of U'Ren as secretary and representative of the Farmers' Alliance,

⁵⁶See ibid., pp. 1-10, with numerous references. Steffens, loc. cit., furnishes some details, but is not specific about dates. Robert C. Woodward, William Simon U'Ren: In an Age of Protest (Masters Thesis; Eugene: University of Oregon, 1956), covers the same subject from basically the same sources, but is less extensive.

⁵⁷J. W. Sullivan, Direct Legislation by the Citizenship through the Initiative and Referendum (New York: Twentieth Century Publishing Co., 1892), p. 100, quoted from Thomas C. McClintock, "Seth Lewelling, William S. U'Ren and the Birth of the Oregon Progressive Movement," Oregon Historical Quarterly, Vol. LXVIII, No. 3 (September, 1967), 206. Note the difference in the spelling of the name Luelling.

William S. Vanderburg of the Knights of Labor, A. I. Mason of the Portland Federated Trades, and Judge William D. Hare of the State Grange.⁵⁸

Initiative and referendum were indorsed and included in the 1894 state platforms of the Democratic and the Populist Party. On April 12 of the same year, an Initiative and Referendum League was founded at Oregon City. R. Scott was chosen president, Alfred Luelling secretary, and U'Ren lecturer.⁵⁹

In spite of an intensive lobbying effort by the I and R League -- as it was often referred to -- the legislature of 1895 failed by one vote each to call a constitutional convention for the purpose of inserting the initiative and referendum into the Oregon constitution. It was then that U'Ren decided to pursue a different course: the measure would instead be brought before two consecutive legislatures for adoption, and would then be submitted to the people for a final and decisive vote.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ The date November, 1892, is based on U'Ren's own account, as given to Joseph Gaston; see his Portland, Oregon. Its History and Builders (3 Vols.; Chicago and Portland: S. J. Clark Publishing Co., 1911), I, 565-6. Thompson, op. cit., pp. 25-6, reports about an interview with Mrs. S. Luelling, giving spring of 1891 as founding date; this must be an error of memory. Erroneous is also McClintock, loc. cit., p. 207, giving early 1893 as founding date.

⁵⁹ See The Oregonian, March 16, 1894, p. 6, and April 18, p. 3; the paper does not report about the founding of the I and R League. For that point see Thompson, op. cit., pp. 38-9, who is, however, not quite correct with the dates here.

⁶⁰ See Weinstein, op. cit., pp. 18-9; Thompson, op. cit., pp. 50-2; Steffens, loc. cit., pp. 533-4.

CHAPTER II

ORIGIN AND FORMATION OF THE UNION BIMETALLIC PARTY OF OREGON

(FEBRUARY-JULY, 1896)

THE SPLIT IN THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

The money question split the political parties on the local, state, and national level. The Republican Party of Oregon was no exception to this rule. The 1896 state convention was held in Portland on April 9 and 10, and it brought the differences clearly to the fore. Two rival factions from Multnomah County demanded to be seated; after a heated debate, the convention solved the problem by admitting half of both of them. By a vote of 129 to 108, the following financial plank, taken from the national platform of 1892, was adopted:

The American people, from tradition and interest, favor bimetallism, and the republican party demands the use of both gold and silver as standard money, with such restrictions and under such provisions, to be determined by legislation, as will secure a maintenance of the parity of values of the two metals, so that the purchasing and debt-paying power of the dollar, whether of silver, gold or paper, shall be at all times equal. The interests of the producers of the country -- its farmers and its workingmen -- demand that every dollar, paper or coin, issued by the government, shall be as good as any other dollar.¹

¹Johnson and Porter, op. cit., p. 93. The Oregonian has a detailed account about the proceedings of the convention, April 10, pp. 1 and 8, April 11, pp. 1 and 9.

This plank could not deceive the free-silver champions in the party, who insisted on a clear endorsement of the free coinage at a ratio of 16 to 1. Insofar the platform was unacceptable to them. Many members of the minority faction were not ready to concede defeat, however, but determined to put principle above party in this particular case.

On April 23, 1896, free-silverites of the Republican Party of Multnomah County filed a separate ticket for the June 1 state elections under the name "Mitchell republicans."² This name referred to U. S. Senator John H. Mitchell, one of the most controversial figures in Oregon politics in the 19th century. The former state senator (he served from 1862 to 1866) and Portland attorney had been a member of the U. S. Senate from 1873 to 1879 and again since December, 1885. He was an advocate of free silver and pleaded for this doctrine on the Senate floor.³ His current term was to expire on March 3, 1897; the next state legislature would thus have to elect a senator for the term from March 4, 1897 to March 3, 1903.

It was the main goal of the Mitchell Republicans to help elect free-silver advocates to the next state legislature, so as to ensure

²Ibid., April 24, p. 10. About the divisions in the Republican Party of Multnomah County see ibid., May 14, p. 4; May 29, p. 4.

³For biographical notes about Mitchell see Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1971 (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1971), p. 1420; Robert C. Clark in Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone (eds.), Dictionary of American Biography (20 Vols.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1946), XIII, 53-4; Gaston, Portland, Oregon. Its History and Builders, I, 560-2. For a free-silver speech see U. S. Congress, Congressional Record, 54 Cong., 1 Sess., Vol. XXVIII, Part II, pp. 1106-14.

the reelection of Mitchell against a gold candidate. For this purpose they were willing to enter into local alliances with Silver Democrats and Populists. To all Silver Republicans who allied themselves with like-minded from the other parties, the term "Mitchell Republicans" was being applied. The ardently gold-standard Oregonian saw in this alliances nothing but the desire of the free-silverites to parcel out among themselves all federal office positions in the state, after their candidate had been reelected. Then they would also be able to capture state and even county and municipal positions as well.⁴

The Mitchell Republicans cooperated especially with the Populists. The latter had their own selfish purposes, however, for entering into any such alliance. As John C. Young, the state central committee chairman, put it quite bluntly: They would vote for Mitchell to succeed himself, if they did not get a majority in the next state legislature; otherwise, they would elect one of their own, unless Mitchell formally joined the People's Party.⁵

THE FORMATION OF THE UNION BIMETALLIC PARTY

As elsewhere, the Republican Party of Yamhill County was irreparably split over the money question. Sound-money advocates were in charge of the party organization here; silverites were not wanted

⁴May 14, p. 4.

⁵Ibid., May 18, p. 8.

and were to be excluded from the coming county convention by scratching their names from the lists of possible candidates.⁶

The precinct primaries for the county convention were held on March 21 and brought the differences clearly out into the open. One center of the storm was North Sheridan; here the silver forces won by a vote of 47 to 23, and the defeated gold candidates bolted the precinct convention and retired to another room. "There was more strife between the republican factions," wrote The Oregonian, "than was ever before known in this section."⁷ In McMinnville the "desperate attempts" of the silverites were "gloriously foiled," and the paper was confident that "the conservative and stalwart element of the republican party is yet in the majority in this county."⁸

One day before the county convention it was reported that a gold victory was doubtful, but probable. And the gold forces won indeed. Two rival delegations had been sent from North Sheridan, and by a vote of 67 to 59 the gold delegation was seated. The rebuked silverites under Henry G. Guild and some like-minded delegates from other precincts then walked out.⁹

⁶McMinnville Telephone-Register, Feb. 13.

⁷March 22, p. 6; see also Telephone-Register, March 19.

⁸March 24, p. 3; see also Telephone-Register, March 26.

⁹See ibid., April 2; The Oregonian, March 27, p. 3, and March 29, p. 2; Republican League Register. A Record of the Republican Party in the State of Oregon (Portland: The Register Publishing Co., 1896), p. 138.

It seems as if Guild played a major role in the formation of the Union Bimetallic Party, although this cannot be supported by any clear evidence. Guild had been born in Illinois in 1855 and had worked as a typesetter for the Grinnell (Iowa) Herald, before he came to Oregon in 1873 and settled at Cornelius. He worked for the Washington Independent, established the Silverton Appeal in 1880, and in 1892 bought the Sheridan Sun. Guild was a delegate to the Republican state conventions of 1882 (from Marion County) and 1894 (from Yamhill County). In the latter year he was elected to the state legislature as joint representative of Tillamook and Yamhill Counties.¹⁰ After he had been rebuked at the state convention, he could no longer hope to be renominated, and this fact may have prompted him to look for support and votes outside the regular Republican organization.

On April 5, 1896, The Oregonian contained a short note that recently an attempt had been made in Sheridan to launch a new party.¹¹ On April 8, a new party was founded at McMinnville: The Union Bimetallic Party. It was hardly taken notice of at all. Not even the local weekly paper, the Telephone-Register, reported about the founding convention. It did, however, speculate about the purposes and motives of the party founders, as did The Oregonian.

¹⁰ See ibid., pp. 44, 53, 84 and Appendix 2. A short sketch of Guild is in Joseph Gaston, The Centennial History of Oregon, 1811-1912 (4 Vols.; Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1912), III, 709-10.

¹¹p. 3.

The leading spirits behind the movement were obviously Free-Silver Republicans. But representatives of both the Democratic and the People's Party must also have been present. The new party was seen as a move to further the selfish interests of some local leaders.¹² J. C. Cooper, a Silver Republican and prominent citizen of McMinnville, and Charles Grissen, who is not to be identified, were suspected of having an eye on the state legislature. Both did not run on June 1; but H. G. Guild was later nominated and elected. The party was also seen as being in the interests of U. S. Representative Binger Hermann, who was fighting for renomination, and of Senator John H. Mitchell.¹³

E. J. Wood, chairman of the Populist county central committee, was elected temporary chairman of the Union Bimetallic Party. Whether he was authorized by his party to take over a leading role in the new organization, and to what extent other populists did participate, is not to be determined from the meager sources available. The same is true for the Democrats. They had adjourned their county convention on March 28 without nominating a ticket; obviously, they wanted to wait for the outcome of the struggles within the rival Republican organization.¹⁴

¹²See letter by T. V. B. Embree to The Oregonian, June 18, 1897, p. 7. Embree was a disgruntled Populist; he charged the leaders of the movement with personal ambition and desire for retaliation.

¹³For these speculations see Telephone-Register, April 9, May 7; also The Oregonian, May 27, p. 4.

¹⁴See ibid., March 29, p. 2; Telephone-Register, April 2 and 16.

The Telephone-Register, a Democratic paper, seemed to have been consulted about the formation of the new party. The paper complained that the Democrats had not nominated their own ticket; in that case, they would have been able to break the Republicans wide open, and honest Silver Republicans would have voted Democratic on June 1. Now it was too late; but the Union Bimetallic Party was destined to die after the elections, anyway.¹⁵

One gets the strong impression that all three elements -- Silver Republicans, Democrats, and Populists -- regarded the new party as a convenient vehicle to further their own influence within the free-silver movement in Yamhill County. The common desire to defeat the goldbugs led and held them together in a united organization, which alone promised the chance of victory.¹⁶ And such a victory was the more to be desired in the face of the current Republican county administration. As the local paper observed, the county officers seemed to believe that the offices belonged to them by divine right. The Republicans were accused of gathering all good things in the county for themselves; Republican businesses were favorably patronized and Republicans preferred in biddings for contracts. The taxpayer here, wrote the paper, was simply a means of keeping the Republican county administration in good running.¹⁷

¹⁵April 30, May 7, and May 21.

¹⁶See The Oregonian, May 2, p. 4.

¹⁷Telephone-Register, May 21.

THE UNION BIMETALLIC CONVENTION OF APRIL 18, 1896

On April 16, precinct primaries for a county convention of the Union Bimetallic Party were held. Interest was lively. The Oregonian observed: "Men grown gray in the service of the old parties attended. Free silver was the rallying cry."¹⁸

The convention convened two days later at McMinnville. Delegates from about 20 precincts were present. They endorsed some nominations made earlier for the June 1 elections by other parties: William S. Vanderburg, Populist, for U. S. Representative, second district; John Gill, Populist, for joint representative of the Oregon House; and S. L. Hayden, Democrat, for district attorney. O. C. Emery and Henry G. Guild were nominated for representatives from Yamhill County. A full slate of candidates for the county offices of sheriff, clerk, recorder, treasurer, commissioner, assessor, superintendent of schools, surveyor, and coroner was set up. The old party affiliations were dropped, and all candidates were designated as running for the Union Bimetallic Party. The convention also named J. C. Cooper delegate to the National Silver Party convention, July 22 at St. Louis.¹⁹

Besides these nominations, the delegates adopted a platform for their party. It read as follows:

¹⁸April 17, p. 3.

¹⁹See Telephone-Register, April 23. The National Silver Party convention is here referred to as "bimetallic conference."

We, the voters of the commonwealth, desiring a government of the people, by the people and for the people, set forth the following platform as declaring our principles, and invite our fellow commoners to co-operate with us to carry out the principles set forth.

We are in favor of the coinage of both gold and silver at the ratio of 16 to 1, without waiting for the action of any other nation, making both a full legal tender for the payments of all debts public and private, and the abolition of all specific contract laws discriminating against any of our national currency.

We declare ourselves opposed to the issuance of bonds.

We declare for the establishment of postal savings banks.

We declare in favor of the election of U. S. senators, president and vice-president of the United States by a direct vote of the people.

We demand the re-enactment of the mortgage tax law²⁰ and a reduction of indebtedness where a corresponding taxable credit is shown.

We pledge our representatives that they will work faithfully for the reduction of the salaries of state and county officials to an amount and no more than will correspond with the prices paid in other business for the same kind of work. We pledge our candidates to work for the abolition of all useless commissions and boards, for the salary system of paying of public officers, for a state appropriation bill providing only for the constitutional salaries and the economical support of necessary state institutions and against any appropriations for sectarian institutions.

This being a government by the people and for the people we therefore declare in favor of such laws as will enable the people to express their will for or against proposed legislation wherever practicable.

We heartily sympathize with all temperance movements in the United States.²¹

The Populist county convention met on April 21 and adjourned without nominating a ticket for the coming campaign; one week later

²⁰ Repealed Feb. 10, 1893, by H. B. 125; The State of Oregon. General and Special Laws and Joint Resolutions and Memorials, Passed and Adopted by the Seventeenth Regular Session, 1893 (Salem: Frank C. Baker, State Printer, 1893), pp. 5-6.

²¹ Telephone-Register, April 23.

the Democrats followed suit by a convention vote of 83 to 29.²² Thus it was assured that only one reform ticket would be in the field on June 1 against the Republican incumbents.

THE ELECTIONS OF JUNE 1, 1896

The campaign in Yamhill County met with lively interest:

In this county the gold standard and the free coinage of silver are the issues. No other party lines are known, and an audience of almost any size can be had on the shortest notice. There is speaking everywhere in the county, day and night.²³

On June 1 the entire Union ticket was elected, with majorities ranging from 215 to 685 votes. Henry G. Guild, O. C. Emery, and John Gill were elected to the state legislature, and S. L. Hayden won the race for district attorney.²⁴ It was a total triumph for the new party, and the victory was celebrated accordingly in McMinnville:

The noisiest crowd that ever gathered in this part of the county paraded the streets here last night. Fully 2,000 people joined in the ratification of the victory of the new-born union bimetallic party. . . . The people from the country came in and took possession of the town, and did whatever their fancy suggested. An old veteran, an active spirit in the campaign, was given a 14-foot flag and . . . was put into a carriage and hauled through the streets by the jolly crowd. Hon. H. G. Guild

²²Ibid., April 23, April 30.

²³The Oregonian, May 22, p. 3; see also ibid., May 31, p. 2.

²⁴Complete results in Telephone-Register, June 4.

was carried in a chair on the shoulders of four stalwart admirers.²⁵

A confusing variety of arrangements had been made for the Oregon elections. No less than seven tickets were presented to the voters in Multnomah County. In the second congressional district, matters had been complicated by the renomination of Republican Representative W. R. Ellis, a free-silver man, and that had prompted Judge H. H. Northup to enter the race as independent sound-money Democrat. In some cases Democrats and Populists had united forces and presented common candidates at least for some offices. More often, however, they had separate tickets in the field, thus enabling their Republican opponents to win by simple, and often very narrow, margins. The following table and figures will illustrate the point.

TABLE IV

OREGON STATE ELECTIONS OF JUNE 1, 1896
VOTES FOR SUPREME JUDGE AND U. S. CONGRESSMAN

Party	Supreme Judge	U. S. Congress, First District	U. S. Congress, Second District
Republican	Bean 40,451	Tongue 19,356	Ellis 12,583
Democratic	Burnett 18,623	Myers 8,105	Bennett 7,255
Populist	Gaston 26,135	Vanderburg 19,282	Quinn 12,239
Independent (sound-money)	-----	-----	Northup 8,800

Biennial Report of the Secretary of State of the State of Oregon to the Legislative Assembly, Nineteenth Regular Session, For the Fiscal Years ending December 31, 1895, and December 31, 1896 (Salem: W. H. Leeds, State Printer, 1897), pp. 321-2.

²⁵The Oregonian, June 5, p. 1.

Figure 1: Oregon state elections, June 1, 1896.
Counties with majorities for Republican or reform legislators.

State of Oregon, Biennial Report of the Secretary of State, 1897
(Salem: State Printer, 1897), pp. 327-31.

□ Counties with majorities for Democratic/Populist legislators
(Yamhill and Tillamook: Union Bimetallic; Multnomah: including Mitchell Republicans)

▨ Counties with majorities for Republican legislators

Bt. = Benton
Cl. = Clatsop
Clack. = Clackamas
Col. = Columbia
Gill. = Gilliam
Josep. = Joesphine

Lc. = Lincoln
Multn. = Multnomah
Sh. = Sherman
Tl. = Tillamook
Wa. = Washington
Yam. = Yamhill

Figure 2: Oregon state elections, June 1, 1896.
Counties represented by Republican or reform legislators.

State of Oregon, Biennial Report of the Secretary of State,
1897, pp, 327-31.

- ☐ Counties represented exclusively by Democratic/Populist legislators (Yamhill: Union Bimetallic)
- ☐ Counties represented largely by Democratic/Populist legislators
- ☐ Counties evenly split
- ☒ Counties represented largely by Republican legislators.
- ☒ Counties represented exclusively by Republican legislators.

For abbreviations, see above, p. 40.

EXPANSION OF THE PARTY. BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF J. C. COOPER

Encouraged by the surprising victory in Yamhill County, the leaders of the Union Party decided unanimously on June 8 to expand the party state-wide and to call the first state convention for July 9 at McMinnville. Delegates were apportioned to the counties, the total number being 296. The call read partially as follows:

The signal victory of the Union Bimetallic party in Yamhill county is full testimony that the plain people must and will right the wrongs of financial legislation, and that they can and will unite for that purpose.

The Union Bi-metallic party of Yamhill, Oregon therefore earnestly call upon all men who favor the unlimited coinage of both gold and silver, and the use of both as standard money to step outside party lines for a time, and join with us in a united effort in convention and at the ballot-box, until this is accomplished. . . .

The people can be trusted and they will trust each other. . . .

"United We Stand," -- to win.

W. V. Spencer,	J. C. Cooper,
Secretary	Chairman. 26

The new party chairman Jacob Calvin Cooper -- who superseded E. J. Wood under unknown circumstances -- was to be the driving spirit and the most important personality of the Union Bimetallic Party. He was born in Lawrence County, Missouri, on January 16, 1845. From 1862 until 1865 he served as a bugler in the 14th Missouri state militia volunteer cavalry. During the war his parents moved to Oregon, and Cooper decided to join them. He left Fort Leavenworth in late May, 1866; a wagon-maker by trade, he drove a six-mule freight

²⁶The call is in Oregon Historical Society, Mss. Politics, Miscellaneous, under Issues -- Economy.

train across the plains to Helena. From here he proceeded on foot to Walla Walla, and then mostly by boat via Portland to Salem, where he arrived in mid-October.

For some time Cooper taught school. In 1868 he went back to Missouri to marry his boyhood friend, and after his return to Oregon operated stores at Lincoln, Zena, and Perrydale (he is said to have founded the latter two together with his older brother Daniel). He came to McMinnville in 1876 as secretary of the People's Protective Transportation Company. Later he turned to constructing and surveying, being a deputy surveyor for Yamhill County from 1881 to 1889. He then served as postmaster of McMinnville until 1894.

Cooper was a Mason and a Granger. On September 20, 1882, he was a co-founder -- and subsequently first commander -- of Custer Post No. 9 of the Grand Army of the Republic. He was also commander of the Oregon chapter of the G. A. R. in 1893 and 1894 and served as assistant adjutant-general of the Oregon state militia for an unspecified time.²⁷

Cooper must have joined the Republican Party shortly after the Civil War, probably after he came to Oregon. He was a delegate to four Republican state conventions: in 1870 and 1874 from Polk County, and in 1882 and 1886 from Yamhill County. In 1894-5 he was president

²⁷The Oregonian, April 2, 1933, p. 23; Oregon Journal, Oct. 12, 1937, p. 12; Telephone-Register, Dec. 9, 1937; Portrait and Biographical Record of the Willamette Valley, Oregon. Containing Original Sketches of many well known Citizens of the Past and Present (Chicago: Chapman Publishing Co., 1908), pp. 692-4.

of the McMinnville Lincoln Republican Club.²⁸ In the struggle over the money question Cooper stood firmly on the side of free silver. He belonged to those whose names were scratched from the lists of candidates for the 1896 county convention.²⁹ On April 2 of that year, the Telephone-Register contained a short comment that Cooper, who had followed the Republican Party "through slush and slime for the past 30 years," was out with a "Bi-standard platform" (which had probably been intended for presentation at the county convention). If Mr. Cooper believed, as he wrote, the paper continued, he was not a member of the Republican Party of McMinnville.

Instead, he was a man of principle without a political home now. But Cooper was not a person tending to resignation. A new political basis was to be found, from where to continue the fight for his avowed political beliefs. He became affiliated with the National Silver Party in early 1896 and must have worked actively for it; he was said to have "organized and made the party in Oregon,"³⁰ although no evidence supporting this claim could be found. As for Oregon, the Union Bimetallic Party afforded a chance to become the rallying point for the champions of free silver. So Cooper went to work.

²⁸See Republican League Register, passim.

²⁹See Telephone-Register, Feb. 13.

³⁰See recommendation letter, St. Louis, July 22, 1896, to the Democratic national committee chairman, Senator Jones of Arkansas, in the Cooper letters, Oregon Historical Society. The signers asked Jones to consider Cooper for some post in the national executive or campaign committees. This recommendation was not honored, however; see lists of members of these two committees in Bryan, op. cit., p. 287.

Following the call of June 8, Cooper sent out letters to some prominent men and tried to enlist their support. The Oregonian reprinted a letter by Governor Lord who politely refused to endorse the party.³¹ On June 20, Yamhill County elected delegates to the state convention. One week later the party was organized in Marion County.³² Some form of preliminary organization must have taken place in other counties as well, although evidence is lacking.

THE FIRST STATE CONVENTION (JULY 9, 1896)

About 100 delegates finally gathered at McMinnville on July 9, among them half a dozen former state legislators.³³ Three former chief justices of Oregon -- Reuben P. Boise, Erasmus D. Shattuck, and John B. Waldo -- were also present at the convention.³⁴

³¹June 23, p. 3; the party is here referred to as bimetallic league of Yamhill.

³²See Woodburn Independent, July 2; The Oregonian, June 23, p. 3.

³³A list of delegates is given in Appendix A.

³⁴A general remark about biographical sketches in the various sources may be inserted here. Sometimes there are discrepancies as far as dates are concerned. It is impossible to discuss all these cases in detail, and only a few references will be made in that respect. Generally it can be said that the articles by G. H. Williams, W. D. Fenton, and M. C. George about Oregon political history in the Oregon Historical Quarterly as well as the Republican League Register -- except for the biographical sketches -- seem to be flawlessly accurate. Very reliable are also the articles in the Dictionary of American Biography and the History of the Bench and Bar of Oregon. The decision which source to regard as the most authoritative has been made from case to case; it is, of course, subject to revision. Occasionally, an alternate date is given in brackets, when such a decision could not be arrived at.

Boise was born in Massachusetts in 1818, graduated from Williams College in 1843, and was admitted to the bar in 1848. Two years later

Thirteen counties were represented: Baker, Clackamas, Clatsop, Coos, Jackson, Josephine, Linn, Marion, Multnomah, Polk, Tillamook,

he came to Oregon. He served as code commissioner and prosecuting attorney and represented Polk County in the territorial legislature and in the constitutional convention of 1857. In 1857-8 he was associate justice of the territorial supreme court. After Oregon gained statehood in 1859, Boise became circuit judge and ex-officio associate justice of the state supreme court; he held this position until 1870 and served as chief justice in 1862-4 and again in 1868-70. After private practice he returned to the bench as an associate justice of the supreme court in 1876, serving for four years, and then as circuit judge until 1892. In politics, Boise had been a Douglas Democrat, affiliated with the Salem Clique, then became a Republican after the Civil War, and finally turned populist. See Joseph Schafer in Dictionary of American Biography, I, 201-4; Sidney Teiser, "Reuben P. Boise, Last Associate Justice of the Oregon Territorial Supreme Court," Oregon Historical Quarterly, Vol. LXVI, No. 1 (March, 1965), 5-24; History of the Bar and Bench of Oregon (Portland: Historical Publishing Co., 1910), pp. 259-61; Republican League Register, passim.

Shattuck was born in Vermont in 1824, attended the university of his home state from 1844 to 1848, and was admitted to the New York bar in 1852. One year later he went to Oregon. He taught ancient languages at Pacific University, Forest Grove, and served in the constitutional convention of 1857 and the last territorial legislature one year later. Shattuck began his judicial career in 1862; he was circuit judge for five years and associate justice of the supreme court until 1866, subsequently chief justice for two years, and then associate justice again from 1874 to 1878. He returned to the bench as circuit judge in 1886, serving in that capacity for 12 years. Shattuck's party affiliation was first Republican, then Greely Democrat, and finally Democrat. Biographical notes are in Julius Hawthorne, The Story of Oregon. A History with Portraits and Biographies (2 Vols.; New York: American Historical Publishing Co., 1892), II, 278-83; History of the Bench and Bar of Oregon, pp. 22, 274.

Waldo was born on a homestead farm in Marion County in 1844. He graduated from Willamette University in 1866 and was admitted to the bar in 1870. He was associate justice of the supreme court from 1880 to 1884 and then chief justice for two years. In 1889 he was a republican member of the Oregon House of Representatives. See Republican League Register, p. 56 and App. 2; History of the Bench and Bar of Oregon, p. 22; Oregon Historical Society, scrap book no. 66, p. 3.

Washington, and Yamhill.³⁵ Chairman Cooper delivered an address.

The purpose of the meeting, he said, was

to unite the plain people for the present [presidential] and possibly future campaigns, believing the state can be carried by a large majority if a union of all the free-silver elements can be made. . . .

The spirit of Jackson may not be in the White House, but it is among the people. A nation's honor and credit fails to be such when nine-tenths of the people are stripped and turned into serfs to pay debts they did not contract.

History notes no contest such as we are entering now, fought out on peaceful lines, and the call for unity of the plain people, that they may have a peaceful solution, rises above every other demand, and they will destroy all selfish and party considerations that stand in the way of union. It would be indiscreet to magnify and useless to deny the gravity of the situation. Your duty is plain, and you cannot well avoid it. Let the pure democracy of Jefferson, the nerve of Jackson's and Lincoln's plain, honest anxiety for the welfare of the people be your policy, and there will be no doubt of the result. We will unite, and we will win.³⁶

David P. Thompson, one of the most prominent businessmen and republican politicians of Oregon, was elected temporary chairman of

³⁵ See Telephone-Register, July 16; Woodburn Independent, July 16; The Oregonian, July 10, p. 10.

³⁶ Ibid.

the convention.³⁷ An interesting interlude occurred, while reports were being prepared. Marion County delegate Salmon Brown, only living son of John Brown of "Bleeding Kansas" and Harper's Ferry fame, was called to the front, and the audience sang "John Brown's Body." It was then learned that W. T. Booth, the son of the sheriff who had executed Brown, was also present, a delegate from Yamhill County.³⁸

The convention adopted a set of resolutions, dealing with financial and other economic demands and reiterating the standard beliefs concerning the money question. A call for united action was inserted:

We therefore confidently appeal to the people of the United States to leave in abeyance for the moment all other questions, however important, [and] even momentous, they may appear; to sunder, if need be, all party ties and affiliations, and unite in one supreme effort to free themselves and their children from the domination of the money power -- a power more destructive than any which has ever been fastened upon the civilized men of

³⁷ Thompson was born in Ohio in 1834 and came on foot to Oregon in 1853. A surveyor for many years, he then became engaged in numerous businesses and was president of a variety of companies and banks. In the political field, Thompson served in the state senate in 1868 and 1870 and in the lower house in 1878 and 1889. He was governor of Idaho Territory (1875-6), mayor of Portland (1879-82), presidential elector in 1884 and gubernatorial candidate in 1890, finally minister to Turkey (1892-3). For biographical notes see H. K. Hines, An Illustrated History of the State of Oregon (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1893), pp. 253-4; Gaston, The Centennial History of Oregon, 1811-1912, I, 5-8; Robert C. Clark in Dictionary of American Biography, XVIII, 455-6; Hawthorne, op. cit., II, 212-7; Republican League Register, passim and Apps. 1 and 2 for clarification of the dates when he served in the legislature. For a Commentary see The Oregonian, July 11, p. 4.

³⁸ Telephone Register, July 16; The Oregonian, July 10, p. 10.

any race in any age. . And upon the consummation of our desires and efforts we invoke the gracious favor of Divine Providence.³⁹

A move to insert the demand for initiative and referendum was introduced by Boise, but opposed by Cooper, Thompson, and others; it was tabled with less than a dozen delegates voting for it.⁴⁰ Senator Teller's Walk-out of the St. Louis Republican national convention was endorsed. It was decided to support for president the nominee of the Democratic national convention, then under way at Chicago; the delegates had no doubt that a free-silver man would be nominated. The Populist delegate McMahon presented a resolution asking the Democratic convention to nominate Teller. It was first tabled, but later brought up once more. McMahon predicted that the Populists would stay out of the Union movement unless Teller were nominated. The resolution was then referred to the appropriate committee, "and the only disturbing element in the convention was quieted."⁴¹ At a later date during the meeting, the resolution was reconsidered, adopted, and wired to Chicago.⁴²

Seventeen delegates were elected to the national convention of the National Silver Party, which was to begin on July 22 at St. Louis;

³⁹Ibid.; Woodburn Independent, July 16. See also above, p. 15, n. 32.

⁴⁰The Oregonian, July 10, p. 10.

⁴¹Telephone-Register, July 16; also The Oregonian, July 10, p. 10.

⁴²Ibid.

they were instructed to work for a union of all reform forces.⁴³ A Union state central committee was also elected, consisting of chairman Cooper and ten other members.⁴⁴

It is an interesting speculation whether the Union Bimetallic Party of Oregon may have been intended as an affiliate or even state branch of the National Silver Party. No direct mentioning of such a plan could be found, however. And if it really existed, it would soon have become obliterate, regarding the fact that the National Silver Party, after the events of July, 1896, had become next to superfluous as an independent organization.⁴⁵

⁴³Only 16 names are mentioned ibid. 17 are given in Woodburn Independent, July 16; the paper writes erroneously that they were delegates to the Populist national convention which met at the same day and place.

⁴⁴Names are given in App. B.

⁴⁵Cf. above, pp. 14-16.

CHAPTER III

THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OF 1896 AND THE HOLD-UP LEGISLATURE OF 1897

THE CAMPAIGN AND PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION (AUGUST-NOVEMBER, 1896)

Originally, the Democrats and Populists had separate tickets for presidential electors in the field. On August 13, the state central committees of the two parties held meetings in Portland and agreed in principle to put together a common ticket. The person of Arthur Sewall, Democratic vice-presidential nominee, was anathema to the Populists and threatened to be the decisive obstacle on the road to a fusion ticket.¹ But after considerable discussions and negotiations the Democrats finally agreed with Populist demands that the electoral votes for vice-president would be cast for Tom Watson and that the name of Sewall would not appear on the ballot. It was then decided that a fusion electoral ticket would be filed which was to consist of two Populists, one Democrat, and one Silver Republican. The following were later nominated by their respective organizations: Harry Watkins and former state central committee chairman W. H. Spaugh (replacing Martin L. Olmsted) by the Populists; E. Hofer for the Silver Republicans; and N. L. Butler for the Democrats.²

¹See The Oregonian, Aug. 14, p. 10.

²See ibid., Aug. 26, p. 10; Aug. 27, p. 10; also Sept. 17, p. 3.

Representatives of the People's, Democratic, and Union Bimetallic Parties met on September 7 to discuss the coming campaign. Obviously, no substantial efforts had been made so far, and they seemed to be quite confident of Bryan's success.³ In the last few weeks before election day, however, a more vigorous campaign was carried on.

On November 3, Oregon went for McKinley, if only by a small majority. Bryan's bad showing in Multnomah County was decisive.

TABLE V

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OF NOVEMBER 3, 1896
VOTES FOR REPUBLICAN AND FUSION ELECTORS

		Without Multnomah	Multnomah	Oregon Total
Republican	J. F. Caples	36,897	11,803	48,700
	T. T. Geer	36,955	11,824	48,779
	E. L. Smith	36,895	11,816	48,711
	S. M. Yoran	36,793	11,775	48,568
Fusion	N. L. Butler	40,286	6,453	46,739
	E. Hofer	40,216	6,446	46,662
	W. S. Spaugh	40,120	6,434	46,554
	H. Watkins	40,090	6,428	46,518

State of Oregon, Biennial Report of the Secretary of State, 1897, pp. 332-3.

³See ibid., Sept. 8, p. 10.

Figure 3: Presidential election of November 3, 1896.
Counties with majorities for Bryan or McKinley electors.

State of Oregon, Biennial Report of the Secretary of State, 1897, pp. 332-3.

- ☐ Counties with majorities for Bryan electors
- ☒ Counties with majorities for McKinley electors
- [] votes split

For abbreviations, see above, p. 40.

THE HOLD-UP LEGISLATURE OF 1897 -- AND AFTERMATH

After the presidential election, political attention in Oregon turned to the next state legislature due to convene on January 11, 1897. Mitchell's reelection to the U. S. Senate stood in the center of interest and was passionately debated time and again. About one year earlier, Mitchell had written to Jonathan Bourne, secretary of the Republican state central committee:

You will be satisfied there is no change of sentiment on my part on the money question, nor the slightest disposition on my part to evade the issue -- not the slightest. My convictions on this subject . . . are of such a character that I would not think for one moment of changing them if I absolutely knew my reelection depended upon it.⁴

In the last days of July , 1896, a few weeks after the St. Louis Republican national convention, Mitchell announced that he would stand by his party's platform and would do all he could to hold Oregon in the Republican camp.⁵ The Populists and Democrats who were willing to reelect him were, quite naturally, disappointed, if not irate. They demanded that Mitchell make his current indistinct stand on the money question unmistakably clear. But this the Senator would not do. Whatever Mitchell might politically stand for, he was first of all an opportunist who desired to be reelected, and he would finally come out on the side which promised him the better chances to achieve this goal. As The Oregonian put it, he

⁴Jan. 16, 1896, quoted from Weinstein, op. cit., p. 21.

⁵See The Oregonian, Aug. 1, 1896, p. 4.

would "teach that the earth is round or flat, just as the directors require."⁶

In August, 1896, U'Ren had called on Mitchell and had offered a trade: Populist votes for Mitchell's reelection against active help to bring initiative and referendum through the legislature. At first the Senator seemed to agree, but in January, shortly before the opening of the session, he changed his mind; he believed that he had three Populist votes secure and therefore would not need the trade any longer. It was then that U'Ren decided to ally himself with the anti-Mitchell forces and to prevent the reelection of the Senator at all costs.⁷

In a preview in early January, The Oregonian rated Mitchell's chances as good. On the same day John C. Young, in his capacity as chairman of the Populist state central committee, issued a statement announcing bluntly that Mitchell would not be supported by the legislators of his party.⁸ One day later Mitchell came finally out in the open and declared that he would oppose the free coinage of silver except by international agreement.⁹ With that statement he lost whatever support he still might have had among free-silver advocates.

⁶Dec. 27, 1896, p. 5; see also Dec. 16, p. 4.

⁷See Woodward, op. cit., pp. 26-8; Steffens, loc. cit., pp. 534-6; Weinstein, op. cit., pp. 25-7; quoting a circular prepared by U'Ren and a personal letter by Young to U'Ren, Dec. 21, 1896, showing the efforts to line up the Populist legislators.

⁸The Oregonian, Jan. 7, 1897, p. 10; Jan. 8, p. 10; Jan. 10, p. 1.

⁹Ibid., Jan. 9, p. 10.

On the opening day of the session the Salem Capitol Journal contained an editorial by E. Hofer which probably reflected the views of Silver Republicans in Oregon quite accurately. After maintaining that free-silver advocates, as well as sound protectionists, had been driven out of the Republican Party, Hofer turned to Senator Mitchell. He said that his paper had kind feelings for him. It had supported him in the conventions and primaries in 1896 as a Republican of avowed bimetallic principles and a champion of free silver. But he was up for the political struggle of his life to secure his reelection, and for this purpose he had deserted the cause.¹⁰

The session of 1897 went down in Oregon history as the "hold-up legislature." Two rival Houses of Representatives were organized: the anti-Mitchell "Davis House" and the pro-Mitchell "Benson House." Because both were not able to muster the constitutional two-thirds majority to organize permanently and proceed with business, no election for U. S. senator could be held. The details of the maneuvers and counter maneuvers are beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice it to mention that the three Union Bimetallic representatives -- Guild, Emery, and Gill -- expectedly sided with the anti-Mitchell forces.¹¹

¹⁰Reprinted in Telephone-Register, Jan. 14.

¹¹See for example The Oregonian, Feb. 19, pp. 1 and 3; the paper has almost daily reports about the session between Jan. 12 and March 6. For details about the "hold-up legislature" see Weinstein, op. cit., pp. 27-34; Woodward, op. cit., pp. 31-42; Oswald West, "Reminiscences and Anecdotes: Mostly About Politics," Oregon Historical Quarterly, Vol. LI, No. 2 (June, 1950), 95-107; McClintock, loc. cit., pp. 213-5, with further references.

Naturally, the attitude of the Populists in the legislature came under heavy criticism from within their own ranks. U'Ren explained the reasons for the Populist course at Salem on occasion of a meeting of the Clackamas County central committee on March 27. He acknowledged that all legislators of the party, except one, had received money from a fund made up "by the enemies of Mitchell." U'Ren himself had been given \$80 by Bourne, but he insisted that this was only a loan which he would pay back. The meeting finally endorsed the actions of the Populist legislators.¹²

The issue seemed to fade away after a few weeks. But in December of the same year it was suddenly revived and provided some exciting committee meetings and newspaper reports. Some letters were stolen from U'Ren's desk in his Milwaukie home; among them was a letter by Young in which the strategy for lining up the Populist legislators at the last session was discussed. There was also an ultimatum of unknown content, signed by the party's lawmakers in Salem. Just how these documents were secured is not entirely clear; but it seems that the stepdaughter of Seth Luelling, with whom U'Ren had been associated for a number of years, "found" them, while searching for some deeds, and regarded it as her "patriotic duty" to make them known. She handed the letters over to John D. Stevens, member of the Union state central committee and rival of U'Ren in

¹²See Woodward, op. cit., pp. 44-5; The Oregonian, March 28, 1897, p. 2. U'Ren did pay back the money to Bourne: see Steffens, loc. cit., p. 536.

the Clackamas County Populist organization. She also provided Stevens with an affidavit alleging that U'Ren had been bribed with large sums of money and had actually shown her a whole bundle of bills during the legislative session.¹³

Cooper sent copies of these three documents to Senator Jones of Arkansas, but asked him not to publish them, because that could ruin some good men who did not apprehend the danger when they signed the ultimatum. The material should be used instead to prevent the seating of Henry W. Corbett, whom Governor Lord had appointed to the Senate to fill the vacancy created by the inability of the 1897 legislature to elect.¹⁴

Stevens, however, had no such scruples. He presented his "evidence" to a meeting of the Clackamas County central committee of the People's Party on January 8, 1898. U'Ren acknowledged and defended the political bargains he had made the previous year, but denied again that he had accepted any money except for the loan. The committee voted to exonerate him.¹⁵

¹³ The letter by Young is the same mentioned above, p. 55, n. 7. It was published in the Oregon City Enterprise on Jan. 14, 1898 and is quoted from there in Weinstein, op. cit., pp. 25-6. See also ibid., pp. 37-9; McClintock, loc. cit., pp. 197, 216-7; The Oregonian, Jan 5, 1898, p. 5; Woodburn Independent, Jan. 13, 1898.

¹⁴ Cooper to Senator James K. Jones, Dec. 30, 1897; in Cooper letters, Oregon Historical Society. All letters mentioned and quoted in this paper are in the Cooper collection, OHS, unless otherwise stated.

¹⁵ See Woodburn Independent, Jan. 13; The Oregonian, Jan 9, p. 3.

At a Populist meeting in Portland on January 19, U'Ren and Stevens became engaged in a fistfight; the latter was refused admittance to the meeting and was virtually read out of the party.¹⁶ In early February U'Ren resigned as chairman of the Populist county central committee, and his rival commented spitefully: "He (U'Ren) is a dead duck now all right."¹⁷

¹⁶See ibid., Jan. 20, p. 10.

¹⁷See ibid., Feb. 6, p. 3; John D. Stevens to Cooper, Feb. 14.

CHAPTER IV

EXPANSION OF THE PARTY, THE DEBATE OVER UNION OR FUSION,

AND SOME PRELIMINARIES OF THE 1898 CAMPAIGN

(APRIL, 1897 - MARCH, 1898)

THE ALBANY CONFERENCE OF JUNE 2, 1897

After the presidential election of 1896 and the legislative session of 1897 had passed, the leaders of the Union Bimetallic Party were faced with the question whether to maintain their organization with regard to the next state election in June, 1898. No discussion on this question within the state central committee or any other party body is known. Only the simple fact can be recorded that the party was being continued.

During the spring of 1897 Cooper travelled to southern Oregon, "holding counsel individually and collectively." He received many letters from all over the state, expressing a desire for a union of all the reform forces, e.g., the opponents of the Republican administration. On April 8, about 20 "prominent men from the principal counties of Western Oregon," including two unidentified members each of the Democratic and Populist state central committees, met at Albany and came out unanimously for union. Cooper displayed an abundant optimism:

It is plain that the populists will not make unreasonable demands, that democrats will make all reasonable concessions and silver republicans will throw down everything to accomplish a union of forces. There is a firm determination which culminates in an emphatic declaration, to avoid personal and factional politics.¹

In mid-May Cooper announced that at least 17 counties would be represented at a silver conference scheduled for June 2 at Albany. Again he cited various encouraging letters he had received recently.²

Fifty-five delegates from sixteen counties finally gathered at Albany, with the strongest forces coming from Josephine, Lane, and Linn Counties. For no apparent reason there were no delegates from Coos and Tillamook Counties which had been represented at the first state convention one year earlier. Union, Benton, Douglas, Lane, and Wasco Counties were new in the union camp. Gilliam County would have been represented, if the prospective delegate could have made the trip to Albany. Like the McMinnville convention of 1896, the Albany meeting could boast of more than half a dozen former state legislators in attendance; the most prominent newcomer of state-wide reputation was probably judge John Burnett of Corvallis.³

¹See Telephone-Register, April 15. The letters Cooper mentions here are not in the collection in the Oregon Historical Society.

²Ibid., May 13. These letters are also not in the collection in the OHS.

³See W. W. Hoover to Cooper, May 27. A complete list of delegates is given in App. A.

John Burnett was born in Missouri in 1831 and went to California in 1849. He came to Oregon nine years later and was admitted to the bar in 1859[60]. He was a prominent trial lawyer and Democratic politician, being a presidential elector in 1868, state senator in 1878-80, and mayor of Corvallis in 1891-95. His judicial career

Chairman Cooper addressed the meeting. Independent action, he said, was the patriotic duty when "arrogant, corrupt and selfish factions get into the party saddle," and patriotic citizens would unite to overthrow the money power. Cooper's speech revealed a strong anti-foreign bias. He maintained that the silver forces had been compelled by the gold leaders to adjust to present conditions, the same that prevailed in foreign countries. But they would not submit to foreign countries! There was no room in America for an England or Ireland, a Spain or Cuba, and "they would not harbor a brood of American gypsies."⁴

As far as organization was concerned, it was decided that the selection of committees and party management should be left to the people at the primaries -- whatever that might have meant precisely. Until then the following plan of organization should be in operation: The present conference would elect a Union state central committee, consisting of one member for each county represented. Each central committeeman would be ex-officio chairman of his respective county organization. In each county a mass meeting should be held within

included positions as county judge (1870-74), associate justice of the supreme court (1874-76), and district judge (1880-82). Burnett was also candidate for U. S. Congress in 1872 and was twice defeated for supreme judge (in 1880 and 1896). See Portrait and Biographical Record of the Willamette Valley, pp. 1340-1; Hines, op. cit., pp. 416-17; Hawthorne, op. cit., I, 315-17; Republican League Register, p. 166, for clarification of dates.

⁴From Telephone-Register, June 10. Later Cooper modified his attitude towards foreigners insofar as foreign-born persons who were guided by the American flag and accepted majority rule were invited to join the reform ranks. See The Oregonian, Jan. 8, 1898, p. 10.

30 days to elect a secretary and three committeemen; together with the chairman they would constitute the county executive committee. This group should then appoint committees of three voters for each precinct, for the purpose of conducting the nominating primaries.

Actual authority and the power of decision-making were on the level of the county: each county executive committee would have the right to call a county convention, to fix the basis of representation by delegates, to submit nominations for a county ticket, and to canvass and certify returns of party elections. The state central committee was thus reduced to a coordinating body. Whether it had any rights of instruction towards lower levels, was not specified. Likewise, it was not mentioned which rights, if any at all, the party chairman would have.⁵

The delegates adopted an appeal for unity -- "a sort of populist version of the declaration of independence"⁶ -- which listed the ills and wrongs inflicted upon the people, and suggested united action by all free-silver forces as panacea. Its rhetoric showed some other familiar themes, those of the American yeoman farmer class and the honest toiler being exploited by evil financial classes. The appeal read partially as follows:

To those who believe in the declaration of independence,
That all men are created equal.

⁵ See Telephone-Register, June 10. A list of the central committeemen chosen at Albany is given in Appendix B.

⁶ Albany Weekly Herald-Disseminator, June 10.

To those who believe unto equal rights to all and special privileges to none.

To those who pray to Lincoln "that the government of the people by the people for the people, shall not perish from the earth", we urge you to form a closer union. . . .

We call upon candid people to witness that all along the century now closing, the people have toiled westward, building and leaving numberless homes and industries to the tax gatherer, the usuer [sic] and the financial adventurer, while all between the oceans, legions of their kindred lie in unmarked graves.

They have conquered the wilderness as they have been relentlessly pursued and despoiled of their substance. They have gathered two thousand millions in gold from the mines of the west, which has gone into the coffers of Wall street to maintain an idle aristocracy.

Our chosen servants have made themselves our masters and have bound us and our homes in bonds to endure for generations to come. . . .

With a firm reliance in the God of nations, whom we ask to witness the earnestness of our appeal, the honesty of our purpose and the justice of our cause, we declare ourselves ready for a renewal of the conflict for the preservation of that sturdy independent American yeomanry, the crowning glory of ages, upon whose prosperity depends the diversified business interests of the nation.⁷

The delegates also agreed upon a Declaration of Principles; it was to serve as the basic creed of the Union Bimetallic Party. All paragraphs, except the last one, were adopted unanimously. The declaration read as follows:

We demand the free and unlimited coinage of gold and silver at the ratio of 16:1, independent of the action of any other nation.

That the government shall issue all money without the intervention of banks, and in quantity adequate for the needs of the people; that all money issued by the government, whether gold, silver or paper, shall be a full legal tender for all debts public and private.

That no contract or law shall discriminate against any kind of money issued by the government.

⁷Quoted from Telephone-Register, June 10.

We are opposed to the issue of United States interest-bearing bonds in time of peace.

We demand the redemption of Oregon from rings, commissions, and corrupt methods, and demand honest elections and election laws, including a stringent registration law.

We demand that the people shall have a veto power over all legislative enactments by the use of the referendum.

We demand the election of all officers by direct vote of the people.

We favor and advise that all nominations for municipal and county officers, including members of the legislature, shall be made by primary election.

We recommend that the party shall be known as the Union party; and we invite all the reform forces of this state to unite with us in focalizing these principles by a united effort, and we pledge ourselves to unite with such reform forces in carrying out this bond of union. Union is strength and strength is victory.⁸

This last paragraph touched upon the only divisive issue which emerged at the conference, and led to considerable and heated discussions. Some delegates were not prepared to go ahead with the organization of a new party. Others wanted to delay a decision about the problem, until assurances to go along this line had been obtained from the proper authorities of the various parties involved. Still others approved the formation of a new party, but either would have liked it to be dominated by their old party, or wanted to suggest such a close affinity to be shown in the party name. A Populist delegate proposed the name "Peoples Union Party," and judge Crowell of Jackson County proposed "Democratic Union Party." But in the end a feeling that united action in a new party was the call of the

⁸ Quoted from ibid. See also The Oregonian, June 3, p. 3.

hour prevailed, and the last paragraph was adopted by a vote of 40 to 8.⁹

Comparing this declaration with the platform adopted on April 18, 1896, several changes will be noticed. Dropped were the demands for the reenactment of the mortgage tax law and a reduction of indebtedness; for the establishment of postal savings banks; no appropriations for sectarian institutions; and the expression of sympathy with the temperance movements. The long paragraph concerning the salaries of officials and the abolition of useless boards and

⁹See Albany Weekly Herald-Disseminator, June 10. The Telephone-Register, June 10, does not report about this debate. The Oregonian, June 3, p. 3, has only a short, inadequate report about the Albany convention. There had already been two Union Parties in Oregon history, and mention of them will be made here, in order to avoid possible confusion.

The first Union Party was a product of the Civil War. It was a very loose election coalition of Republicans and Douglas Democrats (as opposed to pro-southern Democrats, who were denounced as "seceders"). In January, 1862, members of these two groups issued a call for a common state convention; it was held in Eugene in April and put together a common ticket and platform. After the end of the war many Democrats returned to their regular organization. The name "Union" was retained by the Republicans for a few more years. See Gaston, The Centennial History of Oregon, 1811-1912, I, 653-4; George H. Williams, "Political History of Oregon From 1853 to 1865," Oregon Historical Quarterly, Vol. II, No. 1 (March, 1901), pp. 29-34; William D. Fenton, "Political History of Oregon From 1865 to 1876," ibid., Vol. III, No. 1 (March, 1902), pp. 44-55.

The second Union Party was founded at Salem on Sept. 14, 1889, with Prohibitionists, Free Traders, Greenbackers, Single Taxers, Union Laborers, Knights of Labor, American Party representatives, and Woman Suffragists in attendance. A state convention was held on April 10, 1890. The Democratic nominees for supreme judge and governor were endorsed, but for other state-wide offices its own candidates were nominated. The platform raised a number of demands, including the Australian ballot (enacted in 1891) and the direct election of U. S. senators, but not free silver. The party won about 2,800 votes in the election of June, 1890, and then practically ceased to exist. See Cross, op. cit., pp. 49-62; Harrington, op. cit., pp. 17-26.

commissions was reduced to the short demand to redeem the state from "rings, commissions, and corrupt methods." The vague demand that the people should be able to "express their will for or against proposed legislation," was now called by its proper name "referendum." There was no mentioning of the initiative, however. New in the Albany declaration were the demand that banks should not issue currency; the call for honest elections and election laws; the election of all officers by a direct vote of the people; and an extension of the nominating primaries, in use at that time only for the nomination of delegates to party conventions. Unfortunately, no debate about all these issues is recorded, and therefore no reasons for the changes can be offered.

It can be said in summary, however, that, whereas the first party platform had dealt largely with financial and economic issues, the Albany declaration gave ample space to a second set of demands which can be summarized as "democratization of the political process." Although the Albany meeting had been launched as a silver conference, the political party which took shape there was a full-fledged "reform party" now.¹⁰

¹⁰ The terms "reform parties," reform forces," and similar, were in common use then and were merely a collective name for the Populist, Democratic, Silver Republican, and Union Bimetallic Parties, as opposed to the regular Republican Party.

UNION OR FUSION?

One of the problems most frequently and passionately discussed was the question of whether the Union Bimetallic Party should be a separate party with a separate organization to supplant those of the old parties, or whether it should merely assume the nature of a coordinating body with only a minimum of organization. Cooper quite obviously favored the former solution, when the party came into being. In his call for the Albany conference one year later he had used the formula that a union of forces in primary convention should be achieved; although not explicitly said, this certainly meant that the three old parties were to cancel their respective primaries, and only one primary on each level should be held: that of the Union Party.¹¹

In the weeks following this call Cooper received several letters urging him to adopt the fusion system which had been successfully tried in several states (for example in Kansas, Nebraska, and Washington). This system generally meant that the conventions of the various reform forces would meet on the same day at the same place. Delegates were elected to a fusion convention which distributed the offices to be filled among the groups, usually according to their voting strength at the most recent election; a common platform might also be worked out. The separate party conventions would then have

¹¹See Telephone-Register, April 15, 1897.

to name the candidates for the offices allotted to them, and ratify all agreements.¹²

The Albany conference explicitly used the word "party" in its Declaration of Principles; obviously, Cooper's idea had prevailed. But the discussion about this problem was just about to begin in earnest in the summer of 1897.

Many reform-minded citizens in the state received the results of the conference very favorably, and sentiment for union ran high:

The people here look upon the movement, not as a fusion for the spoils of office, but as a union of the people in the fight for deliverance from the bondage in which the money power is seeking to place them, and recognizing the fact that in union there is strength, they hail the movement with gladness.¹³

This paragraph was written with special reference to Josephine County, but in other counties sentiments were certainly similar. The proponents of a union of reform forces were generally convinced that they were fighting not only on the right side, but for a good, patriotic and just cause in the interest of humanity. Editor Hofer of the Capitol Journal, for example, was convinced that the union people were conducting the "grandest battle since the abolition of slavery" for the sake of humanity.¹⁴

¹²F. M. Saxton to Cooper, May 28, 1897; John H. Smith to Cooper, May 28; A. J. Brigham to Cooper, May 31. The Iowa plan alluded to was then under consideration and was put into reality on June 23, 1897; see The Oregonian, June 24, p. 4.

¹³Telephone-Register, July 8, 1897.

¹⁴Quoted in Weekly Eugene City Guard, July 16, 1897.

Dr. Jones of Linn County felt it to be important that the people were imbued with a feeling that they were all belonging to one brotherhood. The prime object of the gratifying work in the union movement was the "betterment of oppressed humanity" in the United States; he expressed the hope that "an enslaved commonwealth may see again the dawning of liberty."¹⁵ For another correspondent it seemed to be

little less than a crime for those who have claimed to be friends of true bimetallism to refuse to join in a union movement that affords the only hope of defeating the gold party in this state. There should be no hesitancy whatever. Only those who place party above the cause -- servant above the master, can or will hesitate.¹⁶

Still others harbored strong resentments against both the Republican and Democratic Parties which had proven themselves unable to bring about true reform. One correspondent called these two parties "despicable appendages" to the reform movement, and maintained that many reformers were repulsed by them. Fragmentary organizations, he continued, were the "sheerest folly."¹⁷ The need that the selfishness of the old parties had to be absorbed in a true union,

¹⁵D. M. Jones to Cooper, July 2, 1897.

¹⁶T. R. Coon to Cooper, Dec. 27, 1897; similar W. M. Crowell to Cooper, July 1, 1897.

¹⁷I. S. McCain to Cooper, Feb. 4, 1898; see also J. L. Story to Cooper, Aug. 12, 1897.

was felt by some other unionists, who urged one united effort and joint union conventions.¹⁸

A favorite argument of the opponents of the fusion system was the fear that it favored the political bosses and factional leaders. Not they should rule a party, but the people, expressing its will mainly through primaries.¹⁹ Time and again, Cooper himself warned of the dangers of fusion -- which he called "machine politics," standing in contrast to "direct politics," e.g., union at the primaries -- and especially the danger that unsatisfied groups, claiming unjust treatment, might bolt, appeal to their respective parties and party voters, and finally even keep aloof, if no changes in their favor were made. Instead of being united, people would continue to be merely traded. "If this thing of fusion keeps up," he wrote, "we ask just how long, O Lord, how long are the people to be kept apart, for the benefit of factional leaders."²⁰

The editor of the Times-Mountaineer of the Dalles also inveighed against political machines and expressed his firm belief -- a belief generally shared by the reformers -- in the judgement of the people:

The people who are taking hold of the reform move throughout the state are not children nor are the[y] imbeciles who need a few bosses to tell them what they want. They are going into

¹⁸D. M. Jones to Cooper, July 2, 1897; John D. Stevens to Cooper, Sept. 14, 1897.

¹⁹See for example A. J. Brigham to Cooper, Jan. 20, 1898; J. G. Pierce to Cooper, Jan. 25; Cooper to I. S. McCain, Feb. 5.

²⁰See The Oregonian, Jan. 8, 1898, p. 10; Cooper to W. T. Rigdon, Jan. 26; Cooper to G. E. Allen, Feb. 2; Cooper to J. A. Douthit, Feb. 7.

the move with their eyes open after having carefully studied every phase of the question; and what they are trying to free themselves from is . . . bossism . . . ²¹

But old party affiliations were not to be overcome so easily; and in the end only few people seemed really willing to abandon their old political homes entirely for a new party. Such a body, so the standard argument of the fusionists ran, would only put one more reform party in the field, thus dividing the reform forces in their fight against the common enemy.²²

Dry and scanty though this argument was, it gradually made its way. Cooper had to accomodate himself to the circumstances. He began to use the expression "movement" and asserted that it was not its intention to start a new party at all.²³ Finally he put forth the following formula:

The purpose of the union movement is for the people to get together at the primaries -- democrats, populists and silver-republicans. Elect delegates to state and county conventions on non-partisan lines as near as possible. Let this state union convention nominate a ticket, decide under what name the campaign shall be run and the ticket voted for; whether "union", "union-democratic", or "populist-democratic-silver-republican". Then hold the populist and democratic county and state conventions

²¹J. A. Douthit to Cooper, Feb. 6, 1898.

²²S. H. Holt to Cooper, May 19, 1897; O. H. Kerns to Cooper, July 2, 1897; Robert A. Miller to Cooper, Oct. 5, 1897; C. S. Dustin to Cooper, Jan. 4, 1898; W. T. Rigdon to Cooper, Jan. 24, 1898; G. E. Allen to Cooper, Feb. 1, 1898.

²³Cooper to Sen. James K. Jones, Dec. 13, 1897.

to indores the union ticket and maintain these party organizations.²⁴

A clarification of this rather complex and confusing situation was finally reached on January 7, 1898, on occasion of a Union conference at Portland. After a lively discussion, the following report was adopted, with no dissenting votes mentioned:

We recognize that the general welfare of our country is opposed by a common enemy that should be met by a solid phalanx of American citizens, who love their country and desire the greatest good to the greatest number. We therefore recommend that this meeting request the people of the populist party, the democratic party and the silver-republican party to use all fair and honorable means to secure a proper alliance of these parties in district, state and county organizations, to the end that co-operation may be had at the coming election.

There are plenty of good men in any or all of these parties, pure in principle and tried in patriotism, to fill with honor to their constituents the trusts to which the people would call their servants by popular vote.

Therefore we would hope:

First -- That the conventions of the several parties be held at the same time and place.

Second -- That they endeavor to agree upon the same principles and candidates, maintaining their separate party organizations.

Third -- That the county organizations endeavor to govern themselves by the same co-operation similar to that of the district and state organizations.

Fourth -- That all work together for such a victory as is sure to follow harmony of action for a just cause, for in union there is strength.²⁵

This formula did not explicitly say, but strongly suggested, that separate Union primaries had become obsolete. The delegates had

²⁴Address to state Unionists, printed in The Oregonian, Dec. 15, 1897, p. 5; very similar also in Cooper to Sen. James K. Jones, Dec. 13, 1897.

²⁵Quoted from The Oregonian, Jan. 8, 1898, p. 10.

adopted this resolution in spite of Cooper's warnings, and thus its adoption must be regarded as a clear defeat for him. It was hardly justified to speak of the Union Bimetallic Party as a "party" any longer, as far as the state level was concerned. In the counties, however, a true union might still be accomplished. Cooper urged such county arrangements in several letters:

Union at the primaries is a union of all the silver and reform forces in joint primary meeting to elect delegates to a union county convention for the purpose of nominating a ticket and electing delegates to a union state convention.

The old party organizations are to be maintained. The voters can attend their respective primaries and hold their regular party conventions and ratify the work or correct the errors of the union convention, also to maintain the party organizations.²⁶

This formula of concurrent Union and regular party primaries and conventions resulted in a good deal of confusion. Quite understandably, many voters and Union Party representatives as well got mixed up about "union" and "fusion" existing side by side. Several correspondents complained to Cooper about the complex situation and asked for some clarification.²⁷

²⁶Cooper to A. J. Brigham, Jan. 26, 1898; similar in letter to G. E. Allen, Feb. 2. The stressing of joint primary meeting is mine.

²⁷A. J. Brigham to Cooper, Jan. 23, 1898; Eugene Palmer to Cooper, Jan. 28; R. S. Sheridan to Cooper, Jan. 29; G. E. Allen to Cooper, Feb. 1. See also Weekly Eugene City Guard, Feb. 26, quoting from Bandon Recorder; this paper made a useful distinction: fusion meant a common set of candidates, but separate platforms, whereas union meant both common candidates and a common platform.

FURTHER EXPANSION OF THE PARTY AND BRYAN'S VISIT TO OREGON

(JUNE - AUGUST, 1897)

The Times-Mountaineer of The Dalles was convinced that the Union Party was destined to become the leading party in Oregon.²⁸ But this could not be achieved without hard work. In some counties organizational efforts were made almost immediately after the Albany conference. In Linn County a mass meeting was held on June 9 at Lebanon, and two Populists and one Democrat were elected to the executive committee. Josephine County held a similar meeting, under the chairmanship of state central committeeman L. G. Brownell, on June 16 at Grant's Pass.²⁹

On June 26 about 150 to 200 men of all reform parties gathered at McMinnville. Populist state central committeeman Dr. Ernest Barton was in the chair. The meeting unanimously agreed to accept the Albany Declaration of Principles, except for the referendum clause which was to be replaced by a demand for initiative, referendum, and imperative mandate, the latter being defined as "the right and authority of the people to remove any and all officials when in their judgement the officials are remiss in their duties." This was probably the first time that the imperative mandate was demanded, and insofar the meeting went a step beyond the state platform. It is interesting to note that Cooper was a member of the resolutions

²⁸Mentioned in the Telephone-Register, June 17, 1897.

²⁹D. M. Jones to Cooper, June 9 and June 21; Telephone-Register, July 8.

committee, which worked out these recommendations. But as usual, no discussion about any matters of principle is reported by the newspaper.³⁰

In Lane County, state central committeeman J. G. Stevenson called a meeting for the organization of the Union Party for July 10 at Eugene. The plan of organization and the Declaration of Principles of the Albany conference were adopted. A county executive committee was elected, consisting of one Democrat, two Silver Republicans, and two Populists. Participants were reported as declaring that they would leave their old parties with regret, but for a common cause.³¹

The county of Washington was organized in similar fashion at a meeting in Hillsboro on August 7. James H. Sewell was chairman of the executive committee here.³² Leading Unionists predominantly concurred that Union Clubs should be organized on the precinct level. At least in Linn and Washington Counties this was done during the summer of 1897.³³ Cooper's correspondence contains an undated draft of a pledge which members of such clubs were obviously asked to sign:

³⁰Ibid., July 1.

³¹The Oregonian, July 11, p. 3; Weekly Eugene City Guard, July 16.

³²J. H. Sewell to Cooper, Aug. 8.

³³See answers on questionnaires sent out by Cooper on June 21. Cooper himself had proposed that the Union voters should be organized in neighborhoods of ten voters each, and these in groups of ten neighborhoods each; but this idea, smacking somewhat of militarism,

We, the undersigned voters of . . . who favor the free and unlimited coinage of silver and the issue and control of all money by the general government, a distinctly American system of finance, and who favor Direct Legislation hereby associate ourselves together as a union club for the purpose of discussing these and other questions of political reform.

In early July, 1897, the main attention of the reform forces in Oregon turned to the speaking tour of William Jennings Bryan. The 1896 presidential candidate had three major appearances in the state. On July 10, he addressed about 2,500 people at Ashland, reiterating the familiar arguments in favor of bimetallism in such a way, as one listener wrote, "that a child could understand."³⁴

On July 12, Bryan spoke to a crowd -- estimated at between 5,000 and 12,000 -- at Gladstone Park, Lebanon. Hotels and livery stables in that community had been "crowded to their utmost capacity" the night before, and hundreds stayed overnight in tents. In the evening of the same day about 20,000 people gathered at the Portland Multnomah Fields for Bryan's third major speech; it was the largest outdoor meeting in the history of the city to date.³⁵

did not meet with approval. For the organization of clubs in Linn and Washington Counties see D. M. Jones to Cooper, July 27; J. H. Sewell to Cooper, July 27, Aug. 8, and Sept. 25. In December, a Union Club was organized in Forest Grove: see W. M. Langley to Cooper, Dec. 27, 1897, and Jan. 1, 1898. See also G. E. Allen to Cooper, Feb. 1, 1898, for clubs in Marion County; and undated newspaper clipping in Cooper correspondence for Lake County.

³⁴A. S. Barnes to Cooper, July 11; see also W. M. Crowell to Cooper, July 16, and The Oregonian, July 11, p. 6.

³⁵See ibid., July 12, p. 2, and July 13, pp. 1 and 8, with extensive excerpts from the Lebanon speech; see also Weekly Eugene City Guard, July 16.

Besides these major engagements, Bryan also gave short speeches from the platform of his train car, drawing crowds of up to 5,000 listeners. In Eugene City about 1,000 people turned out to the railway station at 4 o'clock in the morning, just to see him and grasp his hands (Bryan did not speak here, because it was Sunday).³⁶

Which effect the Bryan visit had on the reform forces in Oregon is impossible to determine. One writer had expressed the fear that the old wounds between Democrats and Populists would fester again, and predicted new jealousies between the two groups. Another correspondent, however, was convinced that the visit would do much good for the union cause in the state.³⁷

DEVELOPMENTS IN SOME COUNTIES (DECEMBER, 1897 - MARCH, 1898)

Yamhill. The central committees of the Democratic, Populist, and Union Parties held a joint meeting on December 18 and advised

that the believers in the free coinage of silver and direct legislation by the people meet together at the primaries and elect delegates to a union convention, which convention shall meet for the purpose of nominating a union ticket and promulgate a free-silver and direct-legislation platform and ticket. We also advise that each party organization be maintained.³⁸

Democrats, Populists, and Silver Republicans held separate county conventions on March 5 at McMinnville. The delegates elected

³⁶See ibid.; The Oregonian, July 11, p. 6, and July 15, p. 3.

³⁷D. M. Jones to Cooper, July 2; W. M. Crowell to Cooper, July 16.

³⁸The Corvallis Times, Dec. 22, 1897.

to the various state conventions on March 23 were unanimously instructed by their meetings to work for a union of forces under one ticket and one set of principles.³⁹

Lane. Several meetings took place in Eugene on December 22, 1897. The Democratic and Populist county committees first met separately and appointed delegates to a conference committee. The latter worked out a report indorsing, besides free coinage, referendum, initiative, and imperative mandate. It was also agreed that one common county convention should be held and that all true believers in the issues mentioned before would be allowed to vote in the primary. This recommendation was unanimously adopted by the Democratic and Populist committees, presented to the Union executive committee, and accepted there as well.⁴⁰

Democrats and Populists held another joint meeting on February 19, 1898. They decided to hold separate primaries and county conventions to elect delegates to their respective state conventions. Both should also make one nomination each for a minor county office. These plans were implemented on March 16. Besides, five delegates each were nominated for a conference committee to work out further details of the proposed union. The Silver Republicans held their

³⁹The Oregonian, March 6, p. 6; Telephone-Register, March 10.

⁴⁰Weekly Eugene City Guard, Dec. 25, 1897; J. W. Baker to Cooper, Dec. 23; J. G. Stevenson to Cooper, Dec. 23.

county convention on the same day, but were left out of the union arrangements, obviously because they were too weak in numbers.⁴¹

Benton. A Union conference convened on January 5, 1898, at Corvallis; the call was interesting insofar as it was also signed by three Prohibitionists. No prearrangements for the meeting had been made. A Committee on resolutions was appointed and recommended one platform and one common ticket. The resolutions also called for the primary system of nominating and electing officers and for the initiative and referendum. The delegates agreed that the separate party organizations should be maintained.⁴²

The Populist county central committee, meeting on February 11, indorsed these arrangements and set a referendum for March 12 to decide upon a fusion on the state level. The returns of the referendum showed near-unanimity for this plan.⁴³

Marion. Populists, Democrats, and Silver Republicans held separate conventions on March 16, 1898. They appointed members to a conference committee to draft a platform and apportion the offices. On the following day this committee came out with a platform, containing the usual money planks and calling for a reduction of salaries of officials as well as initiative and referendum. The county

⁴¹Weekly Eugene City Guard, Feb. 26, March 19; The Oregonian, Feb. 27, p. 3, and March 17, p. 9.

⁴²The Corvallis Times, Dec. 20, 1897 (clipping in Cooper correspondence); Jan. 8, 1898.

⁴³The Oregonian, Feb. 13, p. 6; March 16, p. 3; March 20, p. 3.

offices were distributed among the three groups; but according to a Populist proposal, the office of surveyor was left out, and all three made a separate nomination in this case. The purpose of this arrangement was to measure the strength of the three parties at the polls. The separate conventions then named their candidates, and the platform and all nominations were ratified by the three groups.⁴⁴

Polk. A sharp split within Populist ranks occurred in this county. The party chairman, Dr. Embree, had sent out a circular asking for support of the mid-road position. At the county convention on February 9, 1898, the committee on credentials, appointed by Embree, rejected 28 of the 50 delegates, because they had not signed the circular. These delegates, joined by two others, then walked out. The remaining Mid-roaders named a full slate of candidates for the state legislature and the county offices and elected delegates to the Populist state convention. The bolting Fusionists, led by Union state central committeeman John D. Kelty, nominated candidates for the state convention only.⁴⁵

Sherman. The various offices to be filled at the June elections were divided between Populists, Democrats, and Silver Republicans on March 10, 1898. But then the Populists presented a resolution asking

⁴⁴Ibid., March 17, p. 9, and March 18, p. 3; Woodburn Independent, March 24.

⁴⁵Ibid., Feb. 10; The Oregonian, Feb. 10, p. 3 and Feb. 13, p. 6.

the Democrats to indorse their platform, and this demand was rejected, because the Democrats did not want to give up their party identity. They presented a resolution indorsing fusion, but maintaining the separate party organizations; this resolution was rejected by the Populists, who obviously wanted a real union of the reform forces, or none at all.⁴⁶

Jackson, Union, and Clackamas. There are no reports or even indications that Democrats or Silver Republicans rejected a union of forces in any county in Oregon. The Populists, on the other hand, were by no means united on that question, and splits in their ranks occurred in some other counties besides Polk.

In Jackson County a Populist meeting on February 12, 1898, was evenly split between Mid-roaders and Fusionists and decided to leave the delicate question of fusion to the party voters at the primary. The county convention on March 12 found the mid-road element under state senator and central committeeman S. H. Holt in the majority. The fusion advocates bolted, and both groups elected a slate of delegates to the state convention.⁴⁷

A Populist referendum had been held in Union County, and fusion had been rejected. Therefore, the county convention on March 18 nominated a full ticket.⁴⁸ In Clackamas, a similar referendum showed

⁴⁶ Ibid., March 21, p. 3.

⁴⁷ A. S. Barnes to Cooper, Feb. 13; The Oregonian, March 13, p. 9.

⁴⁸ Ibid., March 19, p. 3.

an overwhelming majority of Populist party members in favor of fusion; but the county leadership, under chairman U'Ren, was opposed to it. After U'Ren's resignation in early February the way was open for arrangements with the Democrats and Silver Republicans, and the Mid-roaders bolted the county convention held on March 19.⁴⁹

Wasco, Umatilla, and Malheur. The Populist county committee of Wasco met on February 9, 1898, and invited other reformers to join with them in a common effort. As prerequisite for union, they insisted that the common platform had to include not only the money planks, but also initiative and referendum. This proved to be no obstacle at all. The three parties held their county conventions on March 10, and elected a conference committee which distributed the offices.⁵⁰

In Umatilla County, Populists and Democrats had appointed members to a conference committee in early February, 1898; this committee worked out recommendations concerning the distribution of offices. A large ratification meeting was held on March 18. The Silver Republicans, counting only a few members in this county, were graciously included in the arrangements and given one spot on the common ticket. A common platform was also agreed upon; it included demands for initiative, referendum, and imperative mandate.⁵¹ In

⁴⁹Ibid., March 17, p. 9; March 20, p. 3.

⁵⁰Ibid., Feb. 13, p. 6; March 20, p. 3.

⁵¹Ibid., Feb. 17, p. 6; March 19, p. 3.

Malheur County, the county conventions of the Democrats and Populists met on March 11, 1898, and nominated a county ticket. Silver Republicans were not included in this arrangement because of lack of party members.⁵²

Linn, Lincoln, Washington, and Gilliam. The Linn County Populist central committee had decided to divide only the county offices with the Democrats. On March 16, however, a full fusion was brought about after a heated discussion. A conference committee was appointed, its report adopted, and a ticket nominated. The Silver Republicans did not have enough delegates at hand to hold a county convention, but their leader, Dr. Jones of the Union state central committee, was nominated for the state legislature by the other two parties.⁵³

Democrats and Populists of Lincoln County held a joint convention on March 17 and nominated a common ticket, giving one position to the Silver Republicans.⁵⁴ In Washington County the populists of Eagle Creek rejected any idea of fusion, but the other precincts were represented at the county convention on March 19. Democrats and Silver Republicans met at the same day and place; a conference committee worked out a platform, but no nominations were made.⁵⁵

⁵²Ibid., March 15, p. 3.

⁵³Ibid., Jan. 13, p. 3; March 17, p. 9.

⁵⁴Ibid., March 18, p. 3.

⁵⁵Ibid., Feb. 17, p. 6; March 20, p. 3.

A complete fusion was arranged for Gilliam County on March 21, and nominations were made for the coming elections.⁵⁶

PRELIMINARIES OF THE 1898 CAMPAIGN (DECEMBER, 1897 - MARCH, 1898)

Following the unanimous advice by prominent party men, a Union state executive committee was established sometime during the summer or fall of 1897.⁵⁷ It held an informal meeting, attended by some other party members as well, on December 2 in Portland. It was decided to begin preparations for the 1898 campaign, and Cooper was commissioned to open headquarters for that purpose. Within a few days he secured two rooms in the Perkins Hotel and went to work in the firm belief that Oregon would be carried by a majority of 10,000 votes.⁵⁸

The Populist state central committee, dominated by Mid-roaders, met in the same city on December 11, and without consulting the other parties, it called the next Populist state convention for Portland, March 23, 1898.⁵⁹ Cooper answered by calling a Union conference for the purpose of discussing methods and propositions for a union of reform forces; it was scheduled for Portland, January 7, 1898. The call was issued in the form of a circular letter. In about two weeks

⁵⁶ Ibid., March 22, p. 3.

⁵⁷ See questionnaires of June 21, in Cooper correspondence.

⁵⁸ See The Oregonian, Dec. 3, p. 10, with a number of grave mistakes (the Union Party was said to have been founded "last August at Albany"); Dec. 15, p. 5; Cooper to W. M. Crowell, Dec. 8.

⁵⁹ The Oregonian, Dec. 12, p. 9.

Cooper received several hundred signatures from 20 counties, indorsing his action. The purpose of the circular was quite obvious: the signatures would be presented to the chairmen of the Democratic and Populist Parties to demonstrate a wide-spread desire within their organizations in favor of a union of forces. Whereas the Democrats hardly needed to be pushed at all, Populist chairman Young might, it was hoped, reconsider his negative attitude.⁶⁰

Towards the end of 1897, the Union Party was organized in some form in 25 of the 32 counties. Grant, Harney, Malheur, Sherman, Unatilla, Wallowa, and Lincoln Counties were still unorganized.⁶¹

The Portland Union conference met as scheduled and paved the way for a fusion of the reform forces at the coming election. Several other meetings were held on this and the following day in Portland. The Union state central committee decided to delay further action until after a Populist meeting envisaged for January 19; Cooper's work was indorsed, and he was instructed to continue in his efforts. Both the Democrats and the Silver Republicans called their state conventions for Portland, March 23, 1898 -- the same day and place for which the Populist state convention had already been fixed. The

⁶⁰ See *ibid.*, Dec. 24, p. 1; *The Corvallis Times*, Dec. 29. Also Cooper's correspondence, containing drafts of the call, dated Dec. 16; Cooper to the members of the several state central committees, Dec. 31; and numerous other references.

⁶¹ A list of the members of the state central committee is given in Appendix B. A Union Club was formed in Harney County in February, 1898: see Charles P. Rutherford to Cooper, Feb. 17 and Feb. 21.

Democratic state central committee also appointed a committee to work out an address to be published at some later time.⁶²

This committee finally got down to business and produced a document which was published in The Oregonian under the characteristic headline "Unpatriotic Appeal." It indulged in a vehement attack upon the "flagrant profligacy" and "financial imbecility" of the Republican state administration. The "irresistible conclusion" was arrived at that "reform in our state is an absolute necessity, profligacy and methodical scoundrelism must be stamped out." The authors then recognized that Democrats, Populists, and Silver Republicans had common beliefs in many principal matters, and concluded:

And recognizing that, however we may differ from the silver republicans and populists as to details, yet that we are all honestly striving toward the same ends, and believing in common that the just purpose of government is largely to protect the weak and poor against the encroachments of the strong and powerful, rather than the fostering and perpetuating of inordinate fortunes and special privileges, we welcome the hope that these three organizations may make common cause against a common enemy, and we earnestly trust that some plan may be discovered upon which all three of them may unite in some manner which is alike fair and honorable to each and all of them, so that without any sacrifice of principle the common people may present a united and unbroken front in favor of government "by the people", and against a party which now represents but little more than an organization of the wealth of the country for the purpose of magnifying itself, at the expense of all the best interests of the masses.⁶³

⁶²See The Oregonian, Jan. 8, 1898, p. 10, and Jan. 9, pp. 1 and 8; The Corvallis Times, Jan. 12; above, pp. 66-7.

⁶³The Oregonian, Feb. 12, p. 10.

In late February, 1898, a dispatch by the Associated Press provided some pre-campaign stirrings. In that dispatch the issue was raised that Senators Jones of Arkansas and Butler of North Carolina, the chairmen of the Democratic and Populist national committees, respectively, had made secret deals concerning the distribution of offices in Oregon. Jones denied that such a plan had been worked out and called the dispatch fabricated. There was no clear denial from Butler. Obviously, the two had talked about Oregon politics and would have discussed names, too. But neither of them had the authority to "fix" anything in Oregon, and accordingly the reproach against them was rather ridiculous. At any rate, The Oregonian delightfully harped upon this alleged outrageous interference in Oregon politics, which did cause some indignation in Populist circles.⁶⁴

Months in advance of the elections, the usual scrambling for offices had begun. Names were discussed and tips traded.⁶⁵ A good example for the desire for public office which seemed to captivate some men all over the state is The Dalles attorney Story. Often pressured, he had always refused to run, except for once, because he thought that he had no chance. But as a Union candidate things looked different. He asked for Cooper's advice whether he should run for

⁶⁴ Sen. Jones to Cooper, Feb. 16; Telephone-Register, Feb. 24; The Oregonian, Feb. 24, p. 9; Feb. 28, p. 10; March 5, p. 4; and March 7, p. 2.

⁶⁵ See for example ibid., Jan. 11, p. 5; Feb. 28, p. 10; March 7, p. 10. Also Woodburn Independent, Jan. 20; O. P. Coshov, Jr., to Cooper, Jan. 20.

supreme judge or for U. S. representative. If Cooper thought favorably of that, it might be of inestimable value for him.⁶⁶

No answer to the plagued attorney is contained in Cooper's correspondence. He was more concerned with the qualities which the first man on the ticket, the gubernatorial candidate, should have:

The man we elect for governor and other state officers must draw only their constitutional salary and must earn it. We don't want a goody-goody man to run, for the purpose of catching votes and then be putty in the hands of the corporations and place-hunters. We want a determined man from Bitter Creek, one who can wield a four foot piss-elm club, who will not only smash all of the offical pie, but the pie counter and the pie hunter also, and defy the encroachments of the money power and corporate greed.

He went on to express his hope that the next legislature would finally rectify the wrongs under which the people were suffering, and concluded this letter -- the last one preserved in his correspondence, as far as the Union Party is concerned -- with a strong plea for action:

My years [sic] work of uniting the forces is about up and a Union is inevitable, but in stepping down and out I talk this plain to the men who will be called on to fulfill the duties that this movement has called into action. State platforms and party promises will not satisfy longer. Performances are demanded.⁶⁷

⁶⁶J. S. Story to Cooper, Feb. 22.

⁶⁷Cooper to Ch. P. Rutherford, Feb. 26, 1898.

CHAPTER V

FORCES DETRIMENTAL TO THE UNION CAUSE

THE RETURN OF PROSPERITY

In 1893 the nation had been plunged into a long, deep depression. By the spring of 1897 there were signs that depression was giving way, not only to a return to normalcy, but even to modest prosperity. The Corvallis Times ran a full page about the improvement of business and "cheering reports from every section of the country" as early as April 17. A few weeks later The Oregonian reported about "facts full of hope" and "the turn of the tide."¹

The indicators supporting this optimistic outlook were manifold. The number of failures in all branches of business declined; bank clearings rose sharply. More and more unemployed were put back to work. The purchasing power of consumers increased and in turn fostered business activities. The retail distribution of products was said to be unusually large, and the volume of trade advanced in a degree not surpassed in five years.²

Fall wheat harvest began in mid-July, and exceptionally good yields seemed to be almost certain. Other crops, corn, and fruit

¹May 25, p. 4, quoting from American Agriculturist; June 5, p. 1.

²See The Oregonian, June 5, p. 1; Aug. 21, pp. 1 and 2; Sept. 11, p. 1. The paper quotes the weekly reports by Dun and Bradstreet.

were also expected to be in good shape, and a "year of plenty" was looked forward to. On August 20, September wheat scored a sensational advance, and under scenes of great excitement cash wheat passed the \$1 mark at several exchanges for the first time in seven years.³

Whereas the crop output in the United States for 1895 had been 467,102,947 bushels and the average export price 57½ cents per bushel, the 1897 output was estimate at between 540 and 600 million bushels. In the 15 wheat states which had voted for Bryan in 1896, farmers could expect an overall gain of at least \$30 million for the current year.⁴

PROSPERITY
TRADE IMPROVEMENT IN OREGON

Good Crops, Fair Prices and Restoration of Confidence

Under these headlines The Oregonian reported that, by early October, business improvement had reached Oregon and could no longer be discredited by the most dismal doubters. Since 1892 the state had not been as prosperous as in the fall of 1897.⁵

Incomplete estimates for the whole year forecast that the value of Oregon's market products would amount to about \$30 million. The crops netted the farmers eventually an estimated \$35 million. In growing numbers farmers could pay their debts and lift their mortgages.

³See ibid., July 16, p. 6; Aug. 21, p. 1.

⁴Figures taken from New York Times and reprinted in The Oregonian, Aug. 28, p. 4.

⁵Oct. 2, pp. 1 and 8.

In 14 of the 32 counties mortgage releases in the period from December, 1896, to November, 1897, amounted to slightly above \$2.6 million, and the total figure for the state was expected to be in the neighborhood of \$5 million. In short, Oregon farmers as a whole were more prosperous than they had been for the last five years.⁶

In spite of ever growing production figures, the demand for silver had further declined; the downward drive of the silver price continued, until in August, 1897, its bullion value was quoted at a trifle over 43 cents. At the same time, the gold supply, both worldwide and in the United States, rose considerably. New gold fields had been discovered in Australia and South Africa; the new method of the cyanide process accounted for larger extracts from the mines and also allowed the use of previously wasted lean ore. The output of the Alaska gold mines, which had been worth \$6 million in 1896, was estimated to reach about \$10 million for 1897. By mid-July of that year, the mad rush to the Klondike was fully under way. At this time, the silver mines of the country yielded about 10 million fine ounces less than in the peak year 1892, a decline which corresponded with an almost as large reduction of the worldwide output.⁷

⁶See The Oregonian, Nov. 24, pp. 1 and 6; Nov. 27, p. 10; Dec. 3, p. 1.

⁷See ibid., March 20, p. 3; July 18, pp. 1 and 8; July 19, pp. 1 and 9; detailed reports about the Klondike rush on subsequent days; Aug. 6, p. 1. See also Hicks, op. cit., p. 389.

TABLE VI

PRODUCTION OF GOLD AND SILVER, WORLDWIDE AND U. S., 1890-1897

	Worldwide		U. S.	
Year	Gold	Silver	Gold	Silver
	fine ounces	fine ounces	fine ounces	fine ounces
1890	5,749,306	126,095,062	1,588,880	54,500,000
1891	6,320,194	137,170,919	1,604,840	53,330,000
1892	7,094,266	153,151,762	1,596,375	63,500,000
1893	7,618,811	165,472,621	1,739,323	60,000,000
1894	8,764,362	164,610,394	1,910,813	49,500,000
1895	9,615,190	167,800,960	2,254,760	55,727,000
1896	9,783,914	157,061,370	2,568,132	58,835,000
1897	11,420,068	160,421,082	2,774,935	53,860,000

All figures are based on reports of the Director of the Mint. For worldwide production see U. S., Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, Statistical Abstract of the United States. 1922 (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1923), p. 709. The figures for U. S. production are in U. S., Bureau of Statistics, Statistical Abstract of the United States. 1901, p. 51.

All these developments belied some of the basic beliefs of free-silver advocates and bimetallists. How would they react to the changed conditions? The New York Sun predicted that the Democratic and Populist party platforms would have to be rewritten, and made the following ironic suggestion:

Whereas, The crop of wheat in the United States is said to be unusually large; and,

Whereas, The price of wheat has been advanced by the money power; be it

Resolved, That the condition of the farmer can never be improved by large crops or large returns for the same, due to

the iniquitous machinations and manipulations of Wall street; and,

Resolved, That the alleged foreign demand for wheat is undubitably an artificial crisis produced by the Rothschilds; and,

Resolved, That the wheat crop and the price of wheat cannot be increased or made normal by natural and honest means until the free coinage of silver at the ratio of 16 to 1 has stimulated nature, boomed prices, and relieved the downtrodden farmer from the clutch of the usurer and the money shark.

Resolved, That in the present condition of things large crops and large prices of the same are an outrage and a curse, and a distinct insult to the popocrats and populists.⁸

Cooper's correspondence contains only few references to this problem of the return of prosperity. They show, however, a diversity of reactions. One writer suspected the administration "to use every means in its power, no matter how unscrupulous, to create a shadow of false prosperity." He also linked the good prices for agricultural products with the aggressive foreign policy of the administration in regard to Cuba and Hawaii, and expressed the fear that both together might avert the people from the "overshadowing evil."⁹

Good prices, however, were decidedly a real thing, and dollar wheat meant a good deal to farmers who had voted for Bryan in the desperate hope of relief from debt and hard times. The New York Times predicted that the new prosperity would make it plain to farmers that the argument higher prices for their products could be obtained only by means of the free coinage of silver was plain nonsense. Nobody could be deluded any longer by the notion that

⁸Quoted in The Oregonian, Aug. 1, p. 4.

⁹C. H. Baker to Cooper, July 29, 1897. This is the only letter in Cooper's correspondence in which the problem of foreign policy is at least alluded to.

free coinage was a remedy for anything. The paper also maintained that the farmers would no longer seek a remedy, because they had no more need for one.¹⁰

But this approach to the problem was too rational. Many farmers would not make the administration or the single gold standard in any way responsible for the prosperity. They saw instead Providence at work. As one correspondent wrote:

Some few of our friends have fears that the sudden rise in wheat will drive many farmers from the silver cause, but I can not shair [sic] this view, as there is not one farmer in a thousand who does not fully understand the cause of the increased price of wheat. I have taken the pains to talk personally with a great many farmers and laborers & have not found one who does not understand, perfectly well, that it is the providence of God that has brought the temporary relief and not the result of the gold standard.¹¹

Besides, the new prosperity was not equally distributed over the country, and foreclosures, delinquencies, want and misery did by no means disappear from the scene all of a sudden. In other sections, the improvement of the situation was too modest for any noticeable change in political beliefs.¹²

Some free-silverites chose to ignore the signs of prosperity altogether, while others doubted the situation and continued to see the economic reality rather gloomily. The Oregonian poked fun at these "sad-eyed and hollow-voiced calamity-howlers" for whom the good

¹⁰Quoted in The Oregonian, Aug. 28, 1897, p. 4.

¹¹R. Veatch to Cooper, Sept. 7, 1897.

¹²Idem to Cooper, Dec. 17; J. G. Stevenson to Cooper, Dec. 13, 1897.

crops and the high prices made life "a rather sad and unhappy thing." They had banked on calamity in their prophecies, and the bank had been broken.¹³

Nevertheless, a tendency among the farmers to become careless and indifferent towards the doctrine of free silver, and the other reform issues as well, was to be observed at least in some parts of the state.¹⁴ And such a reaction was, after all, only natural. Precisely how much the reform forces in Oregon were hurt by the return of prosperity, is impossible to determine. That they were hurt to some degree, can be assumed beyond doubt. However, it would have been a grave mistake for anybody to believe that the cause for reform in Oregon would collapse. For it must be borne in mind that the platforms of the reform parties were not confined to money and other economic issues, but also contained demands -- like referendum, direct elections, or direct primaries -- which were not affected by prosperity at all.

CHRONIC LACK OF MONEY

The problem of raising funds for the 1898 campaign caused the party leadership considerable difficulty. Various proposals were made: assessing the counties and leaving the way to raise the money entirely to them; voluntary contributions, subscriptions, and club

¹³Sept. 9, 1897, p. 4.

¹⁴See J. L. Story of Wasco County to Cooper, Dec. 11, 1897; D. M. Jones of Linn County to Cooper, Dec. 15, 1897.

fees. Voluntary contributions were obviously the main source; some were received at any rate.¹⁵ According to U'Ren, Cooper gave him to understand that funds for the Union Party came largely from the officials elected at the first state convention on July 9, 1896. However, several of these men, who were not identified, denied ever having given any money.¹⁶

Murky though the financial background of the party was, it cannot have spent any considerable sums. To the contrary, it was always desperately short of money, and Cooper saw himself forced to send out several begging-letters. In December, 1897, he wrote to the chairmen of the Democratic Party and the National Silver Party and asked whether they could help with some funds. A spokesman for the latter wrote back that each state would have to rely upon itself for that purpose.¹⁷

Cooper tried again to secure some money from the Democratic national committee: a sum of \$150 to \$200 would be needed to carry on his office work. But his plea was obviously to no avail.¹⁸ In mid-February, 1898, he gave up headquarters in Portland and returned

¹⁵See A. S. Barnes to Cooper, July 2, 1897, and Jan. 17, 1898; R. M. Veatch to Cooper, Sept. 7, 1897; Cooper to W. M. Crowell, Dec. 8, 1897; Cooper to O. P. Coshov, Feb. 1, 1898; Cooper to H. C. Watson, Feb. 1, 1898.

¹⁶See The Oregonian, Jan. 5, 1898, p. 5.

¹⁷Cooper to Sen. J. K. Jones, Dec. 13; Cooper to C. D. Lane, Dec. 11; L. W. Linn to Cooper, Dec. 16.

¹⁸Cooper to Sen. J. K. Jones, Jan. 27, 1898; Cooper to J. H. Townsend, Feb. 1, 1898.

to his home in McMinnville. The Oregonian reported that money was so scarce that he could no longer even pay for postage stamps.¹⁹

THE PENNOYER "PUSH" AND RUMORS ABOUT OTHER SCHEMES

In April, 1897, rumors started that Sylvester Pennoyer, former governor of Oregon and currently mayor of Portland, might seek another gubernatorial term.²⁰ His plans were seen as trying to mass Democrats and free-silver Republicans behind him to form a coalition with the Mitchell Republican faction. Pennoyer loyalists tried to infiltrate the Multnomah Democratic Club and the Portland chapter of the Patriots of America, in order to secure followers and delegates for the Democratic conventions of 1898.²¹

Pennoyer had been a Democrat when elected to his two terms as governor in 1886 and 1890. But after the Democratic state convention of 1892 had stalled his ambition for national office, he went over to the Populists in May of that year. The governor deeply annoyed his former party friends in the remainder of his term, his famous

¹⁹Feb. 28, p. 10.

²⁰See The Oregonian, April 26, p. 8. Pennoyer had been born in New York state in 1831. He graduated from Harvard Law School in 1854, but never practiced his profession. He came to Oregon in 1855, taught school, and since 1862 became engaged in the lumber business, where he acquired a modest fortune. From 1868 to 1871 he edited the Oregon Herald. Biographical notes are in Hines, op. cit., pp. 1172-3; Portrait and Biographical Record of the Willamette Valley, p. 1046; Robert C. Clark in Dictionary of American Biography, XIV, 445-6.

²¹See The Oregonian, June 7, p. 6; June 14, p. 8.

Christmas letter to the new president, Grover Cleveland, being but one example.²²

In June, 1896, Pennoyer surprised friends and foes alike by insisting that he was back in the Democratic ranks. The Democrats, however, were far from enthusiastic in welcoming back the lost son, and in Populist circles the aversion against the renegade became next to insuperable. Neither party seemed inclined to nominate the mayor for any political office any longer. The Oregonian, which was in constant warfare with Pennoyer and denounced him regularly -- sometimes in terms unusual even for this newspaper -- concluded that his exit from public life would be welcomed by an almost unanimous voice.²³

Pennoyer must soon have realized that his chances to win some office again were rather poor. Therefore he seemed to be content with pushing candidates of his choice for governor and mayor of Portland, although in the beginning he refused to give away any names.²⁴ Besides, he probably hoped for a while that he might play a leading role in uniting all reform forces under the Democratic banner. But even this hope seemed to falter. Democrats in the

²²See Cross, op. cit., pp. 76-9, 95-101.

²³See Pennoyer's letter, printed in The Oregonian, June 22, 1897, p. 4; ibid., April 26, p. 8; June 14, p. 8; June 20, p. 4. Pennoyer also attracted a good deal of animosity by the way he ran the city of Portland. One critic, whose views were probably shared by many others, accused him of yielding to the "Tammany stripe of politics" and of being a man of the "city rabble"; see H. S. Lyman to the editor, printed ibid., March 18, 1898, p. 10.

²⁴See ibid., June 21, 1897, p. 10; June 28, p. 8; Nov. 1, p. 1.

state were in open revolt against Pennoyer and seemed to favor a union of forces along the line of Cooper in overwhelming numbers.²⁵ One thing Pennoyer did accomplish at any rate: he caused considerable confusion in the ranks of his party. Some leading fellow Democrats even discussed the plan to leave the office of governor voluntarily to the Populists in the fusion negotiations for the 1898 campaign, for the only reason to forestall a possible Pennoyer candidacy.²⁶

What the mayor's definite plans might be, and where he would eventually stand, was and remained one of the favority guessing games of the political season in Oregon in late 1897 and early 1898. Probably state central committee chairman Starr made the best prediction, when he expressed his belief that eventually the whole Democratic Party, including Pennoyer and his followers from Multnomah County, would fall in line with the Union movement.²⁷

The small group of Mitchell Republicans, who still seemed to believe that the former senator was a free-silver man, were also active in the fall of 1897. They thought of holding separate primaries and seeking support outside of Multnomah County to elect Mitchell followers to the various Republican conventions. For a while they seemed willing to take part in the regular Republican

²⁵See for example, The Corvallis Times, Jan. 12, 1898.

²⁶See The Oregonian, Jan. 11, 1898, p. 5; Feb. 12, p. 10.

²⁷Ibid., Dec. 31, 1897, p. 8.

primaries; but feeling that they did not get a fair deal, they finally went ahead with their own schemes.²⁸

At least in some parts of the state the Pennoyer "push," as The Oregonian used to call it, the Mitchell Republicans, and the Union Bimetallic Party were variously linked together and rumored to make common cause and secret deals. Mid-road Populists were especially prone to believe in conspiracy theories to that effect.²⁹ Some people in Benton County obviously thought that the Declaration of Principles, adopted at Albany on June 2, 1897, was a scheme of Pennoyer. Others saw the Union Party as a common scheme of Pennoyer and Mitchell. A secret agreement between these two gentlemen was also seen by still other observers: Mitchell would be reelected to the U. S. Senate, Pennoyer would become governor, and his henchmen would control Portland.³⁰

Some Populists in Jackson County believed that Mitchell, Pennoyer, and David Thompson -- who may have broken with the Union Party by now, although there are no clear indications³¹ -- were controlling Cooper's hands in their interest and were "furnishing" his headquarters

²⁸See ibid., Nov. 1, 1897, p. 8; Dec. 29, 1897, p. 10; Jan. 11, 1898, p. 5.

²⁹See for example The Oregonian, Jan. 5, 1898, p. 5.

³⁰See Eugene Palmer to Cooper, June 29, 1897; W. M. Crowell to Cooper, July 2, 1897; R. M. Veatch to Cooper, Dec. 17, 1897; F. E. Olson to Cooper, Jan. 12, 1898. See also The Oregonian, Jan. 19, 1898, p. 10.

³¹Some people seemed to have a suspicion to that effect: see W. M. Crowell to Cooper, July 16, 1898.

in Portland. Rumors that Pennoyer and Cooper were working in the interest of Mitchell were also reported from Marion County.³²

The most persistent rumor was that of a close cooperation between the Union Party and the Mitchell followers. The fact that the party had been started by Republicans, and that Cooper had belonged to that organization himself, certainly played a role here. Besides, some Silver Republicans refused to take part in the Union movement, and others were said to condemn, openly or not, the Populists for having prevented the reelection of Mitchell in 1897.³³ The suspicions may have been kept alive by a conference Mitchell had with some local people on a farm in Yamhill County in early December, 1897, although it was reported that the result must have been disappointing for him.³⁴

Cooper, of course, denied that the Union Party had anything to do with the former senator, and maintained that it was not a Mitchell organization by any means:

The union party of Oregon will always oppose the election of John H. Mitchell or any other man to the United States senate who is not avowedly the champion of the free and unlimited coinage of silver. We are particularly and emphatically opposed to the return of J. H. Mitchell to the senate. I have always

³²See T. J. Howell to Cooper, Dec. 28 and Dec. 29, 1897; J. L. Fennington and J. C. Boswick to Cooper, Dec. 30, 1897; K. L. Hibbard to Cooper, Jan. 6, 1898.

³³Vague charges in that direction see in The Oregonian, Jan. 5, 1898, p. 5.

³⁴See ibid., Dec. 13, 1897, p. 5.

been on friendly terms with him, but he cannot bank on our personal friendship to advance his own political aspirations.³⁵

The rumors, however, would not die, and in his last letter Cooper saw himself once more compelled to deny that either Mitchell or Pennoyer worked for the Union movement. Cooper stated his confidence that the latter, although he did not contribute anything to the cause, would not oppose it after all. In the case of Mitchell he had lost all hope; anybody caught working for the former senator, he wrote, would be declared an enemy of the reform forces.³⁶

RESISTANCE BY MID-ROAD POPULISTS

The question of union or fusion with other reform parties is almost as old as the People's Party itself. Two opposing groups faced each other. On the one side stood those who were willing to throw the old Populist demands -- on transportation, land, aliens, direct legislation and elections -- overboard and campaign on a free-silver basis only.³⁷ They were opposed by the "genuine" Populists, or "Middle-of-the-roaders," as they were usually called. This faction wanted to maintain the separate party organization at all costs and stand by every plank of the revered St. Louis and Omaha platforms of 1892. For them the doctrine of the free coinage of

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Cooper to C. P. Rutherford, Feb. 26, 1898.

³⁷ See Cross, op. cit., pp. 85-90, 102-3, 109, and 117-21, on fusion talks in 1892 and 1894; see also Hicks, op. cit., pp. 349-50.

filver contained a good deal of nonsense. Money was created by the fiat of government; they advocated a "scientific money," redeemable neither in gold nor in silver, and in quantities adequate for the needs of the country.³⁸

Many genuine Populists harbored strong resentments against the Democrats. That resulted in part from local quarrels, but mostly it can be traced back to the elections of 1896. Populists still seethed that the Democrats had put separate candidates for the congressional races in the field, thus causing the defeat of the Populist candidates by hair-thin majorities.³⁹ Bryan's defeat in the November presidential election was another disappointment hard to swallow. Some Populists argued that they had made sacrifices for the common cause, and felt deeply offended when Democrats charged Populist theories with having caused McKinley's victory. As one paper wrote:

In their honest attempt to accomplish reform measures, the populists, not only in many states, but nationally, sacrificed much by their magnanimity, and in every instance have not been treated with even common decency by the forces they have joined hands with.⁴⁰

The Populist state central committee was firmly in the hands of Mid-roaders, with Young, U'Ren and Holt as leading personalities. In

³⁸See ibid., pp. 316-8, and p. 327 N. 16; Harrington, op. cit., pp. 70-2; S. H. Holt to Cooper, May 19, 1897; The Oregonian, April 21, 1898, p. 4.

³⁹See O. P. Coshov to Cooper, Dec. 27, 1897; Cross, op. cit., pp. 139-40, 143-5.

⁴⁰Baker City Eastern Oregon Observer, reprinted in The Oregonian, April 26, 1897, p. 4.

April, 1897, the committee met in Portland in order "to determine the sentiment of the populist party in Oregon as to disorganizing and uniting with another party on the single proposition of the free and unlimited coinage of silver." Full consent was reached that the party would be maintained, and the following resolution was unanimously adopted:

Resolved, That it is the sense of our state central committee that the people's party is a union of reform forces; that it is the original and only national bimetallic party, and that we cordially invite all who are opposed to the single gold standard and its allied trusts and monopolies to act with us, and that we are opposed to any attempts at fusion with any other political party or faction under any other name or upon any different platform than that adopted by the people's party national convention, at St. Louis.⁴¹

The conclusion, then, seemed clear to Mid-rovers:

No more fusion in Oregon! Our motto is "Principle, not office." All we have to do is stick to our principle, and the offices will come to us.⁴²

The reasons for the mid-road attitude were somewhat more specified by other party members. Some saw in the Union movement the danger that the Democratic Party and its repudiated leadership would be rehabilitated. In the end, the rival organization might well gain the upper hand and totally swallow the People's Party.⁴³

⁴¹Ibid., April 16, 1897, p. 1. An "Address to the People" was also adopted, which repeated much the same with other words.

⁴²Ibid., Apr. 26, 1897, p. 4, reprinted from Eastern Oregon Observer.

⁴³See M. L. Olmsted to Cooper, June 25, 1897; Eastern Oregon Observer, reprinted in The Oregonian, April 27, 1897, p. 4.

In such a case, Young wrote, he would be subjected to political beliefs he could not agree with. He pointed to the irregularities in ballotting and counting of votes, by which means the Democratic legislatures and administrations in southern states perpetuated their reign. He had been a Republican, Young wrote, then become a Democrat, and finally found a political home in the Populist Party; he would not return to the democratic ranks to become an "involuntary adjunct to bourbonism."⁴⁴

Up to the last, some genuine Populists saw nothing but frauds and tricks from the side of the Democrats in fusion arrangements; like the "country populist," who warned his party fellows:

An attempt is being made by the party machinery in a number of counties, through a bogus referendum, to turn the people's party body and breeches into the camp of another party. . . . Populist voters, where is your boasted love of liberty and manhood? Let no one be so craven as to vote for the fraud. Vote not upon it at all.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ See his letter, printed ibid., Jan. 24, 1898, p. 5. John C. Young was a nephew of Brigham Young. He was born in Salt Lake City in 1850 [1851]. He taught school, read law for one year, and then became a reporter for the Salt Lake City Tribune, where he ridiculed the Mormons pseudonymously. In 1879 he went to Idaho as a miner but returned to the Tribune staff in 1881. Six years later Young moved to Baker City, where he became engaged in mining. He was the first secretary of the first silver club in Oregon in 1892 and ran unsuccessfully for the state legislature two years later. See An Illustrated History of Baker, Grant, Malheur and Harney Counties, With a Brief Outline of the Early History of the State of Oregon (Spokane: Western Historical Publishing Co., 1902), pp. 191, 193; Hines, op. cit., p. 293; Oregon Historical Society, scrap book No. 8, p. 80.

⁴⁵ Letter to the editor, printed in The Oregonian, Mar. 18, 1898, p. 8. See also W. D. Hardin to the editor, ibid., Mar. 5, 1898, p. 3.

Mistrust and suspicion towards the Union Party and its leaders was also to be observed. The state central committee gave expression to such feelings:

A careful investigation of the alleged "union party" will reveal the fact that it is composed largely of self-appointed leaders, and it is better calculated to disrupt than to unite the reform forces of the state, and that all who went into it from patriotic motives are being misled. . . . There can be no united action with the people's party .⁴⁶ under the leadership of Mr. Cooper's so-called "union" party.

Some genuine Populists were theoretically willing to leave their party, but only after a formal vote of disorganization and under the condition that the other reform parties would do the same. Then the way would be free for a true union which they could join. Otherwise they would prefer to stay in the middle of the road.⁴⁷

But this was the exception. When Mid-roaders talked about union, they usually meant with it that all reformers should join the People's Party, the original reform party, which had a united, vigorous, and harmonious organization in the field. This essential point is very aptly summarized in a letter by the Reverend McCain; it may be quoted here in length:

I note that you have gone into a regular party organization name, platform and all. I also note that you have adopted the principles of the Populist party almost in toto. The silver Republicans have organized and they too have adopted Populist principles. That puts three reform parties in the field instead of

⁴⁶Printed ibid., Dec. 12, 1897, p. 9.

⁴⁷See ibid., Feb. 22, 1898, p. 3; C. S. Dustin to Cooper, Jan. 4, 1898.

one. Now what earthly use is there for these three parties, all believing in the same doctrines and demanding the same reforms? Ten years of time and millions of money have been spent in building up the great Populist party until it is at the point of success, now if these people are sincere in their professions of faith in the Populist principles then why not fall in line with that great reform party and help it on to victory. Pardon me, my dear friend but it looks to me like a move in one of two directions. Either a shrewd plan on the part of the old parties to keep these people out of the Populist ranks lest they will carry the state at the next election, or else a strike of office seekers who have no hope from the Populist party. No brother, I think the proper thing [is] for these people is to line up with the grand men who have conducted the fight up to date and help win. You say it is not the purpose to have a new party and yet you work to the end of perpetuating it. I think you are honest but mistaken.⁴⁸

Indeed there was much to be said in favor of this point. Cooper himself confessed that he was a Populist "in all that goes to make up a populist in principle." The party of the future had to adopt Populist principles and get "the best blood from the old parties." Unfortunately, the People's Party was just another party, governed by political bosses instead of by the people, and therefore he could not honor McCain's request.⁴⁹

The main fear of the Mid-road Populists seemed to be that the various elements within the reform movement would eventually unite on the smallest common denominator only, and important planks of the Populist creed might be abandoned in a common platform. This was the reason why they insisted on the adoption of Populist principles, or

⁴⁸ I. S. McCain to Cooper, Jan. 9, 1898. See also letter by A. P. Nelson to the editor, in The Oregonian, Feb. 11, 1898, p. 7; E. E. Lange to the editor, ibid., March 23, p. 10.

⁴⁹ Cooper to I. S. McCain, Feb. 5, 1898. Cf. the chapter on the debate of union or fusion, above, pp. 68-74.

at least important parts of them.⁵⁰ Most probably, these Populists would never have united on a free-silver platform only. However, there was not the slightest indication that a common platform for the next election would confine itself to this single issue. And the more they realized that, and in view of the near-certainty that some form of fusion was about to be achieved, resistance from the side of the Mid-roaders dwindled.

A decision about the future course of the party was expected on occasion of a conference at Portland on January 19, 1898. Anti-fusionists conducted a battle of retreat. U'Ren moved that the state convention be called for February 23 instead of March 23. A two-hour debate followed, then the motion was defeated by a vote of 22 to 4. Another motion by U'Ren disapproving of fusion in general terms was discussed for more than three hours and then defeated, 9 votes to 4 with numerous abstentions.⁵¹

The advocates of fusion had carried the day, and the last obstacle on the way to fusion arrangements between the various reform parties had been removed. Many Mid-roaders, reluctant though they

⁵⁰ See The Oregonian, Jan. 9, 1898, p. 3, with regard to Umatilla County, and Feb. 13, p. 6, for Benton and Wasco Counties. See also J. H. Wiles to Cooper, July 1, 1897; K. L. Hibbard to Cooper, Dec. 23; A. L. McFadden to Cooper, Dec. 24 and Dec. 29; O. C. Beck to Cooper, Dec. 28; W. A. Wood to Cooper, Dec. 28.

⁵¹ See The Oregonian, Jan. 20, p. 10. The votes were by counties; Clackamas, Jackson, and Lincoln voted for U'Ren's motions, the fourth anti-fusion vote is not to be determined. The abstentions probably meant that these delegates wanted to wait for the outcome of party primaries or committee decisions in their counties, which they would then support.

still may have been, finally recognized the given facts, accepted them as the lesser evil in comparison to the reelection of the Republican administration, and joined the rolling bandwagon.⁵² Some unflinching party stalwarts would not give in, however, and a separate Mid-road ticket at the June elections had to be reckoned with. How numerous this group was, remained to be seen.

⁵²The letter by I. S. McCain to Cooper, Feb. 4, 1898, may be interpreted in that way.

CHAPTER VI

THE CAMPAIGN AND ELECTION OF 1898 (MARCH - JUNE, 1898)

THE STATE CONVENTIONS OF MARCH 23-26, 1898

Oregon was the first state in the country to hold congressional and state elections in 1898, and the nation watched closely:

No more captivating political study is before the country today than the proposed fusion of Bryan forces in Oregon. . . . It is evident that no June election in Oregon in recent years has received so much attention from the nation at large as this one is going to receive.¹

When the state conventions approached, it was clear that some sort of fusion would be arrived at. Delegates gathered in Portland full of hope and optimism. Publisher Heath of the McMinnville Telephone-Register, a Democratic delegate and state central committeeman, gave a preview to his readers:

Well, the fight of the people of the state of Oregon against the corruption that has ruled the republican party and thus the state for a number of years past, is on. The delegations are coming in on every train and there is a spirit of fellowship evidenced that presages success. Men who have been reported by partisanship are congregating in little knots about the hotels and swearing fealty to the cause of the people. . . . The majority of populists like the democrats are looking for results along reform lines rather than personal gratification of pocket or ambition. . . . Every one has recognized the fact

¹The Oregonian, Feb. 24, p. 4.

that disruption means defeat and that the introduction of disruptive factors is a part of the republican campaign.²

On March 22, about 50 Mid-road Populists held an informal meeting with Dr. Embree in the chair. Fusion Populists and Democrats begged them not to disrupt fusion and were willing to grant almost any terms to keep the minority faction from bolting. The Mid-roaders unanimously adopted the following resolution:

Whereas, There is being made at this time in the state of Oregon a desperate effort to destroy and disrupt the people's party and deliver it over to the democracy under the guise of union or fusion, and,

Whereas, We, the undersigned, delegates to the state convention of the populist party, are opposed to union, or fusion, in any form, save and except on the people's party national platform, and under people's party leadership; therefore, be it

Resolved, That we demand that any union or fusion shall be on the people's party platform, and under populist leadership.³

The first contest in the Populist convention was over the selection of a temporary chairman; fusionist C. C. Hogue of Albany scored an overwhelming victory against national committeeman John C. Luce of Grant County. When the committee on credentials got down to business, it found a severe problem at hand: contesting delegations from three counties demanded to be seated -- Baker, Polk, and Jackson -- and a heated struggle ensued. In the meantime, Luce was given the opportunity to explain the Mid-road attitude to the delegates.

²Telephone-Register, March 24. Heath went on to raise the defamatory and totally unfounded reproach that the Mid-road Populists had been bought up with Republican funds.

³The Oregonian, March 23, p. 12.

He asserted that "the final salvation of the laboring man" lay with the genuine Populists and urged his party fellows not to surrender to the Democrats and thus forfeit the chance for victory in the national election of 1900.⁴

The committee on credentials reported on March 24 and suggested to seat the fusionists from Baker and the genuine Populists from Polk, because these delegations were regarded as having been legally elected. In the case of Jackson, such a decision could not be arrived at, and it was recommended to seat half of both delegations. The committee report was adopted against 37 nays. Then permanent organization was completed, and nine delegates to the fusion committee were elected. On the third day of the convention, the party platform was adopted as a whole by a vote of 189 to 18, with 7 blanks. Sixteen Mid-roaders then walked out, and 13 others followed them shortly thereafter. They organized their own convention, with S. H. Holt as chairman, and called a state convention for April 14 at Portland.⁵

Democrats and Silver Republicans proceeded to business without delay on March 23 and then waited patiently until their Populist brethren had finally set up the platform. Both conventions then

⁴Ibid., March 24, pp. 1 and 8.

⁵Ibid., March 25, p. 8; March 26, p. 8. The bolters came from: Jackson (10), Baker (8), Polk (7), Multnomah (2), Linn (1), and Grant (1).

adopted this platform without any changes.⁶ It read essentially as follows:

United in a common cause for the sacred purpose of preserving the principles of government by the people, in fact as well as in name, restoring and maintaining equality, under that government, of all classes, we, the people's democratic and silver-republican parties of the state of Oregon, waiving all minor points of difference, and uniting for the purpose of carrying out the great underlying principles upon which we are all agreed, do make and present to the people of this state the following declaration of principles, and to the carrying out of which we solemnly pledge each and every candidate upon our united ticket:

We demand the free and unrestricted coinage of silver and gold at the present legal ratio of 16 to 1, without waiting for the consent of foreign nations; . . .

We demand a national money, safe and sound, issued by the general government only, without the intervention of banks of issue, to be a full legal tender for all debts, public and private; also a just, equitable and efficient means of distribution direct to the people through the lawful disbursements of the government.

We demand that the volume of circulating medium be speedily increased to an amount sufficient to meet the demands of the business and population of this country, and to restore the just level of prices of labor and production. . . .

We demand that there shall be no further issue of United States interest-bearing bonds.

We demand that postal savings banks be established by the government for the safe deposit of the savings of the people and to facilitate exchange.

We demand the election of United States senators by direct vote of the people.

We demand the initiative and referendum system for law-making in its optional form, local, state and national, and the submission by congress of all important national questions for an advisory vote of the people, until such time as the national constitution shall have been amended so as to provide for direct legislation.

We condemn as dangerous and unjust the surrender, in all departments of the government, to the influence of trusts, corporations and aggregations of wealth generally; and the packing of the highest courts of the land with corporation lawyers, too ready to do the will of their late employers, and

⁶Ibid., March 24, p. 8; March 25, p. 8.

to set aside valid and wholesome laws passed by the legislative departments of the states and government, upon flimsy pretexts, at the behests of such institutions.

We are apposed to government by injunction.

In state matters, we demand:

A simple and well-guarded registration law.

A more equitable mode of appointing judges of election. . . .

We denounce and condemn the corrupt and extravagant republican legislative assemblies, and charge that the republican party, in its eagerness for the spoils of office, has become divided into warring factions, so that it is incapable of government as exemplified by the condition existing in the office of the state treasurer, there being at this time more than \$50,000 therein wrung from the people by the process of taxation, while state warrants are stamped "Not paid for want of funds."

We demand that all district and county officers be placed upon salaries commensurate with the duties to be performed by them.

Inasmuch as railroad and other corporate property is not bearing its proportion of taxation, we demand that such property shall bear its just and equal share of the expenses of government.⁷

The three conventions had elected nine delegates each -- one for each judicial district -- to the fusion committee for the distribution of offices. On March 25, the fourth day of the conventions, this committee finally got down to business. No records of the deliberations have been preserved, but a very lively bickering behind the scenes must have taken place. "The only possible agreement" that could be arrived at apportioned the offices thus:

Populists: four (governor; attorney-general; superintendent of public instruction; and state printer); Democrats: three (treasurer; supreme judge; U. S. Congress, first district); Silver Republicans: two (secretary of state; U. S. Congress, second district).⁸

⁷Printed ibid., March 26, p. 8; Telephone-Register, March 31.

⁸See The Oregonian, March 27, p. 1.

The Democratic members of the fusion committee had tried very hard to get the office of governor. They were even willing to be content with only one additional spot on the ticket, but they did not prevail with their demand. They offered a deal to that effect to the Populist convention, which, however, rejected it, adopting the committee report instead. Then nominations were made. Four names were proposed for governor, but the contest was between judge John Waldo and state senator William R. King, who had the backing of the Democratic Pennoyer loyalists. On the fifth ballot, King was nominated with 109 against 106 votes.⁹

The standard-bearer of the reform forces was only 33 years old. He had been born near Walla Walla, Washington Territory, on October 3, 1864. The family moved to Oregon in 1873 and settled at Jordan Valley (then Baker County) five years later. King attended the Agricultural College at Corvallis from 1882 to 1885 and studied law at Central Normal College in Danville, Indiana, from 1889 to 1891. He was then admitted to the bar and practiced for a short time in Indianapolis, before going back to Oregon in 1892. He practiced at Vale and was elected as a Democrat to the Oregon House of Representatives in 1892. One year later, he moved to Baker City, switching

⁹See ibid., March 27, pp. 1 and 8; March 28, p. 4.

his party allegiance to Populist, King was elected state senator for Baker and Malheur Counties in 1894.¹⁰

In the other races in the Populist convention, Joseph L. Story of Wasco was nominated for attorney-general and Charles A. Fitch, owner and editor of the Oregon City Herald, for state printer. Clatsop County superintendent of schools H. S. Lyman won the nomination for superintendent of public instruction.¹¹

The democrats were a pritty sick crowd when the report of the conference committee was read to them . . . ; but they took the pill with the best grace at their command, and, after a brief battle, adopted the report.¹²

For supreme judge, they nominated William M. Ramsey of Yamhill over John Burnett. John O. Booth of Josephine, member of the Union state central committee, beat Dr. Daly, a state senator from Lake, in

¹⁰See An Illustrated History of Baker, Grant, Malheur and Harney Counties, pp. 576-7; Gaston, The Centennial History of Oregon, 1811-1912, IV, 1014, 1017; History of the Bench and Bar of Oregon, pp. 165-6; The Oregonian, March 27, 1898, p. 9; Telephone-Register, April 7, 1898; Weekly Eugene City Guard, April 30, 1898.

¹¹See The Oregonian, March 27, p. 8. Story was born in Missouri in 1845 and came to Oregon in 1853. He attended McMinnville Baptist College and served briefly in the Civil War. Then he taught school until 1869, before becoming a school principal in Umatilla County. He studied law simultaneously and was admitted to the bar in 1881. He practiced as anti-corporation lawyer in The Dalles. See ibid., March 27, p. 9.

¹²Ibid., March 27, p. 8.

the race for treasurer. Robert M. Veatch of Douglas County barely won the nomination for the first congressional district.¹³

During the fusion negotiations there had never been any doubt that the Silver Republicans would receive the office of secretary of state, in order to renominate incumbent Harrison R. Kincaid of Lane County. There was virtually no opposition to him. The race for U. S.

¹³ Ibid.; also March 28, p. 4. Ramsey was born in Iowa in 1846 and came to Oregon one year later. He graduated from McMinnville Baptist College in 1866, taught school, studied law, and was admitted to the bar in 1868. He was elected Yamhill county judge in 1870, at age 24, and served for four years. Besides his private law practice, he was dean of the Law Department at Willamette University; in 1887 and 1888 he served as mayor of Salem. See Hines, op. cit., p. 814; Gaston, The Centennial History of Oregon, 1811-1912, II, 948-9; Oregon Historical Society, scrap book No. 132, p. 226

Booth was born in Iowa in 1848 and came to Oregon in 1852. He studied at Wilbur Academy and was elected Douglas County superintendent of schools in 1870. In 1878 he was defeated for the state legislature. Booth was engaged in numerous businesses at various places before he settled at Grant's Pass in 1894, becoming a hotel manager, constructor, and property owner there. See Portrait and Biographical Record of Western Oregon. Containing Original Sketches of many well known Citizens of the Past and Present (Chicago: Chapman Publishing Company, 1903), pp. 501-2; The Oregonian, March 27, 1898, p. 9.

Veatch was born in Illinois in 1843. He worked in various occupations in this state and in Iowa, before he went via Nevada to California in 1864. From there he proceeded to Oregon in 1865. He attended Eugene Academy, Willamette University, and the Agricultural College at Corvallis, being in the first class to graduate from this institution in 1870. He also operated a farm and read law, although he never practised. Veatch was elected to the lower house in 1882 and 1884 and to the state senate in 1886 and 1890; in 1892 he ran unsuccessfully for U. S. Representative. He served as register of the U. S. Land Office at Roseburg from 1893 to early 1898. See Gaston, The Centennial History of Oregon, 1811-1912, II, 476, 479; Portrait and Biographical Record of the Willamette Valley, pp. 1520-1; Oregon Historical Society, scrap book No. 67, pp. 209-10.

Congress, second district, went almost as smoothly, and C. M. Donaldson of Baker County was nominated.¹⁴

The Populist bolters met again on March 26 and revised their earlier decision to hold their own state convention. Instead, they made several nominations -- among others, Luce for governor -- and left the remaining spots on the ticket to be filled later by district delegates. Holt was elected state central committee chairman of the new Mid-road organization. The Omaha and St. Louis national platforms of 1892 were indorsed in entirety and supplemented by some demands pertaining to state matters.

The delegates were perfectly aware of the fact that they had not the slightest chance for success in June. The only purpose of their course was to preserve and maintain the autonomy of the Populist Party. They issued an open address to the Populists of Oregon, in which they bitterly attacked the fusionists. They charged that out of 215 delegates attending the Populist state convention, 134 were

¹⁴See The Oregonian, March 27, p. 8. Donaldson was born in New York in 1834. He moved to Iowa in 1838 and to Oregon in 1852, where he was engaged mainly in the mining business. Via Illinois he went to Tennessee during the Civil War. He was an organizer of the Republican Party there, served as sheriff, and ran unsuccessfully for secretary of state. About 1875 Donaldson moved to St. Louis, where he became secretary of the largest cotton company in the U. S. In 1884 he went to Colorado and managed a mine in Leadville. Four years later he returned to Oregon and settled at Baker City, continuing in his last profession. He attended the Republican national conventions of 1888 and 1892 as delegate, and the Republican state conventions of 1890, 1892, and 1896. See Hines, op. cit., pp. 1024-5; Republican League Register, passim; The Oregonian, March 27, 1898, p. 9, with numerous errors, mainly concerning dates.

"office-holders, candidates and men seeking nomination" on the various levels. These delegates as well as the common platform were said to be unpopulistic, and therefore unacceptable. The attack concluded:

By the adoption of said pla-form it became apparent to all true populists that the convention, as there constituted, was controlled by men who were no longer populists, but were office-hunters and spoilsmen, and was not, therefore, a populist convention, but in truth and in fact a democratic-silver-republican convention, the delegates there assembled who were populists by conviction and principle were failing in their duty to their party in longer remaining in said convention.¹⁵

Candidates on the state fusion ticket held an informal meeting for the discussion of campaign strategy on April 7 in Portland. As a result of their deliberations, a fusion executive committee was formed and immediately opened headquarters in Portland. It consisted of Frank Williams, Populist; R. S. Sheridan, Democrat; and Seneca Smith, Silver Republican.¹⁶

Cooper had no more part in all these developments. He attended the Silver Republican state convention as a guest only, but was elected to the state central committee of this party. The Oregonian reported him as having remarked that he had been crucified and would go down as a martyr to the cause for reform. He returned to

¹⁵See ibid., March 27, pp. 8 and 9.

¹⁶See ibid., April 8, p. 10; April 11, p. 10.

McMinnville, the paper continued, as a thoroughly disgusted man, ruminating over the uncertainties of politics.¹⁷

THE CAMPAIGN AND THE WAR WITH SPAIN

The campaign and election of 1898 was overshadowed by the war with Spain. All other differences notwithstanding, on this particular issue the parties were thoroughly united. Two examples may be given to illustrate that the fusion forces were probably as bellicose as their Republican opponents. Cooper had offered a rather mild resolution to the Silver Republican conference at Portland:

We, who applaud the doctrine of Monroe, have practiced the policy of Nero. We have craved the friendship of a nation whose friendship would be a blight to any country. We have proclaimed ourselves a refuge for the oppressed of all nations and have helped to strangle the people who are our nearest neighbors. We have proclaimed in platforms for the independence of Cuba and have lent aid in crushing it.¹⁸

A few days before the declaration of war, which passed Congress on April 25, the Lane County Union convention adopted this resolution "by rising vote and three cheers:"

There is not room in the Western hemisphere for the American flag of freedom and the Spanish emblem of despotism and slavery; and we believe Congress is obeying the dictates of God and humanity in declaring that the frightful Spanish atrocities in the

¹⁷ See ibid., March 24, p. 8; March 28, p. 4. It is interesting to note that Cooper became a socialist in the course of the next years. He was socialist candidate for state printer in the elections of June, 1906. See sheet with abstract of votes in John D. Stevens papers, Oregon Historical Society.

¹⁸ Ibid., March 25, p. 8.

island of Cuba must cease. We pledge to Congress and the president our sincere and earnest support to the end that the armies and navies of the United States assist the people of Cuba in establishing a free and independent government and banish forever from American soil the last decaying remnant of old world despotism. We demand the absolute freedom and independence of Cuba.¹⁹

Stalwart Republicans took the opportunity of the war to talk the people into believing that a vote for the fusion ticket would dangerously hamper the war efforts. The Oregonian asked how the state should vote, so as to make a record for itself and do the best thing for the country; the paper gave this answer:

The fusion parties stood for unsound theories and experiments, especially in financial matters. Their doctrines carried with them "distrust, disorder and weakness;" the ascendancy of these doctrines would distract the country, enfeeble it, and make it less able to grapple with the serious problems of the time. Oregon was sending many of her sons to war; would the policies of the fusion parties be suited to support the soldiers and give to the state the necessary strength in arms and finances? The conclusion was arrived at that it would be destructive, if not insane, to dally with monetary fallacies now:

These false and dangerous notions about money, which, moreover, are intimately connected with socialistic theories that run towards mischief, and even towards anarchy, already have dangerous political power, in congress and elsewhere. It is a

¹⁹Quoted from Weekly Eugene City Guard, April 30.

duty of the rational citizenship of Oregon . . . to set a check at this time upon the further spread of these errors.²⁰

The main targets of the paper were gubernatorial candidate King and congressional candidate Veatch. While serving in the legislature, both had opposed every measure for the equipment and support of the Oregon National Guard. The paper quoted a statement without source -- obviously made by one of the two men -- which called the Guard "a force of mercenaries, actuated by no patriotism, but kept for the protection of capitalists and plutocrats, ready for intimidation of the masses of the people, at the bidding of plutocratic masters." No friend of any soldier, Oregon gave to the war, so the conclusion of the comment ran, should even think of voting for either King or Veatch.²¹

The Baker Republican struck a similar chord by urging the voters to elect to Congress the Republican candidate Moody. It said that he would do all within his power to preserve the nation; he was a patriot who would "take the last dollar and the last drop of blood" to defend his country. His opponent Donaldson, on the other hand, had only one goal, namely to down the administration, "and with it must fall our war with Spain and the freedom of Cuba."²²

²⁰The Oregonian, May 5, p. 4; see also May 13, p. 4; May 17, p. 4; May 27, p. 4; May 30, p. 4; June 1, p. 4; June 3, p. 4.

²¹See ibid., May 19, p. 4; also May 23, p. 4; May 29, p. 4, with a reprint from the Pacific Tribune.

²²Reprinted in The Oregonian, May 23, p. 4.

Thus, by insinuation and by unveiled defamation, the fusion candidates were described by some of their opponents as unpatriotic, dangerous politicians, who put their selfish cause above the welfare of their country.

THE ELECTIONS OF JUNE 6, 1898

On June 6, the Union forces were dealt a severe blow at the polls. The entire Republican state ticket was elected by comfortable majorities; T. T. Geer received 45,104 votes for governor, as against 34,530 votes cast for his Union opponent Will R. King. Both Republican candidates were elected to Congress; Moody beat Donaldson by 6,598 votes, and the majority of Tongue over Veatch was 2,029 votes. In the races for the state legislature, Union candidates won only three out of sixteen seats in the Senate and 18 out of 60 in the House of Representatives.²³

No complete results for all counties could be obtained. Union tickets scored considerable victories and elected most of the county officers in the counties of Baker, Crook, Linn, Malheur, and Wallowa. In Benton, Clackamas, Harney, Lake, Morrow, Union, and Umatilla, Unionists also did very well.²⁴ This is probably true for Coos,

²³ See Biennial Report of the Secretary of State of the State of Oregon, 1898 (Salem: W. H. Leeds, state printer, 1899), pp. 7-10.

²⁴ See An Illustrated History of Baker, Grant, Malheur and Harney Counties, pp. 195-7, 536-7, 650-1; An Illustrated History of Central Oregon (Spokane: Western Historical Publishing Company, 1905), pp. 744-5, 874; William Parsons and W. S. Shiach, An Illustrated History of Umatilla County and of Morrow County (n. p.: W. H. Lever, publisher, 1902), pp. 153, 290; An Illustrated History of Union and

Douglas, Josephine, and Polk Counties as well, but no exact results from these four counties are at hand.

According to The Oregonian, the election was an international event; the people of the state had turned over a new page in the history of civilization.²⁵ What were the reasons for this great victory?

The Republican majority was so large that one could seriously doubt that the outcome of the election would have been reversed without the war. Nevertheless, some prospective fusion voters may have changed their minds and given their votes to the incumbents instead. During the campaign The Oregonian had expressed the belief that many voters had rationally recognized the fallacies of free coinage and bimetallism and would, therefore, repudiate these doctrines at the polls.²⁶ This may have been wishful thinking, but at least in some cases such a learning-process will have taken place.

Quite naturally, a fusion consisting of three different groups, which had feuded against each other until a few years or even months ago, was not all harmony. Some voters who sympathized with one of the three fusion parties, but harbored resentments against the other two, will have stayed at home and not have voted at all.²⁷ For most

Wallowa Counties (Spokane: Western Historical Publishing Company, 1902), pp. 210, 499-500; The Oregonian, June 11, p. 3, June 10, p. 6, June 12, p. 3, and June 13, p. 6.

²⁵Ibid., June 8, p. 4.

²⁶March 28, p. 4.

²⁷See Weekly Eugene City Guard, June 18.

Figure 4: Oregon state elections, June 6, 1898.
Counties with Republican or Union majorities, state-wide
and congressional races.

State of Oregon, Biennial Report of the Secretary of State,
1898., (Salem: State Printer, 1899), pp, 7-10.

☐ Counties with Republican majorities

☒ Counties with Union majorities

For abbreviations, see above, p. 40.

Figure 5: Oregon state elections, June 6, 1899.
Counties represented by Republican or Union state
legislators.

Oregon Legislative Album, 1899 (Salem: Statesman Job Office,
[1899]), passim.

- ☐ Counties represented exclusively by Republican legislators
- ☐ Counties represented largely by Republican legislators
- ☐ Counties evenly split
- ☒ Counties represented largely by Union legislators
- ☒ Counties represented exclusively by Union legislators

For abbreviations, see above, page 40.

observers it was no surprise at all that the fusion vote of June 6, 1898, lagged behind the Bryan vote of November 3, 1896. The latter election had been the result of rather unique circumstances:

There was in the effort of that time an electric current that precipitated every particle of the material held in solution in the boiling-pot of Bryanism. For many years this material had been accumulating; everything having affinity with it was drawn to it; a roaring fire was under the cauldron, and all the conditions were such as to get from the contents the largest material results.

No "manufactured fusion" could equal the strength of the "spontaneous fusion" of 1896. That performance could not be repeated.²⁸

But the most plausible reason why many voters in agricultural regions became indifferent towards the reform cause and either stayed at home or abandoned the cause altogether, is to be seen in the economic and financial condition of the time. The new prosperity of 1897 had not been a temporary phenomenon; to the contrary, the trend accelerated in early 1898. Crops were expected to be in excellent shape; large outputs were almost certain; full prosperity was within reach.²⁹

The results in the agricultural counties of Baker, Union, Umatilla, Coos, Josephine, and Jackson quite dramatically illustrate the point. In November, 1896, Bryan had received a majority of 3,774 here. The same counties gave the Republican gubernatorial candidate

²⁸The Oregonian, March 28, p. 4.

²⁹Ibid., May 15, pp. 1 and 9; May 16, p. 4; May 18, p. 8; June 3, p. 10.

Geer a majority of 314 votes in June, 1898; this accounted for a change of more than 4,000 votes out of about 18,000 cast.³⁰

With the state elections of June 6, 1898, the issue of bimetallism and the free coinage of silver was all but dead in Oregon. The demands for a democratization of the political process -- initiative, referendum, nominating primaries, direct elections -- went down in defeat with the monetary question. But the fight for these issues would not be suspended, and it would eventually triumph.

³⁰See ibid., June 11, p. 4.

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APPENDIX A

LISTS OF DELEGATES

FIRST STATE CONVENTION (JULY 9, 1896)¹

County	Delegates
Baker	Martin L. Olmsted; John C. Young
Clackamas	Samuel Barlow; William Barlow; John P. Cole; W. V. Jesse [Jessee]
Clatsop	Clarence J. Curtis
Jackson	M. F. [S.] Eggleston; Frank Williams
Josephine	John O. Booth; L. G. Brownell
Linn	W. B. Lawler
Marion	Henry L. Barkley ² ; Reuben P. Boise; Salmon Brown; Charles Burggraf; Dr. L. M. [W.] Guiss; Thomas L. Davidson; E. Hofer ³ ; L. H. McMahon; Charles Miller ⁴ ; Winfield T. Rigdon; D. C. Sherman; Amos Strong; John B. Waldo

¹This is not a complete list, but a compilation of names given in the newspaper accounts. See Telephone-Register, July 16; Woodburn Independent, July 16; The Oregonian, July 10, p. 10.

²The Reverend Barkley was a Republican member of the Oregon House of Representatives in 1895; reelected as Silver Republican in 1896. See Republican League Register, passim, and App. 2.

³Born in Iowa in 1854, Hofer turned to the newspaper business at age 22. He served as secretary of the Iowa state senate, before he came to Oregon in 1889. He served one term (1895) in the state House as a Republican national committeeman of the American Bimetallic Union in 1897. See Republican League Register, passim, and App. 2; letter to Cooper, June 5, 1897.

⁴A pioneer of 1848; one of the Democratic state representatives who voted for John H. Mitchell's election to the U. S. Senate in 1885.

County	Delegates
Multnomah	Francis Clarno; Frank V. Drake; Fred A. [R.] Dunham; Thomas Guinean; Glen O. Holman; William J. Kelly; Martin Quinn; Erasmus D. Shattuck; T. G. Struble; David P. Thompson.
Polk	N. L. Butler ⁵ ; W. E. Cressy [Cresse]; Dr. John J. Daly ⁶
Tillamook	Frank Linville; William Raleigh
Washington	Robert Embrie; James H. Sewell; Ward Swope
Yamhill	W. T. Booth; C. S. Clark; Jacob C. Cooper; M. B. Hendricks; W. V. Spencer
_____	_____ Hinman; H. W. Parker; A. V. R. Snyder

ALBANY CONFERENCE (JUNE 2, 1897)⁷

Baker	J. J. Sturgill
Benton	John Burnett; F. Daddle; Eugene Palmer
Clackamas	John D. Stevens
Clatsop	O. W. Dunbar

Turned populist and ran unsuccessfully for U. S. Congress in 1894. See Portrait and Biographical Record of the Willamette Valley, pp. 986-7; Republican League Register, p. 168; Oregon Historical Society, scrap book No. 45, p. 180, and No. 57, p. 101, with several mistakes.

⁵ A Democratic lawyer, who served as circuit judge in 1870-74, ran unsuccessfully for U. S. Congress in 1886, and represented Polk County in the state senate in 1893 and 1895. See William D. Fenton, "Political History of Oregon From 1865 to 1895," Oregon Historical Quarterly, Vol. III, No. 1 (March, 1902), 42, 46; Republican League Register, p. 167; OHS, scrap book No. 139, p. 226

⁶ A school teacher and lawyer; Democratic state representative in 1885, delegate to the Democratic national convention of 1892. See Portrait and Biographical Record of the Willamette Valley, pp. 478-80; OHS, scrap book No. 267, p. 84.

⁷ Complete list, as given in Telephone-Register, June 10.

County . . . Delegates

Douglas	A. S. Cheney; B. Cooper; Dr. L. A. Kent
Jackson	Albert S. Barnes; William S. Crowell; Rufus Cox; T. J. Howell by A. S. Barnes; N. A. Jacobs; Charles Nickell ⁸ ; A. L. Soliss by K. K. Kubble; Robert Taylor
Josephine	John O. Booth; Willard Crawford; E. C. Wade
Lane	C. H. Hillegas; Jos. D. Matlock ⁹ ; H. D. Martin; N. Martin and J. H. Veatch by J. W. Baker; A. S. Patterson; J. G. Stevenson
Linn	A. F. Beard; J. O. Griffin; Dr. Daniel M. Jones; Milton A. Miller ¹⁰ ; M. Payne; William Powers; John J. Whitney ¹¹
Marion	Thomas L. Davidson; Dr. L. M. [W.] Guiss; A. B. Huddleston; D. C. Sherman
Multnomah	Dell Stuart ¹² ; J. T. Milner; David P. Thompson
Polk	C. C. Adams; W. C. Hembree; J. D. Kelty; W. A. Moorhead; E. T. Smith

⁸ Born in 1856, Nickell was hired by the Jacksonville Democratic Times in 1871, became city editor at age 16, and sole proprietor at age 18. He was Democratic candidate for state printer in 1886, served in the state house in 1893, and ran unsuccessfully for secretary of state in 1894. President and secretary of the Oregon Press Association. See Hawthorne, op. cit., II, 456-8.

⁹ A businessman and farmer from Eugene; Lane county superintendent of schools [1864-6], state legislator in the lower house, 1874. See Portrait and Biographical Record of the Willamette Valley, pp. 1543-4; OHS, scrap book No. 251, pp. 198-9.

¹⁰ Born on a donation farm near Lebanon in 1861; school teacher and director, businessman, and mayor of Lebanon. He served in the Oregon House as a Democrat in 1893 and was a delegate to the Democratic national convention of 1896. See OHS, scrap book No. 67, pp. 157-8; No. 118, p. 90.

¹¹ A lawyer and school teacher. District attorney, 1874-82; state representative, 1882; county judge, 1884-8. See Hines, op. cit., p. 1269; Oregon Legislative Album, 1899, p. 21.

¹² Here misspelled Stewart.

County	Delegates
Union	W. H. Strayer ¹³
Wasco	Joseph L. Story by O. H. Kerns ¹⁴
Washington	W. M. Dunbar; H. B. Luce; James H. Sewell ¹⁵
Yamhill	Jacob C. Cooper; H. L. Heath; William M. Ramsey; C. W. Talmage ¹⁶

¹³Here misspellt Staver.

¹⁴Names misspellt Storey and Kers.

¹⁵Here misspellt Sewall.

¹⁶A lawyer from McMinnville; Oregon national committeeman of the Silver Republican Party. See letter to Cooper, Dec. 20, 1897.

APPENDIX B

THE UNION STATE CENTRAL COMMITTEE

ELECTED AT FIRST STATE CONVENTION (JULY 9, 1896)¹

County	Committeeman	Party	Profession
Baker	Martin L. Olmsted ²	Republican, turned Populist	Lawyer
Clackamas	John P. Cole ³	Prohibitionist	Businessman
Jackson	M. S. Eggleston ⁴	Democrat	Newspaper editor

¹The Oregonian, July 10, p. 10; Telephone-Register, July 16.

²The name was mostly spelled Olmstead; for correct spelling see letter to Cooper, June 25, 1897.

Olmsted was born on Sept. 29, 1844 [1842] in Tullahoma, Tenn. He graduated with an LL. B. degree from Albany, N. Y., Law College and was admitted to the bar in 1867. He practised his profession in Iowa and Nebraska, before he came to Oregon in the early 1870's. Here he continued to practise law in Grant and then in Baker County. Olmsted served as circuit judge in 1884-86. He attended many Republican state conventions and was a member of the state central committee from 1884 until 1888. He was Populist candidate for attorney-general in 1894. See Republican League Register, passim; History of the Bench and Bar of Oregon, p. 201; Hines, op. cit., pp. 1176-77; An Illustrated History of Baker, Grant, Malheur and Harney Counties, pp. 229-30; The Oregonian, Aug. 27, 1896, p. 10; M. C. George, "Political History of Oregon From 1876-1898 inclusive," Oregon Historical Quarterly, Vol. III, No. 2 (June, 1902), p. 113.

³Cole was born in Chester, Ill., on Nov. 7, 1838. He crossed the Plains in 1861 and proceeded from Walla Walla to the Willamette Valley in 1862. Cole operated a farm and was engaged in the lumber and milling businesses. See Hines, op. cit., pp. 519-20.

⁴Eggleston was born in Vermilion County, Ind., on Jan. 10, 1855. He attended Wabash College, Ind., and West Point Academy (1873-77). He served as an engineer for the Army in various states, before he

County	Committeeman	Party	Profession
Josephine	L. G. Brownell ⁵		Businessman
Marion	Winfield T. Rigdon ⁶	Republican/ Prohibitionist	School Teacher and principal/ businessman
Multnomah	J. T. Milner		
Polk	W. E. Cressy ⁷		Composer and orchestra direc- tor
Tillamook	William Raleigh ⁸	Democrat	

resigned in 1889. One year later he moved to Oregon. He worked as a mining engineer and then edited the Ashland Semi-Weekly Tribune. See Portrait and Biographical Record of Western Oregon. Containing Original Sketches of many well-known Citizens of the Past and Present (Chicago: Chapman Publishing Company, 1904), p. 262.

⁵Proprietor of Grant's Pass Opera House Meat Market; see letters to Cooper, for example May 21, 1897.

⁶Rigdon was born in Poweskeck County, Iowa, on Feb. 16, 1849, and came to Oregon in 1850. He was teacher and principal at Jefferson Institute, bookkeeper, and businessman in drugs and undertaking. Rigdon was a Republican state representative in 1882 and ran as Prohibitionist for U. S. Congress in 1892. He was the current chairman of the executive committee of the Silver Republican Party of Oregon. See Sarah Hunt Steeves, Book of Remembrance of Marion County, Oregon, Pioneers, 1840-1860 (Portland: The Berncliff Press, 1927), pp. 197-201; Republican League Register, pp. 44, 168, App. 2; letter to Cooper, Jan. 24, 1898.

⁷Most probably is identical with W. E. Cresse mentioned in the newspapers. He was born on Sept. 23, 1846, in New Hampshire. After graduating from college, he taught school in Illinois, California, and in Oregon since 1881. He retired from his profession and became mainly engaged in music. See Portrait and Biographical Record of the Willamette Valley, pp. 902-3.

⁸See The Oregonian, March 6, 1898, p. 6.

County	Committeeman	Party	Profession
Washington	James H. Sewell ⁹	Republican	Businessman and factory owner
Yamhill	C. S. Clark		

ELECTED AT ALBANY CONFERENCE (JUNE 2, 1897)¹⁰

County	Committeeman	Party	Profession
Baker	M. L. Olmsted		
Benton	Eugene Palmer ¹¹	Republican	
Clackamas	John D. Stevens ¹²	Populist	

⁹Sewell was born on his father's donation claim in Washington County, Oregon, on May 24, 1847. He raised stock and managed the family farm. He was the owner of the largest tile factory in the state and of the Hillsboro North Pacific Clay Works. In 1873 Sewell was a co-founder of the Oregon Grange, which he served as secretary and director for many years. See Hines, *op. cit.*, pp. 935-6; *Republican League Register*, p. 78; Oregon Historical Society, scrap book No. 57, p. 111.

¹⁰See *Telephone-Register*, June 10.

¹¹See his letter to Cooper, Dec. 16, 1897.

¹²He was born in Albany, N. Y., on Dec. 18, 1847. After the Civil War he migrated west and finally came to Oregon in 1876. Stevens was active in the Initiative and Referendum League and in the Knights of Labor organization. In 1900 he was an organizer of the Social Democratic Party. He ran as a socialist for U. S. senator, short term, in the elections of June, 1906, and with 15.2% was far ahead of the ticket. See *The Sellwood Bee*, June 17, 1932; F. J. Dunbar to Stevens, Aug. 14, 1900; abstract of votes of the June, 1906, elections; statement to notary public; all in Stevens papers, Oregon Historical Society.

County	Committeeman	Party	Profession
Clatsop	O. W. Dunbar ¹³		Newspaper editor
Douglas	John H. Wiles		
Jackson	Albert S. Barnes ¹⁴	Populist	Sheriff
Josephine	L. G. Brownell		
Lane	J. G. Stevenson ¹⁵	Republican	
Linn	Daniel M. Jones ¹⁶	Republican	Medical Practitioner

¹³He published the Astoria Daily Budget and bought the Astoria Evening News in Sept., 1897. He was most probably a Republican. See The Oregonian, Sept. 14, 1897, p. 3; Sept. 24, p. 4.

¹⁴Barnes was born in New York and came to Oregon in 1881. He was also engaged in merchandising. See sketch of his father Albert S. Barnes, Sr., in Gaston, The Centennial History of Oregon, 1811-1912, II, 508-9; letter to Cooper, July 2, 1897, et al.

¹⁵He was Lane County superintendent of schools at an unspecified time. See Weekly Eugene City Guard, Feb. 26, 1898; Republican League Register, pp. 82, 115.

¹⁶Dr. Jones was born on April 3, 1838, in Johnson County, Ind. He moved to Missouri in 1846 and to Oregon in 1852. He was a farmer and a school teacher, before he began to study medicine at Willamette University in 1863. He graduated in 1867 and returned to the university in 1870 as a professor. His fellow professor John H. Mitchell secured his appointment as minister to the Hawaiian Islands, but Jones declined to accept. In 1875 he went to Mineral Springs College, where he served as professor and president. He practiced in Soda-ville from 1879. See Republican League Register, p. 46; Oregon Legislative Album, 1899, p. 24; OHS, scrap book No. 71, p. 101, and No. 132, pp. 319-20.

County	Committeeman	Party	Profession
Marion	Elisha P. Morcom ¹⁷	Republican	Lawyer
Multnomah	J. T. Milner		
Polk	J. R. Shepard		
Union	W. H. Strayer		
Wasco	O. H. Kerns ¹⁸		Representative of Electrical Supply Company
Washington	J. H. Sewell		

DECEMBER, 1897¹⁹

Baker	M. L. Olmsted	
Benton	Eugene Palmer	
Clackamas	J. D. Stevens	
Clatsop	W. Hampton Smith ²⁰	Republican

¹⁷Morcom was born on Feb. 6, 1860, at Dodgeville, Wis., where he was assistant postmaster from 1882 until 1887. He moved to Tower, Minn., and served as town commissioner (1888-89) and clerk of the Board of Education (1889-91). In 1891 he was admitted to the bar and a few months later moved to Oregon. He settled at Woodburn, practicing his profession and working as city attorney for many years. See Gaston, The Centennial History of Oregon, 1811-1912, II, 1042-3; Portrait and Biographical Record of the Willamette Valley, pp. 908-9; Republican League Register, passim; History of the Bench and Bar of Oregon, p. 190.

¹⁸See letter to Cooper, July 6, 1897.

¹⁹See The Oregonian, Dec. 17, 1897, p. 10.

²⁰See ibid., Jan. 9, 1898, p. 1; W. T. Rigdon to Cooper, Feb. 9, 1898.

County	Committeeman	Party	Profession
Columbia	Samuel A. Miles ²¹	Democrat	Stock raiser
Coos ²²			
Crook	Walter S. Carsner ²³		Rancher and stock raiser
Curry	Cyrus Madden ²⁴	Republican	Miner
Douglas	J.H. Wiles		
Gilliam	W. L. Wilcox ²⁵	Democrat	Businessman
Jackson	A. S. Barnes		

²¹Miles was born in Pulaski County, Ky., on Sept. 17, 1830; he moved to Missouri in 1839 and to Oregon in 1850. After working in various jobs, he became engaged in stock-raising since 1860 and acquired a fortune. He served as sheriff and tax-collector from 1862 to 1870. See Portrait and Biographical Record of Portland and Vicinity, Oregon. Containing Original Sketches of many well known Citizens of the Past and Present (Chicago: Chapman Publishing Company, 1903), pp. 610, 613.

²²I. S. McCain had been appointed as committeeman; he learned about it from the newspaper and declined to serve. See his letter to Cooper, Jan. 9, 1898.

²³Born in Polk County, Iowa, on Nov. 11, 1852, Carsner came to Oregon in 1862. See Gaston, The Centennial History of Oregon, 1811-1912, III, 565-6.

²⁴Madden was born in Fairfield County, Ohio, on May 6, 1832, and attended Denison University at Granville, Ohio. He was a school teacher in several states, studied law and was admitted to the Kentucky bar in 1860. One year later he went to California and finally turned to mining. He came to Oregon about 1864 and was engaged in the mining business ever since. See ibid., IV, 660.

²⁵A native son of Oregon, born in Washington County on Jan. 16, 1857. He was engaged in numerous businesses. Wilcox served one term in the Oregon House of Representatives (1888) and as sheriff from 1890. See An Illustrated History of Central Oregon, p. 614; letter to Cooper, Feb. 17, 1898.

County	Committeeman	Party	Profession
Josephine	W. H. Merritt		
Klamath	Joseph G. Pierce ²⁶	Republican	Newspaper editor
Lake	J. C. Oliver ²⁷	Populist	Newspaper editor
Lane	J. G. Stevenson		
Linn	D. M. Jones		
Marion	E. P. Morcom		
Multnomah	J. T. Milner		
Morrow	W. H. Rush		
Polk	John D. Kelty ²⁸		Mercantilist, school director
Tillamook	P. W. Todd ²⁹	Democrat	Merchant
Union	J. R. Oliver ³⁰		County Clerk

²⁶Editor, proprietor, and publisher of the Klamath Falls Express. See Republican League Register, pp. 162, 90; letters to Cooper, for example May 21, 1897.

²⁷Editor and proprietor of the Lakeview Rustler; see letters to Cooper, for example Dec. 17, 1897; Cooper to Sen. Marion Butler, Jan. 28, 1898.

²⁸He was born in Davies County, Ind., on April 28, 1831, and came to Oregon in 1852. He also served as postmaster of Bethel. See OHS, scrap book No. 53, p. 21.

²⁹He was born in Andrew County, Mo., on April 26, 1861 and came to Oregon four years later. He attended Baptist College at McMinnville, operated a drugstore, and then went to California. There he operated a vineyard and served as clerk of Sonoma County [1890-94]. After his return to Oregon, Todd opened a merchandise firm in Tillamook. See Gaston, The Centennial History of Oregon, 1811-1912, II, 886-7.

³⁰See letter to Cooper, Dec. 14, 1897.

County	Committeeman	Party	Profession
Wasco	Alfred S. Bennett ³¹	Democrat	Lawyer
Washington	J. H. Sewell		
Yamhill ³²			

SPRING, 1898³³

County	Committeeman	County	Committeeman
Baker	M. L. Olmsted	Grant	W. H. Short
Benton	Eugene Palmer	Jackson	A. S. Barnes
Clatsop	W. H. Smith	Josephine	W. H. Merritt
Clackamas	J. D. Stevens	Klamath	J. G. Pierce
Columbia	S. A. Miles	Lake	J. C. Oliver
Curry	Cyrus Madden	Lincoln	J. W. Parrish
Douglas	J. H. Wiles	Linn	D. M. Jones
Gilliam	W. L. Wilcox	Marion	E. P. Morcom

³¹Bennett was born in Dubuque, Iowa, on June 10, 1854. He came to Oregon in 1865, worked as a farm hand for eight years, and then taught school. In 1878 he was elected Wasco County superintendent of schools. Bennett also read law, was admitted to the bar in 1880, and practised at The Dalles. He was elected to the lower house in 1882, but did not take his seat; accepting instead an appointment as circuit judge, he served in that capacity for two years. In 1892 and 1894 he was Democratic candidate for supreme judge, and in 1896 candidate for U. S. Congress. See Gaston, The Centennial History of Oregon, 1811-1912, IV, 1054.

³²The newspaper mentions the name of W. H. Rush; but this must be an error.

³³Jacob C. Cooper letters, OHS.

County	Committeeman	County	Committeeman
Malheur	Jonathan E. Roberts ³⁴	Umatilla	R. M. Turner
Morrow	W. H. Rush	Union	W. H. Strayer
Multnomah	J. T. Milner	Wasco	A. S. Bennett
Polk	J. D. Kelty	Washington	J. H. Sewell
Sherman	W. M. Barnett	Yamhill	E. J. Wood
Tillamook	P. W. Todd		

³⁴Editor and proprietor of The District Silver Advocate (Vale); see letter to Cooper, Jan. 16, 1898.