Dirt Farmer Internationalists:
The Meitzen Family, Three Generations of Farmer-Labor Radicals, 1848-1932

BY

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Table of Contents

Summary

This dissertation uses three generations of a German Texan family to examine the evolution and continuity of agrarian radicalism in the U.S. and transnational influences on that political tradition from Central Europe, Mexico, Ireland, and the Soviet Union. This project seeks to broaden our historical understanding of U. S. political culture and modern finance capitalism through examining some of its earliest critics–agrarian radicals. It begins with a historical overview of the home of the Meitzens, the then multi-ethnic Prussian province of Silesia-populated by Germans, Bohemians, and Poles. Silesia was one of the most industrial Prussian provinces, while at the same time remaining highly agricultural. This resulted in a unique convergence of workers and farmer's political demands in Silesia during the 1848 Revolution. When the revolution failed, Otto Meitzen, along with other German and Silesian political exiles, emigrated to Texas where they decisively influenced state politics in the years to come. Otto Meitzen's son, E.O. Meitzen, would begin his decades long political activism with the Greenback Labor Party and the Grange. He then rose to a rank-and-file leader in the Populist movement and later became a leader of the Texas Socialist Party with his son, E.R. Meitzen. The farmer-labor political alliances that the Meitzens fought for were remarkably similar to those seen in Silesia during the 1848 Revolution. During their decades long activism, the Meitzens formed political partnerships with Irish radicals, Mexican revolutionaries and supporters of the Bolshevik Revolution that greatly influenced their lives and politics. I argue that, building upon this international legacy of agrarian radicalism, the farmer-labor bloc from the 1870s-1920s, of which the Meitzens were a key constituent part, moved the U.S.

political spectrum to the left and is responsible for initiating and moving forward much of the economic reforms of the Progressive and New Deal eras.

Introduction

"I was born in Fayette County [Texas], from German parents, and who fled from the reaction of the 1848 revolution. I think that I inherited some of my revolutionary qualifications. I am not responsible for them. I can not help it."[1] So testified E.O. Meitzen before Frank Walsh's Commission on Industrial Relations in March 1915 as to why he involved himself in the political struggles of working farmers. At the time, Meitzen was a veteran leader of the Texas Socialist Party. Nearly thirty years earlier, Meitzen's inheritance had led him to help organize and lead the Fayette County Farmers' Alliance. When the Alliance failed to bring relief to farmers, Meitzen joined the Populist revolt becoming a statewide leader of the People's Party. The Meitzen political legacy extended to E.O.'s children, in particular his son E.R., who was a leader successively in the Farmers' Union, the Socialist Party, the Nonpartisan League, and the Farm-Labor Union of America. Overall, for three generations, from the 1840s to 1940s, the Meitzens participated in numerous movements and organizations that fought for the economic and political rights of laborers and working farmers.

The Meitzens were not simply a product of their time--they actively sought to shape the political and economic contours of democracy. During the course of the over one hundred years of political activism by the Meitzens, the forces of war, industrialization, and immigration dramatically transformed the United States. Amid this century, the dictates of finance and industrial capitalism brought about war at home in order ensure the dominance of free over slave labor, and then abroad to secure

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[1] U.S. Congress, *Senate Commission on Industrial Relations, Final Report and Testimony* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1916), 9143.

international markets and resources. Industrialization resulted in capitalism emerging as the dominant economic system, replacing the independent artisan and yeoman with the factory worker and tenant farmer. At the same time, government increasingly came to promote the individual accumulation and concentration of wealth into the hands of a wealthy few. After the genocidal removal of much of the continent's indigenous population, the owners of capital encouraged the workers of the world to immigrate to the U.S. in order to fill the factories and fields. These mass migrations changed the racial and ethnic composition of the nation. These transformations, though, did not go uncontested as workers and farmers organized collectively, in both progressive and reactionary ways, to resist the economic, political, and social demands of capitalism.

The presence of organizations and parties, from the 1870s through the 1920s, representing the interests of working farmers and laborers, demonstrates the existence of a decades-long farmer-labor bloc in U.S. political culture. Though its origins go back further, the sustained farmer-labor bloc began with the Knights of Labor (KOL), Greenback Labor Party and Grange of the 1870s. From these organizations, the farmer-labor bloc progressed through the Farmers' Alliance, the Populist movement, the Socialist Party, the Nonpartisan League, and the Farmer-Labor conventions of the 1920s.

While historians have written much on the history of radicalism in the U.S., their scholarship often follows the traditional periodization situating the narrative as part of the Gilded Age, or the Progressive Era, or in relation to the rise of the C.I.O. during the 1930s. If continuities to past or future events are acknowledged they are usually in passing or as part of a preface or epilogue. The farmer-labor bloc, however, was not something that flared-up now and then, punctuated by periods of hibernation. This

movement was a regular feature of U.S. political culture for over five decades.

A shared producerist philosophy connected each of the organizations of the farmer-labor bloc. The belief that those who labor should control what they produce differed radically from the corporate practice of controlling and profiting from the labor of others. Though never achieving electoral success at a national level, and with only limited electoral victories at regional and local levels, the farmer-labor bloc nevertheless played a crucial role in the U.S. Working independently of the Democratic and Republican parties, the farmer-labor bloc served as a bulwark against unrestrained corporate capitalism. The continual organized agitation of the farmer-labor bloc moved the political spectrum of U.S. political culture to the left. Though enacted into law, in much compromised forms, by Democrats and Republicans, many of the historic reforms of the Progressive and New Deal Eras originated and were tirelessly championed by individuals and organizations within the farmer-labor bloc. Indeed, without their efforts it is hard to see a Progressive Era or New Deal ever happening.

The Meitzens provide an excellent example of the flesh-and-blood continuity that constituted the farm-labor bloc from the 1870s through the 1920s. They played an active role in the farmer-labor bloc, first as rank-and-file members and then leaders. E.O. Meitzen and his son, E.R., both held local and national leadership positions and served as candidates for office on the local and statewide levels for various organizations of the farmer-labor bloc.

Though leaders in their own right, the Meitzens did not have the cachet or significance of such figures as Tom Watson, Eugene Debs, or Robert La Follette. They were rank-and-file leaders. As such, they were more in tune with how the national

campaigns of the farmer-labor bloc influenced workers and farmers locally. Thus, while this study utilizes the forms of a multi-generational biography, it is at heart a bottom-up history of the farmer-labor bloc from a community level.

The three generations of Meitzens covered in this study spent most of their lives in Texas. In particular, they resided in Fayette and Lavaca counties, and in the town of Hallettsville, all in the eastern half of central Texas. Arguably, no other state witnessed a more sustained and militant presence of the farmer-labor bloc than Texas—the Meitzens were part of the radical glue holding the coalition together. Despite this, much of the historiography of reform and radical movements of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era focus on northern, urban, and European immigrant experiences. This study adds southern, rural, and--due to the nearby fluid border--Mexican immigrant experiences to this contested period of U.S. history. The Meitzens--German political refugees and their descendants, through their political activism, would persuasively come into contact with Mexican political refugees during the Mexican Revolution, bringing transnational influences to bear on an otherwise conventional U.S. narrative.

Transnationalism has been a welcome addition to the historiography of the United States. This study did not begin as a transnational history—the sources led to it. This study hopes to demonstrate how transnationalism was and is a part of people's daily lives and one need not regulate it to a trend or historiographical sub-field. Transnationalism need not be forced; it is already there, all around us. A world, both physical and ideological, is there for the engaging.

Otto and Jennie Meitzen arrived in Texas in January 1850. Otto was born in

Breslau in 1811, the capital of the then Prussian province of Silesia—now a part of western Poland. Upon reaching adulthood, Otto moved to Liegnitz, west of Breslau, to ply his trade. He made a modest living as a millwright, but due to his participation in the 1848 German Revolution, he and his family were forced to flee to America.

A reconceptualization of our current understanding of the 1848 German Revolution is necessary in order to understand the revolution's influence on agrarian radicalism in Texas. The prevailing historiography of the revolution presents the main revolutionary forces as coming from the middle classes in a nationalist uprising for a united Germany founded on the liberal demands of freedom of the press and speech, and representative democracy. Largely absent from these histories is the role of workers, and even more so agrarian laborers. Historians have often omitted the region of Silesia as well. Adding the Meitzen's home province of Silesia dramatically changes our perceptions of the 1848 German Revolution (and, ultimately, some of the origins of American radicalism).

Despite Germans being the largest immigrant group in the U.S. during the second half of the nineteenth century, their experiences of and influences on their new home remain understudied. This was understandable, to a large degree, due to the anti-German prejudices generated by the two world wars and the horrifically mind-numbing atrocities of Nazi Germany. However, even with the passing of decades, the turn of a new century, and a modern Germany seeking atonement for its past (more so than the U.S. has ever attempted for its own history of African slavery and indigenous genocide), a historiographical hangover, in many ways, persists against German-American history. Of the few works that look at German Texans, the majority of these take mainly a cultural

focus without placing them into the broader U.S. narrative.

The geopolitical fallout of the Second World War has especially affected Silesian history. As part of the 1945 Potsdam Agreements, Silesia reverted to Poland. As a result, historians since then have mainly passed over the German history of Silesia. English-language historians barely mention Silesia in histories of the 1848 Revolution, and much the same has occurred in German language histories on the topic. The one notable exception is the work of German historian Walter Schmidt, upon whose scholarly foundation much of my first chapter is built.

During the Cold War, West German historians primarily focused on the regions of the Federal Republic. While according to Schmidt, East German historians, for political reasons, Polandized Silesian history[2] in order to justify the Soviet Union's removal of much of eastern Poland into Ukraine, and much of eastern Germany into Poland, along with the forced relocation of much of these area's populations. Though the Cold War has ended, these geographical and political divisions continue in the historiography of the 1848 German Revolution.

The omission of the Meitzen's home province of Silesia has had a detrimental effect not only on our overall understanding of the 1848 Revolution, but also the working-class origins of Marxism, and--of utmost importance for this study--the history of agrarian radicalism in Texas. Silesia, prior to the revolution, was one the most industrialized regions of Prussia. While at the same time it had a large agricultural base. The combination of the two resulted in a unique convergence of farmer and labor economic demands in Silesia prior to and during the revolution. For Marx, the 1844

[2] Walter Schmidt, "Moritz Eisner und die 1848er Demokratie in Schlesien," *Leibniz-Sozietät/Sitzungsberichte*, Vol. 63 (2004), 19-22.

Silesian Weaver's Revolt provided a materialist example of the working-class in action, complementing, if not confirming, his theories of dialectics and class struggle. During the revolution, Silesians were among the most committed and radical revolutionaries, resulting in the province suffering some of the harshest repression in Prussia during the counter-revolution.

The embodiment of conjoined farmer and labor radicalism in Silesia during the revolution was the creation of the Rustic Alliance. The Silesian Rustic Alliance was the only province-wide organization representing the interest of rural workers, to emerge in Germany during the revolution. The organizational stimulus for the Rustic Alliance came out of the democratic movements in the urban centers of Breslau and Liegnitz. The Democratic Club of Liegnitz in particular, of which Otto Meitzen in all likelihood was a member, aided the creation of the Rustic Alliance in order to encourage an alliance of peasants and laborers. Moreover, this alliance shares a striking resemblance to the farmer-labor radicalism of the Famers' Alliance and the Populist movement witnessed in Texas a few decades later.

After the failure of the revolution, a significant number of German 48ers, including some from Silesia, such as the Meitzens, fled the counter-revolution in order to make a new beginning in Texas. They carried with them their revolutionary experiences and radical politics. German Texan 48ers were the first to introduce radical farmer-labor politics to Texas through a political convention they organized in San Antonio in 1854. The outbreak of the Civil War, though, slowed the growth of 48er political influence in the state. Once the war ended, though, they once again sought to assert themselves on the political field.

After bipartisan support from elected officials was given to bills approving railroad subsidies and granting landlords more control over tenant farmers, disgruntled German Texans, from both the Democratic and Republican parties, held a German convention in Fayette County in October 1873 and declared their "opposition to monied capitalists," who exerted "an undue influence on the Legislature."[3] A few weeks later, now with the support of area Anglos, another convention called the "People's Convention" was held in Fayette County, out of which a "People's" or "Farmer's" Party was formed to run in that fall's elections in Fayette and neighboring Bastrop counties. The 1873 People's Party did succeeded in electing one candidate to the state House and another to the state Senate. Though it lost in every other race and disbanded after the November 1873 election, it would have a lasting legacy.

Initiated by German Texans, the 1873 People's Party provided much of the political and organizational foundation for the farmer-labor bloc that would be a consistent facet of Texas politics for the next six decades. During the same period in which the short-lived People's Party existed, the Grange also entered Texas. With the arrival of the Grange, so began the organizational continuity of the farmer-labor bloc in Texas that would ultimately last until the mid-1920s.

Failing to see the continuities of the farmer-labor bloc from the Grange to the Greenback Labor Party to the Knights of Labor and Farmers' Alliance to Populism to Socialism and the Nonpartisan League and, finally, the farmer-labor movement of the 1920s has influenced not only our historiography, but even our current political culture. Instead of seeing how third parties and protest movements that challenged the basic

[3] *Weekly Democratic Statesman*, October 18, 1873.

economic underpinnings of industrial and finance capitalism were a regular facet of American politics, today third parties are viewed as quixotic. After the 1930s, economic protest movements were virtually non-existent until the brief Occupy movement and the recent Fight for 15.

While some historians have acknowledged the continuities between these nineteenth and early twentieth-century agrarian and workers' movements, none have placed them in a single narrative. Only recently in Matthew Hild's 2007 *Greenbackers, Knights of Labor, and Populists: Farmer-Labor Insurgency in the Late-Nineteenth Century South*--can one find a work that addresses the early connections of the farmer-labor bloc. In fact, most works seek to show the disconnections between the organizations of the farmer-labor bloc.[4]

The most prominent of these works is Lawrence Goodwyn's *Democratic Promise: The Populist Moment in America* (1976). Goodwyn pronounces the agrarian revolt dead with the Populist-Democratic fusion of 1896. He also fails to see labor's involvement in the Populist movement, citing the decline of the KOL during the late 1880s as preventing any possible farm-labor alliance. Again one must look to Hild to see how the KOL played an important role in the development of the Populist movement. In addition, Hild shows that the Populist movement was a genuine farmer-labor movement, not just a movement of farmers as Goodwyn argues. This study confirms Hild's assertion that the Populist movement was a farmer-labor movement.

Elizabeth Sanders's *The Roots of Reform: Farmers, Workers, and the American*

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[4] Hild's *Greenbackers, Knights of Labor, and Populists* (Athens, University of Georgia Press, 2007) argues that the Populist movement established itself most firmly in states where farmer-labor political coalitions dating back to the 1870s had already been formed, such as in Texas, Arkansas, and Alabama; while Populism fared worse in states like South Carolina and Tennessee with no such tradition.

State, 1877-1917 (1999) is another work that notes the alliance between workers and farmers during the late nineteenth century. However, like Goodwyn, Sanders places the end of the farmer-labor bloc at the end of the Populist movement. Following the People's Party fusion with the Democrats in 1896, Sanders presents the farmer-labor bloc as flowing naturally into the Democratic Party. After fusion she states, "The Democrats then became the only plausible party of reform, the vehicle of the farmer-labor alliance."[5] From this starting point Sanders crafts a history in which politically mobilized farmers organized in the Democratic Party, headed by William Jennings Bryan, served as the main force behind Progressive Era state sponsored reforms such as the income tax, railroad reform, and the eight hour work day.

This is an important contribution to the agrarian legacy in the U.S. Yet, I see a more regionally nuanced version of the farmer-labor alliance than does Sanders. Her argument that the Democrats "became the only plausible party of reform" may hold weight in states such as Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, Illinois, and Indiana. However, in states and cities where the farmer-labor alliance maintained its political independence within the farmer-labor bloc, the main push for reform came outside of and often against the Democratic Party. This was the case in states such as Texas, Oklahoma, North Dakota, Minnesota, and Montana. The betrayal of many rank-and-file Populists through fusion, further radicalized them, as nationally, the continuity of the farmer-labor bloc, generally, continued through the Socialist Party, not the Democratic Party.

An overall lack of appreciation of the political radicalism of the farmer-labor bloc dominates the historiography of the Populist era. The People's Party was a multi-class

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[5] Elizabeth Sanders, *Roots of Reform: Farmers, Workers, and the American State, 1977-1917*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), 139.

party that brought together numerous reform movements. However, once the national Populist leadership boiled down all reform aspirations to the issue of free silver and Bryan, this put them at odds with the radicalism of the farmer-labor bloc. The Texas People's Party made up one the largest sections of the Populist movement. The radicalism of rank-and-file Texas Populists was evident in their choice of leaders such as E.O. Meitzen. Meitzen was one the "Immortal 103," the Texas delegation at the 1896 St. Louis People's Party convention, which stood firm and vehemently opposed fusion and the nomination of Bryan for president on the Populist ticket. Texas Populists' vision of economic and political equally in a future Cooperative Commonwealth was more democratic and put more power into the hands of the working class than did Bryan Democrats' rhetoric rich, but action poor, panacea of free silver. Instead of viewing fusion as inevitable, what could be seen as almost unavoidable was the farmer-labor bloc's split from Populism, and its move, not end, toward working-class-based anti-capitalism, then embodied in the Socialist Party (SP).

The historiographical glossing over of the radicalism contained in the Populist movement continued in Charles Postel's highly praised and Bancroft Prize winning *Populist Vision* (2007). Postel convincingly shows that Populists were forward-looking moderns, hopefully ending once and for all Richard Hofstadter's claim that Populists were backward looking hayseeds—a claim that should have ended with Walter Nugent's masterful counter to Hofstadter, *The Tolerant Populists*, first published in 1963. However, I find unconvincing Postel's contention that the Populist movement was spurred on by a business orientation. The desire to embrace modern business practices did help create the Farmers' Alliance, but it is hard to see how this sparked the politically

insurgent Populist movement. The Grange prior to the Alliance had a strong business orientation, yet it did not transition into the political movement of Populism like the Alliance did.

Yet, political orientation, not business orientation is the key to understanding the Populist movement. In this regard, this study follows Goodwyn's movement culture analysis of the Populist movement. When the Grange refused to give up its nonpartisan political stance, farmers (E.O. Meitzen included) left the organization *en masse* for the Alliance. Though the Alliance had an official nonpartisan position like the Grange, many traveling Alliance organizers were individuals determined to create a new party to address politically the economic demands of workers and farmers. The political networks created by these radical Alliance organizers helps us understand the creation of the People's Party better than does Postel's business orientation model.

I also have a deep disagreement with Postel's racial analysis of the Populist movement. Postel claims "The white Farmers' Alliance was a driving force behind the new Jim Crow segregation laws adopted across the South of the 1890s." These laws according to Postel were "some of the most sweeping legislative victories in the movement's history."[6] Postel makes these arguments while providing almost no historical evidence to back them up. The Populist movement as a whole was not a model for racial equality. Its actions were at times promising but often uneven and contradictory, and at times out-right racist in its relationships to African Americans. However, most Populists were not the arch-racists Postel makes them out to be.

The example of the Meitzens allows one to carefully analyze the southern wing of

[6] Charles Postel, *Populist Vision* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 176-177.

the farmer-labor bloc on the issue of race. The Meitzens' road on the issue of race was rocky. E.O. first encouraged African Americans to join the People's Party, then he and his supporters used the White Man's primary to gain elected office. The Meitzens initially supported the whites-only policy of the SP-backed Renter's Union, then had their racial beliefs challenged by Mexican revolutionaries. E.R. walked a dangerous tightrope during the 1920s Jim Crow South in calling for political and economic equality for African Americans, and joined the successful campaign against the poll tax in Florida while being hounded by the Ku Klux Klan.

After the failure of Populism, the farmer-labor bloc progressed into the Socialist Party. The beginning of this introduction notes the predominance of northern, urban, and European immigrant experiences in the historiography of reform and radical movements of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era. This is especially apparent in the historiography of the Socialist Party. James Green's, nearly four decades old, *Grass-Roots Socialism: Radical Movements in the Southwest, 1895-1943* (1978), remains the only book-length treatment of the SP in the South during the Progressive Era. In the ensuing decades, however, new sources have come to light. Foremost of among these are the papers of Irish American and Texas Socialist Party leader, Thomas A. Hickey, contained at Texas Tech University and copies of the Texas Socialist newspaper edited by E.R. Meitzen, *The Decentralizer*, found at Southern Methodist University and Columbia University. Also, social and political attitudes have changed, rightfully placing more focus on the Mexican-American experience in the U.S.

These new sources and social-political concerns dramatically change our

understanding of the early SP and political culture of the Progressive Era. This is especially so when one examines the transnational effects of the Mexican Revolution on the Texas SP. In the years preceding the Mexican Revolution, organizational disputes between Texas Socialists (part of the party's national left faction) and the Right-dominated SP national office were a regular feature of internal party life. Texas SP locals and national committee members frequently submitted proposals that included limiting the power of the national executive committee and national committee, strengthening the power of state over national bodies, and supporting investigations of Right SP leader Victor Berger for endorsing capitalist politicians in elections. Interactions with Mexican revolutionaries furthered radicalized Texas Socialists and exacerbate the divide between and Left and Right Socialists, resulting in much of the agrarian wing of the SP leaving the party and joining the North Dakota-based Nonpartisan League. This split, even before differences over World War I and the Bolshevik Revolution, was the initial fracture of the SP—a fracture that reduced the national presence of the SP, leaving it much more vulnerable to government backed repression. At same time white Texas Socialists' collaboration with Mexican revolutionaries challenged their racist attitudes, as many white radicals no longer viewed Mexicans, Mexican Americans and Tejanos as slavish peons, but instead as comrades.

Placing an emphasis on the Mexican Revolution as a catalyst for the split within the SP differs starkly from the current historiography of the SP. Taken together Ira Kipnis's *The American Socialist Movement, 1897-1912* (1952) and James Weinstein's *The Decline of Socialism in America, 1912-1925* (1969) chronicle the rise and fall of the SP in the United States. Both studies view the year 1912 as the apex of SP influence in

U.S. political culture. In 1912, the SP received its highest presidential vote percentage (6%) and the conflict between the Left and Right wings of the party came to a head. The right wing emerged as the victor through the recall of Haywood from the party's National Executive Committee and the Right's subsequent control of the party machinery.[7]

Weinstein, however, sees 1919 as the more critical year, when mainly immigrant socialists enamored with Bolshevism split the party. This interpretation has served as the standard for our present understanding of the deterioration of the SP. Weinstein, though, does not explain why by 1917 many agrarian socialists from the southwest and throughout the Great Plains had already left the SP. These agrarian socialists, disgruntled with the top-down leadership of Berger, were being drawn into the Nonpartisan League (NPL), which was growing spectacularly at this time and spoke directly to the worsening economic plight of working farmers.[8]

Kipnis's study comes a bit closer to the mark than Weinstein in pin pointing the waning of the SP at 1912. He stresses the internal party strife between direct actionist led by dual Left SP/Industrial Workers of the World leader Haywood and the step-at-a-time socialists led by Berger.[9] In turn, David A. Shannon's *The Socialist Party of America* published in 1955 explicitly disagrees with Kipnis's argument that internal party conflicts led to the demise of the SP. Shannon contends that the SP lost much of its strength due to

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[7] James Weinsten, *The Decline of Socialism in America, 1912-1925* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1984, 1967), 18; Ira Kipnis, *The American Socialist Movement, 1897-1912* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2004, 1952), 416-417; *Socialist Party Monthly Bulletin*, March-April, 1913.

[8] Weinstein, *The Decline of Socialism in America,* 238. Weinstein does cite the NPL as an organization competing with the SP for the sympathies of radicals but does not go into any discussion as to why radical farmers would leave the SP for the NPL.

[9] Step-at-a-time socialism is the belief that socialism can be achieved through a gradual process of step-at-a-time reforms of the capitalist system as opposed to direct action through labor actions, electing socialists or revolutionary violence. Kipnis, *The American Socialist Movement*, 152-153.

conservative Socialists drifting toward the progressivism of Woodrow Wilson and "a spate of social legislation" enacted during the first few months of his administration. This argument, though, does not help explain why large numbers of agrarian Socialists left the party as Haywood was stripped of his SP leadership position five days before Wilson was even inaugurated.[10]

Unfortunately, a more recent account of pre-war U.S. socialism in Michael Kazin's *American Dreamers: How the Left Changed a Nation* (2011) completely glosses over the 1912/13 conflicts within the SP. Kazin delineates the SP into three wings–the "plain folks," "anchored among skilled workers in midwestern cities and tenant farmers on the Great Plains"; secular Jewish immigrants; and the "modernists" intellectuals and artists centered mainly in Chicago and New York. Yet dividing the SP into these three broad groupings does little to advance our understanding of the party and its collapse. In discussing the "plain folks," Kazin primarily focuses on Oklahoma Socialists. He describes them as viewing the world through a "messianic lens" relying more on evangelicalism than Marxism to bring about the Cooperative Commonwealth that would eliminate class distinctions but leave their plain folk society intact. The Socialists of the Great Plains, however, were not that plain. As a whole, they regularly read Marxist writings, were a part of the world socialist movement, and embraced the latest scientific discoveries and technological advances. Agrarian Socialists were the heart of the SP's left wing. Kazin sees secular Jews as the "core" of the SP's left. However, this was only the case after World War I and the departure of the vast majority of agrarian Socialists

[10] David A. Shannon, *The Socialist Party of America*, (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1955), 79, 92-93, 262-263, 270. Besides his Wilson based argument, Shannon also falls back onto the often repeated trope that the SP failed because of the resilience of U.S. political traditions centered on the two party system and the lack of class consciousness among the U.S. working class.

from the party. Kazin spends most of his space on U.S. socialism on the "modernists." The reasons for the SP's demise during this era, according to Kazin, was government repression and the "modernists" only providing literary and artistic magazines while not addressing the basic needs of the working class. True enough, though understanding why the tenant farmers of Great Plains supported the left wing of SP during the 1912/13 internal party fights moves us much closer to understanding the end of the SP as a force within U.S. political culture.[11]

Kipnis does provide a blow-by-blow account of the SP's internal fights: indeed, so much so to the fault that he ignores external political factors such as specific domestic labor struggles or foreign events. He also draws incorrect battle lines placing farmers on the side of Berger, when in fact socialist farmers largely sided with the left wing of the SP. Weinstein draws the correct lines, placing socialist farmers within the SP's left wing but ignores the role of the Mexican Revolution.[12] More generally, neither Weinstein nor (especially) Kipnis spend much time discussing issues of race as they played out among the rank-and-file of the SP.

Written considerably later, Emilio Zamora's *The World of the Mexican Worker in Texas* (1993) and Neil Foley's *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (1997) do each have race and Mexican workers as central subjects. Both frame the experience of interracial unity between white socialists and Mexican radicals as a failure. This, though, is due in good measure to both scholars viewing the

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[11] Michael Kazin, *American Dreamers: How the Left Changed America*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011), 113, 133, 135, 146; For agrarian Socialists' relationship to Marxism and international Socialism see Stephen Burwood, "Debsian Socialism Through a Transnational Lens." *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, Vol. 2, Issue 3 (July 2003), pp. 253-282.

[12] Kipnis, *The American Socialist Movement*, 70; Weinstein, *The Decline of Socialism in America,* 17-18.

years 1910 through 1917 as one continuous period. As a result, Zamora and Foley view the racial attitudes of white Texas socialists as full of contradictions. They both point out how *The Rebel*, a Socialist newspaper, would print letters from readers with anti-Mexican biases. *The Rebel* also regularly referred to Mexicans as peons and talked about the Mexicanization of Texas agriculture in replacing white workers with cheap Mexican labor, while at the same time claiming to champion the entire working class. Comparing the racial attitudes of radical white tenant farmers before their interaction with Mexican revolutionaries and after, however, can solve this problem of contradictions.[13]

Zamora does point out the unique interracial character of the collaboration between Mexican radicals and white southern socialists for its time. However, Zamora continual qualifies each example of interracial unity. He feels the Texas SP did not provide enough financial support for Mexican organizers and that organizing of Mexican tenants was left to Mexican organizers. Yet, the evidence shows that the SP did provide financial support for Mexican organizers when faced with legal troubles. Beyond this the evidence also shows that not only were Mexican organizers receiving little financial support, but so were all other organizers, white and non-white.[14]

In reviewing the letters of Hickey and the Meitzens contained at Texas Tech, one finds that lack of money was constantly an issue for the Texas SP. In an interview with E.R. Meitzen's daughter, Jo-Lou Gaupp, she stated that her father on organizing trips lived hand to mouth depending on the generosity of supporters. E.R. also frequently hopped trains to get where he was going. This lifestyle of his early years caused him

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[13] Emilio Zamora, *The World of the Mexican Worker in Texas* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1993), 137; Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 110.

[14] Zamora, *The World of the Mexican Worker in Texas*, 136-138, 159.

much physical pain later in life. Also, that Mexican organizers were used to organize Mexicans into Mexican locals follows how the SP generally organized various ethnicities nationally into separate ethnic federations. In Texas, for example, besides the numerous Spanish language locals, in October 1915, a German local of the SP was organized in Houston's Third Ward. Earlier in March, of the same year, an Italian organizer was made available in Texas. Though no evidence exists that any Italian locals were formed.[15]

In the end Zamora states, "the socialist leadership often remained aloof from the actual work independently initiated by Mexican organizers. Consequently, the alliance was at best ambivalent and did not allow for the full incorporation of Mexican workers and the building of effective working-class unity."[16] While one should not make apologies for the racism of Texas socialists, we should acknowledge the trajectory of further and deeper interracial working-class unity begun in 1913 that was only cut short by government repression in 1917. It is hard say what would have happened had government repression not dismantled the Texas SP, but the period between 1913 and 1917 showed promising signs of working-class interracial unity.

Benjamin Johnson's *Revolution In Texas: How a Forgotten Rebellion and Its Bloody Suppression Turned Mexican into Americans* (2003) takes a more nuanced stance toward interracial politics. Johnson convincingly argues that "[a]lthough state repression would soon crush such efforts, by 1915 an alliance of dispossessed Anglos and Mexicans seemed to be getting on its feet."[17] Each of these works does a valuable service in

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[15] Interview of Jo-Lou Gaupp by the author, Arlington, Texas, July 12, 2008; *Rebel*, March 20, October 16, 1915.

[16] Zamora, *The World of the Mexican Worker in Texas*, 161.

furthering our knowledge of racial politics in Texas during the Progressive Era. Zamora, in particular, gives long neglected agency to Mexican workers in Texas. However, Zamora and Foley each fail to acknowledge the evolution in racial outlook, which Johnson hints at, by many white Texas socialists.

The new sources that have appeared since Weinstein, Kipnis, Shannon, Zamora, Foley, and Johnson published their works, should change our historical analysis of agrarian radicalism. Most significant of these is *The Decentralizer*. By placing *The Decentralizer* alongside the Texas SP's propaganda sheet *The Rebel*, which praises the Mexican Revolution, and then putting this into the context of the Right/Left faction fight within the SP, we can gain a new understanding of the pivotal role played by the influence of the Mexican Revolution on the political culture and interracial politics of the Progressive Era SP.

While internal faction fights played a role in weakening the farmer-labor bloc, the ultimate demise of an openly radical farmer-labor bloc came about, in a large way, due to government-backed repression. Repression came in the form of the use of courts to halt working-class protests, the jailing of radicals, local officials turning a blind eye to rightist vigilante attacks, and the Texas Rangers functioning as a death squad along the south Texas border from 1910-1920.

After the repression of the SP in Texas in 1917, the Meitzens moved to Minnesota and North Dakota to assist the growing NPL. E.O. edited the German language edition of the NPL's newspaper and E.R. became one of five national organizers for the NPL. While

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[17] Benjamin Heber Johnson, *Revolution In Texas: How a Forgotten Rebellion and Its Bloody Suppression Turned Mexican into Americans* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 66. While Green's *Grass-Roots Socialism* does discuss the SP's Right/Left faction fight and interactions between Texas Socialists and Mexican revolutionaries, he does not connect the two.

working for the NPL, E.R. was a part of a large national network of political radicals across the U.S. that were connected by the radical press, national farm-labor conferences, and overlapping membership in numerous political organizations. During this time, he came into contact with radicals who would become early leaders of the communist movement in the U.S.

Up until recently the only book length study of the NPL dated back to Robert Morlan's 1955 *Political Prairie Fire: The Nonpartisan League, 1915-1922*. This changed with the addition of Michael Lansing's *Insurgent Democracy: The Nonpartisan League in North American Politics* published in 2015. While Morlan focused primarily only on the NPL in North Dakota and Minnesota, Lansing provides us with the welcome service of detailing the NPL's history where it held sway in the U.S. and in Canada as well. Hopefully, Lansing's *Insurgent Democracy* will return the NPL not only into the historiography of the U.S. and Canada, but also into the canon of historical radicalism that can be drawn on by activists of today.

However, Lansing follows in the vein of Goodwyn and Sanders' histories of Populism by describing the NPL as a distinct chapter of agrarian history. This dissertation argues against Goodwyn's termination of the farmer-labor bloc in 1896 and Sanders transitioning the farmer-labor bloc into the Democratic Party. In the same manner it also disagrees with Lansing's contention that "The NPL drew on but did not emerge from the broad tradition of American socialism."[18] Instead, according to Lansing, while the NPL adhered to a producerist ideology, it came from a commitment to middle-class ideals,

[18] Michael Lansing, *Insurgent Democracy: The Nonpartisan League in North American Politics* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 25.

capitalist markets, and ownership of property.[19]

If one follows Lansing's argument that the NPL "did not emerge from the broad tradition of American socialism," than neither did the Texas SP. The NPL had nearly identical demands as the post-1912 Texas SP, minus the Marxist rhetoric. Both the NPL and Texas SP called for state owned mills and warehouses, state insurance, and for the state to provide loans to farmers. Most importantly in regards to comparing the two organizations, both fought for the property rights of family farmers in opposition to corporate run agri-businesses and land speculators.[20] Just as Lansing states, "That League leaders derived their program from the political goals generated by farmers themselves,"[21] so too did the Left agrarian-wing of the SP. The best of the socialists had a long tradition, both in practice and in principle, of immersing themselves in the daily struggles of the working class. The end goal of both socialists, such as the Meitzens, and the NPL were not that dissimilar—a more democratic society, both politically and economically, run in the interests of producers.

Though Lansing contends that the NPL was distinct from the SP, his own evidence shows how former members of SP founded the NPL. Many of its organizers, were former SP members including the Meitzens, Hickey, and Stanley Clark from Texas-not to mention numerous former Socialists in other states. The break of these Socialists from the SP and their subsequent joining of the NPL was not entirely a break from socialist ideology. Agrarian Socialists departed a party controlled by right-wing

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[19] Lansing, *Insurgent Democracy*, 16, 27.

[20] Ernest W. Winkler, ed., *Platforms of Political Parties in Texas* (Austin: Bulletin of the University of Texas No. 53, 1916), 566-567, 592-593; Lansing, *Insurgent Democracy*, 19.

[21] Lansing, *Insurgent Democracy*, 29.

Socialists, who they felt no longer represented the interests of working farmers. Rather than a break, the actions of agrarian Socialists represented more of an informal fusion of much of the agrarian wing of the SP with the NPL, maintaining the continuity of the farmer-labor bloc into the NPL.

While E.R. Meitzen was organizing for the NPL in the upper Great Plains, back in Texas, farmer-labor activists sought ways to rejuvenate their movement after the war. They hoped to do so by forming an alliance with impeached former Texas governor James Ferguson's rhetorically pro-worker-farmer, but socially conservative American Party. In the few mentions of the American Party in the historiography of Texas, it is often misunderstood and mischaracterized. Most historians simply view the party as a vehicle for Ferguson to keep himself before the Texas electorate in his constant attempts to regain state office at a time when he was barred from doing so.

This study reintroduces the American Party as a genuine vehicle for the farmer-labor bloc. Despite Ferguson's intentions, farmer-labor activists used the American Party to continue their fight for the Cooperative Commonwealth before Ferguson disbanded the party in 1922. The farmer-labor bloc's brief alliance with Ferguson, however, had drastic consequences that changed the course of Texas politics and that continues to affect the nation to this day. The farmer-labor bloc's alliance with Ferguson precipitated the tenor of working-class politics in Texas moving from Left anti-monopolism to conservative anti-statism. This contributed to the transformation of Texas from a hotbed of economic radicalism to a bastion of social conservatism.

The farmer-labor bloc in not taking a stand against the White Primary law of 1923

stands as one of the main exemplars of the rightward shift in Texas politics. Before its partnership with Ferguson, the farmer-labor bloc regularly tackled social issues such as calling for economic and political equality for African-Americans, supporting women's suffrage, and even supporting Margaret Sanger's birth control campaign. Beginning with its use of the American Party, the Texas farmer-labor bloc shunned social issues and focused purely on economics. This left it ill-prepared to combat the rise of the Ku Klux Klan and its focus on social issues.

In May 1923, the Texas Legislature passed a white primary statute. The law declared that all qualified members of the Democratic Party, the only effectual party in the state, were eligible to vote in the party's primary. The law, however, specifically stated that Negroes were not qualified for membership in the Democratic Party. As historian Darlene Clark Hine observed, "White Primary laws were among the most effective and blatantly discriminatory disenfranchisement schemes adopted in one-party southern states."[22] While Hine's *Black Victory: The Rise and Fall of the White Primary in Texas* (1979, 2003) provides an excellent narrative of the legal battle to end Texas' white primary, it does not explain why the law was created at this specific moment when other Jim Crow measures were already in place. This leaves one to view the 1923 white primary statue as simply another example of predictable or stereotypical southern racism. However, an analysis of working-class politics of this period in Texas reveals otherwise.

After the recall of North Dakota's NPL-backed governor in 1921, E.R. Meitzen returned to Texas to assist the Farm-Labor Union of America (FLUA), first out of Bonham and then Texarkana. Organizationally and politically the FLUA followed in the

[22] Darlene Clark Hine, *Black Victory: The Rise and Fall of the White Primary in Texas*, new edition (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 43.

tradition of the Farmers' Alliance and adopted the election tactics of the NPL by running candidates in the primaries of the two major parties, in this case the Democratic Party. The new organization soon grew to 125,000 members in Texas and spread into Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida. The FLUA also gained the support of the Texas State Federation of Labor. The FLUA, like the American Party, has been an understudied part of Texas labor history.

The early 1920s were busy years for E.R. Meitzen. He spent much of this time representing the FLUA in efforts to create a national Farmer-Labor Party, modeled on the British Labour Party. The efforts of Farmer-Labor Party activists came to head when a broad array of progressive forces supported Robert La Follette's campaign for president in 1924. Though losing the election, La Follette received the highest nationwide vote total ever for an independent candidate and received the only endorsement the AFL ever gave to a presidential candidate outside of the two major parties.

Regardless of the achievements of the La Follette campaign, La Follette had insisted that he run as an independent, not as the candidate of a new party. With no new party organized, the Farmer-Labor Party movement on a national level fell apart. More significantly, the defeat of La Follette represented the collapse of the farmer-labor bloc in U.S. politics after so much effort had been put into his election. For moderate radicals within the farm-labor bloc, the Meitzens included, a large amount of frustration and exhaustion appears to have set in, while the more radical elements were drawn to the revolutionary example of the Soviet Union.

Back in Texas, the FLUA was also falling into decline. The NPL elections tactics adopted by the FLUA did not serve it well in an over-crowded Texas Democratic

primary. The FLUA's disregard of at least economic and political equality for African-Americans and the creation of the whites-only primary prevented an inter-racial alliance of black and white working-class Texans harkening back to the days of Populism. The increased agitation of the farmer-labor bloc divided the white vote between FLUA supporters and traditional Democrats. At the same time, black Texans and their white allies within the Republican Party, the Black and Tans, were losing a factional fight against racist Lily White Republicans. With farmer-labor radicals on the move and blacks looking for a way to politically assert themselves outside of the GOP, traditional Democrats (with Klan support) felt a dire need to create a white only primary in order to prevent black votes from being a decisive electoral bloc in Texas elections--thus answering "why 1923?" With Texas, for all practical purposes, being a one-party state, denying African Americans the right to vote in the Democratic primary barred them from the only meaningful election in the state.

Before its demise, the FLUA would attract the attention of communists in the Workers Party. The Workers Party initially ignored the plight of working farmers in the U.S. Though, the Workers Party, acting under a directive from V.I. Lenin, created the United Farmers Educational League (UFEL), in order to politically reach farmers. E.R., after having served on committees of the Farmer-Labor Party with communists such as James Cannon, agreed to serve on the national committee of the UFEL bringing him into the orbit of the international communist movement. Though E.R. never became a communist (at least openly, whether briefly in secret one can only speculate), Cannon also invited E.R. to serve on the national committee of the International Defense League (IDL). The IDL organized and controlled by Cannon, besides campaigning for the

defense of political prisoners around the world, became the main vehicle of the Left Opposition in the U.S. in the fight against Stalinism.

Eventually, both the FLUA and UFEL collapsed and E.R. was left with the realities of financially providing for a growing family during difficult economic times. He decided to move his family to northern Florida in 1927, after purchasing a small county newspaper in Live Oak, then relocating it to Lake City, before moving back to Texas in 1940. Never ceasing to be a political being, E.R. decided the best way to continue the fight for a Cooperative Commonwealth would be to work within the left wing of the Democratic Party. This tactic, adopted by many participants of the farmer-labor bloc played a large role in the complete collapse of the historic farmer-labor bloc into New Deal liberalism. After the 1924 election, the U.S. political landscape was devoid of another political party originating from the farmer-labor bloc operating in the electoral arena.

Over ninety years have transpired since the collapse of the agrarian based farmer-labor bloc. The general public has largely forgot the people of the farmer-labor bloc and the parties they created. When discussed by historians, they are often portrayed as misguided hayseeds, isolated in their local communities, who looked more to the past than the future. Their radicalism dismissed as messianic evangelicalism or turned around to be a product of a business orientation or undefined middle-class values. Yet, a deeper analysis shows that without the actions and organizations of these country bumpkins we might never have left the Gilded Age and broke the dominance of the Robber Barons.

It is now widely accepted that we are presently living in a second Gilded Age. Economic inequality is at its highest levels in decades. The income of the top 1% of

Americans has quadrupled, while remaining static for everyone else. The top 1% also owns more wealth than the bottom 95% combined. While leading politicians of the Republican and Democratic parties argue in a nationalist framework over whether we need to "Make America great again" or if "America never stopped being great," the majority of Americans are suffering. Conditions such as these led to the creation of the farmer-labor bloc during the first Gilded Age.[23]

In the 1925 *American Labor Who's Who*, E.R. Meitzen described himself as "active since 21 of age in promoting dirt-farmer organizations and other political and indust[rial] mov[ements] toward [a] coop[erative] commonwealth."[24] The experience of three generations of the Meitzen family could traditionally be viewed as a story of American exceptionalism. Their connections with Germany, Ireland, Mexico, and the Soviet Union made them dirt farmer internationalists. Those seeking solutions to today's social and economic problems would be well served by understanding the transnational history and lessons of the Texas farmer-labor bloc.

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[23] Howard Fineman, "A New Gilded Age Threatens the State of Our Union," *Huffington Post*, January 23, 2014, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/01/23/gilded-age-state-of-the-union_n_4647348.html (accessed March 3, 2016); Institute for Policy Studies, "Facts and Figures in 99 to 1," http://inequality.org/99to1/facts-figures/ (accessed March 3, 2016); Nick Gass, "Clinton takes on Trump: 'America never stopped being great,'" *Politico*, February 27, 2016, http://www.politico.com/blogs/2016-dem-primary-live-updates-and-results/2016/02/hillary-clinton-donald-trump-slogan-219908 (accessed March 3, 2016).

[24] Solon De Leon, ed., *The American Labor Who's Who* (New York: Hanford Press, 1925), 157.

Chapter One

What Was Lost in Germany Might, in Texas, Be Won

In January 1850, Otto Meitzen stood on the deck of the brig *Herschel* off the Texas coast near Galveston. With him was his wife of eleven years, Jennie, and their three young children. After sailing for nearly six weeks from the port of Bremen, across the Atlantic Ocean and through the Gulf of Mexico their destination was in sight. However, a blue norther blew them back into the Gulf, and it would be another week before they made land.[25]

Much more had to be on Otto's mind, though, than the cold. The autocratic Prussian king still ruled. Otto would now have to achieve his dreams of economic and political freedom in Texas, not in a united Germany. He had embraced the revolutionary tide that swept Europe in 1848 and actively participated in the attempts to forge a democratic republic in opposition to the despotism of Prussian king Friedrich Wilhelm IV. During the revolution some of the more radical working-class demands emanated from the Meitzen's home province of Silesia. When the revolution failed and the counter-revolution ensued, the Meitzens, according to family lore, made "their escape to the sailing vessel one jump ahead of the emperor's bayonets." The Meitzens were not alone as other Silesians also chose exile in Texas. These Silesian immigrants and their fellow *achtundvierziegers* would influence working-class Texas politics in the decades to

[25] "A list of Passengers arrived from foreign countries at the Port of Galveston during the quarter ending March 31, 1850," National Archives and Records Administration, film M575, Reel 3; Frieda Meitzen Williams, "German Pioneers in Texas," *Frontier Times* (Bandera, Texas) 13, No. 1, (1935): 70.

follow.[26]

A powerful connection exists between the Silesian region of Central Europe and Central Texas, ultimately linking the radical working-class demands of the 1848 Revolution, Texas Populism, the Socialist Party of the early twentieth century, and attempts to create a labor party in the United States following World War I. During the 1848 Revolution, Silesia was the only region in Europe that developed a province-wide organization, the Rustic Alliance, whose membership was composed of and fought for the demands of the agrarian working class. The origins of the Rustic Alliance began in the Democratic Club of Liegnitz, Silesia, after the club's members decided to go into the countryside in order to link the radical democratic and economic demands of workers with those of rural peasants. Though ultimately failing, the Rustic Alliance and Democratic Clubs of Silesia served as a politically left pull on the overall course of the 1848 Revolution.

The farmer-labor alliance witnessed in Silesia during the course of the 1848 Revolution was remarkably similar to the same type of alliances seen in Texas Populist and Socialist movements. This was due in part to the significant number of Silesian and other 48er political exiles, along with their descendants, who chose to continue to fight for their political beliefs in Texas, after fleeing the counter-revolution in Europe. The Texas sections of the People's and Socialist parties were among the largest of their movements in the United States. Just as the Silesian radical farmer-labor movement acted as a left pull on the 1848 Revolution, the Populist and Socialist movements did the same

[26] Frieda Meitzen-Williams, *History of the Meitzen Family* (Houston: np, 1958), pages are not numbered; *Nonpartisan Leader*, September 20, 1917; Hans Joachim Hahn, *The 1848 Revolutions in German-Speaking Europe* (New York: Pearson Education Limited, 2001), 64. Achtundvierzieger is German for 48er, the term used to describe those who participated in the 1848 Revolution.

for U.S. political culture.

One bright red thread linking these momentous movements together is the German Texan Meitzen family. For three generations, from the 1840s to 1940s, the Meitzens participated in numerous movements and organizations that fought for the economic and political rights of laborers and working farmers. Along the way, they interacted with Irish radicals, Mexican revolutionaries, and adherents of the Bolshevik Revolution both creating and revealing the dramatically transnational nature of contemporary radicalism.

Silesia could be called the lost province of German history. This description, though, does not encompass the cosmopolitan history of the region. Silesia sits at one of the not-altogether-unique convergence points of peoples and empires in Europe. Presently Silesia is a part of southwestern Poland. The first state to control the area was Greater Moravia in the late ninth century followed briefly by Bohemia. In the late tenth century the Piast dynasty brought much of Silesia into the Polish state. After a series of conflicts Poland surrendered rule of Silesia to the Kingdom of Bohemia in 1335. From Bohemia the region passed into the realm of the Hapsburg Empire. Due to the early Bohemian and eventual Hapsburg rule Silesia always had a strong Germanic presence to go along with Bohemians and Poles. The German position rose to ascendancy with the Prussian conquest of Silesia in 1741 and remained so until the end of World War II. The terror of ethnic cleansing during Nazi rule, the defeat of Nazi Germany resulting in Silesia becoming a part of Poland, and the forced removal of millions of ethnic Germans from Silesia and nearby areas ended much of the region's centuries long multicultural

identity.[27]

While the horrors of the twentieth century waited in the future, Silesia, like much of Europe, was embroiled in political turmoil when Otto Meitzen was born in the provincial capital of Breslau on February 12, 1811. The American and French revolutions of the late eighteenth century inspired Europe's laboring masses and progressive intellectuals with the ideas of liberty, fraternity, and equality. The French Revolution also produced the Napoleonic armies that, though destroying the reactionary and obsolete Germanic Holy Roman Empire, also brought war and foreign military occupation. Beginning on January 5, 1807 Breslau was occupied for almost a year by a French garrison commanded by Napoleon's youngest brother, Jerôme Bonaparte. After Napoleon's retreat from Moscow in 1812, Breslau became the center of German resistance to and liberation from the French. The French defeat, however; did not usher in a new era of liberty but instead the formation of the Germanic Confederation, dominated by Austria, and the consolidation of a bureaucratic, aristocratic-minded government.[28]

Concurrent with the redrawing of Europe's political geography, the economic transition from feudalism to capitalism was underway as well. As early as the beginning of the seventeenth century a nascent capitalist economy was developing in Silesia with a

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[27] Historians Norman Davies and Roger Moorhouse described Breslau, the provincial capital of Silesia, as "the lost city of German history," because the city is now in Poland and has been in-large neglected by historians of Germany. I have extended this description to include the entire province. Norman Davies and Roger Moorhouse, *Microcosm: Portrait of a Central European City* (London: Pimlico, 2003), 11, 54-55, 61-103, 407-432. For the removal of ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe following World War II see Alfred Maurice de Zayas, *A Terrible Revenge: the Ethnic Cleansing of the East European Germans* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006).

[28] Ida Holmgren, *Family Tree Book of the Holmgreens and the Meitzens*, translated by E.O. Meitzen (Hallettsville, Texas: New Era, 1909), 12. A branch of the Holmgren family that immigrated to the U.S. changed the spelling of their name to Holmgreen; David Blackbourn, *The Long Nineteenth Century: A History of Germany, 1780-1918* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), xiii, 93-96; Davies and Moorhouse, *Microcosm*, 212-213. Breslau is now Wrocław, Poland.

cottage textile industry and mining developments. State-sponsored policies of Friedrich II begun during the 1770s until his death in 1786 further assisted the industrialization of the textiles and mining industries in Silesia. Napoleon's Continental System also provided the German textile industry protection from English competition. Though undergoing industrialization Silesia, still had a large agricultural sector. This would create a unique convergence of farm and labor working-class demands in 1848.[29]

Changes in the Meitzen family make them symbolic of the historical shifts of this period. The earliest known Meitzens were from the northeastern Prussian province of Pomerania. Based on available sources, most likely they were farmers; well into the twentieth century the Meitzen family would hold significant political ties to farmers and the land. Otto Meitzen's father, Melchior, was born in Berlin in 1772. At some point, Melchior moved with his brother August to Breslau. The historical record does not reveal his position in society other than that he married an unnamed noblewoman of the Kalckreuth family. This surely though had to be a step up in the social hierarchy of Prussia for the family.[30]

The Kalckreuths were an old and wealthy Silesian family that traced their nobility back to the beginning of the thirteenth century. They held land in Brandenburg, Pomerania, Saxony, and Posen as well. One in their lineage was made a Baron in

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[29] Davies and Moorhouse, *Microcosm*, 163, 210, 219.

[30] The English version of the *Family Tree Book of the Holmgreens and the Meitzens* states Melchior Meitzen was born in Berlin. Though the German original states that Melchior was born in Breslau. Ida Holmgren who was the sister of Otto Meitzen's daughter-in-law, Jennie Holmgren Meitzen, wrote this family chronicle around 1901. It is the main source for much of the early Meitzen family history. Ida was born in September 1825 and remained in Germany until her death in 1908 in Eberswalde near Berlin. Otto's grandson, E.O. Meitzen, translated it into English and corrected Otto's birthplace to Berlin. A revised and updated edition of Ida's chronicle was published in 1958 by Otto's granddaughter Frieda Meitzen-Williams titled *History of the Meitzen Family*. Holmgren, *Family Tree Book of the Holmgreens and the Meitzens*, 12; Meitzen-Williams, *History of the Meitzen Family*, noted.

Bohemia in 1678. In Melchior's time, Friedrich Wilhelm II made Friedrich Adolf von Kalckreuth a Count in 1786 for his service as a colonel in the War of Bavarian Succession (1778-1779). Through his actions in the Napoleonic Wars, Count von Kalckreuth was promoted to field marshal and died the Governor of Berlin in 1818.[31]

Nevertheless, a life within the Prussian aristocracy was not to last long for the Meitzens. Melchior divorced the Kalckreuth noblewoman and married her maid. The historical record is silent on the reasons for the divorce, though politics could have been a factor. If Melchior's politics were anything like his son Otto's, and his grandson's, and his great grandchildren's radical working-class politics that a Major von Kalckreuth put down a protest of peasants in Brandenburg in June 1811, surely would have caused tensions in the family. Melchior had one child with the noblewoman, a son, August, born in 1805 in Breslau. August stayed connected to his mother and became "manager of estates in Silesia," presumably of the Kalckreuth family lands. With his new wife, Melchior had three children--the already mentioned Otto, Marie born in 1816 in Breslau, and William also born in Breslau in 1818. From Melchior's divorce and new marriage, the Meitzens slipped from feudal nobility back into the laboring classes. The 1810 directory of homeowners in Breslau does not list the Meitzens as owning their home, as Melchior worked as the superintendent of stables at the University of Breslau. Meanwhile

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[31] . Otto Titan von Hefner, ed., *Siebmacher's Grosses und Allgemeines Wappenbuch in verbindung mit mehreren neu herausgegeben und mit historischen, genealogischen und heraldischen Notizen begleitet von Dr. Otto Titan von Hefner. Dritten Bandes Erste bis Dritte Abtheilung. Der adel des Kőnigreichs Preussen* V. 29 (Nurnberg: Verlag von Bauer und Raspe, 1857), 14; Otto Titan von Hefner, A. Grenser, G.A. von Medűverstedt, and Adolf Matthias Hildebrandt, ed., *Siebmacher's grosses und allgemeines Wappenbuch in einer neuen, vollständig geordneten und reich vermehrten Auflage, mit heraldischen und historisch-genealogischen Erläuterungen Dritten Bandes Erste bis Dritte Abtheilung. Der blűhende Adel des Kőnigreichs Preussen (Edelleute A-L)* V. 30 (Nurnberg: Verlag von Bauer und Raspe, 1878), 191; Hugh Chisholm, ed.,"KALCKREUTH (or KALKREUTH), FRIEDRICH ADOLF, COUNT VON (1737-1818)," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th edition, Vol. XV (New York: The Encyclopedia Britannica Company, 1911), 639. Translations throughout are by the author.

a broader societal transition from feudalism to capitalism was also underway.[32]

With a developing textile industry and most of the arable land controlled by the Junker class, Silesian peasants and laborers were subjected to the double yoke of feudalism and capitalist exploitation. Historically overshadowed by the radicalization of the French Revolution in 1792, in this same year Silesian peasants stood up against feudal exactions and revolted against their Junker landlords. The Prussian government declared martial law and used military force to halt the uprising. This revolt was only the beginnings of a decades-long Silesian peasant resistance to the old feudal order. At the same time improvements in agricultural techniques lessened farm labor demands and lowered food prices resulting in many peasants being forced off the land into the nascent working class centered on the textile industry. A growing labor pool brought wages down and put workers into conflict with the budding capitalist order. Following their fellow Silesians in the countryside, journeymen in Breslau revolted in 1793. Thirty-seven people were killed and seventy-eight injured before the revolt was put down. It would not take long for Silesian peasants and workers to link in resistance against their shared double yokes of economic oppression.[33]

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[32] Melchior's son August is not the same August Meitzen as the well-known geographer, statistician and political economist August Meitzen (1822-1910); however, he was Melchior's nephew--the son of Melchior's brother also named August. Holmgren, *Family Tree Book of the Holmgreens and the Meitzens*, 12, 15; F.L. Carsten, *A History of the Prussian Junkers* (Aldershot, England: Scolar Press, 1989), 79. On a side note the philosopher, Solomon Maimon (1754-1800), spent his final years (1790-1800) on a Kalckreuth estate in Silesia. "Maimon, Solomon ben Joshua," *The Jewish Encyclopedia: A Descriptive Record of the History, Religion, Literature, and Customs of the Jewish People from the Earliest Times to the Present Day*, Vol. 8 (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1906), 266-269; United States Census, *Census Reports*, *Eighth Census of the United States Taken in the year* 1860; Paul C. Boethel, *The Big Guns of Fayette* (Austin, Texas: Von Boeckman-Jones Co., 1965), 79; *Verzeichnis der Hausbesitzer Breslaus* (Circa 1810), Archiwum Panstwowe we Wroclawiu, Wroclaw, Poland.

[33] Walter Schmidt, Gerhard Becker, Helmut Bleiber, Rolf Dlubek, Siegried Schmidt, and Rolf Weber, *Illustrierte Geschichte der deutschen Revolution 1848/49* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1975), 33; Helmut Berding, ed., *Soziale Unruhen in Deutschland während der Französischen Revolution* (Göttingen:

On March 23, 1793, in the town of Schömberg, 53 miles southwest of Breslau, weavers revolted against their working conditions. The revolt spread into the countryside, and joined by peasants, evolved into a general conflict against Prussian feudalism involving approximately 20,000 people before being ruthlessly suppressed in April by Prussian soldiers. War and occupation did not put a stop to continued resistance. In 1807, Silesian peasants revolted in Trebnitz and Striegau, which was viciously quashed by the occupying French army. A peasants' "war" erupted in February 1811, in the district of Ratibor, when peasants attacked landlords and demanded an end to their feudal conditions. Armed with spears and their scythes, the peasants attacked the troops sent in to stop them, only to be defeated with high losses. Around the same time peasants in the district of Pless also rose up in revolt. After high losses of life, the uprising was suppressed with 300 rebels being jailed and/or flogged. Conjoined workers and peasants resistance to feudalism and capitalism would culminate in the 1848 Revolution.[34]

The above portrait of resistance to feudalism and capitalism depicts a struggle of an embryonic working class versus the aristocracy and emerging capitalist class. In late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Europe, however, class designations were rarely this sharply delineated. Between the poor peasant and unskilled laborer on one side, and aristocrat on the other, was a growing and fluid middle. The middle classes were on the rise due to the beginnings of a profit-driven capitalistic economy; early industrialization; and the professionalization of trades related to law, education, and economics. Friedrich

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Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988), 243; Blackbourn, *The Long Nineteenth Century*, 50-51; Davies and Moorhouse, *Microcosm*, 220.

[34] "Silesian Weavers Uprisings," *The Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, 3rd Edition, 1970-1979, http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/Silesian+Weavers+Uprisings; Blackbourn, *The Long Nineteenth Century*, 51, 122; Carsten, *A History of the Prussian Junkers*, 77-78.

the Great, in his drive for modernization and efficiency--though still giving preference to noble birth--opened the way for those in the middle classes to serve in the Prussian civil service due to their professional training. Goethe, born into the middle class, further helped ease among elites, and popularized in German society the rise of a middle-class professional ethic. "Birth, rank and fortune are nowise incompatible with genius and taste," Goethe wrote in his second novel, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, published in 1795. The upward mobility of the middle classes was legally recognized in Prussia through a series of reforms begun in 1807 that eliminated serfdom, lessened the power of guilds, and removed barriers to professions previously only held by aristocrats. The Meitzens fell within this growing middle class.[35]

The sources concerning the Meitzens in Europe are fragmentary, but do provide enough to give us a rough illustration of their lives. Despite Melchior divorcing the noblewoman of the Kalckreuth family, that he married her to begin with shows that he moved within an upwardly mobile social network. His superintendent position at the University of Breslau stables places the Meitzen family within the middling classes of early nineteenth-century Prussia. The early careers of Melchior's sons, Otto and William, confirm this as well--though their vocations were technical and skill related placing them closer to becoming a part of the swelling working class.

Educated as a mechanical engineer, Otto established himself as a millwright in Liegnitz, west of Breslau. He probably ran a small shop where he worked alongside at

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[35] David Blackbourn, "The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie: Reappraising German History in the Nineteenth Century" in *The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Germany*, David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 176-177; Ernest K. Bramsted, *Aristocracy and the Middle-Classes in Germany: Social Types in German Literature, 1830-1900* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1937, 1964), 20, 32, 36; Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship and Travels*, trans. Thomas Carlyle (London: Chapman and Hall, Ld., 1893), book V, chapter IX, 151; P.H. Noyes, *Organization and Revolution: Working Class Associations and the German Revolutions of 1848-1849* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), 18.

least one known employee who was a cousin of his from Pomerania. Millwrights at this time were carpenters who specialized in building machines for use in the processing of agricultural and lumber products. Otto's machinist skills could very well have been applied to the building of textile mills as the first modern textile mills were being built in Silesia in the 1830s and 1840s.[36]

Mechanical engineering not only provided Otto Meitzen with a source of income but also in all likelihood led him to meeting his future wife, Jennie Caroline Alpine Holmgren. Jennie was the daughter of Prussian government architect Jens Engelbrecht Holmgren who in 1832 was sent to Liegnitz to oversee public works projects in the city. Jens Holmgren was born in Copenhagen on December 31, 1784. Jens Nilsen, his Swedish born father, left Sweden at a young age for Copenhagen, changed his name to Holmgren and started out as a cabinetmaker. The elder Jens eventually found work with the Danish Asiatic Company starting out as a ship carpenter. He made six trading voyages to China and amassed a "small fortune" in the process.[37]

Following in his father's footsteps, Jens Engelbrecht Holmgren started off as a ship's carpenter. Though initially he would not find the same fortune as his father--the Napoleonic Wars ensured this. Jens Engelbrecht served as a citizen artilleryman of the home guard during the British Bombardment of Copenhagen or the Second Battle of

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[36] Liegnitz, now Legnica in Poland, is 59 miles west of Breslau (Wroclaw). Leonie Rummel Weyland and Houston Wade, *An Early History of Fayette County* (La Grange, Texas: La Grange Journal Plant, 1936, 2002), 56-57; Holmgren, *Family Tree Book of the Holmgreens and the Meitzens*, 12; William Otto Henderson, *The Rise of German Industrial Power, 1834-1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 73-74.

[37] Jennie Holmgren was born September 16, 1818. Holmgren, *Family Tree Book of the Holmgreens and the Meitzens*, 7, 8; Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz Berlin (GStAPK), I HA Rep. 93 Ministerium der öffentlichen Arbeiten, Nr. 637 Konduitenlisten der Baubeamten im Regierungsbezirk Liegnitz, Bd. 1 Adhib, 1834-1837; GStAPK, I. HA Rep. 93 B Ministerium der öffentlichen Arbeiten, Nr. 638 Konduitenlisten der Baubeamten im Regierungsbezirk Liegnitz, Bd. 2, 1839-1856.

Copenhagen (1807). The battle was a devastating Danish defeat resulting in the surrender of the Danish navy and a large portion of Copenhagen burning to the ground. Completely impoverished Jens Engelbrecht found work as a cabinetmaker.[38]

Jens Engelbrecht Holmgren's poverty did not last long. While attending lectures on mathematics in Copenhagen, Jens met the four brothers Friedrich, Hermann, Christian, and Burghard Freund of Hannover. The eldest brother Friedrich had lived in Copenhagen since a child learning the locksmith trade from his uncle. The three younger brothers joined Friedrich in Copenhagen in order to escape impressment into the French army. Holmgren and the Freunds formed a friendship with Holmgren's mother, who became a mother figure for the exiled brothers. This friendship led to Holmgren marrying one of the Freund's sisters, Coenke Margaretha on August 6, 1817. Together Jens Holmgren and Coenke Freund had seven children including Jennie. Holmgren's new mother-in-law was a descendant of the Swiss knight Burghard von Wurden who arrived in Germany in 800 A.D. in the retinue of the Emperor Charlemagne. Though the von Wurden fief north of Bremen in the Kingdom of Hannover was no longer in direct family control, the Freunds and von Wurdens enjoyed a life within the upper classes of Europe.[39]

Another chance meeting at a mathematics lecture furthered the fortunes of the Holmgrens and Freunds. Around 1815, Christian Freund moved to Berlin to ply his trade as a coin maker. At a lecture by the mathematician C.L. Lehmus, Christian Freund met the poet Clemens Brentano, a leading figure of the German Romanticism movement.

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[38] Holmgren, *Family Tree Book of the Holmgreens and the Meitzens*, 7.

[39] Meitzen-Williams, *History of the Meitzen Family*, noted; Adolf Matthias Hildebrandt, ed., *Siebmacher's grosses und allgemeines Wappenbuch in einer neuen, vollständig geordneten und reich vermehrten Auflage, mit heraldischen und historisch-genealogischen Erläuterungen Zweiten Bandes Neunte Abtheilung. Der Hannöverische Adel* V. 28 (Nurnberg: Verlag von Bauer und Raspe, 1870), 19.

Brentano took an interest in Christian and introduced him to two members of the Prussian *Geheimrat* or Privy Council, one of who had attempted and failed to build a steam engine on his own. These connections enabled Christian to secure a loan to purchase a piece of land near the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin. On this land, Christian, in partnership with Jens Holmgren, built a workshop and foundry. Together Jens and Christian built one of the first German steam-powered boats and also installed a steam engine in the Prussian mint. Jens would eventually leave the Berlin foundry in control of the Freund brothers and take on the career of a government architect that led him to Liegnitz. His government job and marital ties to an ancient noble family placed the Holmgrens firmly within a growing German bourgeoisie.[40]

When Otto Meitzen met Jennie Alpine Holmgren she was "a lady with gloves, servants, and a carriage." She however, fell in love with the "quiet spoken" and studious millwright who had little money. Jennie's von Wurden family especially did not approve of her attraction to Otto due to his lack of wealth and refusal to be baptized. "Tiny fiery" Jennie stood up to her mother and married Otto on July 28, 1838. Otto's brother William's track was not all too dissimilar to that of his older brother. Through the guild system, which was becoming archaic, William had become a master of mines and smelters in Breslau. In 1842 William married the Polish lady Antonia Tschikovsky.[41]

The extended Meitzen family of the early 1840s was very much a product of its

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[40] Hildebrandt, ed., *Siebmacher's grosses und allgemeines Wappenbuch*, *Der Hannöverische Adel* V. 28, 19; Arthur F.J. Remy, "Klemens Maria Brentano," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 2 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1907), http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02759a.htm; Meitzen-Williams, *History of the Meitzen Family*, noted.

[41] Meitzen-Williams, *History of the Meitzen Family*, noted; Weyland and Wade, *An Early History of Fayette County*, 56; Holmgren, *Family Tree Book of the Holmgreens and the Meitzens*, 15; Ethel Hander Geue, *New Homes In a New Land: German Immigration to Texas, 1847-1861* (Baltimore: Clearfield Company, Inc., 1970, 2002), 106. The trade of machine builder, of which Otto Meitzen worked as, was not organized by a guild at this time in Prussia. Noyes, *Organization and Revolution*, 29.

time. The French Revolution and the eastward march of the French army fractured and redrew the aristocratic feudal order of Europe. The Metternich System then sought to restore Europe to its pre-French Revolution conservative order. The old social order though would bend to the rise of the new ascending economic order of capitalism. Affairs of trade and industry were no longer only the purview of monarchs and their royal retainers as the bourgeois increasingly made such matters sources of private profit. With the bourgeoisie came their fundamental beliefs in liberalism and nationalism, putting the new class in conflict with conservatism and hereditary monarchy. However, neither the aristocracy nor the bourgeoisie was strong enough to supplant the other as the dominant power. In fact, they still needed each other as industrialization gave birth to a working class, a class whose interests were diametrically opposed to those of feudalism and capitalism.

Within the Meitzens one finds the presence of three contending classes–the aristocracy, bourgeoisie and proletariat. Like their father before them, Otto and William Meitzen each married a woman with noble lineage (but unlike their father never divorced). The marriage of Otto Meitzen's wife Jennie's grandparents–the doctor Julius Conrad Freund to Elisabeth von Wurden, and the marriage of Jennie's parents Jens Holmgren to Coenke Margaretha (von Wurden) Freund--demonstrate, in part, the declining fortunes of Europe's nobility during this period of capitalist ascendancy. No longer in purely noble circles, the von Wurdens in two consecutive generations bonded themselves to families, the Freunds and Holmgrens, with bourgeois potential. The von Wurden's displeasure with Jennie's marriage to Otto Meitzen showed a fear that a branch

of their family could drop into the sprouting proletariat. [42] Capitalist industrialization threatened both Otto and William Meitzen's positions as independent artisans, creating a specter of their becoming wageworkers within the working class.

The process of German industrialization began in the Rhineland and Silesia toward the end of the eighteenth century. In Silesia, the center of the German textile industry, the number of looms went from 19,800 in 1748 to 28, 700 in 1790. The majority of these looms were not steam-powered modern looms, but the numbers demonstrate a transition from subsistence agriculture to modern industry and wage labor. Prussian administrators during this period, though, did put steam pumps to use in the expanding Silesian mining industry and introduced coke smelting to the region.[43]

In the early nineteenth century, English engineers were used to further mechanize the Silesian textile industry. The largest advances though came in mining. Silesia contains deposits of iron, zinc, lead, silver, and vital to industrialization--coal. In the first half of the nineteenth century Silesian coal deposits were the most valuable in Germany. The iron industry grew as well, with approximately seventy blast furnaces running in Silesia in 1846.[44]

Industrialization and the expansion of capitalism in Silesia did not follow clear patterns separating aristocrat from capitalist, peasant from laborer, and the state from entrepreneur. The lines were often blurred. Unlike England where private hands guided industrialization, the monarchal Prussian state directly participated in the process of

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[42] Meitzen-Williams, *History of the Meitzen Family*, noted.

[43] Henderson, *The Rise of German Industrial Power*, 25, 28.

[44] Henderson, *The Rise of German Industrial Power*, 53-56, 60.

industrialization. The Prussian state provided grants, loans, and special privileges to many industrialists. Differing even more from England, in Prussia the state nationalized and operated manufacturing enterprises in multiple industries. The Prussian state, through the Seehandlung (a state trading and financial institution), ran more enterprises in Silesia (18) than all its other provinces combined (17) in the 1840s. [45]

While some Silesian noble families financed manufacturing endeavors, others actively engaged in capitalist industrialization by founding colliers, ironworks, and textile operations on their estates. "Industrial capitalism in Silesia evolved directly out of the former feudal economy. Feudal magnates became capitalist entrepreneurs and their serfs became miners and factory hands," observed historian W.O. Henderson. The Silesian nobility had become bourgeoisified—in contrast to other areas of Prussia, where Junkers held a general disdain for industry. The extent of aristocratic control of early industry in Silesia was especially evident in mining. In 1785 out of the 243 mines in Upper Silesia, 205 belonged to nobles, 20 to the Prussian king, and just 2 to commoners.[46]

From the perspective of working-class Silesians the double yoke of feudal and capitalist oppression often came from the same person. When one's lord made the switch from agriculture to industry, a peasant could lose his small land holding and go from peasant to coalminer or textile weaver. Former peasants turned textile workers, now subjected to the whims of capitalistic labor exploitation in the form of low wages and long hours, still had to pay a *weberzin* or "weaver's tax" to their feudal lord. It was these

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[45] Henderson, *The Rise of German Industrial Power*, 13, 27, 71-72

[46] Henderson, *The Rise of German Industrial Power*, 26, 56; *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, December 9, 1848.

conditions that led to the aforementioned weaver's revolt of 1793.[47]

Because peasant weavers in Silesia revolted against the lords who controlled their labor options, these conflicts are commonly portrayed as simply anti-feudal. Not looking below the anti-feudal surface has led some historians to ignore the formation of a working class in Silesia and its role in the 1848 Revolution. Historian Jonathan Sperber argues that because only the beginnings of industrialization or a factory labor force could be observed in central and western Europe that "the role of the labor movement itself in the radical politics of 1848 has been exaggerated in retrospect." To make clear his argument, Sperber specifically negates the role of class, stating, "class struggle and class consciousness as they would be understood in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries were far from being keys to the political left" so early.[48] With this view, Sperber barely mentions Silesia at all in his history of the 1848 Revolutions in Europe, and he pushes the revolutionary actions of the developing working class to the margins (or in the case of radical Silesian peasants to a footnote). Hans Joachim Hahn echoes Sperber stating, "studies of the German revolutions have too often given an exaggerated role to workers and peasants."[49]

The dominant historical view of the 1848 Revolution, from those such as Sperber and Hahn, portrays the main revolutionary forces as coming from the bourgeoisie and educated middle classes. As Hahn argues, "it must be recognized that the revolutionary

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[47] Henderson, *The Rise of German Industrial Power*, 56, 63.

[48] Sperber, *The European Revolutions*, *1848-1851* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 247. Sperber does not make clear how he thinks class consciousness and action were understood in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, making it unclear in how he thinks it differed from the time of the 1848 Revolution.

[49] Sperber, *The European Revolutions*, *1848-1851*, 171; Hahn, *The 1848 Revolutions in German-Speaking Europe*, ix.

inspiration and leadership came from within the ranks of Germany's academic community, from its many advocates, writers, historians and teachers."[50] Having grown frustrated and held back by bureaucratic monarchical rule, these growing classes of industrialists and professionals demanded liberal reforms through a constitution that granted freedom of the press, free speech, and the rights to assembly and form associations. According to this prevailing historical view, the middle-class liberals found "unexpected allies"[51] from some workers and peasants. This interpretation, however, denigrates the role played by the working class in 1848-49. What the dominant historiographical interpretation fails to grapple with is the question of how there was a revolution at all without workers and peasants who did most of the fighting and dying. It was the peasants in the countryside who sacked the noble estates, and "the workers and artisans of the cities, who manned the barricades and fought in the streets, who provided the force, or threat of force, which, however disorganized, made 1848 a revolution in the eyes of cotemporaries and hence history," as historian P. H. Noyes wrote back in 1966 against the long-dominant mainstream view.[52] While historians of this dominant view, if questioned, would unlikely negate the importance of artisans and workers in the revolution, in their writings, the working classes have been pushed to the margins.

Confirming the existence of a Silesian working class that acted in its own class interests is vital to understanding not only the 1848 Revolution, but also the course of working-class radicalism to this day. The resistance of the Silesian working class against

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[50] Hahn, *The 1848 Revolutions in German-Speaking Europe*, ix.

[51] Sperber, *The European Revolutions*, *1848-1851*, 182, 240-241; Henderson, *The Rise of German Industrial Power*, 80-81.

[52] Noyes, *Organization and* Revolution, 2, 59-60.

the dying feudal and burgeoning capitalist industrial orders would affect not only the Meitzens, but the rest of Europe as well. Otto Meitzen, along with fellow Silesian exiles, would be the human vessels that brought the lessons of Silesian working-class resistance to Texas. In turn, Karl Marx would conduct these ideas to the world.

Though lacking numerous industrialized factories, a working class that mattered did exist in Silesia and elsewhere in Germany prior to the 1848 Revolution. While downplaying the role of factories in creating a working class, E.P. Thompson argued that class consciousness happens when people "as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared), feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs."[53] German historian Jürgen Kocka built on the ideas of Thompson, seeing class happening from three dimensions 1) a shared economic condition 2) shared social identity 3) shared action.[54] Silesian peasants and laborers shared all of these dimensions and articulated them in their joint opposition against their feudal lords, fulfilling both Thompson's and Kocka's prerequisites for class consciousness.

The common experiences (both inherited and shared) of Silesia's working class were more often than not ones of economic hardship. In October 1807, during the French occupation, serfdom was in many ways abolished in name only as "freed" serfs were still obligated to pay feudal taxes and labor dues. Former serfs in most cases were now tenant farmers on their land*lord*'s land. One form of economic subjugation had now become two as peasants suffered capitalist exploitation as tenant farmers while still forced to pay

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[53] E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Penguin Books, 1963, 1991), 8-9, 211.

[54] Jürgen Kocka, *Industrial Culture & Bourgeois Society: Business, Labor, and Bureaucracy in Modern Germany* (New York: Berghahn Books, 1999), 214.

feudal dues. High fixed rents and low crop yields resulting in large debts tied peasants to their landlords as if they were still serfs. Crop failures in 1816-17 and 1830-31 further exacerbated the crisis on the land causing rampant misery with food prices doubling. Some peasants found themselves eating grass in order to survive.[55]

Many fled the countryside to towns and cities in hopes of finding relief. Once off the land, textile manufacturing was the main source of employment to be found in Silesia. This offered little reprieve. Following the Napoleonic Wars the thinly mechanized Silesian textile industry again suffered from competition from the highly mechanized British textile industry (from which they had been spared during Napoleon's attempted closing of the continent to British manufactures). Flight from the countryside made matters worse by increasing the labor pool thus bringing down wages and worsening work conditions. For many an added hardship was working under the putting-out system. This system made workers dependent on a merchant capitalist who both provided them with raw materials and bought the finished product. It is estimated that up to 40% of the manufacturing workforce across Germany labored under the putting-out system. This was especially so in Silesia and neighboring Saxony.[56]

In an attempt to lessen their production costs and compete with English textiles, Silesian merchants decreased weavers' wages. With wages falling below subsistence levels, weavers in the Silesian villages of Peterswaldau and Langenbielau revolted on June 4, 1844. The weavers who worked at home marched to textile factories and destroyed the machines that they saw as endangering their livelihood. Revolting weavers

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[55] Davies and Moorhouse, *Microcosm*, 250; Blackbourn, *The Long Nineteenth Century*, 138-139.

[56] Davies and Moorhouse, *Microcosm*, 220; Blackbourn, *The Long Nineteenth Century*, 115; Hahn, *The 1848 Revolutions in German-Speaking Europe*, 56; Schmidt, *et al*, *Illustrierte Geschichte der deutschen Revolution 1848/49*, 33.

also protested in front of the homes of manufacturers and destroyed the merchant books that recorded their debts. The next day military troops were sent to halt the revolt. In the face of gunfire from soldiers that killed eleven and injured twenty-four, the weavers armed with clubs, axes, and stones forced the military to flee. The following day the military returned, this time with artillery and cavalry, and smashed the rebellion.[57]

Through suppressed, the Silesian Weavers Revolt was part of a wave of strikes and demonstrations across Germany and Central Europe. Weavers, artisans, and craftsmen in Breslau demonstrated in connection with the weavers' revolt in the countryside. Textile workers in Aachen, Berlin, and in Prague and other parts of Bohemia went on strike in 1844 along with sugar workers in Magdeburg and carpenters in Rendsberg to name a few. Altogether the number of strikes in 1844 was higher than those in the previous decade combined.[58]

Conditions only worsened in Germany in the years to follow. The crop failures of 1845-47 were worse than those of 1816-17 and 1830-31. Potato disease and the failure of the grain harvest caused famine in Silesia during 1847. Starvation contributed to around 80,000 people contracting typhus in Silesia, of which an estimated 16,000 died. Famine intensified the anti-feudal struggle in the countryside. Village workers joined with peasants in unauthorized incursions onto noble held lands to poach, gather firewood, and at times set fire to and loot manor houses and tax offices. Through these actions Silesia became a center of peasant resistance against the Junkers. While in the cities, food shortages led to a hunger demonstration in Breslau on March 22, 1847 and food riots

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[57] Schmidt, *et al*, *Illustrierte Geschichte der deutschen Revolution 1848/49*, 33-35; Blackbourn, *The Long Nineteenth Century*, 113.

[58] Schmidt, *et al*, *Illustrierte Geschichte der deutschen Revolution 1848/49*, 35.

across Germany in April and May. *Katzenmusiker* (cats' chorus), a kind of "flying picket," became a frequent sight in Breslau as they surrounded buildings yelling and making catcalls protesting laws and officials they opposed.[59]

By the end of 1847, Germany was in a pre-revolutionary situation, with Silesia especially turbulent. Already in 1845, Prussian authorities had uncovered a plan in Warmbrunn, Silesia to overthrow the state and create a society founded on equality. Five artisans were arrested in connection with the plot. Four were given short prison terms, but the leader, a master cabinetmaker, was initially sentenced to death, before a later commutation to life imprisonment. In early February 1848 a secret society of journeymen was uncovered in Breslau with its literature confiscated and leaders jailed.[60]

Across Europe, socioeconomic and political factors were creating revolutionary conditions. These factors include a gradual deterioration in popular living standards due to the turbulent replacement of an agrarian-artisan economy, by a more robust market economy driven by improvements in agriculture and industrialization. This transition coincided with increased demands that European states put on their inhabitants in the form of taxes, military obligations, and economic regulations. [61]

Since 1789, and again in 1830, France had served as harbinger of revolutionary change across Europe. On February 22, 1848, the people of Paris took to the streets leading to the abdication of Louis-Philippe and the declaration of the Second Republic.

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[59] Blackbourn, *The Long Nineteenth Century*, 138; Martin Kitchen, *Cambridge Illustrated History of Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, 2000), 179; Schmidt, *et al*, *Illustrierte Geschichte der deutschen Revolution 1848/49*, 36, 43-44; Davies and Moorhouse, *Microcosm*, 223.

[60] Noyes, *Organization and* Revolution, 43; Hahn, *The 1848 Revolutions in German-Speaking Europe*, 64.

[61] Sperber, *The European Revolutions*, *1848-1851* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 239-240.

The German working class was already primed for revolution. The German middle classes, inspired by events in Paris, and no longer willing to be held back, in Engels' words, by "the pressure of a half-feudal, half-bureaucratic Monarchism," joined the working classes in struggle. [62] They helped popularize and generalize the discontent across Germany through their already established democratic associations, student clubs, journals, and newspapers. Silesians were the first to act directly in Germany.

On March 17, 1848 barricades went up in Breslau, a day before Berlin. Two days later with armed workers in control of the streets, the mayor and chief of police fled the city. Demonstrators destroyed the railroad line to Berlin and barricaded the city to defend themselves from government troops. The Breslau insurgents, from across classes, created a Citizens Militia that by the fall occupied all municipal buildings and halted tax payments to Berlin. Rural Silesians responded to the signal and joined the urban center in revolt with Peterswaldau and Langenbielau once again serving prominent roles.[63]

The details of Otto Meitzen's participation in the 1848 Revolution are unknown. He lived and worked in Liegnitz, had family in Breslau where he was born, and according to his son E.O. Meitzen was also involved in revolutionary activities in Berlin. Otto's actions were enough that when the counter-revolution began he had to flee with his family, which included a month old infant. Even his wealthy and aristocratic in-laws could not, or would not, save them. [64]

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[62] Schmidt, *et al*, *Illustrierte Geschichte der deutschen Revolution 1848/49*, 58; Friedrich Engels, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Germany* (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1977), 15.

[63] Davies and Moorhouse, *Microcosm*, 216; Hahn, *The 1848 Revolutions in German-Speaking Europe*, 64-65.

[64] E.O. Meitzen, "About Autocracy in Germany," *Nonpartisan Leader*, September 20, 1917. That the Meitzens had to make "their escape to the sailing vessel one jump ahead of the emperor's bayonets,"

No matter what his direct involvement in the revolutionary events of 1848 and 1849, Meitzen must have witnessed a great deal that would later give substance to his family's radical legacy. One can, however, paint a portrait of revolutionary actions in Silesia whose brushstrokes would leave an impression on agrarian radicalism in Texas in the decades to come. Much as did the rest of Germany, Silesia had middle-class based democratic clubs and student fraternities that supplied leadership during the revolution. These Silesian organizations, though, had a different character in that they responded from the bottom-up to workers and peasants and embedded themselves in their struggles. While most democratic clubs functioned as discussion groups debating the meaning and limits of democracy, a small group of Silesian democrats sought out solutions to *die Soziale Frage* (the social question)--contemporary term given to the need to address the economic plight of workers and peasants faced with poverty and famine in a society transitioning to a new capitalist industrial order.[65]

The *Breslauer Burschenschaft*, or Breslau fraternity at the University of Breslau, was an incubator of radical democratic politics that would join the struggles of working-class Silesians during the revolution. Student fraternities began forming across Germany in the early 1820s. These fraternities discussed political questions that fostered German national unity and liberalism in opposition to feudalism. As a result, the fraternities faced

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might be a bit of an exaggerated family tale from one of Otto's granddaughters. This, though, is probably closer to the truth than the version put forth by Frank Johnson in the "mug book" portrait of Otto's son Herman, which conveyed that Otto did not participate in the revolution and he immigrated because "he became so disgusted with the attitude and policy of the government." Frank W. Johnson, "Herman J. Meitzen," *A History of Texas and Texans*, (Chicago: American Historical Society), 1916. The timing, November 1849, of Otto's departure and state of hardship that he and his family arrived in when reaching Texas are indicative that the Meitzens had to leave Prussia in a hurry for a reason. Multiple sources (cited throughout) also state that Otto Meitzen did participate in the 1848/49 Revolution.

[65] Walter Schmidt, "Moritz Eisner und die 1848er Demokratie in Schlesien," *Leibniz-Sozietät/Sitzungsberichte* Vol. 63 (2004), pp. 19-53, 27-28, 46-47.

government repression and often operated in secret. By the late 1820s, the Breslau fraternity, in order to avoid government harassment, had become hostile to its members being actively involved in politics.[66]

In early 1832, however, a small political core of members, argued for the Breslau fraternity to be solely focused on political issues. This core was under the leadership of Wilhelm Wolff and Robert Julius Bartsch and included the brothers Ludwig and Ewald Matthäi. Wolff later became a prominent leader of working-class radicalism in Silesia and a seminal Marxist, a close confidant of Marx and Engels. Both Wolff and the Matthäi brothers had close connections to the Silesian countryside and with its long history of peasant resistance; it would have been antithetical to their backgrounds to remain apolitical. The Matthäis's father had been a tenant farmer who worked two jobs, as an estate inspector and a bailiff, in order to escape tenancy and provide an education for his children. Wolff's father was a hereditary serf, and as a child young Wilhelm had to perform statute labor for the local lord. Wolff worked his way through college as a private tutor.[67]

Wolff and the Matthäi brothers began tackling the political questions of their day within the Breslau fraternity. They stood in solidarity with the opposition movement in southwest Germany, supported the Polish Revolution of 1830, and argued for equal membership in the fraternity for Jews-an atypical stance for most fraternity members.

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[66] Walter Schmidt, *Wilhelm Wolff: Sein Weg zum Kommunisten, 1809-1846* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1963), 58, 66-68.

[67] Schmidt, *Wilhelm Wolff*, 21, 50, 76-77; Walter Schmidt, "Die Matthäi-Brüder. Lebenswege dreier schlesischer Burschenschafter im 19. Jahrhundert," in *Abhandlungen der Leibniz-Sozietät der Wissenschaften, Band 25: "Von Auflärung bis Zweifel. Beiträge zu Philosophie, Geschichte und Philosophiegeschichte. Festschrift für Siegfried Wollgast,"* ed. Gerhard Banse, Herbert Hörz & Heinz Liebscher, (Berlin: Trafo, 2008), pp. 325-363, 326-327, 334; Friedrich Engels, "Wilhelm Wolff," *Marx and Engels Collected Works* (*MECW*), Vol. 24, (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1989), pp. 129-171, 132.

Naturally, much of their focus was on the peasant struggle in their home province, and Wolff developed into one the leading writers on the subject.[68]

Their activities soon drew the attention of the Prussian government. In June 1834, authorities arrested Wolff for his involvement in the leftwing of the Breslau fraternity. He received an eight-year prison sentence, though a commutation found him released after serving four years. Similarly, authorities arrested both Ludwig and Ewald Matthäi in December 1837, with each sentenced by the Prussian *Kammergericht* to serve six years in jail. Ludwig served one year before being released and Ewald eighteen months before his release.[69]

Upon his release from prison in 1838, Wolff, despite constant harassment from government censors, took to the pen to expose oppression. Imprisoned before he was able to complete his university degree, he was only able to find work as a private tutor in Breslau. From there he wrote articles criticizing the political and economic conditions in Prussia and Silesia in particular. These articles would have a major impact on how the working class in Germany was conceptualized, in turn influencing radical politics in the coming revolution and the future course of socialist thought and action–a course that is still adhered to today.[70]

On November 18, 1843, the *Breslauer Zeitung* published an article by Wolff exposing the miserable conditions of homeless people in Breslau living in a decrepit and overcrowded former prison. According to Wolff biographer Walter Schmidt this article

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[68] Schmidt, "Die Matthäi-Brüder," 334; Schmidt, *Wilhelm Wolff: Sein Weg zum Kommunisten*, 88-89.

[69] Walter Schmidt, *Die schlesische Demokratie von 1848/49, Geschichte und Akteure,* II Halbband*, Protagonisten der schlesischen Demokratiebewegung* (Berlin: Trafo, 2012), 90, 92, 152.

[70] Schmidt, *Wilhelm Wolff: Sein Weg zum Kommunisten*, 156-157; Schmidt, *Die schlesische Demokratie von 1848/49*, II Halbband, 152.

had "a tremendous impact and literally hit like a bomb," gaining Wolff notoriety across Europe. This impact was due to Wolff's concrete description of Silesia's working class. Prior to Wolff's article, discussions on the German working class tended to be more theoretical in nature, with many even doubting the existence of a working class in Germany. The prevailing thought was that the conditions that created a working class in England and France were not yet present in Germany, with some believing they might never occur. Wolff exploded this view by showing from the bottom up the conditions of the Silesian working class. The existence of a German working class was now a widely recognized fact. It would not be long before he showed the working class in action.[71]

Wolff's "*Das Elend und der Aufruhr in Schlesien*" (*The Misery and Turmoil in Silesia*), published directly after the Silesian Weavers' Revolt of 1844 gained a wide readership across the continent. This study revealed a German working class movement, along with some of its revolutionary potential. Around this time Wolff began writing for the Parisian *Vörwärts!*, the German language newspaper of radical political émigrés that Marx and Engels exerted a strong influence over. When Marx and Engels refer to "the German working-class risings" in the *Communist Manifesto* published four years later, this is in main an allusion to the Silesian Weavers' Revolt.[72]

Demonstrating the existence of a German working class was not simply an academic matter to Wolff. In 1843, Wolff helped found the Association for the Education of Helpless Proletarian Children in Breslau. Wolff would come to the conclusion that

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[71] W.O. Henderson, *The Life and Times of Friedrich Engels* Vol. 1 (London: Frank Cass and Company Ltd, 1976), 247; Schmidt's words in the original German, "…erlangte dieser Artikel eine enorme Wirkung und schlug buchstäblich wie eine Bombe." Schmidt, *Wilhelm Wolff: Sein Weg zum Kommunisten*, 170-171.

[72] Schmidt, *Die schlesische Demokratie von 1848/49*, II Halbband, 152; Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, 38-39.

charity work was not enough and that a revolutionary change in economic systems was needed. In 1844, he therefore co-founded the Silesian Socialists Circle. He also continued writing articles attacking the Junkers and Prussian militarism appearing in *Vörwärts!* and the *Schlesische Chronik* in 1845.[73]

Wolff's writings and activism put him in unremitting conflict with Prussian censors and authorities. In the fall of 1845, they charged Wolff with "offences against the press laws" and in early 1846 sentenced him to three months imprisonment. To avoid arrest Wolff fled to London where he joined the German Communist Workers' Educational Society. Soon Wolff moved to Brussels where he sought out Marx and Engels.[74]

Once Wolff connected with these revolutionary titans, through his endearing personality and direct experiences with Silesia's working class, he rose to leadership positions within a communist movement then very much in its infancy. In the summer of 1847, Wolff traveled with Engels to London to attend the first congress of the Communist League where Wolff was the delegate of the Brussels workers. When Brussels erupted in revolution in response to the February 1848 French Revolution, Brussels police arrested and brutally beat Wolff before deporting him to France. In Paris, Wolff sat on the executive committee of the Communist League and was one of the six signers, along with Marx and Engels, of the *Demands of the Communist Party in Germany*. First printed in March 1848, these demands would influence radical democrats

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[73] Henderson, *Life and Times of Friedrich Engels*, 249; Schmidt, *Die schlesische Demokratie von 1848/49*, II Halbband, 152; Schmidt, *Wilhelm Wolff: Sein Weg zum Kommunisten*, 172-173.

[74] Engels, "Wilhelm Wolff," 135; Henderson, *Life and Times of Friedrich Engels*, 249.

during the 1848 Revolution.[75]

Throughout the revolution, Wolff worked tirelessly to advance the social question of workers and peasants and the creation of a democratic republic over the constitutional monarchy advocated by the liberal bourgeoisie. When the revolution failed, Wolff fled to Zurich and then joined Marx and Engels in London. He would remain a steadfast ally of Marx and Engels, one of their few, until his death in Manchester on May 9, 1864. When Engels first met Wolff in April 1846, he described Wolff as "the figure of an East German peasant."[76] This "East German Peasant"--by bringing the experiences of Silesia's workers and peasants to his relationship with Marx and Engels--had a profound impact on the early development of what would become Marxism.

Two of the key components of Marxism are dialectical materialism and the concept of class conflict, with the working class being the only revolutionary class capable of bringing about a democratic socialist society. Marx had developed dialectical materialism as a young student of philosophy. However, most socialists, during Marx's early years, were utopian socialists who believed socialism would come about without class conflict through a gradual evolution to a voluntary planned society. Wolff's writings on Breslau's working class and the Silesian Weaver's Revolt of 1844 provided for Marx the material he needed to demonstrate class conflict and the revolutionary potential of the working class. Once Wolff connected with Marx and Engels in exile, he often acted as Marx's point man. He served as a delegate to numerous heated communist

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[75] Engels, "Wilhelm Wolff," 131, 136; Henderson, *Life and Times of Friedrich Engels*, 250; Karl Marx, "Notes on the Arrest, Maltreatment and Expulsion of Wilhelm Wolff by the Brussels Police February 27 to March 1, 1848," *MECW*, Vol. 6, 581-582; Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Demands of the Communist Party in Germany," *MECW*, Vol. 7, 3-7.

[76] Henderson, *Life and Times of Friedrich Engels*, 251-252; Engels, "Wilhelm Wolff," 131.

meetings arguing for proletarian revolution against utopian socialism. During the course of the 1848 Revolution, Wolff carried out most of the "on the ground" work within workers' organizations, as a Left delegate in parliament and editor of revolutionary newspapers. His efforts, both during and after the revolution, in addition to those of Engels, freed Marx to devote his time to his theoretical masterworks. In many ways, Wolff's Silesia is the soul of Marxism. When *Das Kapital* was first published in 1867, Marx dedicated it "To my unforgettable friend Wilhelm Wolff. Intrepid, faithful, noble protagonist of the proletariat."[77]

Wolff, though, was only a part of the growing working-class and increasingly socialist activism in Silesia. Rudolph Matthäi, the younger brother of Ludwig and Ewald Matthäi, was another leading figure of Silesian radicalism. In 1836, Rudolph Matthäi joined the *Breslauer Burschenschaft*–a year before his brothers' arrests for their involvement in the fraternity. After finishing his studies in 1840, he worked as a tutor in Western Europe. Rudolph Matthäi became one of the leading figures of socialist thought in Germany, in particularly that of "true socialism." True socialism, popular among German intellectuals and artisans, was an ideology that romanticized pre-capitalist forms of production such as the guild system and believed socialism could be achieved by an enlightened populace without going through a stage of large-scale industrialization or violent class conflict. This was different from the philosophy of Wolff, who, along with Marx and Engels, came to advocate a proletarian revolution as the path to socialism.[78]

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[77] Karl Marx, "Preface to the First German Edition," *MECW*, Vol. 35, 7. For a detailed account of Wolff's collaboration with Marx and Engels see Walter Schmidt, *Wilhelm Wolff: Kampfgefährte und Freund von Marx und Engels, 1846-1864* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1979).

[78] Schmidt, *Die schlesische Demokratie von 1848/49*, II Halbband, 94; Schmidt, "Die Matthäi-Brüder," 341-342. Marx and Engels' critique of true socialism and R. Matthäi is contained in *The German Ideology* in *MECW*, Vol. 5, 470.

Despite political differences, Rudolph Matthäi joined the Silesian Socialist Circle formed by Wolff in 1845. Matthäi, along with Wolff, was a frequent contributor to the *Schlesische Chronik*, making it one of the leading journals in German containing socialist viewpoints. By 1845, Matthäi was based in Liegnitz, where Otto Meitzen lived and worked. From Liegnitz, Matthäi served as editor from July 1845 to June 1846 of *Der Bote aus dem Katzenbachthale* the first socialist periodical in Silesia. Matthäi was also responsible for popularizing Engels' *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845) in Silesia, which resonated in Breslau, where capitalist economic development had caused a major housing crisis. With its long history of peasant revolts, increasing number of workers' strikes, and maturing socialist movement, Silesia was primed for revolution by the time the barricades went up in Paris in February 1848.[79]

During the revolution, Silesia demonstrated characteristics that differentiated it from other regions. Silesia was equal to the Rhineland, Baden, Saxony and Berlin in its democratic aspirations, though Silesia's long brewing agrarian conflicts and growing working class made the province particularly volatile. More so than other regions, the social question of addressing the economic and political demands of farm laborers and workers was the central issue for many radicalizing Silesians. When democratic associations made the social question the fulcrum of their activity, Silesian farmers and urban workers responded. In Silesia democratic organization arose to a province wide level. This was different from other areas where organization was primarily limited to a town or a trade. What made Silesia further stand out was that it was the only region

[79] *Der Bote aus dem Katzenbachthale*, February, 1846; Schmidt, "Die Matthäi-Brüder," 341, 343; Schmidt, *Wilhelm Wolff: Sein Weg zum Kommunisten*, 185-186; Davies and Moorhouse, *Microcosm*, 223.

where the agricultural population formed their own political organization.[80] These conditions and the actions of revolutionary Silesians were the incubator of Otto Meitzen's radical beliefs.

Responding to the barricade fighting in the streets of Breslau and Berlin that began on March 17 and 18, 1848 respectively, the rural areas of Silesia went up in revolt. By March 21, the mountain areas of western Silesia and the rural district around Liegnitz in particular were areas of heightened unrest. On the nights of March 23 and 24 in several villages across Silesia, peasants and villagers, in groups as large as 500, confronted their landlords and forced the local Junkers to sign documents surrendering their feudal privileges.[81]

On the same day, March 24, that peasants across Silesia were moving to end feudalism once and for all, representatives of Breslau's democratic clubs and associations met to lay the foundation for a citywide democratic club. On April 7 the *Breslauer Demokratische Verein* (Breslau Democratic Club) was formed. Four days earlier on April 3, a large meeting of the city's workers met "to form an association to convey the spiritual and physical well-being of all workers." This meeting led to the creation of the Breslau Workers Club on April 14.[82]

After the democrats of Breslau had organized themselves and rural peasants had put the Junkers in check, the thrust of political activity in Silesia was the election of representatives to the constitutional assemblies in Frankfurt am Main and Berlin. The

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[80] Schmidt, *Die schlesische Demokratie von 1848/49,* I Halbband, 9.

[81] Schmidt, *et al*, *Illustrierte Geschichte der deutschen Revolution 1848/49*, 109-110.

[82] Günther Höpfner, "Ness von Esenbeck (1776-1858) – ein deutscher Gelehrter an der Seite der Arbeiter" in *Beiträge zur Nachmärz-Forschung, Schriften aus dem Karl-Marx-Haus*, Nr. 47 (Trier: Karl-Marx-Haus, 1994), 69-71; Schmidt, *Die schlesische Demokratie von 1848/49,* I Halbband, 14.

Frankfurt National Assembly was, at minimum, tasked with uniting the numerous German lands into a single Germany and creating a constitution that would enact liberal reforms such as the rights of freedom of speech, press, and assembly. What form of government that would preserve these rights–either a democratic republic or constitutional monarchy--as well as whether or not a united Germany would include Austria and other German-speaking lands of the Hapsburg Empire, became two of the points of contention that ultimately paralyzed the Frankfurt Assembly. The Prussian or Berlin Assembly, while initially allowed "by agreement with the Crown" (not popular sovereignty), in order to confer with the Crown in establishing a constitutional monarchy evolved into a Prussian parliament in which matters of state and legislation were contested by fractions representing the crown, the bourgeoisie, and radicals.[83]

Upon the outbreak of the revolution, many of the exiled German workers and radicals organized in the Communist League returned to Germany, carrying with them copies of the newly printed demands of the Communist League and the *Communist Manifesto*. Wolff returned to his native Silesia to campaign in Breslau and the surrounding countryside for the election of radical democrats to the constitutional assemblies. In Breslau, Wolff himself ran as a candidate to the Frankfurt National Assembly.[84]

The national election results to the Frankfurt Assembly reflected the initial bourgeois character of the March Revolution. The deputies elected were overwhelmingly middle class, with 370 members being professionals such as judges, lawyers, and civil

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[83] Schmidt, *Die schlesische Demokratie von 1848/49,* I Halbband, 15; *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, June 8, 14, 1848.

[84] Noyes, *Organization and Revolution*, 115; Henderson, *Life and Times of Friedrich Engels*, 250.

servants; another 140 were businessmen; and only four master artisans, one peasant (from Silesia), and no workers served in the Assembly. Many of the left deputies hailed from Silesia and neighboring Saxony and were led by Robert Blum, the radical journalist and bookseller from Leipzig. Wolff was elected as a "substitute member" from Breslau, meaning he could take a seat only if the regular member was absent. After the election though Wolff moved to Cologne to work as an editor of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* with its first issue appearing on June 1, 1848.[85]

The Prussian Assembly was only slightly more representative of the population with twenty-eight artisans serving as deputies among the 398 members. Middle-class professionals were again the largest group of deputies in this assembly. Silesia's history of rural resistance was reflected more in the Prussian than Frankfurt Assembly. Out of the 97 left deputies, 44 were from Silesia with the next largest set, 18, coming from the Rhineland. Silesians only sent 10 right deputies to Berlin in comparison to the 18 sent by the city of Düsseldorf alone. Right deputies outnumbered the left 146 to 97, with 155 sitting in the middle. [86] This balance of representation, tilted in favor of bourgeois liberalism, would determine the future course of the revolution to the detriment of Germany's working class and the revolution's ultimate failure.

Whatever hope workers and peasants might have had in the Frankfurt and Prussian assemblies to enact reforms to alleviate their economic condition were quickly dashed. Even before the Frankfurt Assembly convened, a Pre-Parliament was held to

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[85] The Frankfurt Assembly was a 605-seat body. On average 400 to 500 deputies were present and a total of 831 people served. Noyes, *Organization and Revolution*, 223-224; Henderson, *The Rise of German Industrial Power*, 93; Hahn, *The 1848 Revolutions in German-Speaking Europe*, 57; Henderson, *Life and Times of Friedrich Engels*, 250; *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, June 1, 1848.

[86] Noyes, *Organization and Revolution*, 254; Donald J. Mattheisen, "Voters and Parliaments in the German Revolution of 1848: An Analysis of the Prussian Constituent Assembly," *Central European History*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (March, 1972), pp. 3-22, 10.

establish guidelines for the assisting of the national assembly to draft a constitution for a united Germany. When Gustav Struve of Baden proposed a fifteen point economic program to the Pre-Parliament that included a progressive income tax, government support for the poor, and a ministry of labor to "'equalize' the relation between capital and labor," it was immediately rejected. When the Frankfurt Assembly convened it did create an Economic Committee, though the policy proposals that came out of this committee reflected the class composition of the Assembly, favoring merchants and industrialists and a laissez-faire approach to the general economy.[87]

Seeing that they would gain no help from the Frankfurt Assembly, workers across Germany turned toward their own self-organization. Beginning in the spring of 1848 and until the triumph of the counter-revolution in 1849 a significant number of strikes as well as workers' conferences and assemblies were held across Germany organized varyingly on a trade, local, regional, and national basis. The Breslau Workers Club was one of the more radical workers' organizations, explicitly shunning the liberal label and embracing socialism. The German working class during this revolutionary era however, proved to be just as divided as the middle classes and rarely was able to come together on a course of action or organization. One of the chief points of contention within the working class was the perennial conflict between master artisans and journeymen. Master artisans sought to preserve and strengthen the guild system, while many journeymen and workers viewed the hierarchical guild as a hindrance to their own improvement and broader working-class unity. The recent emergence of industrial workers further confounded attempts to achieve anything resembling a united labor movement.[88]

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[87] Noyes, *Organization and Revolution*, 92, 322-325.

Like workers and the Frankfurt Assembly, Silesian peasants also found that they would receive no remedy to their unfortunate condition from the Prussian Assembly. Through their actions in the early March days of the revolution, Silesian peasants had abolished feudal privileges. They now wanted the end of feudalism codified in law. This was, however, not to be.

On June 20, 1848 the Prussian Minister of Trade, Industry and Public Works, Baron von Patow, submitted a memorandum to the Prussian Assembly on regulating the abolition of feudalism in the countryside. Patow's plan would establish mortgage banks that would compensate Junkers eighteen times the value of the annual obligations of the peasants. The peasants would then have to pay back the banks the amount that the banks had compensated the Junkers. In effect, peasants would still be paying dues, though now to a bank instead to a lord. If enacted Patow's plan would reverse the revolution in the countryside. On July 18, Minister of Agriculture Gierke formally submitted a bill to the Prussian Assembly that would eliminate feudal obligations, but only after the aristocrats were compensated. Peasants across Prussia were enraged by the proposals being discussed in Berlin that would basically return them to the old feudal order.[89] With the assemblies in Frankfurt and Berlin virtually negating the gains of workers and peasants during the March revolution, the conditions were ripe for a farm-labor political alliance. Such an alliance would emanate out of Liegnitz.

In the summer of 1848, the radical Liegnitz Democratic Club instigated a worker-peasant, urban-rural alliance in Silesia that was unique during the course of the 1848 Revolution, and of great significance for the Meitzens' ensuing political actions. The club

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[88] Noyes, *Organization and Revolution*, 128-137, 152-160.

[89] *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, June 25, July 30, 1848.

formed out of the protest movement in mid-May against the return of the Prince of Prussia from England. Two of the clubs founding members were the teacher Carl Otto Cunerth and the farmer and journalist Otto Wüstrich who had issued a call during the May protests to form a volunteer corps to support the civic militia in defending the revolution. In July, the club put out a newspaper that would appear weekly until October called *Der Demokrat* (the Democrat) with Rudolph Matthäi serving as one of the paper's editors and writing a series of articles on the relationship of socialism to democracy. By early August, the club had six hundred members and was continuing to grow. Otto Meitzen was in all probability one of these members (Cunerth married Meitzen's sister, Marie, in 1856).[90] Much of the Liegnitz Democratic Club's farmer-labor ideology and many of its strategies and tactics would ultimately be reflected in Texas through the political activism of Otto Meitzen's son and Cunerth's nephew--E.O. Meitzen.

From its origins, the Liegnitz Democratic Club did not view its political arena to be limited to the city. The Liegnitz Democratic Club took directly from *Demands of the Communist Party in Germany*, which specifically addressed peasants and small tenant farmers, to craft its own founding manifesto. Like the *Demands of the Communist Party*, the Liegnitz Democratic Club's *Manifesto* called for the elimination of all feudal obligations without compensation, calling the nobility a "medieval institution" that is "worthless in the eyes of the rational." The first issue of *Der Demokrat* appealed to their "brothers of the country" to join them in organizing and to attend the Liegnitz

[90] *Der Demokrat*, Probeblatt, July, Nr. 4, August, 1848; Adalbert Herman Kraffert, *Geschichte des Evangelischen Gymnasiums zu Liegnitz* (Liegnitz: DrückVon H. Krumbhaar, 1869), 129; Schmidt, *Die schlesische Demokratie von 1848/49,* I Halbband, 64; Schmidt, *Die schlesische Demokratie von 1848/49,* II Halbband, 163; Fayette County Records, Marriage Licenses, 1838-1923, Fayette Public Library, Museum and Archives, La Grange, Texas; Prince Wilhelm of Prussia, King Friedrich Wilhelm IV's brother, commanded the Prussian troops that killed demonstrators in Berlin during the street fighting of March 18, 1848. Outrage over the killings forced the Prince to flee to England. His return to Prussia sparked protests across Germany.

Democratic Club's weekly Friday People's Assembly.[91]

Around the time that *Der Demokrat* made its appearance the first Democratic Congress of Silesia was held on July 16, 1848 in Breslau. This was the first provincial congress to be held in Germany during the revolution with another Silesian congress occurring in October 1848. Over sixty delegates attended the congress from twenty-one different locations across Silesia.[92]

The first debate in the Silesian Democratic Congress was over what type of government the Congress should advocate. One proposal was for a democratic republic. Carl Otto Cunerth of the Liegnitz Democratic Club and an editor of *Der Demokrat* went further, proposing a "social-demokratische" (socialist) republic. After a three-hour debate, the Congress adopted the ambiguous proposal that "The Congress should recognize that the pure and undivided sovereignty of the people is the only moral basis of a state constitution." Similarly, though the Congress declared "that the solution of the social question was the first and last task of democracy," no specific proposals were adopted to actually solve the social question. Instead, the Congress asked the local Democratic Clubs to draft reports on the social question and for the convening of a special congress to deliberate on this issue. Such a "special congress" would, though, never be held.[93]

The democratic aspirations of revolutionary Silesians did not hinge solely on congresses, whether they were in Frankfurt, Berlin or Breslau. The local democratic club

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[91] *Der Demokrat*, Probeblatt, July, 1848; Marx and Engels, "Demands of the Communist Party in Germany," 3-4; Schmidt, *Die schlesische Demokratie von 1848/49,* I Halbband, 64.

[92] *Der Demokrat*, Nr. 1 July, Nr. 4 August, 1848.

[93] *Der Demokrat*, Nr. 1 July, Nr. 3 July, 1848.

served as the base of the democratic movement in Silesia. It was through their local clubs that Silesian workers and peasants worked to defend and expand the revolution. During the summer of 1848 democratic clubs, in particular those of Liegnitz and Schweidnitz, sent out members into the countryside to form village branch democratic clubs to address the political and economic demands of the rural population. Twenty-six rural communities created branch clubs associated with a nearby town's democratic club. This organization drive led to the formation of the independent grassroots rural based Silesian *Rustikalverein* (Rustic Alliance), the only such farmer organization created in Germany during the revolution.[94]

The presence of the Rustic Alliance in Silesia, one of Prussia's most important provinces both economically and politically, contests the view of many historians that the 1848 German Revolution was primarily a revolution of middle-class intellectuals, punctuated by sporadic working-class protests. The overall absence of Silesia by the dominant historians of the 1848 Revolution is the equivalent excluding Massachusetts from histories of the American Revolution. The farmer-labor alliance witnessed in the creation of the Rustic Alliance also challenges the notion many Marxists developed in the second half of the nineteenth century, and still held by many to this day, that workers and farmers have little in common. Though their types and locations of work differentiated Silesian rural farmers and urban workers, they shared a common oppression from the dying feudal and ascending capitalist systems. Their mutual oppression led Silesian workers and farmers to the common causes of action during the 1848 Revolution and future vision of society.

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[94] Schweidnitz is now Świdnica, Poland--thirty-one miles southeast of Legnica and thirty-two miles southwest of Wroclaw. Schmidt, *Die schlesische Demokratie von 1848/49,* I Halbband, 81, 114, 116.

Decades later, many radical activists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries did not see a natural alliance between workers and farmers. They saw farmers as petty bourgeois owners of land and equipment, placing them in a different category than workers who sold their labor for a wage under industrial capitalism. Historians who analyze this era have often followed in this same vein of thought, separating the stories of workers from those of farmers. Many farmers did technically own land and equipment, but doing so placed most of them in debt, putting them under the dictates of their debt holding merchants and banks. This subjugated farmers to the whims of capitalist market fluctuations and speculation. Seeing the joint exploitation of workers and farmers under capitalism as a whole, is what eventually led E.O. Meitzen, and others like him, to adopt a radical farmer-labor ideology against capitalism—very much like the principles of the farmer-labor alliance of the Rustic Alliance.

By advocating resolutely for the elimination of feudal privileges without compensation to the Junkers, the Rustic Alliance, by the end of October 1848, had around 200,000 members across Silesia. Leading the Rustic Alliance was the retired army sergeant and assistant magistrate of Schweidnitz, Julius Maria Petery, along with Otto Wüstrich of the Liegnitz Democratic Club. Wüstrich now devoted his energies to the Rustic Alliance and edited its newspaper the *Schlesische Dorf-Zeitung*. The rapid growth of the Rustic Alliance was due in part to the provocation of the Junkers who created their own Junker Parliament in order to restore the old order. The Rustic Alliance held its own meeting in opposition to the Junkers on August 27 and 28, 1848 in the village of Mörschelwitz between Breslau and Schweidnitz. Four hundred delegates representing

eighteen local Alliances attended this meeting. In September, a Rustic Congress met in Breslau, organizing the local Rustic Alliances into a united province-wide organization.[95]

While the growth of the Rustic Alliance and Democratic Clubs in Silesia seemed to indicate a bright future for the revolution, elsewhere the storm clouds of reaction were gathering. The barricade fighting and peasant protests of March 1848 led to the creation of the National Assembly in Frankfurt. Instead of asserting the power given to it by the revolution to enact revolutionary reforms, the Frankfurt Assembly instead was an indecisive body that continually sought the favor of the Prussian monarchy and ignored the economic demands of the working classes. A crisis of faith in the Frankfurt Assembly was brewing among Germany's democratic masses.

Emboldened by the weakness of the Frankfurt Assembly, nobles in Bavaria, Saxony, and Silesia attempted to collect the taxes and levies that were ripped from them in March. Working-class Silesians responded with a renewed wave of rural protests. *Der Demokrat* encouraged the rural communities of Silesia to continue to refuse to pay their feudal obligations "since everyone knows that the era of oppression is over" and even though "the aristocracy does have the means, the people have the power … it is high time to act together … for the oppressed people!" In Saxony the protests moved to the cities as well, where a protest of workers in Chemnitz evolved into a revolt. Again, the elites deployed troops to stifle the protests. Across Prussia, the Crown used the wave of protests and uprisings to make mass arrests of democratic and revolutionary leaders.[96]

The revolution had come to an impasse. The majority of deputies in the bourgeois

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[95] Schmidt, *Die schlesische Demokratie von 1848/49,* I Halbband, 116-118; Schmidt, *Die schlesische Demokratie von 1848/49,* II Halbband, 101, 155.

[96] *Der Demokrat*, Nr. 10, September 1848; Bleiber, "Germany, September Crisis 1848"; *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, September 14, 27, 1848.

dominated Assemblies in Frankfurt and Berlin favored a constitutional monarchy. The hope that Friedrich Wilhelm IV would accept a crown bestowed on him by a constitution, instead of divine right, prevented the bourgeoisie from overthrowing the monarchy. More was involved than the delusional hopes of the bourgeois revolutionaries, however. Overthrowing the monarchy would inevitably require unleashing workers and peasants in further revolutionary struggle. Bourgeois revolutions grew to fear the violence of working-class and "mobs" and the possibility of sharing political power with such unwashed masses. With workers and peasants pushing for a solution to the social question, such a struggle could result in the working class supplanting the bourgeoisie as the ruling power in a post-monarchal society. The bourgeoisie was in a precarious position. Prussian government ministers and others loyal to the Crown saw their opening. The stage was now set for either a second revolution or a counter-revolution. The Hapsburg dynasty struck first and decisively crushed the revolutionary forces in Vienna in October 1848. The retaking of Vienna was a major defeat for German nationalism and the revolution as a whole.

Seizing on the victory of the Hapsburg crown, Friedrich Wilhelm IV went on the offensive. He viewed himself as an absolute monarch and was through trifling with the Prussian Assembly over creating a constitutional monarchy. On November 1, 1848, the king dismissed General von Pfuel as Prime Minister. Pfuel, a moderate Junker, had been working with the Prussian Assembly to create a constitutional monarchy. In Pfuel's place, Friedrich Wilhelm IV appointed his great-uncle Friedrich, Count von Brandenburg, a conservative Prussian general. Brandenburg immediately moved 50,000 troops into Berlin. Berlin democrats were caught off guard and the city was taken without

resistance. Brandenburg and Friedrich Wilhelm IV had, in effect, successfully orchestrated a monarchist *coup d'état*. The counter-revolution had openly begun.[97]

On November 9, a royal decree transferred the Prussian Assembly from Berlin to the small town of Brandenburg. The ninety-six Right deputies promptly left for Brandenburg while two hundred and sixty-three other deputies remained in Berlin and continued to meet as Prussian authorities forced them to move from location to location within Berlin. From Berlin, the remaining deputies proclaimed General Brandenburg guilty of high treason. Thus "the obligation to pay taxes automatically ceases," setting off a no-taxes campaign. The Frankfurt Assembly, however, declared that the Prussian Assembly's no-tax proclamation to be illegal.[98]

While the bourgeois dominated Frankfurt Assembly capitulated to the Crown, the masses of people initially supported the no-tax campaign and the Berlin Assembly. This was especially so in Silesia. Since September, the Democratic Clubs and Rustic Alliance of Silesia had become increasingly radical. The provincial head of the Rustic Alliance at this time was the farmer Ludwig Schlinke. Schlinke owned his farm but contradicted the image of the conservative land-owning farmer by advocating radical socialist positions within the Silesian democratic movement. Under Schlinke's leadership, local Rustic Alliances across Silesia voiced their support for the Berlin Assembly and refused to pay taxes as long as the Brandenburg Ministry was in power. Radicals, in cities across Silesia, formed Committees of Public Safety to organize the no tax campaign and to defend the

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[97] *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, November 9, 12, 15, 1848; Sperber, *The European Revolutions*, 218-219.

[98] *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, November 12, 23, 1848.

Berlin Assembly.[99]

Unlike March, when the revolution caught the Prussian monarchy by surprise, the Crown had prepared for any popular resistance to the November coup. Prussian troops had already been concentrated at strategic positions throughout Silesia, especially Liegnitz. The Committees of Public Safety in Silesia were able to do little more than organize a few protests. Also, since the middle of October, Prussian authorities had increased their surveillance and harassment of democrats. During this period of government crackdowns the last issue of *Der Demokrat* appeared. In November, Schlinke, president of the Rustic Alliance, fled to avoid arrest after he participated in a large demonstration in Breslau in support of the Berlin Assembly. At the end of January, Prussian authorities were able to arrest the vice-president of the Rustic Alliance, Julius Maria Petery.[100]

The protest movement was unable to save the Prussian/Berlin Assembly as a royal decree dissolved it on December 5, 1848 for refusing to move to Brandenburg. On the same day, the Crown imposed a constitution that established a two-chamber parliament. An upper chamber was comprised of gentry. A second chamber was chosen through indirect elections, without a secret ballot, based on male suffrage over the age of twenty-four and the creation of three taxation brackets—the first bracket represented the wealthiest 4.7% of the population, the second bracket the next 12.7%, and the third the remaining 82.6%. Each bracket elected a third of the electors. A combination of the top

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[99] *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, November 12, 1848; Schmidt, *et al*, *Illustrierte Geschichte der deutschen Revolution 1848/49*, 235, 238; Schmidt, *Die schlesische Demokratie von 1848/49,* II Halbband, 121-122; Schmidt, *Die schlesische Demokratie von 1848/49,* I Halbband, 179.

[100] Schmidt, *Die schlesische Demokratie von 1848/49,* I Halbband, 169, 225; *Der Demokrat*, Nr. 13, October, 1848.

two brackets, representing the wealthiest 17.4% of the population, negated the votes of the overwhelmingly majority. The King still held all the important decision-making powers and the ability to prorogue or dissolve parliament. Especially devastating for the Prussian working classes was the announcement on December 13 that the bill proposed in July to abolish feudal obligations would not be passed into law.[101]

Despite the government repression, the democratic movement in Silesia continued. However, its zenith had passed and was now on the defensive. When the upper chamber of the Prussian Parliament met on February 26, 1849, it proposed a bill for the settlement of feudal dues. In short, the bill acknowledged that the feudal dues system was on its way out, but until then feudal dues would resume. "The worthy lords are in a hurry. They wish to squeeze enough out of the rural population before closing time " wrote Wilhelm Wolff in response to the Junker's motion. "Silesia, particularly, hitherto the golden land of feudal and industrial barons, is to be thoroughly rifled once again in order that the splendor of its land owning knights may shine on, enhanced and fortified," Wolff continued. Silesian Junkers proceeded to take the contracts that peasants forced them to sign in the first weeks of the revolution, which ended their feudal privileges, to criminal courts of law as evidence against the peasants of belonging to rebellious mobs. When judicial action did not suffice, the government employed mobile military units to force peasants to perform their feudal obligations.[102]

The Rustic Alliance began a counter campaign against the Junkers' attempts to regain their feudal privileges. One of their tools in this campaign was a series of articles

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[101] *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, December 7, 8, 1848; Sazonov, "Notes," 554; Verfassungsurkunde für den preußischen Staat vom 5. Dezember 1848; Engels, "Wilhelm Wolff," 141.

[102] Wilhelm Wolff, *Die schlesische Milliarde*, (Hottingen-Zurich: Volksbuchhandlung, 1886), 24-25; Engels, "Wilhelm Wolff," 148.

in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* penned by Wolff. From March 22, 1849 to April 25, 1849, Wolff wrote eight articles collectively titled *Die schlesische Milliarde*, roughly translated as the Silesian multi-millions. In these articles Wolff detailed how the "robber-knights" extracted their feudal dues and the total financial amount taken from the peasants. Wolff came to the rough estimate that for the previous thirty years the rural population of Silesia had paid feudal lords approximately 240 million talers. "The ever growing awareness that if there is to be any talk of compensation for feudal burdens then it is the peasants who must be compensated for the knightly robbery perpetrated on them," wrote Wolff, and the 240 million talers, or Silesian multi-millions, should be paid back to the peasants.[103]

Never before had a work such as Wolff's *Die schlesische Milliarde* been undertaken. Wolff revealed the depths of exploitation of not only agricultural workers, but also other workers such as millers, brewers, butchers, smiths, and bakers. Before 1810, many artisans paid dues to feudal lords that granted them a local monopoly free from competition. In 1810, though, the Prussian state enacted a free trade law that ended the monopolies many artisans had enjoyed. The advent of competition did not mean the end of feudal dues for artisans. Feudal lords continued to wrest dues from artisans even as lords established mills, breweries, bakeries, etc. of their own. In effect forcing artisans to pay dues to their new competition. This in turn adversely effected millwrights, such as Otto Meitzen, who were employed by millers to build their mills.[104]

Wolff's articles began appearing in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* just as the Rustic Alliance convention was convening in Breslau on March 28. One of the items the

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[103] Engels, "Wilhelm Wolff," 146, 148-149; Wolff, *Die schlesische Milliarde*, 26-27.

[104] Wolff, *Die schlesische Milliarde*, 39; Engels, "Wilhelm Wolff," 153, 155-156.

convention was deliberating over was the regulation of property taxes. In light of Wolff's articles the convention demanded a thorough investigation of all such taxes. Orders for the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* in Silesia, and other eastern provinces, greatly increased. The Silesian farmer, C.F. Steinberg, took it upon himself to have three thousand copies of the collected *Die schlesische Milliarde* printed and distributed among peasants. The influence of *Die schlesische Milliarde* was so large that it dwarfed in comparison the ignored at the time *Wage, Labor and Capital* by Marx--the seminal work of Marxism that was appearing in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* at the same time as *Die schlesische Milliarde*. Prussian authorities noticed the influence of *Die schlesische Milliarde* and fined Steinberg forty talers for distributing an item that "contains insults and slander that would incite disobedience."[105]

The persecution of Steinberg was not an isolated incident. During the spring of 1849, Prussian authorities arrested radical democrats across Silesia, bringing about a corresponding decline in radical activity. As state repression increased, the democratic movement itself became politically polarized. While some democrats became more radical, due to the betrayal and failures of the liberals in the Frankfurt and Prussian Assemblies to deliver on the promises of the March Revolution, others continued to hope that despite the perfidy of the liberals they would change past practice and produce the desired freedoms. That the Rustic Alliance put considerable effort into getting sympathetic candidates elected to the Second Chamber of the restricted-suffrage Prussian Parliament showed that liberalism still held a strong sway over the democratic

[105] Schmidt, *Die schlesische Demokratie von 1848/49,* I Halbband, 237, 263; Engels, "Wilhelm Wolff," 146; *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, April 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 1849.

movement.[106]

Political division was a major contributing factor for the internal decline of the Silesian democratic movement. Radicals considered the Second Chamber as serving "no other purpose than that of legalizing the already completed counter-revolution," while liberals supported it. During the summer of 1848, strong local Democratic Clubs and Rustic Alliances provided a sturdy backbone for the democratic movement. However, single political camps, as the movement fractured between liberals and socialists, dominated local clubs and branches and they became more autonomous. The increased autonomy of local units weakened and divided the previous province-wide structure of the movement, just as it began to face a united counter-revolution. As the movement fractured, the no-tax campaign fell to the wayside and peasants proved unable to resist the reimposition of feudal dues. It would not be until June 1852 that the Prussian government amended its constitution to forbid feudal tenures and in April 1856 they abolished feudal dues and "the obligations arising from manorial or patriarchal jurisdiction, from serfage, and from former tax and industrial organization" without compensation.[107]

The Frankfurt Assembly's final act of servility to the Prussian Crown occurred on March 28, 1849, when it voted to elect Friedrich Wilhelm IV as "Emperor of the Germans." Friedrich Wilhelm IV toyed with the Assembly for nearly a month before rejecting the imperial crown and Constitution on April 25. Two days later Friedrich

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[106] Schmidt, *Die schlesische Demokratie von 1848/49,* I Halbband, 201, 225, 253; *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, February 18, 1849.

[107] *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, March 30, 1849; Schmidt, *Die schlesische Demokratie von 1848/49,* I Halbband, 200-201, 236; The Prussian Constitution imposed on December 5, 1848 when amended in June 1852 and April 1856 abolished most feudal dues and duties. See Constitution of the Kingdom of Prussia Articles 40-42.

Wilhelm IV dissolved the Second Chamber of the Prussian Parliament because it had voted on April 21 to accept the Imperial Constitution proposed from Frankfurt. At the same time the Kingdom of Saxony dissolved its Diet in Dresden.[108]

The protests against the rejection of the Imperial Constitution were the last, albeit still militant, gasps of the revolution. Although the Frankfurt Assembly had completely failed to address the economic and political demands of Germany's working classes, many saw the Imperial Constitution as the last chance to get anything out of the March Revolution. On May 3, barricades went up in the streets of Dresden as an armed uprising, composed mainly of workers, began in defense of the rejected Imperial Constitution. Two days later on May 5, around five thousand journeymen, workers, and a few intellectuals revolted in Breslau in response to the attempt to move artillery units from the city to Dresden. Shortly afterwards, open military campaigns started in Baden, the Palatinate, and the Rhineland city of Elberfeld, featuring organized armed units of revolutionaries. Berlin remained quiet--having been militarily occupied since November.[109]

Just as it had been prepared for the reaction to its *coup d'état* in November, the Prussian Crown was ready for violent reactions against its rejection of the Imperial Constitution. The Crown even arguably hoped for such a reaction in order to flush revolutionaries into the open and crush them once and for all. In Breslau, Prussian troops outnumbered the barricade fighters and the fighting ended on May 7. Prussian troops quickly ended resistance in the rest of Silesia, as the province had basically been in a state of military siege since the winter. With the aid of Prussian troops, the King of

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[108] *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, April 3, 28, May 2, 1849.

[109] *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, May 8, 9, 10, 11, 1849; Hahn, *The 1848 Revolutions in German-Speaking Europe*, 163; Schmidt, *Die schlesische Demokratie von 1848/49,* I Halbband, 280, 282, 345.

Saxony was able to end the Dresden uprising on May 9, despite people from the countryside arriving to assist the uprising. On May 14, the Prussian Crown ordered Prussian delegates in the Frankfurt Assembly to return home, effectively ending the ineffectual Assembly. Elberfeld fell next to on May 16, signaling the victory of the counter-revolution in the Rhineland. The last issue of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* appeared on May 19. In the Palatinate, 6,000 revolutionary troops were unable to resist a Prussian invasion of 30,000, and those revolutionary troops who were not killed retreated into Baden in June. The revolutionary forces of Baden did not hold out much longer and by July 12 the last of the insurgents retreated to Switzerland and exile.[110]

Reaction had triumphed. Military terror spread across Germany stamping out all pockets of resistance. "After bloody struggles and military executions, particularly in Silesia, feudalism was restored," wrote Engels in one of his articles for the *New York Daily Tribune* on the revolution and counter-revolution. Simultaneous with the military terror, the police and judiciary system arrested and imprisoned revolutionaries. In Dresden for example, over 800 people languished in prisons after the May Revolt. Even if one was fortunate enough to avoid execution or jail, having been associated with the revolution made it extremely difficult to find employment. Faced with such dire conditions many German revolutionaries chose emigration and exile. This was the decision Otto Meitzen and his family made in leaving Silesia for Texas.[111]

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[110] *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, May 8, 10, 17, 19, 1849; *Neue Kölnische Zeitung*, May 17, 1849; Friedrich Engels, "The Campaign for the German Imperial Constitution," MECW, Vol. 10, pp. 147-239, 154, 206, 208, 215, 234-237; Hahn, *The 1848 Revolutions in German-Speaking Europe*, 161.

[111] Frederick Engels, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Germany*, (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1977), 54; Though de-facto feudalism was restored in Silesia, the Silesian Rustic Alliance survived, albeit without the radicalism, keeping farmers connected and standing as a check against the unrestrained feudalism of old. Schmidt, *Die schlesische Demokratie von 1848/49,* I Halbband, 135, 237; Schmidt, *et al*, *Illustrierte Geschichte der deutschen Revolution 1848/49*, 335.

During and in the aftermath of the counter-revolution, thousands of people left Germany. Some emigrated to Switzerland and France, but most left for North America. In 1850, nearly 79, 000 Germans arrived in the United States. By 1854, this number reached 215, 009. Between 1840 and 1860, around one and a half million Germans immigrated to the United States. With more arriving in the decades to follow, by the end of the nineteenth century Germans were the largest immigrant group in the United States. Many Germans settled in the urban areas of New York City, Chicago, Milwaukee, Saint Louis, and Cincinnati. Some gave farming a try in northwest Ohio and Illinois. However, a small but significant minority of Germans settled in Texas. In 1850, there were over 30, 000 Germans in Texas, constituting twenty percent of the total white population.[112]

Many German political emigrates came to the United States due to a romanticized image of the country as a land of political and religious freedoms. Many had enthusiastically followed the American Revolution in Germany. During the Frankfurt Assembly, some delegates put forward the U.S. Constitution as a model for a German political charter. During democratic meetings in Germany, the American flag, at times, appeared alongside the French and revolutionary red flags. Particularly popular were the writings of Thomas Paine whose *Common Sense* was printed in German in 1777. Paine remained in the German *Zeitgeist* through his ruminations on the French Revolution in *Rights of Man*. First appearing in German in 1794, and reprinted numerous times, Pain's *The Age of Reason* was especially popular with its deist thought and attacks on

[112] Bruce Levine, *The Spirit of 1848: German Immigrants, Labor Conflict, and the Coming of the Civil War* (Urbana; University of Illinois Press, 1992), 15-16; Hahn, *The 1848 Revolutions in German-Speaking Europe*, 197; Glen Lich, "Goethe on the Guadalupe," in Glen E. Lich and Dona B. Reeves ed. *German Culture in Texas: A Free Earth; Essays from the 1978 Southwest Symposium* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980), 38.

institutionalized religion. Gustav Struve included writings of Paine in his 1847 book *Die Väter unserer Republik in ihrem Leben und Wirken*. Also popular were the works of Thomas Jefferson and his faith in independent artisans and yeoman farmers as the backbone of democracy.[113]

Indeed, conditions in Texas seemed ideally suited for Germans seeking to realize the dream of becoming a Jeffersonian yeoman. Before 1830, German immigration to Texas was barely registerable. In 1831, Friedrich Ernst of Oldenburg acquired a land grant from the Mexican government, in what is now Austin County, Texas and began farming. Ernst found success and wrote a letter to a friend in Germany, in which he exuberantly described conditions in Texas. An Oldenburg newspaper first published the letter, to be followed by other newspapers, and then by a travel book on Texas, all drawing considerable positive attention to Texas. Henceforth, a small trickle of German immigrants began settling in present day Austin, Colorado, and Fayette counties.[114]

From 1830 to 1860, the founding period of German settlement in Texas, publishers in Germany printed more immigration accounts of Texas than of any other region of North America. These accounts portrayed Texas as a land of milk and honey with plenty of cheap and fertile land available. What really stirred the imagination of politically minded emigrants were the tales of the Texas Revolution, in which settlers defeated a military dictatorship with no separation of church and state and formed their own short-lived republic. This romantic view of Texas skirted the issue of slavery.

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[113] *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, June 7, 1848; Hahn, *The 1848 Revolutions in German-Speaking Europe*, 143; Mischa Honeck, *We Are the Revolutionists: German-Speaking Immigrants and American Abolitionists After 1848* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 14; Mark O. Kistler, "German-American Liberalism and Thomas Paine," *American Quarterly*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (Spring, 1962), 82-83.

[114] Terry G. Jordan, *German Seed in Texas Soil: Immigrant Farmers in Nineteenth-Century Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1966), 40-41.

Idealist German settlers figured the comparative isolation and unsettled nature of Texas would allow them to form communities that would preserve their German language and culture separate from the rest of the slaveholding South.[115]

Though published accounts of Texas in Germany did bring about a fair share of immigrants to Texas, the main stimulus to German settlement came from the *Verein zum Schutze deutscher Einwanderer in Texas* (Society for the Protection of German Immigrants in Texas), know more commonly as the *Adelsverein*. A group of wealthy and aristocratic Germans formed the *Adelsverein* on April 20, 1842 near Mainz. The twenty founding members had come to the conclusion that overpopulation had caused Germany's desperate social and economic conditions. The creation of an emigration society was settled upon to help ease Germany's supposed overpopulation and to turn a profit for its founders.[116]

The young Republic of Texas appeared to be properly suited for the *Adelsverein* 's objectives. A colony, in the still sparsely settled region, would give the Germans more of an opportunity to influence the development of Texas and provide a market for German goods. Texas statehood in 1845 did little to alter their plans, as the Germans had already acquired in 1844 interests in a Texas land grant. For $240 a family, the *Adelsverein* provided transportation to Texas, 320 acres for each family, provisions, credit, and the promise of public improvements to the settlement area. The *Adelsverein* made its profits by maintaining ownership of one-half of the land in the settlement area. Between 1844

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[115] Theodore G. Gish, "Introduction," Viktor Bracht, *Texas in 1848* (San Marcos: German-Texan Heritage Society, 1991), vii; Andreas Reichstein, *German Pioneers on the American Frontier: The Wagners in Texas and Illinois* (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2001), 27, 36.

[116] Jordan, *German Seed in Texas Soil*, 41; Reichstein, *German Pioneers on the American Frontier*, 20.

and 1846, the *Adelsverein* brought 7,380 German immigrants to central Texas. Among those who arrived in Texas via the *Adelsverein* was Edgar von Westphalen (Karl Marx's brother-in-law and a communist himself) as well as the *Darmstädter* group--a group of roughly forty individuals who set out to establish a communistic colony in Texas. The *Darmstädter* group's colony attempts failed due to internal disputes and the *Adelsverein* itself went bankrupt in 1847 from mismanagement. However, the *Adelsverein* did secure a treaty with the Comanches, one of the few honored treaties between European settlers and Native Americans, easing the way for peaceful German settlement. Although the *Adelsverein* went bankrupt, waves of German immigrants, including the Meitzens, kept arriving in central Texas throughout the nineteenth century.[117]

William Meitzen with his wife and three children, along with his sister Marie and her then husband, Edward Gentner, reached Galveston via the ship *Franziska* on December 2, 1849. His older brother Otto and his family arrived later the next month. The Meitzens traveled by rail to Houston. Here they hired a freight and passenger ox-wagon to carry their children, a few pieces of furniture and feather bed coverings, while the adults walked. The money Otto Meitzen's family had come from the quick sale of their home back in Liegnitz.[118]

The Meitzens had planned to push on to the areas settled by the German *Adelsverein* immigrants around New Braunfels and Fredericksburg. Though they learned,

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[117] Jordan, *German Seed in Texas Soil*, 43; Lich, "Goethe on the Guadalupe," 37, 58; Rudolph Leopold Biesele, *The History of the German Settlements in Texas, 1831-1861*. (Austin: Von Boeckmann-Jones Co., 1930), 7-9; Reichstein, *German Pioneers on the American Frontier*, 20-21, 48, 58.

[118] Ethel Hander Geue, *New Homes In a New Land: German Immigration to Texas, 1847-1861*, (Waco: Library Binding Co., 1970), 94, 124; Frieda Meitzen Williams, "German Pioneers in Texas," *Frontier Times* (Bandera, Texas) Vol. 13, No. 1, (1935), pp. 70-72, 70; Leonie Rummel Weyland and Houston Wade, *An Early History of Fayette County*, (La Grange, Texas: La Grange Journal, 1936), 56.

along the way that New Braunfels was recovering from a cholera outbreak that claimed over forty lives. Hesitant about continuing on and weary from traveling in the torrential rain that was accompanying them, turning the roads to mud and making it nearly impossible to build a fire, they encountered Joseph Biegel. Biegel had received a land grant from the Mexican government in 1832, in what would become Fayette County. Beginning in 1839, Biegel began selling parcels of his land to German immigrants, transforming Fayette County into an area of German settlement. Biegel convinced the Meitzen brothers to settle in Fayette County and sold Otto Meitzen 32.5 acres for $40.50. On his purchased land, Otto built a story and a half log cabin home and began farming. By 1852, two years later, Otto had increased his holdings to 60 acres, along with three horses and five head of cattle.[119]

Though not farmers by trade, Otto and Jennie Meitzen's family was able to eek out a living, without slaves, from the land. However, it was Otto and his brother William's mechanical and engineering skills, learned in Germany that contributed to the growth of Fayette County and kept their families financially afloat. The Meitzen brothers built the county's grist mill, cotton gin, and saw mill. In 1859, the brothers went into business together operating their own mule powered gin and mill in Fayetteville which in 1860 was switched to steam power. Jennie put her husband's skills to use by directing him to build a still that she operated and sold whiskey from. She also taught school and made cigars and candles. The early years in Texas were especially hard for Otto and

[119] Biesele, *The History of the German Settlements in Texas*, 135; Geue, *New Homes In a New Land*, 37; Weyland and Wade, *An Early History of Fayette County*, 56; Thomas Supak, Charles Hensel, and Ricky Dippel, "German Settlers in Fayette County," in Marjorie L. Williams, ed., *Fayette County: Past & Present*, (privately printed, 1976), 22; Emily Suzanne Carter and Crystal Sasse Ragsdale, *Biegel Settlement: Historic Sites Research, Fayette Power Project*, (Austin: Texas Archeological Survey/University of Texas at Austin, 1976), 47; 1852 Fayette County, Texas, County Tax Rolls, 1846-1910, Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Austin, Texas, Texas Secretary of State, Archives and Information Services Division.

Jennie, as their three children that arrived with them from Germany passed away in the years 1851-1857. These were years of constant birth and death for the couple. From 1851 to 1863 Jennie gave birth to thirteen more children of which just five survived to adulthood--Herman (1851-1927), Edward Otto (1855-1935), Ernest August (1857-1892), Julia (1859-1947), and Ida (1863-1918).[120]

As Silesians, the Meitzens were not alone in settling in Texas. They were part; maybe even one of the initial sparks, of a chain migration from Silesia to Texas. Estimates of the number of Silesian immigrants who came to Texas are difficult to calculate. U.S. census records list countries of birth, and Silesia was a province of Prussia. Some individuals, though, did list Silesia instead of Prussia on the census. More useful are the few passenger lists of ships that transported German immigrants to Texas from1847-1861 that survived the Galveston Hurricane of 1900 and the Second World War, which indicate a significant number of immigrants arriving from Silesia. The research of geographer Terry Jordan found Silesia to be one the major areas of origin of German settlers in Texas as well.[121]

Many Silesian immigrants settled in Fayette County and the neighboring counties of Washington, Colorado, and Lavaca. These Silesian immigrants were not just Germans but reflected the multi-ethnic character of Silesia and included Bohemians and Poles. The immigrant Silesian Poles who settled in Texas founded the first Polish colonies in the

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[120] Weyland and Wade, *An Early History of Fayette County*, 58; Supak, Hensel, and Dippel, "German Settlers in Fayette County," 22; Meitzen-Williams, *History of the Meitzen Family*, noted; "Killen, Ida," *Texas Death Certificates, 1890-1976*, *1918, Tarrant-Howard Counties*, State Registrar Office, Austin.

[121] United States Census, *Census Reports*, Tenth Census of the United States Taken in the year 1880, Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the year 1920; The surviving ship passenger lists are reprinted in Geue, *New Homes In a New Land*, 70-108; Jordan, *German Seed in Texas Soil*, 32.

United States.[122]

In recounting the motivations for German and Silesian immigration to Texas following the 1848 Revolution one should be careful not to exaggerate political factors. Many immigrants left their homelands based on grim economic conditions at home and perceived opportunities in the U.S. However, some Silesians, like the Meitzens, had participated in the 1848 Revolution and working-class politics in Silesia. One such Silesian was Josef Georg Wagner of Breslau. Wagner was a shoemaker who "took an active part in politics and was a founder of many labor organizations" before leaving for Texas in 1853. He settled in Round Top, Fayette County and eventually became a farmer. Also, reflective of the political nature of German immigrants in Fayette County was the naming one of their settlements Blum Hill in honor of martyred German revolutionary Robert Blum. Among the Polish Silesian immigrants was Stanisław Kiołbassa, who settled in Karnes County. Kiołbassa served as a Left/Center delegate to the Prussian Assembly. His son Peter Kiołbassa moved to Chicago after the Civil War where he became a successful businessman and helped found the first Polish-Catholic church in the city.[123]

The most prominent Silesian 48er that settled in Fayette County with a direct connection to the Meitzens was Carl Otto Cunerth. As discussed earlier, Cunerth was an editor of *Der Demokrat* and leader of the Liegnitz Democratic Club that helped created the Rustic Alliance. Cunerth immigrated to Texas in 1850. German sources state that

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[122] United States Census, *Census Reports*, Eighth Census of the United States Taken in the year 1860; T. Lindsay Baker, *The First Polish Americans: Silesian Settlements in Texas* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1979), 3.

[123] Frank Lotto, *Fayette County: Her History and Her* People (Schulenburg, Texas: self-published, 1902), 294-295; Biesele, *The History of the German Settlements in Texas*, 60-63; Baker, *The First Polish Americans*, 15-16, 165.

once Cunerth arrived in Texas he operated a farm near San Antonio. Though in U.S. records he first appears in the marriage records of Fayette County. On December 6, 1856, Cunerth married Marie (Meitzen) Gentner in La Grange, who's first husband, Edward Gentner, died earlier in the year. Cunerth farmed in Fayette County until 1862 when the tides of war interceded. Nothing is known of Cunerth's political activities in Texas before the war, but his shared experiences during the 1848 Revolution left a lasting political impression on his nephew: Edward Otto (E.O.) Meitzen.[124]

When German 48ers arrived in Texas in the late 1840s and early 1850s, they had traveled not only a long way geographically, but politically, and even historically as well. Many of them had been born during the turbulent years of the Napoleonic Wars. At the same time these wars were redrawing the map of Europe, industrialization was fundamentally changing how people lived and worked. A basic knowledge of both these wars and the transformative class creating process of industrialization is necessary for understanding the actions of working-class Europeans. And, of course, layered on top of these general processes, the Prussian province of Silesia was one the most volatile areas of Europe during this era of massive historical change—from the peasant uprising of 1792 to the Weavers' Revolt of 1844 and the influential role of Silesians during the 1848 Revolution.

As the masses of people rose against the dying feudal and ascending capitalist orders during the 1848 Revolution, they were not revolting against the process of industrialization itself or trying to escape a life on the land. What they stood opposed to

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[124] Schmidt, *Die schlesische Demokratie von 1848/49,* II Halbband, 36; Fayette County Records, Marriage Licenses, 1838-1923. In some records Marie (Meitzen/Gentner) Cunerth appears as Mary; Holmgren, *Family Tree Book of the Holmgreens and the Meitzens*, 15; United States Census, *Census Reports*, Eighth Census of the United States Taken in the year 1860; 1861 Fayette County, Texas, County Tax Rolls; *Nonpartisan Leader*, September 20, 1917.

were the economic and political elites who used feudalism and controlled industrialization in order to enrich themselves financially and politically to the detriment of democracy and regardless of the social dislocation and mass poverty caused by their actions. Drawing inspiration from the American and French revolutions and the resistance to Napoleonic rule, Europeans from the broad middle and working classes, during the 1848 Revolution, fought against aristocrats and capitalists who undemocratically controlled their social and economic lives. In Silesia, with its distinctive mix of agriculture and industrialization, farmers and workers joined together in common struggle. In the process, they developed a farmer-labor ideology that would have a transnational influence on working-class radicalism.

After the failure of the 1848 Revolution, 48ers, such as Otto Cunerth and the Meitzens, brought their democratic farmer-labor ideology with them to Texas. The Meitzens were emblematic of how many 48ers hoped to put into practice their idealized life germinated from the fields of European upheavals and revolution. Though skilled engineers, the Meitzen brothers bought land in order to live life as yeoman farmers. However, they did not shun the latest scientific and technological advances and used their mechanical skills to further the industrial development of Fayette County. That, however, would be as far as the Meitzens came to realizing their independent yeoman dreams.

Chapter Two

Inheritors of the Revolution

"During the war I was brought up, jerked up," reminisced E.O. Meitzen in reference to his childhood during the U.S. Civil War. In leaving Prussia, and settling in Texas, the Meitzens had only left one political conflict and entered another. The issues of slavery and secession had Fayette County and the surrounding area deeply divided in the years preceding the Civil War.[125]

Outside of a few family anecdotes and listings in government records, very little is know of the Meitzens during the first two decades of their time in America. Despite the absence of the Meitzen's actions in the historical record, a political and economic sketch of this period is vital for understanding the agrarian radicalism of the Meitzen family. During this period, working-class German Texans, as well as other Texans, had to abandon their yeoman dreams to the realities of a now dominant market based capitalist economy. Also, German immigrant hopes that slavery in Texas would gradually fade away or that at least they could exist separate from it, proved to be increasingly ill founded as the planter class showed its willingness for war to defend their peculiar institution. Faced with these political and economic conditions German Texans adapted their 48er radicalism to conditions more specific to their present situation in Texas.

When the Meitzens first arrived in Fayette County, the local economy was primarily based on subsistence farming, with a few plantations and farmers keeping in bondage 820 slaves. This low level of development would rapidly changed in the short

[125] U.S. Congress, *Industrial Relations, Final Report and Testimony, Submitted to Congress by the Commission on Industrial Relations, Created by the Act of Congress August 23, 1912*, Vol. X (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1916), 9143.

years to follow. By the end of the 1850s, Fayette County had a flourishing plantation economy based on corn, tobacco, wool, and cotton. In 1859, Fayette County produced 320,580 bushels of corn and 12,683 bales of cotton, making it one of the state leaders in both categories. Much of this increased production was based on the labor of the county's slaves, which had grown in number to 3,786. Overall Fayette County's population skyrocketed from 3,756 in 1850 to 11,604 (including slaves) in 1860, making it one of the most developed counties in Texas.[126] Though late to appear in central Texas, the empire of cotton had conquered yet another region. Whatever ambitions German immigrants to Texas might have had about becoming enlightened farmers, with slavery peacefully fading away, were quickly dashed. No longer was the question how to fulfill their yeomen dreams, but instead how to survive a brewing civil war.

After a few years of settlement and adjustment, many German Texans were confronted with the political and economic realities of their new home. They had crossed the Atlantic with the hope of living in a democratic and equalitarian society. As whites, German Texans possessed more legal rights than they did back in Germany. But these rights were not for all as often literally right next door to free Germans were enslaved African Americans--directly confronting their notions of liberty and justice for all.

Slavery was not the only issue troubling German political émigrés. Modern capitalism was transforming the United States and threatening the Jeffersonian ideal of a democratic country based on independent artisans and self-sufficient farmers that many German immigrants held as the promise of America. Industrialization threatened the artisan as wage labor was becoming the dominant norm, while land speculation and the beginnings of large scale commercial agriculture tied to national and international

[126] Daphne Dalton Garrett, "FAYETTE COUNTY," *Handbook of Texas Online*.

markets was squeezing out the small self-sufficient farmer. Especially troubling to German immigrants was a growing nativist movement that blamed them for America's economic problems and moral reformers who attacked immigrant drinking habits and their refusal to abide by Sabbath day practices.[127]

Already having been tempered in the flames of revolution, German Texan 48ers, like their counterparts across the U.S., began to politically organize in the mid-1850s. Germans in New Braunfels stood up to the moral attacks against them by holding a meeting in January 1854 "at which a very *spirited* resolution was passed, maintaining their Republican right to drink as much schnops [sic] as they pleased." The next month a *Handwerker-Bund* (Workingmen's Club) was founded in New Braunfels to create a workers' illness fund and provide educational activities, showing that German Texans were beginning to organize in defense of their economic interests. The organization that would have wide-ranging ramifications on German Texans in the years to come, however, had been established a few months earlier northwest of New Braunfels in the town of Sisterdale.[128]

Founded in 1847, Sisterdale arguably contained the highest concentration of 48er intellectuals in Texas. Due to its large number of educated inhabitants, Sisterdale was known as the "Latin Settlement." Residents of Sisterdale included Ernst Kapp, who fled prison in Germany due to his liberal writings; Julius Froebel, a delegate to the Frankfurt Assembly who was sentenced to death with Robert Blum in Vienna, but was pardoned

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[127] Levine, *Spirit of 1848*, 67; Mack Walker, "The Old Homeland and the New," in *op. cit. German Culture in Texas: A Free Earth; Essays from the 1978 Southwest Symposium* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980), 76-77.

[128] *Texas Monument*, January 11, 1854; Biesele, *The History of the German Settlements in Texas*, 210; For accounts of German 48er political actions in the U.S. see Levine's *The Spirit of 1848* and Honeck's *We Are the Revolutionaries*.

before the sentence was carried out; Adolf Douai, a teacher and revolutionary writer; the educator August Siemering; and Karl Marx's brother-in-law Edgar von Westphalen.[129]

In the autumn of 1853, residents of Sisterdale created *Der Freie Verein* (Free Society) "for the purpose of striving for and promoting the greatest possible freedom of mind in all directions." Its members were freethinkers who held anti-slavery views. Kapp was elected president and Siemering to the position of secretary. *Der Freie Verein* was associated with the national *Bund Freier Maenner* (League of Free Men) that had been organized in Louisville, Kentucky earlier in 1853. The *Bund Freier Maenner* sought to coordinate the political activities of German-Americans nationally and called for state conventions to be held in states with large German populations. From December 1853 to September 1854, state conventions were held in Milwaukee, Louisville, Cincinnati, Indianapolis and Wheeling, West Virginia. Out these conventions the Louisville meeting was the most significant.[130]

"'Liberty, prosperity, and education for all!' This is the great principle of the revolution which all free Germans … brought with them from the old country," began the series of resolutions adopted by the convention of Germans in Louisville in February 1854 that became known as the Louisville Platform. The platform was a broad defense of democratic rights and attacks on special privilege, the "despotism" of religion, and the "moral cancer" of slavery. Though deeming slavery a cancer, the convention concluded "its sudden abolition neither possible or advisable." Instead it took the free soil position

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[129] Lich, "Goethe on the Guadalupe," 58, 62.

[130] R.L. Biesele, "The Texas State Convention of Germans in 1854," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (April, 1930), pp. 247-261, 248-249; Don Heinrich Tolzman, "A German-American Position Statement: The Louisville Platform" in Don Heinrich Tolzman, ed., *The German-American Forty-Eighters, 1848-1998* (Bloomington: Indiana University Printing Services, 1997), 97.

of opposing the expansion of slavery into the territories and the "gradual extermination of slavery."[131]

Other specific demands of the Louisville Platform included "the free cession of Public Land to actual settlers," an easy path to citizenship for immigrants, "the radical reform of the judicial system … the law being at present a mystery for the people and a means to deceive them," direct elections, internal improvements financed by the federal government, an interventionist foreign policy "against despotism," equal rights for women, the repeal of the Fugitive Slave Law, and a declaration that "in free States the color of skin cannot justify a difference of legal rights." In regards to labor the Louisville Platform stated, "the welfare of a nation cannot be generally and permanently assured unless its laboring classes be made independent of the oppression of the capitalist."[132]

The demands of the Louisville Platform were not new for their time. The platform was similar to the Free Soil platforms adopted in Buffalo in 1848 and Pittsburgh in 1852. All three platforms condemned slavery as evil, supported democratic rights, called for federally funded internal improvements and the assurance that free land grants be given to actual settlers. Unique to the Louisville Platform was the call for equal rights for women. This is significant in that it shows that radical German immigrants were more responsive to the burgeoning women's right movement than the new Republican Party, made up of many Free Soilers, which did not include women's rights in its 1856 platform. The Louisville Platform also stood out in its revolutionary internationalism in calling on the U.S. to militarily intervene against monarchal despotism around the

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[131] *Louisville Platform*, reprinted in *The German-American Forty-Eighters*, pp.98-105, 99-102.

[132] *Louisville Platform*, 103-104.

world.[133]

Though not entirely unique, the Louisville Platform played an important role in promoting anti-slavery, pro-labor, and settler land rights positions across the United States. This was especially so among the U.S.'s largest immigrant group, Germans, as the Louisville Platform was reprinted in at least thirty German-language newspapers. The proliferation of the Louisville Platform also alerted conservatives to the radical immigrants in their midst fueling the growing nativist movement.[134]

Adolf Douai, formerly of Sisterdale, promulgated the Louisville Platform in Texas by printing the complete platform in his newspaper the *San Antonio Zeitung* on March 25, 1854. Taking advantage of the second annual *Sängerfest* (singer festival) already happening in San Antonio on May 14 and 15, 1854, the Sisterdale *Freie Verein* called for a political state convention of Germans to take place during the festival. The convention was in line with the *Bund Freier Maenner*'s call for state conventions. The task of the convention, as put forth by Siemering, was for German Texans to act in unison on important political events, the most important being the upcoming 1856 presidential election, and to adopt a platform as had been done in Louisville.[135]

Attended by members of German communities and societies from across the state, the convention of Germans took place in San Antonio as planned. While based on the Louisville Platform, the platform adopted in San Antonio is much more detailed and

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[133] Biesele, "The Texas State Convention of Germans in 1854," 251; *1848 Platform Free Soil Party, Buffalo, New York, August 9-10, 1848*; *1852 Free Soil Party Platform, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania*; *Republican Party Platform of 1856, June 18, 1856*; The call for U.S. military intervention must be placed in its 1850s context before the U.S. was a world military power and was seen by many as the only example of a democratic republic.

[134] Levine, *Spirit of 1848*, 102.

[135] Biesele, "The Texas State Convention of Germans in 1854," 249-251.

specific in its demands and contains fewer rhetorical flourishes about democracy and liberty than its Louisville cousin. "We are convinced that the people of the United States do not enjoy the liberties guaranteed to them by the constitution," began the San Antonio Platform, "we are satisfied that the existing parties have neither the will nor the power to improve the political, social, and religious relations of the country." The preamble of the platform ended by stating that their intention was not to form a "German party."[136]

The San Antonio Platform is divided into three sections – political reforms, social reforms, and religious reforms. The political reforms included calls for the direct election of the President, U.S. senators, and judges along with the right of recall of elected representatives. Reflective of the German delegates harsh experiences with Prussian militarism, the political demands placed restrictions on the military such as the "abolition of all corporal punishment," elimination of cadet academies, and soldiers in time of peace being subject to the same laws as other citizens.[137]

The social reforms of the San Antonio Platform were by far the most extensive. Much like the Louisville Platform, the San Antonio Platform is indicative of the Jeffersonian beliefs of German Texans in regards to the importance of maintaining independent yeomen on the land. "The soil should not be an article of speculation," declared the San Antonio Platform. Not just every citizen, but everyone under the "protection of the government,"--citizens and non-citizens alike--shall be granted free land. Elements of a farmer-labor alliance are present as well. Calling for "equality of labor and capital in all laws relating to them," the convention adopted planks designed to

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[136] *San Antonio Zeitung*, May 20, 1854; An English translation of the San Antonio platform appears in Biesele, "The Texas State Convention of Germans in 1854," 251-254.

[137] *San Antonio Zeitung*, May 20, 1854.

protect the working class, such as the elimination of debtor prisons, greater protection of immigrants, the exemption of property necessary to make a living from judicial sale, progressive income and inheritance taxes, and the "abolition of banks in their present establishment." Judicial reforms included the abolition of the grand jury system and a simplification of the legal system to eliminate the need for lawyers. Dear to the Germans was the demand to repeal all temperance laws. But notably absent from the San Antonio Platform, in comparison to the Louisville Platform, was the omission of a women's rights plank. Moreover, educators clearly helped draft the platform. Contending that "it is the duty of the State to provide for the education of the youth" those assembled demanded free schools and the "establishment of universities with admission to all." The education planks intersected with the platform's religious reforms calling for the "total exclusion of religious training, as well as of religious books, from schools" and demanded, "no preacher may be a teacher." The platform ended with the statement that "religion is a private matter. The United States are political states and have no right to interfere in matters of religion, either favoring or restricting."[138]

Many of the demands of the San Antonio Platform date back not just to the Free Soil Party, but to the Workingmen's Party of the late 1820s. This was, however, the first time these demands emanated out of a political gathering in Texas. The San Antonio Platform was not limited to a German-language audience, as the statewide English newspaper, *The Western Texan*, printed the platform in its June 1, 1854 issue. The political demands laid out by the German Texans who gathered in San Antonio, in May of 1854, would reverberate in Texas in the decades to come during Reconstruction, in the Greenback Labor Party of the 1870s and 1880s, and into the Populist movement of the

[138] *San Antonio Zeitung*, May 20, 1854.

1890s.[139]

Though the San Antonio Platform encompassed a wide range of economic and social issues, the plank on slavery is what produced a firestorm once the platform went public. Tucked in the middle of the social reforms, the plank reads: "Slavery is an evil, the abolition of which is a requirement of democratic principles; but, as it affects only single states we desire: That the federal government abstain from all interference in the question of slavery, but that, if a state resolves upon the abolition of the evil, such state may claim the assistance of the general government for the purpose of carrying out such resolve."[140]

After reading about the San Antonio convention, supporters of slavery and the political status quo immediately questioned the loyalty of German Texans wondering aloud if they were abolitionists or even revolutionary socialists. "If a portion of our German population have come among us with a view of engrafting upon the organization of civil society, the abominable heresies of … infidel socialism … they will very soon find that they have very widely mistaken the latitude in which either they, or their disorganizing doctrines can find a respectable foot-hold," announced the editor of the *Texas Monument* out of La Grange in Fayette County, stating further that "American republicanism is not free enough for their licentious notions of political equality." Even more threatening, the Austin based newspaper, the *Texas State Gazette* asserted, "We hope that the charges are unfounded … for let any portion of our population undertake a

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[139] Biesele, "The Texas State Convention of Germans in 1854," 254-255; Hans-Martin Sass, "Man and His Environment: Ernst Kapp's Pioneering Experience and His Philosophy of Technology and Environment" in *op. cit. German Culture in Texas*, 92.

[140] Biesele, *The History of the German Settlements in Texas*, 199; *San Antonio Zeitung*, May 20, 1854

crusade … against slavery, our laws, religion and its ministers in Texas, and they will raise a storm of indignation from which they will be glad to escape by any means within their power."[141]

When the "American citizens" of La Grange discovered that the La Grange German Singing Union had participated in the San Antonio *Sängerfest*, a clamor was made to organize a meeting to air public opinion on the San Antonio Platform. The *Texas Monument* advised its "native citizens" to delay the meeting for a few days in order to give "our German friends an opportunity to define their position." The La Grange German Singing Union swiftly held an emergency meeting and passed a resolution that it "declares to follow no secret, political and revolutionary tendencies" and that they did not send any delegates to the convention and "solemnly protest against it [the San Antonio convention]." Though the La Grange German Singing Union might not have sent any of its members to the political convention, La Grange was one of the towns from which an organized delegation to the convention was sent. Just who these individuals were remains lost to history.[142]

This scene in La Grange was repeated in towns across Texas with German populations. Conservative and moderate Germans hurriedly organized meetings and wrote letters to newspaper editors to denounce the San Antonio convention and especially the slavery plank in order to not be implicated as abolitionists. Some German Texans felt that it was unwise to take such a militant stand against slavery that could lead to slaveholders and nativists, in an act of self-defense, to deny German immigrants of their

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[141] Both quotes are from the *Texas Monument*, June 28, 1854.

[142] *Texas Monument*, July 14, 1854; Biesele, *The History of the German Settlements in Texas*, 202.

rights.[143]

The rancor over the San Antonio convention and the abolitionist accusations against German Texans as a whole might have died down if not for the continued agitation of Adolf Douai. Undaunted and emboldened by the controversy created by the San Antonio Platform, Douai's *San Antonio Zeitung* became an openly abolitionist newspaper. This in turn reinforced the notion that German Texans as a whole were abolitionists in their sentiments. This perception has continued to the present day due in part to historians over-reliance on Frederick Law Olmsted's *A Journey through Texas: Or a Saddle-Trip on the Southwestern Frontier* (1857), which portrays German Texans as overwhelmingly against slavery.[144]

Olmsted's *A Journey through Texas* is part travelogue and in some ways partly anti-slavery propaganda. The book chronicles Olmstead's travels through Texas from November 10, 1853 to May 26, 1854. During his journey he befriended and established an anti-slavery political collaboration with Douai, which included Olmstead becoming part owner of the *San Antonio Zeitung*. Olmstead was a strong supporter of the armed free-soil campaign in Kansas. Both he and Douai viewed German Texans as the foundation for a free-soil colonization project in West Texas similar to those in Kansas. *A Journey through Texas* was published with the idea of enticing free soilers to settle in West Texas by promoting the area's agricultural possibilities. Olmstead also helped Douai finance a Spanish-language free soil newspaper that hoped to enlist Tejanos and

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[143] *Texas Monument*, August 1, 1854; Biesele, *The History of the German Settlements in Texas*, 199-202.

[144] Biesele, *The History of the German Settlements in Texas*, 202; Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Journey through Texas: Or a Saddle-Trip on the Southwestern Frontier* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1857, 2004), 140-142, 202-204.

Mexican immigrants to their cause.[145]

Douai and Olmstead's free soil plans for West Texas never came to fruition. The bloody and prolonged free soil campaign in Kansas commanded the attention and resources of northern abolitionists, consigning the West Texas campaign to failure before it even started. Douai was also unable to hold on for long in San Antonio. Conservative Germans cancelled their subscriptions, followed by an organized boycott of the *San Antonio Zeitung*. Money from northern abolitionists helped Douai keep the paper running, though once Douai's plan to make a free state out of west Texas appeared in print he was incapable of weathering the increasingly violent storm of attacks from supporters of slavery and nativists alike. One Texas newspaper called for the *San Antonio Zeitung*'s printing operations to be thrown into the San Antonio River, while another paper called for the death penalty for persons distributing antislavery materials. In the middle of 1855 the attacks on Douai had come to violence. A band of twelve slavery supporters rode into San Antonio and vowed that they would lynch Douai if the citizens of the town did not do so themselves. Upon hearing this, members of the local German *Turn Verein* took to the streets armed and defended Douai and his press until the threat abated. By the end of 1855 Douai had withstood enough, selling the paper and moving to Boston. In Boston Douai was active in the abolitionist movement, opened the nation's first kindergarten, and became an advocate of Marxist socialism.[146]

The actions of many German Texans in opposition to the San Antonio Platform

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[145] Olmsted, *Journey through Texas*, viii, 133, 204-209; Honeck, *We Are the Revolutionaries*, 61, 64, 68. *Tejano* is a term used to identify persons born in Texas of Mexican or Spanish ethnicity.

[146] Honeck, *We Are the Revolutionaries*, 51, 61-64; Olmsted, *A Journey through Texas*, 436-439; August Siemering, *Die Deutschen in Texas Waehrend Des Buergerkrieges/The Germans in Texas during the Civil War*, ed. William Paul Burrier, Sr. (Plantation, Florida: Llumina Press, 2013), 9; Adolf Douai, "Labor and Work," *Workmen's Advocate*, April 23, 1887.

and the anti-slavery politics of the *San Antonio Zeitung* show that German Texans were indeed not a united bulwark against slavery. A small number of German Texans even owned slaves--mainly in the older eastern settlements. Between 1840 and 1865 around sixty Germans owned slaves in the counties of Austin, Fayette, and Colorado. Among these German slaveowners was Otto Meitzen's brother-in-law, Edward Gentner, who owned one slave for one year in 1854. One should be hesitant, though, in making an overcorrection by making German Texans out to be supportive or indifferent toward slavery as these sixty German slaveowners made up less than five percent of the area slaveowners. German Texans were in their majority opposed to slavery as will be seen in their votes against secession, the formation of Union Loyal Leagues in heavily German areas, and their less-than-enthusiastic service in the Confederate military.[147]

Looking back one can take a more nuanced approach toward German Texan's attitudes toward slavery and abolition during the 1850s, though many Anglo Texans at the time did not. The 1854 San Antonio Platform and the anti-slavery positions of the *San Antonio Zeitung* directly fueled the fledging nativist Know Nothing movement in Texas. In the heavily German populated cites of San Antonio and Galveston, native born white support of Know Nothing candidates resulted in nativists carrying the San Antonio municipal elections of December 1854 and the mayor's office of Galveston in March 1855. Buoyed by these successes, Texas Know Nothing leaders met, in June 1855, to select a slate of candidates for the state elections in November. U.S. Senator Sam Houston put his support behind the Know Nothings for its stance on preserving the federal Union in opposition to the sectionalism of leading Democrats. Know Nothings

[147] Walter D. Kamphoefner, "New Perspectives on Texas Germans and the Confederacy," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 102, No. 4 (April, 1999), 442-443; 1854 and 1855 Fayette County, Texas, County Tax Rolls.

elected to office twelve state legislators, the state land commissioner, and one representative to the U.S. Congress.[148]

After the election, Texas Know Nothings, now organized as the American Party, held their first open convention on January 21-22, 1856 in Austin. The party adopted a platform that included limiting election to public office to only "native Americans," extending the period of naturalization of foreigners to twenty one years, preservation of the federal Union, support of state's rights, and for Congress to not "legislate upon the subject of slavery."[149]

In general as supporters of maintaining the federal Union, German Texans faced conflicting and contradictory political options. The Democratic Party that opposed nativism was at the same time responsible for fanning the sectional crisis in its unyielding defense of slavery. In turn, the American Party defended the federal Union but was opposed to the very existence of Germans in Texas. This led the Germans of Fayette County to rely on their own self-organizing. In La Grange, on June 9, 1855, a meeting of area Germans "Resolved, that a committee be appointed to draw preliminary articles of a constitution for a Society, to be called 'Social Democratic Society,' which has in view to unite the German population as body, encourage and assist the more ignorant and indifferent of their countrymen to become citizens of the United States, and use all means as a political body, to defend and uphold Democratic principles." In the end, though, it would not be the actions of German Texans that brought about the demise of the American Party in Texas, but rather internal differences at the national level. Support in

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[148] Ralph A. Wooster, "An Analysis of Texas Know Nothings," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 70, No. 3 (Jan., 1967), pp. 414-423, 414, 416.

[149] *The La Grange True Issue*, February 23, 1856.

Texas for the party waned after efforts to include a plank defending the institution of slavery in the national platform failed.[150]

In the presidential election year of 1856, slavery, not nativism was the all-consuming issue. Southern slaveholders saw a direct threat to their power in the candidacy of Republican nominee James Fremont, who opposed extending slavery into the territories. Slaves, on the other hand, saw hope, which in turn produced more fear in slaveholders. The *New York Herald* of December 11, 1856 captured the fears of southern slaveholders: "The idea, no doubt was that with Fremont's election all the negroes of the South would be instantly emancipated or supported from the North in a bloody revolt." Historian Harvey Wish's research on the Slave Insurrection Panic of 1856 found that, "Contemporary opinion, with remarkably few exceptions, attributed the revival of slave plots to the excitement wrought by the national [presidential] election." This excitement was not without merit.[151]

In September 1856, at Columbus in Colorado County, bordering directly east of Fayette County, the slave owners' Vigilance Committee discovered a plan for a large slave uprising involving over two hundred slaves. The slaves were found to possess large numbers of pistols, bowie knives, guns, and ammunition. Upon killing all the whites in the area they planned to fight their way to freedom in Mexico. In a preemptive strike by

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[150] *La Grange Paper*, June 16, 1855 quoted in Biesele, *The History of the German Settlements in Texas*, 203. Unfortunately, this is all that is known about the La Grange Social Democratic Society as copies of La Grange newspapers for most of the year 1855 have been lost. There was a similarly named Social Democratic Society of Germans in Richmond, Virginia that the La Grange society might have had connections to. The Richmond Society advocated similar demands to the Louisville and San Antonio Platform, but went further in its radicalism by calling for the abolition of the presidency and Senate so that the Legislature shall have only one branch. It also called for the eight-hour workday and supported the anti-slavery policies of Cassius M. Clay. *The Washington American* (Washington, Texas), September 3, 1856; Roger A. Griffin, "AMERICAN PARTY," *Handbook of Texas Online*; *La Grange True Issue*, February 23, 1856.

[151] Harvey Wish, "The Slave Insurrection Panic of 1856," *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 5, No. 2, (May, 1939), 206-222, 207.

slaveowners, two slaves were whipped to death and three hanged to serve as examples. On account of the slave's plan to make it to Mexico, all Mexicans were ordered to leave the county and never return on penalty of death.[152]

The next month, a similar planned slave revolt, involving arms and an escape to Mexico, was uncovered in Lavaca County. Three white men were implicated in aiding the plot, one of whom, an abolitionist named Davidson from Ohio, was captured. After receiving one hundred lashes, Davidson was ordered out of the county. In November, more revolt plans were uncovered in Lavaca, DeWitt, and Victoria counties. No reports of punishment handed the slaves is recorded; however, several white men implicated were "severely horsewhipped" and banished.[153]

Despite the deterioration of the Know Nothing movement in Texas, political options for pro-Union and anti-slavery Germans, and other liked minded groups, did not improve in the 1857 state elections. Returning from the Senate, Sam Houston mounted an independent campaign for governor with the support of what was left of the Know Nothings and lost to the regular Democratic candidate Hardin Runnels. The 1859 campaign, however, did provide an opening for pro-Union German Texans to play a meaningful role.[154]

By 1859 the regular Democratic Party in Texas was firmly in control of the fire-eaters. The Fire-eaters were extremist pro-slavery supporters who advocated the reopening of the foreign slave trade and even secession in order to defend slavery. On the

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[152] Wendell G. Addington, "Slave Insurrections in Texas," *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (October, 1950), 408-434, 414-416.; Wish, "The Slave Insurrection Panic of 1856," 208.

[153] Wish, "The Slave Insurrection Panic of 1856," 208; Addington, "Slave Insurrections in Texas," 417.

[154] Wooster, "An Analysis of Texas Know Nothings," 417.

other side, a coalition of pro-Union Democrats, former Whigs, and Germans--known collectively in Texas as the Opposition--formed the Union Democrat party. At a mass meeting in Austin, in May 1859, Union Democrats put forth Sam Houston as their candidate for governor and invited "all who are opposed to the re-opening of the African Slave Trade, Secession and other disunion issues … to unite with us."[155]

Houston, in brushing aside his former Know Nothing support, paved the way for German support of the Union Democrats. With the fire-eaters in control of the regular Democratic Party, a group of Democrat German Texans met and issued what became known as the German Platform. The German Platform stated that the regular Democratic convention in the city of Houston was not representative of Democrats in Texas and declared members' support for the Buchanan administration and the 1856 Democratic Platform adopted in Cincinnati. The Cincinnati Platform called for Congressional non-interference on the issue of slavery and supported the Compromise of 1850 and the Kansas-Nebraska Act. These less-than-radical demands of the German Platform were still enough for fire-eaters to state the "'German Platform' … seems to be an extract taken from a late number of the *San Antonio Zeitung*," referencing the anti-slavery paper forced to close three years earlier. Again conservative German Texans came out to distance themselves from the German Platform and reiterated their support for the regular Democratic Party. [156] That both progressive and conservative Germans came out with statements regarding the state of the Texas Democratic Party shows that some German

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[155] James Alex Baggett, "The Constitutional Union Party in Texas," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 82, No. 3 (Jan., 1979), pp. 233-264, 236; *Colorado Citizen*, May 28, 1859.

[156] Dale Baum, *The Shattering of Texas Unionism: Politics in the Lone Star State During the Civil War Era* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998), 33; *Colorado Citizen*, May 28, 1859; Democratic Party, *1856 Platform, Cincinnati, Ohio, June 2, 1856*; *San Antonio Texan*, May 28, 1859; *La Grange True Issue*, July 23, 1859.

Texans by this time had gained at least political toeholds within the Democratic Party and its competing factions.

Houston won the August election with fifty-nine percent of the popular vote. Two issues carried the day in Houston's favor. First was the inability of the regular Democrats to defend the western frontier against attacks from Comanches and Kiowas. Second was what many Texans felt was the unnecessary insertion of sectional slavery issues into state politics. Houston campaigned against his opponents' extreme pro-slavery positions that he felt could lead to secession and civil war. Support for Houston though should not be equated as a vote against slavery. The South's ruling elite overwhelmingly approved a state's right to maintain slavery. The *Colorado Citizen* newspaper of Columbus, Texas voiced a representative sample of reasons for backing Houston: "we have advocated the re-opening of the African slave trade, and we are still in favor of it, if it can be done without destroying the Union; but we think it impracticable at the moment. We would not destroy the Union for the advantages of the slave trade. We are willing in the spirit of compromise and peace to give up something for the sake of the Union. Therefore we will support the Union Ticket … For our part, we are not tired of the Union and are content to live a while longer under the stars and stripes." The hope in Houston's election was that cooler heads would prevail. This of course was not to be--the Year of Meteors was at hand.[157]

Two months after Houston's election John Brown carried out his raid on Harpers Ferry. Any misgivings that many Texans had held toward pro-slavery extremists were abandoned. What had been deemed an obsessive fantasy of pro-slavery fanatics of

[157] Baum, *The Shattering of Texas Unionism*, 37; Donald E. Reynolds, *Texas Terror: The Slave Insurrection panic of 1860 and Secession* (Baton Rogue: Louisiana State University Press, 2007), 12; *Colorado Citizen*, May 28, 1859; Walt Whitman, *Year of Meteors* [1859-60].

northern abolitionists invading the South and inciting a slave revolt had become a reality. The next year this reality hit Texas.[158]

Beginning in July 1860, a series of fires destroyed most of the downtown of what was then the small town of Dallas, the town square of Denton, and a store in Pilot Point. Initially the fires were blamed on the blazing hot summer, but within a few days newspapers editors began to blame the fires on the work of abolitionists and "certain negroes," their motivation supposedly to terrorize whites and induce a slave rebellion. A state of unrest and anxiety by slaveowners would continue in Texas leading up to the Civil War.[159]

In August 1860, in lower Fayette County, authorities uncovered another attempt at the reoccurring plot of slaves fighting their way to Mexico. This seemed to confirm the rumored slave rebellion. From the repression preceding the revolt, to the brutal consequences of its failure, over twenty-five whites and fifty blacks were hanged in Fayette County from July to September. In Henderson, the Vigilance Committee "hung Green Herndon and his negro woman" after finding them "guilty of burning the town." Wendell Addington in his study of slave insurrections in Texas found that "frequent white support to slave revolts in Texas seems to have come from local farmers and artisans–the poor whites who were also oppressed by the slavocracy. Special mention should be made of the Germans in Texas, almost none of whom held slaves and who were themselves refugees from Prussian tyranny."[160] This was the beginnings of an often

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[158] Baum, *The Shattering of Texas Unionism*, 38.

[159] Donald E. Reynolds, "TEXAS TROUBLES," *Handbook of Texas Online*.

[160] *New Orleans Daily Picayane*, September 8, 10, 13, 1860; Addington, "Slave Insurrections in Texas," 426, 433.

strained, on-and-off again, political collaboration between radical German and black Texans that would last until the end of the century.

By the end of September, the panic over slave revolts had subsided only to be replaced by anxiety over the coming presidential elections. Secessionist stump speakers spread across the state warning people of the dangers that "Black Republicanism" would bring to their livelihoods. The Union Democrats of the 1859 election, who joined the national Constitutional Union party, were the main opposition to the secessionist movement. Though the electoral coalition of 1859 that pushed Houston into the governor's office would not materialize again in 1860. Many Germans who supported the Union Democrats did not support the Constitutional Union party due to its presidential candidate John Bell's former ties to the Know Nothings. John Brown's raid and the summer's slave revolt panic turned others against Unionism. The Republican Party, even if desired, was not an option, as its ticket did not even appear on the ballot. The Democratic candidate, John Breckenridge, carried the state with 75% of the vote.[161]

Once Abraham Lincoln won the White House the movement for secession proved unstoppable. The referendum on secession in Texas was organized for February 23, 1861. The two months leading up to the referendum were full of violence and intimidation against anyone who dared oppose secession. When the votes were totaled the results were 46, 153 for and 14, 747 against, with only eighteen counties out of 122 casting majorities against secession. "IT IS FINISHED," enthusiastically declared the *La Grange States Rights Democrat*, "The deed has been done. We breathe deeper and freer for it. The Union is dead; and with it all the hopes and all the fears which divided and agitated our people. It was a glorious fabric, but its timbers had rotted at the heart," as Texas became

[161] Reynolds, "TEXAS TROUBLES"; Baggett, "The Constitutional Union Party in Texas," 248-249.

one of the original seven Confederate states.[162]

The two counties with the highest percentage against secession were the western German frontier counties of Gillespie and Mason with 96 percent against. San Antonio, the city with the state's largest German population, voted against secession but the totals from the surrounding county put Bexar County barely into the secession column. Elsewhere, throughout Texas, many German-dominated communities voted against secession only to be outvoted in the county totals. Beside Gillespie and Mason much of the anti-secession vote came from the Anglo frontier counties of Uvalde and Medina, a number of counties along Texas' northern border, and a few central counties that included Travis County where Austin is located.[163]

In Fayette County, home of the Meitzens, the vote for secession was defeated by a count of 580 for and 628 against. The county's newly arrived German, Bohemian, and other immigrants, numbering 2,027 out of a free population of 7,818, proved to be a deciding factor. The *States Rights Democrat* saw it as such blaming the anti-secession vote in Fayette County on "sauerkraut dirt-eaters" and wondered if the influence of the 1854 San Antonio Convention was still present in the county.[164]

Germans were less than enthusiastic when it came to service in the Confederate military. Very few German Texans voluntarily joined the Confederate cause in the first year of the war. It was not until around the time the Confederate draft was instituted on April 16, 1862 that Germans in significant numbers appear on Confederate rolls. The

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[162] Walter L. Buenger, "SECESSION," *Handbook of Texas Online*; *La Grange States Rights Democrat*, February 21, 1861.

[163] Kamphoefner, "New Perspectives on Texas Germans and the Confederacy," 444-445.

[164] Kamphoefner, "New Perspectives on Texas Germans and the Confederacy," 447; United States Census, *Census Reports*, *Eighth Census of the United States Taken in the year 1860*; *La Grange States Rights Democrat*, March 21, 1861.

initial draft was for men aged 18-35, and in September 1862, the Confederate government expanded it to the age of 45. Failure to serve after being drafted would result in arrest. Fleeing the draft often meant leaving loved ones behind to an ambiguous fate as well as abandoning farms and or other property earned through years of hard work. For many these were not viable options, though some Germans did make the perilous trek to Brownsville to enlist in the Union Army.[165]

When Germans did enlist in the Confederate Army most did so when service seemed unavoidable and joined in order to serve in the company of people they knew and fellow countrymen--not out of fidelity to the Confederacy. This was apparently the case with Otto Cunerth, and possibly his brother-in-law William Meitzen, and William's son Max. Otto Meitzen at fifty-one years old was exempt from the draft.[166]

When the war broke out Otto Cunerth, former leader of the radical Democratic Club of Liegnitz, Silesia, who had advocated a socialist republic for a united Germany during the 1848 Revolution, was farming in Fayette County. From county tax records it appears Cunerth was farming 180 acres of land controlled by his wife Marie (Meitzen) that she probably obtained the rights to upon the passing of her first husband Edward Gentner. Cunerth was a teacher by trade, but like many German immigrants was attempting to be a yeoman farmer. Any accounts of his political stances in Texas prior to the war do not exist, but he did not enlist once the war started. At the age of forty-four, in 1862, Cunerth was past the draft age when the draft began in April. Though knowing the severe man power shortage the Confederacy faced in comparison to the Union, any

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[165] Kamphoefner, "New Perspectives on Texas Germans and the Confederacy," 449.

[166] Victoria E. Bynum, *The Long Shadow of the Civil War: Southern Dissent and Its Legacies* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010), x, 26; Kamphoefner, "New Perspectives on Texas Germans and the Confederacy," 449.

thinking person could venture that inevitably the age limit would be raised in the near future, as it was to forty-five just five months later.[167]

Not willing to be subjected to the randomness of the draft, Cunerth, enlisted on his own. On March 18, 1862, Cunerth joined in the 24th Texas Cavalry, which along with the 6th Texas Infantry contained the largest number of Silesians, many of them not just Germans but ethnic Poles. During the fall and winter both units were sent to Fort Hindman, an earthen fort along the Arkansas River near Arkansas Post, Arkansas. The soldier's time passed rather uneventfully until January 9, 1863, when Union gunboats were sighted approaching the fort. Fort Hindman served as a base by Confederates to disrupt Union shipping on the Mississippi River and stood at the rear of the Union's impending attack of Vicksburg.[168]

On the morning of January 10, 1863, Union gunboats began their bombardment of Fort Hindman. At a range of only 400 yards, Union ships fired shells weighing between 30-105 pounds at the earthen fort walls while also disembarking troops for a ground assault. The next morning, Confederate soldiers were able to repel the initial Union ground invasion, but in the process the fort's walls had crumbled and its guns were disabled. Some time after 4 p.m., as the Union Army was preparing a massive advance; white flags began to appear from the Confederate trenches. The white flags came from Cunerth's 24th Texas Cavalry. Though ordered to hold the fort, the soldiers of the 24th

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[167] *Der Demokrat*, Nr. 1 July, 1848; United States Census, *Census Reports*, *Eighth Census of the United States Taken in the year 1860*; 1860, 1861, 1862, Fayette County, Texas, County Tax Rolls;

[168] "Cunerth, Otto, Twenty-fourth Cavalry (Wilkes' Regiment; Second Lancers; Second Regiment, Carter's Brigade)", *Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of Texas*, National Archives (hereafter referred to as *Compiled Service Records*); T. Lindsay Baker, *The First Polish Americans: Silesian Settlements in Texas* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1979), 69-71; Sam Smith, "The Battle of Arkansas Post: Stepping Stone to Vicksburg," *Civil War Trust*, http://www.civilwar.org/education/history/navy-hub/navy-history/the-battle-of-arkansas-post.html.

Texas acted on their own and surrendered. As a result of the confusion within Confederate ranks Union forces were able to capture the entire fort and win the battle. The exact details have been lost in the clouds of war, but on the surface we have unenthusiastic Confederate Silesians, who enlisted only so they could serve together, surrendering to Union forces at their first opportunity, resulting in the capture of 4700 Confederate soldiers, the largest Confederate loss west of the Mississippi until the end of the war.[169]

Cunerth and his captured comrades were sent to the Union POW camp at Fort Butler near Springfield, Illinois. Shortly after they arrived at Fort Butler, in early February 1863, the Union commander discovered that many of the captured Confederates, particularly the "foreigners, Germans, Polanders, &c," had been "pressed" into service and now desired to join the Union forces. From this 38 men from the 24th Texas and 152 from the 6th Texas, mostly Germans and Poles, swore an oath of allegiance to the U.S. and joined the Union Army. Cunerth was not among those who joined the Union Army. This was perhaps because he did not want to abandon his wife and farm back in Texas. Instead Cunerth was part of a group of 508 Confederate prisoners sent to Virginia in April, where they were then paroled in a prisoner exchange with Union forces. The remnants of the 24th Texas were sent to Tullahoma, Tennessee where they were assigned to the Confederate Army of Tennessee. While stationed in Tennessee, the soldiers of the 24th Texas were harassed due to their surrender at Arkansas Post, and most officers did not want them under their command due to their reputation. They participated in one major battle, that of Chickamauga in September 1863, before being consolidated into Granbury's Texas Brigade. While in Granbury's Brigade the

[169] Smith, "The Battle of Arkansas Post"; Baker, *The First Polish Americans*, 71.

soldiers of the Texas 24th were in near endless combat, participating in the battles of Missionary Ridge, Resaca, New Hope Church, Kenesaw Mountain, Peachtree Creek, Atlanta, Jonesboro, Franklin, Nashville, and other numerous skirmishes before the few remaining soldiers surrendered at Greensboro in April 1865. Out of the approximately 9800 Texans, from various regiments who served in Granbury's Brigade, only 401 had survived to Greensboro. When he was not in combat Cunerth's own personal military experience was worsened by two bouts at military hospitals in Georgia and Alabama suffering from "diarrhoea chronica."[170]

William and Max Meitzen's Civil War service was much more uneventful than that of Cunerth's. On April 26, 1862, William Meitzen joined the 5th Texas Field Battery, an artillery unit command by Edmund Creuzbaur. Creuzbaur was a former Prussian Army artillery officer who had settled in Fayette County. Most of the men in this unit were German, Bohemian, and Wend residents of Fayette County. Max Meitzen joined his father in the 5th Texas as a private on June 1, 1863. By this time William Meitzen had been commissioned a First Lieutenant. The father and son spent most of their time of service on patrols in Texas and Louisiana. When the Texas 5th Field Battery did experience its one bit of combat, the Battle of Calcasieu Pass on May 6, 1864, in which they fended off a Union naval invasion of the Louisiana coast, the Meitzens were on

[170] "Cunerth, Otto, Twenty-fourth Cavalry," *Compiled Service Records*; quote from Baker, *The First Polish Americans*, 71-72. Included in the Poles joining the 16th Illinois was Peter Kiołbassa; John R. Lundberg, *Granbury's Texas Brigade: Diehard Western Confederates* (Baton Rogue: Louisiana State University Press, 2012), 79, 242; James M. McCaffrey, *This Band of Heroes: Granbury's Texas Brigade, C.S.A.* (Austin: Eakin Press, 1985), 80, 88, 99, 115, 124; Palmer Bradley, "GRANBURY'S TEXAS BRIGADE," *Handbook of Texas Online*; Walter Kamphoefner, "New Americans or New Southerners? Unionist German Texans," in J. Frank de la Teja, ed., *Lone Star Unionism, Dissent, and Resistance: The Other Civil War Texas* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2016), 123.

assignment, away from the battle, grazing the unit's horses.[171]

In many ways the home front was often more harrowing for German Texans and other Unionists than the frontlines. Germans referred to the war period as *der Henkerzeit*, or hanging times, due to the acts of violence carried out against them. The most horrific act perpetrated against Unionists in Texas was not against Germans, but against Anglo Unionists in the northern border counties that had opposed secession. In April 1862, out of a protest against the exemption of large slaveholders from the draft, a nucleus of a Union Loyal League was formed in Cooke and neighboring counties. In reaction to this state troops, headed by two of the largest slaveowners in the area, arrested 150 men on October 1. Between court ordered hangings and mob lynchings, forty men were hanged in Gainesville, and two others shot while trying to escape during the month.[172]

German Texan Unionists also resisted secession and the Confederacy. In June 1861, German immigrants in the Hill Country organized a Union Loyal League. The publicly stated intention of the League was to defend the area against "bands of Indians," but the true goal was to assist in returning the U.S. government to power in the state. Similar groups were established in Bexar, Austin, and Travis counties. To combat the Union Loyal League, the state government declared martial law in Gillespie County and parts of bordering counties, arrested several residents, and hung two German immigrant "troublemakers." As a result of these actions a group of an estimated sixty-one German men decided on August 1 to heavily arm themselves and flee to Mexico. In the very early

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[171] "Meitzen, William," "Meitzen, M.," *Compiled Service Records*; Michael Dan Jones, *The Battle of Calcasieu Pass and the Great Naval Raid on Lake Charles, Louisiana* (self-published, 2012), 30, 75; C. Walter von Rosenberg to William von Rosenberg, May 10, 1864 in Jones, *The Battle of Calcasieu Pass*, 49.

[172] Francis Edward Abernethy "Deutschtum in Texas: A Look at Texas-German Folklore" in *German Culture in Texas*, 213; Richard B. McCaslin, "GREAT HANGING AT GAINESVILLE," *Handbook of Texas Online*.

hours of August 10, a band of Confederate soldiers and irregulars attacked the fleeing Germans in their sleep. In the ensuing firefight nineteen Unionists were killed and nine wounded. On the Confederate side, two were killed and eighteen wounded. After the battle, the nine wounded Unionists were executed. Of the escaping Unionists, eight more were killed on October 18, 1862 trying to cross into Mexico. The Battle or Massacre of Neuces, as it came to be known, sparked a bushwhacker war in the Hill Country for the duration of the Civil War.[173]

Shortly after the Nueces Massacre, eastern German settlements in Texas began organizing against the draft. During the month of December 1862, German communities held local meetings on how they could resist the draft. The communities came together for a two-day convention from December 31 to January 1, 1863 at Roeder's Mill. The convention drew four to six hundred participants from Fayette, Washington, Austin, and Colorado counties. According to witnesses, the Germans arrived well-armed and used the gathering to drill and skirmish, in addition to engaging in political discussions. In response, Confederate authorities placed Austin, Fayette, and Colorado counties under martial law. Others chose more individualistic ways to avoid the draft, such as cutting off one's fingers. More lamentable was the case reported by a Houston newspaper of "a German, in Brenham" who "blew his brains out."[174]

The dismal economic conditions faced by just about everyone in Texas and the South exacerbated the dire political situation of German Texans during the war. With his

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[173] Stanley S. McGowen, "Battle or Massacre?: The Incident on the Nueces, August 10, 1862," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 104, No. 1 (July, 2000), 67-70, 75-80, 83, 85; "NUECES, BATTLE OF THE," *Handbook of Texas Online*.

[174] *Bellville Countryman*, March 26, 1863. Roeder's Mill is present-day Shelby; Kamphoefner, "New Perspectives on Texas Germans and the Confederacy," 450; *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, January 14, 1863.

brother William in the Army, Otto Meitzen ran their gristmill and gin on his own. The year before the war started, the brothers had invested to convert the mill from mule to steam power. The Union naval blockade of the Gulf coast, however, cut off area farmers from their previous markets. Business at the mill came to a standstill. A wildly fluctuating Confederate currency only made matters worse. As his granddaughter, Frieda Meitzen-Williams later recounted, Otto, who could find no work, "sat reading many hours with his rawhide bottom chair tipped back and his head against the wall."[175]

During these years of struggle, Jennie Meitzen worked hard to sustain and hold her family together. While the mill struggled and failed, Jennie pursued other economic options to provide for the family. She sold cigars made out of tobacco that she grew herself. Jennie also taught at a school for German-language children, riding miles on horseback in order to do so. In addition, she carried out her regular responsibilities of cooking three meals a day, cleaning, and making clothing, soap, candles, and wurst. The family also made corn whiskey, which sold at local general stores. In general, they lived off of fish and wild game. Roasted acorns substituted for coffee, and sorghum, in place of sugar, was a delicacy. "Corn bread and cowpeas, a diet a German detested but forced to become accustomed to, were staples," Frieda Meitzen-Williams recounted.[176]

After four years of Civil War, the Meitzen brothers lost their investment and their mill operations went bust. William returned to Fayetteville, where he began farming and opened another mill of his own. Otto Meitzen, financially ruined by the war, was forced to sell his home and enter into tenant farming. Otto Cunerth, after the war, returned to his

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[175] "FAYETTE COUNTY," *Handbook of Texas Online*; Williams, *History of the Meitzen Family*, 13.

[176] Williams, "German Pioneers in Texas," 71.

wife, Marie, in Fayette County and started farming again. In February 1868, though, Marie passed away. Cunerth then gave up the land and moved to La Grange, where he took up his old profession of teaching. Cunerth also took on the responsibility of teaching his nephews English.[177] But it was sharing his experiences of the 1848 Revolution that left a lasting political impression on his nephew E.O. Meitzen. Little could young E.O. know just how much in the decades to follow he would put into practice the political lessons he inherited from his 48er father and uncle as he went on to play leadership roles in the Farmers' Alliance, the Populist movement and Texas Socialist Party—all groups that formed farm-labor alliances so similar to those forged in Silesia during the 1848 Revolution.

Reconstruction was an exceptional U.S. experience in the world history of slave emancipation in which freedmen contested with their former masters and poor whites for political power.[178] In turn, Texas was unique within the Reconstruction experience as the only Southern state with a sizable immigrant population that also contested for power in the shuffling post-war disorder. These immigrants were primarily German and Mexican, but included Bohemians and Poles. Prior to the war, German Texans had largely been shut out of representation at the state and in many places even the county level. In the post war contestation of political power, they now sought a place at the table.

A prewar vote against secession did not automatically translate into support for

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[177] Johnson, *A History of Texas and Texans*, 1916-1917; Boethel, *The Big Guns of Fayette*, 79; Holmgren, *Family Tree Book of the Holmgreens and the Meitzens*, 15; United States Census, *Census Reports*, *Ninth Census of the United States Taken in the year 1870*.

[178] For a transnational view of Reconstruction see Eric Foner, *Nothing But Freedom: Emancipation and Its Legacy* (Baton Rogue: Louisiana State University Press, 1983, 2007).

the Republican Party in Texas after the war. The postwar political struggle also did not fall into clearly delineated lines of blacks and working-class whites within the Republican Party against the old planter class within the Democratic Party, as it did in much of the rest of the former Confederacy. Political and economic elites were present in each party and used them to advance their own interests.[179] Local factors often determined which party Germans and other advocates of working-class based politics joined.

In areas with German majorities, German Texans mainly supported the Republican Party. San Antonio, with its large population of Germans and Tejanos, sent the 48er Edward Degener, who lost two sons in the Nueces Massacre, to Congress as a Republican with Texas' first congressional delegation during Reconstruction. The German counties of the western Hill Country also went Republican during Reconstruction.[180]

In the eastern counties of Colorado and Washington, where Germans were only a sizable minority, they formed a political alliance with blacks to create a Republican political majority. In Colorado County, blacks, Germans, and Bohemians together made up 55% of the population, while in Washington they were nearly 61%. Through this alliance, in the face of racially motivated violence, both counties would remain Republican beyond Reconstruction into the 1880s. Washington County, in the first Reconstruction Texas legislature, sent a black to the Senate and a German immigrant to

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[179] Carl H. Moneyhon, *Republicanism in Reconstruction Texas* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1980), xvi. In an effort to placate federal officials over their loyalty, southern Democrats dropped the label "Democrat," in referring to their party, using the term "Conservative" instead. Once Texas was readmitted to the Union in March 1870, the use of "Democrat" returned. In order to avoid confusion I am using the term "Democrat" to describe the Democratic Party even though at the time it went by the name Conservative Party. Carl H. Moneyhon, *Texas After the Civil War: The Struggle of Reconstruction* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2004), 172.

[180] Kamphoefner, "New Americans or New Southerners? Unionist German Texans," 126, 130.

the House. It took increased violence and stolen ballot boxes to return these counties to Democratic control by 1890.[181]

In adjacent Fayette County, blacks, Germans, and Bohemians only made up 49% of the population, the county though still elected Republicans to office during Reconstruction. Without a clear majority, force and shows of force were required to maintain black-German Republican political power in Fayette County. On an election day in February 1868, blacks organized themselves into an armed company and marched into La Grange in order to vote. Federal troops were also stationed in the county at Round Top, which were required to protect Germans and blacks targeted by "Rowdy gangs." Otto Meitzen was one of the area Germans who supported the Republican Party, and he would continue to do so through the remainder of his life. However, not joining Otto in his support of the Republicans was his brother William and brother-in-law Otto Cunerth.[182]

On October 16, 1869, Otto Cunerth was appointed to the Central Executive Committee of the Fayette County Democratic Party. Joining him on the party's Auxiliary Committee, as co-head of precinct five, was William Meitzen. Not much is known of William Meitzen's personal politics. But on the surface, Cunerth's acceptance of a leadership position within the Democratic Party appears to be a complete reversal of his earlier socialist and radical farmer-labor political beliefs in Silesia that led him to exile in Texas. This is especially so when one considers that Victor W. Thompson was chairman

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[181] United States Census, *Census Reports*, *Ninth Census of the United States Taken in the year 1870*; Kamphoefner, "New Americans or New Southerners? Unionist German Texans," 126-128.

[182] United States Census, *Census Reports*, *Ninth Census of the United States Taken in the year 1870*; *States Rights Democrat*, April 5, 1867, February 14, 1868, November 12, 1869; Kamphoefner, "New Americans or New Southerners? Unionist German Texans," 123; Johnson, *A History of Texas and Texans*, 1916.

of the county Democratic Party.[183]

Thompson was editor of the La Grange newspaper *States Rights Democrat*. As the name implies, Thompson was a firm defender of the Confederate cause and vehemently opposed the "Radical party," which was how conservatives, such as Thompson, referred to the Republican Party. Thompson was an arch-racist and, more so than any other issue, attacked the "Radicals" for their support of "negro equality" and viewed opposition to the Republican Party as "the only hope and safety of the white race in Texas." [184] During the secession crisis, the *States Rights Democrat* was the official paper of the Knights of the Golden Circle--a pro-slavery and pro-secession paramilitary group that terrorized Unionists. After the war, Thompson supported the Ku Klux Klan, printing the Klan's organization and initiation guidelines in his paper. When "unknown parties" assaulted a "white individual" in Fayette County for gambling with "negroes about town," Thompson applauded the assaulters and hoped that they would "hold themselves in readiness for any other similar cases that might come along.," intimidatingly concluding, "for anything we know to the contrary, it may have been the Ku Klux. Who knows?"[185]

Membership in a political party with individuals such as Thompson, could be pretty damning in tracing Cunerth's political evolution from 48er to reluctant Confederate to possible Ku Kluxer. However, a more nuanced analysis of the Democratic and Republican parties in Texas, and local conditions in Fayette County, reveal that most

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[183] *States Rights Democrat*, October 29, 1869.

[184] *States Rights Democrat*, October 29, 1869.

[185] *States Rights Democrat*, March 21, 1861, quote from May 1, 1868; Baum, *The Shattering of Texas Unionism*, 58.

likely Cunerth did not stray far from his 48er past.

Despite the Republican Party being the party of Union victory, espousing equality for all, Republicanism was not a clear pole of attraction for all radical-minded German Texans. Before the war, Fayette County had an active nativist movement. During this period it was the Democratic Party that opposed nativism and accepted support from immigrants. After the war, many nativists became prominent in the Republican Party, alienating some Germans from the party. This could be especially so for German Texans who had to deal directly with nativists such as in Fayette County, as opposed to predominatly German counties who only dealt with nativism from afar. Some Germans had also found a small place in the Union Democrat wing of the Democratic Party before the war. This position gave these Germans a voice in state and county politics through the Democratic Party that they had not had before and would most likely not want to easily relinquish. Some Republican leaders in Texas also advocated, unsuccessfully, that anyone who had borne arms against that the U.S. be prevented from voting, thus disenfranchising reluctant Confederates like Cunerth.[186]

The Republican Party in Texas contained, like the Democrats, its share of political and economic elites. The party was organized from the top down by a small group of men who ran the party as a machine. To maintain its power, the party machine depended on patronage doled out by the Federal military forces stationed in Texas. Also, rather than being sharp defender of the rights of Freedmen, white Republicans in Texas, more often than not, manipulated the black vote, through its machine, to advance the political and economic objectives of party elites, such as pushing internal improvements beneficial to

[186] *The True Issue*, December 15, 1855, February 23, 1856; Baum, *The Shattering of Texas Unionism*, 149; Moneyhon, *Republicanism in Reconstruction Texas*, 58, 181.

their economic interests and dividing Texas into three separate states that they could more easily control once Federal troops were removed. Internal divisions also severely limited the effectiveness of Republicans in Texas.[187]

After the 1868 state constitutional convention, the Texas Republican Party had basically split into two parties–conservative and radical. The conservatives, overwhelmingly white in composition, led by then Governor Elisha M. Pease, opposed the Reconstruction policies of the Radical Republicans nationally and prevented a civil rights section from being added to the Texas state constitution. George T. Ruby, an African-American born in New York City in 1841, who arrived in Texas in 1866 as a representative of the Freedman's Bureau, led the radical wing of the party. In June 1868, he was elected the first state president of the Loyal Union League. Ruby's power base came from Galveston's black dockworkers, and he worked to organize them, establishing the Colored National Labor Convention to represent non-agricultural black laborers in 1869. He was twice elected to the Texas Legislature from Galveston (1870- 1873) where he was the chief spokesperson for the Radical Republicans in the statehouse. Ruby's main allies in the party were West Texans.[188]

Fayette County Republicans were led by, among others, the Germans Hans Teichmueller and Robert Zapp. Teichmueller was known as "a firm believer in the goodness of mankind and in the moral and intellectual progress of the human race" and Zapp supported desegregated public schools. Zapp was a successful businessman who owned two general stores in Fayette County after gaining his money through real estate

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[187] Moneyhon, *Republicanism in Reconstruction Texas*, 82, 85, 91.

[188] Moneyhon, *Republicanism in Reconstruction Texas*, 90, 103, 134; Paul Casdorth, *A History of the Republican Party in Texas, 1865-1965* (Austin: The Pemberton Press, 1965), 5-6, 40;

speculation—a practice that put him in direct opposition to the plank of the San Antonio Platform of 1854 that specifically stated, "The soil should not be an article of speculation."[189]

Cunerth, a long-time political animal, faced a choice. He could join the newly formed Republican Party or the Democratic Party. Without any surviving documents of Cunerth's from this period one can only speculate on his decision-making process (and others like him). The Republican Party supported free soil beliefs, pro-settler programs such as the 1862 Homestead Act, and universal political equality, all of which 48ers had advocated in the Louisville and San Antonio platforms. However, after the war, northern war profiteers were gaining more and more control, and the Republican Party contained in its ranks nativists and temperance advocates. In Texas, some Republicans sought to deny men like Cunerth a political voice. Texas Republicans were also deeply split with the statewide party machinery controlled by the conservatives. The only ideological political alliance would be with Ruby's radical wing based only among black Galveston dockworkers. At the time, 69% of Texas' population was white, with much of that group holding white supremacist beliefs, which maybe even Cunerth himself held. Even if the German Texan vote was united, which it never was or would be, a German-Black-Tejano alliance would not be numerically strong enough to gain statewide electoral and political power.

The Democratic Party, on the other hand, was the historic party of Jeffersonianism and opposed nativism and temperance. During the sectional crisis, German Texans had established themselves as a wing of the Democratic Party that would

[189] *States Rights Democrat*, November 12, 1869; Lotto, *Fayette County*, 229-230; Kamphoefner, "New Perspectives on Texas Germans and the Confederacy," 452; *San Antonio Zeitung*, May 20, 1854.

grow during and after the war. The Democratic Party in Texas was also an agrarian-based party that contained a small radical agrarian wing, while Ruby's Republican base was black, non-agricultural, wageworkers. However, the southern Democratic Party contained within it the planter class. The southern plantation elite, pushed back during Reconstruction, had now gone on the offensive, utilizing racism and terrorism to keep blacks and poor whites subordinate, as northern politicians proved more and more unwilling to militarily enforce black equality.

Cunerth decided to fight it out within the Democratic Party. Evidence does suggest that a radical agrarian faction existed within the Democratic Party based in Fayette and neighboring Bastrop County, to the north, that fought for the economic interests of working farmers. This was only the beginning of many times that white Texan agrarian radicals would choose to fight for economic issues over social issues such as black equality, much to the determinant, and eventual collapse, of farmer-labor radicalism in Texas in the early twentieth century.

Bastrop and Fayette and counties were tied together politically by each being in the U.S. 4th congressional district as well as in the same state judicial and senatorial districts. Because of this, Bastrop and Fayette county Democrats frequently collaborated through joint political meetings and election campaigns. It was also in Bastrop County that radicals within the Fayette County Democrat Party, like Cunerth, found allies such as Julius Noeggerath--a German elected to the State House as a Democrat, and future members of the Greenback Labor Party. As to the Fayette County Democratic Party, in addition to Cunerth, the German-radical Louis Frankee also held a leadership position in the county party. While not a 48er per se, Frankee was forced to emigrate from Germany

in 1847, due to his political stance against the Prussian monarchy.[190]

If Cunerth, by this time, was still holding true to his radical 48er beliefs he must have been a part of the faction within the Democratic Party of Fayette and Bastrop counties with Noeggerath, and others that fought for the economic interests of working farmers. Agrarian radicals, such as Noeggerath, first fought within the Democratic Party. When this failed they broke from the narrow restraints of the two-party system and set out on the course of independent political action. This began a six-decades pattern of farmer-labor radicals in Texas first attempting to work within the Democratic Party, and after this tactic failed, forging their own independent political party. Cunerth, though, would not be around for this new stage of working-class independent political action in Texas.[191]

In March 1871, Cunerth traveled to Washington, D.C., applied for a passport and returned to Germany. During the previous twenty-two years, Cunerth had lived through revolution, counter-revolution, immigration and exile, civil war, a prisoner of war camp, more war, the death of his wife, and political struggles against the old planter class. Around the same time that Cunerth filled out his passport application, the *Bastrop Advertiser* expressed the political mood of 1871 Texas, "We admit that there never was in the history of our State a time when our people were more completely worn out by

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[190] *States Rights Democrat*, November 26, 1869; *Weekly Democratic Statesman* (Austin, TX), September 25, October 2, 1873, March 23, 1876; Roscoe Martin, "The Greenback Party in Texas." *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 30, No. 3. (Jan., 1927), 169; Aragorn Storm Miller, "FRANKE, LOUIS," *Handbook of Texas Online*; *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Texas: Being the Session of the Thirteenth Legislature Begun and Held at the City of Austin, January 14, 1873* (Austin: John Cardwell, 1873), 251. Frankee would be elected as a Representative of the 26th District in 1872. However, he was murdered on the capitol grounds on February 19, 1873. Since it was early in the legislative session it is unknown how Frankee would have voted on bills that divided the legislature along class lines.

[191] *Bastrop Advertiser*, October 18, 1873.

political calamities, disgusted with party intrigue and corruption, sick at heart with the longing for lost liberty and disappointed patriots' hope than the present."[192]

Cunerth returned to a united Germany, something he had fought for during the 1848 Revolution. Though instead of the socialist republic he had advocated, Germany was united under the authoritarian rule of Otto von Bismarck. Cunerth resettled in Görlitz, where he was born in 1817. There he worked as a language teacher at a girls' school, for a year, then moved onto teach at a local Gymnasium, where he was until 1882, when he accepted the head teaching position at a trade school in Gleiwitz. In 1883, Cunerth left for an Easter vacation and vanished without a trace. German scholars believe Cunerth either immigrated back to the U.S., although there are no records of this happening, or he committed suicide.[193]

Young E.O. Meitzen had to have been saddened by the departure of his Uncle Otto back to Germany. He had lost not just an uncle but a teacher and mentor. In 1870, at the age of fifteen, E.O. Meitzen proved fortunate enough to escape the poverty of his family's tenant farm and become an apprentice blacksmith. In this same year, E.O.'s older brother Herman passed his teaching exam and started work as a teacher at a school in Fayetteville. If any truth can possibly be gleamed from E.O.'s daughter Frieda's fictionalized account of her father's life in her novel, *New Breslau (Oil Town, Later)*, E.O. apprenticed for a Bohemian man, who besides blacksmithing, taught E.O. to speak

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[192] "Cunerth, Otto," *Passport Applications, 1795-1905*, Record Group 59, Roll 0171, National Archives; *Bastrop Advertiser*, March 25, 1871.

[193] Schmidt, *Die schlesische Demokratie von 1848/49*, II Halbband, 35-36; Benno Nietsche, *Geschichte der Stadt Gleiwitz* (Gleiwitz: Paul Raschdorff, 1886), 709.

Bohemian. Also, around this time, E.O. befriended a doctor who lent him books to further his self-education.[194]

E.O. Meitzen entered adulthood and set out on his own during very tumultuous times, both economically and politically. For Meitzen, and other working-class southerners, still attempting to recover from the war years, the depression of 1873 hit especially hard. Speculation and overvaluation of railroad bonds resulted in the centrally placed investment firm of Jay Cooke and Company going bankrupt in September 1873. The downfall of Cooke and Company caused a financial panic, forcing the stock market to temporarily close and bring about a six-year-long depression that witnessed the closing of thousands of business and millions of people losing their jobs.

The growth of railroads had brought farmers into the modern world of finance capitalism and connected them to the world market. As historian Robert McMath put it, Southern yeomen began "the historic shift from self-sufficiency to cotton speculation."[195] While hoping for an increased standard of living, farmers instead were now vulnerable to world market fluctuations. Cotton prices declined 23 percent from July 1873 to January 1874. Before 1875, cotton prices had varied from $.12 to $.18 per pound. However, in 1875, cotton prices fell to $.11 per pound. With cotton generally costing $.05 to $.08 per pound to produce, many farmers were now unable to meet their current needs or purchase the supplies needed for the following year's crop. Cotton prices did not rise above the 1875 equivalent levels for the rest of the century. Many farmers fell into debt, losing their

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[194] *The Rebel*, July, 25, 1914; Johnson, *A History of Texas and Texans*, 1917; Frieda Meitzen Williams, *New Breslau (Oil Town, Later)*, (Houston: Self-Published, 1969), 2.

[195] Robert C. McMath, Jr, *American Populism: A Social History, 1877-1898* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), 39.

land and independence.[196]

Due to the fall of world cotton prices, many farmers, after harvest, were left without the monetary means to purchase the materials necessary to plant the next season's crop. The collapse of the southern economy after the war had left many areas without a bank from which farmers could procure a loan, in an area of the country already historically lacking in banks. This is where the furnishing merchant stepped in. The merchant would furnish to a farmer the necessary supplies in exchange for a lien on the crop. More often the case than not, the crop did not yield enough to pay off the lien, which would be extended year after year, until the farmer was forced to pay the lien by turning over his land to the merchant. As a result, the merchant in many cases became landlord, and the farmer a sharecropper or a tenant farmer, across the South.[197]

At the same time, workers began to see that industrial wage work, whether in a factory, mine, or elsewhere, was not a temporary step toward becoming an independent artisan, but something more permanent—even "wage slavery." More and more Americans, across the country, were now toiling as wage laborers their entire working lives. Subsequently, "the ideal of economic independence that had been embedded in the promise of American democracy receded more and more each year into the realm of fantasy," as worded by historian Nancy Cohen.[198]

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[196] Warren M. Pearsons, Pierson M. Tuttle, and Edwin Frickey, "Business and Financial Conditions Following the Civil War in the United States," *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, Vol. 2, Supplement 2 (July, 1920), 17; Donna A. Barnes, *Farmers in Rebellion: The Rise and Fall of the Southern Farmers Alliance and People's Party in Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984), 50-51; Nancy Cohen, *The Reconstruction of American Liberalism, 1865-1914* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 123.

[197] Lawrence Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment: A Short History of the Agrarian Revolt in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 21-22.

[198] Cohen, *The Reconstruction of American Liberalism*, 30.

In the aftermath of the war, a highly politicized electorate of workers and farmers–black and white, male and female, faced a rising corporate elite, each side with rapidly diverging views on the future of democracy in the U.S. Many nineteenth-century workers and farmers saw themselves as producers. Their concept of citizenship and democracy expressed itself through producerism. This concept was based on the labor theory of value: that the producer deserves the fruits of his or her work. In Gilded Age America, however, the worker/farmer vision of a producerist society was being crushed by the rise of corporate capitalism. As McMath explained, "In the natural order of things, farmers believed, rewards should go to the producers of goods, whose independence was thereby secured. But instead, profits were accruing not to the person who produced the crop, but to the one with capital or credit enough to hold it for speculation."[199]

In addition to losing their economic independence, by the early 1870s, working-class Texans, like their counterparts across the country, were losing their political voice within the two-party system. Across class lines, after the war, Texans joined the party they felt best represented their interests, often based on location and/or their stance toward black equality. On March 30, 1870, Texas was readmitted to the Union. With the reality of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments upon them, economic elites, through their representatives in the state legislature, moved to maximize their profits from the state's agricultural resources, of which cotton was king, and to devise ways to control the labor that grew and harvested the state's wealth. At the same time, working-class Texans, in each party, struggled to maintain their political and economic independence.

By 1870, the issues of railroad construction and farm tenancy had Texans no longer divided by party but by class. Despite the heated and frequently violent conflicts between

[199] McMath, *American Populism*, 45, 51.

Democrats and Republicans during Reconstruction, economic elites of each party backed government support to private railroad corporations. In 1865, Texas had only around 341 miles of railroads in operation and by 1870 had increased to just 711 miles. From 1870 to 1873, however, railroad milage had more than doubled to almost 1600 miles. This substantial increase in rail mileage was the result of bipartisan legislation that provided railroad companies with government subsidies, government backed bonds, and land grants to finance railroad construction.[200]

The expansion of railroads provided cheaper transportation costs and easier access to markets for agricultural products. Before the 1873 collapse in cotton prices, and even after, most Texans believed cotton was the main crop to earn them money. As the railroads expanded so did cotton cultivation into the state's interior and frontiers.[201] The question now stood as to who would control the cotton wealth. Under capitalism, the primary way to extract profit is through the control of labor. This would not change in regards to Texas's cotton economy.

Early in 1873, the Landlord and Tenant bill was introduced into the Texas legislature. At this point the Democrats had recently regained control of the Texas House after the 1872 elections. The Senate only maintained a slim Republican majority due to staggered terms. The Landlord and Tenant bill was a clear piece of class-based legislation designed to control the state's agricultural workforce and codify into the law the crop lien system to the benefit of wealthy agricultural elites. For all persons renting or leasing land, the bill prosed putting a lien, not only on the tenant's crop, but on all of the tenant's personal property as well. If the tenant was unable to pay rent, the landlord, under the

[200] Moneyhon, *Texas After the Civil War*, 133, 152; *Weekly Democratic Statesman*, June 5, 1873.

[201] Moneyhon, *Texas After the Civil War*, 155-156.

bill, was allowed to seize, with the help of the local sheriff, not only the tenant's crop, but also the tenant's personal property, with the tenant having no legal recourse. The bill also stipulated that the tenant had to gain the landlord's permission before selling their crop.[202]

"If this act becomes a law, that class [tenants] can keep nothing sacred against the rapacity of the landlord. The tenant's supply of daily food for his family and himself, his furniture and bedding, his tools of trade, the very clothes on his back, all belong to the landlord. The latter cannot have more from his tenant unless it be the figurative pound of flesh." So wrote Radical Republican Governor Edmund Davis on May 26, 1873, to the Texas House as to why he vetoed the bill. After hearing the Governor's position, the House called a vote to override the veto. As recorded in the *House Journal*, "The bill then passed, notwithstanding the objections of the Governor," by a vote of 50 to 14. One of those voting against the bill was Fayette County Democrat Julius Noeggerath.[203] Immediately upon hearing of the bill passing the House, the Senate moved it to a vote. With 11 "yeas" and 10 "nays" the bill failed to receive the necessary majority to override the Governor's veto. The Senate had originally approved the bill 13 to 12 before the veto.[204] This was even with a Republican majority, showing that some Republicans favored the bill.

With the state's Democratic leadership supporting land grants and bonds to finance railroad corporations, along with the oppressive Landlord and Tenant bill, immediate

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[202] *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Texas: Being the Session of the Thirteenth Legislature*, 273; *Weekly Democratic Statesman*, September 25, 1873; Moneyhon, *Texas After the Civil War*, 203.

[203] *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Texas: Being the Session of the Thirteenth Legislature*, 1351-1353.

[204] *Journal of the Senate of Texas: Being the Session of the Thirteenth Legislature Begun and Held at the City of Austin, January 14, 1873* (Austin: John Cardwell, 1873), 860, 1147.

dissent developed within the ranks of working farmers who had supported the party. Just how widespread this dissent was is evident in the large amount of space devoted to defending railroads and landlords in the Democratic Party's statewide organ the *Weekly Democratic Statesman* out of Austin. "The lands are worthless … without the railroads," argued the *Statesman*, and if the Democratic Party opposed internal improvements "the democratic party of Texas would be rent into fragments and become an easy prey to the radicals, or some mongrel, half breed concern."[205] This did little to satisfy the angry rank-and-file. The purpose of land grants was to allow railroads to sell the granted land in order to offset rail construction costs. This practice, however, facilitated railroad corporations to using the land for speculative purposes in order to obtain the highest return on the land. Inflated land costs, due to speculation, made it increasingly difficult for white farmers ruined by the war and freedmen seeking to make it on their own to escape tenancy and become independent. Once trapped in tenancy, the Landlord and Tenant bill would put their labor under direct control of a landlord. The *Statesman* brushed aside the concerns of debt-ridden farmers, asserting, "Is it oppression to compel the payment of an honest debt from the rich or poor, if they have the means of payment?"[206] In early June 1873, with the *Statesman* printing, "There always has been a difference among Democrats on these subjects … but that is no reason for splitting up and smashing the good party," the Democratic leadership must have had a good inkling that it faced an arduous time heading into the summer.[207]

"The leading organs of the Democracy are allied with the bond holding human

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[205] *Weekly Democratic Statesman*, July 3, 1873.

[206] *Weekly Democratic Statesman*, September 25, 1873

[207] *Weekly Democratic Statesman*, June 5, 1873.

oppressors of the land … the honest farmer has no choice between a spurious Democracy and fraudulent Republicanism," wrote the *Victoria Advocate* in July 1873. The paper, up to this moment, had supported the Democratic Party but now raised the question of the need to create a farmers' party.[208] "The Democratic Party, we suppose, has always had a few such crazy asses in it," replied the *Statesman*, furthering stating, "We have opposed the getting up of a farmers' party, and have insisted that the Democratic Party has always been a farmers' party."[209]

At this divisive political moment, a group of German Texans organized a convention to take place August 7 in Austin. The convention was called by leading German Texans, both Democratic and Republican, "For the purpose of a free discussion of the present political situation of the country; an expression of our wishes as American citizens; a definition of our position toward the different parties, and uniting on the platform on which we intend to work, pending the next election." Though coming together across party lines, it is apparent that German Democrat and Republican leaders attended the convention with the intention of attracting German votes to their respective parties. These partisan leaders included August Siemering, who as secretary of the Sisterdale *Freie Verein* played a leading role in organizing the 1854 San Antonio Convention and was now a leader of the Republican Party in San Antonio. Across the aisle was Hugo Lehmann of Houston, who later in September organized a meeting of Germans in Harris County that endorsed the Democratic Party state platform. On the first day of the convention, delegates adopted a few innocuous resolutions calling for "a more liberal

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[208] Quote from *Weekly Democratic Statesman*, July 24, 1873. Unfortunately no copies of the *Victoria Advocate* from this period are known to exist.

[209] *Weekly Democratic Statesman*, July 24, 1873.

system of public schools, which shall meet the wishes of all citizens" and "sufficient protection of the life and property of all citizens." When the issue of railroad subsidies was broached, political divisions surfaced and the issue was dropped from further consideration. On the second day, the unifying German issues of temperance and Sunday laws were both condemned as an "attempt to deprive the citizen of his personal rights." A bit of the pre-war 48er spirit also materialized above the partisan divide with the adoption of a resolution stating, "We declare ourselves against any law which may aim at the oppression of any class of citizen of the State on account of race and color or previous condition." They furthered the egalitarian spirit by adding: "the burden of taxation should be equally divided."[210]

The August convention of Germans would only be the opening salvo in the effort to win German votes before the December election. "The Germans will remember the service they received at the hands of the Democratic party during the Know Nothing contest. Had it not been for the manly contest on the part of Democrats … not one-fifth of Germans now in Texas would have the right to vote." Such ascertains ran in practically every issue of the *Democratic Statesman* up to the election. The Democratic Party even ran the German, J.J. Gross of New Braunfels, for state Land Commissioner in order to attract German votes, while the Republican Party relied on people such as Siemering to rally its German Unionist base.[211]

Although German Democrats and Republicans participated in the Austin convention in order to rally Germans to their particular parties, the bringing together of some

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[210] *Weekly Democratic Statesman*, July 31, August 7, 14, September 25, 1873; *Bastrop Advertiser*, August 16, 1873.

[211] *Weekly Democratic Statesman*, September 25, 1873; Quote from *Weekly Democratic Statesman*, October 2, 1873.

disgruntled members from each party had unintended consequences for the convention organizers–political independence. After failing to change the Democratic Party from within, renegade German Democrats, together with like-minded German Republicans held a German Convention at La Grange in early October.[212] The end result of the La Grange German Convention was the formation of the independent working-class "People's Party" in Texas.[213] From this foundation would be built much of the ensuing farmer-labor political organizations that would be a regular feature of Texas political culture for the next six decades. The preamble of the convention expressed their deep level of dissatisfaction:

> We believe that the Democratic party which puts us in remembrance of the error, passions and advantages sought in past times, is not efficient enough to advance and improve the questions of the present day, that in fact it is getting beyond the requirements and improvements of the present age, and the requirements of the people at large, and hence never will be able to unite the people on an honest reconstruction of a constitutional government.
>
> We are perfectly satisfied and aware that both present political parties have outlived themselves, and their sole object is to keep up their organization in order to keep the power in the hands of the successful party, and for the sake of office seekers and holders.
>
> Therefore, we deem it necessary to cut ourselves loose from all party organizations, to bring the politic body in a healthy condition again, which we think can only be done by a new party organization, which must be built up gradually and is bound to cut itself of all old party organizations, and be it
>
> *Resolved*, That from now on we will act independent of the Republican and Democratic party and their conventions; that we will strive to secure the election of candidates for office who are able to fill the same, and understand the local interest of the people …[214]

Some of the resolutions adopted at the convention included, "Opposition to monied

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[212] *Bastrop Advertiser*, August 23, September 6, 20, October 11, 18, 1873.

[213] *Weekly Democratic Statesman*, October 30, 1873.

[214] *Weekly Democratic Statesman*, October 18, 1873.

capitalists, who form powerful corporations and who form coalitions by an undue influence on the Legislature at the expense of the mass of the people," free public education, and "a reform of the elective franchise to enable minorities in proportion to their number and intelligence to take part in the government."[215] Germans in Bastrop County held a convention of their own during this time as well. According to the *Bastrop Advertiser* the convention "adopted the radical Dallas platform," referring to the Republican Party platform adopted at their Dallas convention. Due to a dearth of sources it is hard to ascertain if this is entirely true. The *Bastrop Advertiser* openly supported the Democratic Party and put forth the view that any independent candidates were actually "radicals"–Republicans in disguise. That then-Democratic state representative Julius Noegroath attended the Bastrop convention indicates that the convention was possibly broader than the *Advertiser* indicates and could have adopted a set of resolutions similar to the La Grange convention.[216]

Fayette and Bastrop county Germans were not alone in their move to political independence from Democrats and Republicans. They were joined by area Anglos as well. Foremost among Anglos joining the independent movement was Captain Jesse Billingsley. Billingsley was a highly respected veteran of the Texas Revolution. He participated in the Battle of San Jacinto, the decisive Texas victory over the Mexican forces of Antonio López de Santa Anna that won Texas its independence. Folklorist J. Frank Dobie even credits Billingsley with being the one to first cry, "Remember the Alamo! Remember Goliad!" at San Jacinto. In early August, prior to the La Grange Convention, Billingsley announced that he was breaking from the Democratic Party and

[215] *Weekly Democratic Statesman*, October 18, 1873.

[216] *Weekly Democratic Statesman*, August 2, 23, September 6, October 18, 1873.

running as an independent candidate to represent Bastrop and Fayette counties in the Texas House, due to his opposition to the Landlord and Tenant bill and government subsidies to railroad corporations and his support of free public education. Democrats were abashed that this once "firm and unshaken Democrat" was now standing against them. For his defection this once lionized hero was berated as "an old hypocrite" and a "Benedict Arnold," who was allowing himself to be used as a "tool" for the radicals.[217]

With the independent movement growing and gaining momentum, a "People's Convention" was organized in Fayette County in late October. Little is known of the Fayette and Bastrop County district "People's" or "Farmers'" Party, as most of the surviving newspapers from this time are Democratic organs. The common practice of Democratic papers in covering something they opposed was to belittle it, as with the *Democratic Statesmen* calling the People's Party "a mongrel Radical Farmer's Party"--and then basically not providing it any coverage.[218] We do know that Fayette County German Republican, Hans Teichmueller, was one of the organizers of the People's Convention. Both Billingsley and Noegrath sought the convention's nomination as one of the area's three representatives to the state house. The convention though did not go with Noegrath, but instead chose Billingsley and two men associated with the Republican Party, Jack Walker, a farmer from La Grange, and R.F. Campbell from Bastrop as their nominees. For state senate the convention nominated Hamilton Ledbetter, a farmer from Round Top who before Emancipation owned a plantation with a large number of slaves. The Democratic nominee running against Ledbetter was his own son, William Hamilton

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[217] *Weekly Democratic Statesman*, August 2, 9, November 29, 1873; J. Frank Dobie, *Coronado's Children: Tales of Lost Mines and Buried Treasures of the Southwest* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1930, 2011), 15-16; *Weekly Democratic Statesman*, November 13, 1873.

[218] *Bastrop Advertiser*, November 1, 1873; *Democratic Statesman*, November 27, 1873.

Ledbetter, an attorney, leading the *Democratic Statesmen* to state, "this is one of the cases in which the son ought to beat his daddy, and that too, soundly."[219]

The Republican Party of Fayette and Bastrop counties at this time was controlled by Germans and blacks who supported the left wing of their party. After coming together with disaffected radical Democrats at the Austin and La Grange German conventions, area Republicans actively participated and helped lead the People's convention. The district Republican Party decided not to field any candidates of their own but instead joined the People's Party movement, where a few Republicans were given spots on its ticket. This was the beginning of a decades-long practice of radical minded farmer-labor Republicans foregoing their own ticket in order to support working-class based parties, such as the Greenback Labor Party in the early 1880s and the Populist People's Party in the 1890s. State and national Republican leaders even supported this practice, at times, as a way, to if not defeat, at least weaken the Democratic Party.[220]

Fayette and Bastrop counties were not the only places where people broke from the two major parties to form independent clubs and support independent candidates during the 1873 election. On October 7, in San Antonio, a group of African-Americans dissatisfied with the Republican Party held a meeting to organize an "independent club." However, several white Republicans showed up at the meeting and persuaded many of those in attendance to return home. Thirty men though stayed and organized a club, of which little else is known. In Salado, Bell County, a former Democrat, Rev. J.E.

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[219] *Bastrop Advertiser*, October 18, November 1, 1873; F. B. Largent, Jr., "LEDBETTER, WILLIAM HAMILTON," *Handbook of Texas Online*; *Weekly Democratic Statesman*, October 30, 1873.

[220] *Bastrop Advertiser*, October 18, November 1, 1873; *Weekly Democratic Statesman*, October 30, 1873; Alwyn Barr, *Reconstruction to Reform: Texas Politics, 1876-1906* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1971, 2000), 64-65.

Ferguson, ran as an independent candidate for state representative. While in the 27th District, composed of Caldwell and Hays counties, west of Fayette and Bastrop counties, a full "farmers' ticket" was fielded for the state House and Senate races. [221]

An additional factor contributing to the changing political landscape in Texas was the arrival of the Grange. On July 5, 1873, R.A. Baird, a national deputy of the Grange, organized the first subordinate Grange of Texas in Salado. Formally known as the Patrons of Husbandry, the Grange was founded in 1867 by government clerks at the Agricultural Bureau in Washington, D.C. The Grange formed as a means to assist farmers in addressing economic challenges by educating them in new scientific methods of farming. By 1873, the Grange had hundreds of thousands of members across the country. As individuals, members could engage in politics, though as an organization, Grange leaders expressly forbid the Grange from taking political stances. The Grange, in their view, was an organization for farmers to collectively come together with a business orientation. Though when political factors such as government railroad subsidies and land policies economically effected farmers, many saw the Grange as a vehicle to organize politically.[222]

Farmers were not the only ones to see the political potential of the Grange. "We have no objection to the farmers of the country looking out sharply for their own interests … but we are opposed to getting up anything like a political farmer's party," read a front-

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[221] *Weekly Democratic Statesman*, October 9, November 6, 20, 1873. No newspapers are known to exist from Caldwell and Hays counties during this period that cover the "farmers' ticket."

[222] *Weekly Democratic Statesman*, July 3, 1873; Ralph A. Smith, "The Grange Movement in Texas, 1873-1900," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 42, No. 4 (April 1939), 297; Roscoe Martin, "The Grange as a Political Factor in Texas," *Southwestern Political and Social Science Quarterly* Vol. 6 (1925/1926), 366-368.

page article in the *Democratic Statesmen*, the week the Grange arrived in Texas.[223] The *Democratic Statesmen*, during the political campaign of 1873, frequently attacked the Grange, seeing it as dividing people along class lines, while everyone in its opinion should be working together--this coming from a paper that supported railroad subsidies and the Landlord and Tenant bill that clearly favored economic elites. "What do we want of them in Texas? What are they to accomplish? We have now the good old Democratic party, which was always and is now the friend of the farmers and it will protect all their interests. Let us keep out of the State every new-fangled Northern political invention, calculated to disturb this party," wrote the *Democratic Statesmen*.[224]

A promoter of the Grange, in a letter to the same newspaper, wrote that "politics has nothing to do with the organization of the order, and all political discussion is excluded from the Granges." "But," as the *Democratic Statesmen* editorialized, "the devil got into Paradise, and this advocate of the Granges admits that careful as the founders were upon this subject …" they could not prevent politics from being injected into the Grange. "This is the old story, we suppose, in regards to all good works: 'No sooner doth the Lord erect a house of prayer, Than Satan surely comes and builds a chapel there.'"[225] The *Democratic Statesmen* was not entirely unjustified in its concerns. Based on reports from the La Grange *New Era*, the *Democratic Statesmen* printed, "that the poison is working in Fayette county, where under color of the Granges, they are already calling for meetings of a 'people's party.'"[226] This is evidence that, from the beginning, radical-minded

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[223] *Weekly Democratic Statesman*, July 3, 1873

[224] *Weekly Democratic Statesman*, September 18, 1873.

[225] *Weekly Democratic Statesman*, October 23, 1873.

[226] *Weekly Democratic Statesman*, September 25, 1873.

farmers viewed the Grange with more of a political than business orientation, despite the intentions of national Grange leaders.

With the white electorate growing more and more divided over the issues of railroads and farm tenancy, the Democratic Party used white supremacist beliefs to keep white men in its column. "The negro and the white man can never become homogenous. Nature has forbidden homogeneity between them, and it is useless to strive against nature," wrote the *Democratic Statesmen*.[227] White womanhood was also at stake according to the paper: "On the very day Governor Davis was in Waco, declaiming loudly for negro equality, a white woman of that city was united in the holy bonds of matrimony with a full blooded negro, described as one of 'the biggest, blackest and strongest of his race' … Is our noble white blood to be contaminated with this shameless miscegenation?"[228] Democratic editors across the state portrayed a vote against the Democratic Party as a vote against the white race and for its mongrelization.[229]

The December election was a near total victory for Democrats as they won all statewide offices and now controlled both houses of Congress. Texas was Redeemed. Reconstruction was also over in Texas, with federal troops already leaving the state before the election. There were, however, minor victories to be found in Fayette and Bastrop counties. One of the three candidates for state representative backed by the People's Convention, Walker, was elected to the House where he served as one of only ten Republicans (six of them black) with seventy-eight Democrats. A second candidate for representative of the convention, Campbell, lost by only 25 votes. The People's

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[227] *Weekly Democratic Statesman*, July 24, 1873.

[228] *Weekly Democratic Statesman*, October 30, 1873.

[229] Moneyhon, *Texas After the Civil War*, 197.

Convention's candidate for state senate, Hamilton Ledbetter, won his race over his son 2,864 to 2, 569--the only independent to win election. However, Ledbetter's victory would be hollow. When not frequently absent from the Senate, Ledbetter often voted with the Democrats, including most notoriously voting for the Landlord and Tenant bill, which with the Democrats now in control was passed into law.[230]

The election results did nothing to hamper the growth of the Grange. While prior to the election the *Democratic Statesmen* had ardently opposed the Grange, some Democratic papers such as the *Waxahachie Democrat* argued that the *Democratic Statesmen* did not fully understand the Grange. Also, during a campaign rally in November 1873, Democratic politician J.W. Robertson declared, "The Granges are composed of our best farmers, and are the firmest friends of Judge Coke,"--Richard Coke being the Democrat's winning candidate for governor.[231]

In its December 6, 1873 issue, the *Bastrop Advertiser* gave two columns to the Grange--right next to the election results. One article was by the General Deputy of the South Carolina Grange, D. Wyatt Aiken, who sought to counter southern critics of the Grange who opposed it as a northern institution. "But the Southern Bourbon accuses the Order of being an 'ism' from Yankee land. So be it. If it be good accept it, even though it come from 'Nazareth,'" penned Aiken. In the neighboring column, J.B. Johnston, state Master of the Texas Grange, sought to inform readers on the aims and objectives of the Grange. "It will be seen that politics and religious discussions are forbidden by the order,

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[230] *Bastrop Advertiser*, December 6, 20, 1873; Moneyhon, *Texas After the Civil War*, 197; *Directory of the Members and Officers of the Fourteenth Legislature of the State of Texas and also the State Officers of the State of Texas* (Austin: Caldwell and Walker Printers, 1874), 2-6; *Journal of the Senate of Texas: Being the Session of the Fourteenth Legislature Begun and Held at the City of Austin, January 13, 1874* (Austin: Cardwell and Walker Printers, 1874), 297.

[231] *Weekly Democratic Statesman*, October 16, November 20, 1873.

which ought to silence some of the newspapers in their denunciations of the order as a political machine. Co-operation among the agricultural class of the American people for the protection of their interests …" was the purpose of the Grange as laid out by Johnston.[232]

The Grange became so palatable to Texas Democrats that nearly half of the newly elected legislators would join the Grange. In many ways the Grange became an auxiliary of the Democratic Party, as leaders of the state Grange supported the party. "No politics" meant no politics outside of the Democratic Party. When the state Grange elected its statewide leadership of authorized agents in late 1873, none of the agents came from Fayette, Bastrop, Hays, or Caldwell counties where independent "farmers" or "people's" tickets had been organized. In order to make any future working-class based electoral threats to Democratic rule more difficult, the Democrat-controlled state Constitutional Convention convened in 1875 and gave the state legislature the ability to impose a poll tax in the 1876 Texas Constitution. The Democrats were not chasing ghosts as only days after the near Democratic election sweep of December 2, the *North Texan* newspaper out of Paris, Texas called for the formation of a new party.[233]

Serving as a mutual aid organization and a social outlet for rural people, the Grange grew rapidly. By April 1874, 360 local Granges formed across the state, now including Bastrop and Fayette counties. Membership peaked in 1877, with around 45,000 members, including 6,000 women. As the economic crisis of the 1870s deepened, the Grange created a system of cash-only cooperative stores to aid farmers. The Grange stores sought

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[232] *Bastrop Advertiser*, December 6, 1873.

[233] Barr, *Reconstruction to Reform,* 9; *Bastrop Advertiser*, December 6, 1873; *Constitution of the State of Texas (1876)*, Article VIII, Section 1; *Weekly Democratic Statesman*, December 4, 1873.

to become an alternative to the furnishing merchants. However, for cash-starved farmers, already trapped in the crop lien system, the Grange stores provided little relief.[234]

In spite of the professed non-political stance of the Grange, many Grangers understood the political potential of farmers acting collectively through the Grange. Abusive railroad practices more than any other issue motivated many Grangers to push their organization into politics. The expansion of railroads connecting farmers to national and international markets enticed many farmers to transition from substance farming to a reliance on cash crops, such as cotton and wheat. This in turn made farmers heavily reliant on railroads to transport their crops to market. With monopolies in many areas, railroad corporations charged what many farmers felt to be exorbitant freight rates. The pressure from rank-and-file Grangers in 1875 against the "fearful rate of freights," resulted in the Worthy Master of the Texas Grange, William W. Lang, calling railroads "public tyrannies" and declaring that it was "high time for them to be regulated, not destroyed, by the necessary laws and constitutional enactments of a free people."[235]

Pressure for railroad regulation became so great that the public forced the state Constitutional Convention, then in session, to act. Article X, of the new constitution, dealt specifically with railroads and gave the Legislature the ability to regulate railroad schedules or fees and to halt the merging of competing lines to prevent monopolies. Worthy Master Lang even broke the Grange's scared no politics pledge and allowed himself to be nominated and elected as a Democrat Representative from Falls, Milam and

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[234] Martin, "The Grange as a Political Factor in Texas," 367; *Bastrop Advertiser*, March 28, April 11, 18, 1874; Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment*, 32.

[235] Martin, "The Grange as a Political Factor in Texas," 373.

Bell counties to the legislature convened in 1876.[236]

Though now having the power to regulate railroad practices, this Fifteenth Legislature refused to act in defense of farmers. Lang continued to speak out against unfair railroad practices, both in the Legislature and in speeches across the country. His activism led many supporters of the Grange to see him as a candidate for governor in 1878. Clearly referring to Lang, the *San Antonio Express* printed, "The people desire a change. The people begin to distrust even the Democratic party in the hands of men who have exhibited no disposition to make the promised reforms … I think it the most opportune time for the farmers to make a rush for control of our state government …A man capable, worthy and well known to the state, subject to a Democratic nomination for governor …would be a rallying point for the farmers."[237]

Before the 1878 state Democratic Convention, Lang declared that he was a Democrat and would abide by the decisions of the convention. Convention delegates however did not look favorably on Lang's candidacy and instead nominated Texas Supreme Court Chief Justice Oran Roberts. Some people wanted Lang to run as an independent candidate, but he refused to do so, remaining loyal to the Democrats. For his loyalty Lang was appointed consul at Hamburg, Germany by the Grover Cleveland administration in 1885.[238]

Grange membership peaked in 1877-78, during the height of its organizational political activism, and rapidly plummeted after Lang refused to run an independent

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[236] Martin, "The Grange as a Political Factor in Texas," 374; John Cardwell, *Sketches of Legislators and State Officers, 1876-1878* (Austin: Democratic Statesmen Print, 1876), 107-109.

[237] Martin, "The Grange as a Political Factor in Texas," 370, 374; *San Antonio Express* quoted in *Galveston Daily News*, May 8, 1878.

[238] Martin, "The Grange as a Political Factor in Texas," 370, 374; Barr, *Reconstruction to Reform*, 75.

campaign for governor. At the Grange's 1879 state meeting it was reported that the Grange was down to around 9,500 members–a nearly 79% drop in membership from 1877. Regardless of the stated business orientation of the Grange, there is a clear correlation between political activism within the Grange and membership numbers. Political activism drove up enrollment in the Grange and motivated its members, not its business orientation. There were other factors that hampered Grange membership as well. The Southwest experienced successive financial panics in 1878 and 1879 that left currency scarce and Grangers unable to pay their dues. Once the panics ended membership did not, though, return to pre-panic levels. The Grange also faced competition from a rival farmer organization established during this time.[239]

In September 1877, a group of farmers pressed hard by economic difficulties gathered in Lampasas County, Texas, to discuss what could be done to alleviate their plight. This meeting would signify the beginning of the Farmers' Alliance. They came together for a number of reasons. Many believed that governmental policies on land, transportation, and currency had caused their troubles, and they desired independent political action. Democrats in the organization sharply disagreed, insisting on the need to reform the Democratic Party. Still others argued the Alliance should stay out of politics altogether and focus on education and economic cooperative endeavors. When one of the officers of the Lampasas Alliance suggested they convert their organization into a local Grange, one of the Alliance founders and local farmer, A.P. Hungate, opposed the move due to the self-help business approach of the Grange. The Grange, Hungate felt, "might discover secrets of nature as would enable them to grow one hundred ears of corn where they now harvest fifty nubbins. But what benefit would that be if while engaged in that

[239] Smith, "The Grange Movement in Texas, 1873-1900," 300.

achievement, their negligence as citizens had allowed laws to find place upon our statute books that would render the fine ears worth less than the nubbins … We have undertaken the erection of a more commodious structure." All agreed, though, that something had to be done, and in the summer of 1878, plans were made to launch a statewide "Grand State Farmers' Alliance."[240]

With no unifying ideology, the Farmers' Alliance grew rather slowly. Even with some members desiring the Alliance to move into politics, the Grange at this point was at the height of its brief openly politically period, leaving little differentiation between the two organizations. While farmers, within both the Grange and Alliance, debated the means to achieve their political ends, a new party arrived in Texas–the Greenback Party.

Greenbackers had organized nationally through a series of conventions from 1874 to 1876, with the expressed purpose of taking direct political action by forming a party and running candidates for office. According to Greenbacker ideology, the country's economic woes had been caused by a shortage of government-issued paper money due to an act of Congress in 1875 that required paper currency to be backed by specie. This shortage, they believed, deflated prices and raised interest rates. Greenbackers advocated the issuing of more currency and the remonetization of silver to back up the expanded currency. In 1876, they ran their first presidential candidate with little success receiving a total of roughly 80,000 votes nationally.[241]

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[240] Donna A. Barnes, *Farmers in Rebellion: The Rise and Fall of the Southern Farmers Alliance and People's Party in Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984), 51; Hungate quote in Robert C. McMath, Jr, *Populist Vanguard: A History of the Southern Farmer's Alliance* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1977), 5.

[241] Irwin Unger, *These United States: The Questions of Our Past, Volume II since 1865, Fifth Edition* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1992), 560; Roscoe Martin, "The Greenback Party in Texas," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association), January 1927, Vol. 30, No. 3., 169.

Running primarily on currency issues, the Greenback Party had limited appeal to the nation's workers and farmers. However, following the Great Railroad Strike of 1877, and the condemnation the Greenbackers received from both the Democratic and Republican parties, many workers saw the need for independent political action and looked to the Greenback Party. During the strike, workers, farmers, and small businessmen aided the strikers due to their joint hatred of the railroad trusts. These three groups came together politically through a series of mergers beginning in August 1877, in Pennsylvania, with the fusion of the Greenback Party with the United Labor Party. Across the country, Greenbackers merged with formally independent Workingmen's Parties, and, with support from the Knights of Labor formed the Greenback Labor Party (GLP).[242]

In the spring of 1877 the Greenback Party began organizing in Texas. They established a newspaper in Austin, the *Texas Capital*, and following the national example promoted a fusion with the Austin Workingmen's Club.[243] The 1877 Railroad Strike was also a factor in the development of the GLP in Texas.

On Friday morning July 27, the entirely black dockworker force of the Morgan steamship line went on strike after their wages were cut from 40 cents to 30 cents an hour. Joining them in solidarity on the docks were white members of the Longshoremen union. After striking for an hour, management restored their wages. Buoyed by this result, primarily black workers across the city held meetings over the weekend to discuss a general strike to begin on Monday, demanding $2.00 a day pay. At 6:30 a.m. Monday

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[242] Philip S. Foner, *The Great Labor Uprising of 1877* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1991), 224-225.

[243] Barr, *Reconstruction to Reform*, 44.

morning black construction workers at the Girardin building "organizing themselves into a sort of vanguard to the general revolt that was desired by the laboring classes against the prevailing rates of wages" began urging nearby labors "to cease work and join the strike," according to the *Galveston Daily News*.[244]

Forming a body of around fifty men, and first marching down the Strand, the strikers proceeded to more construction sites, convincing additional workers to join the strike. They then marched to areas where construction gangs in the employ of the Narrow Gauge Railroad were working. At each site, railroad workers joined the marching strike. The strikers, now in the hundreds, marched to worksites around town including a mill and the Galveston, Houston and Henderson Railroad depot. Again, at each site their numbers grew. When they arrived at the Galveston Flour Mill it was decided that these workers should not be induced to strike, as bread prices were already too high. In answer to why they were striking, "the men asserted that they could not pay house rent, which in no case had been reduced, buy clothing, food, and medicines for themselves and families, at the rates they were receiving for their labor," reported the *Galveston Daily News*.[245]

After marching through town, and encouraging all those making under $2 a day to join them, the strikers numbered over 800 by the afternoon. They then marched to the courthouse and adopted a series of resolutions stating their right to peacefully protest and that $2 per day become the fixed rate of labor for the city. At the courthouse, white labor leaders joined them and pledged that "the white laborers of the city would never back out of the movement" for the $2 day. After electing a leadership committee the strikers

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[244] *Galveston Daily News*, July 28, 31, 1877.

[245] *Galveston Daily News*, July 31, 1877.

adjourned and planned to meet the next morning.[246]

At the Tuesday morning meeting, the strikers decided that the elected leadership committee should visit each struck worksite to demand a $2 day and report back on the meetings at the courthouse early in the evening. During the adjournment a fight broke out on the docks between a white man and a black man. According to the *Galveston Daily News*, after the city police arrested the white man a large group of black strikers attempted to storm the jailhouse in order to lynch the white assaulter. The black strikers asserted they were merely peacefully protesting. To disperse the crowd, police fired into the strikers and wounded one man in the leg and arrested three others.[247]

When the strikers gathered at the courthouse they found that the employers had agreed to raise their wages, either immediately or in the near future, to $2 a day. While victorious in their wage demands, the strikers were rather incensed about the police brutality they had suffered. Many now wanted to start protesting against the police. At this point Norris Wright Cuney, a local black businessman and statewide leader of the Republican Party, addressed the crowd. Cuney stated that the shooting incident was the result of the strikers parading in the streets and stirring up bad blood. He continued that they should return home and let the law handle if any charges should be brought against the officers who shot at the strikers. Then, in what many strikers had to have taken as a threat transmitted from white authorities, Cuney said that if they continued protesting, "there were over 700 armed men–trained soldiers--in the city, who could annihilate them all in an hour; and if they could not, he said that in the city of Houston there were 1000

[246] *Galveston Daily News*, July 31, 1877.

[247] *Galveston Daily News*, August 1, 1877.

men under arms, who could be brought to this city in two hours to accomplish the bloody work."[248]

Cuney's remarks did not go over well with most of those gathered and for many working-class blacks had to have put the Republican Party in a foul light and opened them to the new Greenback Labor Party. At the same time, many working-class whites had grown tired of the Democratic Party's empty promises to reform oppressive railroad practices and the inability of the Grange to break from the Democratic Party. The Greenback Labor Party was perfectly positioned to gain support from dissatisfied workers and farmers, both black and white. Among those deciding to support the Greenback movement was E.O. Meitzen.

In 1875, after five years of apprentice blacksmithing, E.O. Meitzen opened a blacksmith shop of his own in Cistern, Fayette County. Blacksmithing was profitable enough for E.O. that he and his siblings were able to help buy back their parent's old home and farm. This act brought Otto Meitzen out of tenancy and no other Meitzens would ever be in tenancy again. Their experience with tenancy, though, never left them and many of Otto's children and grandchildren devoted their political careers to standing up for the rights of tenant farmers. Unfortunately, the elder Meitzens did not have much time together back on their old homestead. Jennie Meitzen passed away on March 17, 1877, in Biegel at the age of fifty-eight.[249]

Happier times returned for the Meitzens when E.O. married Johanna Whilemena

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[248] *Galveston Daily News*, August 1, 1877; Philip Foner in *The Great Labor Uprising of 1877* p. 198 incorrectly describes Cuney as "longshoreman leader." Cuney was born on a plantation near Hempstead, Texas in 1846, the son of a wealthy white slave owner and a slave mother. In 1859 he went to Pittsburg, PA where he received a formal education. After that he returned to Texas and became a leader of the Republican Party. Paul Casdorth, *A History of the Republican Party in Texas, 1865-1965* (Austin: The Pemberton Press, 1965), 46.

[249] Johnson, *History of Texas and Texans*, 1916; Williams, *History of the Meitzen Family*, np.

Augustina Kettner on October 21, 1877. Johanna Kettner was born on January 9, 1858, in the German city of Coswig, Anhalt. Her father was a cabinetmaker, and her family settled in southeast Texas in 1871. Within two years of their marriage, E.O. and Johanna would have two children, Jennie born August 17, 1878, who sadly died five days later, and Edward J., born August 7, 1879.[250]

After ten years of blacksmithing in 1880, E.O. received a spinal injury while "shoeing an unruly horse," forcing him to quit the trade. While recovering from his spinal injury, Meitzen had time to in engage in a period of reading and study oft-denied him as a young boy. He had been known since childhood as one with an avid desire for knowledge. He read whatever books, pamphlets, and newspapers he could obtain but was denied a regular formal education because of the disorganization of the area school system during the years of war and Reconstruction that marked his childhood. Realizing that as a consequence of his injury he would need a lighter form of work, Meitzen studied to become a schoolteacher.[251]

After passing his teacher's exam, Meitzen took a second grade teaching position at Novohrad in Lavaca County, bordering to the south of Fayette County. As he later recalled about his exam, "In those days it was a very easy matter. It took me fifteen minutes to be examined. I was examined by a lawyer who did not care whether I taught school or not, or whether I knew anything or not."[252] As he put it, this is when his own schooling began, and he "had a race keeping ahead of the boys who were right behind

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[250] Holmgren, *Family Tree Book of the Holmgreens and the Meitzens*, 13; Williams, *History of the Meitzen Family*, np.

[251] Williams, *History of the Meitzen Family* np; *The Rebel*, July 25, 1914; U.S. Congress, *Senate Commission on Industrial Relations, Final Report and Testimony*, 9142.

[252] U.S. Congress, *Senate Commission on Industrial Relations*, 9142.

me."[253] During this period, E.O. and Johanna had two more boys, Ernest Richard born May 3, 1881 and Arnold Charles born December 30, 1882. Both Ernest and Arnold would join their father as leaders of the Texas Socialist Party in the 1910s. [254]

As a new generation of Meitzens entered the world, the old was passing away. Otto Meitzen lived most of the remainder of his days at his home in Biegel, until ill health forced with to live out his last months at E.O.'s home near Novohrad. He died on April 22, 1882 at the age of seventy-one. [255] Otto had lived long enough to see that at least some of his 48er political radicalism had been passed on to his son, as E.O.'s support of the GLP began his own political evolution.

By November 1877, around fifty-nine Greenback clubs had been created across Texas. Just five months later in April 1878, the number of clubs was 250, including some racially segregated black clubs. The first state convention of the Texas GLP was held at Waco on August 8, 1878. Two hundred and seventeen delegates, from 482 Greenback clubs, including 70 black clubs, attended. When a white delegate refused to sit next to black delegates he was expelled from the convention (but later readmitted). The Texas GLP marked the beginnings of an inter-racial workers and farmers coalition in Texas outside of the Republican Party. The platform adopted included calls for an increase in paper currency, the cessation of government bonds, abolishing the national bank, halting Asian immigration, ending convict labor, preventing state governments from giving land and special privileges to railroad companies, fighting government bureaucracy,

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[253] U.S. Congress, *Senate Commission on Industrial Relations*, 9143.

[254] Holmgren, *Family Tree Book of the Holmgreens and the Meitzens*, 13.

[255] Johnson, *A History of Texas and Texans*, 1916; 1879 and 1881 Fayette County, Texas, County Tax Rolls; Holmgren, *Family Tree Book of the Holmgreens and the Meitzens*, 13; *La Grange Journal*, May 4, 1882.

establishing free public schools, and a graduated income tax. The platform demanded "cheap capital and well paid labor in place of dear capital and cheap labor." Among the candidates nominated for office were attorney and former Democrat William H. Hamman for governor and Jacob Kuechler for Land Commissioner. Kuechler had immigrated to Texas in 1847, as part of the communistic Darmstadt colony, survived the Nueces Massacre (spending the war in Mexico), and previously held the position of Land Commissioner as a Republican during Reconstruction.[256]

The GLP appealed to and won support from the Republican Party. At a Republican meeting in Austin, following the GLP convention, former Radical Republican Governor Edmund Davis gave his support to the GLP ticket. The regular Republican Party made no nominations of its own and radicals in the party put their full support behind the GLP. A small conservative faction of the Republican Party, made up of bankers and holders of federal patronage positions, including Cuney, disagreed with supporting the GLP and held a small convention to nominate a straight Republican ticket. At a meeting of a Galveston black workingmen's club, Cuney called for "colored people" to "support the grand old party against democrats, greenbackers and everybody else."[257]

Cuney's pleas did not have his desired effect. Black Greenbackers were active in areas as separated as Waco and northeast Texas. Black support proved especially decisive in the Fifth U.S. Congressional District that included Galveston. In this district, the former Democratic leader of Bastrop County, George Washington Jones, ran a vigorous Greenback campaign among white and black voters alike. This was quite an evolution (or

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[256] Barr, *Reconstruction to Reform*, 44-45, 47; Martin, "The Greenback Party in Texas," 3; James Patrick McGuire, "KUECHLER, JACOB," *Handbook of Texas Online*.

[257] Barr, *Reconstruction to Reform*, 48; *Galveston Daily News*, August 25, 1878; Casdorth, *A History of the Republican Party in Texas,* 38-40; *Norton's Union Intelligencer*, October 12, 1878.

opportunism) on Jones' part, who in 1868, in Bastrop, led a crowd at a polling place to harass black voters. Jones had earlier barely lost an 1876 Congressional run as an independent after breaking with the Democrats over the party's failure to enact railroad reforms. This time around as a Greenback, Jones defeated his Democratic challenger 21, 101 to 19, 721. Overall the Democrats still dominated the statewide elections with Hammond losing to Roberts in a lopsided 158, 933 to 55, 002. Greenbackers, though, were able to elect two state senators and ten representatives from Central and East Texas, as well as winning several local offices. A delegate at the 1879 national Union Greenback Labor Party convention reported that Texas had 658 clubs, third behind only Missouri and Illinois.[258]

The 1880 Texas GLP platform added planks in favor of "a radical change in our cumbersome and expensive judiciary system," and against a poll tax, emphasizing that "The Greenback Labor Party everywhere denounces the attempted disfranchisement of citizens as a crime, whether committed by Republicans in Massachusetts and Rhode Island, or Bourbon Democrats in Texas, and denounce all laws restricting the right of suffrage or impairing the secrecy of the ballot box." Included among the 140 delegates at the 1880 convention were 20 African-Americans. The Texas Republican Party, this time around, due to the divisions created in 1878, did field a ticket of its own, though radicals in the party continued to support the GLP. The GLP also failed to win support from the state Grange, though a few East Texas Granges merged with Greenback clubs, continuing the rapid decline of the Grange. The statewide election results brought defeats similar to 1878. While the GLP's State House representation dropped from ten to three and the

[258] Barr, *Reconstruction to Reform*, 51, 54-55; Moneyhon, *Republicanism in Reconstruction Texas*, 79.

senate seats from two to one from Caldwell County. Jones once again won, but only by around 200 votes. Dallas, though, did elect a Greenback mayor. GLP presidential candidate James Weaver received only 27, 471 votes in Texas in comparison to 155, 963 for Democrat W.S. Hancock and 57, 225 for Republican James A. Garfield, who won the national election.[259]

Though in decline, the 1882 Texas GLP platform distinguished itself from pervious platforms by directly addressing the demands of the state's agrarian working class. The platform condemned the state government's granting of land to railroad companies and exempting them from taxes. In a reference to a move by the state government to give a Chicago firm most of the Texas Panhandle in return for constructing a new capital building, the platform accused the state government of establishing "gigantic land monopolies in our midst by granting to four Chicago capitalists 3,000,000 acres of public domain to build a state house." The platform further complained that the state government "has inaugurated a system of class legislation in favor of the rich by refusing to sell the public domain in tracts less than 640 acres, thus depriving her men of the opportunity to acquire homes in our State." The platform was, however, missing the call for the eight-hour day contained in the national GLP platform.[260]

The GLP convention supported Jones for governor, and he ran on an Independent-Greenback ticket. With support from the Chester Arthur administration, Texas

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[259] *The Texas Capital*, May 23, 1880; *The Texas Capital*, July 4, 1880; *The Texas Capital*, July 11, 1880; Barr, *Reconstruction to Reform*, 56, 60; *La Grange Journal*, November 10, 1880; Will Lambert, *Pocket Directory of the Seventeenth Legislature of Texas* (Austin: Swindells' Book and Job Office, 1881), 3.

[260] *Galveston Daily-News*, July 1, 1882.

Republicans once again formally threw their support behind independent and Greenback campaigns. This time with the undivided support of the black Republican leadership, many black Texans supported the Jones campaign. Running for Jones's old Congressional seat, as a Greenback, was Fayette County Republican Robert Zapp. The Democrats, in order to counter the growing in popularity of the GLP positions, ran former state Supreme Court Justice and state senator John Ireland. Ireland supported public schools, land sales only to actual settlers, state regulation of railroads, and the founding Greenback position of expanding the national currency. Though Jones made a much better showing than previous GLP gubernatorial races, the Democrat's expropriation of the GLP platform worked, and Ireland won 150, 809 to 102, 501. GLP candidates also lost all other statewide GLP candidates.[261]

Although the GLP would continue to run candidates in Texas through 1884, none won election, and the party quickly dissipated. A number of factors contributed to the demise of the GLP. First, outside forces such as the Anti-Monopoly movement drew away the conservative elements of the party by focusing on regulating business behavior. Second, the more radical working-class elements called for more direct trade union action and opposed the GLP's anti-communism. Finally, by the early 1880s, both the Democratic and Republican parties had recognized free-silver wings within their parties. This allowed for the silverites within the GLP to return to the fold of the two major parties.[262] While some were discouraged by the demise of the GLP, many others, such as E.O. Meitzen, gained there their first taste of independent political action--looked toward

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[261] Barr, *Reconstruction to Reform*, 27-28, 64-65, 69; Aragorn Storm Miller, "ZAPP, ROBERT," *Handbook of Texas Online*; Casdorth, *A History of the Republican Party in Texas,* 45.

[262] Martin, "The Greenback Party in Texas," 8; *The Texas Capital*, May 23, 1880; Foner, *The Great Labor Uprising of 1877*, 227.

to continued protest.

In 1885, E.O. Meitzen joined the Grange at Colony, Fayette County, six miles from his home in Cistern. A change in occupation induced E.O.'s membership in the Grange. In 1883, after three years of teaching in Novohrad, Meitzen, using some of the money he had saved while blacksmithing, bought some land in Cistern in order to give farming a try. He was now learning first hand the economic realities of being a farmer. With the Farmers' Alliance having yet to reach Fayette County, this left the stagnant Grange as the only existing organization for area farmers seeking better economic conditions to join. [263]

Detached from romantic notions, farming is hard work. A general day on the farm in the late nineteenth century began before sunrise feeding stock and tending to horses. The day was occupied until after sunset with plowing, sowing, mowing and harvesting, in addition to any repairs or building maintenance. Mild Texas winters meant the growing season never really ended for Texas farmers: there was always another rotation of crops suited for the particular season.

Meitzen was not exempt from the economic crisis facing farmers, and nature was not making things any easier. The 1884 planting season had been particularly difficult; in fact, the first planting did not take. After a second planting, a storm caused damage to the crop. While farming, Meitzen kept his teaching credentials up-to-date when the state began to enforce more stringent teaching standards. He passed the new teaching exam and secured a first-grade teaching certificate. In September 1884, Meitzen took a job teaching first grade in Cistern, attempting to farm as well as teach in order to supplement the family income. In this same month, Johanna gave birth to her and E.O.'s fifth child

[263] *The Rebel*, July 25, 1914.

Benjamin Franklin--a name revealing a veneration of the American Revolution's more radical and internationalist heritage.[264]

Hard work and two jobs were not improving the economic plight of the Meitzen family. The monetary investments required to keep the farm operational were making a life off the land unprofitable and bringing the family closer to debt. With an economic system clearly stacked against them, farmers like Meitzen continued to seek ways to address their economic and political grievances.[265]

For many farmers who came to see collective political action as an essential part of obtaining better economic conditions, the Grange's supposed non-political stance became an obstacle. As A.J. Rose, Master of the Texas State Grange, insisted in a message to Grangers across Texas, "The grange has not nor never will take a political stance, as a body." Many Grange leaders, however, belonged to the Democratic Party and encouraged their members to vote as such. Though still not breaking from the Democratic Party, revered by many as the 'Party of Our Fathers,' many farmers believed that in a democracy their collective voice should be heard.[266]

For an example of collective action in 1885, Texas farmers needed to look no further than to the of the Knights of Labor (KOL), which took on railroad tycoon Jay Gould's Southwestern rail service, including the Texas & Pacific line that crossed the entire state. The strike against Gould's Southwestern system began in March, when rail workers in Sedalia, Missouri, struck over wage cuts and the firing of longtime employees.

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[264] U.S. Congress, *Senate Commission on Industrial Relations, Final Report and Testimony*, 9143; *The Rebel*, July 25, 1914; *La Grange Journal*, May 8, June 5, September 18, 1884; Williams, *History of the Meitzen Family*, np.

[265] U.S. Congress, *Senate Commission on Industrial Relations, Final Report and Testimony*, 9143.

[266] *La Grange Journal*, June 17, 1886.

With solid community backing in Missouri, the strike rapidly spread into Texas.[267]

In Texas, the KOL and the previously dormant Farmer's Alliance organized joint rallies, picnics, and mass meetings in support of the striking workers. Gould backed down, and the strikers won. National membership in the KOL, during the next year, jumped from 100,000 to 700,000. In Texas, membership peaked at around 20,000 members, organized into 238 KOL local assemblies. A few of these locals, organized in rural areas, consisted of primarily farmers. Due in part to its support of the KOL strike, farmers began flocking to the revitalized Farmers' Alliance, with some holding memberships in both organizations—including E.O. Meitzen.[268]

Economic hardship alone proved not enough for farmers to join either the Grange or Alliance. Before 1887, the cooperative marketing and purchasing plans of both the Grange and Alliance were nearly identical, as both promoted the establishment of either Grange or Alliance-run cooperative stores. However, what differentiated the Alliance from the Grange in the following years was the Alliance's development of a movement ideology. This movement ideology would be best expressed by S.O. Daws.[269]

In late 1883, the state Alliance hired Daws to the newly created position of "Traveling Lecturer," with the power to appoint subogranizers in every county. The thirty-six-year-old Daws had developed a radical ideology as a Mississippi farmer trapped in the crop-lien system before moving to Texas. In the spring of 1884, he began to travel around the state with a political-economic message that denounced furnishing

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[267] McMath, *American Populism*, 74.

[268] McMath, *American Populism*, 75; James C. Maroney, "GREAT SOUTHWEST STRIKE," *Handbook of Texas Online*; Matthew Hild, "The Knights of Labor and the Third Party Movement in Texas, 1886-1896," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, Vol. CXIX, No. 1 (July 2015), 25, 28, 31; *The Rebel*, March 6, 1915.

[269] Barnes, *Farmers in Rebellion*, 39.

merchants, railroads, trusts, and capitalists. At the end of his lectures he implored farmers to join the Alliance.[270]

A number of factors had now come together to transform agrarian unrest into an organized agrarian protest movement. In 1886, cotton prices hit a new low at $.081 per pound. Many farmers were now growing cotton at a loss. Corn prices were equally depressed. Radicalizing farmers no longer viewed the economic crisis as temporary, but more permanent, unless something was done to change the situation. Joining a protest organization became a risk more were willing to take, if it meant an improvement in their condition. Through traveling lecturers, Alliance newspapers, and the cooperative store plan, farmers began to see the commonality of their plight and developed what historian Lawrence Goodwyn called "a mass expression of a new political vision … a movement culture."[271]

The conflict between labor and capital intensified in 1886. Gould, still bitter over the defeat he suffered at the hands of organized labor on the Southwest railroad lines, the year before, provoked a conflict by firing a union leader in Marshall, Texas. The KOL responded by calling a strike on March 1 that spread from Texas into Arkansas, Missouri, Kansas, and Illinois involving some 3,000 strikers. When strikers began blocking rail traffic and occupying switch junctures, Gould used scabs to replace strikers, and Pinkerton detectives to violently attack them. Democratic Texas Governor John Ireland further aided Gould by using the state militia and Texas Rangers to suppress the strike and ensure its defeat. On May 4, 1886, Grandmaster Workman of the national KOL,

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[270] Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment*, 26-27.

[271] Barnes, *Farmers in Rebellion*, 34, 52; Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment*, 33.

Terence Powderly, called off the strike.[272]

Many historians have viewed the Southwest strike of 1886 as a major defeat for the KOL that doomed its significant participation in the coming Populist movement. Historian Matthew Hild disagrees, arguing that the KOL continued to work with Alliance members toward common political goals well into the 1890s. For Hild, "The Southwest strike of 1886 seems to have marked more of a beginning than an end to farmer-labor coalitions in the South."[273] The historical record supports Hild's argument.

Brought together by the strike, Alliance members and Knights solidified the incipient farmer-labor alliance of the previous decades. While the strike was still being waged, an Alliance-KOL coalition elected H.S. Broiles, a member of both organizations, as an independent mayor of Fort Worth in April 1886. Across the state KOL locals and individual Alliance members (without the sanction of the state Alliance leadership) formed independent political coalitions. In July, the Farmers' Alliance and KOL held a joint convention in Tarrant County that endorsed Dallas lawyer, Jerome Kearby, for the U.S. House. Kearby had run unsuccessfully for Congress on the GLP ticket in 1880 and 1882 and had gained the support of the convention by providing legal defense to strikers during the 1886 Southwest Strike. In September 1886, delegates from twenty-eight

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[272] Maroney, "GREAT SOUTHWEST STRIKE," *Handbook of Texas Online*; Hild, "The Knights of Labor and the Third Party Movement in Texas," 28; For a detailed history of the Southwest Strike of 1886 see Theresa A. Case, *The Great Southwest Railroad Strike and Free Labor* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2010).

[273] Matthew Hild, *Greenbackers, Knights of Labor, and Populists: Farmer-Labor Insurgency in the Late-Nineteenth Century South* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2007), 74, 77-78. In the 1870s and 1880s, Gould and other U.S. industrialists consolidated their plans for control over rail lines in both the U.S. and Mexico. Maintaining labor servility along Gould's Texas lines was a key component in connecting Texas to the railroad concessions gained in Mexico through Mexican president and dictator Porfirio Diaz. Though not fully realized yet, the Mexican and Texan working classes now shared common oppressors in the form of U.S. industrialists and their backers in Washington and the Texas state house that directly affected the Mexican Revolution and the building of the Texas Socialist Party in the years preceding World War I. John Mason Hart, *Revolutionary Mexico: the Coming and Process of the Mexican Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 132-135.

mainly northern counties formed an Antimonoply Party. The delegates decided not to field a statewide ticket but instead to focus on congressional and local elections. Though none of the Antimonoply candidates won, a few made respectable showings, including Kearby. However, a successful farmer-labor coalition took shape in Comanche County, where the "Human Party" elected a full slate of county officials. [274]

For Grange leaders, desiring to maintain the relevance of their organization, the political activism of farmers within the KOL and Alliance had to be disconcerting. On July 16, 1886, A.J. Rose traveled to La Grange in order to address the Fayette County Granger's picnic. At the picnic, Rose declared, "that neither politics nor religion could be tolerated in the order; that its membership embraced men of all political parties and religious denominations." [275] This message must not have sat well with Meitzen and other more politically minded farmers and their allies—some of whom, at least, were probably KOL members, or soon to be members, like Meitzen. Shortly after Rose's visit, Meitzen became a charter member of the local Farmers' Alliance in Cistern. With the Farmers' Alliance taking root at this time and beginning to seek political as well as economic solutions to the plight of farmers, farmers left the Grange en masse for the Alliance. By 1887, the number of Grange members had fallen to 5,000, and the Grange ceased being a factor in Texas politics. In late October 1886, a countywide Farmers' Alliance was organized in Fayette County with Meitzen elected as secretary of the Fayette County chapter at the founding meeting. Though Meitzen later described his experience farming as "wonderful," by this year financial pressures had forced him out of farming as he

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[274] Hild, "The Knights of Labor and the Third Party Movement in Texas," 29-31; Robert C. McMath, Jr, *Populist Vanguard: A History of the Southern Farmer's Alliance* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1977), 25.

[275] *La Grange Journal*, July 22, 1886.

found he could make a better living solely from teaching.[276]

E.O. Meitzen was not just a product of his times. He responded to and participated in the great issues of his day. Industrialization and the rise of finance capitalism had rapidly transformed the American political and economic landscape. The agrarian crusaders of Meitzen's type were not the reactionary farmers searching for the "lost agrarian Eden" Richard Hofstader made them out to be.[277] They did not fear the new technological advances in communication and transportation. Instead they believed that these advances should be used for the betterment of society as a whole, as they called for the nationalization of the railroad and telegraph industries. What people like Meitzen were reacting to was the redefining of American democracy, in which one million dollars seemed to hold more power than one million votes. In creating an agrarian protest movement to address their grievances, agrarian radicals, like Meitzen, were simply following in their belief in a tradition of protest that had begun with the American Revolution.

In Texas, the influx of radical German 48ers greatly strengthened this tradition. From the 1854 San Antonio Convention to the Fayette and Bastrop county German conventions of 1873, German Texans laid much of the political and organizational foundations of agrarian based farmer-labor radicalism in Texas. The assistance they provided to slave revolts in the 1850s and political collaboration with black Texans during Reconstruction also provided an example of interracial unity that would surface

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[276] *The Rebel*, July 25, 1914; Barnes, *Farmers in Rebellion*, 39; *La Grange Journal*, November 4, 1886; U.S. Congress, *Senate Commission on Industrial Relations, Final Report and Testimony*, 9143.

[277] Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to FDR* (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), 62. For a work disproving Hofstader's argument of agrarian radicalism being a seedbed for fascism see Walter Nugent, *Tolerant Populists: Kansas Populism and Nativism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963, rp. 2013).

again during the Populist Revolt of the 1890s. When E.O. Meitzen was elected secretary of the Fayette County Farmers' Alliance he assumed a position of leadership in this agrarian protest movement that he maintained until near the end of his life—during which he would draw on both the direct examples and political ideology of his 48er inheritance.

Chapter Three

Populist Revolt

The Farmers' Alliance in Texas brought together farmers and their allies into a single large organization in order to address their economic grievances against monopolies, abusive railroad practices, high tariffs, and land speculation. Members of the Alliance, though, were far from unified as to what approach to take in order to achieve their desired reforms. While many advocated working within the existing power structure through the Democratic Party, others sought an independent farmer-labor movement and the creation of a new party that represented their interests. These political differences eventually tore the Alliance apart and resulted in the formation of the People's Party in the early 1890s. E.O. Meitzen, as a leader of the Alliance, was directly engaged in this struggle, first as an active member of the Democratic Party, then as an agitator for independent political action. By 1892, he was convinced that farmers needed their own political party, one that would also reach out to wage workers to build a viable alternative political movement.

The political split within the Texas Farmers' Alliance, in many ways, originated in the positions individual Alliance members and local sub-Alliances took toward the Great Southwestern Strike, which began in March 1886, in Marshall, Texas. The Jeffersonian independent yeomen beliefs of Alliance farmers coalesced with the free labor philosophy of Knights of Labor (KOL) members under a shared anti-monopoly ideology. Just like many Alliance members, Martin Irons--a leader of the Southwestern Strike, had been a member of the Grange because of its anti-monopoly ideology. This ideology felt that the

single-minded drive for wealth by industrial magnates had caused economic misery and given elites a dangerous amount of political influence and control that threatened the existence of a democratic republic.[278] The question of how to stop the growing economic and political monopoly of these robber barons, however, became a central point of division within the Alliance.

Up until this point the Alliance, under the leadership of state Alliance president Andrew Dunlap, had put its efforts into the establishment of Alliance-run cooperative stores across the state. The Alliance believed that by having their own stores they could break the monopolistic control of large economic concerns. One can view cooperatives as attempts to better the lives of the workers and farmers while avoiding class conflict. Dunlap, and those like him who pushed the cooperative stores plan, had precisely sought to avoid the type of class conflict-fueled violence witnesses during the Southwest Strike. They believed that cooperative stores, coupled with working for reforms within the Democratic Party, would bring to an end the growing conflict between labor and capital that portended a tearing asunder of the country.

Radical-minded Alliance members through their experiences in the Southwestern Strike, came to different conclusions than Dunlap over how to confront the rising unchecked power of capitalists. Rather than distancing themselves from the KOL, due to the violence seen during the strike, they favored a deeper alliance with the KOL and other labor organizations for independent working-class political action. They viewed the use of the state militia and Texas Rangers by Democratic Governor Ireland, as well as Pinkerton agents and the courts, to suppress the strike, as evidence that the government

[278] Theresa A. Case. *The Great Southwest Railroad Strike and Free Labor* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2010), 32, 38, 39, 154.

was already in the hands of corporate interests and that they could not redress their grievances through the Democratic Party.

William Lamb, the person with the most direct knowledge of the cooperative plan, helped lead the radical Alliance faction in favor of a partnership with labor and the KOL during the strike. As the state purchasing agent for the Alliance's cooperative stores, Lamb witnessed first-hand the limited effect of cooperative stores. At the practical level Lamb found that many manufacturers of agricultural equipment and supplies were unwilling to sell directly to Alliance stores.[279] Lamb joined the KOL, like Meitzen, and was part of a political network of radical KOL and Alliance members that dated back, for many to their previous memberships in the GLP and the Grange.

Through the strike Lamb, and other Alliance members, began to see their struggle as one between economic classes. Lamb spoke out against "manufacturers" who have "organized against us." In contrast he favored a national farmer-labor political coalition to transform the American political landscape. Lamb's statements and actions flowed his, other radical's, views that farmers were no longer independent yeoman, but instead were now a part of the working class. This view would guide the ideology and actions of farmer-labor radicals in Texas from this point into the next century, often putting them at odds with many of their northern counterparts who placed farmers in a separate class than wageworkers. To this end, the Montague County Alliance, with Lamb as president, sent forth a proclamation calling for a boycott of goods shipped on Gould lines in support of the KOL.[280]

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[279] Lawrence Goodwyn, *Democratic Promise: The Populist Moment in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 59.

[280] Goodwyn, *Democratic Promise*, 59-60; Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment*, 36.

The boycott call of the Montague County Alliance brought an immediate rebuke from Dunlap, who complained that Lamb did not have the authority to issue such a boycott. The Dunlap-Lamb conflict revealed a deep conflict between the conservatism of the Alliances' top officials and the more radical outlook of much of the rank and file. Dunlap, who feared the attacks that a coalition between the Alliance and the controversial KOL would invite from the pro-business press and large farm owners, believed that such a partnership would also interfere with the workings of commerce and business by more experienced men and violate the non-partisan stance of the Alliance. Lamb, on the other hand, considered a farmer-labor political alliance as a necessity if farmers were to achieve their vision of a cooperative commonwealth. Many rank-and-file Alliance members agreed with Lamb. They saw that the same corporate interests allied against them, were also allied against the KOL and wage laborers. One farmer in support of the boycott railed: "we have to combat with a strong opposition and we have simply to put our brains and numbers against capital." Four county Alliances passed resolutions in support of the boycott call. This included the Dallas County Alliance that also participated in a local boycott call of the Dallas KOL against a merchandising firm due to a labor conflict. Two local Alliances within Dallas County, though, came out against the Lamb boycott call. As a result of this internal split, the newly revitalized Farmers' Alliance stood on the verge of collapse.[281]

Daws, the state lecturer most responsible for the Alliance's recent growth, advanced a third position to solve the Dunlap-Lamb conflict. He stated, "There is a way to take part in politics without having it in the order. Call each neighborhood together and organize

[281] Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment*, 37-39; Goodwyn, *Democratic Promise*, 57, 62; *Rural Citizen*, March 18, 1886 as quoted in Goodwyn, *Democratic Promise*, 62.

anti-monopoly leagues … and nominate candidates for office."[282] As detailed in the last chapter, some Alliance members followed Daws's advice and organized local farmer-labor coalitions to select candidates for office. Though organized outside of the Alliance, these coalitions were made up largely of and led by Alliance members, who thus gained valuable political experience. As Robert C. McMath, Jr., argued, "The question was no longer whether, but how the Alliance would exert political pressure."[283]

When delegates gathered in Cleburne, Texas for the state Alliance's first official state convention in August 1886, in the aftermath of the Southwest Strike and during the Haymarket trial, the movement stood deeply divided. The conservatives, led by Dunlap, opposed Alliance involvement in independent politics, while the more radical elements led by Daws, Lamb, and Evan Jones represented the continuity of the Greenback critique of capital and the vision of a farmer-labor coalition. With state legislative and congressional elections approaching in the fall, the radical elements composed a platform that expressed their views. This platform became known as the Cleburne demands.[284]

The Cleburne demands grafted much from of the KOL's Reading platform of 1878. The demands called for the recognition of trade unions and co-operative stores, equal taxation of land, a ban on foreign ownership of land, ending convict labor, the creation of a National Bureau of Labor Statistics, and wage protection for laborers. Not included in the Reading platform, but included at Cleburne, were demands to create an Interstate Commerce Commission to regulate railroads, outlawing trading in futures of agricultural

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[282] Quoted in Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment*, 43.

[283] McMath, *Populist Vanguard*, 25.

[284] Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment*, 51; McMath, *Populist Vanguard*, 26; Hild, *Greenbackers, Knights of Labor, and Populists,* 86.

commodities, removal of illegal fences, increasing the money supply through the coinage of both gold and silver, and calling for the convening of a national conference "to discuss such measures as may be of interest to all laboring classes." The platform was adopted by a vote of 92 to 75, but only after much debate and opposition from the Alliance's conservative elements led by Dunlap.[285]

Upset over the adoption of the Cleburne demands, the conservatives and Dunlap took steps to form a rival "Grand State Farmers' Alliance," taking with them the treasury of the regular Alliance. Into the schism between the Dunlap officialdom and Alliance radicals stepped Charles Macune. Macune was a thirty-five-year-old farmer, physician, Methodist preacher, newspaper editor, and lawyer who had impressed convention delegates with his oratorical skills and creative economic mind. He brokered a truce between the factions in which Dunlap remained president of the Alliance. To satisfy the radicals, Macune advocated the expansion of the Alliance by merging with progressive farm organizations in other states.[286]

The truce did not last long. Dunlap resigned from the Alliance shortly after the Cleburne convention, and Macune stepped into the state presidency of the Alliance with the treasury safely secured. The state Alliance also switched its official newspaper from the conservative Jacksboro *Rural Citizen* to the state's leading anti-monopoly paper, the *Mercury* (soon to be called the *Southern Mercury*) based in Dallas. Despite this split, the positive response by farmers to the Cleburne demands resulted in spectacular growth for the Alliance. By year's end, the Alliance numbered over 200,000 members. It was during

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[285] Hild, *Greenbackers, Knights of Labor, and Populists*, 3-4, 86; McMath, *American Populism,* 79-80; *Galveston Daily News*, August 8, 1886.

[286] Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment*, 51-52; Hild, *Greenbackers, Knights of Labor, and Populists*, 86.

this rapid rate of growth that the Fayette County Alliance was chartered with Meitzen chosen as secretary.[287]

When the Alliance met in convention in Waco in January 1887, members still carried with them the divisions of the previous convention. Though the Alliance had rejected the non-partisan stance of the previous leadership, and favored a move into politics, this did not translate into an endorsement of third party or independent politics. The majority of the membership still held true to the party of their fathers, the Democratic Party, hoping that it could be transformed into a party of laborers and farmers. Advocates of independent political action had rejected this stance, arguing that the railroad corporations controlled the Democratic Party.[288]

In order to bring together the contending fractions, Macune put forth a plan of action that united the Alliance by confronting a problem faced by most farmers–that of obtaining credit. Macune proposed a central statewide Farmers' Alliance Exchange. By acting as the main purchasing and marketing agent of the cotton crop of Alliance members, and by offering savings on farm equipment through buying in bulk, directly from the manufacturer, the Exchange would free members from the crop-lien system. Macune also saw the need to unite the entire cotton belt, in order to confront the economic monopolies that currently controlled Southern agriculture. Taking a step toward this, the Texas Farmers' Alliance merged with the Louisiana Farmers Union and became the National Farmers Alliance and Cooperative Union at the Waco convention—

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[287] Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment*, 52; Bruce Palmer, "SOUTHERN MERCURY," *Handbook of Texas Online*; *La Grange Journal*, November 4, 1886, April 28, 1887.

[288] Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment*, 43, 53.

appeasing the radical-minded Alliance members' desires to create a national organization.[289]

Imbued with the spirit of the cooperative vision of Macune, Meitzen and members of the Fayette County Alliance met on April 1, 1887. At that time, the county had 750 Alliance members and 26 sub-alliances. As Goodwyn points out, "The central educational tool of the Farmers' Alliance was the cooperative experiment itself."[290] The cooperative experiment included the statewide Exchange, but also cooperative stores, warehouses, mills, and gins. As secretary, Meitzen helped pass the Fayette County Alliance resolution that called for "the erection of factories at home, on the cooperative plan, to include the money and influence of every laboring white man, seems to us a sore necessity to relieve the southern cotton farmer from that financial pressure, with which he is struggling more and more every year."[291]

The cooperative plan gave the struggling farmers of Fayette County, and their allies, concrete objectives to fight for. In the end, it also became the vehicle for Meitzen and others to learn Lamb's lesson on the limits of cooperatives under capitalism. Once again at their July 1887, meeting, the Fayette County Alliance endorsed the state and national Alliance's plans to establish cooperative stores and factories, in particular the plan to establish a mill at Marble Falls in Burnet County. They also called for cheap textbooks in local schools. In the fall, an Alliance store was established in La Grange. Unlike the Grange, which also called for cooperative enterprises, the Alliance did not shy from politics. At the July meeting, the Fayette County Alliance passed the following

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[289] Barnes, *Farmers in Rebellion,* 78-80.

[290] Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment*, 66.

[291] *La Grange Journal*, April 14, 1887, November 3, 1887.

resolution: "Resolved that we believe that the only security the people have for their future welfare is the ballot box. We suggest that the ballot box be guarded by electing men to make our laws, whose interests is identical with ours."[292]

Armed with the ideas of cooperative producerism, Alliance lecturers spread across the South in 1887. By the fall, solid state Alliances had been established in Louisiana, Missouri, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, the Indian Territory, and North Carolina. In Arkansas, the leading farmers' organization was the National Agricultural Wheel. In December 1888, the Wheel and the Southern Farmers' Alliance began the process of consolidation, which resulted in the Farmers' and Laborer's Union of America.[293]

Not included in this expansion were African-American farmers. Bowing to the racial power dynamics of the era, the original Cleburne convention determined that Alliance membership was open only to someone who was "a white person and over the age of sixteen." This racial restriction was reaffirmed at the Dallas convention in August 1888.[294] Barred from the white Alliance, African Americans founded their own Colored Farmers' National Alliance, which originated in Houston County, Texas, in 1886, after the Cleburne convention. As African Americans embraced the vision of a cooperative commonwealth, the Colored Alliance grew to perhaps one million members across the

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[292] *La Grange Journal*, July 7, 1887.

[293] McMath, *Populist Vanguard*, 46,59.

[294] Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment*, 58; McMath, *Populist Vanguard*, 43; Hild, *Greenbackers, Knights of Labor, and Populists*, 122; Grand State Farmers' Alliance, *Constitution and By-Laws of the Farmers' State Alliance of Texas. Adopted at Cleburne, 1886*, (Dallas: Dallas Print Company, 1886), 7; Grand State Farmers' Alliance, *Constitution and By-Laws of the Farmers' State Alliance of Texas approved at the session held at Dallas, Texas, August 1888*, (Dallas: Southern Mercury Printing, 1888), 8.

South by 1890.[295]

As the Farmers' Alliance spread across the South, E.O. and Johanna Meitzen made a move of their own. At the October 7, 1887 meeting of the Fayette County Alliance, E.O. handed in his resignation as secretary. E.O. did this as both he and Johanna had accepted teaching positions at Witting in neighboring Lavaca County. Johanna taught German and E.O. general studies. After his resignation as secretary of the Fayette County Alliance, his younger brother, Ernest August, or E. A., won the election to replace him as the county's new Alliance secretary. E. O., upon moving, became a member of the Lavaca County Alliance. From Lavaca County E.O. would base his future Populist and socialist electoral campaigns.[296]

A change in the agriculture mode of Lavaca County after the Civil War encouraged many German immigrants and their descendants to settle in the county. Prior to the Civil War, cattle ranching, along with the growing of cotton and corn, made up the base of Lavaca County's economy. By the 1880s, increased land values and low beef prices forced cattle raisers to divide up their land and sell it to farmers. Germans, Austrians, and Bohemians moved into the county and formed their own farming communities of Breslau, Vienna, Witting, Glecker, and Moravia. [297]

This period of E.O.'s Alliance, and approaching Populist activism, also was a time of continued family growth. Unfortunately, the the Meitzen's sixth and seventh children did not last long on this earth. Nora Johanna, "a beautiful, chubby little child …

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[295] Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment*, 119; Jack Abramowitz, "The Negro in the Populist Movement," *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (July, 1953), 257.

[296] U.S. Congress, *Senate Commission on Industrial Relations, Final Report and Testimony*, 9143; *La Grange Journal*, October 13, 1887; Meitzen-Williams, *History of the Meitzen Family*, n.p.

[297] Boethel, *The History of Lavaca County*, 94-95, 101.

the idol of her mother and father," died at eighteen months in January 1889, of congestion,[298] and Gerda did not survive the day she was born, September 19, 1890. Their one daughter to make it into adulthood, Frieda Johanna, was born December 16, 1892. Like her older brothers, E.R. and A.C., Frieda also engaged in socialist activism, though not for a time as long as her brothers. After Frieda came Martin Luther Meitzen, born January 19, 1895. The name reflected the Meitzen's nominal Lutheran religious beliefs, as the Lutheran Church provided a sense of community for many German Texans, as well perhaps a little of the spirit of the historical Martin Luther's rebellious stand against the Roman Catholic Church and the resulting peasant wars. The birth of their final and tenth child, Richard Waldemar, born June 3, 1897, had to have been a trying experience for E.O., and a torturous one for Johanna, as E.O. had to deliver the baby feet first.[299]

While the more radical elements of the Alliance served as traveling lecturers to establish Alliances across the South and plant the seeds of independent political action, Meitzen and a larger section of Alliance members began their reform-oriented agitation within the Democratic Party. Meitzen, shortly after moving to Lavaca County, became an Alliance activist in the Democratic Party. In May 1888, he was elected to represent the Witting at the party's Lavaca County convention. Convention delegates then elected Meitzen as a delegate to the Democratic State Convention in Fort Worth.[300]

Though united behind Macune's cooperative economic proposals, reform activists in the Democratic Party, such as Meitzen, found themselves on a different political path

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[298] *Hallettsville Herald*, January 17, 1889.

[299] Meitzen-Williams, *History of the Meitzen Family*, np.

[300] *Hallettsville Herald*, May 10, 1888.

from the one taken by radicals who favored the creation of a farmer-labor party. While the Democrats met in Fort Worth, a separate non-partisan convention of Laborers, Farmers, and Stockraisers convened in Waco with around 280 delegates from sixty-one counties "for the purpose of considering what steps, if any, should be taken in the approaching campaign." Alliance members made up a large portion of the convention, but KOL members controlled much of the convention's proceedings. The convention adopted a platform containing many of the recognizable Greenback demands, but recessed without naming any candidates.[301]

Alliance members not only made up the majority of delegates at the Waco convention, they also made a sizable showing at the Democratic convention in Fort Worth. Partly to placate the large number of Alliance members, including Meitzen, and to hold the loyalty of Texas farmers, the Democratic convention passed a resolution emphasizing "that we condemn the pools and trust combinations of financial power which are now organized and on a gigantic scale threaten with ruin every legitimate industry involved by them, and we commend the efforts being made in congress to expose and correct them."[302]At this time there existed such a large number of Alliance leaders in the Democratic Party that non-Alliance Democrats feared an Alliance take-over of the party. After making such a large presence at both conventions, the Alliance leadership made its customary statement avowing the organization's non-involvement in politics.[303]

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[301] *Southern Mercury*, April 19, 1888, quoted in Hild, *Greenbackers, Knights of Labor, and Populists*, 112. See also *Hallettsville Herald*, May 24, 1888, and *Galveston Daily News*, May 16, 1888.

[302] Reproduced in *Hallettsville Herald*, May 24, 1888.

[303] *Hallettsville Herald*, May 31, July 19, 1888.

With differing sections of the Farmers' Alliance engaged in separate political activity, the Alliance faced the larger problem of a faltering state Exchange. The hope had been that the Exchange would be funded by a $2 assessment fee from each of the Alliance's 200,000 members in Texas. By April 1888, however, the Exchange had ordered goods totaling $108, 371 yet had collected only $20, 215 in fees. Unable to secure loans from banks hostile to the Alliance, the Exchange stood on the verge of collapse as the bills came due in May for goods ordered. To address the problem, the state Alliance Executive Committee issued a call to save the Exchange by holding courthouse rallies across the state to gather support for the Exchange and to collect money on June 9th.[304]

County Alliances across the state responded to the call for courthouse rallies with the same grassroots zeal that had propelled the Alliance to its current strength. Rallies numbered in size from a few hundred to over a thousand. Both Fayette and Lavaca counties had successful rallies. W. H. Turk, president of the Lavaca County Alliance, observed, "We can truly say it was a gala day for the Alliance of Lavaca County, … And I must say never in life did I see a body of men assemble that worked as harmoniously and in unison … Brothers and sisters, let the work go bravely on."[305]

Though the courthouse rallies gave the Alliance another powerful dose of "movement culture," the Exchange could not be saved. Evidence suggests that many poor farmers, trapped in the crop-lien system, simply could not afford the $2 assessment, and that other farmers, who at one time might have been able to contribute, had already been

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[304] Barnes, *Farmers in Rebellion*, 83-86.

[305] Barnes, *Farmers in Rebellion*, 86; *La Grange Journal*, June 14, 1888; *Hallettsville Herald*, June 14, 1888.

tapped dry by having previously contributed to the Alliance's numerous other cooperative ventures. [306] Once again, a purely economic plan within a capitalist system had failed to alleviate the dire plight of southern farmers.

The failure of the state Exchange exacerbated the political divisions within the Alliance. As part of a continuing effort to seek a political solution to the economic conditions of financially strapped farmers, a second convention of Laborers, Farmers, and Stockraisers met in Fort Worth on July 3, 1888, a few days before the Texas Union Labor Party (ULP) was to meet in the same city. Chaired by William Lamb, the convention adopted a platform similar to their May platform, with an added plank calling for term limits, and this time nominated candidates for office. State Farmers' Alliance president, Evan Jones, received but turned down the nomination for governor. Although he was an advocate of independent political action, he feared that his candidacy would further fracture the Alliance. Meeting after the convention of Laborers, Farmers, and Stockraisers, the Texas ULP adopted the candidates nominated by the previous convention. This included backing Prohibition Party candidate for governor Marion Martin, who supported railroad regulation. The Texas ULP endorsed the national ULP ticket and platform, except for the woman suffrage plank. The Texas Republican Party also put its support behind the Texas ULP, though this was not enough to stop a Democratic victory at the polls.[307]

With third party advocates beginning their campaign for the ULP, Meitzen and many Alliance members continued their attempts to reform the Democratic Party.

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[306] Barnes, *Farmers in Rebellion*, 86-87.

[307] *Hallettsville Herald*, July 5, 1888; *Southern Mercury*, July 12, 1888; Hild, *Greenbackers, Knights of Labor, and Populists*, 113-114.

Meitzen continued his rise through the ranks of the Alliance and Democratic Party in Lavaca County. At the July 1888, meeting of the Lavaca County Alliance, attended by 1,000 people, he was elected to the same position he had held in the Fayette County Alliance, that of county secretary. Meitzen also served as the Democratic Party's precinct chairman in Witting and as a delegate to the party's senatorial convention in Gonzales.[308]

The faltering of the state Exchange, on the eve of the state convention of the Farmers' Alliance held in Dallas in August 1888, brought into question the viability of the co-operative economic enterprises fostered by Macune. With the Alliance's official newspaper, the *Southern Mercury,* leading the criticism of the Exchange, local alliances reported significant losses in membership. Some even questioned the future existence of the Alliance. However, the spirit that had ignited the hopes of farmers across Texas would not dim so easily. The delegates to the convention proved loyal to Macune and pledged their continued adherence to the cooperative vision. As Meitzen, who represented Lavaca County at the convention, insisted, "The few weak-kneed brothers and outsiders who imagined the Alliance is about 'ausgespielt' were never worse mistaken in their lives."[309]

After the convention, Meitzen and other delegates went home to their local Alliances, committed to reinvigorating the membership through the cooperative economic proposals of Macune. Meitzen and members of the Lavaca County Alliance held particularly true to the cooperative vision. Right before Meitzen had left for the state convention, he was elected to the board of directors of the Alliance store in Hallettsville--

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[308] *Hallettsville Herald*, July 5, 19, 1888.

[309] Barnes, *Farmers in Rebellion*, 94; Meitzen quoted in *Hallettsville Herald*, August 30, 1888, translation: played out or finished.

the county seat. Shortly after the convention, Lavaca County Alliance president, W. H. Turk, expressed his view that people only needed more education on the cooperative system in order for it to work. In a good-natured teasing of Meitzen, Turk praised his renewed commitment to cooperative principles in the pages of a local newspaper: "Well, he was a good Alliance man before he went off [to the convention], 'but Jah!' You ought to see him now. He not only looks alliance but he talks 'liance, walks 'liance and even smells 'liancy.[310]

As Lavaca County's white farmers were reaffirming their commitment to cooperative principles, the county's black farmers also began to organize. On August 4, 1888, African Americans organized a county alliance of the Colored Alliance in Hallettsville to join in the struggle for the same economic goals as those of their white neighbors.[311] At times, the two alliances would act together and at others, separately. The formation of the Colored Alliance held out the hope of biracial political cooperation but invited the threat of repression from those committed to maintaining white supremacy.

Heading into the fall of 1888, the Lavaca County Alliance continued to educate its members on the principles of cooperation against the credit system. Alliance leaders did some soul searching to explain the failure of the cooperative experiment so far. As Turk acknowledged, "Candor compels us to admit that one of the prime causes for this opposition to the Alliance can justly be laid at the Alliance door."[312] During the following weeks, the "Alliance Corner" column of the *Hallettsville Herald* became a vehicle for educating the public on the merits of cooperative enterprises as a means to alleviate the

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[310] Turk quoted in *Hallettsville Herald*, September 6, 1888; *Hallettsville Herald*, August 9, 1888.

[311] *Hallettsville Herald*, August 16, 1888.

[312] *Hallettsville Herald*, August 23, 1888.

desperate economic plight of farmers. On October 2, the county Alliance adopted a resolution, authored by Meitzen, denouncing "the course of the *Mercury*, or its present management toward the State Exchange, at Dallas and its manager C.W. Macune." A week later, the state Alliance took over editorship of the *Mercury* and through the pages of the *Mercury*, blamed the failure of the Exchange on the anti-Exchange and anti-Macune stance of the newspaper's previous editors. At the beginning of November, Meitzen reported that the Alliance co-operative store in Hallettsville was doing well.[313]

The November election returns in Lavaca County proved the strength of the cooperative-based reform movement inside the Democratic Party, and validated at least temporarily the political strategy of Meitzen and other Alliance leaders in the county. The Democratic candidate for governor, Lawrence S. Ross, carried the county with 2343 votes, compared to the ULP candidate, Marion Martin, who received only 656 votes. In Witting, where Meitzen served as Democratic Party precinct chairman, Ross received all 83 votes cast. Nevertheless, there were signs of discontent in the county over the strategy to back the Democratic Party. For example, the sub-alliance in Granberry, Lavaca County, passed a resolution supporting Martin for governor prior to the election. The National Farmers' Alliance was able to skirt the touchy issue of independent political action because of a yellow fever epidemic in Meridian, Mississippi, where a national meeting was to take place on October 10-right before the election. The meeting was rescheduled for December, safely after the election.[314]

The problems that plagued co-operatives in 1888 taught Texas Alliance members

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[313] *Hallettsville Herald*, October 4, November 1,1888; Barnes, *Farmers in Rebellion*, 94-95.

[314] *Hallettsville Herald*, September 20, 27, November 15, 1888.

valuable lessons, and raised their consciousness about the political system. According to Goodwyn, "The discovered truth was a simple one, but its political import was radical: the Alliance cooperative stood little chance of working unless fundamental changes were made in the American monetary system."[315] Radical greenback doctrines, which had shaped the dominant ideology of the agrarian movement, now mixed with the crusade for co-operatives. If co-operatives were to survive, farmers needed control over the federal government to change the monetary system. The question now stood as to whether Alliance members would take the reform path of Macune or the third party path of Lamb.

Though the Hallettsville cooperative Alliance store was reportedly doing well at the time, other nearby Alliance stores were not. By March 1889, the stores at La Grange and Schulenburg, in southern Fayette County, had failed. Alliance members were encouraged to buy stock in the Hallettsville store in order to keep it from failing as well. But as one Alliance member declared in a letter to the *Mercury,* "One of the greatest hindrances to the Alliance is the individual indebtedness of the membership." Poor debt- ridden farmers simply could not afford to buy stock in all the Alliance's various financial schemes. In 1890, Meitzen would move his family to Hallettsville in order to run the Alliance store as a full-time job.[316]

As the Alliance's financial conditions worsened, its overall membership numbers declined. The economic plight of poor farmers had changed little, and the agrarian revolt led by the Farmers' Alliance seemed to lose momentum through the winter and into the spring of 1889. At that time, however, came a call from the Georgia Farmers' Alliance to

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[315] Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment*, 84-87.

[316] Quoted in *Hallettsville Herald*, November 15, 1888. See also *Hallettsville Herald*, March 7, 14, 1889, and August 11, 1892.

boycott jute bagging for cotton.[317]

The Great Jute Boycott was the last major primarily economic strategy of the Farmers' Alliance. Jute fiber served as baling material for the marketing of cotton, which required six and one-half yards per bale. In August 1888, jute manufacturers combined to form a jute trust that raised the price of jute from $.07 per yard to $.11 and even $.14 per yard in some places. When this increase went into effect in 1888, it was too late into the season for farmers to react with a readily available jute substitute.[318]

In May 1889, Alliance leaders convened in Birmingham, Alabama, to discuss the jute issue. Out of this meeting came a resolution calling for the boycotting of jute and its replacement with cotton bagging. With Alliance membership numbers in decline, the jute boycott became an important test for the future of the Farmers' Alliance as a protest organization.[319]

Alliance members across the South, including Lavaca County, responded with fervor to the jute boycott. Lavaca County leaders regarded the boycott as the most important issue that had confronted the Alliance. As farmers refused to buy jute bagging, some even wore outfits made of cotton bagging as a form of protest. The jute boycott also served as a unifying force in the South, as local and state alliances discussed the pending merger of their state Alliances and Wheels into a single national organization. At their July meeting, the Lavaca County Alliance voted continued support to the jute boycott and endorsed the proposed merger. Meitzen was also reelected as secretary of the county

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[317] Barnes, *Farmers in Rebellion*, 98; *Hallettsville Herald*, April 11, 1889.

[318] Barnes, *Farmers in Rebellion*, 99, 106; Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment*, 88.

[319] McMath, *Populist Vanguard*, 54; *Hallettsville Herald*, May 30, 1889.

Alliance, and W. Tarkington as its new president.[320]

The results of the jute boycott were mixed at best. In the summer of 1889, jute producers backed off their drastic price increase and set the price of jute at $.09 per yard. The switch to cotton bagging also proved to be more complicated than originally thought. Cotton bagging weighed less than jute bagging, thus upsetting the established weighing practices of cotton exchanges. While the New York and New Orleans cotton exchanges agreed to compensate for the weight adjustment, the cotton exchange in Liverpool, England, refused to accept the cotton baling. The refusal of the Liverpool cotton exchange to accept cotton baling was significant in that Britain was the largest market for U.S. cotton. As these complication developed, Alliance farmers decided to stick with jute bagging. Though the price increase had been successfully beat back, the Alliance failed in its ultimate goal to destroy the jute trust.[321]

After the end of the jute boycott, as Donna Barnes writes, "The curtain closed on the major economic strategies of the Farmers' Alliance."[322] Cash-poor, debt-ridden farmers trapped in the crop-lien system could not compete with the financial power of merchants, bankers, and robber barons of corporate America. Recognizing the failure of its economic strategies, the Alliance began a move to enter electoral politics.[323]

Heading into their December 1889, convention in St. Louis, the Alliance sought numerical growth in order to expand their reach into politics. At this convention, activists

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[320] Sociologist Donna Barnes points out that "the boycott had become a symbol of the consumers' ability to control corporate America." Barnes, *Farmers in Rebellion*, 102; Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment*, 88; *Hallettsville Herald*, May 23, 30, July 18, 1889.

[321] Barnes, *Farmers in Rebellion*, 102-106.

[322] Barnes, *Farmers in Rebellion*, 106.

[323] Barnes, *Farmers in Rebellion*, 107.

sought a merger with the northern Alliance, the KOL, and the Farmers' Mutual Benefit Association--an organization akin to the Alliance in Illinois and neighboring states. While a national merger of all participating organizations did not result from this convention, the stout Kansas and North and South Dakota Alliances joined the southern Alliance to form the National Farmers' Alliance and Industrial Union (NFA&IU). The Alliance also decided to seek organizational growth in the Midwest and West and chose former Confederate officer Leonidas L. Polk, of North Carolina, a leading advocate of sectional reconciliation, as president.[324]

The most significant development coming out of the St. Louis convention was a broad agreement on the need to actively engage in politics. The convention adopted a seven-point platform that contained many of the familiar greenback demands dating back to the 1870s, this time calling for the nationalization of railroads. The one new addition to these familiar demands was the inclusion of Macune's subtreasury plan.[325]

The subtreasury plan called for the federal government to establish a system of warehouses in the agricultural areas of the country. The warehouses, or subtreasuries, would allow farmers to store their nonperishable crops until market conditions became favorable to sell. In the meantime, the federal government would provide low-interest loans, with the crops as collateral, in order for farmers to get by until the crops sold. Alliance members, particularly those in the South, responded to the plan with great enthusiasm as something that could democratize the market place, and they began to campaign for its enactment.[326]

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[324] McMath, *Populist Vanguard*, 86-89; McMath, *American Populism,* 109.

[325] McMath, *Populist Vanguard*, 109.

McMath views the subtreasury plan as "the issue that propelled the Alliance into politics, first in an effort to commit the southern Democracy to its enactment and, failing that, in an effort to establish a new party."[327] Before the subtreasury plan, though, serious efforts were already underway to establish a third party in the tradition of the Greenback Labor Party by individuals such as Evans and Lamb. What the subtreasury plan and the failed efforts to achieve its enactment did was to educate a great number of farmers on the ineffectiveness of working within the two-party system to improve their economic and social conditions. The educational experience of the subtreasury campaign created the critical mass necessary for a third party to become a viable alternative to the twin parties of big capital.

The campaign to get reform Democrats behind the St. Louis platform politicized the Farmers' Alliance, and demonstrated that the farmers of Texas were an important political force to be reckoned. The "Alliance yardstick" served as the determining factor as to whether or not Democratic candidates measured up by supporting enough Alliance planks to receive Alliance support in the 1890 election.[328] As early as the fall of 1889, Alliance Democrats began to promote Texas Attorney General, James Stephen Hogg, as a candidate for governor. Samuel Dixon, editor of the *Southern Mercury,* was an ardent Hogg supporter, frequently publishing Hogg's speeches, trumpeting his campaign, and proclaiming, "The people have long regarded him as a friend and fearless advocate of their rights."[329]

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[326] McMath, *American Populism,* 109; McMath, *Populist Vanguard*, 88.

[327] McMath, *Populist Vanguard*, 88.

[328] Hild, *Greenbackers, Knights of Labor, and Populists*, 136.

[329] McMath, *Populist Vanguard*, 99; *Southern Mercury,* January 9, May 3, 1890.

Hogg earned this reputation by advocating anti-monopoly policies in Texas, particularly against railroads. Though Hogg's anti-monopoly politics were not entirely based on progressive reform, but also financial self-interest. After Spindletop, the anti-monopoly legislation pushed by Hogg allowed his Hogg-Swayne Syndicate and other Texas oil interests to challenge Standard Oil's monopoly through the creation of the Texas Company (Texaco) in 1902. The directors of the Texas Company included much of the state's economic and political elite, including--Colonel Edward Mandel House; Hogg plus three other Texas governors--Joseph Sayers, Charles Culberson, and Samuel Lanham--lumber baron John Henry Kirby among others. William Jennings Bryan even participated in the company's land speculation in the Rio Grande Valley. The discovery of large oil fields moved Texas from a rural state to an emerging economic and political powerhouse with interests stretching from New York to Mexico.[330]

Hogg received Texas Alliance support, despite his clear opposition to the subtreasury plan. Alliance leaders reconciled this by touting Hogg's support of a state Railroad Commission that would regulate railroad corporations in Texas. Though Alliance leaders had abandoned the yardstick principle, many rank-and-file Alliance members did not, demanding that their candidates support the subtreasury plan. As Barnes notes, "The potential impact of the subtreasury, however promising it might have been for tenant and yeoman farmers, was threatening to three powerful interest groups: bankers, agricultural commodity speculators, and profiteers of the crop-lien system of finance."[331]

As a result of these struggles, Meitzen underwent a transformation from a local

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[330] Hart, *Revolutionary Mexico,* 148-151.

[331] Barnes, *Farmers in Rebellion*, 121; *Southern Mercury,* April 10, 1890.

Democratic Party leader to a statewide leader of the emerging Populist movement. He was elected as one of eight delegates from Lavaca County to the Democratic convention in San Antonio in August 1890. He and other Alliance Democrats meant to make their presence felt at the convention. The *Galveston Daily News*, which regarded Alliance Democrats as "extremists," reported that they had captured control of the convention, but they were unable to prevent the subtreasury plan from being rejected as part of the state Democratic Party's platform. Meitzen, "disgusted with the drunken antics of the Donk [Democratic Party]" at the convention, headed back to Lavaca County as a disgruntled Democrat and die-hard advocate of the subtreasury plan.[332]

The *Mercury* continued to campaign hard for Hogg, using the railroad commission issue as "a symbol of the struggle of the people to control the increasingly powerful corporations."[333] Hogg won the governorship and in Lavaca County easily defeated the Republican candidate by a margin of 2543 votes to 485.[334]

Immediately after the Texas Democratic Party's rejection of the subtreasury plan, Alliance leader and long-time third-party advocate William Lamb began an extensive campaign to educate Texas farmers on the necessity of the subtreasury plan. For Lamb, the subtreasury issue became a tool to make a clear distinction between the Democrats and a third party that would advance programs to help farmers and laborers. Through the subtreasury education campaign, Lamb, and other radicals, sought to transform the NFA&IU into the People's Party.[335]

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[332] *Galveston Daily News*, March 10, August 13, 1890; *The Rebel*, July 25, 1914.

[333] Barnes, *Farmers in Rebellion*, 119.

[334] *Hallettsville Herald*, November 27, 1890.

[335] Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment*, 148.

When the national Alliance met in Ocala, Florida, in December 1890, representatives of the Colored Alliance and KOL also attended. Both of these organizations, as well as western Alliance members, were now firmly behind the push for independent political action and the creation of a new political party. However, the battle for a third party would be fought in the South, where Alliance members remained hesitant to launch a national People's Party. Macune put forth a compromise from the southern Alliance by proposing a conference of industrial farmer and labor organizations to meet in February 1892, to revisit the issue of whether to create a third party. The Ocala convention adopted a platform similar to previous conventions and officially endorsed the subtreasury plan, which had now become a third-party issue. The question now was clear: Would southern Alliance members remain true to the subtreasury plan or the party of their fathers?[336]

The subtreasury plan had become more than a simple economic plan; it represented something greater in the minds of Texas farmers. For farmers in a rapidly industrializing country, increasingly controlled by corporations, the subtreasury plan held out the hope of a more democratic market place. The cooperative crusade allowed farmers to envision a future free from the chains of the crop lien system and the furnishing merchant. Farmers yearned to be the independent yeomen once idealized by Thomas Jefferson. The Democratic Party, though claiming to be the "party of the people," was proving to many farmers to be the party of big business.[337]

In Texas, Hogg angered many Alliance members by making members of the railroad

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[336] Hild, *Greenbackers, Knights of Labor, and Populists*, 137-138.

[337] Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment*, 157-159. While the subtreasury plan was the most important plank of the Alliance program in the South, in Western Alliance states, in particular Kansas, free silver was more important--a difference that created severe consequences for the unity of the movement in the following years. Nugent, *The Tolerant Populists*, 46-47.

commission appointed rather than elected. He further alienated them when he refused to appoint an Alliance member to the commission. On the other hand, the railroad commission did lower shipping rates within the state for grain, meal, flour, and cotton, and Hogg approved an anti-alien land bill to prohibit aliens from acquiring land titles in Texas. These actions and a future promise to bar land corporations in Texas kept many farmers in the Democratic camp.[338]

For Alliance members such as Meitzen, however, Hogg's actions were not enough. They demanded complete adherence to the Alliance platforms adopted at St. Louis and Ocala. In order to win converts to the subtreasury plan, the Alliance continued its extensive educational campaign across the state. Alliance lecturers spoke at encampment meetings that resembled religious revivals and numbered into the thousands at times. These encampments became a hallmark of the insurgent agrarian movement in Texas that continued through its Populist and, even later, its socialist phases.[339]

In 1891, the Texas Alliance split into pro- and anti-Hogg factions. This split led to the formation of the People's Party in Texas in August 1891. From this factional struggle, Meitzen, who distinguished himself during this period as a capable defender of the subtreasury plan, rose from the ranks to become a statewide subtreasury leader.[340]

Throughout the month of April, Meitzen engaged in an extensive written debate in the pages of the *Hallettsville Herald* over the principles of the subtreasury plan. By September, his written defense of the plan appeared in the *Galveston Daily News*--a

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[338] *Hallettsville Herald*, February 5, 1891; Hild, *Greenbackers, Knights of Labor, and Populists*, 164.

[339] *Hallettsville Herald*, July 30, 1891; Barnes, *Farmers in Rebellion*, 124.

[340] *Hallettsville Herald*, August 27, 1891.

major daily newspaper of the time.[341]

The split within the Alliance took a dramatic turn on March 4, 1891, when the Alliance friends of Governor Hogg issued what became known as the *Austin Manifesto*. The *Austin Manifesto* denounced the Alliance's legislative committee, complaining that it was taking the Alliance into politics and toward a union with the growing third-party movement. From this point forward, the Alliance was divided into two antagonistic wings, neither of which was willing to compromise.[342]

At the April meeting of the Lavaca County Alliance, resolutions were passed denouncing the *Austin Manifesto* and endorsing the Ocala platform, including the subtreasury plan. Though denouncing the *Austin Manifesto,* the county Alliance had yet to take the third-party path. After the county meeting, the *Hallettsville Herald* interviewed "a number of well-informed" Alliance members and reported: "The *Herald* has not found a general third party sentiment in this section. The opinion rather obtains that the best policy is to affect their purposes by influencing the present political organizations. But the order is essentially political."[343]

Although Lavaca County Alliance members thought it best to pursue a strategy of working within the Democratic Party, the party's actions caused them to re-think their loyalty to the party of their fathers. For example, Hogg proposed that surplus money from public land sales be loaned to railroad corporations, rather than placed in a public school fund. Also, former president of the United States, Grover Cleveland, the party's likely

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[341] *Hallettsville Herald*, April 9, 16, 23, 1891; *Galveston Daily News*, September 22, 1891.

[342] Roscoe Martin, *The People's Party in Texas: A Study in Third-Party Politics* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1933), 36-37.

[343] *Hallettsville Herald*, April 16, 1891.

candidate for president again in 1892, came out against the subtreasury plan and the free coinage of silver. Actions like these caused Lavaca County Alliance member W.P. Laughter to ask, "What is the Democratic party that we are required to sacrifice everything on its altar? … We feel our hearts going out to our brethren of the north, and the hold the Democratic party had upon us begins to slip…"[344]

The Ocala conference had compromised on the question of a third party by deciding to hold a conference on the issue in February 1892. At this conference, third party activists, acting on their own, called for all reform organizations to meet in Cincinnati in May to form a new national party. In May 1891, the Cincinnati conference adopted a familiar greenback critique platform, elected a national executive committee, and adopted the "People's Party" as the name of the new party. The Cincinnati conference received prominent coverage in newspapers across Texas, including Hallettsville.[345]

As People's Party activists continued their work, Democratic leaders in the Alliance, such as Meitzen, pushed forward on their subtreasury education campaign. The Alliance encampment remained their main educational tool. One such encampment in July at Sulphur Springs drew 6,000 people. Though not touted as such, newspapers described the meeting as "strictly a third party affair."[346]

Spirited on by the enthusiastic response that workers and farmers in Texas were giving to the creation of the People's Party in Cincinnati, Lamb called for a founding convention of the People's Party in Texas to take place in Dallas on August 17, 1891.

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[344] *Hallettsville Herald*, April 9, 30, May 7, 1891.

[345] McMath, *Populist Vanguard*, 107; Hild, *Greenbackers, Knights of Labor, and Populists*, 139; *Hallettsville Herald*, May 21, 1891.

[346] *Hallettsville Herald*, July 30, 1891.

Lamb, having been elected to the National Executive Committee of the party in Cincinnati, issued the convention call in person at a meeting of the Texas State Federation of Labor in July. That Lamb made such a call at a meeting of the State Federation of Labor, which was struggling to organize at the time, shows the continued alliance of workers and farmers after the Great Southwestern Strike. The People's Party convention met as planned, elected a state executive committee of seventeen (including two African Americans), and selected a platform committee.[347]

Despite the creation of the People's Party in Texas, Lavaca County Alliance members remained within the Democratic fold. The *Hallettsville Herald* reported in October, 1891, that earlier enthusiasm for independent political action had given way to "a spirit of moderation and caution" after national Alliance lecturer Ben Terrell, visited and gave speeches in the county. Terrell, according to the *Herald,* "unequivocally expressed himself as opposed to the formation of a new party, advising his hearers to seek redress through the Democratic Party."[348]

The subtreasury split within the Democratic Party reached cataclysmic proportions shortly after Terrell's lecture. The split would propel the subtreasury Democrats such as Meitzen into the People's Party. In late October, N. W. Finley, Chairman of the State Executive Committee of the Texas Democratic Party, issued a letter in which he argued that since the state convention of 1890 had rejected the subtreasury plan, Alliance Democrats "should not be allowed to participate in Democratic primaries."[349]

Finley's "ukase" enraged Alliance members, who now faced an ultimatum: either

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[347] *Hallettsville Herald*, June 11, 1891; Martin, *The People's Party in Texas*, 40-41.

[348] *Hallettsville Herald*, October 22, 1891.

[349] Martin, *The People's Party in Texas*, 39-40.

resign from the Alliance or quit the Democratic Party. In response to Finley, a secret conference of prominent Alliance members was held on November 14, 1891, in Dallas. Meitzen, who had become a recognized subtreasury leader, attended, along with state Alliance president Evan Jones, Alliance legislative committee head, Harry Tracy, and other state leaders. Upon returning to Hallettsville, Meitzen emphatically proclaimed, "We do not propose to be read out of the Democratic party by the dictum of one man. We are Democrats and Mr. Finley's letter cannot change the fact."[350]

On November 24, the Alliance leaders who met in Dallas issued what can be called the *Subtreasury Manifesto*, directed against Finley. The manifesto asserted their rights as "freemen having full possession of and control over [their] own conscience." Calling themselves "true and loyal democrats," they decided to support the subtreasury plan for the benefit of the people:

> We believe in common with the great mass of laborers and producers, that during the past thirty years, if not ever since its formation, our federal government has been administered in the interest of capital, to the prejudice of labor. The tillers of the soil, the producers and property owners generally, and all other values, have submitted for many years to systematic robbery by the government, for the enrichment of capitalistic classes. . . to the details of the subtreasury plan we are not wedded … but upon the principles of the subtreasury plan we remain inflexible … without taking the advise of some 'boss.'[351]

In the midst of the factional struggle in the Democrat Party and the emergence of the People's Party, the workers of the San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railroad went on strike on December 28, 1891, demanding higher wages. The strike affected 680 miles of line across south and southwest Texas, including Hallettsville. In Hallettsville, the strike caused a cessation of mail delivery and rail travel in and out of the city, and hampered

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[350] Quoted in *Hallettsville Herald*, November 19, 1891.

[351] Manifesto reproduced in *Dallas Morning News*, November 25, 1891.

business operations. In keeping with the Farmers' Alliance's past support of the Southwestern Strike, the Lavaca County Alliance once again came to the aid of striking workers, passing a resolution expressing "heart-felt sympathy with the employees," and supporting their calls for a wage increase. The few trains that ran through town were manned by strikebreakers and protected by well-armed U.S. Marshals and Pinkerton detectives. Area strike supporters tried, but failed, to get local hotels to refuse service to scabs, but did succeed in convincing some would-be strikebreakers to seek employment elsewhere. The strike ended on January 21, 1892, with the strikers failing to gain a wage increase but maintaining their former jobs. [352] Though the strike failed, it demonstrated that the "movement culture" of agrarian insurgency included workers as well as farmers—an attempt at union missed, dismissed, by historians.

As the People's Party of Texas organized for its coming convention in February 1892, Meitzen and the Subtreasury Democrats held a conference on February 10 in Dallas. The two hundred delegates in attendance, who constituted themselves as Jeffersonian Democrats, elected an executive committee that included Meitzen and adopted a set of principles. The principles embraced the Ocala platform and included the by-now characteristic demands concerning land, transportation, and finance. The conference ended by calling for the creation of Democratic clubs to carry out the demands. Asked to comment on the Dallas conference, William Lamb, chairman of the executive committee of the People's Party of Texas, retorted, "I expect no reform under neither of the old parties." Lamb also expressed a concern that a deceitful Democratic Party might absorb the Democratic clubs being organized by the Jeffersonians.[353]

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[352] *Hallettsville Herald*, January 7,14, 21, 1892.

As the national labor conference proposed by Macune, taking place in St. Louis, approached, the NFA&IU had expanded into thirty-six states with well over a million members. J. W. King, editor of the "Alliance Corner" in the *Hallettsville Herald,* began to promote the coming conference. When the conference convened on February 23, Alliance members far outnumbered representatives of other organizations, including the KOL and the Colored Alliance. After a rowdy conference at which opponents of a new party failed to derail the movement, a platform similar to that of the NFA&IU was adopted. More significantly, the conference urged all citizens who support the conference platform to organize public meetings on the last Saturday of March, to ratify the demands and elect delegates to a national People's Party nominating convention in Omaha on July 4. The People's Party had now all but formally absorbed the NFA&IU.[354]

After the St. Louis conference, a *Hallettsville Herald* reporter who interviewed Meitzen reported, "Mr. Meitzen while he questioned the wisdom of the action taken at St. Louis, yet said very emphatically that a decision meant a third party in Texas, and that in due time county and minor organizations would be formed wherever the Alliance had a membership sufficient to justify it." Meitzen had been slow to abandon the Democratic Party, but the Alliance came first. If furthering the work of the Alliance now meant leaving the Democratic Party, he was ready to take that step. On March 11, 1892, he and eleven other Alliance members in Lavaca County issued a call "To every lover of our country residing in Lavaca county irrespective of former political affiliation" to join them at a meeting in Hallettsville to organize the People's Party in Lavaca County. Their

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[353] *Dallas Morning News*, February 11, 1892.

[354] *Hallettsville Herald*, January 14, 21, February 11, 1892; McMath, *Populist Vanguard*, 106, 130-131.

appeal drew on the heritage of the American Revolution: "Bear in mind the noble ancestry from whom we descend. Follow the example sat you by the patriots of 1776."[355]

With five hundred fellow residents, the majority of them farmers, gathered before him, Meitzen ascended the platform in front of the Hallettsville courthouse on March 26, 1892. Gripped in his hand was a copy of the St. Louis platform. Loosening the paper from his hand, Meitzen, full of determination, read aloud the platform denouncing monopolies, calling for direct democracy, demanding land reform, the abolition of the national bank system, and the nationalization of transportation. After finishing, Meitzen read the same again, this time in German. Then someone else read the platform in Bohemian. Upon completion a show of hands was called for to approve the platform. The assembled crowd, as the *Hallettsville Herald* observed, "crossed the dead line that separated them from the party of their fathers and of their youth and manhood without regret, and with the enthusiasm of new converts some even administered a parting kick at its intangible corpus." In this manner, the St. Louis platform gained approval and the People's Party of Lavaca County was formed.[356]

The mass meeting elected Meitzen as chairman. Meitzen accepted the honor and acknowledged that it would be "no soft job." Those gathered then went about selecting the remaining officers and an executive committee representing the various communities in the county. Elected to represent the town of Shiner was E.O.'s younger brother, Ernst August (E.A.). E.O. Meitzen, recognizing the large number of African Americans present, suggested they choose chairmen of their own to represent the county's black population. The meeting approved Meitzen's proposal, and African-American sections of

[355] *Hallettsville Herald*, March 3, 11, 1892.

[356] *Hallettsville Herald*, March 31, 1892.

the People's Party were organized in eight communities of Lavaca County. Another county convention was called for April 16, to elect delegates to state and district conventions. While back in Fayette County the eldest Meitzen brother, Herman John, became a leader of that county's People's Party.[357]

The final act in leading subtreasury Democrats into the People's Party came on April 11, 1892, in Dallas. There, in the Farmers' Alliance building, as the *Dallas Morning News* relayed, was "found a new infant, perhaps a giant at that. The child is the result of the marriage of the people's party and Jeffersonian democracy." Seven representatives each from the People's Party and the Jeffersonian Democrats met, and upon agreeing on the need for relief measures from six-cent cotton and debt-ridden farms, merged their organizations into the People's Party in order to present "a solid front in the name of the farmers and laborers of the state." A convention was then called for June 24 in Dallas to create a permanent state organization and choose candidates for state offices.[358] The Farmers Alliance, though maintaining its independence as a separate organization, had become an appendage of the People's Party.

As Lavaca County Populists went about the business of organizing their new party, Meitzen was struck with a personal tragedy. On April 23rd, his brother, E.A., was found dead under a tree. He had shot himself in the heart with a shotgun. E.A., although he had joined his brother in the new party, had recently become a successful businessman in Shiner. Described as a trustful and jolly man, E.A. was apparently too trusting and allowed others to steal his new found wealth. A note found next to him under the tree,

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[357] *Hallettsville Herald*, March 31, 1892; *Southern Mercury*, April 21, 1898.

[358] *Dallas Morning News*, April 12, 1892.

complained of "vultures who had fled beyond the law with his wealth."[359]

Undoubtedly still mourning the loss of his younger brother, Meitzen set about the task of organizing the People's Party. Meitzen began a series of speaking tours across the region that did not let up until the November election. As the Hallettsville People's Party elected to send fourteen whites and seven African-Americans to the upcoming Lavaca County convention, the new party spread into neighboring Gonzales and Fayette counties and nearby Brazoria County. On the same day his brother was found dead, Meitzen was in Frelsburg, Colorado County, as residents organized the party there.[360]

The Democratic Party, having been initially caught off guard by the emergence of the People's Party, quickly regrouped and went on the attack. The area point man for Lavaca County Democrats was state representative J.W. Kirk. After the call for the first People's Party convention in Lavaca County, Kirk called for democratic unity, believing that nine-tenths of the Alliance men were opposed to a third party. He vowed that the Democrats would take on Standard Oil and other trusts. Meitzen responded in the pages of the *Hallettsville Herald* by noting the Democratic Party's failure to respond to the repeated reform demands of labor organizations and its culpability in the rise of trusts and monopolies. "Therefore," Meitzen wrote, "I say cut loose from both old parties, drop our prejudice, let's come to the conclusion at last that the war is over, and let all who favor a government of, for and by the people, and not by and for political bosses and wirepullers, unite in one common cause." Meitzen further noted that if, according to Kirk, true Alliance men were opposed to a third party; Kirk must be the only true Alliance man in

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[359] Williams, *History of the Meitzen Family*, n.p.; *Hallettsville Herald*, April 28, 1892.

[360] *Hallettsville Herald*, April 14, 28,1892.

the county.[361]

The Kirk-Meitzen exchange continued at the April 16th People's Party convention of Lavaca County. After the election of officers, Kirk requested and received an hour to address the convention. He then "proceeded to tell the audience that their only hope for alleviation of the burdens that oppressed them was in adhesion to the Democratic party." After Kirk continued in this vein for thirty-five minutes, the chairman declared that his time was up. The crowd then called for Meitzen, who went about rebutting Kirk's arguments. When Kirk began questioning Meitzen, the chair declared Kirk out of order and warned that his interruptions would be tolerated no further.[362]

Kirk settled the score with Meitzen when the two debated on May 28th at Hackberry. At the debate Kirk explained that hard times were simply a result of the cycle of natural laws. As Meitzen got up to speak, the steam whistle at the nearby gin began blowing, so that in Meitzen's words, "I had to get into the middle of the crowd and exert myself to the utmost to make them hear me. Upon asking Mr. Kirk if that was a sample of his democracy, he replied sarcastically that the miller had a big head of steam to blow it off. This is absolutely the first time I had to debate against a steam whistle." The "steam whistle debate" remained a source of contention between the opposing sides for weeks to come.[363]

While juvenile disruption tactics remained a feature on the campaign trail, Democrats also attacked Populist loyalty to the South. The Democratic Party in the South was firmly associated with the "Bloody Shirt" of the Confederacy. Some felt it

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[361] *Hallettsville Herald*, March 18, 31, 1892.

[362] *Hallettsville Herald*, April 21, 1892.

[363] *Hallettsville Herald*, June 2, 30, 1892.

intolerable to those who came home maimed from the Civil War that Meitzen, "with his never tiring lungs," routinely called Democrats "bushwhackers," "grand rascals," and their party "a rotten old party."[364] As part of waving the "Bloody Shirt," Democrats also attacked the so-called Twelfth Plank of the February St. Louis conference. The Twelfth Plank called for Union soldiers to be paid the difference on their pensions between the depreciated currency they received and gold. Southern Democrats seized on this to claim a northern bias within the People's Party. Meitzen rebutted by pointing out that the issue in dispute was passed as a resolution, not a demand of the official platform, and that "the demands only mentioned money, land and transportation, but after the 200 old rebel soldier delegates and the 200 Yankee delegates met and shook hands across the bloody chasm and by a strong resolution buried that dirty old rag, 'the bloody shirt,' together with the hate and prejudice engendered during the war."[365] At this point southern radicals rejected what would become known as the Dunning School and Lost Cause view of the Civil War and Reconstruction, which glorified Democratic Redeemers and wealthy landowners as saviors of the South from Yankee invaders. They instead found common cause with their fellow working-class northerners. It would take the legal violence of Jim Crow and KKK terrorism for the Dunning School to gain sway over the South's working class.

After three months of relentless organizing across Texas, the People's Party state convention convened on June 23, 1892 in Dallas. Lavaca County sent Meitzen, along with four other delegates, including Ben Bailey--an African American from Hallettsville. At the convention, the nearly eight hundred delegates approved the St. Louis platform

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[364] *Hallettsville Herald*, June 9, 1892.

[365] *Hallettsville Herald*, May 26, 1892.

and an additional state platform. The Texas People's Party platform was the synthesis of nearly four decades of farmer-labor insurgency in the state. The platform made the usual demands concerning land ownership and government ownership of railroads. In an effort to reach out to the state's laborers, the platform included demands for the eight-hour day, the regular payment of railroad workers, the establishment of a state bureau of labor, and the end of convict labor. The platform also included demands for an effective system of public schools, free text books in the public schools, and the use of the Australian (or secret) ballot in elections. After adopting what the *Dallas Morning News* called "anti-corporation ideas," the convention nominated Thomas L. Nugent, a Christian socialist District Judge from Stephenville, for governor and Marion Martin, for lieutenant governor. Nugent had been the ULP gubernatorial candidate in 1888.[366]

Almost two weeks later, the national People's Party convention met from July 2nd to July 4th in Omaha. The convention adopted a platform similar to that approved in Texas, with a few notable additions. At the top of the platform was the demand for the free and unlimited coinage of silver and gold at the ratio of 16 to 1, and for an increase in the amount of circulating currency to $50 per capita. The rationale behind these demands was that an increase in money supply would result in an increase in prices for agricultural products, thus benefiting farmers. The platform also called for a graduated income tax and the nationalization of the telegraph and telephone industries.[367]

In choosing national candidates, the fledgling People's Party faced a more difficult challenge. NFA&IU president L.L. Polk, the consensus choice as the party's presidential candidate before the convention, had died at the age of fifty-five on June 11. Lacking a

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[366] *Hallettsville Herald*, June 23, 30, 1892; *Dallas Morning News*, June 24, 1892.

[367] *Hallettsville Herald*, July 7, 1892.

clear candidate, the party nominated the old Greenback war-horse and Union general from Iowa, James B. Weaver, for president. The party nominated ex-Confederate general James G. Field, of Virginia, for vice-president in order to balance the ticket. The selection of a former Union general for president led to more "bloody shirt" waving across the South, despite a Confederate general serving as his running mate.[368]

While the national convention met and concluded its business, Meitzen continued his vigorous speaking tour around central and east Texas promoting the People's Party. By the end of July, he had spread the word of Populism across the counties of Colorado, Austin, Fort Bend, Wharton, and Brazoria. An account of the Colorado County People's Party convention described Meitzen as "perhaps the best political economist in the state."[369]

As early as the Fayette County People's Party convention in June, Meitzen's name had surfaced as a possible candidate for Congress in the tenth district that stretched from Hallettsville to Galveston. In August, at the People's Party congressional convention, he did receive the nomination for Congress. Upon accepting the nomination, Meitzen resigned as chairman of the Lavaca County People's Party in order to continue campaigning.[370]

A group that many Populists hoped to win to their cause was African Americans. The new party did attract a limited number of African-Americans, as indicated by their presence at the local founding meeting in Lavaca County and at the state convention in Dallas. At the largely symbolic People's Party primary election on August 27th in

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[368] Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment*, 171-172; *Hallettsville Herald*, July 7, 1892.

[369] *Hallettsville Herald*, August 4, 1892; *Dallas Morning News*, August 1, 1892.

[370] *La Grange Journal*, June 16, 1892; *Hallettsville Herald*, August 11, 1892.

Hallettsville, one-half of the one hundred votes cast came from African Americans. However, Populism at this stage did not attract enough African Americans to constitute a wholesale break from the Republican Party. For example, a report indicated that after many efforts in Wharton County to win African Americans over to the third party, Populists failed to make much progress. Many African Americans still held a deep-rooted loyalty to the party of Lincoln. Also, some African Americans supported Hogg because of statements he made condemning lynching. This in effect split the African-American vote three ways in the 1892 election in Texas.[371]

A more problematic group for Populists to gain support from was that of Tejanos and Mexican Americans. Much of this population was centered around San Antonio and in the southern borderlands. For the previous decades the Democratic Party, through Tejano elites and large ranch owners yielding influence over their Mexican-American employees, controlled much of the Mexican-American vote. The Democratic vote was also supplement by the party's regular practice of bringing thousands of Mexicans across the border to cast fraudulent votes in the U.S. These votes often proved decisive for Democrats in defeating insurgent third party campaigns at the state level. This was one of the factors that prevented the GLP, KOL, and Farmers' Alliance from gaining much of a following in south Texas. An all Mexican Populist club was formed in Yoakum, a city straddling the border of Lavaca and DeWitt counties. However, more significantly Populists did carry many counties southeast of San Antonio in the 1892 and 1894 after Tejano leaders in the area joined the Populist movement.[372]

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[371] *Hallettsville Herald*, August 18, September 1, 22, 1892.

Populists also put considerable time into recruiting laborers. Meitzen traveled specifically to Galveston to court the labor vote. Galveston served as the major port along the Texas coast, employing a large number of rail and dockworkers. On September 4, 1892, the *Galveston Daily News* reported, "Meitzen is known throughout the Tenth as the 'learned blacksmith.'" Meitzen, describing his campaign, noted,

> I … have spoken wherever I could find a crowd to listen, and have talked with whomever would argue with me … If I drove by a store and saw five or six or more men there I would jump out and talk with them and explain the People's party teachings. Then I would leave them a lot of circulars and would drive away, having made several converts. This I did on every occasion. If I met a man in a crowd of Democrats who wanted to discuss the political problems with me I always discussed with him – on the corner or anywhere else – and so I made converts among the listeners if I did not convert my opponent … We are making a good fight, and we are the only party representing organized labor.[373]

Meitzen's Galveston campaign trip coincided with the state's second Labor Day celebration. He rode in a Farmers' Alliance-sponsored carriage behind a contingent of KOL organized bakers. Following the parade, Meitzen and Nugent, along with area labor leaders, addressed a crowd of three thousand, made up of labor organizations and area Alliance members.[374]

By September, according to the *Fort Worth Gazette*, the People's Party in Texas had 113,000 members and 2,800 clubs across the state. The campaign in Lavaca County concluded with a three-day encampment in Weimar's Pleasure Park from October 28th till October 30th. Speakers included Nugent, "Cyclone" Davis, Meitzen, Ben Terrell, women's rights advocate and future socialist Bettie Munn Gay, and Stump Ashby. The

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[372] Gregg Cantrell, "'Our Very Pronounced Theory of Equal Rights to All': Race, Citizenship, and Populism in the South Texas Borderlands," *Journal of American History*, Vol. 100, No. 3 (Dec. 2013), 667-670.

[373] *Hallettsville Herald*, September 15, 1892; *Galveston Daily News*, September 4, 1892.

[374] *Galveston Daily News*, September 6, 1892.

encampment also included refreshments, music, and balls each night with "dancing to entertain those that are fond of the 'light fantastic.'"[375]

Although the encampment appears to have been a success, the local *Hallettsville Herald* gave the event little coverage. As long as the local Farmers' Alliance was firmly rooted in the Democratic Party, the *Herald* gave prominent coverage to Alliance happenings. Once the Alliance went further down the third-party route, however, the pro-Hogg bias of the *Herald* tainted its reporting of the adversary party. A lack of newspaper coverage was not the only handicap faced by the Populists. In Comanche, Populist newspaper editor Thomas Gaines had his printing office destroyed by a mob of Hogg supporters. The mob then moved to his home. After they failed to burn it, they smashed the windows out with his family inside. Meitzen experienced the wrath of Hogg supporters during another trip to Galveston in November before the election. While Meitzen and Harry Tracy attempted to speak on the corner of Market and Tremont streets, a group of Hogg men surrounded and prevented them from speaking.[376]

The People's Party faced a difficult task in challenging the Hogg machine around the state. Hogg realized the large role Alliance support played in propelling him to the governorship in 1890. As a result, the 1892 Hogg platform was designed to win over possible third party converts. The platform included Populist demands of free silver, a graduated income tax, the abolition of the national banking system, and maintaining the railroad commission. However, the platform also specifically denounced the subtreasury plan and government ownership of communication and transportation. For some old-

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[375] *Hallettsville Herald*, September 29, 1892; *Hallettsville Herald*, October 13, 1892; Melissa G. Wiedenfeld, "GAY, BETTIE MUNN," *Handbook of Texas Online*.

[376] *Dallas Morning News*, reported on the success of the encampment see November 2, 6, 1892; *Hallettsville Herald*, November 10, 17, 1892.

guard Democrats, the Hogg platform conceded too much to reform demands and stood in direct conflict with the national platform particularly on free silver. In opposition to Hogg, a Democratic faction split from the state convention and nominated George Clark for governor. The Republican Party, not wanting to enter an already crowded race, endorsed Clark for governor.[377]

The November election registered impressive gains for the new party, but not enough to stop Meitzen from being soundly defeated in a three-way race with the old parties. In the nine-county district, Meitzen received 4297 votes compared to 13,017 for Democratic railroad executive Walter Gresham, and 9453 votes for Republican A.J. Rosenthal. However, Meitzen did win a plurality in Gonzales County. The county's high farm tenancy rate of over forty-one percent probably contributed to the Meitzen vote. Meitzen finished second in his own Lavaca County with 1050 votes to 1725 for Gresham. Meitzen did rather poorly in the remaining counties, including Galveston. Rosenthal won Colorado County, with its strong black Republican vote dating back to Reconstruction.[378]

In the election for governor Hogg won with 43.7% of the statewide vote, Clark finished second with 30.6%, and Nugent third with 24.9%, representing 108,483 votes. The 108,483 votes received by Nugent only amounted to half of the Alliance membership at its peak. Many workers and farmers remained loyal to the party of their fathers and feared the consequences of an openly pro-corporate Clark victory. The urban areas with their larger concentrations of laborers all went with Hogg. The workers and farmers of Texas decided to give Hogg another chance to back his Populist-sounding rhetoric with

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[377] Barnes, *Farmers in Rebellion*, 138-139.

[378] *Dallas Morning News*, November 11, 1892; *Hallettsville Herald*, November 17, 1892; Dorcas Huff Baumgartner and Genevieve B. Vollentine, "GONZALES COUNTY," *Handbook of Texas Online*; Mark Odintz, "COLORADO COUNTY," *Handbook of Texas Online*.

action. The Populists did elect one member to the state senate and eight representatives to the one hundred and twenty-eight member state house.[379]

In the state's presidential returns, the Populists did not fare any better. Weaver totaled 23.5%, or 99,418 votes. Cleveland carried the state with 56.6% of the vote. Weaver's total did surpass the Republican vote of 19.3% for Harrison. Nationally, Cleveland won with 46% of the vote, followed by Harrison with 43%. Weaver finished a distant third with 8.5%, winning only five mainly western states.[380]

When the Texas People's Party executive committee met at the end of November; however, they did so with an air of optimism. They took heart that one out of every four voters in Texas went Populist--a good number for a party in its first election. The committee also made accusations of voter fraud by claiming that the People's Party in many places was denied representation on the boards of election managers that counted the votes, and "that every sinister and corrupt expedient known to practical politics was resorted to break our ranks and the fidelity of our people, and that in certain localities many of our votes were not counted." They also pointed to the "specter" of the force bill (a law that would have used federal marshals to enforce black voting rights) pushed by northern Republicans and the image of federal troops possibly returning to the South, as a factor in keeping many southerners in the Democratic camp.[381]

In evaluating their campaign performance, the state executive committee acknowledged the lack of support they gained from labor. "Our people crowded to the front in the late campaign, up bearing the banner of labor's cause, but alas! they did not

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[379] Barnes, *Farmers in Rebellion*, 142; Martin, *The People's Party in Texas*, 210-211.

[380] Barnes, *Farmers in Rebellion*, 144; Unger, *These United States*, 961.

[381] *Hallettsville Herald*, December 1, 15, 1892.

always find the city laborer where the shadow of that banner fell upon the uprising host. Yet he will be there when the next battle is joined, and when the farmer and artisan link together in the ties of a true fraternity, will stand side by side in the perilous places, to deliver the last shot and wield the last blow in defense of the common cause."[382]

After the election, Meitzen accepted an appointment as assistant state lecturer for the Farmers' Alliance. The Lavaca County Alliance, realizing the large amount of time Meitzen would be spending as he lectured across the state, decided to close down the Lavaca County Mercantile Co-op, of which Meitzen had been general manager for the past two years. Meitzen spent much of 1893 lecturing in German and English across Texas on the topic of "Hard Times and the Way Out."[383]

As political scientist Roscoe Martin observed, "The keynote of the People's Party peace time campaign was *education*."[384] At the start of the new year, the Texas People's Party made an effort to establish party organs throughout the state, regarding further education of the public on the party's platform as a key for success in the next round of elections. Foremost of the papers established was the *Texas Advance*, of Fort Worth, which in a short period moved to Dallas. After a few years of struggling due to organizational and financial difficulties, the *Texas Advance* ended its run in 1894. At this point, the *Southern Mercury*, the main organ of the state Farmers' Alliance, became the official organ of both the Alliance and People's Party, a more than symbolic example of how the Alliance was rapidly losing itself in the new party. A joint state leadership

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[382] *Hallettsville Herald*, December 15, 1892.

[383] *Dallas Morning News*, January 8, 1893; *Hallettsville Herald*, February 23, May 11, August 3, 1893.

[384] Martin, *The People's Party in Texas*, 162 (emphasis in original).

meeting of the Alliance and People's Party in August 1893, furthered this trend when each endorsed the other's demands and launched a joint educational campaign. At this point, as McMath observes, the Alliance "was virtually a paper organization."[385]

Taking their cue from state leaders, the Lavaca County People's Party met in August and decided to establish an official organ in Lavaca County. The funding came from inducing stockholders of the defunct Alliance co-operative store to reinvest in a Populist paper. In November, Meitzen, along with four other Populists, purchased the *Hallettsville New Era*. Meitzen, who was named editor, vowed, "The basis of my editorial views will at all times be the principles of the present platform of the People's party." Meitzen, a former teacher, in his words now "became an educator of the grown-up people," or as local historian Paul Boethel put it, he became a plague on "the Establishment." From 1892 to 1895 the number of Texas reform papers grew from twenty-one to eighty-five. By 1914, however, the *New Era* remained "the only populist paper that stayed alive and never went back to the old parties."[386]

As the People's Party set upon an ambitious educational campaign in 1893, the nation was hit with its worst economic depression until the 1930s. Cotton sales dropped by 25%, iron sales by 38%, and dry good sales by 20%. During the year, 15,000 businesses failed, causing widespread unemployment and financial hardship. Among industrial workers, unemployment reached 20%.[387] With the country in a full-blown

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[385] *Hallettsville Herald*, January 5, August 31, 1893; Martin, *The People's Party in Texas*, 191-192; McMath, *Populist Vanguard*, 148.

[386] *Hallettsville Herald*, July 27, November 9, 1893; *Dallas Morning News*, August 5, 1893; *Texas Advance*, November 18, 1893; Martin, *The People's Party in Texas*, 193; *The Rebel*, July, 25, 1914; Paul C. Boethel, *LaBaca* (Columbus, TX: Butler Office Supply and Printing Company, 1997), 37; U.S. Congress, *Senate Commission on Industrial Relations,* 9143. Unfortunately, issues of the *New Era* before March 1899 have been lost to history.

depression, the Populist message struck home to the nation's workers and farmers.

Just as the Southwest Railroad strikes of 1885 and 1886 had galvanized the Texas Farmers' Alliance, a railroad strike in 1894 would do the same for the People's Party nationally. In May, over 3,000 workers struck the Pullman railcar company outside of Chicago over wages, high rent in the company town, and union rights. The strike, backed by Eugene Debs of Indiana and the American Railway Union, soon spread and rail service out of Chicago was paralyzed. Utilizing the new strike-busting weapon of the court injunction and the tried-and-true use of National Guard troops, the rail bosses and their allies in the government fought back. Debs and other union leaders were arrested and President Cleveland sent in 2,000 federal troops to crush the strike. After months of struggle, the strike went down to defeat in August, after the American Railway Union was destroyed and twenty-five workers were killed. To many workers and farmers raised on the ideals of the American Revolution, it seemed that something was fundamentally wrong with the capital-dominated government on all levels. As the *Texas Advance* stated, "The colossal power of the United States government is now being used to place the necks of all American laborers completely and permanently under the grinding heel of organized corporate greed, and for the avowed purpose of crushing the last spark of patriotism, independence and manhood out of every American who eats his bread in the sweat of his face."[388]

Populist support for the Pullman strike in the Midwest convinced many labor organizations to join and support the Populist movement. With the backing of unions, the

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[387] *Hallettsville Herald*, January 4, 1894; McMath, *American Populism*, 181.

[388] Samuel Yellen, *American Labor Struggles, 1877-1934* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 2004), 114, 125, 136; *Texas Advance*, July 14, 1894.

People's Party was virtually a labor party in the Midwest. This was especially so in Ohio where United Mine Workers president John McBride rallied organized labor to the Populist cause during the 1894 elections. McBride rode a wave of Populist labor support to unseat Samuel Gompers as president of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) in 1894. [389] Debs expressed Populism's growing appeal to labor: "I am a populist, and am in favor of wiping both the old parties out so they will never come into power again. I have been a democrat all my life and am ashamed to admit it. I want every one of you to go to the polls and vote the populist ticket."[390] Gompers regained back the presidency in 1895 and would hold the office until his death in 1924. McBride's Populist backed presidency was the only brief reprise from the strangle hold Gompers' held on the leadership of the AFL.

Texas Populists continued to seek the support of labor when they met in convention on June 20, 1894, in Waco. The convention adopted planks that called for the eight-hour day, abolition of convict labor, a state bureau of labor, the creation of a state board of arbitration to settle disputes between workers and corporations, and government ownership of railroads and telegraph service. A mass meeting of Dallas labor organizations in August endorsed the Populist ticket.[391]

In the nomination speeches of Nugent for governor and Martin for lieutenant governor, the *Dallas Morning News* reported, "Negro and white man, ex-slave and ex-master, from the same chairs gave thanks that the barriers of race prejudice have been

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[389] Michael Pierce, *Striking with the Ballot: Ohio Labor and the Populist Party* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010), 3-5, 107-108.

[390] *Southern Mercury*, October 25, 1894.

[391] *Texas Advance*, July 7, 1894; *Southern Mercury*, August 30, 1894.

smashed and that hereafter at least in Texas all men of whatever political conviction can vote according to their judgment and not according to color, race or previous condition of servitude."[392] The color line was seemingly shattered. The hopes of a biracial alliance of workers and farmers, and its ramifications for society at-large, were now tied to the People's Party.

Meitzen, now recognized as a state leader because of the strong campaign he ran for Congress against "the greatest aristocrat in Texas, Walter Gresham," was nominated for the office of state comptroller. The issue of prohibition played a large role in the nomination of Meitzen, a German-American, for statewide office. Many German Americans believed that the People's Party favored prohibition because of the influence of prohibition leaders in the party. Martin, for example, had joined the Populists from the Prohibition Party. To ease anti-prohibition fears, the convention adopted a plank in favor of local self-government, suggesting that communities could decide for themselves issues such as prohibition. German voters strongly opposed prohibition, seeing "Sunday Beer" as a right of hard work. German-language Democratic newspapers came out hard against Meitzen, whose nomination they viewed as pandering to German voters. The *Texas Vorwärts* called him a "German worm dangling from the political fishhook of the Populists to attract German bites."[393]

While rank and file Populists pushed the labor planks of their platform, the silver issue began to draw more attention. The silver issue achieved national prominence after President Cleveland called Congress into a special session in August 1893, in order to

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[392] *Dallas Morning News*, June 22, 1894.

[393] *Texas Advance*, April 7, June 30, 1894; Martin, *The People's Party in Texas*, 107-108; *Dallas Morning News*, June 22, 1894.

repeal the Sherman Silver Purchase Act of 1890. After months of public debate, Congress repealed the part of the act that required the government to purchase silver on a monthly basis. As McMath explains, "The silver issue had become in the eyes of some farmers and other debtors, a panacea for increasing the money supply and (they believed) for reversing America's long deflationary slide."[394] The government's repeal of the purchasing clause of the Sherman Act was thus viewed by these elements as a major cause of the financial depression, and as stated in the Texas Populist platform, part of the "persistent efforts of the favored classes to force the legal enactment of the gold standard, efforts which leave no doubt of the existence of a wider conspiracy in England and Europe to dominate the finances of the world."[395]

The rise of the silver issue, to the detriment of other Populist demands, did not happen on its own. Goodwyn calls the silver issue a "shadow movement" within Populism. If silver was a "shadow movement," it was one that overshadowed everything the Populists did for the next few years. The debate over free silver took place anywhere but in the shadows, standing out as one of the major issues of the 1890s. Free silver created a conflict within the Populist movement that brought about the effectual end of the People's Party.

The debate over silver revealed fundamental differences in how various reformers viewed the economic crises of capitalism. On September 8, 1892, an article in the *Galveston Daily News* by Judge Hans Teichmueller of La Grange called "the irrepressible conflict of capital and labor" the most "perplexing social problem of the Nineteenth century, which has come to stay until solved." He continued, "rather than disguise or try

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[394] McMath, *American Populism*, 183.

[395] *Hallettsville Herald*, August 24, November 2, 1893.

to escape this conflict we should face it … and deal with it wisely." As a Democrat Teichmueller believed that the economic problems of capitalism were the result of political corruption. According to Teichmueller, one needed to "discriminate between" capital "which is honestly earned and that which is artificially created by government." He argued that through political remedies that treated capital and labor as equal, class conflict could be ended. On the other hand, Teichmueller warned of the more dangerous road to reform he felt the People's Party was taking. "The people's party," Teichmueller stated, "…recognizes the menacing conflict of labor and capital as an inseparable incident of our industrial progress, and tracing existing wrongs to all organized capital." "This party," Teichmueller warned, "not yet in name, but in its tendencies and principles, unmistakably develops as the socialistic party of the future."[396] Teichmuller's words proved accurate as Meitzen and other Populist farmer-labor radicals, just over a decade later, made the transition from Populism to socialism. Radical's opposition to pure free silver beliefs helped bring socialist ideology into the ranks of Populism.

With the rapid national expansion of the Farmers' Alliance and its blending into the People's Party, the Populist movement incorporated individuals accustomed to a brand of politics different from the more insurgent-minded Texans. Foremost among these individuals was national chairman of the People's Party, Herman E. Taubeneck. According to Goodwyn, Taubeneck and those of his ilk, including Weaver, came from a political experience in which they represented small pressure groups rather than a mass movement. As a result, they took a brokerage approach to politics that sought to achieve their goals through accommodation with the two major parties. The economic depression

[396] *Galveston Daily News*, September 8, 1892. This is the same Hans Teichmueller mentioned in Chapter Two, 120.

that began in 1893 also made professional politicians such as Taubeneck and Weaver, desperate for political office, with a fixed salary and access to the spoils of office.[397]

To Taubeneck and a significant number of other national leaders, the silver issue allowed them to put into practice their brand of accommodationist brokerage politics. Sizable silver wings existed in both the Democratic and Republican parties. From 1889 to 1890, North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Washington, Idaho, and Wyoming were granted statehood, thus adding twelve senators to Congress who bolstered the power of silver-mine owners who backed free-silver candidates. In the West, Populists had achieved electoral success in many states by fusing with either free-silver Republicans or Democrats. Taubeneck worked to fuse on a national level all of the reform forces into one party through the issue of free silver. This plan, though, would have disastrous consequences for the future of the People's Party.

With the financial backing of silver-mine owners, free-silver became the most talked about issue of the day. Silver interests backed the publication of William Harvey's pro-silver *Coin's Financial School*, making it a national bestseller. Democrats who desired to distance themselves from the disastrous "goldbug policies" of Cleveland became silverites. William Jennings Bryan was made editor of the *Omaha World-Herald*, which was owned by silver interests, and he began actively campaigning for silver. When the American Bimetallic League met in Chicago of August 1893, it claimed to be the "biggest non-political convention ever held in America," with eight hundred delegates from forty-two states. Taubeneck, wanting a part of the spoils, sought campaign

[397] Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment*, 179; Robert F. Durden, *The Climax of Populism: The Election of 1896* (Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 1965), x.

contributions from silver mining interests.[398]

The Texas People's Party in the 1894 election increased its vote total over the number of votes received in the election of 1892. Due to the turn-out he witnessed, state Populist chairman Ashby declared on the day after the election that Nugent had won, but the official count gave Democrat Charles Culberson 49% of the vote, followed by Nugent with 36%. This showed a 25% decline for the Democrats since 1892 and an 11% increase for the Populists. Populists won twenty-two seats in the state House and two in the state Senate.[399]

Other than Nugent, Meitzen received more votes than any other statewide Populist candidate with 149,859 votes. This, though, was not enough to overcome the 216,240 votes of his Democratic opponent R.W. Finley. The "German worm" did not attract as many "German bites" as hoped for. Lavaca County was the only county with a large German population that went Populist. In the county results Meitzen out polled Finley by a margin of 2,134 to 1,682 voted. The people of Lavaca County also favored Nugent over Culberson by 426 votes and elected a Populist-backed county judge, James Ballard. The local Populist campaign attacked the Democratic establishment by claiming they were allowing the San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railroad to avoid paying its county taxes.[400]

Despite the gains of the 1894 election, Populists had reason to believe that they were the victims of widespread voter fraud. On November 20, Meitzen attended an emergency

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[398] McMath, *American Populism*, 200; Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment*, 217-218; *Hallettsville Herald*, August 10, 1893.

[399] *Dallas Morning News*, November 8, 17, 1894; *Galveston Daily News*, November 15, 1894; Barnes, *Farmers in Rebellion*, 156

[400] *Galveston Daily News*, December 22, 1894; Martin, *The People's Party in Texas*, 106; *Hallettsville Herald*, October 25, November 22, 1894; Texas Secretary of State, Archives and Information Services Division, Lavaca County Election Results, 1894, Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Austin, Texas.

meeting of the People's Party state executive committee in Waco. The committee claimed, "There has been frauds, intimidation, miscounts and open violations of the election laws." Populists contended that county commissioner courts controlled by local Democrats were responsible for widespread ballot miscounts. Democrats also used the White Man's Union in many African-American strongholds to maintain white supremacy and Democratic rule through harassment and buying of black votes. Populist efforts to prove voter fraud in order to change the election results went for naught. In order not to lose momentum from the election, the Texas Populist leaders decided to begin the 1896 election campaign right away, using education as the main vehicle to convince voters, both black and white, of the need to vote Populist.[401]

Nationally, Taubeneck tried to use the Populist electoral gains to make the People's Party the party of free silver. The few Populist-backed candidates elected to the U.S. Congress had done so through fusion on the issue of free silver. Taubeneck called a conference of Populist leaders to meet on December 28, 1894 in St. Louis. The purpose of the St. Louis conference was well-known, as Taubeneck made his intentions clear to the press that he intended the People's Party to stand on the silver plank alone-eliminating the rest of Omaha platform. If Taubeneck thought a majority of Populist leaders would approve of his new course, he found out otherwise in St. Louis. As the *Southern Mercury* reported, "The effort of a few would be leaders of the people's party at the St. Louis conference to commit the party to silver to the shelving of the balance of the Omaha platform utterly failed."[402]

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[401] *Hallettsville Herald*, November 15, 1894; *Dallas Morning News*, November 22,1894; Martin, *The People's Party in Texas*, 178, 236; *Southern Mercury*, December 6, 1894.

[402] *Southern Mercury*, December 6, 1894, January 3, 1895.

At St. Louis, a coalition of Texas radicals and Chicago socialists headed by reform editor Henry Demarest Lloyd beat back the silver plans of Taubeneck and Weaver. This coalition began a working relationship in defense of the Omaha platform that climaxed at the 1896 national convention of the People's Party. The collaboration between the two groups over the next two years began a slow process in which a number of Texas radicals transformed from Populists to socialists, among them E.O. Meitzen.

With Taubeneck's plans derailed in St. Louis, the struggle between the fusionists and the middle-of-the-roaders (as the anti-fusionists called themselves, refusing to take neither the Democratic or Republican side) intensified. *The National Watchman*, a Taubeneck-backed Populist journal that worked with the Democratic silver lobby, complained "the wicked and foolish surrender to the Chicago socialists by the St. Louis meeting has cost the populist party too much already." Milton Park, editor of the *Southern Mercury* and recently elected national president of the National Reform Press Association, called such talk "nonsense," insisting that if they were socialists so were the framers of the U.S. Constitution. "These plutocrats and socialistic howlers do not know what these constitution framers really did say… 'insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare' (surely this is socialism)," Park retorted.[403]

In between the national conventions, the national, and numerous state reform press associations, served as the organized opposition to Taubeneck's fusion plans. The National Reform Press Association meeting, held in Kansas City in February 1895, voted unanimously to preserve the Omaha platform. Park put the fusionists on notice: "Taubeneck and Weaver had better practice wrestling with a cyclone before they

[403] Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment*, 218, 241; *Southern Mercury*, February 7, March 7, 14, 1895.

undertake to sidetrack the Omaha platform."[404]

As editor of the *Hallettsville New Era*, Meitzen attended the May the meeting of the Texas Reform Press Association in Dallas, which passed a resolution "That we unhesitatingly oppose any fusion or alliance with any faction or party at the sacrifice of a single principle enunciated in the Omaha platform." Other resolutions passed at the meeting denounced the sale of government bonds and called for a national income tax.[405]

Expressing the political mindset of Texas Populists was the People's Party state executive committee's address to the reform press meeting. Jointly authored by Meitzen and eight other Populist leaders on behalf of the executive committee, the address shows an evolving class consciousness and antagonism towards finance capital:

> The doctrines of vested rights and the sanctity of private property, so dear to the Anglo-Saxon heart, have been perverted to build bulwarks of defense around the unjust acquisitions of the rich and to break down the barriers once erected around the possessions of the poor. Thus the wealth produced by labor has been taken to fill the overflowing coffers of the indolent rich, while the agencies of the most powerful government on the globe have been employed to put shackles upon the laboring man.

The address blasted the corporate take-over of government, a recent U.S. Supreme Court's decision against the income tax, and the denial of habeas corpus and jailing of Eugene Debs for asserting the rights of workingmen. The address also cautioned against the growth of rampant militarism across the nation, as the U.S. prepared to intervene in the Cuban struggle for independence from Spain: "Thus does plutocracy in times of peace prepare to repress the rising spirit of freedom among the masses and provide itself with the means of perpetuating those unjust advantages which have enabled it to absorb

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[404] *Southern Mercury*, March 7, 14, 1895.

[405] *Dallas Morning News*, May 30, 1895.

so much of the county's wealth." In confronting the divide-and-conquer attempts of the pro-corporate press which claimed that the predominantly protestant People's Party supported the anti-Catholic American Protective Association (APA), the Texas executive committee's address declared that "no populist should champion the cause within the party lines of the A.P.A. order." The duty of Populists, according to the address, was to focus on the principles of land, transportation, and financial reform.[406]

In order to more effectively reach the German speakers of Texas, Meitzen advocated with Harry Tracy the need for a German-language Populist paper. The Reform Press Association agreed to start one in San Antonio, but for some reason the paper never got off the ground. Meitzen then took upon himself the responsibility of publishing a German Populist newspaper. On January 31, 1896, *Der Deutsche Anzeiger*, run by Meitzen in Hallettsville, made its appearance as the first German-language Populist paper in Texas.[407]

In an effort to reach African Americans in early 1896, Meitzen printed in the *New Era* a letter from J.B. Rayner to the African Americans of Lavaca County. Rayner, the state's leading Populist African-American orator, urged the county's black citizens to "not make promises or pledges to any democrat," and stressed that the Democratic party was an enemy to all blacks in the South. The Democratic *Hallettsville Herald* responded by printing a letter from a local African-American, W.J. Stevens. Stevens, in the same vein of Booker T. Washington's "Atlanta Compromise" which was delivered three months earlier, replied by chiding Rayner to mind his own affairs. Stevens emphasized that blacks in the county had always lived under a democratic administration, "and we

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[406] *Dallas Morning News*, May 30, 1895.

[407] *Dallas Morning News*, May 30, 1895; *Hallettsville Herald*, February 6, 1896.

have nothing very serious (all things considered) to complain of." Furthermore, Stevens recommended that Rayner should keep his addresses limited to the black journals of Texas, and that blacks should tend to their own business and be thankful for what they have.[408]

As the reform editors continued their campaign to educate farmers and laborers on the principles of the Omaha platform, Taubeneck increased his fusion efforts. Using money donated to help defray the expenses of the People's Party national executive committee, Taubeneck, Weaver, and their lieutenants traveled to the numerous state and congressional district conventions of the party in order to promote fusion plans and see that pro-fusion supporters were selected as delegates to the coming national convention. The representation of each state was also fixed in order in ensure a solid pro-fusion convention. Texas, which claimed 178,000 straight Populist votes in the last election, was given only 103 delegates, while the pro-fusion North Carolina with 46,000 Populist votes, was allowed 95 delegates. New York, with less than 8,000 votes, received an allotment of 54 delegates, and Kansas, with 127,000 votes, obtained through fusion, was allowed 95 delegates.[409]

Taubeneck also made sure that the date of the Populist national convention played into his fusion plans. Middle-of-the-roaders favored an early convention in order to stake their claim as the party of true reform. Taubeneck argued for a convention date after both the Democratic and Republican conventions, since it was unlikely that either party would nominate a pro-silver candidate, and lead to the fusion of old party silverites fusing with the Populists. If one of the parties did nominate a silverite, the Populists could then join

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[408] *Hallettsville Herald*, January 16, 1896.

[409] *Southern Mercury*, November 12, 1896.

in a united campaign for free silver. The Taubeneck-controlled national committee thus chose the date of July 22, 1896, to hold the Populist convention in St. Louis, two weeks after the Democratic convention. To further facilitate a fusion of silver forces, the American Bimetallic League, which politically and financially backed Taubeneck's efforts, created a fourth party, the National Silver Party, and decided to hold their convention at the same date and place as the Populists' convention.[410]

Rank-and-file Populists and reform editors began to see Taubeneck's convention plans as a trap. The *Southern Mercury* reacted by running an article entitled "Is There Danger Ahead?–The plans are already laid to capture the populist convention." Particularly disturbing were the plans to hold the convention during the same time and location as the silver convention and Taubeneck's own statement that "A great deal will depend on the action of the bimetallic league." Old guard insurgents feared their party would suffer the same fusion fate that befell the Greenback Labor and Union Labor parties, just as it seemed the People's Party stood on the verge of a national electoral break-through. [411]

Articles and letters attacking fusion became a regular feature of the reform press across the nation in the months leading up to July. For example, Meitzen wrote to the *Mercury*, "I am fully convinced that there is something rotten in our national committee. They are sending out free silver literature to many of the reform papers. Don't be deceived brethren: the plot will unfold in due time. The fight will come off July 22 at St. Louis. Stand to your guns, and we have nothing to fear." Further middle-of-the-road

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[410] Barnes, *Farmers in Rebellion*, 170; McMath, *American Populism*, 202; Goodwyn, *Democratic Promise*, 462.

[411] *Southern Mercury*, March 26, 1896.

militancy, typical of letters printed by the *Mercury*, was expressed by William Whiteside of Voca, Texas: "I am 75 years old and near the end of my journey of life, but I can use a gun yet. If it is necessary to get our rights under the constitution, I am ready to do all I can physically or otherwise to drive our enemies from power. If we permit our enemies to win in 1896, we may never have an opportunity to assert ourselves."[412]

Joining the single-issue silver debate on the side of anti-fusion was the recently established newspaper in Girard, Kansas, *The Appeal to Reason*. Started by Julius A. Wayland in August, 1895, the *Appeal*, according to historian James Green, "became the most successful venture in the history of American left-wing journalism and the principle catalyst for the early Socialist movement in the Southwest."[413] Originally from Indiana, Wayland first gained notoriety as the editor of a Populist-labor paper in Pueblo, Colorado. In 1890, he became a socialist. Though a socialist, Wayland campaigned for Populism in 1892, despite criticism from the Socialist Labor Party's (SLP) Daniel DeLeon. Wayland realized the recruiting ground Populism provided for socialism, with its legions of small farmers filled with the anti-corporate vision of a Cooperative Commonwealth. Many Texas Populists later cited the *Appeal* in their conversion to socialism.[414]

As the *Appeal* advocated for socialism within the Populist movement, the *Mercury* reflected the continued collaboration between Texas radicals and Chicago socialists. The *Mercury* routinely ran articles from Illinois Populists as well as speeches

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[412] *Southern Mercury*, July 9, 1896.

[413] *Appeal to Reason*, August 31, 1895; James R. Green, "Socialism and the Southwestern Class Struggle, 1898-1918: A Study of Radical Movements in Oklahoma, Texas, Louisiana, and Arkansas" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1972), 7.

[414] James R. Green, *Grass-Roots Socialism: Radical Movements in the Southwest, 1895-1943* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978), 17-19; *The Laborer*, October 31, 1908.

from Henry Demarest Lloyd and covered Debs's battle with the courts over his role in the Pullman strike. Seeing the need for labor's support to secure a Populist electoral victory, the *Appeal* openly championed Debs as the People's Party's presidential candidate, "If the populists want the laboring people to vote for them, they should nominate a laboring man. Lawyers and played-out old party politicians will not create any enthusiasm. There are men whose hands are on intimate acquaintance with manual labor who have better heads and hearts than those who, while seeing the wrongs, have always succeeded in living on the sweat of other men's faces. There is not a clearer head or warmer heart in the nation than E.V. Debs." The *Mercury* also endorsed Debs for president.[415]

These efforts against fusion and a single silver plank not only brought about charges of a socialists takeover from Taubeneck, but from Tom Watson as well. Watson, a firm middle-of-the roader, "perceived a clear conflict between socialism and individualism." The *Mercury* responded to Watson by stating, "Tom Watson appears to be greatly troubled by the socialistic ghost. Watson will please explain how a government of the people can be formed without the socialistic ingredient. Much congressional contest has made Tom Watson flighty."[416]

The debate over socialist influences was not just academic, but revealed a growing rift between the different class forces within the Populist movement. Dating back to the Grange, the agrarian revolt had brought together both small farmers and large landowners to address the economic plight of all agriculturalists. As C. Vann Woodward observed, "It is undoubtedly true that the Populist ideology was dominantly that of the landowning

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[415] *Southern Mercury*, September 19, December 26, 1895, July 16, 1896; *Appeal to Reason*, December 21, 1895, March 14, 1896; Goodwyn, *Democratic Promise*, 466.

[416] Goodwyn, *Democratic Promise*, 447; Green, *Grass-Roots Socialism*, 15; *Southern Mercury*, July 9, 1896.

farmer, who was, in many cases, the exploiter of landless tenant labor… Obviously the Populist attack did not strike at the whole system of capitalist exploitation, as did socialism, but in its time and section the Populist party formed the vanguard against the advancing capitalist plutocracy, and its fate was of vital consequence to the future." Watson, one of the largest landowners in Georgia, had more tenants on his land than his grandfather had slaves.[417]

With the economic crisis deepening in the 1890s, more and more small farmers who slipped into the ranks of tenancy made up the majority of rank-and-file Populists. As the landowning class of farmers focused on currency reform to improve their economic plight, tenant farmers embraced calls for land reform and government ownership of transportation and communication. Meitzen, calling attention to reports that the U.S. government planned to own and operate a canal through Nicaragua, insisted, "Then why should it not operate our railroads for the benefit of the people?"[418] After the collapse of the People's Party following the 1896 election, the landowning elements within the party, including Watson, eventually found their way back into the Democratic Party, while a significant number of tenant farmers willing to continue the agrarian crusade moved beyond the greenback critique and regrouped under the red banner of socialism.

At the time, the class divisions within Populism were not as apparent to all those involved. After all, Watson had, without compromise, fought the battles of Populism from the days of the Farmers' Alliance, earning him the devotion of Populists across the

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[417] C. Van Woodward, *Tom Watson: Agrarian Rebel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1938), 218-219.

[418] *Southern Mercury*, July 23, 1896.

nation "as extreme a mid-road Populist as ever breathed or wrote."[419] Yet while some Populist farmers had difficulty in realizing the class differences within their movement, many laborers did not. The *Texas State Labor Journal* declared, "If the populist party expects to maintain its reputation and standing as the representative and exponent of the workingmen, it should at once eliminate the landlord element so strong in its party councils." The *Mercury* responded in a baffled manner, questioning the existence of landlordism in the Populist party and accusing the *Labor Journal* editor of attacking all political parties in order to keep organized labor disorganized at the polls.[420]

When it came time to select delegates to the Populist national convention in St. Louis, Meitzen was chosen as one of 103 delegates to represent Texas. This would be Meitzen's first time to leave the state. The *Mercury* offered the following words to the Texas delegation preparing to leave for St. Louis:

> Don't sacrifice one solitary principle of the party creed … The *Mercury* would especially warn the delegates against the seductive blandishments of the fusionists who will be in St. Louis in great force. Remember the fate of other reform parties that entered into entangling alliances. Stick to the Omaha platform as the guiding star to success. It is the voice of the people. It is the declaration of principles purified in the crucible of patient investigation and trying analysis. It is the embodiment of the will of the people which in all correct governments should be heeded as the voice of God.[421]

The cause of the middle-of-roaders in St. Louis became especially perilous after the actions of the Democratic national convention in Chicago, where the gold bugs lost and the Democrats nominated as their candidate for president the silverite William Jennings

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[419] As quoted in Woodward, *Tom Watson*, 290.

[420] *Southern Mercury*, July 16, 1896.

[421] *Hallettsville Herald*, June 11, 1896; *Southern Mercury*, July 23, 1896; *Galveston Daily News*, August 8, 1896.

Bryan. Bryan's nomination played into the hands of Taubeneck's fusion plans. As the *Appeal to Reason* observed, "The [democratic] convention's act was a bid for the people's party endorsement. If this occurs the people's party is a thing of the past. In four years the two old parties will have the field to themselves and will do as they please and if the reformers find themselves left with[out] organization to assist, they can lay the blame where it belongs–fusion and death."[422]

Upon arriving at the convention, Meitzen and the Texas delegation immediately faced their first challenge from the fusionists. Two rival delegations from Chicago were vying to be seated as the official delegation for Cook County. One consisted of Taubeneck supporters, while the other, led by Lloyd, was composed of socialists and Debs supporters from the ARU. With the convention stacked against them, the Texas delegation needed their allies from Illinois if they stood any chance of beating back Taubeneck's fusion plans. Throwing to the wind the possibility of being labeled socialistic, the middle-of-the-roaders campaigned for the inclusion of the "Debs delegates" and won by the slim margin of 665 to 642.[423]

After the seating of delegates, mid-roaders learned that the fusionist efforts had come to such a point that they proposed that the People's Party nominate the Democratic ticket of Bryan for president and Arthur Sewall, of Maine, for vice-president. This proposal did not sit well with those who favored a straight Populist ticket. Dr. J.J. Burroughs, a delegate from Houston, voiced the concerns of the Texas delegation: "As far as I know the delegates from Texas are warm in opposition to an endorsement of Bryan. They are well acquainted with the fact that the Democrats have had a chance to

[422] *Appeal to Reason*, July 18, 1896.

[423] *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, July 24, 1896.

remonetize silver thirteen times in the last nine years and failed to do it. That is the reason we don't believe that if Bryan is elected, with both branches Democratic, we will be any nearer remonetization than we are now." The Texas delegation was deluged with telegrams from home urging them to stay middle-of-the-road and not to fuse. Five hundred people rallied in Dallas, sending their support: "Never surrender. Bryan means death." Besides Bryan, the nomination of Sewall, a conservative banker, was especially galling.[424]

In response to the proposed nomination of Bryan, the Texas delegation organized a middle-of-road conference at their delegation headquarters in the Southern Hotel. Delegates from twenty-three states attended the conference. The conference resolved that a straight ticket must be nominated and that no fusion should be entertained before the Electoral College convened. Fusion would be used only if a combination of Democratic and Populist electors was necessary to defeat McKinley, the Republican candidate for president. Upon fusing, the Populists and Democrats would split their tickets, with the party gaining the most votes assuming the presidency, and the other presidential candidate, the vice-presidency. This plan left Sewall entirely out of the equation.[425]

Seeing Sewall as the weak link of the fusion ticket, the mid-roaders successfully maneuvered to have the vice-president nominated first. Sewall, the antithesis of Populism, was soundly defeated in favor of Tom Watson for vice-president. Further heartening the mid-roaders was their successful defense of a revamped Omaha platform for the 1896 campaign. Believing that Bryan would not accept Watson or the Populist platform, and decline the Populist nomination, the mid-roaders held out the hope for a

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[424] *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, July 21, 23, 1896.

[425] *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, July 22, 1896; Goodwyn, *Democratic Promise*, 478.

straight ticket.[426]

When the convention reconvened for the final day to nominate a presidential candidate, the St. Louis papers reported that Bryan had refused to accept Watson and would not accept the Populist nomination for president. The fusionists, however, proceeded with their plan, claiming that they had received no official word from Bryan. Weaver then delivered the nominating speech for Bryan. Unfortunately, for the mid-roaders, they lacked a 'big name' candidate to counter Bryan. Debs, the favorite of many mid-roaders leading up to the convention, sent a telegraph to Lloyd: "Please, do not permit use of my name for nomination." The mid-roaders thus selected the less-than-inspiring reform editor from Chicago, S.F. Norton, as their nominee for president.[427]

Refusing to give up, the Texas delegation repeatedly interrupted the nominating roll call to inquire if a formal communication had been received from Bryan. The mid-roaders put up the cry of "No Watson, No Bryan." In truth, word had been received from Bryan, who refused to accept Watson, but the fusion-controlled chairman of the convention kept this vital information from the delegates. At the end of the balloting, Bryan beat Norton by a vote of 1,047 to 331.[428]

The Populist ballot for president shows that the radical middle-of-the-road sentiment was not confined to just Texas or southern states that had gone through the cooperative experience of the southern Farmers' Alliance. Besides Texas, which cast all of its 103 votes for Norton, the delegations of Maine, Missouri, Rhode Island, South

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[426] Goodwyn, *Democratic Promise*, 484.

[427] *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, July 26, 1896; as quoted in Nick Salvatore, *Eugene V. Debs: Citizen and Socialist* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 158.

[428] Goodwyn, *Democratic Promise*, 491; *Galveston Daily News*, July 26, 1896.

Carolina, and Wisconsin all voted in the majority for Norton. The delegations of Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, Oregon, and Washington all either split their votes or cast a significant vote for Norton. Ohio also cast eight votes for Debs. The former Alliance strongholds of Georgia and North Carolina went for Bryan.[429]

The fusionist victory in St. Louis greatly demoralized the insurgent minded rank-and-file of the Populist movement, especially in states where insurgent radical Populism was still in its incipient stage. For example, in Indiana only 100 of the 900 expected delegates showed at the state's Populist convention following St. Louis. Lacking participation from the anti-fusion rank and file, the Indiana People's Party fused with the Democrats. A similar pattern occurred in states across the nation. Though the People's Party lingered into the next century, the fusion victory at St. Louis all but ended the party's existence as a national mass party.[430]

Reeling from their defeat at the national convention, Texas Populists gathered at their state convention on August 5, 1896, in Galveston. The Texas delegation, "the immortal 103," had stood firm in St. Louis against fusion with the Democrats. Accepting William Jennings Bryan, a close friend and political ally of their archenemy, Jim Hogg, as their presidential candidate was something many Texas Populists refused to do.[431] Feeling that "the enemy of my enemy is my friend",[432] one delegate stated, "The convention was evidently manipulated in the interest of spoilsmen who ran the Chicago [Democratic] convention, and I am now in for defeating them, and I believe McKinley is

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[429] *Galveston Daily News*, July 26, 1896.

[430] *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, July 28, 1896.

[431] Goodwyn, *Democratic Promise*, 491.

[432] *Galveston Daily News*, August 5, 1896.

the man to do it and I shall vote for him."[433]

On the day after the St. Louis convention, the *Galveston Daily News* reported on a proposed fusion in Texas between Populists and Republicans. Republican leaders had made a proposition that in exchange for Republican support of Populist congressional and state candidates, Populists in turn would support McKinley for president. John Rayner was one of the architects of this fusion arrangement. Some Populists leaders now appeared willing to accept the Republican offer.[434] However, others were not. As the *Galveston Daily News* reported, "Whatever may be the desires of the leaders regarding fusion the rank and file will have none of it." As one delegated was quoted, "The man who proposes to sell Texas out to McKinley gold men on the floor of this convention will get pitched head foremost through a window."[435]

As the Galveston convention began, an air of confusion prevailed as delegates debated fusion nationally with Democrats and locally with Republicans. Contributing to the confusion was the fact that fusionist-led Populist state conventions in Kansas, Nebraska, and Colorado, defying the St. Louis convention, dropped Watson and placed Bryan and Sewall on their presidential ballots. Delegates were also left in the dark as to whether Bryan would accept the Populist nomination, given that the new Populist national chairman, Marion Butler, a U.S. Senator from North Carolina, refused to officially notify Bryan of his nomination.[436] In order to contain dissention in the ranks, Butler came to Galveston to prevent the Galveston convention from declaring on national

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[433]*Galveston Daily News*, July 27, 1896.

[434] *Galveston Daily News*, July 27, 1896; Gregg Cantrell, *Kenneth and John B. Rayner and the Limits of Southern Dissent*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 232-237

[435] *Galveston Daily News*, August 5, 1896.

[436] Goodwyn, *Democratic Promise*, 496-497.

matters.[437]

Believing that the St. Louis convention in nominating Bryan had also nominated Sewall, some delegates called for a denunciation of the convention. Meitzen spoke up, setting straight that the national convention had not nominated Sewall. The *Galveston Daily News* observed that "Meitzen said he also was one of the delegates to St. Louis, and while the convention's action did not please him in all respects he favored conservatism, and he thought if the populists could give the democrats rope enough they would hang themselves. He was willing to abide the decision of the St. Louis convention. He did not want to stir up strife. He favored [e]ndorsement in a general way, but he didn't favor hearty [e]ndorsement." Many at the convention; however, did want to stir up strife. Early on it appeared that the convention might declare for S.F. Norton as president. In the end, though, harmony prevailed in order to keep unity in the ranks. The convention endorsed neither Norton nor Bryan.[438]

In the North, workers and farmers fed-up with the two major parties had the option of voting for the SLP. The *Appeal to Reason* encouraged Populists to embrace socialism, stressing that the People's Party "has run its course, performed its mission and helped prepare the way for a party of scientific principles–the socialist party." The *Appeal* openly campaigned for the SLP's presidential ticket. The SLP did not wage a "real campaign" in the South, however, and did not hold its first convention in Texas until 1898. [439] Lacking a true champion for their cause, most Texas Populists resigned

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[437] *Galveston Daily News*, August 5, 1896.

[438] *Galveston Daily News*, August 5, 1896.

[439] *Appeal to Reason*, August 15, 1896; Green, *Grass-Roots Socialism*, 17; Ruth Allen, *Chapters in the History of Organized Labor in Texas* (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1941), 25.

themselves to lesser evilism. As J.M. Daniel, a farmer from Burleson County, stated, "I believe the democrats should [e]ndorse Watson, but if they don't I am inclined to vote for Bryan anyway, believing that a half loaf is better than no loaf at all."[440]

While not adopting the cry of "No Watson, No Bryan" as some proposed, middle-of-the-roaders in Texas expressed themselves in the selection of their state ticket and platform. Jerome Kearby, the radical lawyer who defended the KOL leaders in the Great Southwest Strike of 1886, was nominated for governor. An old Alliance radical and long-time third party man, "Stump" Ashby, received the nod for lieutenant governor, and the man responsible for much of the Farmers' Alliance's original growth, S.O. Daws, for treasurer. With a "whoop," Meitzen was nominated once again by acclamation for the office of comptroller. The convention also adopted a straight Populist platform with no fusionist compromises.[441]

In the end, the Galveston convention made no official pronouncements on statewide fusion with the Republican Party. With a member of the Republican national committee in attendance throughout, though, it appeared that some kind of arrangement had been reached. But as the *Galveston Daily News* stated, "Just how the fusion is to be brought about none on the inside can tell, and they won't."[442]

The 1896 state convention had been the largest Populist convention yet, with seven hundred people attending, including one hundred and fifty African Americans with thirty-one acting as delegates. While the convention as a whole remained silent on Republican

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[440] *Galveston Daily News*, August 5, 1896.

[441] *Galveston Daily News*, August 6, 8, 1896; *Dallas Morning News*, August 7, 8, 1896; Hild, *Greenbackers, Knights of Labor, and Populists*, 28.

[442] *Galveston Daily News*, August 9, 1896.

fusion, African-American delegates did not. Meeting as a separate caucus, the African-American delegates voted 18 to 13 to vote for McKinley electors in exchange for Republican votes for Populist state candidates. Although only African-American Populists openly declared for fusion, John Grant, State Chairman of the Republican Party, directed Republicans to campaign for Populist candidates after the Republicans fielded no candidates of their own.[443]

However, the fusion plan fell apart when William M. "Gooseneck Bill" McDonald, a leading black Republican, disregarded the plan and actively campaigned for the Democratic candidate for governor among black Texans. Populists claimed that McDonald agreed to move black votes into the Democratic column in exchange for the position of superintendent of the state Negro insane asylum. The charge was never proven, but McDonald's effectiveness in garnering black votes was widely acknowledged in aiding the Populist defeat at the polls. McDonald remained a leader of black Republicans into the 1920s, and had become by then one of the richest African Americans in the U.S. through his business and political dealings.[444]

Besides openly endorsing fusion, African-American delegates called for a plank in the Texas Populist platform to address their needs. The resolution introduced by African-American delegate Frank W. Thomas, of Navarro County, stated that African Americans, specifically, should receive full equality and justice under the law. Thomas deemed the resolution necessary on grounds that African Americans, while held accountable to the law, were prohibited from jury duty and had been practically disenfranchised at the ballot

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[443] *Galveston Daily News*, July 27, August 6, 7, 9, 1896.

[444] *Galveston Daily News*, August 6, 7, 9, 1896; Cantrell, *Kenneth and John B. Rayner and the Limits of Southern Dissent*, 232-237; *Southern Mercury*, August 13, October 22, 1896; *Chicago Defender*, July 17, 1920; *Houston Informer*, February 7, 1920, January 19, 1924.

box. Thomas also pointed to Mississippi, where a Jim Crow Constitution in 1890 had denied African Americans the right to vote. The Galveston convention did not approve Thomas's resolution, adopting instead a resolution stating, "We are in favor of equal justice and protection under the law to all citizens without reference to race, color, or nationality." In response to the biracial Populist revolt, Jim Crow legislation swept the South in the years to follow, effectively ending the political unity of poor black and white farmers achieved during the Populist era.[445]

The ambiguity over fusion at their state convention plagued Populists in the three months before the general election. In October 1896, W.M. Walton, the Populist candidate for attorney general, withdrew his candidacy, citing a secret fusion deal between Populists and Republicans. Populists countered, claiming that the Democrats' "Austin junta" bought out Walton. The state secretary of the party resigned as well over the purported fusion plan. The *Southern Mercury* reported that Ashby refused a Democratic bribe of one thousand dollars if he dropped out of the race.[446] When the *Hallettsville Herald* demanded that Meitzen express his opinion on fusion, he responded: "We have expressed it as our opinion that we would resign our candidacy for comptroller if a fusion of McKinley electors was arranged by the executive committee. We say so yet."[447]

On Election Day 1896, Populist candidates in Texas received their largest vote totals to date. Kearby, the gubernatorial candidate, received over 237,000 votes, compared to

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[445] *Galveston Daily News*, August 7, 1896; Greg Cantrell, D. Scott Barton, "Texas Populism and the Failure of Biracial Politics," *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 55, No. 4 (November, 1989), 659-692, 678; C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955, 1966), 84-85.

[446] *Hallettsville Herald*, October 22, 1896; *Southern Mercury*, October 29, 1896.

[447] *Hallettsville Herald*, October 22, 29, 1896.

nearly 153,000 votes cast for the gubernatorial candidate in 1894. Labor support helped Kearby, a longtime KOL supporter, win the Dallas and Austin vote. The total, however, proved not enough to defeat incumbent Democratic governor, Charles Culberson, who won by 11% with around 60,000 more votes than Kearby. Populist representation in the state house declined from twenty-two to six, and the number in the senate remained at two.[448]

Meitzen also received more votes than he did in 1894, but lost once again to R.W. Finley by a total of 311,580 to 222,009 votes. Meitzen had carried Lavaca County in 1894, but his home county did not turn his way in 1896, voting for his opponent by a margin of 2,865 to 1,846. Populist-backed Lavaca County Judge James Ballard also lost his reelection bid to Democrat D.A. Paulus by a total of 2, 535 to 2, 248.[449]

In Texas, the Bryan and Sewall ticket soundly defeated the Bryan and Watson ticket by 284,000 to 76,750 votes. If a fusion arrangement was made, it did not make a difference as McKinley received only 158,650 votes. A solid northern vote put McKinley in the White House.[450]

While dissention and confusion over fusion in the Populist ranks, both locally and nationally, contributed to the Populists' defeat, the vote itself revealed numerous irregularities. As the *Dallas Morning News* commented in regard to the vote totals, "in several instances there is manifest inaccuracy due to carelessness. In some cases this carelessness is so gross and inexcusable as to appear willful." The paper estimated that

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[448] *Dallas Morning News*, November 25, 1896; Martin, *People's Party in Texas*, 210-211; Hild, *Greenbackers, Knights of Labor, and Populists*, 194.

[449] *Dallas Morning News*, December 20, 1896; Lavaca County Election Results, 1894, Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Austin, Texas, Texas Secretary of State, Archives and Information Services Division; *Hallettsville Herald*, November 12, 1896.

[450] *Dallas Morning News*, November 25, 1896; Martin, *People's Party in Texas*, 243.

some 10,000 votes for Daws were counted as "scattering" because returning officers reported votes for S.O. Davis instead of S.O. Daws.[451]

More prevalent than misspelling of names was manipulation of the black voters. According to Kearby: "The negro vote in many sections was manipulated by fraud, intimidation and open bribery; the ignorant were preyed upon by slander and falsehood; the vicious and purchasable were hired by campaign funds raised to debauch the elector."[452] Populists claimed that a trip by Hogg out East was conducted in order to collect money from the Sewall campaign fund to "save Texas by replacing the white trash vote with colored votes to be bought." Ballot stuffing occurred in predominantly African-American counties, resulting in vote totals outnumbering in some cases the number of voters. In Fort Bend County, the ballot was designed in a way that when illiterate voters thought they were voting Populist, they had actually voted for Culberson. Populists believed once again that they had an election taken from them, this time through fusion and fraud.[453]

Following the election, Meitzen called "for a state People's Party meeting for consultation early in 1897, say at the reform press association or earlier. What say our Populist brethren?" Meitzen was not the only Populist calling for a reorganization of the party. Texas Populist, W.L. Franklin, stated, "Let us reorganize with a national meeting in Dallas and elect a national chairman after the manner of Milton Park, Eugene Debs, or Paul Vandervoot [president of the National Reform Press Association]. Then we will

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[451] *Dallas Morning News*, December 20, 1896.

[452] *Dallas Morning News*, December 10, 1896.

[453] *Southern Mercury*, September 17, 1896; *Dallas Morning News*, December 10, 1896.

move onward and upward and gain glorious victory in 1900."[454]

Debs had actively campaigned for Bryan, hoping to keep the Populist movement united as the "only mass-based alternative to the values of industrial capitalism."[455] This experience, along with his study of Marxism while in jail for violating an injunction against the Pullman strike, led Debs to the conclusion that labor must create its own party free from the control of corporations. To this effect Debs openly declared for socialism in January 1897: "The issue is Socialism versus Capitalism. I am for Socialism because I am for humanity. We have been cursed with the reign of gold long enough. Money constitutes no proper basis of civilization. The time has come to regenerate society–we are on the eve of universal change."[456] The Populists now would have to reorganize without Debs.

On February 20, 1897, the Texas Reform Press Association met in Dallas with Meitzen in attendance. The association met to elect delegates to the upcoming National Reform Press Association (NRPA) meeting in Memphis. Meitzen, along with Harry Tracy, Milton Park, "Cyclone" Davis, and several other reform editors were elected as delegates to Memphis. At the first national meeting of Populists since the St. Louis convention, the Texas delegates meant to make their displeasure with fusion known. As the *Dallas Morning News* observed, "Every delegate selected at [the] meeting is a middle-of-the-road populist, bitterly opposed to fusion in the future with silver democrats." As one delegate put it, "They had us grabbed at St. Louis when they forced Bryan's nomination. We are prepared for them now and it is a cinch. At Memphis we will

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[454] *Southern Mercury*, November 26, December 24, 1896.

[455] Debs quoted in Salvatore, *Eugene V. Debs*, 161-162.

[456] As quoted in Salvatore, *Eugene V. Debs*,161-162.

teach the fusionists a lesson." Immediately following the meeting, the Texas delegation boarded a train for Memphis.[457]

Not wanting to be taught such a lesson in Memphis, pro-fusion Populists met separately in Kansas City, Missouri, while the middle-of-the-road Populists convened in Memphis. Each group claimed to be the true Populist organization. This registered the first organizational split within the Populist movement as a rival reform press association formed in Kansas City.[458]

Vandervoot called the Memphis gathering "the beginning of a new era in the life of the People's party." Besides attending to NRPA business, the meeting served as an unofficial conference of Populist leaders. In his opening remarks, Vandervoot denounced the leadership of Marion Butler and other fusion leaders. Illustrating left-wing Populists' break from the old greenback critique of capitalism and a move toward socialism, many at the conference no longer viewed free silver as a cure-all and focused their demands on government ownership of the transportation and communication industries, as well as universal employment through government-backed public works projects. In order to prevent fusion in the future, Vandervoot proposed two resolutions. The first resolution recommended that proxies no longer be recognized in all conventions and conferences of the People's Party, and the second reaffirmed the resolution of the Omaha convention that no office holders shall be eligible as convention delegations. [459] These resolutions acknowledged the role proxy voting and office holding delegates beholden to fusion played in nominating Bryan in St. Louis.

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[457] *Dallas Morning News*, February 21, 1897.

[458] *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, February 24, 1897.

[459] *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, February 21, 23, 25, 1897.

Meitzen spoke in favor of the resolutions. Jumping on party disorganizers, he stated, "If the Omaha convention had been followed at St. Louis, the life would not have been fused out of our party." After Meitzen spoke, "Cyclone" Davis moved against the resolutions, arguing that office holders "were usually men of discretion and wisdom." The majority of the conference disagreed with Davis, and the resolutions were adopted. Davis, a founder of the Populist movement, had now begun his path back into the Democratic Party and the Ku Klux Klan. He later won a Democratic seat in the U.S. Congress in 1916. The NRPA conference ended with a call for Populists to regroup at a national convention to be held in July. Meanwhile, the Kansas City conference decided to meet again in the fusionist stronghold of Omaha in February 1898. The Populist movement, once united against monopolies and gold bugs, now possessed two distinct and rival wings.[460]

Proceeding without the backing of the regular organization's leadership, over six hundred mid-road Populists, including Meitzen, from twenty-eight states gathered in Nashville on July 4, 1897. The conference took a decisively anti-fusion stance and promoted the referendum and initiative as ways to wrest back the government from corporate control. The conference also created a National Organization Committee to oversee the reorganization of the party and foster antifusionism among the rank-and-file members. Milton Park was elected to head this committee.[461]

Before the Nashville conference, Populists had organized across Texas to elect

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[460] *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, February 24, 25, 1897; Goodwyn, *Democratic Promise*, 559-560.

[461] *Nashville American*, July 6, 7, 8, 1897; Barnes, *Farmers in Rebellion*, 189-190; John Hicks, *The Populist Revolt*: *A History of the Farmers' Alliance and People's Party* (Omaha: University of Nebraska Press, 1961), 381-382; *Dallas Morning News*, July 6, 10, 1897.

delegates to Nashville and voice their anger over fusion. In order to keep the momentum going after Nashville, Populists held a two-day encampment in Williamson County beginning on August 5. The event drew a large crowd, which heard a report back from Nashville by S.M. Woolsey, as well as additional addresses from J.M. Perdue, E.O. Meitzen, and G.E. Womack, who spoke on the referendum and initiative. The enthusiastic crowd presented a glimmer of hope that the People's Party could survive and grow by the next election.[462]

Besides efforts aimed at resurrecting the People's Party, Meitzen faced a legal attack during the summer of 1897. Before heading to Nashville, he was arrested in Austin along with O. Mundelius on a charge of criminal libel. Judge Julius Schutze, Austin editor of the *Texas Vorwärts*, sued the two for an article written by Mundelius and published in Meitzen's *Anzeiger* that reflected "severely" on Schuetze as an officer of the Order of the Sons of Herman, a German-American fraternal benefit society.[463]

Meitzen and Mundelius each posted bail on the day of their arrests and were released pending trial. On July 26, due to a technical variance between the indictment and the evidence, the cases against Meitzen and Mundelius were dismissed. Schuetze, determined to prosecute, immediately filed another criminal libel suit against Meitzen and Mundelius this time over a different article in the *Anzeiger*. What happened in this second case is not entirely clear, but it apparently never went anywhere either.[464]

As a Populist newspaper editor, Meitzen was not alone in facing post-fusion difficulties. With what historian John Hicks called the "shifting sands" of Populism at

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[462] *Dallas Morning News*, August 8, 1897.

[463] *Austin Daily Statesman*, July 6, 1897; *Hallettsville Herald*, July 8, 1897.

[464] *Austin Daily Statesman*, July 6, 1897; *Dallas Morning News*, July 27, 1897.

this time due to fusion and repression, the Populist support base began to erode. The decline of the reform press in Texas represented this erosion. In 1895, there existed eighty-five reform journals in eighty counties. By 1901, this number had fallen to thirty-six.[465]

As part of consolidating the Populist press, Meitzen combined his *Anzeiger* with Austin's German-language Populist paper, the *Texas Post*. To facilitate this consolidation, Meitzen leased the *New Era* to Whit Byrn, of Hallettsville, and Cyrus Pagett of Ennis. At the start of 1898, Meitzen and his family moved to Austin, where he took over the editorship of the *Texas Post* .[466]

Any hope Populists held that the divisions within their movement would heal faded as they entered the election year of 1898. Continued quarreling over fusion was tearing the People's Party apart both nationally and in Texas. In June, both wings of the Populist movement met in Omaha. The resulting "Omaha contract" stated that national chairman Butler and his faction would refrain from promoting fusion at any level and the national organization would allow each state organization to determine which route suited them best. The final part of the contract, never fully agreed upon, stated that the People's Party would not have a national convention until 1900.[467]

Radical Populists remained distrustful of the "Omaha contract," especially the stipulation that a national convention could not convene until 1900. Milton Park, as chairman of the anti-fusionist National Organization Committee, broke the "Omaha

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[465] Hicks, *The Populist Revolt*, 391; Martin, *The People's Party in Texas*, 194, 208. An example of violent repression during this time occurred in Waco on July 24, 1897, when J.B. Daniel, a labor leader and Populist editor, was assassinated at his home. See *Austin Daily Statesman*, July 25, 1897.

[466] *The Rebel*, July 25, 1914; *Hallettsville Herald*, December 30, 1897.

[467] *Austin Daily Statesman*, July 8, 1898; Barnes, *Farmers in Rebellion*, 190-191; Hicks, *Populist Revolt*, 384.

contract" and called a convention in Cincinnati on September 4, for the purpose of reorganizing the People's Party. The Cincinnati convention was poorly attended with only seventy-six delegates (seventy-two men and four women) from twelve states. Even among the die-hard middle-of-the road Populists gathered at Cincinnati, divisions surfaced. To head off any possible fusion presidential candidate in 1900, the left wing of the convention sought to nominate Populist presidential candidates two years before the election. Objecting to such a drastic measure, many of the northern delegates bolted the convention. The remaining delegates nominated Wharton Barker, a Populist editor from Philadelphia, for president and former U.S. Congressman Ignatius Donnelly of St. Paul, for vice-president.[468]

In Texas, fusion now had an able champion in "Cyclone" Davis, who, although he had helped lead the "immortal 103" against fusion in St. Louis, now viewed another straight Populist campaign as fruitless. Texas Populists, however, still went against fusion and fielded a straight Populist ticket headed by Barney Gibbs, a former Democratic lieutenant governor. Gibbs had provided free legal services to rail workers during the Great Southwest Strike, but had only recently converted to Populism in early 1896. With a less-than-enthusiastic campaign, Gibbs received only twenty-one percent of the vote, although the Populists did elect eight members to the Texas legislature, including Ed. Tarkington, of Lavaca County.[469]

Austin, where Meitzen now resided, was not immune to the turmoil tearing at the Populist movement. G.W. Mendell, who in 1894 declared himself a socialist, led the

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[468] *Dallas Morning News*, June 18, 1898; *Cincinnati Enquirer*, September 6, 7, 1898.

[469] Martin, *The People's Party in Texas*, 246; "GIBBS, BARNETT," *Handbook of Texas Online*; Barnes, *Farmers in Rebellion*, 191; *Hallettsville Herald*, November 17, 1898; *Southern Mercury*, November 24, 1898.

Travis County People's Party. Mendell's leadership perhaps reflected a broader form of radicalism among Populists in the county, so that when fusion appeared, new organizational modes of reform were sought. Travis County's Populists did not field any candidates for office in Austin or the county in the 1898 election. Instead, the area's reformers and radicals ran an independent slate of candidates.[470]

Travis County independents ran candidates for primarily county offices, besides that of state representative. Meitzen served as the candidate for county superintendent of public instruction, pledging "to so conduct himself both in and out of office as to meet the strictest rules of conduct, thereby setting an example to the children of the county." The independent slate of candidates presented a platform that stated, "Each candidate for office pledges himself to discharge honestly and faithfully, with no regard to color or party affiliations, the duties of his respective office." The independent slate, however, was soundly defeated. Meitzen lost his campaign by a margin of 4,203 to 1,576 votes. The other independent candidates received similar margins of defeat.[471]

With the reform movement in Austin stalled, the Meitzen family decided to move back to Hallettsville in December of 1898. It is not entirely clear what prompted Meitzen's sudden departure, or what became of the *Texas Post*. Perhaps being an enemy of Judge Julius Schutze, a prominent German-American politician and editor in Austin, served as a hindrance to Meitzen's economic and political future in Travis County. Returning to his support base in Lavaca County, where Populism still played a role in county politics, in any case provided Meitzen with a better opportunity to continue the

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[470] *People's Advocate*, December 22, 1893; Green, *Grass-Roots Socialism*, 15; *Austin Daily Statesman*, November 8, 1898.

[471] *Austin Daily Statesman*, November 1, 10, 1898.

agrarian crusade.[472]

Back in Hallettsville, E.O. Meitzen resumed control of the *New Era* in December 1898. In securing the financial resources to do so, Meitzen sacrificed a college education for his children. Three of his adult and teenage sons, E.R., A.C., and Benjamin Franklin, received training and employment in the *New Era*'s print shop. E.O.'s conscious choice of choosing political struggle against the establishment, even if it meant living on the edge of poverty for his family, contrasts to that of his cousin Max—the son of William Meitzen. Instead of investing his money to create a radical newspaper, Max bought a hotel and served two terms in the Texas state house, of little note, as a Democrat (1901-1905), ensuring the financial stability of his family.[473]

After the 1898 election, the *Austin Daily Statesman* declared, "Texas Populism Dead." In the context of its poor electoral showing, the People's Party disintegrated. The party now stood divided into a fusion wing led by Davis and an anti-fusion wing led by Park. Harry Tracy now sided with fusion while Jerome Kearby stood with Park (Populist gubernatorial candidate, Barney Gibbs, returned to the Democratic Party in 1899).[474]

While the Populist movement fell apart, the economic conditions that spawned it

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[472] *Hallettsville Herald*, December 8, 1898.

[473] *Hallettsville Herald*, December 29, 1898, May 5, 1899; Williams, *History of the Meitzen Family*, np; *Albany News*, February 22, 1901; *The McKinney Democrat*, March 21, 1901; *Schulenburg Sticker*, May 16, August 29, 1901, November 13, 1902.

[474] *Austin Daily Statesman*, November 14, 1898; Martin, *The People's Party in Texas*, 246-247. While the Texas Populist Party crumbled from within, North Carolina, the last stronghold of Populism, faced Democratic terrorism under the guise of white supremacy against alleged Negro domination. In 1894, the Populist-Republican fusion elected Butler to the U.S. Senate and the passage of election reform laws in 1895 resulted in a number of African-Americans being elected to the North Carolina state house in 1896. Using the specter of Negro domination, Carolina Democrats in 1898 waged a campaign of outright violence to crush the Populist-Republican coalition and restore democratic rule in North Carolina. White supremacy would dominate southern politics for the next half-century as opposed to the Populist alternative of an inter-racial alliance of workers and farmers. *Austin Daily Statesman*, November 9, 1898; Goodwyn, *Democratic Promise*, 444, 533.

persisted. The 1890s had been particularly devastating for farmers in Texas. Soaring land values and plummeting crop prices caused many farmers to lose their land and become tenant farmers. The number of tenant and share farmers in Texas increased from 95,510 in 1890 to 174,991 in 1900. Lavaca County followed this trend. The county experienced an increase in farms from 3,062 in 1890 to 3,876 in 1900, with a farm tenancy and sharecropping rise from 1,443 farms to 1,935 farms during the same period.[475] The boll weevil, which had plagued Mexican farmers for years, appeared in Corpus Christi in 1894 and rapidly spread across the state's cotton fields. In 1904, roughly 700,000 bales of cotton, worth $42 million, were lost due to the boll weevil. Farm tenancy in Texas rose from 37.6 percent in 1880 to over 52 percent in 1910.[476]

Lavaca County farmers adapted to the boll weevil and resulting cotton losses by readjusting their agricultural output. Poultry and eggs became important. Attempts were made at tobacco farming through the Hallettsville Tobacco Company, which Meitzen invested in and promoted in the *New Era*. The tobacco was of poor quality; however, and the enterprise was abandoned after a few years. Truck farming proved to be the most successful readjustment in Lavaca County, producing cucumbers, potatoes, onions, garlic, beans, sweet potatoes, and tomatoes. Cotton, though, remained king and as late as 1930, over half the county's farmland was growing cotton. No manufacturing plants existed, except those related to agriculture.[477]

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[475] United States Census, *Census Reports*, Eleventh Census of the United States Taken in the year 1890.

[476] Frank Wagner, "BOLL WEEVIL," *Handbook of Texas Online*; James Green, "Tenant Farmer Discontent and Socialist Protest in Texas, 1901-1917," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, Vol.LXXXI, No. 2, (October 1977), 133-134.

[477] *Handbook of Texas Online*, "LAVACA COUNTY"; *New Era*, October 14, 1904; Boethel, *The History of Lavaca County*, 104.

Agricultural diversification did little to halt growing tenancy and loss of land ownership. A rise in absentee land ownership and land speculation inflated land values beyond the reach of tenant farmers who wanted to own their own farms. Populism had done little to address the growing trend toward tenancy, instead calling "for the unity of rural society against northern plutocracy,"[478] whether landed or landless. C. Vann Woodward, in his biography of national Populist leader Tom Watson, notes that for Watson, "the dichotomy between dispossessed farmers and possessing farmers was one he chose to ignore."[479]

By 1900, mid-roaders firmly controlled the Texas People's Party. At the Lavaca County People's Party convention in May 1900, Meitzen once again assumed the position of county secretary. The county convention also recognized the mid-road Cincinnati Populist convention over the fusionist-led Populist convention then taking place in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. The Sioux Fall convention nominated Bryan for president and the silver Republican, Charles A. Towne, of Minnesota, for vice-president. The mid-roaders stuck to their 1898 nominations of Barker and Donnelly. [480]

In Texas, the Barker-Donnelly ticket received only six percent support with 20,981 votes. These votes made up forty-one percent of their national vote total of 50,989, representing only .36% of the popular vote nationally. Bryan once again received the Democratic nomination and once again lost to McKinley. The gubernatorial candidate of the Texas People's Party, T.J. McMinn, a San Antonio lawyer, gained only seven percent

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[478] Green, "Tenant Farmer Discontent and Socialist Protest In Texas, 1901-1917," 133-134.

[479] Woodward, *Tom Watson*, 404.

[480] *New Era*, May 4, 1900; *Cincinnati Enquirer*, May 9, 10, 11, 1900; Hicks, *Populist Revolt*, 398-400.

of the vote. As the Populist candidate for Lavaca County tax collector, Meitzen lost soundly by a vote of 1451 to 2873. The People's Party no longer served as an effective reform party.[481] Two years before his run for governor, McMinn projected the future of agrarian radicalism: "The 'Proletariat' is increasing at a frightful rate, and so-called conservative people hold their hands up in holy horror at the mention of 'Socialism.' But Socialism is growing fast, and the time is rushing us on to a decision for or against it … but in the absence of Populism, Socialism is at hand."[482]

By the end of nineteenth century, agrarian based radicalism in Texas had come a long way, both politically and organizationally, since the 1850s. The 1854 San Antonio convention of Germans had introduced radical farmer-labor ideology to working-class Texans. Nearly two decades later, the German conventions of 1873 in Fayette and Bastrop counties, leading to the creation of a localized "People's party," provided an organizational example of independent political action. When the national Greenback Labor Party arrived in Texas in the late 1870s, it was able to build on these foundations and, for the first time in Texas, farmer-labor ideology and organization came together at a statewide level. Though by the time the GLP had begun to make a modest headway in Texas, the party nationally was already in decline. Without a national, or statewide, political organization, many radical-minded Texans fell back into the Democratic fold.

Though agrarian radicals in Texas no longer had an independent political organization of their own by the early 1880s, the poor economic conditions that had led to their radicalization persisted. In order to collectively confront high freight rates and

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[481] Barnes, *Farmers in Rebellion*, 194; *Hallettsville Herald*, November 15, 1900.

[482] *Southern Mercury*, December 15, 1898.

low crop prices, farmers joined the Grange and the Farmers' Alliance. The Grange started as organization to educate farmers on the latest scientific and business methods of farming. However, once farmers came together and started talking politics, they transformed the Grange from a mutual aid organization into a political pressure group. Infused with an anti-monopoly ideology, the Grange became a platform for farmers to speak out against unfair railroad practices and establish co-operative stores. In areas of west Texas, where the Grange had yet to reach, hard-hit farmers formed the Farmers' Alliance with similar goals and methods as the Grange.

Both the Grange and Alliance had a stated non-partisan political position; however, how they each expressed their nonpartisanism diverged in dramatically different directions. Though the memberships of both organizations largely considered themselves Democrats; the Alliance, from its beginnings, had a small but influential radical wing committed to independent political action. The leadership of the Grange wedded itself to the Democratic Party and under the cloak of nonpartisanship, refused to allow the Grange to be openly critical of the party. This resulted in large membership defections from the Grange and its end as a mass organization.

While the majority of Alliance members remained Democrats, the radicals had educated them on the need to remain steadfast in their political beliefs over loyalty to a party. Many radicals in the Alliance ascended to leadership positions, both at the state and local level, during the course of the Southwest Strike. Through the strike they had demonstrated their farmer-labor ideology in action and remained committed to it in the face of attacks from conservative Alliance leaders and a hostile government. When Democrats, who had been elected with Alliance support, refused to enact desired Alliance

reforms, a large number of rank-and-file Alliance members chose political principles over party loyalty and created their own People's Party.

The People's Party remains the most successful "third party" in U.S. history and brought the two-party system to the brink of collapse. However, the People's Party was a multi-class party with much of the national leadership viewing free-sliver as a cure-all for the nation's slumping economy. With the backing of silver mining concerns, the national Populist leadership dropped all of the party's working-class based economic and political demands and fused the party with Bryan's presidential campaign under the single demand of free silver, resulting in the eventual end of the Populist revolt.

The economic and political experiences endured by Texan agrarian radicals in the 1890s taught them lessons that brought about an evolution of their farmer-labor ideology. Agrarian radicals had hoped their Jeffersonian dream of becoming independent yeomen and artisans could be achieved through a basic producerist ideology. Though when they viewed the new industrial order around them, they saw that their simple ideology--of those who produce wealth, through their own labor, should control that wealth—had become outdated. Those who held vast amounts of capital not only now controlled the wealth, but also the economic and political systems of the U.S. and ran them in their own capitalist class interests.

Globally, Marxist socialism had long been a component of farmer-labor political thought. After all it had been born out of the 1848 Revolution and heavily influenced by the farmer-labor political experiences of Wilhelm Wolff. However, with its calls of class conflict and revolution, it had had never held a dominant sway among farmer-labor radicals in the U.S. Radical Texans through the decades frequently worked within the

Democratic Party and felt that the American political and economic systems could still be reformed, or saved, for the benefit of the majority of the population who labored in fields, shops and factories. The growing frequency and length of economic crises and the government's use of courts and violence in the interest of economic elites against those of the working class, though, convinced farmer-labor radicals that they were living in a period of cataclysmic changes and that the economic system they lived under must not be reformed--but replaced. Their experience within the Populist movement also demonstrated to farmer-labor radicals that they needed a working-class-based party of their own. For many agrarian radicals, like E.O. Meitzen, Marx's socialist worldview of a society divided by classes and the need for working-class-led revolutionary change before capitalism brought down all of humanity, increasingly described the world they saw and a way forward. As Meitzen wrote in 1905, "We are rapidly approaching the critical period when the entire fabric of human civilization will be thrown into the melting pot and recast to emerge from the trial by fire, purified, glorious and beautiful."[483] Meitzen had gone into the pot a Populist, to emerge recast a socialist.

[483] *New Era*, March 10, 1905.

Chapter Four

From the Bottom Up

The Populist movement had ended, but the conditions that produced it were far from resolved. Though how the agrarian based revolt of farmers and laborers would continue was a point of contention. Should reformers work within the established Democratic and Republican parties, or should they create a working-class based party? This question continues to challenge those fighting for working-class-based economic and social justice to this day.

After the People's Party's fusion with the presidential campaign of William Jennings Bryan in 1896, many workers and farmers continued to put their support behind the Democratic Party as the best option to achieve progressive economic reforms. They hoped that they could either capture the party or through their support of Bryan, the Democratic Party would finally follow through on their much promised, but seldom carried out, reforms.

Many rank-and–file farmer-labor militants of the early twentieth century disagreed with such support of the Democratic Party. Bryan did not inspire the overall confidence in leadership attributed to him by some. E.O. Meitzen, for example, called Bryan "the counterfeit champion of the common people," who preached "Back to the People" but practiced "Back to the Corporation."[484] Radicals such as Meitzen had learned the lesson of Democrats paying lip service to their demands while campaigning, and then not enacting any meaningful reforms once in office. Political scientist Elizabeth Sanders' argues that the Democratic Party, with the backing of politicalized farmers, produced the

[484] *Hallettsville New Era*, April 7, 1905.

reforms of the Progressive Era.[485] Meitzen might counter her argument with that is was the radical farmer-labor bloc, organized independently of the Democratic Party, that was more responsible for these reforms.

In fact, it was the presence of independently organized radical workers, farmers, and middle-class professionals, during the first two decades of the twentieth century that pulled the political spectrum to the left and forced the both Democratic and Republican parties to address and enact concessionary measures to working-class economic demands. Many of the crowning reforms of the Progressive Era not only came out of the farmer-labor bloc, but farmer-labor radicals, working outside of the Democratic Party, continued to be one of the most important sources for progressive reform after the fusion of 1896.

The list of reforms first championed by the independent farmer-labor bloc is long. In many western cities and states, independent radicals succeeded in enacting the initiative and referendum--long a staple of Populist demands. Arguably the most influential piece of muckraking journalism, responsible for food health and safety reforms, was the socialist Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, which was first published in the socialist newspaper *Appeal to Reason* in 1905. Outside of the small progressive wing of the Republican Party, socialists were among the leading suffragists. Socialists also helped co-found the NAACP and in many places led the labor movement. The overarching "Trust Busting" theme of the Progressive Era came directly out of and continued to be articulated and advanced by independent farmer-labor radicals. In Texas, the SP was the main party that pushed for women's suffrage and land reform.

Evolving beyond the reform-oriented Greenback critique of capitalism, numerous agrarian militants, schooled by Populism, now began to organize themselves within the

[485] See Sanders, *Roots of Reform*.

emerging socialist movement. Following the belief of the national distributed *Appeal to Reason*, which stated, "Socialism is all of Populism plus more that is wholesome and good,"[486] the continuity of the farmer-labor bloc, in large, continued through the Socialist Party, not the Democratic Party.

In choosing to take a socialist course of independent political action, agrarian radicals in Texas would be starting from scratch and building from the bottom up. The socialist movement in Texas was in its infancy. Nationally, the socialist movement was going through a period of splits and reorganization revolving around the Socialist Labor Party (SLP). The SLP did have a few chapters in Houston and San Antonio, and held its first state convention in the later in 1898. The SLP, though, held little appeal for Texas farmers and made no serious inroads in the state as the party focused almost entirely on industrial unionism.[487] Much of what would become the Texas Socialist Party came from the old Alliance-KOL political network and what remained of the Populist movement.

In 1898, William Farmer, a former Greenbacker and KOL member, quit the People's Party and formed an independent socialist party in Bonham, Texas. The following year, Debs, who was on an organizing tour through Texas, convinced Farmer to join the Social Democratic Party. Shortly afterward, the party hired Martin Irons, the old rail worker who had helped lead the Southwest Strike of 1886, to organize for them across the southwest. Milton Park, now sole editor of the *Southern Mercury*, began promoting the "sewer socialism" of Samuel "Golden Rule" Jones, mayor of Toledo,

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[486] *Appeal to Reason*, November 24, 1898.

[487] *Houston Daily Post*, December 4, 1898; Ruth Allen, *Chapters in the History of Organized Labor in Texas* (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1941) 25.

Ohio, who advocated public ownership of municipal utilities. Two of the most vital Populist converts to socialism turned out to be the brothers Lee and Jacob Rhodes of Van Zandt County. Lee Rhodes was a former Populist state representative and together with Jacob made Van Zandt County, in northeastern Texas, a stronghold of socialism. These individuals, along with E.O. Meitzen, laid the foundation for the birth of socialism in Texas.[488]

Sometime around the turn of the century, Meitzen became a committed socialist as well. His transition from Populism to socialism appears to have been greatly influenced by the *Appeal to Reason*. By using the language of Populism, the *Appeal to Reason*'s brand of homegrown socialism started to germinate across the South. Articles from the *Appeal to Reason* began to frequently appear in Meitzen's *New Era.* As early as March 1899, Meitzen printed a column in the front page of the *New Era* titled "What Socialism Is." The column consisted of a number of dictionary and encyclopedia entries defining socialism as a cooperative system that promotes equality and identifies with Christian ethics. Also around this time, articles by Meitzen began to frame Populist demands, such as nationalization of railroads, more in the terminology of class conflict.[489]

Beyond Meitzen's dictionary and encyclopedic answers, what did socialism mean to turn-of-the-century agrarian radicals? One possible meaning came from Christian socialist George D. Herron, whose articles ran in the influential *Southern Mercury* and then in the Texas Socialist newspaper *The Rebel*. According to Herron, socialism is the

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[488] Green, *Grass-Roots Socialism*, 15-21; Hild, *Greenbackers, Knights of Labor, and Populists*, 194; *Southern Mercury*, November 24, 1898; Kyle G. Wilkinson, *Yeomen, Sharecroppers, and Socialists: Plain Folk Protest in Texas, 1870-1914* (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 2008), 174.

[489] *Shiner* Gazette, June 13, 1906; New *Era*, March 10, 1899.

collectivization of production and distribution for the benefit of everyone--this is in contrast to capitalism where production and distribution are governed by competition for private industry. On a global scale Herron viewed imperialism as an expected result of capitalism's relentless competition.[490]

Agrarian radicals drawn to socialism saw in capitalism an illogical, unjust, and morally corrupt system—all close to tenets of previous Populist beliefs. A system that according to E.R. Meitzen, promoted "the man who lives and thrives off the labor of others rather than by the sweat of his own face" was both inegalitarian and unjust.[491] Farmer-labor radicals understood that under capitalism the path to a comfortable life was not achieved by one's own hard work, but instead came through the control of other's hard work. They witnessed members of the upper class live lives of idleness and pleasure seeking while contributing nothing to society in return. Inherited wealth, often-earned generations ago, and maintained through the years by interest, perpetuated an economic upper class. Members of the upper class increase their wealth, and power, through the purchasing of stocks and bonds, speculation, and the buying of labor from people whose only means of subsistence was through the selling of their labor. All of this leading, in agrarian radical's minds, to a clear conflict between classes.

Agrarian radicals held to their producerist beliefs in that the one who performs genuine labor should be the one to profit from their own labor. They also believed that those who worked the land should own it. They called for the nationalization of basic industries so that the betterment of all humankind--not profit--would be the driving force of society.

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[490] George D. Herron, "Socialism is Coming," *Southern Mercury*, November 29, 1900.

[491] *The Rebel*, November 4, 1916.

As such, farmer-labor radicals often referred to the future socialist society as the Cooperative Commonwealth. To take from Edward Bellamy's bestselling at the time utopian socialist science fiction novel, *Looking Backward: 2000-1887*, they viewed the cooperative commonwealth as "a social order at once so simple and logical that it seems but the triumph of common sense."[492]

Because many agrarian radicals were fans of Bellamy's utopian novels and often utilized the language of Protestant evangelism, contemporary critics and modern scholars often portrayed their brand of socialism as utopian moralism rather than Marxism. And to be sure there were plenty of utopians and moralists within the socialist movement. However, the dominant ideological strain within the socialist movement, even its agrarian wing, was the Marxist view of class struggle.

Two of the Texas SP's most effective stump speakers, Stanley Clark and M.A. Smith, were former Methodist preachers. In describing Smith's speaking style, Dallas Socialist George Clifton Edwards, Sr. related, "He was … well read in the Bible and hymns and was quite skillful as a versifier. He often used some of his poems and songs in the style of Methodist hymns with great effect with country audiences."[493] Smith spoke in a vocabulary and style plain folk deeply understood. In rural communities the church was often the most important social institution, with many people having learned to read by reading the Bible. Though drawing on evangelical language, Smith's "sermons" were Marxist at their core. He denounced capitalism and preached class conflict. "The blessed day is near at hand, when rich men will not own the land; when all who toiled will have a

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[492] Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward: 2000-1887* (Boston: Ticknor and Company, 1888), iii.

[493] George Clifton Edwards, Sr., Unpublished autobiography, 46, George Clifton Edwards Collection, 1910-1961, Texas Labor Archives, Library Special Collections, University of Texas at Arlington.

home, and be no longer forced to roam," extolled Smith as he advocated the orthodox socialist position of collective ownership of the land.[494]

Many rank-and-file Socialists echoed Smith's socialist sermons. This came through in the "Why I am a Socialist" section of *The Rebel*, in which the paper's editors encouraged reader's to share the foundations of their beliefs. "My own reasons for being a Socialist are based on the Bible," wrote a reader from Memphis, Texas, because he felt both Socialism and Jesus teach "brotherly love."[495] Expressing a Christian-producerist-socialist philosophy, George Benson of Lampasas wrote, "Among the early and true Christians every one had according to their needs and then received of the products of labor according to their deeds. This is Socialism and it is Christianity."[496]

In the midst of the repressive climate of World War I, Texas Socialists viewed their rank-and-file party as "the ablest and staunchest defender of international Socialism."[497] Their paper, *The Rebel*, frequently cited Marx and referred to the *Communist* Manifesto. When E.R. Meitzen died in 1948, among his belongings found by his daughter and son-in-law was a very used copy of Marx's *Capital*.[498] Texas Socialists may have been down on the farm, but they were very much a part of the international revolutionary Marxist socialist movement.

The political experiences of radical farmer-laborers with the major two parties,

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[494] Wilkinson, *Yeomen, Sharecroppers, and Socialists*, 125, 127, Smith quoted 136, 139; *The Rebel*, July 8, 1911.

[495] *The Rebel*, September 6, 1913.

[496] *The Rebel*, October 25, 1913.

[497] *The Rebel*, January 22, 1916.

[498] *The Rebel*, June 13, 1914, April 10, 1915, March 11, 1916; Jo-Lou and Peter Gaupp, interview by the author, video recording, Arlington, Texas, July 12, 2008. See also, Stephen Burwood, "Debsian Socialism Through a Transnational Lens." *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, Vol. 2, Issue 3 (July 2003), pp. 253-282.

and the Populist movement, convinced many of them for the need of a party of their own. Lesser evilism had gotten them nowhere. They viewed the Republican Party, in Herron's words, as "frankly the party of the capitalist order." The Democratic Party under Bryan's leadership hinted at social reforms. Though radical farmer-laborers felt reform of the capitalist system was not enough. To rely on Herron again: "The best that the most ardent reformers propose is the abolition of special privileges and the restoration of an imaginary free competition … So-called special privileges can be abolished only by making the special privileges of the few the common privileges of all. The special privileges at which the individual reformer would aim are the direct result of the very competition which he proposes as a remedy."[499]

The Populist experience in turn taught radical farmer-laborers that even if a party's platform was their own, a cross-class coalition such as the People's Party could never truly act solely in the interest of the working class. Proletarians and rural producers needed an independent anti-capitalist party of their own.

Though Meitzen, and others like him, had begun their transition to socialism, they still hoped to use the national network of reformers and radicals created by the Populist movement to craft a new party. In September 1901, a conference of reform organizations, including fusion and mid-road Populists, Bryan Democrats, Single Taxers, Liberal Socialists, and the Public Ownership Party met in Kansas City. Those gathered resolved to hold a convention in Louisville in April of 1902 in order to create a new party.[500]

The convention in Louisville sought to gather all those "opposed to the centralization of capital." This included those who met previously in Kansas City as well

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[499] Herron, "Socialism is Coming," *Southern Mercury*, November 29, 1900.

[500] *Kansas City Star*, September 17, 19, 1901.

as the Independent Labor Party and representatives of the Socialist Party, which had been formed in July 1901, under the leadership of Debs and Victor Berger. The convention adopted a platform reaffirming the Populist platforms of Omaha, St. Louis, and Cincinnati. The end result was the merging the People's Party, the Public Ownership Party and the Independent Labor Party into a single Allied People's Party. Milton Park was authorized to call a convention in 1904 to nominate the new party's presidential ticket.[501]

In commenting on the Allied People's Party, the *Philadelphia Times* observed, "Under the name Socialist we might count their heads. They are Socialists and they should be plainly designated so that they may be reckoned with as Socialists."[502] How wide the influence of socialism was spreading comes through in a letter by Jo. A. Parker, chairman of the Allied People's Party, to fellow Populist James Baird: "Everything seems to be turning to socialism. Everybody is talking about socialism, and I fear that we will be engulfed by the tide…[the] Socialist movement has taken our place in the public mind." [503]

Populism had almost run its course, though its fate in the 1902 elections in Texas would not be determined by socialism, but by infighting within the state Democratic Party. In 1890, before the creation of the People's Party, the Farmers' Alliance had forged a coalition with reform Democrats who shared their hostility toward northern capitalists and railroad trusts. In Texas, this coalition resulted in the election of Democrat James Stephen Hogg as governor. Once elected, however, Hogg did little to assist hard-

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[501] *Louisville Courier-Journal*, April 2, 3, 4, 1902.

[502] As quoted in *Louisville Courier-Journal*, April 3, 1902.

[503] Green, *Grass-Roots Socialism*, 22.

pressed farmers, thus encouraging Texas farmers to create a party of their own.

Hogg served only four years as governor, and by 1900, conservative Democrats had regained control of the party, due in part to the exodus of reformers to the People's Party. Though not running for office, Hogg reentered the political ring in 1900 to aid the reelection campaign of longtime friend, U.S. Senator Horace Chilton. In order for the reform Democrats to regain control of the party machine, Hogg sought to revive the coalition with Populists that had won him the governorship in 1890. To do this, Hogg proposed in 1900 to add three anti-railroad corporation amendments to the state constitution. As historian Robert Worth Miller argued, "The proposals constituted an open invitation for white Populists to return to the party of their fathers."[504] By 1900, however, the Populists' share of the electoral vote had plummeted to six percent. For some Populists, an alliance with reform Democrats was seen as a way to rekindle Populist causes. The *Southern Mercury* thus came out in favor of Hogg's amendments.[505]

In order to completely facilitate the return of Populists into the Democratic fold, changes in election laws were needed. The Democratic Party had a monopoly on power in Texas and throughout the South. The Republican Party had drawn only marginal support outside of African Americans since Reconstruction. With the rise of the People's Party, the Democrats, seeking to maintain control of their party, required loyalty oaths and stipulated that in most cases voters must have previously voted in at least the last two Democratic primaries in order to be consider a part of the party. These regulations kept anyone who had recently voted Populist from voting in the Democratic primary. With

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[504] Robert Worth Miller, "Building a Progressive Coalition in Texas: The Populist-Reform Democrat Rapprochement, 1900-1907," *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 52, No.2, (May, 1986), 163-182, 164.

[505] Miller, "Building a Progressive Coalition in Texas," 167.

Texas nearly back to single-party rule, the Democratic primary was more meaningful than the general election. Hogg pushed and got changes to the Democratic primary process. Almost every county agreed to conform to a uniform primary law and throw out restrictive party tests. The path was now clear for Populists to participate in a meaningful primary process.[506]

The new primary, however, was not open to all. Democrats, learning their lessons from the interracial black-white unity that propelled the Populists to the brink of power, maneuvered to make sure Populists would not take over their party. To do this the Democrats crafted a primary for whites only in 1903. They justified the exclusion of African Americans as one that was necessary to purify the vote. The Populists, still stinging from what they saw as a manipulation of black votes to halt their success at the ballot box, acquiesced to the cruel logic of a purified vote. Termed the White Man's Primary, the new primary effectively disenfranchised African Americans from the political process. In Lavaca County, this meant that the county's 4,890 black citizens, or 17.4 percent of the population, were all but removed from the political process. The primary restrictions came the year after a poll tax had been enacted in 1902. With the average wageworker in Texas making little more $425 a year and farmers perpetually in debt, a poll tax of between $1.50 and $1.75 made voting cost prohibitive for not only blacks, but for almost all workers and farmers.[507]

When Lavaca County's Populists met on April 21, 1902, with Meitzen as chairman, they concluded that due to "the recent radical changes in the democratic

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[506] Miller, "Building a Progressive Coalition in Texas," 169.

[507] United States Census, *Census Reports*. Twelfth Census of the United States Taken in the year 1900.

primaries, which virtually changed the same to a white man's primary, regardless of past or present party affiliation, it was decided not to encourage independent candidates for county office and to aid the good work by advising all to take part in the primary election." In discussing whether or not to nominate the Populist Ed. Tarkington for the U. S. Congress, with such a short campaign period (the primary occurring on May 24th), the majority of Lavaca's Populists "urged that the good work of purifying county politics should be encouraged at the risk of defeat." When Tarkington decided to run for the Texas House, however, he ran unopposed, perhaps as a conciliatory move by the Democrats. The Hogg strategy eventually paid off in 1906, when the Hogg Democrat, Thomas Campbell, won the race for governor. The 1902 election proved to be the end of Populism in Lavaca County.[508]

While the use of the white man's primary yielded promising statewide results in 1902 for Hogg Democrats, it produced unexpected results for Lavaca County Democrats in 1904. Meitzen won the 1904 white man's primary for county judge with the support of white Populists and Central European immigrants. A special report to the *Houston Post* blasted Meitzen's immigrant support: "No regard was had for the … election law, and people who could not speak the English language were voted like Mexicans on the border in times gone by."[509] As Meitzen later explained, "I was elected county judge by accident–slipped up on the blind side of politicians in a local fight regarding better conditions."[510] With the Lavaca County People's Party having disbanded after the 1902

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[508] *Hallettsville Herald*, April 24, May 29, 1902.

[509] *Houston Post*, July 11, 1904.

[510] U.S. Congress, Senate, Commission on Industrial Relations, Final Report and Testimony, 9143; In Texas, county judges preside over a five-member commissioners court and hold broad judicial and administrative authority over county government functions.

election, and the local Socialist Party still in its infancy, Meitzen ran as an independent.

Meitzen's campaigns for county judge demonstrates how he used his political standing as a former Alliance and Populist leader to build a base for socialism in Lavaca County. Without a preexisting socialist base he ran as an independent. Though not openly declaring himself a socialist, he used his campaign and elected position to educate Lavaca County's working class on the basic principles of socialism. However, unlike helped Meitzen helped found the People's Party in Lavaca County in March 1892, this time he failed in his public encouragement for African Americans to join the new movement. The harsh realities of Jim Crow made such pronouncement much different than they had been, just over ten years earlier. Instead of challenging Jim Crow, Meitzen worked within it--leaving one to wonder just how a challenge, at this early stage of Jim Crow, might have changed the course of working-class radicalism in Texas.

Meitzen began his campaign by targeting the graft and corruption of the residing county commissioners and county judge, C.J. Gray. He exposed a graft scheme in which each member of the county commission was receiving $300 a year for road supervision. Texas law did not allow commissioners to receive over $120 a year for road supervision, but Lavaca's Democratic state Senator, D.A. Paulus, secured an exemption for Lavaca County from the $120 limit. To return the favor, the commissioner's court gave Paulus a $250 gift from bond sales money. The area *Cuero Daily Record* also reported on a past legal malpractice of Judge Gray: "It is charged that while justice of peace in [Lavaca] county, Gray tried a case in which he was actually attorney for the defendant who lost the case by a decision of Gray's. This ought, if true, disqualify him for re-election."[511]

If indeed Meitzen had "slipped up on the blind side of the politicians," local

[511] *New Era*, October 21, 1904; *Cuero Daily Record*, May 29, 1904.

Democrats sought to remedy the situation. At the Democratic Lavaca County convention a few weeks after the primary, a resolution was introduced requiring a candidate, regardless of whether he won the white man's primary, to pledge to support the Democratic Party's candidates for local and national office in order to be placed on the ballot. This resolution was clearly aimed at Meitzen. The resolution was defeated by a vote of 50 1/3 to 38 2/3. In defeating the motion, delegates pointed out that the white man's primary had the endorsement of the statewide party, and that the resolution, if adopted, would undermine the party's statewide goals. Coming out of the convention, local Democrats resolved to make sure they had a straight ticket in the next election.[512]

Unwilling to undermine the primary system they just started, the Democrats turned to the tried-and-true method they had used to defeat the Populists in the 1890s--that of manipulating black Republican votes. In the primary election for county commissioner for precincts two and six, the winner was the Democrats' choice, E. Gieptner. Another candidate, A. Gleckler, lost by only eleven votes in a three-way race, while the third candidate lost by only eighteen votes. With no candidate receiving a true majority, Gleckler decided to run as an independent write-in candidate in the general election. At the African-American-controlled Republican county convention, Democrats convinced delegates to nominate Gleckler as their candidate for county judge. This move served to attack Meitzen's campaign for county judge and undermine Gleckler's for county commissioner. Meitzen was quick to reveal this Democratic scheme in the *New Era*, which on September 30, 1904, contained a letter from Gleckler urging his supporters to vote for Meitzen, not him, for county judge.[513]

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[512] *Hallettsville Herald*, July 21, 1904.

Meitzen went on to win the general election. Gleckner, however, lost his independent campaign for county commissioner, thus returning a Democratic-controlled county commission. The commissioners sought their revenge. Meeting on November 17, 1904, less than two weeks after the election, the commissioners court, with lame duck county judge Gray presiding, reduced the county judge's salary from $600 a year to $100 a year. The commissioners justified their decision by noting that since Meitzen was not a licensed attorney, the county needed to hire an attorney at $500 a year to assist Meitzen.[514]

The commissioners' action was met with immediate outrage across the county. Letters came into the *New Era* and petitions from Moulton. Area newspapers chimed in against the commissioner's actions as well, including the *LaGrange Journal*, *Moulton Eagle*, *Cuero Daily Record*, *Yoakum Herald*, and the German language papers *Nachrichten* and the *Bellville Wochenblatt*. The Democratic-biased *Hallettsville Herald* remained silent, not printing a single article on the controversy. The commissioners, under obvious pressure, rescinded their decision and restored Judge Meitzen's salary to $600, opting not to hire the additional attorney.[515]

Shortly before the 1904 election, Meitzen, along with his sons, E.R. and A.C., had joined the fledgling Socialist Party and helped to organize the Hallettsville local of the Texas Socialist Party. By December, the Hallettsville local had seventeen dues-paying members, was holding weekly Wednesday meetings, and held a public meeting at the courthouse for all those interested in socialism. Upon his election to county judge,

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[513] *New Era*, September 16, 30, 1904.

[514] *New Era*, November 25, 1904.

[515] *New Era*, December 2, 9, 1904.

however, Meitzen resigned his membership in the Socialist Party in order to present an air of non-partisanship while serving as an elected official.[516]

Though not an official member of the party, Meitzen was a leading advocate of socialism in Lavaca and the surrounding counties. Before the 1904 election, however, the *New Era* made no mention of Eugene Debs' SP presidential campaign. In fact the *New Era* ran a large two-page supplement in October, promoting the Allied People's Party candidate for president, Tom Watson--despite Watson's growing vocal hostility to socialism. [517] Perhaps Meitzen thought he could be a bridge for others to make the transition from Populism to socialism by being an open socialist while at the same time endorsing the old Pop Tom Watson.

Watson campaigned hard in every part of the country but garnered only 117,183 votes nationwide. This was more than twice the number of votes the People's Party had won in 1900--the returns were still a major disappointment. A group of diehard old-timer Populists futility ran Watson again for president in 1908, though, even they knew their party was dead. Conversely, the Socialist Party, with Eugene V. Debs as their candidate, received 400,939 votes in 1904--up from the 87,769 votes Debs had received in 1900 as the Social Democrat Party's candidate. Socialism was on the rise.[518]

After the buoying results of the 1904 elections–both nationally and in Lavaca County--the *New Era* became a firebrand of socialism. Previously, the paper had only flirted with socialism. The *New Era*, following the Populist vein, had regularly attacked

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[516] *New Era*, December 2, 1904; *The Rebel*, July 25, 1914; *Socialist Party Official Bulletin*, October 1904.

[517] *New Era*, October 2, 1904.

[518] Woodward, *Tom Watson*, 362; Hicks, *The Populist* Revolt, 402-403; *New Era*, January 13, 1905.

the railroad trusts, monopolies, and other perceived ills of northern plutocracy. The paper did follow with interest the 1904 struggle of the Western Federation of Miners (WFM), led by Charles Moyer and William "Big Bill" Haywood, against the Cripple Creek Mine Owners' Association in Colorado. By early 1905, however, the *New Era*'s commitment to socialism was forthright. A column announcing that socialist Gary Miller, president of the Telluride Miners Union in Colorado, would soon be speaking in Huntsville, Texas, boldly asserted: "The Socialist Party will soon be a power in national politics, and whether you are for it, against it, or indifferent, you should come out and learn something about it and be entertained at the same time."[519]

Each week, the *New Era* filled its pages with items ranging from announcements of new socialist speakers in the area, exposing the use of child labor at a nearby cotton mill in Gonzales, articles by and on Debs, continuing coverage of the WFM, and attacks on William J. Bryan.[520] With increasing frequency, the *New Era* ran general articles pointing out the illogic and inhumanity of capitalism.

Meitzen's primary form of protest and agitational organizing still came from his attachment to the plight of farmers. At the end of April 1905, he helped form a local branch of the Southern Cotton Association. The association's stated objectives were to unite all southern people in one organization: farmers, merchants, bankers, lawyers, doctors and all others whose interests would be to see cotton sell at a better price "by forming a cotton holding company." Though elected as its president locally, Meitzen's connection with this organization seems to have been only brief. A new farmer's organization had formed, one that more closely followed in the tradition of the old

[519] *New Era*, August 19, 26, 1904, February 17, 1905.

[520] *New Era*, March 24, April 7, 1905.

Farmer's Alliance---the Farmer's Educational and Cooperative Union of America, known as the Farmers Union (FU).[521]

The FU was created in Rains County, Texas, in 1902. The individual most responsible for founding the FU was Newt Gresham. Gresham had been an organizer of the Farmers' Alliance in Texas as well as in Alabama, Tennessee, and Mississippi. Like many Alliance members, Gresham became a Populist, but returned to the Democratic fold through fusion. In the years since the end of the Alliance, Gresham held fast to the belief of the need for farmers to organize themselves, as he eked out a living running rural newspapers. By 1900 around half the farmers of Rains County were tenants while non-tenant farmers faced losing their farms due to the high interest rates charged by the county's banks. In the spirit of the old Alliance, ten Rains County resident came together and chartered the FU. Out of these original ten members three were Populists, one a Socialist, one an independent, and five Democrats.[522] These political differences would strain the unity of the FU throughout its brief existence.

In 1904, the FU became a statewide organization with a reported 120,000 members by early 1905. Demonstrating the institutional continuity of the Farmers' Alliance and Populist movement to the FU, the *Southern Mercury* merged with the FU's newspaper, the *Farmers Union Password*, in May 1905. Given that the conditions of farmers had worsened since the days of the old Alliance, farmers flocked to the FU not only in Texas, but across the country as well. The FU became a national organization in

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[521] *New Era*, May 5, 1905; Sanders, *Roots of Reform*, 150.

[522] Robert Lee Hunt, *A History of Farmers Movements in the Southwest, 1873-1925* (College Station: A. and M. Press, A. and M. College of Texas, 1935), 45-48, 51.

1906 with nearly a million members by 1907.[523]

Lavaca County farmers and supporters formed a countywide FU branch in July of 1905. With state organizer O.B. King speaking in English, and Meitzen in German, locals were quickly organized in every farm community in the county. The *New Era* gleefully reported the forming of each local. Meitzen was elected as the FU's county president, and his son, E.R., who was now coming into his political own, was elected as delegate for Lavaca County to the state FU meeting in August at Waco. The Lavaca County FU promoted the union label campaign and directives to hold back cotton sales, and it agitated for the warehouse plan to store the held cotton.[524]

Nationally, the FU reached out to the socially conservative American Federation of Labor under the direction of Samuel Gompers. The FU expressed solidarity with labor struggles and encouraged the purchase of items marked with the union label, either trade union or FU. The FU also began to identify with the reform wing of the Democratic Party, which further facilitated the return of Populists into the Democratic Party.[525]

Officially the FU had a nonpartisan political stance. The adoption of this position came during the FU's third Texas state convention in February 1905. At this convention, Lee Rhodes, who was working as a national lecturer of the FU, gave a speech using "socialistic" language. Angered by Rhodes' tone, FU Democrats succeeded in changing the FU's constitution so that members of the FU were forbidden, under penalty of expulsion, from discussing partisan politics at FU meetings.[526] During this era,

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[523] Hunt, *A History of Farmers Movements in the Southwest,* 64, 69; Sanders, *Roots of Reform*, 150; *Southern Mercury United with the Farmers Union Password*, May 4, 1905.

[524] *New Era*, July 14, 28, 1905.

[525] Sanders, *Roots of Reform*, 152.

"nonpartisanship" was frequently invoked by leaders of the FU, and others such as Gompers, as code for supporting only Democrats—or, as simplified by historian Julie Green, "nonpartisan in theory though pro-Democrat in fact."[527]

Later in the summer it became apparent that the FU's nonpartisan rule applied to only non-Democrats. Texas Democratic US Senator Joseph Bailey spoke at a FU meeting in Gordon. At the meeting, Senator Bailey attacked several political parties and praised the Democrats, thus violating the supposedly non-partisan principles of the FU. The still-Populist *Abilene Farmers Journal* denounced the appearance of Bailey's appearance was especially galling to Left FU members due to his close connections and lobbying for Standard Oil. The *New Era* reprinted the *Farmers Journal*'s article to further expose the hypocrisy of the FU's nonpartisan rule.[528]

Nationally and statewide, the FU mixed with the Democrats, but in Lavaca County, under the leadership of Meitzen, the mixing was with Socialists. Members of the Hallettsville Socialist Club also held memberships in the FU. On March 24, 1906, for example, A. Haynes Sr. spoke on FU topics in Seclusion, Texas, but on the next night he lectured on the doctrines of socialism in the same town. Socialism and the FU went hand in hand in Lavaca County.[529]

The efforts of Socialists within the FU paid off in 1908 when they recruited the influential editor of the *Farmers Journal* to their cause--J.L. Hicks. Hicks was born on December 23, 1857 in Clarke County, Alabama and moved to Texas in December 1875.

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[526] Hunt, *A History of Farmers Movements in the Southwest*, 55, 69.

[527] Julie Greene, *Pure and Simple Politics: The American Federation of Labor and Political Activism, 1881-1917* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 217.

[528] *New Era*, April 7, September 8, 1905.

[529] *New Era*, March 9, 1906.

He began his political journey as a deeply religious prohibitionist. Seeing no difference between the Democrats and Republicans on prohibition led Hicks down the path of independent political action. The cause of prohibition also led Hicks to take a stand for black political rights. He believed that both whites and blacks faced a "common danger" in alcohol and should not be divided at the ballot box. In 1891, Hicks and his brother, W.P., were won over to the "labor reform movement" after listening to a speech by W.E. Farmer and became Populists. In a letter to *The Vindicator* newspaper in June 1891, W.P. Hicks wrote, "We want equal rights to all and special privileges to none … There is bound to be something wrong in a government when a few men can get to be millionaires so quickly while there are thousands of people on starvation … They are throwing many things in the way of this labor movement, but still they march right on toward the tables of the money changers."[530]

J.L. Hicks farmed before starting the *Farmers Journal* as a Populist paper in the 1890s. He stuck to the cause of working farmers and remained a Populist when he joined the FU. Hicks' interaction, through the FU, with former Populists turned Socialists, such as the Meitzens and the Rhodes, must have played a role in his conversion to socialism in early 1908. As the socialist newspaper the *National Rip-Saw* reported, "'The Farmer's Journal,' one of the biggest little journals in all America … which has been purely a farmer's journal for many years, in its issue of January 13th, last, DELIBERATELY, CANDIDLY and UNHESITATINGLY laid aside all of its Populistic ideas, which do not harmonize with the doctrines of Socialism, and like a man, that its editor is, boldly

[530] *The Vindicator*, June 1, 1891, clipping in Hicks Family Papers, 1880-1977, Texas Labor Archives, Library Special Collections, University of Texas at Arlington (hereafter cited as Hicks Papers).

declared for Socialism."[531]

Back in Lavaca County, E.O. Meitzen, besides actively promoting the FU and socialism, carried on as an activist judge. Meitzen pushed for reforms in how the county government operated. One of his first actions related to the collection and disposition of witness and officers fees. Previously, many unclaimed monies collected by county officials ended up in the pockets of county officials. Meitzen advocated a state law requiring unclaimed fees to be put instead into the County Road and Bridge Fund. He also started a competitive bid system for county projects, requiring outside contractors. In the past, instead of contracts going to the lowest bidder, they instead usually went to patrons of county officials at inflated costs to taxpayers.[532]

In early 1906, Meitzen stepped down as head of the Lavaca County FU. He did so in support of a resolution requiring that only actual farmers could hold office in the FU. This resolution came in the context of protests by Texas FU locals against the appointment of two non-farmers by the national FU to the offices of national president and national organizer. This led to a split between the Texas and national FU, which continued to appoint non-farmers to leadership positions, while the Texas FU allowed for only actual farmers to hold such posts. Despite Meitzen's resignation as head of the county FU, he and other agrarian radicals of Lavaca County continued organizing FU locals. They also busied themselves with spreading socialism and beginning Meitzen's re-election campaign for county judge.[533]

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[531] Wilkinson, *Yeomen, Sharecroppers, and Socialists*, 141; *National Rip-Saw*, March 1908, clipping in Hicks Papers; *New Era*, September 8, 1905. Unfortunately, only scattered articles of the *Farmers Journal* exist.

[532] *New Era*, January 20, October 20, 1905.

Late in 1905, the Democratic newspapers, the *Shiner Gazette* and *Hallettsville Herald*, called for an end to the white man's primary and for a partisan Democratic primary. The *New Era* acknowledged that having a partisan Democratic primary in lieu of a white man's primary would greatly hinder Meitzen's reelection chances.[534]

Throughout the partisan bickering, racism prevailed on both sides of the electoral divide. The *Gazette* and *Herald* insisted that a Democratic primary under partisan control, in addition to the recently enacted poll tax, would keep many African Americans from voting. In the same vein the *New Era* countered that Lavaca County's 4,000 legal voters included 400 to 500 black voters "who constitute a dangerous balance of power that can often defeat good men and elect rascals that scruple not to buy their way into office. This has been done and can be done again." The rural white farmers who had once embraced inter-racial unity, only to have it used against them, now bowed to the prevalent white supremacist attitudes of the time.[535]

Supporters of the white man's primary, calling themselves the White Man's Union, held a mass meeting at the Hallettsville courthouse on March 10. With speakers in English, German, and Bohemian, they discussed what type of primary should be held. At the meeting chaired by Meitzen, the White Man's Union and the Democratic Party decided that they would hold two separate primaries and that nominees of the white man's primary would be placed on the Democratic primary ballot. The white man's primary, though, did not receive official sanctioning from the state Democratic Party as it

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[533] *New Era*, January 12, 1906; Hunt, *A History of Farmers Movements in the Southwest*, 82-84; *Schulenburg Sticker*, September 13, 1906; *National Co-operator and Farm Journal*, April 10, 1907.

[534] *Shiner Gazette*, December 20, 1905; *New Era*, January 12, 1906.

[535] *New Era*, January 12, 1906.

had in 1904. The Lavaca County white man's primary would be run only as a show of public support from those whom primary officials deemed as worthy white people.[536]

Meitzen ran unopposed and won the white man's primary. By the time the Democratic primary was held nearly two months later, however, the Democrats had gone back on their word to place all the nominees of the white man's primary on their primary ballot. The Democrats also reinstated their loyalty oath. Meitzen, refusing to take the oath, decided to run as an independent, gaining ballot status at the general election by collecting the required 150 signatures. The Democrats, through their partisan primary, nominated Democratic county chair W.R. McCutchan to run against Meitzen for county judge.[537]

Meitzen and McCutchan began a series of debates in late June that ran till the election. McCutchan continually attacked Meitzen for his socialist beliefs. Meitzen countered that socialism was not the real issue, emphasizing that he had exposed graft and was the only one on the commissioners court to vote for a raise on the county railroad assessment on railroad corporations from $6,500 per mile to $7,500 per mile, which would have brought an additional $620,000 into the county coffers. The Democratic press remained relentless and worked to make socialism the main issue of the race for county judge.[538]

Though Meitzen claimed socialism was not at issue, Socialists were extremely active in the area during this time. Socialist meetings were held with growing frequency,

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[536] *New Era*, March 9, April 13, 1906.

[537] *New Era*, June 15, 1906.

[538] *New Era*, July 27, 1906; *Shiner Gazette*, July 18, October 16, 1906; *Schulenburg Sticker*, October 11, 1906.

often featuring national speakers. The Socialist Party in Lavaca County also put forward candidates of their own for the first time. Albert Haynes, Sr. ran for area state representative, and J.B. Gay, for area U.S. representative. The *Hallettsville Herald* criticized E.O. Meitzen for running as an independent while his cohorts showed their true colors and ran as Socialists.[539]

The Democrats continued their attacks on Meitzen. Efforts were made in July to prevent Meitzen campaign literature from going through the U.S. mail. The area postmaster, however, refused to ban the literature. Democrats also tried to stir up religious prejudices against Meitzen, claiming at a large Catholic festival that Meitzen was against religion and marriage. Meitzen's reply was that religion had nothing to do with county affairs. The campaign even got personal when rumors circulated that Meitzen, though married, "had been 'running around' with other women," a charge Meitzen denied. When E.O.'s sons, E.R. and A.C., confronted the purveyor of the rumor he pulled a knife on A.C., prompting E.R. to strike down the slanderer with his fists. With the campaign now even more heated, the public speaking debates continued, with twelve occurring in the month of October alone.[540]

During the campaign, the U.S. Congress on June 29, 1906 passed a new naturalization act, which effected Meitzen's core immigrant contingency. The new act switched the power to grant citizenship from local to federal courts beginning September 27, 1906. The naturalization process also would become more costly and more difficult to secure citizenship. Meitzen, who as judge had always liberally granted citizenship,

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[539] *New Era*, August 17, 1906; *Hallettsville Herald*, September 20, 1906. It should be noted that the FU continued to expand during this time as well.

[540] *New Era*, August 3, 31, November 23, 1906.

hastened the process in the days leading up to the federal take-over of naturalization. While the previous county judge had naturalized 16 individuals during his two-year term, Meitzen granted citizenship to 147 people, including twenty-one in a four-day "special session" before the federal government took over. Besides believing in an easy path to citizenship, granting quick and easy citizenship would curry favor from the county's German and Bohemian immigrants in a close race. Meitzen did, perhaps not surprisingly, gain the endorsement of the Hallettsville Bohemian/Czech language newspaper *Obzor*.[541]

In an election with low voter turnout, McCutchan defeated Meitzen by 137 votes, 1,163 to 1,026. Factoring into the low turnout had to have been the new poll tax, which impacted Meitzen's constituency of poor farmers the most. Meitzen carried the rural German and Czech communities of Breslau, Witting, Moravia, Baursville, and Vienna. He also carried Sublime and Ezzell, which had a strong FU presence. Ezzell was also a socialist stronghold, the only community that voted in the majority for Socialists Gay and Haynes. The towns of Hallettsville and Shiner went to McCutchan. The *Hallettsville Herald*, celebrating McCutchan's victory, ran the headline "Democracy triumphs over Socialism."[542]

The *New Era* blamed Meitzen's defeat on the opposition's ability to convince voters that "Socialism stood for all sorts of terrible things such as anarchy, 'dividing up,' taking away farms, Negro equality, abolishment of religion and marriage."[543] The Meitzen campaign had answered that it was not against religion months before the

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[541] *INS Reporter*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (Winter 1977-1978), 41; *Hallettsville Herald*, September 20, 1906; Lavaca County Naturalization Records, Vol. 2 1899-1903, Vol. 3 1904-1906, Vol. 4 1906, Reel #983238, Victoria Regional History Center, Victoria College/UH-Victoria Library, Victoria, TX; *New Era*, July 28, 1905; *Obzor*, June 1, September 15, 1906.

[542] *New Era*, November 23, 1906; *Hallettsville Herald*, November 8, 1906.

[543] *New Era*, November 23, 1906.

election and now sought to clarify its position on "Negro equality." Since the formal organization of the SP in Lavaca County it had abided by the Jim Crow norms at its public meetings by announcing, "arrangements will be made for the separate seating of whites and blacks."[544] The week after the election the *New Era* printed a column authored by the anonymous "A Country Hayseed" from Ezzell. In answer to the Democratic *Hallettsville Herald*'s query: "Does Socialism preach equal rights for the negro, the white man, and yellow man?" Country Hayseed replied, "Socialism preaches equal rights only to the extent that each have the full value of what he produces–be he white, black or yellow. Because a negro perhaps would produce more than a white man does not signify that he should be permitted to eat at the same table with a white man or ride in the same car with him etc."[545] Lavaca County Socialists had fallen for "all the senseless agitation in capitalist society … in respect to 'social equality'" that Debs had argued against in his stand for racial equality.[546]

The racial stance of Lavaca County Socialists must have been particularly vexing to Debs. Three years earlier Debs used an experience he had at the Yoakum, Lavaca County depot, in his now often citied article, "The Negro in the Class Struggle," to call for Socialists to stand against racial prejudices and welcome blacks into the SP on equal terms. Debs recounted that while carrying his bags at the Yoakum depot three white men told him that "a nigger" would carry his bags because that is what God had put them here to do. "Here was a savory bouquet of white supremacy," Debs wrote. "They [the three

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[544] *New Era*, February 17, 1905.

[545] *New Era*, November 16, 1906.

[546] Eugene V. Debs, "The Negro in the Class Struggle," *The International Socialist Review*, November 1903, Vol. IV, No. 5, 257-260, 258.

white men] were ignorant, lazy, unclean, totally void of ambition, themselves the foul product of the capitalist system and held in lowest contempt by the master class, yet esteeming themselves immeasurably above the cleanest, most intelligent and self-respecting negro, having absorbed the 'nigger' hatred of their masters."[547]

Crying "forsooth!," Debs argued that capitalists use the "shrill cry" of social equality to distract the working class from the real issue of economic freedom. "As a socialist party we receive the negro and all other races upon absolutely equal terms. We are the party of the working class, the whole working class, and we will not suffer ourselves to be divided by any specious appeal to race prejudice."[548] Debs's words, alas never completely took among the majority of white Texan Socialists. The Texas SP failed to demonstrate the level of inter-racial political unity such as that witnessed during the Populist era. One can arguably cite this as a reason socialism failed to achieve the electoral success of its radical agrarian predecessor. A pro-socialist black vote definitely could have made up the difference in Meitzen's close election defeat. The racial violence of the Jim Crow era, though, made Socialist outreach to blacks a dangerous proposition–one that white Texan Socialists often avoided.

Though defeated in the 1906 election, the *New Era* pointed out that the Socialist vote in the county had increased from 45 to 100 since the last election. The newspaper proclaimed also that Meitzen would now be "'foot-loose' to spread the doctrines to which he has so consistently adhered." Meitzen, upon leaving office, officially rejoined the

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[547] Debs, "The Negro in the Class Struggle," 258.

[548] Debs, "The Negro in the Class Struggle," 258-289. Historians have frequently used the Debs's quote from this article, "we have nothing special to offer the Negro," to claim that Debs ignored issues of race in favor of economic determinism. A counter to this long-accepted incorrect analysis can be found in William P. Jones, "'Nothing Special to Offer the Negro': Revisiting the 'Debsian View' of the Negro Question," *International Labor and Working-Class History*, Vol. 74, No. 1 (Fall 2008), pp. 212-224.

Socialist Party.[549] The question remains, though: did Meitzen gained anything by running as an independent, instead of running an open Socialist campaign?

While Socialist tallies in votes and members were on the rise, their overall numbers were still fairly small. In 1906, the Texas the SP could only claim around 350 dues paying members, organized in roughly twenty locals. While its candidate for governor that year garnered just 2, 958 votes or 1.61% of the total statewide vote. [550] Before the Texas SP would rise to a real force in Texas political culture it faced an internal party fight and a reorientation from the town to the countryside.

Socialists formally organized the Texas SP at the statewide level in the fall of 1904. Before this time, SP locals existed in the state in cities such as Dallas and Houston, as well as rural areas like Van Zandt County. These locals were in addition to scattered individual members, but they were not jointly organized under a state leadership committee. Texas Socialists had run W.W. Freeman of Val Verde County on the Texas-Mexico border for governor in 1902. Freeman's vote total, though, was under one percent and recorded, like the Texas SP's membership, as "scattering."[551] Two years later the Texas SP would receive its first injection of the old Populist movement culture.

In 1904, the Texas SP held its first summer encampment at Grand Saline, Van Zandt County. Lee Rhodes organized this weeklong camp meeting based on the old Populist model. The Grand Saline encampment featured food, music, dancing, fair rides, and a good dose of political speeches by Rhodes, M.A. Smith, and regional SP organizer

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[549] *New Era*, November 16, 1906.

[550] *Socialist Party Official Bulletin*, February, March, April, May 1906.

[551] *Socialist Party Official Bulletin*, October 1904; Wilkinson, *Yeomen, Sharecroppers, and Socialists*, 175; "Election of Texas Governors, 1845-2010," *Texas Almanac*, online, http://texasalmanac.com/topics/elections/elections-texas-governors-1845%E2%80%932010.

Frank O'Hare, among others. Described by historian James Green as "a cross between an American revival and a European political carnival,"[552] the event drew over four thousand people. In 1906, the Grand Saline encampment drew even more people, with Mother Jones as the featured speaker. Besides the Grand Saline encampment, which became an annual occurrence for over a decade, the SP organized in the years to come, encampments across the state, some drawing tens of thousands, and in addition to Jones they featured Debs, Bill Haywood, the Meitzens, and Tom Hickey, among others.[553]

Due to the organizational efforts of the Rhodes brothers, and the success of the original Grand Saline encampment, the early Texas SP headquarters was located in Grand Saline. For the 1904 election, the SP ran popular stump and encampment speakers Lee Rhodes for lieutenant governor and M.A. Smith for attorney general. SP national committee member, Word H. Mills of Dallas, was the party's choice for governor.[554] The platform adopted by convention at the end of the Grand Saline encampment lacked individual planks addressing the specific needs of workers and farmers. Instead the platform reads more as an ideological track borrowing heavily from the *Communist Manifesto*.

> We recognize that under the capitalist system of production … there exists two distinct classes whose material interests are diametrically opposed … that this conflict of interests has produced a class struggle … This struggle is for the possession of the wealth, which is produced by the working class exclusively, and for the natural sources of the means of life … In order to secure to

[552] Green, *Grass-Roots Socialism*, 40.

[553] Green, *Grass-Roots Socialism*, 40-41; "Big Encampment" flyer in Thomas A. Hickey Papers, 1896-1996 and undated, Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas (hereafter cited as Hickey Papers).

[554] Wilkinson, *Yeomen, Sharecroppers, and Socialists*, 177; *Socialist Party Official Bulletin*, October 1904.

> the workers the product of labor, they must be collectively in possession of and have free access to the land and machinery, from which the wages and profit system has expropriated them … the intelligent purpose of all working men must be the overthrow of the capitalist system and the establishment of the Socialist republic, or the cooperative commonwealth.[555]

Without land or labor planks, other than calling for the collective ownership of land and machinery, the SP election results were no better than they were in 1902--still at less than one percent.[556]

By the next election cycle in 1906, the Texas SP had yet to directly address the land issue. However, their platform did contain a new formulation: "In the wage earners of our towns and cities and the farmer, we recognize the types of the producing elements of the country … both are exploited for the benefit of the capitalist class."[557] Thus farmers were a part of the producing or working class. This contrasted from the more workerist-oriented socialists who viewed farmers as part of the petite bourgeoisie or middle class. Theses are important distinctions. Farmers, if considered part of the petite bourgeoisie, had interests separate from the working class, and if not allies were potential reactionary foes. As part of the working class, farmers, especially tenants and sharecroppers, held the same anti-capitalist revolutionary potential as wage workers and should be organized within the SP on equal terms. It was this later view that guided members of the Texas SP and served them in the coming years as they sought to shape the SP's national policy on farmers and land.

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[555] Ernest W. Winkler, ed., *Platforms of Political Parties in Texas* (Austin: Bulletin of the University of Texas No. 53, 1916), 471-472.

[556] "Election of Texas Governors, 1845-2010," *Texas Almanac*.

[557] Winkler, ed., *Platforms of Political Parties in Texas*, 484.

Though lacking a clear land policy, the Texas SP's 1906 platform did contain more specific demands. The convention in Dallas called for shorter workdays and higher wages, health and unemployment insurance, an old age pension; public education, "public ownership of all means of transportation, communication, and exchange," "equal suffrage for men and women," and the repeal of the poll tax.[558] Again Lee Rhodes received the nomination for lieutenant governor and M.A. Smith for attorney general with E.R. Meitzen entering the state leadership ranks as the nominee for railroad commissioner.[559]

The Socialist candidate for governor was twenty-nine year old George Clifton Edwards of Dallas. Edwards was a Harvard-educated night school teacher for illiterate adults. His father was a local Justice of the Peace and his brother a Dallas alderman, both Democrats, who disapproved of George's socialist beliefs. In 1904, Edwards bought the *Dallas Labor Journal*. He changed the name of the paper to the *Laborer* and succeeded in having it recognized as the official organ of the Dallas Labor Council. "I knew little about Marx and European Socialism and was distinctly a Utopian rather than a 'scientific' Socialist," Edwards would later admit. He also pictured Bellamy's *Looking Backward* as the future Socialist society. With the top of their ticket aimed more at the town than the country, the SP received only 2, 958 votes, or 1.6% of the total.[560]

Winning the 1906 governor's race was progressive Democrat Thomas Campbell. Hogg's strategy of bringing back former Populists into the Democratic Party through

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[558] Winkler, ed., *Platforms of Political Parties in Texas*, 485.

[559] *Socialist Party Official Bulletin*, August 1906; *The Laborer*, September 1, 1906.

[560] Edwards, Unpublished autobiography, 43, 45-46; Wilkinson, *Yeomen, Sharecroppers, and Socialists*, 179; "Election of Texas Governors, 1845-2010," *Texas Almanac*.

changes in the electoral system had worked. With many former Populists now in tow, progressive Democrats recaptured their party from its conservative wing. Though not addressing the land issue or supporting women's suffrage, the 1906 Democratic platform declared "That trusts, monopolies, and combinations … are the most insidious agencies used to oppress the people and destroy the freedom of the citizens … and pledge the full power of the Democratic party to utterly destroy them."[561] Democrats also called for the removal of occupation taxes, good public roads, and laws prohibiting lobbying and corporations from contributing to the campaign expenses of political parties or individuals. This won them the endorsement of the large FU and the small but influential Texas State Federation of Labor.[562] Throughout its brief heyday the Texas SP had to line up against progressive Democrats who paid lip service to the anti-big business concern's of the state's working class, without "the spectre of communism" that hung over the head of the SP.

Disregarding the appeal of a progressive Democratic Party, Texas SP state secretary, W.J. Bell, blamed his party's poor showing on its lack of organization between the state and local level. The Texas SP elected Bell state secretary in 1905 and relocated the state SP headquarters to Tyler where he resided. The party had reached the point where it needed a full time secretary and Bell received a salary of just under $400 a year, which he supplemented by tuning pianos on the side in order to support his family. Bell disapproved of the practice of Socialist stump speakers visiting an area, inspiring residents with a rousing speech, organizing a local, and then leaving it to wither with no

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[561] Winkler, ed., *Platforms of Political Parties in Texas*, 496.

[562] Winkler, ed., *Platforms of Political Parties in Texas*, 493-495; Green, *Grass-Roots Socialism*, 56.

organizational guidance. Bell sought to reign in footloose state organizers and provide more state level direction to locals. This more hands-on approach created tensions within the state party that would come to a head in the coming years.[563] Effective organization is vital for any party. However, without a land policy that spoke to the majority of Texas farmers, the socialist appeal would always be limited.

In a state dominated by agriculture, landownership was the vital issue for working farmers. With none of the political parties confronting the land issue, the FU remained the main organization promoting the interests of farmers. Though Socialists, the Meitzens devoted much of their energy to building the FU, as the SP lacked a true land policy. This did not mean that they did not attempt to inject socialist ideology into the FU. "The speculator is linked with the capitalist class, as a whole, and every exploiter of human labor must see in this great uprising of the working class of farmers their ultimate dethronement … the trouble lies in our government being in the hands of the very enemies of the great plain, common working people … If you have a thorn in your foot poultices may do some good, but removing the thorn would be a much better, although for a moment it might be more intensely painful," wrote E.O. Meitzen to the FU's national paper *The National Co-operator and Farm Journal* in describing the grow of the FU in Lavaca County.[564] E.R.'s work for the FU brought him to a position of state leadership in the FU as a member of the state constitutional committee.[565]

The years 1906-07 would see the FU reach its organizational and membership

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[563] Green, *Grass-Roots Socialism*, 56-57; *Socialist Party Official Bulletin*, October 1905, February 1906; *The Provoker*, December 2, 1909; W.J. Bell to Thomas Morgan, October 19, 1909, Thomas J. Morgan Papers, 1892-1939, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library, Chicago, Illinois (hereafter cited as Morgan Papers).

[564] *The National Co-operator and Farm Journal*, April 10, 1907.

[565] *San Antonio Daily Express*, June 12, 1908.

height, followed by its rapid decline. The FU's August 1907 convention reported that the FU had 4, 472 locals in Texas with approximately 100,000 members. The FU's greatest accomplishment was that it had built over 300 warehouses in Texas and established a central sales agency in Houston. Now with their own warehouses and sales agency, FU members were in a real position to be able to hold their cotton and sell it on more favorable terms. The FU also successfully petitioned the Texas state legislature to pass anti-bucket shop legislation. A bucket shop is an establishment that deals in stock futures and margins. They allow individuals to bet on the rise or fall of stocks and commodities without the expectation of delivery--in other words speculative gambling.[566]

Though the FU had succeeded in barring bucket shops in Texas, this did not make them immune from their use nationally. Beginning in mid-October 1907, a financial crisis, now known as the Panic of 1907, shook the nation after the failed attempt of the Knickerbocker Trust to corner the international copper market. The failure of the Knickerbocker Trust caused depositors to withdraw their money from the firm, leading to its failure. This triggered a nationwide overall lack of confidence in the then unregulated banking system. The use of bucket shops only aggravated the crisis. Over the next three weeks the New York Stock Exchange lost fifty percent of its value as people across the country withdrew their deposits from banks.[567]

The Panic of 1907 could not have hit the Texas FU at a more inopportune time. Shortly before the crisis the FU central sales agency in Houston was in the process of

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[566] Hunt, *A History of Farmers Movements in the Southwest*, 84, 86; *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Regular Session of the Thirtieth Legislature of Texas Convened at the City of Austin January 8, 1907 and Adjourned Without Day, April 12, 1907* (Austin: Von Boeckmann-Jones Company, Printers, 1907), 130, 485, 572, 602, 625, 660, 681.

[567] Scott Reynolds Nelson, *A Nation of Deadbeats: An Uncommon History of America's Financial Disasters* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012), 208. The Panic of 1907 led to the creation of the Federal Reserve. The panic also had very similar causes to those of the 2008 Great Recession.

aiding members in storing their cotton and negotiating financial arrangements with banks to hold their cotton for higher prices. Anticipating a good return on their held cotton, many cotton farmers borrowed money from banks to get them by in the meantime. Just as it seemed the FU's cotton holding plan would come to fruition, the panic struck. Banks began calling in their loans. The FU central agency in order to repay its loans had to sell its member's cotton at a lower than anticipated price. This had a trickle down effect, resulting in many regional FU locals selling their warehouses to creditors, against their desires.[568] The warehouse system that stood to be the FU's crowning achievement was now in ruins. The FU had attempted to better the conditions of working farmers within the capitalist system by setting up their own parallel system of marketing and selling that only subjugated themselves to the endemic boom and bust cycle of capitalism. Capitalism survived, while the FU never recovered.

The Meitzens' political beliefs came from their commitment to the struggles of those tied to the land. Though not having been farmers themselves since the 1880s, their means of support, as rural newspaper proprietors, was tied directly to the dirt farmers they catered to, lived alongside, and championed. With the FU in rapid decline, the Meitzens, with allies such as J.L. Hicks, sought to transform the Texas SP into a party that could speak for the interests of the state's farmers. Before this could happen, the Texas SP would need to be revamped both organizationally and politically.

At their 1908 national convention, Socialists heavily debated "the farmer question." Throughout the debate it was apparent that there were multiple understandings, or misunderstandings, of farmers and their place in capitalist society.

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[568] Hunt, *A History of Farmers Movements in the Southwest*, 87, 123. By 1914 the Texas FU had only around 4,000 members (Hunt, 100).

Most took the preconceived view of a farmer as owning their land. "These [farmers] are called capitalists by a number of men now in the socialist movement," stated a delegate from Illinois.[569] "The average farmer is not a proletarian," was the view of Victor Berger, who saw farmers as part of a separate "farming class."[570] On the other hand, most of the Texas delegation, and other radicals with connections to the land, viewed farmers as part of the working class. As expressed by the lone South Dakota delegate, E. Francis Atwood, "The farmer comes into the socialist movement as a class-conscious workingman. Today our western farmer has nothing. He is skinned by the capitalist class, and staggers under the same burdens as the other workingmen." J.C. Rhodes provided a slightly more nuanced take with his statement that "we have two classes of farmers–one class that farms the soil and another class that farms him. Their interests, of course, are opposed."[571]

Rhodes comments were the closest anyone came to differentiating between land-owning and tenant farmers. Otherwise, delegates mentioned the issue of land tenancy, but did not directly address it. All farmers ride the ups and downs of capitalist market fluctuations. While some farmers owned their land, and had more control of their livelihood, tenant farmers were subjugated to the directives of their landlords, much like laborers and their bosses. Without this illumination, delegates struggled to come to a consensus on the farmer question.

Delegates' views of farmers, and how they perceived socialism-taking root in the

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[569] *Proceedings, National Convention of the Socialist Party, Held at Chicago Illinois, May 10 to 17, 1908* (Chicago: The Socialist Party, 1908), 14.

[570] *Proceedings, 1908 Socialist Party National Convention*, 15.

[571] *Proceedings, 1908 Socialist Party National Convention*, 14.

U.S., determined their stances of the farmer question. Berger, and his more conservative Socialist followers, believed that step-at-a-time reforms of the capitalist system would bring about socialism. They often grounded their positions in electoral politics, which served Milwaukee Socialists well in winning elected offices over the years. Berger knew, as he stated, "this country is before all things a farmers' country," with the majority of people still employed in agriculture in these early years of the twentieth century. "You will never get control of the United States unless you have the farming class with you," continued Berger from the convention floor.[572] Though he did not see farmers as part of the working class, he saw their support as vital to winning elections. Reaching out to farmers under this reasoning drew criticism from the party's Left. "Is this a proletarian, workingman's movement or is it a populist middle-class movement?" asked Oregon delegate C.W. Barzee.[573]

The majority report of the convention's farmers' committee, submitted by Carl Thompson of Wisconsin, sought to reassure land-owning farmers about socialism. The report argued that by improving the "condition of the wage working class, raising their standard of living and thereby increasing their power, will render more stable the market for farm products … And as for the ownership of the land by the small farmers, it is not essential to the Socialist program that any farmer shall be dispossessed of the land which he himself occupies and tills."[574]

Texas Socialists, who had adopted the position that farmers were a part of the working class at their 1906 state convention, felt the majority report was anti-

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[572] *Proceedings, 1908 Socialist Party National Convention*, 15.

[573] *Proceedings, 1908 Socialist Party National Convention*, 16.

[574] *Proceedings, 1908 Socialist Party National Convention*, 178-179.

revolutionary and unsocialistic. They supported the minority report submitted by Barzee. The report read in part:

> We recognize the class struggle and the necessity for united action among the world's workers of every vocation as against the capitalists class exploitation … We therefore recommend that the farmer study the economics of the cooperative social system as against the individual competitive system, and ally his political power with the party of his class. But, we insist that any attempt to pledge to the farmer anything but a complete socialization of the industries of the nation to be unsocialistic.[575]

Texas delegates not only supported the minority report but also called for the collectivization of the land. "If the Socialist movement stands for anything it stands for the working class, the proletariat. The condition of the farmer today is exactly the same as that of the wage worker … We stand for the collective ownership of capital …and I want to know if this convention … is going to go down in history as catering to a small middle class of land owners, or are you going to stand for the great proletarian farming class?" asked Laura Payne, a delegate from Fort Worth.[576]

Oklahoma Socialists, though also facing the tenancy issue, took a different approach from their comrades from south of the Red River. Frank O'Hare, early in the discussion on the farmer issue, said, "I am not in favor of any middle class proposals … I want, and all the Socialist farmers of Oklahoma want revolution."[577] But in absence of socialist revolution, O'Hare later stated, "we should declare to the farmers that we propose that the farmer whose present means of life is his interest in a certain tract of

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[575] *Proceedings, 1908 Socialist Party National Convention*, 179. During the discussion Barzee accepted an amendment to his resolution replacing "of his class" with "of the working class"--an important change for Left Socialists who did not consider farmers part of the working class (183).

[576] *Proceedings, 1908 Socialist Party National Convention*, 183. Payne along with Clark represented Texas on the SP's national committee. She was a strong advocate for women's rights and was the SP's nominee for the U.S. Congress in 1906 from her Fort Worth district. *Socialist Party Official Bulletin*, September 1906, April 1908.

[577] *Proceedings, 1908 Socialist Party National Convention*, 21.

land will not be dumped out in the cold … that the man who is doing a piece of work shall have a place to put his feet while he is working … no man shall represent or no man understand that Socialism propose to rob him of what he now considers the essential of his life, a place to be employed."[578] Oklahoma Socialists realized that many farmers, and maybe themselves too, still held onto the Jeffersonian belief of independent yeomen farmers. Many farmers could be attracted to socialism by seeing that capitalism was responsible for destroying their yeomen aspirations. The Oklahoma Socialists, though, had yet to formulate a set of demands that spoke to tenant farmers while at the same time bringing them closer to socialism. In the absence of such a plank the SP national convention adopted the minority report 99 to 51, as well as the demand for the collectivization of the land.[579]

Texas Socialists returned from their national convention and set to the task of the 1908 election campaign. At their state convention they reaffirmed the 1906 platform, again without a land plank. This time around J.C. Rhodes was nominated for governor, M.A. Smith once again for attorney general, as well as E.R. Meitzen for railroad commissioner, and curiously for superintendent of public instruction Alice McFadden–a wealthy cattle rancher from Williamson County, who had also just served as a delegate to the national convention. With the top of the ticket tied closer to the land than in 1906, Rhodes received 8,100 votes or 1.6% of the total. While the percentage was identical to 1906, the SP vote total nearly tripled. Though this could be attributed to the increased turnout during a presidential election year. In Texas, SP presidential candidate Debs received fewer votes than Rhodes at 7, 870, but a higher percentage of the total at

[578] *Proceedings, 1908 Socialist Party National Convention*, 182.

[579] *Proceedings, 1908 Socialist Party National Convention*, 186.

2.6%.[580]

Even if the SP had adopted a land plank in 1908 that appealed to the majority of the Texas tenant farmers, turmoil within the Texas SP would have prevented them from successfully communicating it to the masses. By this year a political and organizational conflict had developed in the party, the outcome of which would determine whether the Texas SP would be a middle-class reform organization or a working-class based revolutionary socialist party.

The Dallas SP instigated the political split that developed within the Texas SP. The local was one of the earliest established and larger locals in the state, and as such exerted influence over the state party. An ex-preacher, lawyers, and teachers led the Dallas local. As mentioned earlier, George Edwards, of the Dallas local and 1906 SP candidate for governor, ran the Dallas AFL-backed newspaper *The Laborer*. In December 1907, the Dallas local sought to gain more sway over the Texas SP by attempting and failing to convince state secretary Bell to move the state headquarters from Tyler to Dallas. This failed effort gave Bell his first feeling that something more troublesome was brewing in Dallas.[581]

With its ties to the reform based AFL, the professional backgrounds of its leaders, and with few connections to the state's agrarian working class, the Dallas SP, during this period, politically functioned as an urban reform organization. Beginning in February 1908, Edwards and fellow Dallas Socialist, the ex-preacher Charles L. Breckon, actively built and used *The Laborer* to promote a new organization called the Good Government

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[580] Winkler, ed., *Platforms of Political Parties in Texas*, 513-514; *Provoker*, December 2, 1909; "Election of Texas Governors, 1845-2010," *Texas Almanac*.

[581] W.J. Bell to Thomas Morgan, October 19, 1909, Morgan Papers; *Provoker*, December 2, 1909.

League. Launched as a new political party, membership in the Good Government League was only open to members of trade unions and had the support of the Dallas Labor Council. Membership in the League seems to have never been more than 200 people.[582]

At its first meeting on March 7, the Good Government League adopted a platform that was presented and "strongly endorsed" by Edwards.[583] The main features of the platform supported three ballot initiatives in the April Dallas elections: a minimum wage of $2 per day, a 2 cents streetcar fare, and public ownership of a municipal lighting plant. All three measures were defeated at the polls.[584]

Though Edwards was a known Socialist, and he and other Dallas Socialists had done much of the heavy lifting to organize the Good Government League, he sought to distance the League from being labeled Socialist. When attempts were made to label the proposed ordinances as "put up by the Socialists," Edwards declared that this "was not true." Instead Edwards allowed Bryan Democrats to steal the Socialists' thunder for any good work they had done among Dallas's working class in promoting the initiatives. "We find Bryan, the leader of the Democratic party and the man who will, it is generally conceded, be nominated for President, committing himself to the idea of Government ownership of the railroads, and when I find the leader of my party advocating that, I am willing to commit myself to the ownership of an electric lighting plant," pronounced former city commissioner A.B. Flanary at a mass meeting of the Good Government League, as he proudly asserted his Democratic credentials.[585]

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[582] *Dallas Morning News*, February 25, March 9, April 2, 1908.

[583] *Dallas Morning News*, March 9, 1908.

[584] *Dallas Morning News*, March 9, April 8, 1908.

[585] *Dallas Morning News*, March 9, April 2, 1908.

Edwards and Breckon's work with the Good Government League did not sit well with some of their Socialist comrades. Area Socialist Walter Burrows charged them with violating the SP's constitution by starting another political party in direct opposition to the SP. Another member of the Dallas local, John Kerrigan, faced charges of "maligning and misrepresenting comrades in the state." When the Dallas local ignored the charges and refused to try Edwards, Breckon, and Kerrigan, the SP state committee, backed by Bell, revoked the Dallas local's charter.[586]

However historically insignificant this intraparty conflict of the Texas SP may seem, it was necessary before the party could make a claim to speak for the state's agrarian working-class under the leadership of the Meitzens. After a brief period, Bell restored the Dallas local's charter. Though the conflict continued between the Bell-led left wing and the Dallas right-wing grouping. Left Socialists, by this time, believed in openly declaring for socialism and educating the working class on its tenets, so that people joined the SP as fully committed Socialists ready to battle the capitalist system. In contrast, right Socialists often diluted their socialism in order to appeal to a broader base.

During the summer of 1909, the right wing of the Texas SP attempted to seize control of the state party. Members and supporters of the Dallas local, without the authorization of the state committee, organized an encampment at Grand Saline in August. They announced that speakers at the encampment would include Debs; Fred Warren, popular editor of the *Appeal to Reason*; and Dick Maple, editor of the Socialist newspaper the *National Rip Saw*. None of these speakers attended the Grand Saline encampment. Instead audiences heard from Edwards, as well as Clarke and J.C. Rhodes.

[586] Bell to Morgan, October 19, 1909, Morgan Papers. It is unclear, but Burrows seems to have been from either Denton or Fort Worth.

Clarke and Rhodes though generally considered far Left Socialists, due to their support of land collectivization, were still angry at Bell over the rerouting and cancelation of their speaking tours. The unauthorized encampment drew only five hundred attendees, in comparison to previous encampments, which drew thousands.[587]

While the right wing held its encampment at Grand Saline, the left wing held a party-approved encampment at Tyler. Speakers at Tyler reflected the party's Left and included Mother Jones; Dick Maples; George Brewer, of the *Appeal to Reason*; and a rising Socialist leader in Texas--the Rev. Reddin Andrews. As the party's Left gathered at Tyler, the Right revealed the true purpose of its Grand Saline encampment.[588]

Upon the conclusion of the Grand Saline encampment, organizers of the encampment called a "mass meeting" that would, in Edwards' words, "lead to a complete reorganization of the socialist party in Texas."[589] The meeting held was far from being "mass." With fifteen dues paying members of the Texas SP present, the party Right held a "state convention" in a nearby schoolhouse. Edwards and Breckon made motions that Bell be suspended from office, and that Richey Alexander of Grand Saline be made state secretary. Alexander had run unsuccessfully against Bell for state secretary the previous year. Breckon also proposed the moving of party headquarters from Tyler to Grand Saline. When a few members at the schoolhouse convention protested these motions, Clarke, who was now secretary of the Arkansas SP, responded that those present did constitute the Texas SP. The motions passed, in a vote in which the chair only asked for

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[587] *Houston Post*, July 16, August 8, 1909; *Provoker*, December 23, 1909. Bell had cancelled a speaking tour of Rhodes because it was reported that Rhodes had been appearing drunk on stage at previous speaking engagements. Bell to Morgan, October 19, 1909, Morgan Papers.

[588] *Houston Post*, August 1, 6, 8, 1909.

[589] *Houston Post*, August 8, 1909.

"ayes," without asking for "noes." The Texas SP now had two rival organizations. Leaders of the national party's right wing saw an opportunity to advance their position in this split.[590]

Left Texas Socialists had become a thorn in the side of the SP's National Executive Committee (NEC) controlled by Berger and other Right Socialists. The NEC favored a centralized form of administration. In opposition, many Texas Socialists favored more state autonomy and majority rule democracy, and supported such amendments to change the SP's national constitution. As one of the fastest growing state organizations, the Left leaning Texas SP posed a threat to the continued boss rule of Berger over the SP.[591]

Seeing the split in Texas, the Right-dominated NEC intervened on the side of the rightwing of the Texas SP. With the support of the NEC and disregarding the objections of state secretary Bell, rightwing Wisconsin SP state secretary Carl Thompson attempted to organize a Texas speaking tour of Walter Thomas Mills. Because of Mills's involvement in numerous faction fights over the years, Bell had reason to object.[592]

Mills began his political career as a temperance lecturer before joining the SP. A political opportunist, Mills was involved in promoting a few socialistic schools and colonies. They drew in money but then failed before being established--the money most likely finding its way into Mills's coffers. By 1903, Mills was making a living as a for hire faction fighter on behalf of SP's right wing. Using his position as a member of the SP's national committee from Kansas, and his rhetorical skills, Mills charged $10 to $15

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[590] *Provoker*, December 23, 1909; Stanley Clark to Comrades, December 14, 1908, Hickey Papers.

[591] *Socialist Party Official Bulletin*, March, June 1907.

[592] *Provoker*, December 9, 1909; E.R. Meitzen to Thomas Morgan, July 30, 1910, Morgan Papers.

a day to help Right party factions defeat their state's left wing. Mills had been successfully deployed to Ohio, Nebraska, and Washington in helping the SP's right wing gain control of each of these states.[593]

When Bell appealed to national leaders to protest the dubious election of Alexander as state secretary and Mills's proposed tour, he was told to "get out of the way of the revolution" by Socialist Wisconsin state senator W.R. Gaylord.[594] SP national secretary, J. Malhon Barnes, part of the party's right wing, refused to reject Alexander's claim of state secretary and stated he had no authority to prevent Mills' tour. However, Barnes did inform Bell that Mother Jones, who was on a speaking tour of Texas, had no authority from the national office. Mother Jones supported Bell, and the party headquarters in Tyler organized her tour. The Dallas grouping, through *The Laborer*, had earlier called Jones that "Poor, old woman, hired by the state secretary Bell."[595]

Into the fray and helping end the Texas SP's faction fight came Thomas A. Hickey. Hickey was no novice when it came socialist infighting. Born in Dublin, Ireland in 1869, Hickey arrived in the U.S. in 1892. This was also the year of the great Homestead strike, which drew Hickey's attention to the labor movement. After an extensive reading of the works of Marx, while working in a pump works, Hickey became a socialist and joined the Socialist Labor Party (SLP). He helped found in 1895 the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance--a revolutionary socialist trade union tied to the SLP.

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[593] *Provoker*, December 9, 1909, January 6, 1910; Ira Kipnis, *The American Socialist Movement, 1897-1912* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2004, 1952), 180.

[594] *Provoker*, January 13, 1910; Gaylord was later expelled from the SP in May 1917 for calling the SP's stance against World War I treason and for recommending that the SP be repressed.

[595] *Provoker*, December 9, 1909, January 20, 1910; Bell to Morgan, October 19, 1909, Morgan Papers.

For the next four years Hickey worked as a national organizer for the SLP.[596]

In 1900, Hickey led a revolt within the SLP against the ideological doctrinaire and authoritarian control of party leader Daniel DeLeon. Hickey failed and DeLeon expelled him. No longer a paid organizer, Hickey found work at the Sprague Electric plant in Watsessing, New Jersey. Here Hickey organized a successful strike of 600 workers for a nine-hour workday. The strike was victorious, but employers blacklisted Hickey. The blacklist followed Hickey across the country until he was finally able to find employment as a miner in Butte, Montana, where he joined the WFM. Sometime during this period Hickey also had joined the SP.[597]

Using his brief experiences as a miner, Hickey began touring the country in 1904, detailing the horrible conditions faced by miners under the economic grip of the Copper Kings. After authorities framed WFM leaders, Haywood and Moyer, for the murder of former Idaho governor, Frank Steunenberg, Hickey continued touring the country in their defense. His speaking tours also doubled as organizing for the SP. After a jury found Haywood not guilty, and the charges against Moyer were dropped, Hickey moved to Globe, Arizona where he started the newspaper the *Globe Miner* in 1907. Like many, the Panic of 1907 financial ruined Hickey and he took to the road more, as a SP organizer, where he could earn money from speaking fees. Based first out of Globe then Phoenix,

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[596] Thomas Hickey, biographical sketch for unnamed pamphlet, Box 1, Folder 1, Hickey Papers; "New York, Passenger Arrival Lists (Ellis Island), 1892-1924," database, *FamilySearch* (https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:J65Q-JWL : accessed 21 September 2015), Thos. Hickey, 01 Jun 1892; citing departure port Liverpool & Queenstown, arrival port New York, ship name Teutonic, NARA microfilm publication T715 and M237 (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.); Ruth Allen, unpublished typescript on history of Socialist Party in Texas, "Notes, undated," Ruth Alice Allen Papers, 1943-1946, 1971, 1973, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin (hereafter cited as Allen Papers, UT-Austin).

[597] Allen, "Notes, undated," Allen Papers, UT-Austin; Hickey, biographical sketch for unnamed pamphlet, Hickey Papers.

these tours frequently took him to Texas, where he became a popular stump speaker.[598]

As a regular on the Texas Socialist speaking circuit, Hickey was familiar with those involved on each side of the faction fight. Having opposed the strict rule of DeLeon during his years in the SLP, Hickey came to the aid of Bell in his struggle against the Dallas grouping and their right-wing allies in the national leadership. Bell and Hickey, together with E.R. Meitzen, came up with what they called the Texas Program for organizing the SP at both the state and national levels.[599]

The differences between the right and left factions of the SP were more than just simple semantics but got to the heart of what type of party the SP would be and its vision of a future socialist society. Left Socialists, which included the majority of Texas Socialists, envisioned a decentralized bottom-up party from which rank-and-file members would guide and set party policy, positions and strategy. They viewed Right Socialists as top-down, leaving decisions to party professionals who sought to make a career out of working for the party. The Left believed socialism could only be achieved through direct action–-protests, strikes, and revolution (be it through the ballot box or violence if the capitalist government forced it). The Right thought socialism would come about by step-at-a-time reforms of the capitalist system through the electoral process. This Right/Left conflict broaches the question of democracy–how it is put into practice and barriers to it. Hickey, Meitzen, and Bell put forth the Texas Program to counter the degenerative effects that bureaucratic centralism can have on the internal democracy of a professional

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[598] *Dallas Morning News*, November 15, 1905, July 23, 1910; Hickey, biographical sketch for unnamed pamphlet, Hickey Papers. Hickey also appears to have spent some time in Wyoming in 1908, *Dallas Morning News*, April 2, 1908.

[599] Nat L. Hardy, "The Texas Program," *International Socialist Review*, Vol. XI, No. 10 (April 1911), pp. 622-623, 623.

party.[600]

The Texas Program called for a decentralized form of party organization. The central thrust of the program was to strengthen the authority of the county organization. Under the program the state and county secretaries, beholden directly to the rank-and-file membership, were the only executive officers, without the interference of numerous committees. The other provisions stipulated that all candidates for political office must be nominated by a referendum vote, that all state party officials be required to step down at the end of two terms of one year each, and that county and state committees have no function except to fulfill legal-political requirements.[601]

J.L. Hicks opened the columns of his paper, the *Farmers Journal*, to discuss adopting the Texas Program as the Texas SP's state constitution. In order to heal the breach in the state party, Bell called an election to choose a new state secretary. E.R. Meitzen won the election for state secretary as a promoter of the Texas Program. Four days later, with overwhelming approval, the rank-and-file of the Texas SP adopted the Texas Program as their party constitution.[602]

The results of the Texas Program and the leadership of Meitzen were immediately positive. Stagnant members and locals, previously discouraged by the faction fight, became active again. Membership in the Texas SP doubled and the number of counties organized reached fifty. "One of the chief benefits has been the increased activity of the

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[600] Hardy, "The Texas Program," 622-623; Immanuel Ness and Dario Azzellini, "Introduction," *Ours to Master and to Own: Workers' Control From the Commune to the Present*, ed. Immanuel Ness and Dario Azzellini (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2011), 7: For a defense of Victor Berger and step-at-a-time socialism see Sally M. Miller, *Victor Berger and the Promise of Constructive Socialism, 1910-1920* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, Inc., 1973).

[601] Hardy, "The Texas Program," 623.

[602] Hardy, "The Texas Program," 623.

rank and file. The work is brought home to them and they take more interest in party affairs," wrote Texas Socialist Nat Hardy.[603]

With a new form of organization and a leadership now directly responsive to the party's rank-and-file, the political orientation of the Texas SP turned to the land issue. The previous leadership under Rhodes, Smith, and Clarke advocated the collectivization of farmland. They viewed this as following the logic of the Socialist demand for the collectivization of factories in order to end the exploitation of wageworkers. The Meitzens, though, had always remained sympathetic to the land ownership aspirations of tenant and sharecroppers that would free them from the whims of landlords. In the view of the Meitzens, and their co-thinkers, small family run and owned farms were not exploiting anybody but themselves and were not capitalists. This view coincidences with that of Marx who put forth that private property "which rests on the labor of the producer,"--for example farmers--is different than private property gained "on the exploitation of the labor of others,"—capitalists.[604] Some Socialists countered, though, that male farmers were exploiting the labor of their wives and children. Until 1910, the land collectivization position of the SP remained an obstacle to recruiting Texas farmers to socialism. The failure of the SP's May 1910 national convention to adopt a farm program, due to heated disagreements, cleared the way for state parties to draft their own

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[603] Hardy, "The Texas Program," 623.

[604] Marx wrote: "Political economy confuses, on principle, two different kinds of private property, one of which rests on the labor of the producer himself, and the on the exploitation of the labor of others. It forgets that the latter is not only the direct antithesis of the former, but grows on the former's tomb and nowhere else." Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, translated by Ben Fowkes (New York: Vintage Books, 1977, 1867), 931. For a treatment of this subject in regards to small property holders see Robert D. Johnston, *The Radical Middle Class: Populist Democracy and the Question of Capitalism in Progressive Era Portland, Oregon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 82-83.

land platforms.[605]

The Texas SP's 1910 platform registered the party's shift to an agrarian based rank-and-file controlled party. The August convention, held in Corpus Christi, approved the TX SP's most detailed and extensive platform to date. The platform's preamble begins by reaffirming the Texas SP's "allegiance to the principles of international Socialism." It continues by marveling at the "wonderful" advances in technology made by modern manufacturing and agricultural machinery--showing once again that early twentieth century agrarian radicals fully embraced modern society and were not seeking a return to a lost agrarian past. However, "because of this evolution of machinery … the members of society have been separated into classes-the owners or nonworkers, and the nonowners or workers."[606]

The Texas SP put forth a platform designed to place the working-class majority into political power. The top of the platform called for the democratic reforms of the initiative, referendum, and recall of elected officials. The platform continued by demanding full suffrage for women, the abolition of the poll tax, and the defense of Constitutional democratic rights. It also included traditional socialist planks such as the establishment of the eight-hour day, the abolition of child labor, and state "accident and sick insurance" with all physicians and surgeons being employees of the state. Their plan for health insurance also contained the erection of three state sanitariums and state-run drug dispensaries in every county.[607]

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[605] *Proceedings, National Congress of the Socialist Party, Held at Chicago, Illinois May 15 to 21, 1910* (Chicago: Socialist Party, 1910), 212-235.

[606] Winkler, ed., *Platforms of Political Parties in Texas*, 527-528.

[607] *Dallas Morning News*, August 8, 14, 1910; Winkler, ed., *Platforms of Political Parties in Texas*, 528.

The heart of the Texas SP's platform spoke to the dire conditions faced by farmers. By 1910, the problem of land ownership had reached epic portions. The majority of Texas farmers did not own land. In the decade from 1900 to 1910, the number of tenant and share farmers in Texas had more than doubled from 174, 991 to 404,328.[608] Farmers in Texas lost their land and slipped into sharecropping and tenancy for a number of reasons. These included land and commodity speculation that artificially drove up land prices, high transportation costs, periodic crop failures, and lack of access to credit. Sharecroppers and tenant farmers lost the independence they had as owners of their own land, finding themselves in debt to their landlord and local merchants and having little control over the crops they planted, with few guarantees that they would be able to farm the same land next season. The tenant farmer took the financial risks while the landlord reaped most of the profit. To address these conditions, the main planks of the SP's platform called for the state to halt the sale of public land, state purchase of land held by non-residents, a graduated land tax on all land held for speculation, and a proposal that once tenants had paid in rent a sum equal to half the value of the land they occupied, the land would be turned over permanently to the tenants.[609]

In conjunction with confronting the land issue, the Texas SP chose someone closer to the cultural and social backgrounds of many Texans to stand at the top of their 1910 electoral ticket. As reported by E.O. Meitzen in the *New Era*, "The nominee of the Socialist party of Texas for Governor, Reddin Andrews, is well known in this part of the state: in fact, spent his boyhood in Lavaca County: was a Texas cowboy in his younger

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[608] Wilkinson, *Yeomen, Sharecroppers, and Socialists*, 173; James Green, "Tenant Farmer Discontent and Socialist Protest in Texas, 1901-1917" *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, (Austin: Texas State Historical Association October 1977), 133.

[609] Winkler, ed., *Platforms of Political Parties in Texas*, 529.

days, is a Confederate veteran, and has been one of the ablest and best known preachers in the State, being of the Missionary Baptist denomination." Knowing the tough road Socialists faced, Meitzen continued, "A man of such antecedents is entitled to the respectful consideration of his fellow-citizens, even in a State where the great majority heartily opposes his governmental theories."[610]

Besides spending his boyhood in Lavaca County, Reddin, like E.O. Meitzen, was born in Fayette County in January 1848. At the age of 15, Reddin enlisted in the Confederate army as a scout. The experience made him a pacifist. After the war, he joined a Baptist church and in 1871 graduated from Baylor University as valedictorian and an ordained minister. Later, in 1885, Reddin briefly served as president of Baylor. His numerous ministries in rural disadvantaged communities deepened his religious faith in Christ's mission to aid the poor. Putting faith into action, Reddin became an organizer for the People's Party in 1892. After the collapse of the Populist movement, believing that Christianity and socialism represented the same moral beliefs, he stated, "I am a class conscious Socialist."[611]

Reddin's socialism was by no means a watered-down version of Marxism. In front of nearly fifteen hundred people at a 1909 Socialist meeting in Taylor, Reddin exhorted:

> General education is making possible and inevitable a world-wide revolution, which finds its parallel only in spiritual doctrines of life. The oppressed millions see the way of deliverance from the abnormal conditions of poverty and slavery. Socialism derives its life and nourishment from truth, justice, and humanity. It advocates, not reform,

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[610] *New Era* article reprinted in *Dallas Morning News*, June 19, 1910.

[611] Keith L. King, "ANDREWS, REDDIN, JR.," *Handbook of Texas;* "Andrews, A R, Sixteenth Cavalry (Fitzhugh's Regiment; Third Regiment, Johnson's Brigade)", *Compiled Service Records*; As quoted in Wilkinson, *Yeomen, Sharecroppers, and Socialists*, 150.

> but revolution; the substitution of a good in place of bad thing: the displacement of a competitive, capitalistic government by a co-operative commonwealth.[612]

Spiritual revolutionary speeches like these made Reddin popular with the rural poor and earned him the Socialist nomination for governor.

The 1910 Socialist campaign also benefited immensely from the efforts of Hickey. This is the year that Hickey became a full-time SP organizer in Texas. Hickey's Irish roots made him particularly compassionate and attuned to the land issue. He often compared Texas's land problem to that of Ireland's: "The 245 counties of Texas are becoming turned into 245 Irelands with their accompanying evils of landlordism. In the year 1860 Texas was minus renters: in 1870 there was 5 per cent of the land tilled by renters, now 70 per cent of the population is renters, homeless and hopeless under Democratic party rule."[613]

The response to the Texas SP's new land program registered in the SP's increasing electoral results. Andrews received 11, 538 votes, representing 5.3% of the 1910 total vote. Progressive Democrat Oscar Colquitt won the governor's race in a landslide by with 80% of the vote. Still, for a new party, the Socialist vote in Texas had grown substantially since 1902. During the following two years, Socialists campaigned hard as the only party addressing the land ownership problems of poor farmers. Running Andrews again in 1912, the Socialist vote total more than doubled to 25,258 and 8.4% of the total. This is the highest number of votes the Texas SP would ever receive, as it passed the Republican Party as the second largest party in the state. Once again Colquitt

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[612] *Dallas Morning News*, August 5, 1909.

[613] Hickey to Clara Boeer, January 5, 1910, Hickey Papers; *Dallas Morning News*, July 23, 1910.

won with a slightly diminished 78% of the vote.[614]

The Meitzens's new propaganda tool, *The Rebel* newspaper, immensely aided the SP's dramatic rise in electoral success between 1910 and 1912. In June 1911, J.L. Hicks ended the seven-year run of his Populist, then Socialist, newspaper, the *Farmers Journal*, in order to merge it with a new statewide Socialist newspaper run by the Meitzens. The new weekly paper, *The Rebel*, would be based in Hallettsville and printed in the Meitzen's New Era print shop. The New Era shop had eleven people working in it, including A.C. Meitzen, making it the largest print shop between Houston and San Antonio. *The Rebel* retained Hicks as an associate editor, with the managing editor position going to Hickey. E.R. Meitzen started as business manager but remained largely behind the scene, focusing on his responsibilities as SP state secretary.[615]

The name, *The Rebel*, did not derive from Confederate origins, as might be assumed for a southern newspaper. The label "rebel" had been applied to Socialists across the U.S. who opposed the centralized rule of Berger over the SP. Hickey and the Meitzens embraced the label in their rebellion against Berger, and named their paper accordingly, as *The Rebel* promoted Left over Right Socialism.[616]

With the masthead, "The great appear great to us only because we are on our knees–LET US ARISE," the first issue of *The Rebel* appeared on July 1, 1911. "*The Rebel* is here because of an insistent demand for a clean-cut paper that will fight the battles of the Socialist party in Texas and the South," wrote Hickey in the first issue.

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[614] "Election of Texas Governors, 1845-2010," *Texas Almanac*, online.

[615] *Abilene Reporter*, June 19, 1911, clipping found in Hicks Papers; *The Rebel*, July 1, 1911; Hickey to Clara Boeer, February 16, May 16, June 20, 1911, Hickey Papers.

[616] Covington Hall, *Labor Struggles of the Deep South & Other Writings*. David R. Roediger, ed. (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, 1999), 200-201

Making clear the paper's revolutionary ideology he expanded, "we will continue to appear weekly until the conflict between classes that brought the Socialist party into being has ended. With the complete overthrow of the present anarchistic, war breeding, cannibalistic, woman killing, cradle robbing system of capitalism, civilization will be developed and humanity shall step to a higher plane."[617]

Due to the efforts of rank-and-file "rebels," within six months *The Rebel* had a circulation of over 18,000. *The Rebel* would grow to a circulation of over 26,000, with 100,000 copies printed for special editions, making it one of the largest socialist presses in the nation. To finance the paper, the Meitzens created the Socialist Printing Company. The Meitzens owned half of the company, with control of the other half by the Boeer sisters of Stonewall County.[618] The Boeers served as a linchpin of the SP in Texas.

The matriarch of the Boeer family was Maria Wolf Boeer. Born on April 12, 1844 in Germany, Maria immigrated to Texas sometime before 1875. In March 1875, Maria Wolf married Wilhelm Boeer in Colorado County. Wilhelm was born in Prussia in 1833 and first appears in U.S. records as living in Fayette County in 1860. Wilhelm opposed Prussian absolutism and militarism and would often say, "I rather be dead than be a soldier and kill others."[619] Together Wilhelm and Maria farmed in Colorado County into

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[617] *The Rebel*, July 1, 1911.

[618] Green, *Grass-Roots Socialism*, 138; Weinstein, *Decline of Socialism in America*, 94-102, table 1; Hickey to Clara Boeer, February 16, 1911 and J.F. Redmond to Alma Boeer, February 16, 1916, Hickey Papers; Stonewall County is north of Abilene and east of Lubbock. At the end of 1916 stock in the Socialist Printing Company was offered to the public, though it seems there were few buyers. *The Rebel*, December 2, 1916.

[619] "Maria Boeer," *Texas Death Certificates, 1890-1976*, Texas Department of State Health Services, Austin, Texas; "Texas, Marriages, 1837-1973," database, *FamilySearch* (https://familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.1.1/FX7H-1LW: accessed 12 October 2015), Wilhelm Boeer and Maria Wolf, 11 Mar 1875; citing , Colorado, Texas, , reference 2:1W2MBDW; FHL microfilm 969,533; United States Census, *Census Reports*, Eighth Census of the United States Taken in the year 1860; Maria Boeer to Clara and Tom Hickey, May 24, 1916, Hickey Papers.

the 1880s and had at least six children. They then moved to Stonewall County, in west Texas, and began cotton farming before Wilhelm died sometime around the turn of the century.[620]

As a widow, Maria Boeer kept the farm running, raised her children, and became an active Socialist. German remained Maria's primary language, and she maintained an extensive correspondence with writers and editors in Germany. While in Texas she worked to get *Habt Acht*, the German language Socialist newspaper published by the Meitzens, and other Socialist literature into the hands of fellow German Texans.[621] Boeer's political work, in conjunction with the Meitzens, represented one of the last threads of German-language radicalism in Texas dating back to its height during the 1850s and 1870s. Assimilation and a steep decline in German immigration had lessened the influence of the German element in Texas politics. However, small groups of Germans did maintain a presence within the more conservative Republican Party.

During the tumultuous period of the Texas SP faction fight of 1909, west Texas was the only area of the state where the party was not in decline or stagnant. The organizing efforts of the Boeers, J.L. Hicks, and others made west Texas an area of growth for the party during this period. By this time three of Maria Boeer's daughters-Louise (born 1877), Alma (1880), and Clara (1884)--had joined their mother in the Socialist movement. Their organizing in this area, at this time, was aided by Hickey. More than politics motivated Hickey's frequent trips to west Texas. Hickey and Clara

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[620] United States Census, *Census Reports*, Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the year 1910; 1864, 1865, 1866, 1867, 1874, 1879, 1882 Colorado County Tax Rolls.

[621] See Boeer/Wolf Families Papers, Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas; Clara Boeer to Hickey, November 28, 1910, Maria Boeer to Clara Hickey, March 18, 22, 1913, Hickey Papers; The Meitzens also published a Czech language Socialist paper, *Pozor*. Paul C. Boethel, *The Lavacans*. (Columbus, Texas: Butler Office Supply and Printing Company, 1991), 67.

Boeer fell in love and were married on March 1, 1912. Clare joined Hickey in Hallettsville to be with in Hickey's words, "the good Germans"--the Meitzens.[622]

In October 1910, E.R. Meitzen appointed Alma Boeer as the Texas SP's state correspondent to the party's Women's National Committee. Alma remained single and independent her entire life. In July 1912, she even took a trip alone to Sonora, Mexico and while there inquired into ways to have *The Rebel* sent to Mexico. In addition to Alma, E.R.'s mother, Johanna, also served as a correspondent to the Women's National Committee.[623]

When E.R. Meitzen wrote Caroline Lowe, general coordinator of the SP's Women's National Committee, in October 1910 over the appointments to party's state women's committee, he let her know that "there are quite a number of active women comrades in the movement here."[624] As laborers and farmers themselves, female Texas Socialists were attracted to the SP's labor and land planks. Though as Lena Morrow Lewis, a SP national organizer from San Francisco, stated at the 1909 Texas SP encampment at Tyler, "Woman is not only the slave of the wage system, but she is also the slave of man, and after the long centuries of bondage she is just beginning to realize that if there is any purpose in life, woman's first duty is to herself."[625]

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[622] Hardy, "The Texas Program," 622; W.J. Bell to Boeer Sisters, March 25, 1909, Dan C. Crider to Boeer Sisters, March 25, 1909, June 12, 1911, Hickey to Clare Boeer, February 16, 1911, Hickey Papers. Louise Boeer married Karl Wolf. Wolf, a radical thinker, had been born in Germany in 1877 and immigrated with his parents to Texas in 1891. Wolf joined the SP, helped build the SP in west Texas with the Boeers, and became a political confidant of his brother-in-law Hickey. United States Census, *Census Reports*, Fifteenth Census of the United States Taken in the year 1930; Hickey to Carl Wolf, June 4, 1913, Hickey Papers.

[623] E.R. Meitzen to Caroline A. Lowe, October 19, 1910, Alma Boeer to The Rebel, July 14, 1912, Hickey Papers.

[624] E.R. Meitzen to Caroline A. Lowe, October 19, 1910, Hickey Papers.

[625] *Dallas Morning News*, August 5, 1909.

Besides being the only party in Texas with a land plank, the SP was also the only party that supported woman suffrage. The second plank of the 1910 Texas SP platform called for "the extension of the full right of franchise to women," as would every subsequent platform of the party throughout its existence. *The Rebel* declared itself, "the Southern organ for the women's suffragists." While the Texas Democratic Party went as far in its 1916 platform to state, "we declare our unalterable opposition to female suffrage."[626] The Texas SP carried the suffrage banner alone, acting as a left-pull on the Texas Democratic Party, forcing it to eventually come out in favor of women's suffrage or face losing the support of pro-suffrage women and men.

When it came to women's rights, the Texas SP did not stop at suffrage. "The women of the south are beginning to cry out more or less in revolt against the continuous child-bearing that is forced on them by Bourbon tradition," wrote Hickey in a 1916 letter on birth control.[627] *The Rebel* frequently championed Margaret Sanger and her fight for women's access to birth control, calling Sanger "one of the noblest women in the world."[628]

The economic realities of the rural South pressured women into having large families. When a renter sought to work a piece of land, the two questions the landlord regularly asked were "how many mules do you have?" and "how many children do you have?" The landlord would rent to the largest family applying. Early marriage often

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[626] *Dallas Morning News*, August 14, 1910; *The Rebel,* March 17, 1917; The Texas Prohibition Party, though supporting women's suffrage, did not run candidates in 1914, and when it did run candidates in 1916, on the issue of suffrage it simply inserted its national party's pro-suffrage position and did not take it up the issue on its own at the state level. The Texas Republican Party did not come out as either for or against suffrage, stating that the issue, like prohibition, should be submitted to voters through a special election. Winkler, ed., *Platforms of Political Parties in Texas*, 613, 620, 629, 633.

[627] *The Rebel*, March 18, 1916.

[628] *The Rebel*, September 23, 1916.

became the rule in order to maximize the largest number of children possible. Rural women could find themselves brides at the age of 14--even 13.[629]

"The Rebel would suggest that every tenant in Texas who is encouraged by his priests, landlords and bankers to raise a large family regardless of the effect on the health of his wife and her children, should write to Mrs. Margaret Sanger," urged *The Rebel* to its readers, in order to gain information on birth control.[630] The response was massive. The office handling demands for Sanger's pamphlets was overwhelmed with requests from the South. [631] "Dear Comrades Hickey and Meitzen," wrote Sanger:

> Thank you a thousand times for your kind letter and donation … I have often wanted to write to you Rebel friends down there to tell you that I heard from hundreds and hundreds of women in the South asking for pamphlets. They mention The Rebel or friends who had read it. I am always so glad to send literature down there where women have less opportunity to get in touch with the movement like in the cities. The farm women especially, I am anxious to reach. I never realized how much good and what a powerful factor the small radical paper has been in America until this work came up.[632]

According to Sanger's secretary, Texas ranked third, behind New York and Pennsylvania, in states from where people requested that Sanger send them birth control information--"Mrs. Sanger credits The Rebel with this excellent showing."[633]

Today's readers might be surprised that rural Texans sought assistance from Sanger's birth control movement more so than people from the historically liberal states of Massachusetts, Illinois, or California. This is especially so given that historians James

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[629] *The Rebel*, March 18, 1916.

[630] *The Rebel*, February 26, 1916.

[631] *The Rebel*, March 18, 1916.

[632] Margaret Sanger to Hickey and Meitzen, printed in *The Rebel*, November 25, 1916.

[633] James Waldo Fawcett to Hickey, December 1, 1916, printed in *The Rebel*, December 2, 1916.

Green and Kyle Wilkinson have convincingly demonstrated the deeply held Christian religious beliefs of 1910s rural Texans--even rural Socialists.[634] In the early twenty-first century, most working-class conservative Christians separate their moral aversions to birth control and abortion from their own economic self-interests, placing the former over the later in importance. However, many rural Texan Christians of the 1910s made no such separations. They intertwined economics and morality. Socialist stump speakers and *The Rebel* recognized this and utilized evangelical Protestant language to attack what they viewed as the immorality of capitalism. Writing on child labor, *The Rebel* stated, "With the children denied their childhood by the godless profit grabbers of the day, Margaret Sanger with true mother-love, attempted to teach mothers and fathers of the poor the possibilities of family limitation."[635] And for many Texas Socialists the root of the problems of child labor and birth control came down to the political economics of land ownership.

In the first decade of the twentieth century, E.O. Meitzen, now joined by two of his sons--E.R. and A.C.--along with fellow farmer-labor radicals like Hickey, provided an example of how an independent radical working-class party can be built from the bottom up. They began by working within the preexisting network of farmer-labor activists dating back to the Alliance-KOL partnership and what remained of the Populist movement, reestablishing it as a network of socialists. The Meitzens also worked within the Farmers' Union, a mass based farmer's organization, advancing socialist positions

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[634] Green, *Grass-Roots Socialism*, 151-175; Wilkinson, *Yeomen, Sharecroppers, and Socialists*, 125-160.

[635] *The Rebel*, September 25, 1915.

and ideas and recruiting key leaders, such as J.L. Hicks. At the same, they focused locally on building a strong socialist presence in their home of Hallettsville that would serve as the base of left-wing socialism across Texas.

However, all the efforts of the Meitzens, and their cohort, would have been for naught without an economic program and democratic organization that resonated with the realities of working farmers. In order to do so they had to overcome the ideological purity of the Texas SP's far left that advocated the collective ownership of land. On the other side, they faced the party's right, which saw the party more as a municipal reform organization with loose ties to the labor movement. A partnership of expediency, rather than principles, between the right and far left factions at Grand Saline in 1909, threatened to tear the party asunder and relegate it to a political sect. Through a rump convention they attempted to subvert the rank-and-file efforts of Socialist farmers by seizing control of the state party machinery through undemocratic elections, expulsions and the moving of the party headquarters.

The Texas Program drafted by Hickey, Bell, and E.R. Meitzen, with its emphasis on local control and rotating leadership, provided the means for rank-and-file Socialists to democratically run the Texas SP in their interests. Once E.R. Meitzen was elected state secretary of the Texas SP, he did not retaliate against the organizers of the rump Grand Saline convention who had attempted to seize control of the party. Under Meitzen's leadership there were no mass expulsions. Instead the Socialist Party in Texas became a true movement where diverse ideas could be openly debated under a general commitment to bringing about socialism. This is something rarely seen since in socialist or communist organizations, who in their quest for strict ideological agreement have been plagued by

splits and expulsions. The Texas Program also opened the way for the Texas SP to adopt a land plank that focused on the needs of sharecroppers and tenant farmers, who made up the greater part of the state's farmers. With an organizational structure in in place that matched its democratic-working-class ideology, the Texas SP became the main vehicle of Progressive Era reform in Texas and posed a direct challenge to the state's economic and political elites.

Chapter Five

Socialist Prairie Fire

Under the leadership of the Meitzens and Tom Hickey, the Texas SP reorganized itself as a more democratic organization. Through the Texas Program, rank-and-file Socialists adopted a platform more in tune with the direct aspirations of Texas' workers and farmers. The most important aspects of the platform acknowledged tenant farmers' aspirations of becoming self-sufficient landowners. In order to organize the growing number of tenant farmers and to directly address their demands, Socialists helped create the Renters' Union in 1911. At the founding convention of the Renters' Union in Waco, Texas in November 1911, delegates called for reduced rents, more legal and economic protection for tenant farmers, redistribution of land, and the end of the bonus system. They also declared "use and occupancy as the only just title to land." To lead them in this fight, they elected E.O. Meitzen as the head of the Renters' Union.[636]

The Renters' Union represented the culmination of decades of farmer-labor ideology and organization in Texas. Unlike the Populist movement and the Farmers' Union, which claimed to speak for all farmers, the Renters' Union represented only the interests of tenant farmers, who were now over 52% of all Texas farmers. The Meitzens and Hickey viewed farmers as a type of worker and thus part of the working class. Influenced by the industrial unionism of the IWW, they modeled the Renters' Union as one big union for tenant farmers. This model would bring the Texas SP to its height of

[636] *Dallas Morning News*, November 5, 1911; The bonus system charged tenants an extra "bonus" in rent from $1 to $3 for tenants to stay on the farm they rented the previous year, supposedly to account for increased value of the land. C. Horace Hamilton, "Texas Farm Tenure Activities" *The Journal Of Land & Public Utility Economics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, Aug., 1938), Vol. 14, No. 3, pp. 330-333, 330.

prominence and make the land question the main issue of the 1914 state election.

Shortly before the creation of the Renters' Union, revolution erupted in Mexico. The revolution began as a democratic movement calling for the end of Porfirio Diaz's authoritarian rule. However, the revolution rapidly transformed into a clash of economic classes, at the heart of which stood landless Mexican farmers' demand for land. The Mexican Revolution would have a profound impact on the course of farmer-labor radicalism in Texas, with national implications.

Differing political reactions to the Mexican Revolution, even before differences over World War I and the Bolshevik Revolution, led to the initial fracturing of the Socialist Party in the United States during the 1910s. At the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution in 1910, some of the largest sections of the Socialist Party (SP) were found not just in urban centers, but also in the largely agrarian regions of Texas and Oklahoma. Texas Socialists had long been at odds with the dominant right wing of the SP headed by Victor Berger in Milwaukee over the organization of the party. But once Mexican revolutionaries began interacting with Texas Socialists, this fight expanded from one of internal party organizing to over how a socialist transformation of the U.S. should be conducted. Tenant farmers constituted the majority of the membership of the Texas SP. The cry "Tierra y Libertad" of the Mexican Revolution appealed to the debt-ridden Texans, drawing them away from the step-by-step socialism of Berger and toward a policy of direct action as advocated by William "Big Bill" Haywood and Mexican revolutionaries Ricardo and Enrique Flores Magón. While the Berger wing of the SP took a non-interventionist stance toward revolutionary Mexico, the Texas SP went further in calling for the emulation of the Mexican Revolution in Texas. As the Mexican

Revolution politically radicalized white farmers in the Texas SP, it also challenged their white supremacist views toward Tejanos, Mexican-Americans and Mexicans. Through common political struggle, many white Texas Socialists no longer viewed Mexican-Americans and Mexicans as slavish peons but as fellow fighters.

By placing the transnational effect of the Mexican Revolution on the Texas SP within our current understanding of the history of the Socialist Party, we gain a better understanding of working-class history and the political culture of the Progressive Era. Much of what we know about the SP and the Progressive Era in general comes from a northern and urban perspective, with the immigrant experience being that of European immigrants. Analyzing the interactions between Mexican revolutionaries and Texas socialists adds southern, rural, and Mexican immigrant components to this history. These additions change our previous formulations for this era. In particular through knowledge of this transnational agrarian story one gains a new understanding on how with relative ease the U.S. government was able to repress radicalism. For example by the time the U.S. entered World War I, the SP as a national party was already deeply divided, having lost the loyalty of much of its agrarian base, including that of Texas socialists. This division left the SP at a state and national level much more vulnerable to government-supported repression leading up to and following the war. The SP never fully recovered, and the result was the forcible removal of working-class economic radicalism from the mainstream of U.S. political culture.

Before coming into contact with Mexican revolutionaries, the Renters' Union was not immune to the prevalent racism of the era. After the first convention, membership in

the Renters' Union was limited to "all white persons over 16 years of age who are tenant farmers."[637] In the months leading up to the founding convention of the Renters' Union, *The Rebel* presented the need for a Renters' Union in stark racialized terms. The front page of *The Rebel* on September 9, 1911 printed highlights of the U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor's census bulletin on Texas agricultural conditions for 1910 under the headline a "Wonderful Document." The document backs up the Socialists' claims for the worsening conditions of Texas tenant farmers. It also shows that the numbers of black and non-white tenant farmers were increasing, but the number of white tenant farmers was increasing even more, becoming two out of every three tenants. The problem of tenant farmers was thus, in the view of *The Rebel,* primarily a white problem.[638]

In the same issue of *The Rebel*, in the column next to the "Wonderful Document," appeals to join the Renters' Union are made to "Mr. White Renter." The article recounts the story of a white renter desiring to rent land on some newly cultivated black soil in south Texas. The prospective white renter, despite being friends with the landlords, was refused his rental request. The landlords, according to *The Rebel*, stated to the white farmer, "Nothing doing for you … we are going to cultivate this land with Mexicans. We want Mexicans renters as we can make more out of them even though they are not as good farmers as the white farmers." *The Rebel* rhetorically replied, "Now, Mr. White Renter what do you think of that." *The Rebel* follows with another example from Milam County where a landlord recently removed most of his white tenants and "In their place he put negroes and it is believed that this year the remainder of his white tenants will go where their brothers went last year, out on the country road with the earth for a bed, the

[637] *The Rebel,* November 11, 1911.

[638] *The Rebel,* September 9, 1911.

stars for light, and the sky for a blanket." *The Rebel* concludes by stating:

> Now it was not because [the landlord] would prefer the odor of a male or female negro's skin that caused him to make this change from Caucasian to negro. He would prefer the Aryan to the Ethiopian. Save for one thing and that is the sons of Ham are as easily exploited as the sons of Montezuma so between the stove polish and copper-colored brethren the white man is being ground to dust. Do you ask then if the white renters should not organize?[639]

Comments like these led one black socialist, Herbert Harrison, to ask if southern socialists were for "Southernism or Socialism – which?"[640]

The racially exclusive membership policy of the Renters' Union did not last long. SP policy at this time stated that capitalism debased African-Americans and injected race superiority into white workers in order to keep black, white, and other races divided on the economic field. The party offered no specific proposals to address the immediate needs of oppressed minorities within the working class. Socialism was the solution for the entire working class. Ultimately, it was the example of interracial unionism practiced by the Brotherhood of Timber Workers (BTW) that helped changed the racial membership policy of the Renters' Union.[641]

Founded in June 1910, the BTW organized black, white, and Mexican lumberjacks and mill hands in the Louisiana-Texas piney woods. The Southern Lumber Operators' Association, under the heavy hand of lumber baron John H. Kirby, responded to the formation of the BTW by locking out workers at organized mills and importing strikebreakers. Pushed to the brink during the winter of 1912, the BTW at its April 1912 convention voted to affiliate with the IWW. This convention began with black and white

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[639] *The Rebel,* September 9, 1911.

[640] As quoted in Neil Foley, *White Scourge*, 99.

[641] Shannon, *The Socialist Party of America*, 51.

delegates meeting in separate halls. However, bowing to the influence of Haywood, who was in attendance, and Louisiana socialist Covington Hall, the delegates decided to buck regional racial norms and met together in one hall. The IWW's direct action tactics and interracial inclusiveness reenergized the BTW resulting in modest gains in Louisiana. Due to the near feudal control Kirby had over East Texas lumber towns, the IWW/BTW made very little headway into Texas. [642]

Texas Socialists and farmers were inspired by the BTW's militancy and cross-racial solidarity. At the Renters' Union's second convention in 1912, delegates eliminated the word "white" from its membership requirements and called for African-Americans to organize separate local unions. Although little evidence has been discovered to suggest that African-Americans did organize their own locals, large numbers of Mexican-Americans were drawn to the Renters' Union after 1912.[643]

If the Meitzens and Hickey were surprised with the large number of Mexican Americans joining the Renters' Union, they should not have been. For in November 1910, ten months prior to the founding of the Renters' Union, and just across the Rio Grande (or Bravo) River from Texas, the Mexican Revolution had begun. Just as the land issue stood central for Texas tenant farmers, so did it too for many Mexican revolutionaries. The violence of the Mexican Revolution, in which an estimated 1 to 2 million people were killed, along with the pull of an expanding Southwest economy, pushed many Mexicans into Texas. From 1910 to 1920, the number of Mexican

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[642] Covington Hall, *Labor Struggles of the Deep South & Other Writings*. David R. Roediger, ed. (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, 1999), 120, 128. In addition to Hall, for an account of the "Lumbers Wars" in Louisiana and Texas and how it influenced the Texas SP see Green, *Grass-Roots Socialism*, 204-227.

[643] Green, *Grass-Roots Socialism*, 223.

immigrants living in Texas doubled from 125,016 to 251,827.[644] Many brought their revolutionary aspirations tied to the land with them. The once separate trajectories of U.S. agrarian radicalism and Mexican anarchism were now set to collide in Texas.

Separated only by a river, both Mexican and Texas farmers during the early twentieth century increasingly lost their land to banks, corporations, and wealthy landowners. Though sharing the land issue with Mexicans, many Texas farmers held racist views toward Mexicans and Mexican Americans, thus preventing an alliance of all exploited workers of the land. Since 1876, Porfirio Diaz had ruled Mexico. In that year, with the aid of American capitalists, large-scale Texas landowners, and landholding elites in Mexico, Diaz led a revolt that allowed him to seize control of the Mexican presidency; for the next thirty-five years he would be Mexico's de facto ruler. Diaz continued the process of turning Mexico into a modern nation state that had begun under Benito Juárez, albeit in a much more authoritarian fashion than Juárez. Under Diaz governmental power was centralized in Mexico City, and the process of industrialization begun. However, not internal Mexican capital but an inflow of capital from the U.S. and Europe drove this industrialization. In order to speed the process of industrialization and ensure the continual flow of foreign capital into Mexico, Diaz granted major economic concessions to foreign investors, allowing for near monopolies in every industry. The result was the emergence of an oligopoly made up of Diaz supporters in Mexico City and foreign investors.[645]

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[644] Robert McCaa, *Missing Millions: The Human Cost of the Mexican Revolution* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Population Center, 2001); Carey McWilliams, *North From Mexico: The Spanish-Speaking People of the United States* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), 163.

[645] John Mason Hart, *Revolutionary Mexico: The Coming and Process of the Mexican Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 6; Stephen H. Haber, *Industry and Underdevelopment: the Industrialization of Mexico, 1890-1940* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1989), 12.

Many of the foreign investors in Mexico were American capitalists who also held substantial economic investments in the U.S. southwest. This group reads as a who's who of American politics and capital–Jay Gould; J.P. Morgan; the Rockefellers; the Guggenheims; Phelps Dodge; William Green; the American Smelting and Refining Company; Cargill; the Texas Oil Company; Cyrus McCormick; U.S. Senator from New Mexico, Albert Bacon Fall; Texas governors James S. Hogg and Charles Culberson; and member of congress turned postmaster general and political advisor to Woodrow Wilson, Albert S. Burleson.[646] Of Mexico's 485 million-acre surface area, U.S. investors owned 130 million acres concentrated in the important coastal and frontier areas. Americans and Europeans also controlled around 90 percent of Mexico's incorporated capital.[647]

The modernization campaign of Diaz and his cohort had adverse effects on Mexico's laboring classes, in both the field and factory. During the 1880s and 1890s, an enclosure type movement transferred untitled land equaling one-fifth of Mexico's surface area into private property. Titled land transferred as well. This land ownership moved from communal villagers, individual villagers, and smallholders to hacendados, local political bosses, and rancheros (to a large degree, foreigners), while the overwhelming majority of Mexicans became landlessness.[648]

Industrialization exacerbated the landless crisis as the railroad boom of the 1880s evicted many peasants from the land. The boom slightly mitigated the crisis by providing jobs. The textile and mining industries also rapidly developed during this period.

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[646] Hart, *Revolutionary Mexico*, 47, 132, 136-137, 148-151; Friedrich Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1989), 130.

[647] W. Dirk Raat, *Revoltosos: Mexico's Rebels in the United States, 1903-1923* (College Station, Texas: Texas A&M University Press, 1981), 13; Hart, *Revolutionary Mexico*, xi.

[648] Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution, Volume 1: Portirians, Liberals and Peasants* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 79, 95.

However, by the 1890s, the railroad boom ended and the textile industry was suffering from over production resulting in the total number of textile workers decreasing by 50% from 1895 to 1910. As the population of Mexico continued to rise, droughts in 1908 and 1909 resulted in increased food prices at a time when wages were being cut.[649]

Diaz's rule not only had a detrimental effect on Mexico's laboring classes, it also alienated many elites not directly tied to Diaz. Among disaffected elites and middle-class professionals, a sentiment grew for effective suffrage and free local governments. In the summer of 1900, Liberal Clubs formed that in early 1901 launched a campaign against the Diaz regime by organizing protests and distributing radical literature. Joining this agitation were a number of socialists and anarchists, including the brothers Ricardo and Enrique Flores Magón. A political process had now begun of uniting cross-class forces of alienated regional elites, radical intellectuals, workers, and peasants that would lead to the Mexican Revolution. In turn, Diaz began a counter campaign of repression against revolutionary activity by jailing and assassinating democratic activists and shutting down insurgent presses.[650]

By 1903, the repressive climate under Diaz had become so severe that many Mexican revolutionaries decided to organize their activities in exile, from the U.S. On January 4, 1904, the Flores Magón brothers crossed the border into Laredo, Texas hoping to establish a base of operations to ferment revolution in Mexico. The Flores Magóns stayed briefly in Laredo before moving on to San Antonio and starting the newspaper

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[649] Knight, *Mexican Revolution, Volume 1*, 128-129; Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 49.

[650] Knight, *Mexican Revolution, Volume 1*, 30-32; James D. Cockcroft, *Intellectual Precursors of the Mexican Revolution, 1900-1913* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968), 91, 93; Juan Gomez-Quiñones, *Sembradores, Ricardo Flores Magon y el Partido Liberal Mexicano: A Eulogy and Critique* (Los Angeles: Aztlan Publications, Chicano Studies Center, University of California, Los Angeles, 1973), 23-25; Raat, *Revoltosos, 20-21.*

Regeneración, first published on November 5, 1904. After facing police harassment in San Antonio, the Flores Magóns moved to Saint Louis, Missouri in 1905. In Saint Louis they and a small group of fellow exiles organized the Partido Liberal Mexicano (PLM), which by 1907 had over 350 clubs across Mexico in addition to clubs in the U.S. The Flores Magóns began a process in which Mexican revolutionaries would have a radicalizing effect on labor relations in the U.S. Southwest--and a significant influence on U.S. radicals.[651]

Before the Revolution, the broad U.S. Left--from anarchists to the American Federation of Labor (AFL)--supported the PLM in its fight to overthrow the Diaz regime. The PLM's 1906 manifesto was drafted as a liberal document that could appeal to a variety of working-class ideologies both within Mexico and abroad. It called for basic reforms such as a minimum wage, a ban on child labor, and the eight-hour workday that messed with the goals of the AFL. At the same time, anarchists and socialists viewed the PLM's struggle against Diaz as part of the international class struggle. In order to gain this wide support in the U.S., Ricardo Flores Magón muted his personal anarchist beliefs. Paradoxically, while this gained the PLM allies in U.S., in the years following 1906 many of those engaged in the struggle against Diaz in Mexico began to feel that the PLM manifesto was not radical enough. As a result, even while the PLM's influence was growing in the U.S. it was waning in Mexico. With the opening of the Mexican Revolution, the strain between Flores Magón's anarchist political beliefs and his reformist allies in the U.S. became harder to ignore. In 1907, the U.S. government, in coordination with the Mexican ambassador to the U.S., successfully convicted the Flores

[651] Gomez-Quiñones, *Sembradores*, 23-25; Raat, *Revoltosos*, 20-21; Colin M. MacLachlan, *Anarchism and the Mexican Revolution: The Political Trials of Ricardo Flores Magón in the United States*, (Berkley: University of California Press, 1991), 18-19.

Magón brothers with violation of neutrality laws by encouraging armed revolt in Mexico. They served nearly three years in prison before their release in August 1910. During his imprisonment, Ricardo Flores Magón dropped any previous pretensions to political action in favor of direct action and began to openly espouse his anarchist beliefs.[652]

At the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution, Texas Socialists views on the revolution were basically similar to those of their northern right-wing SP counterparts. The SP took a non-interventionist stance toward the revolution, issuing a national proclamation in March 1911 demanding that the U.S. government withdraw the troops President Taft had sent to the Mexican border and condemning any incursion into Mexico as done on the behalf of U.S. capitalists' investment and property interests in the country. Berger's Socialist daily the *Milwaukee Leader* ran editorials against U.S. intervention in Mexico, but for the most part it covered the Mexican Revolution no differently from any other major news event.[653]

The first public display in Texas in support of the Mexican Revolution did not come from Texas Socialists, but from a committee of citizens of Hall County in the Panhandle region. This committee, in February 1911 sent a resolution to the state legislature expressing sympathy with the Mexican insurgents as their "fellow human beings" applauding "their struggle for emancipation." The resolution called on the legislature to support the revolutionaries' right to armed revolt, just as the United States' forefathers had done, and to oppose any U.S. intervention in Mexico against the insurgents. The legislature did not respond favorably to the resolution, as earlier in the

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[652] MacLachlan, *Anarchism and the Mexican Revolution*, 4-5, 20-21, 30, 32-33.

[653] *Socialist Party Official Bulletin*, March 1911; editorial in *The Milwaukee Leader*, February 14, 1913, for examples of news coverage, but not limited to, see *The Milwaukee Leader*, February 17, 1912 and February 10, 1913.

session both houses had passed resolutions in support of Diaz's administration. One senator even called the resolution treason against the U.S. government.[654]

Following the lead of the Hall County committee, Texas Socialists began campaigning against U.S. intervention in Mexico and in support of Mexican revolutionaries. A sense of urgency was given to their campaign when President Taft order 20,000 troops to the Texas-Mexican border on March 7, 1911. Hickey in particular took inspiration from Hall County. After the legislature emphatically rejected the Hall County resolution, Hickey wrote a poetic piece, which paraphrased Irish nationalist Thomas Meagher's "On Abhorring the Sword" (1846), titled "A Defense of the Insurrecto's Sword."[655]

In his "A Defense of the Insurrecto's Sword," Hickey appealed to Texan's religious sentiments and Texas patriotism:

> I do not condemn the use of arms in the hands of the Mexican insurrectos as immoral, nor do I conceive it to be profane to say that the Kingdom of Heaven, the Lord of Hosts, the God of battles has forever bestowed his benedictions upon those like the Mexican insurrectos who unshield the sword to gain their freedom and establish a nation's honor.
>
> From that evening on which, in the valley of Bethulia, He nerved the arm of the Jewish girl to smite the drunken tyrant in his tent, down to this, our day, in which he has blessed the insurgent chivalry of a Magon …
>
> No, Mr. President, the spirits of Crockett and Bowie, of Johnson and Houston, blesses this hall with their presence today and shudders at the degenerate sons of the Lone Star state who would decry the sword that leaps from the scabbard to install freedom and to assert the right of a free

[654] *Dallas Morning News*, February 15, 19, 1911. Little was reported about this committee of "citizens" other than that the resolution came out of a "mass meeting" and the submitted resolution was signed by a woman (Jennie N. Paul) and two men (G.W. Baker and J.L. Pope).

[655] Thomas Francis Meagher (1823-1867) was an Irish nationalist and a leader of the Young Irelander Rebellion of 1848, which was a part of the broader European revolutions of 1848. When the rebellion failed, Meagher was arrested and sentenced to be transported for life to the island of Tasmania. Meagher escaped to the United States in 1852. At the outbreak of the U.S. Civil War, Meagher joined the U.S. Army and recruited and led the Irish Brigade, 69th New York Infantry, rising to the rank of brigadier general. "A Defense of the Insurrecto's Sword," Hickey Papers.

people.[656]

This piece of Hickey's writings encapsulates the transnational influences on Texas agrarian radicalism. Inspired by a group of rural Texans, Hickey comes to the defense of Mexican revolutionaries by invoking an Irish nationalist, who led a rebellion that was animated by the French and German Revolutions of 1848, and makes references to the Old Testament and the Texas Revolution.

In an effort coordinated by the Meitzens, Hickey embarked on a speaking tour of Texas, during the spring of 1911, as part of a statewide campaign of the Texas SP in opposition to a possible U.S. war against Mexico. Hickey addressed meetings not only in English, but in Spanish as well. In a March 1911 letter to his then soon to be wife, Clare, Hickey revealed his hopes that a revolution would soon be take place in Texas, and his own place in the anticipated revolution. "Hard-times are ahead for all of us. The Revolution on this side of the Rio Grande cannot be much longer delayed. You will be the famous wife of one of the leaders."[657] While the anti-war efforts of the Texas SP followed the general anti-intervention line of the SP nationally, Hickey's letter to Clare and his "A Defense of the Insurrecto's Sword" provides a hint of the future emulation many Texas Socialists would hold for the Mexican Revolution, differentiating them from most U.S. Socialists.

Eugene Debs expressed the views of many U.S. Socialists toward the Revolution in Mexico in a July 1911 article in the *International Socialists Review*. Debs called Mexican workers "ignorant, superstitious, unorganized and all but helpless in their

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[656] "A Defense of the Insurrecto's Sword," Hickey Papers.

[657] Flyer, "Thomas A. Hickey Will Lecture On Socialism In Spanish," and Hickey to Clare Boeer, March 10, 1911, Hickey Papers. It is odd that a flyer advertising Hickey lecturing in Spanish was printed in English. If there were any Spanish flyers, they have been lost to history.

slavish subjugation … economic emancipation is simply out of the question. They must first be … educated and organized, and until this work is accomplished … all hope of successful revolution is doomed to disappointment." Debs went on to criticize the PLM leadership for renouncing political action in favor of direct action as a "folly that is certain to end in disaster."[658] This criticism came in the wake of the PLM's failed invasion of Baja California.

In January 1911, a PLM inspired army of anarchists, Wobblies, adventurers, and military deserters invaded the Baja peninsula of Mexico and proclaimed an anarchist republic. By June, Mexican government forces defeated the PLM army. On June 14, 1911, federal officials raided the PLM headquarters in Los Angeles, arresting the Flores Magón brothers and a number of other PLM leaders, charging them with conspiracy to organize armed expeditions from the U.S. against a friendly nation. In June 1912, authorities found the PLM leadership guilty and sentenced them to twenty-three months in prison.[659]

Though the Texas SP did not come out in support of the Baja Invasion, its failure did not have the same distancing effect from the PLM, and the Mexican Revolution itself, as it did on other Socialists. As Texas Socialists campaigned against U.S. intervention in Mexico, their proximity to Mexico put them in direct contact with PLM militants. As the national Left/Right faction fight within the SP intensified, many Texas Socialists, though not adopting anarchism, felt a common affinity with the direct action philosophy of the

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[658] Eugene V. Debs, "The Crisis in Mexico," *International Socialist Review*, Vol. 12, no. 1 (July 1911), pp.22-24, 22-23.

[659] Raat, *Revoltosos*, 56-59; Gomez-Quiñones, *Sembradores*, 41,48-50. Joe Hill was among the radicals that invaded Baja.

PLM.[660]

Political collaboration between the PLM, IWW and left wing of the SP, at a national and international level, had begun as early as 1906. That summer, the PLM and IWW led a strike of copper miners in Cananea, Mexico. Later in the fall, PLM junta leader Manuel Sarabia, during a stay in Chicago, formed a political relationship with left Socialists. In Texas, the PLM/IWW political association emerged in June 1912 during a strike of Mexican onion pickers in South Texas. The IWW stepped in to help guide the strike, but strikebreakers led to its was eventual defeat.[661] Outside of the small onion picker's strike, the IWW gained little influence among Mexican laborers in Texas. Limiting itself to wage earners, the IWW left a void for those caught in the prevailing agricultural system of sharecropping and tenant farming.[662]

"The cause of socialist labor and PLM organizing," Emilio Zamora correctly notes, "became increasingly intertwined with the Mexican Revolution."[663] With the national organization of the PLM under government attack and the IWW's refusal to organize farmers, it made it difficult for radicalizing Mexicans to organize under the banner of these organizations. The convergence on the land issue between Mexican revolutionaries and Texas Socialists though, opened the way for many Mexican immigrants and Tejanos to join the Renters' Union and the Texas Socialist Party.[664]

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[660] *Socialist Party Official Bulletin*, March 1911; Tom Hickey to Clare Boeer, March 10, 1911, Hickey Papers.

[661] Raat, *Revoltosos,* 40-41, 65-91; Green, *Grass-Roots Socialism*, 328-329; Zamora, *World of the Mexican Worker in Texas*, 58.

[662] Green, *Grass-Roots Socialism*, 327.

[663] Zamora, *The World of the Mexican Worker in Texas*, 153.

[664] *The Rebel*, May 10, 17, 1913; Foley, *White Scourge*, 110; Identifying the individual Mexicans

This convergence was reflected in the pages of *The Rebel* during the summer of 1912, when its editors began reprinting articles from the PLM newspaper *Regeneración*. *The Rebel* referred to *Regeneración* as "the official organ of the Mexican revolution"[665] and frequently reported on the situation in Mexico, reprinted articles from *Regeneración* and Ricardo Flores Magón. While it would be hard to call any newspaper of the time the official organ of the Mexican Revolution, this statement does show where Texas Socialists obtained their initial understandings of the revolution. The TX SP adopted the PLM line on Madero in the fall of 1912, seeing him as an instrument of the bourgeoisie. Though critical at times of *The Rebel*, *Regeneración* reciprocated the friendly coverage, reporting favorably on the Renters' Union and covering political happenings in Texas.[666]

Interaction with Mexican Revolutionaries further radicalized Texas Socialists, exacerbating their differences with the Berger led right wing. At the same time that Texas Socialists were forging a political relationship with the PLM in the fall of 1912, their faction fight with the right wing of the SP was coming to a climax.

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and Tejanos who joined the Renters' Union and Texas SP is no simple task. Through the pages of *The Rebel* and Texas newspapers I was able to find the names of sixteen members of the Renters' Union with Spanish surnames out of the reported over one thousand Mexicans that joined. The peak years of Socialist and Mexican revolutionary agitation in Texas were 1913-1917. Due to the porous nature of the Texas-Mexican border, and that tenants would routinely relocate to different farms, the 1910 and 1920 censuses provide little assistance. Using border crossing records, World War I draft registration cards, Texas death certificates, and the "Mexican Files" of the Bureau of Investigation, I was able to find records on eleven of the sixteen individuals. I found that ten of them were born in Mexico. Only one was a Tejano. When an occupation was listed, six of them were farmers, along with one shoemaker. *Border Crossings: From Mexico to U.S., 1895-1964*, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.; *U.S. World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918*, National Archives and Records Administration; "Mexican Files," Bureau of Investigation, Investigation Case Files. National Archives and Records Administration; *Texas Death Certificates, 1903-1982*, Texas Department of State Health Services.

[665] *The Rebel*, June 15, 22, 1912.

[666] *The Rebel*, November 12, 1912; *Regeneración*, November 13, 22, 1913, January 24, 1914, July 11, 1914. *Regeneración* ran an article in its December 27, 1913 issue criticizing an article in *The Rebel* that simplified the Mexican Revolution as a revolt against the Roman Catholic Church. This was not the normal stance of *The Rebel* which, agreeing with *Regeneración*, viewed economic exploitation as the main cause of the revolution. For examples of *The Rebel*'s coverage of the Mexican Revolution see *The Rebel*, June 8, 15, 1912, December 20, 1913, July 7, 1915.

Heading into the SP's May 1912 national convention in Indianapolis, E.R. Meitzen and Hickey planned to introduce parts of the Texas Program into the SP's constitution. They were optimistic, as the Texas Program had the support of Debs and other leaders of the party's left wing. [667] Upon arriving in Indianapolis, their plans for structural changes, to organize the party more democratically, became secondary to the larger political battles at hand. They also lacked the direct help of Debs. While Debs stands out as iconic figure of the SP, due to his masterful oratory skills and personal sacrifices on behalf of the working class, he regularly did not attend party conventions and stayed out of the fray of inter-party faction fights.[668] Despite being a supporter of the party Left, Debs voiced his opinions through writings, not on the convention floor or at heated internal meetings. Debs' self abstention and refusal to use his moral authority to its full force on behalf of the Left, when it was sorely needed, stands out as one of his only political flaws.

As delegates gathered in Indianapolis, the SP was at its height in terms of membership and political influence. However, the party could not unite on how it should advance the cause of socialism. Left Socialists wanted the party to be more revolutionary by helping build mass struggles against capitalism through propaganda and direct action. In particular, they supported industrial unionism over the craft union orientation of the AFL dictated by Gompers. The Right, on the other hand, sought to organize the party on an electoral basis to win votes for Socialist candidates and support of reforms that were

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[667] John Spargo, ed., *Proceedings, National Convention of the Socialist Party Held at Indianapolis, Ind., May 12 to 18, 1912* (Chicago: M.A. Donohue & Company, 1912), 4: E.R. Meitzen to Hickey, February 1911, Hickey Papers.

[668] Ray Ginger, *The Bending Cross: A Biography of Eugene V. Debs* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2007, 1947), 308.

often less than socialistic. They also felt the SP should work primarily within the current AFL union structure.[669]

Hickey and Meitzen did introduce proposals to limit the influence of office seekers and party professionals (those who sought to make a career of working in the party bureaucracy). Coming from the Texas Program, these proposals would have prevented national committee members from serving more than two consecutive terms and disallowed members who held a public political office from simultaneously holding an executive party position. Forced to spend their time on the issues of industrial unionism and the party's choice for presidential candidate, instead of mustering support for their organizational proposals, Meitzen and Hickey's motions suffered defeat.[670]

As a member of the convention's Committee on Labor Organizations and Their Relation to the Party, Hickey helped draft a compromise resolution on the trade union question between the party's Right and Left. Left Socialists desired that the labor committee's report support economic direct action through union organizing and strikes of industrial unions as the primary tactic to advance socialism. On the other side, the Right favored electoral political action by campaigning for Socialist candidates, as the primary task of Socialists within the trade union movement. The final labor resolution put economic and political action on equal footing. It appeased the Right by not specifically endorsing industrial unionism, and satisfied the Left by calling for the attention of labor unions, in the words of the resolution, "to the vital importance of the task of organizing the unorganized, especially the immigrants and unskilled laborers."[671]

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[669] Kipnis, *The American Socialist Movement*, 402.

[670] *Proceedings, National Convention of the Socialist Party, 1912*, 121, 151, 159.

"As one of the committee that has struggled away into the small hours of the morning for two nights, and then for three days—I want to say," expressed Hickey from the convention floor, "that this is the broadest and widest, most statesmanlike and farthest reaching resolution on labor unions that has even been taken up in a Socialist National Convention."[672] The resolution even drew the support of arch-syndicalist Haywood, as he urged "that this report should be unanimously adopted," which it was. Said Haywood: "I feel that then I can go to the working class, to the eight million women and children, to the four million black men, to the disfranchised white men … the men who have no votes, and I can carry to them the message of Socialism … to organize the only power that is left to them, their industrial power."[673]

The labor resolution passed unanimously, "since," as historian Ira Kipnis noted, "the resolution meant many things to many men."[674] After its passage, the Right put forth a motion to make sure that their interpretation carried on after the convention. Wisconsin state senator W.R. Gaylord proposed an amendment to the party constitution which read: "Any member of the party who opposes political action or advocates crime, sabotage, or other methods of violence as a weapon of the working class to aid in its emancipation, shall be expelled from membership in the party."[675] Gaylord's proposal came right on the heels of the defeat of Hickey's motion that would have prevented political office holders,

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[671] *Proceedings, National Convention of the Socialist Party, 1912*, 36, 195; Kipnis, *The American Socialist Movement*, 400-401.

[672] *Proceedings, National Convention of the Socialist Party, 1912*, 100.

[673] *Proceedings, National Convention of the Socialist Party, 1912*, 100.

[674] Kipnis, *The American Socialist Movement*, 401.

[675] Kipnis, *The American Socialist Movement*, 403; *Proceedings, National Convention of the Socialist Party, 1912*, 122, 134; Ginger, *The Bending Cross*, 309.

such as Gaylord, from holding executive office in the party.[676]

The fight over the proposed anti-sabotage clause consumed nearly an entire day. The harmony between Socialists that Hickey expressed the previous day had evidently been only a mirage. Hickey himself acknowledged that he and the other Left delegates who compromised in their drafting of the labor resolution must be "bad bridge builders."[677] Delegates engaged in a heated debate over the meaning of the word "sabotage." Left Socialists made clear what they meant by "sabotage" in relation to labor organizations in the pages of the *International Socialist Review*. The May 1912 issue, appearing just before the convention opened, contained an article, "Some Definitions," by Frank Bohn. Bohn defined direct action as "any action taken by workers directly at the point of production with a view to bettering their conditions. The organization of any labor union whatever is direct action. Sending the shop committee to demand of the boss a change in shop rules is direct action. To oppose direct action is to oppose labor unionism as a whole with all its activities." In regards to sabotage, Bohn wrote, "Sabotage means 'strike and stay in the shop.' Striking workers thus are enabled to draw pay and keep out scabs while fighting capitalism. Sabotage does not necessarily mean destruction of machinery or other property, although that method has been indulged in … more often it is used to advantage in a quieter way. Excessive limitation of output is sabotage." As examples of sabotage, Bohn cited the ancient Hebrews in Egypt spoiling bricks and southern slaves putting stones and dirt in their cotton bags to make them

[676] *Proceedings, National Convention of the Socialist Party, 1912*, 121.

[677] *Proceedings, National Convention of the Socialist Party, 1912*, 134.

heavier.[678]

Right Socialists, in their opposition to industrial unionism, sought to associate "sabotage" with negative connotations. "This is the time to draw the line between a real Socialist revolution on one side and anarchy, murder and sabotage on the other," railed Berger from the floor.[679] "Sabotage-who can define it," countered Hickey, "why, they are not even able to pronounce it with the Milwaukee accent … there are fifty-seven different varieties of pronunciations from the intellectual variety that says 'sabotage' right down to the Irish pronunciation that says 'sabbatage.'"[680]

With the terms already clearly defined, for Left Socialists such as Hickey, the debate over sabotage and direct action was not one of semantics, but whether the SP would be a party run by workers who embraced trade union militancy or a party controlled by intellectuals pushing gradual reforms of capitalism. "We are a political party, and in the course of our development," spoke Hickey as to the future of the party, "we come to have men of the times upon labor committees, upon constitutional committees that have earned the right to sit upon them by belonging to organized labor, and they will not produce the anaemic [sic] things that the intellectuals have produced this afternoon."[681] Hickey's earnest appeal did not have his desired effect, as the convention voted for the anti-sabotage clause 191 to 90.[682] The Right had gained a powerful tool to wield against Left supporters of industrial unionism.

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[678] Frank Bohn, "Some Definitions," *International Socialists Review*, Vol. 12, no. 8 (May 1912), 747-749.

[679] *Proceedings, National Convention of the Socialist Party, 1912*, 133.

[680] *Proceedings, National Convention of the Socialist Party, 1912*, 133.

[681] *Proceedings, National Convention of the Socialist Party, 1912*, 133.

[682] *Proceedings, National Convention of the Socialist Party, 1912*, 137.

Hoping to build on the momentum of their victory in passing the anti-sabotage clause, Right Socialists immediately moved to halt further discussion of the party constitution. They then called for the convention to nominate its candidates for president and vice president. The roll call of state delegations nominated three presidential candidates—Debs, supported by the Left; Milwaukee mayor Emil Seidel, supported by the Right of the Midwest and western states; and Charles Edward Russell of New York, supported by the Right of the eastern states. The Right maneuvered to prevent Debs' nomination, but Debs still came out on top with 165 votes, with 56 for Seidel and 54 for Russell. Even if the Right had united, it would not have been enough to beat Debs, though this was the closest the Right had ever come to preventing Debs from being the party's standard bearer. In an effort to restore party unity, many Left delegates supported Seidel for vice president, who won the nomination. The majority of the Texas delegation, including Meitzen and Hickey; however, refused to show any such faux unity and backed Dan Hogan of Arkansas.[683]

Upon receiving word of his nomination, Debs acknowledged the efforts Hickey, Meitzen and other members of the Texas delegation exerted to place him at the top of the SP ticket. "I shall never forget your personal loyalty and devotion. This confidence and affection of you and other devoted comrades is my most sacred possession beyond my immediate family," wrote Debs to Hickey. "I shall never forget you and Ed Green, and Meitzen, and Noble, and the rest of the Texas warriors, wheel-horses everyone of them. You four alone, above mentioned, represent nearly 25 feet of the revolution. When you

[683] *Proceedings, National Convention of the Socialist Party, 1912*, 137-143; Ginger, *The Bending Cross*, 309; Kipnis, *The American Socialist Movement*, 406.

see or write these comrades send your love along with mine."[684]

On the final day of the Indianapolis convention, after six days of charged debate, most of the exhausted delegates had headed home. The Right though, saw the sparse delegation as one last opportunity for a power grab. In the final hour of the convention, Morris Hillquit of New York City, a Right member of the NEC, nominated J. Mahlon Barnes as chairman of the SP's National Campaign Committee. Barnes, a stalwart of the party Right, had only recently been replaced as the party's national secretary. Christian Socialists in the party had forced Barnes' resignation due to his fathering a child out of wedlock and misusing party funds to support the child. Barnes was no friend of the party Left either. As national secretary, he oversaw the expulsion and suspension of numerous Left SP locals.[685]

When Hillquit nominated Barnes, he did so in a way that made it appear Barnes had the support of the NEC and the Committee on Constitution. Barnes' nomination, though, had no such support, due to Left members, such as Haywood, on each committee vehemently despising Barnes. Hillquit's ruse worked and the remaining convention delegates elected Barnes chair of the Campaign Committee. Debs was enraged in hearing that Barnes would be in charge of his presidential campaign. In a rare instance of Debs forcefully injecting himself into an inter-party conflict, he attended a NEC meeting to discuss the Barnes issue. Hillquit and Berger brushed aside the objections of Debs and other party members to Barnes. They went as far as to say that those who refused to work

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[684] Eugene Debs to Hickey, May 21, 1912, Hickey Papers. Ed Green at this time was the state secretary of the Texas SP, elected after E.R. Meitzen served two terms in the position and did not seek a third per the Texas Program. For information on W.S. Noble see p. 356 of this dissertation.

[685] *Proceedings, National Convention of the Socialist Party, 1912*, 164; Kipnis, *The American Socialist Movement*, 380.

under Barnes should quit the party. According to Debs biographer Ray Ginger, "Debs was so furious that he was literally screaming. With his long body leaning across the table, he waggled his finger under Hillquit's nose and shouted that the objections to Barnes had come from Socialists 'just as good as you, Comrade Hilquit.'" The Right-controlled NEC kept Barnes as national campaign manager.[686]

Never shy of taking on the party's national leadership, the Texas Left jumped into the fray over Barnes. In July 1912, the Texas SP local of Branon, just a few miles southwest of Hallettsville, proposed that a national referendum to remove Barnes as chairman of the National Campaign Committee. The proposal from the Branon local charged that Barnes had been "foisted upon the party against its will, through the machinations of a few old-time members of the N.E.C." who at the last national convention, in a moment of confusion, created the position of campaign manager and railroaded through Barnes's appointment.[687]

The Right leadership countered this attack from the Texas Left by making the accusation that the Branon proposal was a fraud and launched an investigation against E.R. Meitzen for forging the proposal. As it turns out, the Branon local submitted the proposal, but E.R. Meitzen, who belonged to the Hallettsville local, drafted it. Meitzen stated that he asked the Branon local to approve and submit the proposal because he did not want the national membership to view the proposal as just another proposal coming from his and Hickey's local. The investigation cleared Meitzen of any wrongdoing. Haywood, a member of the NEC, supported Meitzen through the whole ordeal. Believing

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[686] *Proceedings, National Convention of the Socialist Party, 1912*, 165; Ginger, *The Bending Cross*, 310-311.

[687] *Socialist Party Monthly Bulletin*, July 1912.

the matter settled, Haywood excused himself from the NEC meeting that discussed the issue and left town. When the NEC reconvened the next day, without Haywood, the NEC moved to discredit Meitzen, regardless of the investigation clearing him. NEC adopted a report against Meitzen stating that the NEC "denounces the methods employed in securing [the referendum] as dishonest trickery, not to be tolerated in the Socialist movement."[688]

Despite the internal differences, the SP carried out its most successful presidential campaign in terms of percentage gained of the total vote. Debs embarked on an exhausting campaign tour across the country, highlights of which included speaking before 13,000 people at Madison Square Garden and 18,000 in Philadelphia. In addition to Debs, the 1912 presidential field was a crowded one with Theodore Roosevelt running on the Bull Moose ticket, President Taft seeking reelection, and Woodrow Wilson representing the Democrats.[689]

After years of scarcely regulated industrialization, confirming much of what the farmer-labor bloc had been arguing about the corrupting influence of capital on democracy, the country was ripe for reform. Roosevelt and Wilson incorporated much of the anti-monopoly language of the farmer-labor bloc into their platforms, leaving them to battle it out for the reform vote. A vote for Debs would be a clear vote for socialism. Over nine hundred thousand people voted for Debs, representing 6% of the total vote. However, while the Socialist vote reached new heights, actual party membership declined due to frustrated left-wing radicals leaving over Berger's control of the party and the

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[688] *Socialist Party Monthly Bulletin*, September 1912.

[689] Ginger, *The Bending Cross*, 311.

passage of the anti-sabotage clause.[690]

During this period of Socialist infighting, the Mexican Revolution had continued to intensify in its scope and violence. The connections between the SP faction fight and the Mexican Revolution would come through at a subsequent meeting of the NEC. At this meeting, Haywood sought to defend Meitzen from the report adopted in his absence. He made clear that "in spite of irregularity in the proceedings, … there is no evidence of any fraud" against Meitzen and that "no charge of forgery in connection with the motion can be sustained." Following Haywood's comments, Berger moved that no further party speakers be sent to southern states. The motion, clearly aimed at Meitzen and his southern supporters, was defeated.[691] Berger's motion shows that he was determined to stop the decentralizing campaign of Texas Socialists, even if it meant seriously harming SP organizing in the South.

While points on an agenda have distinct beginnings and endings in the printed minutes, in the actual meetings political debates (especially when heated) are rarely so delineated and frequently carry over to the next agenda point regardless of the topic. Following Berger's defeated motion, Haywood proposed a resolution that the SP take immediate steps to prevent the U.S. from declaring war on Mexico. Such steps included the SP calling a general strike should war should be declared. The Right, believing that the SP did not "have any right to attempt to declare a general strike," defeated Haywood's resolution. In frustration during the discussion, Haywood declared that the Mexican revolutionists "might be in a far better position today if the Socialist party had

[690] Ginger, *The Bending Cross*, 310-312.

[691] *Socialist Party Monthly Bulletin*, October 1912.

not steadily refused to do its duty." [692] While Haywood's proposal for the SP calling a general strike was not realistic, the SP did have considerable influence within the AFL that could, in fact, have mobilized active labor solidarity for Mexican revolutionaries.

Haywood, as the leader of the party's revolutionary Left, had long been an impediment to the Right's vision of the SP as a party of gradual reform that appealed to middle-class sensibilities. The convention's recently adopted anti-sabotage clause gave the Right the means to be done with Haywood. In December 1912, the Right-controlled State Committee of New York SP submitted a motion for a national referendum to remove Haywood from the NEC. The motion claimed that Haywood "stated in public meetings in New York city that he never advocated the use of the ballot by the workers, and instead advised them to use direct action and sabotage, a violation of Article 2, Section 6, of the National Constitution."[693] On February 26, 1913, Haywood was recalled by a vote of 22,495 for (drawn mainly from Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, and Wisconsin) and 10, 944 against, mostly from Texas, Ohio, and western states.[694]

For rank-and-file Socialists in Texas the word of Haywood's recall came as bitter news. "Things will not get better unless we have a Haywood in every county, instead of expelling this hero from the party!" wrote Marie Boeer to her daughter Clare and son-in-law Hickey.[695] For many struggling Texas farmers, like Boeer, Haywood's revolutionary syndicalism had more appeal than Berger's sewer socialism.

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[692] *Socialist Party Monthly Bulletin*, October 1912.

[693] *Socialist Party Monthly Bulletin*, January 1913.

[694] *Socialist Party Monthly Bulletin*, March-April, 1913.

[695] Marie Boeer to Tom and Clare Hickey, undated, [translated from German], Hickey Papers.

On March 1, 1913, in response to the Right wing's capture of the NEC, E.R. Meitzen published the first issue of *The Decentralizer*. As printed in the first issue, "The Decentralizer stands for a form of party organization that is simple instead of complex, that breeds peace instead of internal and eternal warfare, that is decentralized instead of centralized, and therefore democratic, and efficient."[696] *The Decentralizer* came to the defense of Haywood, feeling the recall showed "how little regard for law and decency a bureaucracy has when it wants to 'get' a man it can't control." The paper pointed out that Haywood had no hearing or trail on the charges brought against him by a "clique in control of the national machinery."[697]

Haywood's recall coincided with the failure of bourgeois democracy in Mexico. Five days before his recall, Mexican president Francisco Madero was assassinated on February 21, 1913. Under Madero's leadership the numerous revolutionary forces of Mexico had united to overthrow Diaz in May 1911. That November, Madero was elected president. Madero's death sparked an increase in revolutionary violence and gave more authority to the radical demands of Mexico's landless farmers and working class, which Madero had failed to adequately address. The language of the paper's concluding statement on Haywood's recall reflects how events of the Mexican Revolution had permeated Texas Socialists. Haywood, it intoned with a dark reference to lynching, "must not be Maderoed by political Huertas. Even though Haywood were the blackest scoundrel unhung, the gorge must rise to the throat of every Socialist who has any sense of justice at all … over the damnable treatment that has been given him."[698]

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[696] *The Decentralizer*, March 1, 1913.

[697] *The Decentralizer*, April 13, 1913.

No longer feeling any fidelity to the SP's conservative national leadership, the Texas SP moved closer to what it understood to be the politics of the Mexican Revolution. The *Dallas Morning News* in reporting on the 1913 state convention of the Texas SP declared, "Socialists Hold Up Mexico As Warning."[699] The warning was: if the government did not address the growth of economic inequality, workers and farmers in the U.S. would be forced--like their comrades in Mexico--to resort to revolutionary violence. This convention marked a change in attitude of Texas Socialists toward Mexicans and Tejanos. Before, white tenant farmers saw Mexicans as what not to become–servile peons. Now, they held up the Mexican Revolution and its agrarian reforms as an example of what needed to be done.

While the SP was embroiled in an internal faction fight, Mexican revolutionary forces were even more splintered. In northern Mexico, Venustiano Carranza, a politician and rancher from Coahuila, was leading the fight against Huerta. Carranza's forces, calling themselves Constitutionalists, demanded the restoration of the 1857 constitution. Also in the north, Pancho Villa's División del Norto, at this time, aligned itself with the Constitutionalists against Huerta. In southern Mexico, the Zapatistas fought independently in order to advance their radical agrarian demands of land redistribution. The Magonistas aided the Zapatistas due to their agrarian radicalism and opposed the Constitutionalists, who were seen by Magonistas as representing the interests of the bourgeoisie.[700]

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[698] *The Decentralizer*, April 13, 1913. "Maderoed" refers to Francisco Madero who was assassinated during a right-wing military coup in Mexico led by Victoriano Huerta.

[699] *Dallas Morning News*, November 11, 1913.

[700] Friedrich Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1989); John Womack, Jr. *Zapata and the Mexican Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1969).

Operating out of Texas, "Magonista guerrilla chieftain" Jesús M. Rangel served as the PLM emissary to Zapata. In September 1913, Rangel had organized a small group of sixteen radicals and syndicalists, that included IWW member and BTW veteran Charlie Cline, to leave from Texas to join the PLM armed struggle in Mexico. On September 11, Texas lawmen ambushed the band as they were preparing to cross the border near Carrizo Springs, Texas. After a gunfight and two days on the run, two of Rangel's group and a Dimmit County Deputy Sheriff were dead before the group was captured and then escorted to prison by Texas Rangers. The fourteen survivors, including Rangel and Cline, received sentences ranging from six years to life imprisonment.[701]

After the arrests of the Rangel-Cline group, the PLM, IWW, and SP cooperated in a national defense campaign to free its members. *The Rebel* frequently covered the campaign. Spearheading the defense efforts in Texas was PLM activist José Ángel (J.A.) Hernández. Hernández was born in 1884 in Tepic, Mexico and migrated to the U.S. in 1909, settling in Houston. While there, he worked as a brick mason and a laborer for the sewer system. He reported becoming a socialist in 1912 after "reading Mexican Socialist Papers." After the Rangel-Cline prisoners were moved to San Antonio, Hernández moved there in October 1913 in order to, in his translated words, "help them out."[702]

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[701] Raat, *Revoltosos*, 259; Green, *Grassroots Socialism*, 329; Hall, *Labor Struggles in the Deep South*, 151, 161; *Brownsville Herald*, September 12, 1913; J.J. Sanders to Henry Hutchings, September 15, 1913, Texas Adjutant General's Department, Departmental Correspondence, 1846-1943, Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Austin, Texas; Charles H. Harris and Louis R. Sadler, *The Texas Rangers and the Mexican Revolution: The Bloodiest Decade, 1910-1920* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004), 134; R.L. Barnes Report, September 17, 1913, Bureau of Investigation, Investigation Case Files. "Mexican Files," Roll 854, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

[702] Eugene Debs, who had been critical of the PLM/IWW invasion of Baja California in January 1911, joined the efforts of the Rangel-Cline Committee--the committee set-up to defend the group of fourteen prisoners. *National Rip-Saw*, August, 1914. In 1915, the committee succeeded in getting the prison sentences reduced. Raat, *Revoltosos*, 259; Green, *Grassroots Socialism*, 329; *The Rebel*, May 30, 1914, February 20, May 8, August 7, September 18, 25, October 23, 1915; "News and Views," *International Socialist Review*, February, 1914, Vol. 14, No. 8, 507; "Voluntary Statement of J.A. Hernandez Before the

As part of his Rangel-Cline Committee work Hernández organized a Saturday night dance on November 15, 1913 in San Marcos north of San Antonio. At the dance, attended by area Mexicans, Hernández made available radical literature and information on the Rangel-Cline case. Out of this gathering, 128 men and women sent a telegram to Texas Governor Oscar Colquitt protesting what they called the "barbarous" imprisonment of "men loyal to the human race and the liberty of oppressed people." The telegram concluded with a warning that if any of the Rangel-Cline group were hung "your state will answer before the whole Mexican community."[703]

Around the same time the San Marcos telegram was sent, Governor Colquitt heard rumors and received an anonymous tip that Mexicans in Texas were buying rifles in preparation for an uprising. Colquitt responded to the signers of the San Marcos telegram with a letter stating that he was committed to upholding the law and that he felt their threat was "a brazen one, and if any violence should come to American citizens as a result of your threat each of you will be held personally responsible under the law." He also unleashed the Texas Rangers to investigate the signers and the rumors of Mexicans arming themselves. The rumors of increased arms sales to Mexicans proved to be false. This, however, did not stop the governor and Texas Rangers from pursuing the San Marcos telegram signers.[704]

Grand Jury of Bexar County, Texas, San Antonio, November 21st, 1913," Oscar Branch Colquitt Papers, 1873-1941, Center for American History (CAH), University of Texas at Austin.

[703] John R. Hughes to Henry Hutchings, November 21, 1913, Texas Adjutant General's Department, Departmental Correspondence; Telegram to Oscar Colquitt, November 15, 1913, Colquitt Papers, CAH.

[704] "A Friend" to Colquitt, November 17, 1913, Guy B. Harrison to Colquitt, November 17, 1913, Colquitt to J.A. Hernandez, et al, November 17, 1913, John R. Hughes to Colquitt, November 24, 1913, John Tobin to Colquitt, November 22, 1913, Colquitt Papers, CAH; Captain D.K. Lansing to Henry

On November 21, 1913, authorities arrested J.A. Hernández in San Antonio and brought him before a Grand Jury. During his testimony, Hernández confirmed that he was a member of the PLM and espoused his anarchist beliefs of opposition to government by any state. Unable to detain him for sending a telegram and holding a dance, the authorities released Hernández, after holding him for eight days, but kept him under surveillance. The other 127 men and women signers were also investigated, with the majority of them found to be farmers from the San Marcos area. Neither Judge W.C. Linden, head of the Hernández grand jury, nor Colquitt was happy with under the law having to release Hernández. Linden in particular was fearful that something along the lines of the *Los Angeles Times* building bombing could happen in Texas if Mexican radicals were "not checked." Colquitt consulted with the state attorney general's office in order to figure out how to deal with in Colquitt's words, "persons like J.A. Hernandez." They decided that Mexican radicals could be prosecuted under vagrancy laws long used in the South to control labor and remove undesirables. On December 28, 1913, Hernández organized another Rangel-Cline defense meeting in Houston. The local sheriff broke up the meeting, and Hernández was detained on a vagrancy charge. Presumably feeling the heat, Hernández moved to Indianapolis sometime in 1914 where he continued his political activism.[705]

Hutchings, November 17, 1913, Texas Governor O.B. Colquitt Papers, 1905-1915, Texas State Library (TSL) and Archives Commission Austin, Texas.

[705] "Voluntary Statement of J.A. Hernandez Before the Grand Jury of Bexar County, Texas, San Antonio, November 21st, 1913," Colquitt Papers, CAH; John R. Hughes to Colquitt, November 24, 1913, Colquitt Papers, CAH; John R. Hughes, "List of signers on telegram to Governor Colquitt …" December 14, 1913, Texas Adjutant General's Department, Departmental Correspondence; W.C. Linden to Colquitt, December 3, 1913, Colquitt to Linden, December 6, 1913, Colquitt Papers, TSL; "News and Views," *International Socialist Review*, February, 1914, Vol. 14, No. 8, 507; J.A. Hernández to O.B. Colquitt, December 28, 1913, copy of letter in E.T. Needham Report March 27, 1918, Bureau of Investigation, Investigation Case Files. "Mexican Files," Roll 621; J.A. Hernández to Aniceto Pizana, November 24,

After the San Marcos telegram incident, Governor Colquitt redirected the Texas Rangers from stopping violations of the Neutrality Act along the border to repressing radical Mexican political activity within Texas as well. Historians Charles Harris and Louis Sadler believe that this shift came about because "the telegram made Colquitt mad."[706] However, a deeper analysis of geopolitical and economic factors illuminate the true motivation: to repress Mexican radicals and subsequently the Texas SP.

On October 21, 1913, a month before the San Marcos telegram, Colquitt returned to Austin from a month long trip to Panama, Costa Rica, and Cuba. According to a *Dallas Morning News* report, the officials of the Canal Zone and the presidents of these countries received Colquitt and his party with much ceremony. "The United Fruit Company … also did much to make the trip particularly pleasant …" On the canal Colquitt stated, "I think the Panama Canal will bring a world of commerce to New Orleans and other Gulf ports. It will put us, as it were, on the crossroads of the high seas."[707]

The city of Houston's location placed it in an ideal position to benefit from the economic stimulus brought about by the interocean commerce of the Panama Canal. With

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1914, Bureau of Investigation, Investigation Case Files. "Mexican Files," Roll 856; On October 1, 1910 the *Los Angeles Times* building was dynamited supposedly by trade unionists killing 21 people.

[706] Charles H. Harris and Louis R. Sadler, *The Texas Rangers and the Mexican Revolution: The Bloodiest Decade, 1910-1920*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004), 135. Harris and Sadler state that in the grand jury testimony "Hernández said he belonged to the I.W.W. and to the Mexican Liberal Party." (135) This is wrong. At the time of the San Marcos telegram, Hernández was only a member of PLM. Throughout the grand jury questioning Hernández is asked if he is a member of the IWW to which he replies no and that he is only a member of the PLM. Colquitt and the Texas Rangers frequently confused the two separate organizations of the PLM and IWW as one and the same, something Harris and Sadler appear to due as well. Though it does appear that Hernández traveled to Chicago and joined IWW shortly after this incident. "Voluntary Statement of J.A. Hernandez Before the Grand Jury of Bexar County, Texas, San Antonio, November 21st, 1913," 2,19-21, Colquitt Papers, CAH.

[707] *Dallas Morning News*, September 24, October 22, November 11, 1913.

seventeen railroad lines already converging in Houston, construction began in 1910 on the Houston Ship Channel in order to ensure the city's rise as a major Gulf and world port. Finished almost simultaneously as the Panama Canal in the summer of 1914, the Houston Ship Channel, traveling fifty miles inland, made Houston a major outlet for exporting products from the central west of the U.S.[708]

Colquitt took an active part in securing federal funding for the ship channel, while Kirby and Jesse H. Jones played leading roles in getting the project off the ground and completed. By 1915, the annual traffic through the Houston Ship Channel totaled $53 million. Lumber and the booming oil industry were large parts of this total. However, the greatest item of commerce to pass through the channel was cotton--cotton picked in main by tenant farmers, many whom were becoming radicalized by the Mexican Revolution and the propaganda of the PLM and Texas SP.[709]

The San Marcos telegram was not the only message of protest to greet Colquitt upon his return from the Panama Canal Zone and the Caribbean. In late August 1913, the Renters' Union and Texas SP began a petition drive to Governor Colquitt, demanding that he call a special session of the legislature to address the land issue. Specifically they demanded that the state submit a single tax constitutional amendment to the vote of the people "providing for a tax equal to the full rental value on all land held for speculation—excepting homestead reservations."[710] If approved, the amendment would make holding land for speculation unprofitable, thus hopefully, forcing speculators to sell their land to

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[708] Ira E. Bennett, *History of the Panama Canal, Its Construction and Builders*, (Washington, D.C.: Historical Publishing Company, 1915), 307-310.

[709] Bennett, *History of the Panama Canal*, 308-309.

[710] *The Rebel*, August 9, 1913.

landless farmers.

The Texas land petition campaign was directly inspired by the revolutionary land reform in Sonora of July 1913, in which large estates were broken-up and given to the landless. "The significance of this move," wrote *The Rebel*, "just across the Texas line from El Paso can scarcely be estimated by the landless Texans."[711] In promoting the petition the paper exclaimed, "Join the army of petition circulators and help start a peaceful revolution in Texas this fall that will lay Sonora in the shade."[712]

From the end of August until the beginning of December 1913, supporters of the land petition secured around 50,000 signatures from 172 counties. Petitioners carried out their work in at least four languages-English, Spanish, German, and Czech. This was despite most of the petitioning being carried out during, and in the aftermath of, the historic of Flood of 1913, in which the Guadalupe, Trinity, Brazos and Colorado rivers overflowed from high rainfall, causing 177 known deaths. In Robertson County, the flooding hit black sharecroppers and tenants especially hard. The demands of the petition also gained the endorsement of the Texas State Federation of Labor at its state convention in Port Arthur.[713]

On December 20, E.R. Meitzen, representing the Renters' Union, met with Governor Colquitt at the capital and presented him with the petition. In a terse thirty-minute meeting, Colquitt dismissed the land petition, in a derogatory manner, as "visionary," and that he would not call a special session to address the land question.

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[711] *The Rebel*, August 9, 1913.

[712] *The Rebel*, August 23, 1913, July 4, 1914.

[713] *Houston Post*, May 17, 1914; Brazos River Authority, "Timeline of the Brazos River Basin," http://www.brazos.org/About-Us/About-the-BRA/About-the-Brazos-River/Basin-History; J.W. Doremus, Jr. to Colquitt, December 9, 1913, Colquitt Papers, CAH; *The Rebel*, November 15, 22, December 20, 1913.

After Meitzen left, Colquitt called in the state press and put forth his plan of a "land credit union mortgage law." The plan would call for a certain percentage of large land tracts to be made available for purchase to tenant farmers on "long time" mortgages. According to Colquitt, his plan would allow the landlord to "have a comfortable income, 5 or 6 per cent interest," and the tenant would eventually become a landowner, concluding that "such a plan would work splendidly for landlord and tenant without being a burden to either."[714]

Meitzen only heard about Colquitt's land credit union mortgage plan in the papers the next day. The plan baffled Meitzen: "how any plan to really aid the tenant could be devised that does not harm the interests of the big land holder," he asked, "is beyond my comprehension." In comparing the relationship between tenant and landlord, Meitzen felt Colquitt might as well said "that the interests of master and slave can be made mutually beneficial." Making clear the goal of the Renters' Union, Meitzen continued, "Our goal is to utterly wipe out landlordism in Texas, so that no one may have a 'comfortable income' but the man who himself tills or uses the land he occupies, without exploiting his fellowman."[715] Though the petition failed in its direct objective of getting a constitutional land amendment put before voters, it did succeed in drawing substantial attention to the land question. Before the petition campaign, prohibition had been the main issue debated by the candidates for governor. Now, because of the Renters' Union's land petition, any aspirant for the governor's office that ignored the land issue would do so at their own peril.

During this time of increased political tension, over the land issue, in 1913 and

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[714] *San Antonio Express*, December 21, 1913.

[715] *The Rebel*, January 3, 1914.

into 1914, *The Rebel* expanded its coverage of the Mexican Revolution and began showing more sympathy for the plight and revolution of landless Mexicans. The paper also began to praise Pancho Villa. On January 31, 1914, while Villa was the de facto ruler of Chihuahua, *The Rebel* ran an article titled "Villa as Socialist." Predicting that Villa would be the next president of Mexico, *The Rebel* applauded Villa's "announced program of (a) homes for all the people; (b) free elections; and (c) dominance of a constitution that is more liberal than of the United States." It also stated Villa would be confiscating the great estates of "our alleged American patriots" W.R. Hearst and Harrison Gray Otis and reprinted an article from the *Literary Digest* detailing the "socialistic" policies of Villa's government in running the street car system, public utilities, a brewery, and gambling houses.[716]

In their praise of Villa, the editors of *The Rebel* present a romanticized, and deficient, appraisal of Villa and his politics. The article came near the height of Villa's celebrity and folk hero status in the U.S. John Reed's widely read articles on Villa and the Mexican revolution in the *Metropolitan* magazine that appeared toward of the end of 1913, helped craft the image of Villa as the Robin Hood of his day. D.W. Griffith's film *The Life of General Villa* released in May 1914, only furthered Villa's heroic image among some U.S. audiences.[717]

Although some of Villa's policies during his rule in Chihuahua could be described as "socialistic," Villa was not a socialist, even if the Texas SP viewed him as a comrade. Historian Friedrich Katz described Chihuahua under Villa in 1914 as a "revolutionary

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[716] *The Rebel*, January 31, 1914.

[717] "Publisher's Note," John Reed, *Insurgent Mexico*, 1914, (New York: International Publishers, 2006), iii; Katz, *Pancho Villa*, 324-325.

society" that witnessed the "redistribution of food and other goods (but not land) to the lower classes of society." Chihuahua was also by no means a democracy, as sole governmental and military power resided in Villa. Villa did expropriate the land of Chihuahua's Mexican oligarchy for the use of his army, but despite *The Rebel*'s expectations he left the vast estates of Hearst, Harrison and U.S. Senator Albert Bacon Fall intact in order not to provoke the U.S. intervention. This contrasts with the state of Morales under Zapata, where a wide-ranging land redistribution program was underway and political power had returned to local villages. The Texas SP's bandwagon admiration of Villa had to have raised the ire of its allies in the PLM who opposed Villa and Carranza.[718]

Soon, Texas socialist farmers were seeing similarities between their situation and the land problem in Mexico. *The Rebel* commented, "Things are rapidly shaping themselves for a similar revolution in Texas where four-fifths of the tillable land is held out of cultivation by … landlords who raise fake issues to distract the minds of our people."[719] A letter to *The Rebel* from Aaron Johnson in Mercedes, Texas reads, "And the Mexicans, unable to read and write, are setting an example to the world, in solving the economic problem, which after all is the most important of problems."[720] *The Rebel* also continued to take a solid stance against U.S. intervention in Mexico stating, "All talk of intervention in Mexico comes from a bunch of industrial pirates who have offices in Wall Street."[721]

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[718] Katz, *Pancho Villa*, 431

[719] As quoted in Benjamin Heber Johnson, *Revolution in Texas: How a Forgotten Rebellion and Its Bloody Suppression Turned Mexican into Americans* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 65.

[720] *The Rebel*, March 14, 1914.

Besides looking across the border to Mexico, *The Rebel* began to concern itself with the plight of Mexican-Americans in Texas. E.O. Meitzen illustrated this in the advice he offered in the Renters' Union column: "We have a serious complaint from Fayette county brothers. Many landlords are importing Mexican renters who work on the halves and live in tents and shanties a white man's family would not stay in. The white renters are thus at a 'discount' and a very serious conditions confronts them. What is to be done? We would say: 'Organize, both American and Mexican renters.'"[722] The advice seems to have been taken as indicated by a letter from W.S. Lynch of Waelder, Texas to *The Rebel* a few months later. "I have been talking to the Mexicans as per your suggestion and find them willing and anxious to throw off the despot's yoke."[723] In May 1913, the Renters' Union arranged to have its "Constitution and Catechism" printed in Spanish, though it would not be until December 1915 that Spanish reading socialists in the U.S. Southwest would have a Spanish language paper modeled after *The Rebel* when *El Liberator* out of Taos, New Mexico began publication.[724]

While white Socialists "talking to the Mexicans" surely recruited some Mexicans to the Renters' Union and SP, the person responsible for recruiting the most Mexicans was F.A. Hernández, a Tejano tenant farmer from Nordheim, Texas. F.A. Hernández was born around 1875 in Texas to parents who were also born in Texas and described himself as a Spanish American. He was the father of two teenage daughters and two teenage sons. With a personal belief in "universal justice for all," Hernández's own life and that of his

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[721] *The Rebel*, June 8, 1912, November 8, 1913.

[722] *The Rebel*, May 24, 1913.

[723] *The Rebel*, August 16, 1913.

[724] *The Rebel*, May 3, 10, November 15, 1913, December 11, 1915.

neighbors as impoverished tenant farmers led him to the Socialist cause. F.A. Hernández would eventually be elected to the executive committee of the Renters' Union in 1913 and then to the position of assistant state organizer. Later in 1915, he was appointed to a leadership position in the Texas SP as a member of the Committee on Literature and Propaganda. [725]

The organizing efforts of F.A. Hernández for the Renters' Union and Texas SP seems to have begun the process of bridging the racial divide between white, Mexican immigrant and Tejano radicals in Texas. One could witness the depths of interracial solidarity achieved by the changed racial attitude of radical white Texas tenant farmers, as expressed by *The Rebel*, at a two day Renters' Union "celebration" held in Nordheim, Texas on September 5 and 6, 1913. Speakers spoke in German, English, and Spanish. As reported in *The Rebel*, "The meetings were well attended and with a spirit of solidarity not often met was manifested."[726] *The Rebel* was also willing to come to the defense of Mexican Renters' Unions. When a prominent Yorktown merchant threaten that he and others would come with a wagon and take members of the town's Mexican Renters' Union to jail if they held another meeting *The Rebel* responded by telling the Yorktown local, "Don't get scared. The Rebel is behind this move and friends of justice and righteousness need only be notified and there will be trouble in the air for Mr. Would-be-plutocrat [the merchant]. … Better act decent: This is no child's play."[727]

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[725] *The Rebel*, May 10, 17, 1913, November 20, December 4, 1915; United States Census. *Census Reports*. Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the year 1910; U.S. Congress. Senate. *Commission on Industrial Relations. Final Report and Testimony*, (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1916), 9284-9285, 9287-9288; Foley, *The White Scourge*, 111; F.A. Hernández to Committee of Public Information, October 4, 1918, Bureau of Investigation, "Old German Files," Roll 721; *Dallas Morning News*, November 9, 1913.

[726] *The Rebel*, September 27, 1913.

Mexican Americans joining the Renters' Union were organized into "Spanish" locals, following the SP model of distinct ethno-language federations for Finns, Poles, Ukrainians, Russians, and so on. In Texas, for example, besides the numerous Spanish language locals, in October 1915, E.R. Meitzen organized a German local of the SP in Houston's Third Ward.[728]

The years 1914 and 1915 would mark the pinnacle of Socialist organization and influence in Texas. As of February 1914, the Texas SP had 4100 dues-paying members, with thousands more reading its' press, attending Socialist encampments, voting for Socialist candidates, and looking to the party for political guidance. The highlight of this period for the SP was its 1914 gubernatorial campaign.[729]

By a referendum vote of the Texas SP's membership, conducted via-mail, rank-and-file members selected E.R. Meitzen as their candidate for governor. Meitzen had distinguished himself in the minds of Texas Socialists first as a leader of the struggle to root the Texas party in the struggles of working farmers by addressing the small holding land ownership aspirations of tenant farmers. Meitzen accomplished this as SP state secretary by putting control of the Texas SP into the hands of local branches though the Texas Program. He also had gained a degree of general statewide recognition as a former leader of the Farmers Union.[730]

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[727] *The Rebel*, June 7, 1913. F.A. Hernandez organized the Yorktown Renters' Union on May 19, 1913. It started with 23 members. Jose Galban was elected president and Constancio Cirilo elected secretary and treasurer. *The Yorktown News*, May 22, 1913.

[728] *Rebel*, February 21, 1914, October 16, 1915.

[729] *The Rebel*, February 28, 1914.

[730] "Platform of the Socialist Party of Texas," Socialism File, CAH; *Houston Post*, May 2, 1914.

While an able office organizer and editor, Meitzen, according to Hickey, also "found that he has a natural talent for speaking." Meitzen discovered this while using the new organizing tool of the automobile to visit community barbecues, across his home base of Lavaca County, to discuss socialism and build the Renters Union during the summer of 1913. This contributed to the Renters Union's choice of Meitzen to deliver their land petition to Governor Colquitt.[731]

Joining Meitzen on the state SP ticket was W.S. Noble for Lieutenant Governor. Aged 46, Noble was a farmer in Rockdale. Like Meitzen, he was a veteran farmer-labor radical in Texas. At a young age, Noble joined the Farmers' Alliance. As a Populist, the people of Eastland County elected him as their deputy sheriff with his brother, J.L. Noble, as sheriff. He volunteered for a time as a Christian preacher and remained part of the faith as he joined and helped organize the early SP in Texas.[732]

The Meitzen-Noble ticket, more so than any previous Texas SP slate, embodied conjoined farmer-labor radicalism. At the same time that Meitzen based himself in the struggles of farmers, he also was a member of the Typographical Union, organizing the union's first local between Houston and San Antonio, and he served as an organizer for a clerk's union and a carpenter's union. While Noble, before farming, worked as a wage laborer on the railroad and was a trade unionist.[733]

Declaring itself "the expression of the economic interests of the working class," the 1914 platform of Texas Socialist Party was its most detailed and comprehensive to date. Upholding their ideological view of farmers as part of the working class, the Texas

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[731] Tom Hickey to Clara Hickey, July 14, 1913, Hickey Papers.

[732] "Platform of the Socialist Party of Texas," Socialism File, CAH.

[733] "Platform of the Socialist Party of Texas," Socialism File, CAH.

SP endorsed industrial unionism and urged "the wage earners, the working farmers and all other useful workers everywhere to organize … on industrial lines, all to the ends that class divisions in the ranks of labor be abolished."[734] The Texas SP persevered to be a unifying force between the field and factory, urban and rural, while many trade unions, farm organizations and even the right wing of the SP continued to view the interests of the two as separate.

Drafted in May 1914, three months before the outbreak of World War I, preventing a war in Mexico, not Europe, remained a primary focus of the Texas SP's platform. Referring to Mexico as "our sister republic," Texas Socialists advocated "a policy of hands off the internal affairs of Mexico" from "war crazed nations" acting in "the interests of international capitalists."[735] Texas Socialists thus provided an early model of working-class based internationalism and anti-imperialism that others could draw on once the war in Europe began.

In addition to endorsing industrial unionism and opposing U.S. intervention in Mexico, the Texas SP platform offered a wide array of proposals designed to advance the economic and political interests of the working class. After the socialist call for the means of production and distribution to be "socially owned and democratically controlled," the platform advanced specific proposals. Predating the modern welfare state, the platform called for old age pensions, "free medical attendance," workplace insurance, employer liability for workplace accidents, child labor laws, and free public education. Political and labor reforms included the repeal of vagrancy laws and blacklists, ending the use of convict labor, eliminating the poll tax, women's suffrage, a mail-in

[734] "Platform of the Socialist Party of Texas," Socialism File, CAH.

[735] "Platform of the Socialist Party of Texas," Socialism File, CAH.

ballot for elections, and the abolition of both the Senate and the veto power of the governor.[736]

Still, with the overwhelming majority of the Texas working class being farmers, the Texas SP sought to make land the main issue of the 1914 election campaign. They made this abundantly clear with the campaign slogan "For Land and Liberty," taken directly from the Mexican Revolution's cry of "Tierra y Libertad." Specifically, Socialists demanded that all of the state's uncultivated land be made available to landless farmers and for high taxes on land held for speculative purposes. The land question did become the main issue of the campaign, but in a way that caught the Texas SP off guard.[737]

Within the Texas Democrat Party, prohibition was the dominant and most divisive issue, with progressive drys holding a slight edge over wets by 1914. Before the primary campaign, both sides expected the former Congressman and Houston attorney, Thomas Ball, to receive the Democratic nomination for governor. As an ardent Prohibitionist, connections to railroads and other corporate clients through his legal practice, and a longtime promoter of the Houston ship channel, Ball seemed the sure-win candidate. Texas Socialists eagerly anticipated a general election campaign in which they could offer a clear working-class alternative, centered on the land issue, in opposition to the corporate attorney. This was not to be.[738]

Into the fray of the Democratic primary stepped the then relatively unknown

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[736] "Platform of the Socialist Party of Texas," Socialism File, CAH.

[737] *The Rebel*, June 6, 1914.

[738] Lewis L. Gould, *Progressives and Prohibitionists: Texas Democrats in the Wilson Era*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1973), 124; *The Rebel*, February 21, 1914.

James Ferguson. Defying traditional political categories, Ferguson pursued an egocentric brand of politics based on advancing his own political power and influence. He was a formidable politician who would be a major force in Texas politics for the next two decades. Ferguson was born the son of a Methodist minister during the summer of 1871 in Bell County. After his father died when he was four, Ferguson spent his youth working the family farm. As a young adult Ferguson roamed from job to job until entering law school and passing the bar in 1897. In 1899, he married Miriam Wallace, a well-off farmer's daughter, who became not only his wife, but also political partner. Following his marriage to Miriam, Ferguson began his rise among the area's financial elites. He first ventured into real estate and insurance and then, in 1907, he opened the Temple State Bank in Temple. By the time he decided to enter politics, his personal wealth was over $400,000, allowing him the luxury of financing his own campaigns.[739]

Unlike establishment Democrats who ignored the problem of land tenancy and Socialists who viewed it as a reason for class struggle, Ferguson saw it as a political opportunity. As wets and dry debated prohibition, Ferguson launched his campaign stating he would veto any prohibition legislation and instead focus his administration on the problem of land tenancy. Specifically, Ferguson put forth a plan that would limit rent to the prevailing thirds and fourths system and half if the landlord provided tools and supplies. Renting on the thirds and fourths meant that tenants gave landlords a third of their grain crop and a fourth of their cotton crop as rent. Ferguson's rent proposal maintained the status quo, though it would halt the growing number of landlords asking for halves of both grain and cotton.[740]

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[739] Gould, *Progressives and Prohibitionists*, 130.

The initial Socialist response to Ferguson was dismissive. *The Rebel* called Ferguson a "joker." The paper also often referred to him as the "Fake Ferguson," in response to the "Farmer Jim" persona Ferguson donned for rural audiences, in which he acted like a simple farmer. Socialists also pointed out that Ferguson's rent limiting plan was unenforceable without radical changes to then current usury laws—changes that Ferguson would not make because they would affect his banking business. Overall, they felt he was attempting to steal their land plank after the success of their land petition campaign.[741]

Specifically, Texas Socialists pointed out the hypocrisy of Ferguson's claims to stand up for farmers. Ferguson, as a banker, had not treated farmers particularly well. He charged them the same high interest rates as other bankers. While Ferguson called for limiting rent, Socialists demanded the abolishment of "landlordism" and tenancy all together. Socialists viewed Ferguson's rent limit call as a plan to transition agricultural labor in the state from tenancy to wage labor. This, after all, Socialists pointed out, was what Ferguson had done on his own 1,000-acre farm in Bell County where he worked the land, not with tenants, but with hired wage laborers.[742]

However, Socialists did not see Ferguson as being able to survive the Democratic primary. Ultimately, they felt Ball would gain the nomination. Ball had the support of lumber baron Kirby, the growing oil industry, railroad corporations, and the numerous big business clients of his law firm. Democratic opponents of Ferguson even attacked his rent limit plan as "socialistic"—a label that limited one's electoral appeal, as Socialists

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[740] Gould, *Progressives and Prohibitionists*, 131.

[741] *The Rebel*, April 11, 25, 1914.

[742] Gould, *Progressives and Prohibitionists*, 130; *The Rebel*, April 11, 1914.

were well aware. So sure were Socialists of Ferguson's defeat, that a month before the primary election a banner headline on *The Rebel* read, "Meitzen Or Ball—Which?"[743] Both establishment Democrats and Socialists were in for a surprise.

Economic realities made the troubles of struggling tenant farmers particularly pressing. The average price of cotton per pound during 1913 had been 12.48 cents. By the start of 1914, prices had tumbled to 7.33 cents per pound. Improved agricultural techniques resulted in the largest cotton crops ever for many Southern states.[744] The excess cotton, already driving prices down, became a glut on the market with the outbreak of war in Europe and the disruption of trade and export markets. Such low prices made it impossible for tenant farmers to escape tenancy and threatened small farm owners with slipping into tenancy. Many farmers no longer cared about who drank what and where, but instead concerned themselves with their own economic survival.

The response of Texans to the land issue regulated prohibition to a secondary campaign issue for the first time in ten years. Establishment Democrats scrambled to draft a land position for Ball. In a rejoinder to Ferguson, Ball asserted that "the state has no more right to fix the land rents than it has house rents … the prices of products grown upon the land, or the prices of cattle, or the prices of goods." Declaring, "My sympathies are with the homeless man," Ball proposed that the state limit taxes on homestead improvements and assist in providing loans to farmers for the purchasing of homes and land. To fund these proposals Ball would use one million dollars a year from the state's

[743] *The Rebel*, June 13, 20, 1914.

[744] Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Cotton Production and Distribution, Season of 1914-15*, Bulletin 131 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1915), 10, 19-23.

school fund.[745]

Socialists scoffed at Ball's land proposals. Besides defunding public education, which Socialist vehemently opposed, Ball's numbers did not total much for tenants. With 250,000 tenant farm families in Texas, Balls draining of one million dollars from the state school fund would amount to only $4 per family—hardly enough to buy a farm, let alone pay one's poll tax and bonus rent.[746] Socialists were not the only ones scoffing at Ball—voters would as well.

With corporate backing and the endorsements of most of the state's major newspapers, Ball had not planned on much of a campaign. Ferguson, on the other hand, conducted a vigorous campaign with daily campaign speaking stops that drew large crowds. He supplemented his public speaking with a dishonest "whispering campaign" that claimed Ball was a drunken adulterer who had contracted a sexual transmitted disease.[747]

Ferguson also had no qualms injecting race into the campaign through an unscrupulous twisting of Ball's positions. During the campaign, Ball stated his desire to reform Texas' election laws. He called for the repeal of the Terrell Election Laws that established the primary system and allowed for the exclusion of many blacks, Mexicans, and poor whites from the electoral process. This call drew the support of some African-American organizations. Ball's opposition to the Terrell laws, however, did not steam from a position of racial and class equality, but instead flowed from his concern that the law allowed a candidate to win a primary with a plurality of the vote instead of a clear

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[745] *Crockett Courier*, June 11, 1914; *The Rebel*, July 11, 1914.

[746] *The Rebel*, July 11, 1914.

[747] Gould, *Progressives and Prohibitionists*, 136.

majority. This aspect of the laws had allowed Colquitt, an anti-prohibitionist, to win the Democratic governor's nomination in 1910, without a run-off, over a field of divided prohibition candidates.[748] To replace the Terrell laws, Ball proposed requiring an educational prerequisite for voting--a tool of Jim Crow legislation used in other southern states. Ferguson attacked Ball's education prerequisite as taking the vote away from old Confederate soldiers and giving it to blacks. "He wants to cut out from voting these brave men who fought that this state might be here today and were fighting when they might have been studying and acquiring an education," Ferguson declared. "He wants to let the niggers vote who have been educated at the public expense … by the taxes even these old soldiers may have paid."[749] Ferguson's devious political mind turned Ball's Jim Crow proposal into a position favoring educated blacks over Confederate veterans.

Not reliant on corporate backers to get his message out, Ferguson spent over $31,000 on his campaign, an unheard of amount in Texas for the time. National brewing companies, intent on preventing prohibition, buttressed his campaign funds. The liquor lobby expended resources to turn out the German vote in Central Texas, the Mexican vote in South Texas, and that of labor in the larger cities. Boosting his "Farmer Jim" credentials, Ferguson gained the endorsement of the Farmers' Union. However, the Farmers' Union, by this time, was not the representative farmer's organization it once was after many agrarian radicals left it for the SP around 1908. The Farmers' Union now primarily served the interests of its merchant and banker sponsors.[750]

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[748] *Temple Daily Telegram*, July 14, 1914; Gould, *Progressives and Prohibitionists*, 7.

[749] *Temple Daily Telegram*, July 14, 1914.

[750] *The Rebel*, August 7, 23, 1914; Gould, *Progressives and Prohibitionists*, 137; Green, *Grass-Roots Socialism*, 294.

Due to Ferguson's intensive campaigning on the land issue, keen political observers now forecast a Ball defeat in the Democratic primary. Establishment Democrats hoping to stem the Ferguson tide sought help from national party leaders. Just two weeks before the primary President Wilson and Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan both endorsed Ball for governor. Wilson expressed to Ball his "deep appreciation of the splendid and unequivocal way in which you are lending your support to the national administration."[751] While Bryan stated, "I regard Ball as a progressive Democrat, and I think he would make a first-class governor."[752] Wilson's endorsement of Ball might, however, have had the opposite of the intended effect, as many farmers were disappointed in Wilson's inaction up to this point on the agricultural crisis facing the country. On Election Day, Ferguson registered a dramatic defeat of Ball, 237, 062 to 191,558.[753]

Ferguson's primary victory did not damper Socialists' enthusiasm for their candidate. A small but significant number of working-class Texans, radicalized by poor economic conditions and Socialist propaganda, no longer trusted the Democratic Party. Meitzen opened his campaign tour in Cameron located in Milam County on May 30, 1914. Despite heavy rains and flooding, Meitzen spoke at the courthouse to a crowd that was, according to *The Rebel*, twice as large as Ferguson's stop here a few weeks earlier. The SP's demand to eliminate tenancy by opening up Texas' 117,000,000 acres of uncultivated land for landless farmers resonated in this county with a tenancy rate of 64.3

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[751] *Temple Daily Telegram*, July 14, 1914.

[752] As quoted in Gould, *Progressives and Prohibitionists*, 141.

[753] Carl R. Woodward, "Woodrow Wilson's Agricultural Philosophy," *Agricultural History*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (Oct., 1940), pp. 129-142, 134-135; Gould, *Progressives and Prohibitionists*, 143.

percent.[754]

Meitzen's Cameron stump was emblematic of many of his campaign stops. After presenting the SP's platform of revolutionary socialism, Meitzen and fellow Socialist campaigners would often approach local residents on their terms. Following his public speech at the Cameron courthouse on Saturday afternoon, local Socialists arranged for Meitzen to speak on "Socialism from a Religious Viewpoint" the next day. With the meeting occurring on a Sunday, local Socialists scheduled it to take place at 4:30 p.m., after Sunday services and Bible study classes ended. Before the meeting, Meitzen attended services with local comrades. Their efforts were aided by Rev. Milton, the minister of one the largest Baptist congregations in the county. Rev. Milton had recently arrived at the conclusion that the SP was the only party that had any solutions to the nation's problems and that he "was more a Socialist than anything else."[755]

One of the services Meitzen attended was Rev. Milton's prayer meeting. After the meeting, Rev. Milton asked Meitzen to address the congregation assuring them that hearing Meitzen would "not hurt them." The local mayor, a known land speculator, was in attendance and feeling Meitzen's words would hurt, objected to Meitzen's presence and convinced a few others to follow him out of the building. Meitzen then gave his brief pitch to attend his afternoon meeting, at which he stated he would address how individual regeneration of the soul was not all there was to salvation and that social regeneration was required as well.[756]

Although early twentieth century Texas Socialists deserve accolades for meeting

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[754] *The Rebel*, June 6, 1914.

[755] *The Rebel*, June 20, 1914; Quote from *The Rebel*, June 6, 1914.

[756] *The Rebel*, June 20, 1914.

working-class religious beliefs, the same can not be said when it came to the era's racial norms. Meitzen throughout his campaign often made his appeals to white farmers and the danger of tenancy pulling them down to the levels of poor Mexicans and Negros. "Many white renters of good old southern stock have worked the land for many years," began Meitzen in describing the situation in Rockwell County, south of Dallas. "These white renters helped to build one of the largest and best equipped rural high schools in the state… Then the landlords moved to town, plantations were established and negroes and Mexicans were placed in the homes that the white renters once used." Meitzen did not follow this example with a call for immigrant and black rights. Texas Socialist's interactions with Mexican and Tejano radicals had begun to lessen the white supremacist beliefs toward these groups by 1914. When addressing fellow Socialists and members of Renters Union, agrarian radicals called for the organizing of Mexican workers, as noted earlier in the call by E.O. Meitzen in 1913. However, when it came to public campaign appearances, Socialists at this point still frequently bowed to the racial social norms of the era, though not with nearly the same vile as their Democratic opponents.[757]

Meitzen carried out a campaign that differed in tone from Ferguson's whisper campaign of personal attacks. "We are not conducting a mud-slinging campaign," declared Meitzen at a Brownwood stump speech with Noble. "We want to give the farmer a chance, and to make it possible for every man to own his own home. To do this the great holdings of the wealthy few must be divided so that all may have a chance." A local reporter noted that Meitzen and Noble, "propounded Socialist doctrines very forcibly. Each is an orator of rare ability and each gave a clear definition of the issues in

[757] *The Rebel*, October 31, 1914.

the race as the see them."[758] Meitzen and Noble carried out a grueling campaign throughout the entire state. From the end of May until the end of October, Meitzen made campaign appearances everyday with only two interruptions. One occurred toward the end of the campaign when heavy rains on the night of October 23, washed out the railroad bridges preventing him from making a stop in Victoria. This gave Meitzen in his words, "a quite day away from the battle and strife of a five months gubernatorial campaign." The other interruption came in mid-July when his father was shot![759]

On the morning of July 15, around 8 a.m., E.O. Meitzen, accompanied by a fellow Socialist, the Rev. J.W. Brice, had just come out of the Hallettsville Post Office after purchasing postal cards. On the sidewalk outside of the Post Office, City Marshall O.T. East approached Meitzen. East was upset that Meitzen had recently sent a letter to the city council requesting an investigation of the city's finances after Meitzen discovered that $13000 of the city's budget was unaccounted for. Meitzen refused to talk to East and walked away from him. Just the day before, East had accosted Hickey on the street, threatening him and demanding that Meitzen keep silent about calling for an investigation. On this day, East refused to be ignored. Being a much smaller man than the fifty-nine year old former blacksmith, East came at Meitzen from behind and slapped him. Standing his ground, Meitzen responded by striking East. East then pulled out his automatic pistol and fired at Meitzen hitting him in the right groin. Meitzen lunged at East, putting him in a bear hug, causing East's second shot to miss Meitzen. To prevent East from firing further, Meitzen bit down on East's pistol hand, severely injuring his

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[758] *The Daily* (Brownwood) *Bulletin*, July 9, 1914.

[759] *The Rebel*, October 31, 1914.

thumb. As Meitzen later recalled, "I was a bit dazed after the bullet hit and the thought struck me I was chewing on one of my friends who were around, so I spit out his hand. Confound him, I should have chewed it off."[760]

Upon hearing East's gunfire, nearby townspeople rushed to the scene and separated East and Meitzen who were now wrestling on the ground. Fortunately, the bullet did not hit Meitzen's femur or any arteries but still created a nasty wound. Outside of the bullet wound, East came out of the struggle worse for the wear, badly bruised and bitten. East received medical treatment and after giving a $500 bond, authorities allowed him to go home. [761]

Meitzen's son, A.C., was one of the first to arrive at the scene. Leaning on his son's arm, Meitzen was able to walk to a nearby drug store where his wound was dressed. From the operating table Meitzen reportedly cried out "Print the news, keep the fight going."[762] When leaving the drug store for his home, Meitzen told the gathered crowd, "Good-bye boys, it takes more bullets than this to kill old Meitzen."[763]

The news of Meitzen's shooting spread rapidly and shocked his family, friends, and comrades. E.R. immediately left the campaign trail to attend to his father. Feelings of shock and despair quickly turned to anger. For two hours Hickey said he fielded phone calls from "angry men, who had armed themselves and were prepared to come to town on horseback, in autos, buggies, and wagons to our assistance." Hickey and E.O. Meitzen implored peace, and cooler heads prevailed. They stated that they believed that East was

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[760] *Houston Post*, July 16, 1914; *Hallettsville Herald*, July 16, 1914; *The Rebel*, July 18, 25, 1914; Williams, *History of the Meitzen Family*, n.p.

[761] *Houston Post*, July 16, 1914.

[762] *Hallettsville Herald*, July 16, 1914; *The Rebel*, July 18, 1914.

[763] *Houston Post*, July 16, 1914.

not a "bad man at heart; he was the victim of a vicious system."[764] Instead of arms, the people of Lavaca County flooded the Meitzen home with gifts to aid the respected agrarian radical's recovery. E.O.'s daughter, Frieda, recalled, "feasting on fruit cake, roast turkey, dewberry cobble, mill ground corn meal bread, etc. for weeks, while papa soon recovered and the marshall had near 'blood poison.'" Near blood poison was the only repercussion East faced, as the "vicious system" never brought charges against him. After four days of visiting his father, E.R. returned to the campaign trail.[765]

The high point of the 1914 Socialist election campaign were the summer encampments. Conducted during July and through August at various locations throughout the state, these encampments were some the liveliest and well-attended the Socialists had ever organized, despite a heat wave with temperatures reaching as high as 117 degrees. Usually lasting three days, the encampments featured speakers such as E.R. Meitzen, Noble, Stanley Clark (now out of Oklahoma), Debs, and Kate Richards O'Hare. In addition to Socialist speakers, the encampments featured evening entertainment and other attractions as well as "plenty of wood, water and shade for camping purposes."[766]

Debs called the 1914 summer encampments of Texas and Oklahoma "the most extraordinary and significant of the kind I have ever attended." He described how eight thousand people, mainly tenant farmers, arrived at the encampment in Golden, Texas. "They came in processions and all the highways were filled with their wagons. Every man, woman and child of them carried a red flag … Far as the eye could reach along all the roads there was the stream of farmers' wagons, filled with their families, and all of

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[764] *The Rebel*, July 25, 1914.

[765] Williams, *History of the Meitzen Family*, n.p.; *The Rebel*, October 31, 1914.

[766] *National Rip-Saw*, June, 1914; *Childress Post*, August 12, 1914.

them waving red flags. It looked as if the march to the Socialist Republic had actually begun." Through interaction with encampment attendees Debs concluded, "The most class-conscious industrial workers in the cities are not more keenly alive to the social revolution nor more loyal to its principles or more eager to serve it than are these farmers." They were not just at the encampments for the spectacle and the chance to escape the drudgery of farm life. Similar to the residents of Lavaca County who armed themselves after the shooting of E.O. Meitzen, Debs observed, "These are Socialists, real Socialists, and they are ready for action, and if the time comes when men are needed at the front to fight and die for the cause, the farmers of Texas and Oklahoma will be found there and their wives and children will not be far behind them."[767] The militancy of many tenant farmers gave Texas Socialists much optimism heading toward the November election.

Though encampments heartened their movement culture, Texas Socialists had realistic expectations in what they sought to achieve at the polls. They knew that winning the governorship was unlikely, but believed that a respectable Socialist vote would put working-class pressure on the government. "The more we reduce the vote in the Democratic primaries," wrote E.R. Meitzen in encouraging people to boycott the primary, "and the higher the Socialist vote goes next November, the more hesitant will big business be about putting over on the people their raw deals and steals through their legislative and state official tools."[768]

While partially conceding the governor's race, the Texas SP aspired to winning a few state congressional elections. "If the Socialist party succeeds in securing a hundred

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[767] Eugene V. Debs, "Revolutionary Encampments," *National Rip-Saw*, June, 1914, 12.

[768] *The Rebel*, July 18, 1914.

thousand votes in Texas this year," the editors of *The Rebel* began, "it will mean that we will carry many counties and representative districts; that the voice of the people will be heard on the floor of the Texas legislature for the first time and that the few husky Socialists with the bull whip of knowledge will lash the rascals through the halls of the legislature."[769] This ambition of the Texas SP did have some grounding. Just north of the Red River, Oklahoma Socialists were waging a similar election campaign based on the land issue as their Lone Star comrades. In the November 1914 elections, six Socialists were elected to the Oklahoma state legislature and close to one hundred were elected to local and country offices.[770] However, one thing made the Texas and Oklahoma elections different—the Ferguson factor.

Ferguson, by campaigning on the land issue and not requiring voters to leave the "party of their fathers," handily won the general election. The anti-establishment Democrat received 176, 599 votes to Meitzen's 24, 977. Meitzen's totals were more than the Republicans at 11,411, the distant Progressive Party with 1, 794, and the barely registering Socialist Labor Party with only 680 votes. The Socialist vote for governor was 281 votes less than they received in 1912. However, the percentage of the vote the SP received increased from 8.4% in 1912 to 11.6% in 1914.[771]

After the election, Hickey acknowledged that Ferguson taking up the land issue stole much of the Socialists' "thunder." Hickey also found that the general consensus of newspaper people was that the SP had helped elected Ferguson through the party successfully making the land issue the dominate issue of the campaign. Though the Texas

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[769] *The Rebel*, July 18, 1914.

[770] Green, *Grass-Roots Socialism*, 293.

[771] "Election of Texas Governors, 1845-2010," *Texas Almanac*, online.

SP failed in its goal of reaching 100,000 votes, the party did succeed in shaping the political issues of the campaign and achieved its highest percentage of the vote ever—a total that did not include much of the SP's main constituency of tenant farmers who could not afford to pay the $1.75 poll tax. In addition, contemporary federal and university researchers found that there was widespread intimidation of tenants by landlords to dissuade them from voting for Socialists. In many areas, the secret ballot was a farce due to Democratic control of the election process. [772]

The Texas SP was not purely an electoral party, and its struggle to improve working-class economic and political conditions did not pause until the next election cycle. In *The Rebel*'s last issue of 1914, the editors told its readers to "Get Ready to Get Busy," as the paper announced the launching of a new land petition campaign in January 1915. Socialists designed the campaign to immediately force Ferguson, as he took office, to make good on his pledge to help landless tenants. The petition called on the governor-elect and the new legislature to adopt constitutional amendments providing that all land held for speculative purposes be taxed to its full value, in effecting making land speculation a zero profit venture. It also proposed that the state issue bonds "that will empower the state to loan money to actual tillers of the soil at the rate of 3 per cent for forty years for the purchase of land and tools."[773] Undeterred and even emboldened, Socialists headed with confidence into the new year.

Events south the border would affect the Texas SP even more in 1915 than they had the previous year. The same end-of-the-year issue of *The Rebel* that announced the

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[772] *The Rebel*, November 21, 1914; Green, *Grass-Roots Socialism*, 297-298.

[773] *The Rebel*, December 26, 1914.

new land petition made this clear. While the land petition article occupied the bottom eighth of the front page, right above it, taking up the rest of the page was an article by Ricardo Flores Magón detailing the revolutionary situation in Mexico with the banner headline "The Land Question Just Over the Border." In the article, Flores Magón detailed the exploitation of Mexican farmers under Diaz, the repression of the Mexican working class by capitalists, the centrality of the land issue to the revolution, and the role of the PLM in the revolution. *The Rebel* editors, to underscore the connections between the Texas SP and PLM and their focus on the land issue, placed a brief preface before Flores Magón's article providing a brief history of the PLM. In the editor's preface, he compares the forced exile of the PLM leadership to St. Louis, where they started a paper to send back to Mexico, to German Social-Democrats under Bismarck's rule in exile in Zurich sending their papers back to Germany—circumstances surely understood by radical German Texan immigrants and their descendants.[774]

Nineteen-fifteen would mark the high point of organizing among Mexicans for the Land League of America, which changed its name from the Renters' Union in mid-November 1914. Mexican membership in the Socialist unions totaled around one thousand members. F.A. Hernández was responsible for coordinating twenty locals throughout Texas. The New Braunfels and Seguin locals claimed a combined membership of 215 workers, which had to be made-up largely of German and Mexican-Americans.[775]

Closer political collaboration with Mexican immigrants brought about a more nuanced understanding of the Mexican Revolution within the Texas SP. 1914 was an

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[774] *The Rebel*, December 26, 1914.

[775] *The Rebel*, December 5, 1914; Zamora, *The World of the Mexican Worker in Texas*, 133.

especially turbulent year of the Revolution. In September, Villa broke with Carranza and would shortly after formed an alliance with Zapata. By this time, the Texas SP had moved beyond the romantic view of Villa and toward the actual land reform being carried out by Zapata. In its November 5, 1914 issue *The Rebel* reprinted Zapata's August 1914 *Manifesto to Mexicans*. The manifesto attacked the limited land reforms of Carranza and called for the continuation of the agrarian revolution. A week after *The Rebel* printed the manifesto Zapata declared war on Carranza. Then in December *The Rebel* printed a lengthy article by Ricardo Flores Magón that also condemned Carranza and Villa for not being committed to the agrarian revolution while praising Zapata as "a sincere and valiant" revolutionist. This contrasts to the *Milwaukee Leader*, which ran an article calling Zapata "the blood thirsty rebel leader" as it scaled back its coverage of the revolution.[776]

The year 1915 also marked the year that Mexican revolutionary Lázaro Gutiérrez de Lara joined the socialist organizing efforts in Texas. In 1906, Gutiérrez de Lara had played a leadership role in the mineworkers strike in Cananea, Mexico that forged an early political partnership between the PLM, IWW, and SP.[777] He moved to San Antonio and took to the lecture circuit, speaking on socialism around the area before eventually returning to southern Arizona to lead a wave of strike activity amongst Mexican miners.[778]

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[776] *The Rebel*, November 5, December 26, 1914; *The Milwaukee Leader*, December 20, 1913.

[777] Raat, *Revoltosos,* 47, 78, 80. Gutiérrez de Lara was also a friend of Mother Jones.

[778] L. Gutiérrez de Lara to T. A. Hickey, March 8, 1915, U.S. Congress, Senate, *Commission on Industrial Relations. Final Report and Testimony* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1916), 9272-9273. Gutiérrez de Lara was a Mexican revolutionary, socialist, and union organizer in northern Mexico. At the time of the 1911 Baja invasion he was leading a PLM army in Chihuahua. Critical of the invasion he resigned from the PLM and turned his army over to Madero forces. After that he began

The integration of large numbers of Mexican immigrants and Tejanos into the Texas Socialist movement brought about dynamic changes to the Texas SP in both actions and political philosophy. For a week in early January 1915, the unemployed of Waco held mass meetings every day and night. At one of these meetings, a man advocated that the unemployed demand "the employers to discharge Mexicans from jobs and give to Americans." Waco Socialist Olive Yarbrough intervened in the meeting, stating, "the man must be demented to advise going after the poor Mexicans … and not try to trample over other workers, regardless of color." In a change of syntax, *The Rebel* demanded that people have "the common decency to quit referring to the Mexicans as a lot of 'Damned Greasers!'[779]

In addition to the Waco unemployed mass meetings, the Dallas SP local led the unemployment movement in their city. Also, in Dallas, the SP on July 18, 1915 co-sponsored with the Arbeiter Ring an anti-war demonstration of 500 people, at which speeches were given in English and Yiddish—furthering the multi-ethnic collaborations of the Texas SP. The Arbeiter Ring was a socialistic anti-Zionist workers' mutual aid organization founded by secular Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe with branches across the country.[780] Though engaging in anti-war actions and movements for unemployed urban workers, the land issue continued to dominate Socialist activism. Following the November 1914 general elections, the Texas SP sought to broaden the importance of the land issue beyond tenant farmers.

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touring Mexico advocating socialism and helping organize miners in northern Coahuila. Though having resigned from the PLM he remained a supporter. In 1917, political opponents murdered him while organizing miners in Sonora. Raat, *Revoltosos*, 58-59; Zamora, *The World of the Mexican Worker in Texas*, 146.

[779] *The Rebel*, January 16, 1915, February 12, September 2, 1916.

[780] *The Rebel*, June 6, 13, 20, 1914, February 13, 1915; *Dallas Morning News*, July 19, 1915.

When Socialists changed the name of the Renters Union to the Land League of America, it was not just semantics. The new organization took its name from the Irish National Land League founded by Irish republican Michael Davitt in October 1879. Like the Texas Renters Union, the Irish National Land League strove to end landlordism and secure for tenant farmers the right to own the land they worked. However, the new Land League of America had a much broader focus than its Irish namesake and the Renters Union that it absorbed. The new organization increased its scope to represent not only tenant farmers, but town renters and small landowners as well.[781]

Besides widening its membership base, the Land League also reoriented its political strategy. While the Renters Union emulated the IWW's model of industrial unionism as one big union for all tenant farmers, the Land League focused on gaining legislative reforms guided by the single tax philosophy. The single tax movement originated with radical reformer Henry George, which he developed through his widely read book *Progress and Poverty*, first published in 1879. George believed the growth of extreme economic inequality was the result of the monopolies held by capitalists over natural resources, especially that of land. By holding land for speculative purposes, economic elites, according to George, were able to increase their wealth and power at the expense of the laboring classes—a belief very much in line with that of Texas Socialists. To remedy this situation, George advocated that taxes on producers, such as those on land improvements and personal property, be eliminated and replaced with a *single* tax, at a rate of 100%, on the profits made from land and other resources held for speculative purposes.[782]

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[781] *The Rebel*, November 28, 1914; Green, *Grass-Roots Socialism*, 303.

After a brief heyday in the 1880s, the single tax movement was experiencing a revival across the U.S. in the second decade of the twentieth century. The single tax movement gained deep traction in the Lone Star state due to the prominence of the land issue. Texas Socialists had long called for a tax on land held for speculative purposes, without calling it a single tax. Its appeal was not limited to landless agrarians but had become especially popular among non-, and sometimes even anti-socialist, middle-class reformers. In February 1913, Lavaca County state senator D.D. Paulus introduced a single tax measure on land to the Texas legislature. Though Paulus' bill failed, it did bring statewide attention to the single tax movement. [783]

Earlier in February 1911, residents of Houston elected the Georgist, J.J. Pastoriza, to serve on the city commission. Upon taking office, the commission made him chairman of the city's board of appraisement. As chairman of the board of appraisement and then head of a special committee on taxation, Pastoriza put single tax principles into practice in Houston. He carried out a complete reevaluation of Houston properties. By raising the valuations of landholdings by economic elites, Pastoriza increased the city's revenues by $100,000 while at the same time lowing the taxes paid by the working and middle-class residents. Economic elites accepted Pastoriza' tax increases, because while he raised their taxes, the value of their properties increased. The popularity of Pastoriza's Georgist tax policies and the efforts of the city's Single Tax League, resulted in his election as mayor of Houston in 1917. However, Pastoriza died of a heart attack, at the age of sixty, after only three months in office and his successor did not share Pastoriza's single tax

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[782] *Dallas Morning News*, November 18, 1914; Johnston, *Radical Middle Class*, 159-161.

[783] *El Paso Herald*, February 10, 1913; Green, *Grass-Roots Socialism*, 303.

philosophy.[784]

Texas Socialists viewed the popularity of the single tax movement as a way to draw continued attention to the land issue. Hickey expressed as much in a letter to William S. U'Ren, a leader of the single tax movement in Oregon, "The powerful landlord organization that absolutely controls the politics and policies of this state are seeking through prohibition channels to play down the land question. Accordingly we are fighting back through the Socialist party and the Single Tax organization to keep the land issue in first place."[785] The popularity of single tax philosophy extended to the labor movement. After the Portland (Oregon) Central Labor Council initiated a single tax campaign and a similar movement was begun by California's state labor federation, the Texas SP introduced a resolution to the Texas State Federation of Labor's (TSFL) 1916 convention calling for it to endorse a single tax land amendment to the Texas state constitution. Hickey, with the aid of Pastoriza, drafted the resolution. The TSFL unanimously endorsed the resolution, believing that such an amendment would lower land values and thus lower rents for laborers.[786]

Though the Texas SP joined the single tax movement, this did not mean they did so uncritically. In the first in a series of articles in *The Rebel* on the single tax, co-authored by E.R. Meitzen and Hickey, wrote that the Texas SP "does not believe that the Single Tax is a cureall, for the ills that beset the nation." While the single tax would eliminate rent, Meitzen and Hickey asked, "What about interest" and profit? They were

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[784] *Houston Post*, March 1, April 11, 1911, February 24, July 10, 1917; Stephen Davis, "Joseph Jay Pastoriza and the Single Tax in Houston, 1911-1917," *The Houston Review*, Vol. 8, no. 2 (1986), pp. 56-78, 61-62.

[785] Hickey to W.S. U'Ren, April 18, 1916, Hickey Papers.

[786] *The Rebel*, May 6, 1916.

critical of the single taxer belief that under a single tax "interest will be natural interest" and "that profit is legitimate," revealing the single taxers as still beholden to a capitalist system. Meitzen and Hickey believed that only through the elimination of rent, along with interest and profit, by direct action--not gradual reforms--would the working class win economic freedom.[787]

While the TX SP offered critical support to the single tax movement, other state Socialist parties across the nation took a different approach. Viewing the single tax movement as unsocialistic and led by middle-class reformers, many Socialist state organizations either abstained from the single tax movement or were openly hostile. For example, the Oregon SP refused to endorse any measure related to the single tax. "When you get down to concrete proposals," wrote U'Ren to Hickey, "my experience is that a great many of the Socialists are fully ignorant as the old party members, and just about as prejudiced."[788]

The Texas SP, however, took a less sectarian attitude than most of their comrades nationally. They were fully aware of the limitations of the single tax movement and its Texas leadership's tactic of working primarily within the Democratic Party. Instead of attacking the single tax movement, they saw the movement as an opportunity to engage in a popular movement and by doing so draw its participants to socialism and working-class revolution. Citing German socialist revolutionary Wilhelm Liebknecht, Meitzen and Hickey were open about their reasons for involving the Texas SP in the middle-class based single tax movement. "Was it not Liebknecht," wrote Meitzen and Hickey, "who

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[787] *The Rebel*, September 25, 1915.

[788] U'Ren to Hickey, July 18, 1916, Hickey Papers, "old party members" refers to members of the Democratic and Republican parties.

said that in the course of the struggle between the classes the working class could draw to itself great divisions of the middle class and could use them to great advantage in their struggle against the great exploiters."[789] By involving themselves in the Texas single tax movement, instead of abstaining from it, Texas Socialists were able to reach broader audiences and form valuable relationships with the TSFL and middle-class reformers. At the same time, they maintained their socialist principles of independent political action. For example, the Texas SP refused to endorse its close ally, Pastoriza, in his campaign for mayor, because he ran as a Democrat. [790] Yet, after his victory *The Rebel* stated, "The revolution has started and can't stop, using all kinds of instruments to attain its end, and Pastoriza is one of those instruments."[791]

While the single tax for Texas Socialists was a drawn-out campaign, they sought out more immediate means to pressure the state government on the land issue, in the aftermath of Ferguson's electoral victory. The United States Commission on Industrial Relations, known more popularly as the Walsh Commission, presented such an immediate opportunity.

In the midst of growing labor unrest, and after the shock of the *Los Angeles Times* building bombing, progressive reformers called for the creation of a federal commission to investigate industrial violence. In 1912, Congress passed a bill authorizing the creation of the United States Commission on Industrial Relations. This act continued the state's long practice of holding public hearings and creating commissions to redirect public outrage from seeking working-class based solutions to labor disputes into ineffectual

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[789] *The Rebel*, September 25, 1915.

[790] Green, *Grass-Roots Socialism*, 303.

[791] *The Rebel*, March 3, 1917.

bureaucratic commissions. President Taft signed the bill creating the latest commission, and in addition to representatives of industry and the public, he nominated three labor leaders to the nine-seat commission. His intended desire was to draw progressive support to his faltering reelection campaign.[792]

Congress refused to confirm Taft's appointments before Wilson succeeded him in the White House. Wilson, however, kept Taft's labor and industry nominations and added Frank Walsh to chair the commission, with all of these gaining Congressional approval. Walsh was a Kansas City labor lawyer whom Wilson had not known for very long. However, Walsh had helped Wilson's presidential campaign in Missouri.[793] And he proved to be anything but just another head of a placid federal commission.

According to historian Shelton Stromquist, "Walsh came to represent a labor progressivism that challenged the reformers' ideal of social harmony."[794] Instead of glossing over class conflict, as some reformers did, Walsh instead drew out and sharpened class conflict as the way to address the causes of industrial unrest. As Walsh wrote to George Creel, "if our investigation results in placing our whole industrial system upon trial and endorsing or condemning it, that this Commission ought to do so [in] some brave and definite terms."[795] The Walsh commission traveled the country from 1913 to

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[792] Joseph A. McCartin, *Labor's Great War: The Struggle for Industrial Democracy and the Origins of Modern American Labor Relations, 1912-1921* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 18-19. Investigatory commissions were created by federal authorities following the 1886 Southwest Railroad strike, an 1887 miner's strike in Pennsylvania, the 1892 Homestead strike, the 1894 Pullman strike, and from 1900-1901 a U.S. Industrial Commission was convened to find the "causes of industrial unrest." Shelton Stromquist, *Reinventing "The People": The Progressive Movement, the Class Problem, and the Origins of Modern Liberalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 22.

[793] McCartin, *Labor's Great War*, 166.

[794] Stromquist, *Reinventing "The People"*, 165.

[795] Frank Walsh to George Creel, August 18, 1913, Frank P. Walsh Papers, New York Public Library, Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York, New York.

1915 making headlines wherever they went, both locally and nationally. Walsh and his felloe panel members held notable lengthy hearings on the Paterson silk strike, a New York City garment workers strike, an Illinois railroad strike, and the Colorado miner's strike that resulted in the Ludlow Massacre. The commission's hearings and findings were quite damning to the captains of industry in their treatment of laborers by exposing harsh working conditions and poverty wages. "Every great fortune," Walsh said, "is a fundamental wrong … Everyman with a fortune must at some time have crossed the line of ethics and of criminal law." Many moderate reformers, establishment politicians and owners of industry felt the Walsh commission had overstepped its bounds by attempting to polarize class relations. When Walsh called for a $2.50 per day minimum wage for unskilled workers, one Georgia newspaper editor stated such calls made Walsh, "well worthy of a straightjacket!"[796]

On the other hand, working-class radicals praised the Walsh Commission. "There must of have been some mistake on the part of the gentlemen who govern this country in allowing Frank P. Walsh to become chairman of the federal commission on industrial relations," wrote Debs in a *National Rip-Saw* editorial. "Not only has Chairman Walsh been thorough in his investigation," continued Debs, "but he has been fearless and outspoken in his condemnation of the causes of poverty and misery, of slavery and degradation among workers."[797]

Agrarian radicals in Texas received an important boost to their cause when the Walsh Commission decided to hold hearings in Dallas on the conditions of agricultural

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[796] Stromquist, *Reinventing "The People"*, 166; McCartin, *Labor's Great War*, 13; *Times-Picayune* (New Orleans), March 9, 1915; *Augusta* (Georgia) *Chronicle*, March 11, 1915.

[797] *National Rip-Saw*, July 1915.

workers in the Southwest. This commission was unique compared to previous industrial commissions in the inclusion of agricultural labor as part of its investigations. Organizers originally scheduled the hearings to begin on December 16, 1914. The timing put immense pressure on Ferguson to carry through on his land reform campaign pledge once he assumed office in January. However, due to the extend time the commission spent in Colorado investigating the Ludlow Massacre, the Dallas hearings were rescheduled for March 1915. The postponement of the Dallas hearings was a reprieve for Ferguson, allowing him to act before the hearings began.[798]

When the state legislature convened in mid-January 1915, Ferguson declared its first responsibility was to pass land reform legislation. "To charge more than a third and fourth rent … means a condition of the tenant farmers of Texas not but little better than the peons of Mexico," wrote Ferguson in his opening letter of instruction to the legislature. Ferguson continued in his comparison of tenant farmers on each side of the Rio Grande. "He [the tenant farmer of Texas] can expect nothing but a mere existence and no financial advancement of his condition. The peon of Mexico is getting the same. And the only difference is that the Mexican is now trying to destroy the government that permits such a condition to exist … while the tenant farmer of Texas is still loyal to his government and has appealed to reason."[799] The Mexican Revolution loomed large as a warning in both the Socialist and Democratic camps--for Socialists it was a threat, for Democrats a danger to avoid.

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[798] Lewis K. Brown to Walsh, November 28, 1914, Walsh to James P. Aylward, November 30, 1914, Walsh to T.L. O'Brien, December 1, 1914, Walsh Papers.

[799] *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Regular Session of the Thirty-Fourth Legislature, Convened January 12, 1915, and Adjourned March 20, 1915* (Von Boeckmann-Jones Co., Printers: Austin, 1915), 131.

On March 3, 1915, just under two weeks before the Walsh hearings began in Dallas, the Texas legislature approved Ferguson's landlord and tenant act. The House passed the bill 100 to 24. On paper, Texan tenant farmers had seemingly won a degree of relief with the act establishing a barrier against increasing rents. However, many Democratic legislators voted for the act with only feigned interest in improving the economic plight of tenant farmers. During Ferguson's election campaign, Socialists criticized his proposed land reform as being unenforceable without major changes to usury laws. Many Democratic legislators voted for the act well aware of this. "I vote for the bill because it is a platform demand… yet I am doubtful of its constitutionality," stated one representative. Other representatives echoed this sentiment. At the same time, legislators who opposed the act also voted for it, with one stating: "I vote for the bill, although I am opposed to such legislation and do not believe it will stand the test before the courts and believe the whole thing to be a farce." Another representative was even more blunt; "I vote 'yea' on this bill… At the same time I don't think it is worth the paper it is written on and will not be effective and will prove the fallacy of such an idea."[800] After passing the act, ,Democrats could say, rather hypocritically, that they passed a land reform measure, while at the same time maintaining the economic status quo. Socialists, though, sought to use the Walsh Commission to expose the duplicitous nature of the Democratic Party and further the struggle for true land reform.

Walsh appeared to have an earnest interest in learning as much as possible on agricultural labor conditions in the Southwest. He called witnesses from a variety of political persuasions and sent field agents out to gather evidence months in advance of

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[800] *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Regular Session of the Thirty-Fourth Legislature,* 788-791; *The Rebel*, April 11, 25, 1914.

the hearings. One such agent spent three days in Hallettsville. An additional agent interviewed E.R. Meitzen and Noble while they headed the 1914 SP electoral ticket.[801]

The Walsh Commission began it hearings in Dallas on March 16, 1915. From the beginning, the hearings demonstrated Walsh's ideology of bringing about progressive change through the drawing out of class conflicts. Throughout the hearings, the order of witnesses Walsh called rotated back-and-forth across the economic divide. To reveal class tensions in agricultural labor, Walsh had no qualms in utilizing Socialists. Placed in between the testimonies of landlords, bankers, merchants, and real estate agents, Walsh placed well-known agrarian Socialists and radicals. In Dallas the Walsh Commission heard testimony from Arthur LeSueur, the former Socialist mayor of Minot, North Dakota and then dean of the socialistic People's College in Fort Scott, Kansas; Noble, who had been elected the first president of the Land League; Oklahoma Socialists Patrick Nagle and W.L. Thurman; single taxer J.J. Pastoriza; Emelio Flores, secretary of the Mexican Protective Association; and E.O. Meitzen.[802]

After the landlords and bankers espoused the virtues of self-improvement and class harmony and the general contentment of tenant farmers, Walsh's radical witnesses laid bare the cruel realities of agricultural labor in the southwest. Sprinkled among these polar opposite viewpoints, the Walsh Committee also heard from various professors of economics, sociology and agriculture whose fact-based statistics backed up much of the radicals' claims. The testimony, which drew the most media attention nationally, was

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[801] U.S. Congress, *Industrial Relations, Final Report and Testimony,* Vol. IX, iv; U.S. Congress, *Industrial Relations, Final Report and Testimony,* Vol. X, iii; *The Rebel*, March 6, 1915.

[802] U.S. Congress, *Industrial Relations, Final Report and Testimony,* Vol. IX, iv; U.S. Congress, *Industrial Relations, Final Report and Testimony,* Vol. X, iii.

that of the Texas tenant farm family, Levi Thomas Stewart, and his wife Beulah.[803]

Before the hearings, the commission tasked Noble with finding a typical tenant farm family and he produced the Stewarts. The Stewarts detailed their life as tenant farmers caught in an endless chain of poverty. Originally from Arkansas, they married at a young age and hoped to someday have a farm of their own. Instead, the Stewarts found themselves trapped in system of renting on the thirds and fourths, moving from farm to farm, and in debt to merchants while trying to provide for eleven children. Before the commission, the Stewarts described a life of poverty, hunger, and children dying due to lack of proper medical care, with a denial of a formal education those who survived.[804]

The testimony of E.O. Meitzen provided further evidence that the experiences of the Stewarts were representative of most tenant farmers. In the months leading up to the hearings, *The Rebel* and Land League staffs gathered letters and testimonials for Meitzen to present as evidence in Dallas. Meitzen submitted over 150 letters from tenant farmers to the commission. In these letters, tenant farmers described how landlords subjugated them to serf-like conditions. Landlords imposed a cotton monoculture on their tenants, not allowing tenants to diversify their crops, which would make them more self-sufficient and less vulnerable to the whims of the market. Some landlords would not even allow their tenants to have a personal garden. If landlords allowed a garden, they would even take half of its crop. Unable to grow their own food stores and already in debt due to low cotton prices, tenant farmers were often forced to mortgage their few meager possessions

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[803] U.S. Congress, *Industrial Relations, Final Report and Testimony,* Vol. IX, 8956-8982; *Washington Post*, March 19, 1915; *Nashville Tennessean*, March 18, 1915; *Louisville Courier Journal*, March 18, 1915.

[804] U.S. Congress, *Industrial Relations, Final Report and Testimony,* Vol. IX, 9005-9044.

such as tools, furniture, a horse or mule in order to obtain credit for food and clothing.[805]

Already ill-fed and clothed, tenant farmers were equally dire in their living conditions. Landlords rarely provided adequate housing for their tenant families. In the letters Meitzen submitted, tenants wrote of living in houses that were only 14 by 14, and even 14 by 11--and this was for families of six and even more. Besides being small, tenant houses were also in bad conditions with leaking roofs, dirt floors, drafts, and few windows. With conditions such as these, Meitzen could not see any social harmony between landlords and tenants.[806]

"If you try to harmonize the interest of exploiter and exploited," testified Meitzen, "but still permit anyone to receive interest and rent and profit—all graft—or permit able bodied men to live without work, it means that you are trying to harmonize the interests of the hawk and dove." For Meitzen the solution was "to stop any man from living from the toll of another," which in his view could only be done by "taking the power from landlordism and placing it in the people, where it justly belongs."[807] Meitzen revealed the direct complicity of Democratic leaders in the systematic exploitation of tenant farmers. He told the commission about an incident on a ranch owned by Postmaster General Burleson, the first Texan appointed to a Cabinet position and a key Wilson advisor. The thirty tenant families on Burleson's land had lived there for a few years renting on the thirds and fourths. They laid down roots, building a schoolhouse and a church with a cemetery. Then one year, shortly before Christmas, armed guards moved convicts onto the land. Burleson's managers then without notice used the convict labor to harvest the

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[805] U.S. Congress, *Industrial Relations, Final Report and Testimony,* Vol. X, 9260-9289.

[806] U.S. Congress, *Industrial Relations, Final Report and Testimony,* Vol. X, 9282.

[807] U.S. Congress, *Industrial Relations, Final Report and Testimony,* Vol. X, 9146.

crop the tenants had sown and forced the tenants to vacate the land, leaving their buried loves behind, and with no place to go themselves. Meitzen's revelation was a national embarrassment for Burleson, which followed him for years afterwards. Meitzen produced a similar embarrassment for Ferguson by bringing to light the governor's past practice of charging exorbitant interest rates, sometimes as high as forty percent, to farmers.[808]

The dreadful conditions of agricultural labor in the Southwest exposed by the Walsh Commission had already resulted in many farmers joining the Texas SP. However, joining the Socialist movement often brought about harmful repercussions. The commission heard such testimony from William Travis Davis, a land-owning farmer and local leader of the Texas SP in Coleman County. By 1912, Coleman County had a strong Socialist presence after travelling Socialist organizers--both men and women, from Chicago and Cincinnati--first visited the county around 1909. To counter the growing Socialist activism, the manager for one of the larger landlords organized an Anti-Socialist League. The manager then removed the Socialist tenants from the lands he supervised.[809]

In addition to political discrimination, the Walsh Commission also brought to light routine racial discrimination. At the start of the cotton-picking season, local law enforcement agencies invoked vagrancy laws to get the "lazy" and "idle" negroes "out and getting them to go to work, instead of lying around the streets and refusing to do anything," as one wealthy landlord expressed. Black workers often did refuse to work the fields--though not out of laziness, but because of low and discriminatory wages. Through

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[808] U.S. Congress, *Industrial Relations, Final Report and Testimony,* Vol. X, 9144; *New York World*, May 5, 1917, as found in Albert Sidney Burleson Papers, Box 2B186, CAH; *Augusta Chronicle*, April 27, 1919.

[809] U.S. Congress, *Industrial Relations, Final Report and Testimony,* Vol. X, 9107-9125; *Dallas Morning News*, March 20, 1915.

the use or threatened use of vagrancy laws, law enforcement officials at the behalf of landowners forced black workers to pick cotton for poverty wages.[810]

Among the letters that E.O. Meitzen submitted as evidence to the Walsh Commission were several describing the exploitation of Mexican and Tejano labor. F.A. Hernández appears to have done much of the legwork to make sure their voices were included as part of Meitzen's evidence. Gutiérrez de Lara also contributed to this effort, stating, "I have heard of cases of the most brutal peonage to which Mexicans are subjected by the feudal exploiters of Caldwell [County], of this state, and how the Mexicans are shot and sent to prison or to the penitentiary under trumped-up charges for refusing to be peonized."[811] Hernández provided examples of how landlords used courts, where language barriers and often citizenship hindered Mexican laborers, to uphold high rents and interests rates to defraud Mexican laborers of their wages. Emelio Flores of the Mexican Protective Association testified that in San Antonio, Mexican laborers are often not "given work unless they produce a poll-tax receipt paid for the present year." Political cliques then direct them how to vote.[812] Practices such as these ensured Democratic victories in a city that might otherwise elect political alternatives, due to its large German and Mexican-American population.

For years, the Texas SP had campaigned on the land issue and the betterment of agricultural workers. Now, because of the efforts of Texas Socialists the land issue had

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[810] U.S. Congress, *Industrial Relations, Final Report and Testimony,* Vol. IX, 9001-9002.

[811] U.S. Congress, *Industrial Relations, Final Report and Testimony,* Vol. X, 9272. The county Gutiérrez de Lara describes is in the same area where J. A. Hernández organized the telegram to the governor for the Rangel-Cline Defense Committee.

[812] U.S. Congress, *Industrial Relations, Final Report and Testimony,* Vol. X, 9203, 9283-9285.

become the dominant issue in Texas politics. The clamor over the land issue and agriculture labor drew the attention of the Walsh Commission. The Dallas hearings then brought the social and economic plight of southwestern agricultural laborers to a national audience. The Texas SP stood at the height of its political influence, and it now sought to bring about tangible reforms to improve the conditions of the working class.

The Texas SP achieved its position of influence through building coalitions and partnerships across political divides. By participating in the single tax movement, the party formed a political partnership with Pastoriza and his group of reformers in the Single Tax League. This partnership aided the Texas SP in gaining the support of the TSFL in demanding that the state government address the land issue. With the Single Tax League and TSFL, the Texas SP fought for higher wages, lower rents, union rights, and landownership for landless farmers.

Because early twentieth-century American Socialists exerted much of their efforts on basic bread and butter issues of the working class, some historians have characterized them as not Marxists or unsocialistic. Certain scholars even go as far as to consider Progressive Era Socialists as part of America's capitalist-oriented liberal tradition.[813]

All too often, the historiography of socialism demonstrates an overall lack of knowledge of basic socialist theory and practice. When historians portray Socialists as non-Marxist liberals this can come from seeing tactics as strategy, or seeing the how as also the what. When both progressive liberals and socialists called for higher wages and

[813] For a discussion of the historiography of U.S. Socialists as not Marxists, see Burwood, "Debsian Socialism Through a Transnational Lens." See also, *The Texas Left: The Radical Roots of Lone Star Liberalism* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2010), the title of this edited collection, which includes articles on the Farmers' Alliance, Populism and the Texas SP, says a lot about where the editors see the liberal tradition coming from; however, not all the authors in this collection agree and rather they see radicalism and liberalism as two separate traditions.

lower rents (the how), they each have different strategies (the what) in mind. Progressive liberals make such demands in order to reform the capitalist system. Socialists, on the other hand, join with workers in their immediate demands to defend their basic interests against capitalists in order to advance working-class self-consciousness and draw workers closer to socialist revolution. Texas Socialists utilized the tactic of campaigning on the land issue and working with progressive reformers and organizations as part of their strategy for socialist revolution. Similar efforts had long been in practice by socialists around the world. Socialists would eventually formularize these tactics during the Third and Fourth Congresses of the Communist International in 1921 and 1922 as transitional demands (slogans) and the united front.[814]

Through the Texas SP's use of transitional demands and united front like tactics, they had pulled the political spectrum in Texas significantly to the left. The land petition and E.R. Meitzen's campaign for governor resulted in the Texas SP gaining its widest and largest hearing to date. Against the intentions of Congress, the Walsh committee hearings gave Socialists a propaganda tool to attack the economic system that perpetuated the labor conditions the hearings exposed. However, the economic and political elites did not remain idle and began their push back.

Upon the conclusion of the Dallas hearings, the editor's of the *Dallas Morning News* ran an editorial criticizing the Walsh Commission. They called the hearings a failure because they "did not disclose anything relevant" on farm tenantry that was not

[814] Karl Radek, "Theses on Tactics and Strategy," in John Riddell ed., *To The Masses: Proceedings of the Third Congress of the Communist International, 1921* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2015), pp. 924-950, 936-938; Executive Committee of the Communist International, " December 1921 Theses on the Workers' United Front," and John Riddell, "Editorial Introduction," both in John Riddell ed., *Toward the United Front: Proceedings of the Fourth Congress of the Communist International, 1922* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2011), 5-13, 1164-1173.

already known and took "no account of the successful tenants." In particular, the editors singled out E.O. Meitzen. They labeled Meitzen a failed farmer due to this own lack of agricultural knowledge. The editorial stated, "one can not escape the conclusion that at least many of those who cry out against the system make an unwitting confession of their own incapacity," implying that all farmers trapped in the tenant system were there due to their own shortcomings. Meitzen's socialist beliefs, in the editor's view, were responsible for "exaggerating the evils" of the tenant system. "It is questionable if any of these evils is so harmful in its consequences as is this fault of exaggerating them. It has probably contributed more to the impoverishment of the tenant farmers as a class than all the evils of the system." The editors continued to blame the victims, going on, "for the inevitable effect of this exaggeration is to rob the farmer of his hope and his courage; an, with these gone, his energies soon follow."[815]

Following the Dallas hearings, the Texas SP stood at a precipice. Inspired by the Mexican Revolution, the party had brought the land issue to the forefront of Texas politics. However, conditions north of the Rio Grande were far from ripe for a similar revolution in Texas, leaving the Texas SP exposed. The Meitzens' and Hickey's continued admiration of the Mexican Revolution put the party in a precarious position. Some rank-and-file members of the party and other farmer-labor radicals wanted to follow the Mexican example and engage in more direct action tactics. However, much like the SP's right wing, many of the Texas SP's progressive allies also looked disparagingly on many aspects of the Revolution. Emelio Flores, secretary of the

[815] *Dallas Morning News*, March 28, 1915. Meitzen, in a letter to the editor, replied that the editor's misconstrued his testimony and that he had been a success as both a blacksmith and farmer and had only left farming for teaching because it provided a more stable income. From the tone of Meitzen's letter, he took the attacks personally and only used his reply to defend himself and not the SP—at least from what the *Dallas Morning News* printed. *Dallas Morning News*, April 4, 1915.

Mexican Protective Association, whose testimony at the Dallas hearings disclosed the racist and exploitive treatment of Mexican-American laborers, called *Regeneration* a "filthy paper" and said that it was "disgraceful to let such a thing be transmitted through our mails," while seeing its editor, Flores Magón as "the worst kind of anarchist."[816] As seen in the *Dallas Morning News* editorial, E.O. Meitzen and the Texas SP had also ignited the ire of political and economic elites, especially that of Postmaster General Burleson who held at his disposal many of the vast resources of the federal government. Pressures, both internal and external, were now truly tearing at the Texas SP.

[816] U.S. Congress, *Industrial Relations, Final Report and Testimony,* Vol. X, 9201.

Chapter Six

From the Cooperative Commonwealth to the Invisible Empire

Since the 1870s, the farmer-labor bloc had served as a left pull on Texas politics. Representing the interests of the working class, the farmer-labor bloc succeeded in forcing reforms of the state's political and economic system. The farmer-labor bloc either initiated or pushed for the anti-monopoly legislation, railroad regulations, election reforms, and land reform the state enacted. Throughout this era the Meitzen family served as a key component within the farmer-labor bloc, linking the succeeding generations and network of agrarian radicals.

The reforms won by the farmer-labor bloc did not go without challenges from the state's economic and political elites. Before passing these reforms into law, the state severely watered them down, almost to the point of being ineffectual. To prevent further working-class reform impulses, the state installed measures to limit democratic capabilities. The legislature enacted a poll tax--creating an economic barrier to voting. To prevent further working-class inter-racial alliances, like those witnessed during the Populist revolt, the government put in place Jim Crow laws such as the white only primary. In addition to these unjust, but legal measures, economic elites also employed extra-legal actions such as ballot box stuffing, courthouse rings, manipulation of black and Mexican votes, along with outright intimidation and violence to prevent farmer-labor electoral victories. Economic elites' race-dividing measures were so successful, both physically and psychologically, that by the time of the emergence of the Texas Socialist Party, the farmer-labor bloc was largely a white movement until the influx of Mexicans

into the Renters' Union.

The Texas Socialist Party brought the farmer-labor bloc to a new stage of its political evolution. The Greenback and Populist challenges wanted to reform capitalist political culture to make it more democratic and equitable. However, growing wealth inequality and a government seemingly in the pocket of big business convinced agrarian radicals, such as the Meitzens, that the entire economic system needed replacing. The Texas SP posed a direct threat to capitalism by calling for a socialist revolution. Though Texas Socialists primarily sought to bring about a revolution through education and the ballot, they did so during a time of intense political tension and anxiety. Revolution was not an abstract proposition in this moment. It had happened in neighboring Mexico and was brewing in Ireland and the Russian Empire, with war engulfing Europe. At the same time in the U.S., labor disputes and strikes persisted with no abatement in sight.

Socialists laid bare the social and economic injustices of capitalism. Through its electoral campaigns and propaganda, the Texas SP had attracted a small, but growing, number of militantly committed members. The example of the Mexican Revolution drove many Socialists to heightened radicalism. At the same time, Socialist participation in the Walsh hearings brought their message to new and larger mainstream audiences.

Just as economic elites had acted against the Populist movement, they also did so against the SP. This time around, however, they had the solid assistance of the federal government. In Texas, during the Populist revolt, economic elites mainly relied on voter suppression and fraud to derail agrarian radicalism. When they utilized physical repression, it was localized and not systematic. The Socialist challenge to the economic status quo was different from that of the Populists, and it occurred during dramatically

different historical circumstances.

During this era of word war, revolution, and labor unrest, the state moved in a systematic manner never before seen to crush working-class radicalism throughout the nation. The state had previously used courts and the National Guard to halt individual strikes—the largest of these being the 1877 Railroad Strike--but never before had the government engaged in anything as wide-ranging as the Red Scare of 1919-1921. Using court injunctions, censorship, denial of mail service, arrests, deportations, and ignoring vigilante violence, the government suppressed and moved to the political margins the farmer-labor bloc and other strains of economic radicalism across the nation. In the Lone Star state, agrarian radicals faced the added menace of the Texas Rangers.

The Texas SP experienced state-sponsored repression well before the post-war Red Scare. The early repression of the Texas SP came about due to its connections to Mexican revolutionaries and growing success in organizing tenant farmers across the white and Mexican racial divide separating white and Mexican. In response to official repression, the farmer-labor bloc adopted tactics less threatening to the economic and political structures of capitalism in the U.S. In doing so, the farmer-bloc compromised its organizational independence resulting in its eventual collapse.

The Mexican Revolution not only had a radicalizing effect on the Texas SP and its base of white tenant farmers, but on others as well. In early 1915, a group of ethnic Mexicans, believing that the disruptions in South Texas caused by the Mexico Revolution made the area ripe for radical social and political change, drafted the Plan de San Diego. The Plan, influenced by anarchist beliefs, called for an army of Mexicans, blacks, and

Native Americans to kill all white males over the age of sixteen and overthrow U.S. rule in Texas, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, and California in order to create an independent republic in the liberated territory. Beginning in July 1915, ethnic Mexican insurgents in South Texas began raiding and burning white-owned farms and settlements, in the process killing around 21 residents and soldiers. In retaliation, as described by historian Benjamin Johnson, Texas Rangers, along with vigilantes, led a violent "counterinsurgency that included the indiscriminate harassment of ethnic Mexicans, forcible relocation of rural residents, and mass executions."[817] The callousness of the Rangers' pursuit of their task comes through in the following exchange. When a Dallas reporter asked a Texas Ranger what happened to three dead Mexicans the Ranger was standing over, the grinning Ranger answered, "it's been pretty hot today–maybe they died of sunstroke." Federal troops were eventually sent in to secure the border during this called at the time "Bandit War." These same federal troops, once the border was secured, were redeployed to the Panama Canal Zone (PCZ)--demonstrating a direct link between the military component of U.S. imperialism in the borderlands and the PCZ. By years end, hundreds of area Mexicans and Mexican-Americans may have been killed.[818]

In the midst of this climate of fear and Texas Rangers--sanctioned murder, the Texas SP never wavered in its support of the Mexican Revolution. Texas Socialists did so, despite the fact they knew full well that federal and state authorities were fishing for ways to connect the SP, IWW, and PLM to the Plan de San Diego, because federal and

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[817] Johnson, *Revolution In Texas*, 2.

[818] Johnson, *Revolution In Texas*, 1-2, 70; James A. Sandos, *Rebellion in the Borderlands: Anarchism and the Plan of San Diego, 1904-1923* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992), 172; *Dallas Morning News*, August 14, September 8, 1915; Lt. Roy O. Henry to Robert Barnes, February 2, 1917 in Barnes Report February 13, 1917, "Mexican Files," Bureau of Investigation, Roll 856.

state agents were questioning SP members and allies.[819] In November, E.R. Meitzen traveled to Kingsville near the Mexican border, an area embroiled in "Bandit War" hysterics. In a socialist stump speech attacking usury, Meitzen declared that the real thieves were the "bank bandits" with the bank of Kingsville (owned by King Ranch interests) charging working people 33 per cent interest. He also pointed how the King "interests brought their influence to bear on the government so that a company of soldiers was rushed to this town to protect the private property of the King interests from the Mexican bandits… Mexican bandits may be the scum of the earth but they are gentlemen and scholars besides the bank bandits that rob only the poor."[820]

Though the PLM did not endorse the raids, and the Texas SP and Land League had scant connections to the Plan de San Diego, this did not prevent repercussions from coming their way. Emboldened by the federal and state government organized repression along the border, local authorizes and even individuals felt empowered to take on farmer-labor radicals. On August 10, 1915 E.O. Meitzen, now aged 61, was assaulted on the streets in his hometown of Hallettsville by 35 year-old Robert D. Ragsdale, who knocked Meitzen to the ground and repeatedly kicked him. Ragsdale attacked Meitzen in response to an article published in the *New Era* exposing his involvement in a fraudulent real estate scheme that swindled farmers with overinflated land values. Later in the month, José Ángel Hernández, who had returned to Texas from Indianapolis in February, faced legal challenges in San Antonio.[821]

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[819] Robert L. Barnes to The Sheriff, Cameron County, Brownsville, Texas, October 30, 1915, Bureau of Investigation, Roll 856; J.C. Adkins to R.L. Barnes, November 4, 1915 in C.E. Breniman Report November 5, 1915, Bureau of Investigation, Roll 856.

[820] *The Rebel*, October 9, November 6, 1915.

[821] *The Rebel*, August 14, 1915.

In August of 1915, Hernández received a commission from the Land League to organize locals in the San Antonio area, apparently joining the SP around the same time. On August 30, Hernández gave a public speech advocating socialism and membership in the Land League at Market Place in the center of San Antonio in front of a reported thousand spectators. After the speech local police arrested Hernández for "planning to incite a rebellion." Two of Hernández's companions were also arrested while distributing the San Antonio PLM newspaper *Lucha de Clases*.[822] Twenty-three spectators were also arrested on vagrancy charges and held without bond for two days. Hernández's companions were fined one hundred and two hundred dollars and the arrested spectators released after paying ten-dollar fines and promising not to attend similar meeting in the future. The San Antonio chief of police in talking to reporters about the arrests stated, "they have been taught a good lesson. From now on the Plan of San Diego will have little success here."[823] Having aligned themselves with the Mexican Revolution, Texas socialists were now receiving the blowback from the ruling elites' campaign against the revolution.

The SP began a vigorous campaign in defense of Hernández. While E.R. Meitzen and another comrade personally posted the $1000 bail for Hernández, *The Rebel* opined, "He [Hernández] had committed the crime of organizing a very large League," noting "that there is a general conspiracy between the landlord and political machine of the San Antonio congressional district to stop the mouth of a man who was on the point of

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[822] Barnes Report, September 1, 2, 1915, Bureau of Investigation, "Mexican Files," Roll 856; *Dallas Morning News*, August 31, 1915; In English *Class Struggle*; Zamora, *The World of the Mexican Worker in Texas*, 145

[823] Zamora, *The World of the Mexican Worker in Texas*, 156-157; *San Antonio Express*, August 31, September 2, 1915; The *Rebel*, October 23, 1915.

bringing thousands of Mexicans into the Land League and from hence into the party of the working class."[824] Hernández would eventually receive an acquittal and a hero's welcome at the Texas SP and Land League conventions later in the year. Hernández's arrest was not an isolated incident, as more Land Leaguers and socialists faced jail and harassment. In response to this ongoing harassment that began even before Hernández's arrest, *The Rebel* made an "appeal to all Spanish locals to write Gov. Ferguson for protection in the right to peacefully assemble."[825]

The Mexican Revolution was not the only factor drawing a portion of the southwestern working class to direct action. As economic exploitation of farmers increased, the land reforms promised by Governor Ferguson, Democratic congressmen, and the Wilson administration failed to produce real changes. In fact, the state never enforced Ferguson's land reform law, as legal challenges produced delays, with courts eventually declaring the measure unconstitutional in 1921. Despite the attention the Walsh Commission drew to the plight of agricultural laborers, it too did not produce any reforms. At the same time the repression of the Brotherhood of Timber Workers in East Texas and the United Mine Workers in Arkansas limited the legal organizational means of workers to resist economic exploitation.[826]

As a result of broken political promises and a clampdown on legal organizations, a significant minority of working-class radicals were drawn to secretive sects that formed in Oklahoma, the Arkansas Ozarks, and West Texas. These organizations engaged in

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[824] *The Rebel*, September 25, October 23, November 6, 1915.

[825] *The Rebel*, September 25, 1915.

[826] Green, *Grass-Roots Socialism*, 300-301, 306; Rumbo v. Winterrowd. 228 S.W. 258. Court of Civil Appeals of Texas, Dallas. 1921; *Supplement to Vernon's Texas Civil and Criminal Statutes*, Vol. 2 (Kansas City, MO: Vernon Law Book Company, 1922), 1554.

night riding against landlords. When the U.S. entered World War I, they also organized opposition to the draft. The most notable event carried out by direct action radicals, outside of the Plan de San Diego, was the Green Corn Rebellion of August 1917 in Oklahoma--a multiracial-armed uprising against the draft.[827]

Agrarian working-class militants attracted to direct action continued to be the heart and base of the Texas SP. Declaring that its "historic mission is to abolish landlordism," the Texas SP once again made the land issue the focus of its 1915 convention. Socialists also called for a law against blacklisting, for workingmen's compensation, an eight-hour day, the establishment of banks run by the people, "free medical and surgical attention for all," proportional representation, and woman suffrage. The single tax remained the only issue of some dispute in the Texas SP, with some seeing it as unsocialistic. Instead of calling for a single tax, Socialists made the elimination of the poll tax one of their major campaigns for 1916, along with mobilizing against any possible U.S. involvement in the war in Europe. The convention also announced that a statewide membership referendum selected E.R. Meitzen once again as the party's candidate for governor in 1916. Besides Meitzen, the convention also provided another example for the father to son, Populist to Socialist, transition in selecting Clarence Nugent--the son of Thomas Nugent the Populist candidate for governor in 1892 and 1894—as its candidate for state attorney general.[828]

Though divided on the single tax, Texas Socialists remained united in their

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[827] Green, *Grass-Roots Socialism*, 301-303; Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz and John Womack, Jr., "Dreams of Revolution: Oklahoma, 1917", *Monthly Review*, Vol. 62, No. 6 (November 2010), http://monthlyreview.org/2010/11/01/dreams-of-revolution-oklahoma-1917 (accessed May 26, 2016).

[828] *The Rebel*, April 3, November 20, 1915; Winkler, *Platforms of Political Parties in Texas*, 625-628; *Dallas Morning News*, November 12, 13, 1915.

support of the Mexican Revolution. Early in 1916, *The Rebel* ran a banner headline proclaiming, "The Great Mexican Revolution." In this article that covered the entire front page, *The Rebel* stated what it understood to be the great achievements of the Mexican Revolution--equity in the taxing of land, labor legislature in favor of the working class, the reformation of the judicial system, and the abolition of monopolies over natural resources.[829]

When the Mexican Revolution crossed over the border into the U.S., however, Texas Socialists' admiration of the Revolution would be tested. On March 9, 1916, Villa's forces raided the town of Columbus, New Mexico; approximately one hundred Villistas and eighteen Americans were killed. *The Milwaukee Leader* echoed much of the day's bourgeois press, printing statements from U.S. politicians and military leaders calling for the U.S. to strike "hard and quick" against Villa and advocating that he be taken dead or alive. It also reprinted a supposed statement from Villa which read, "I am going to invade the United States, burn cities and kill every 'gringo' I find–men, women, and children"[830]--fueling the hysteria for intervention in Mexico. *The Rebel* had a different reaction to the Columbus raid. They believed that Standard Oil and other capitalist investors in Mexico orchestrated the raid as a pretext for U.S. invention.[831] In line with *The Rebel*, Debs, upon hearing of Wilson's ordering of troops into Mexico, declared: "I want the people of America to understand that if we have war with Mexico, our boys will not be fighting for their country. They'll be fighting for the Wall Street interests that own four billion dollars' worth of property in Mexico for which they paid

[829] *The Rebel*, January 29, 1916.

[830] *The Milwaukee Leader*, March 10, 11, 1916.

[831] *The Rebel*, March 18, 1916.

not one hundredth part."[832] The views of Texas Socialists and Debs put them both at continued odds with the party's leadership. Texas Socialists eventually came to understand that Villa was behind the Columbus raid and he was quietly dropped as a figure of idolization.

Though no longer looking to Villas for inspiration, Texas Socialists continued to venerate the Mexican Revolution. *The Rebel* stated, "The Mexican revolutionists are going through to the limit and all hell can't stop them now."[833] Shortly before the Columbus raid on March 4, 1916 *The Rebel* ran a full-page article on the front page under the banner headline "The Land Revolution in Yucatan." As if to reiterate its continued support for the Revolution, *The Rebel* reprinted the article three months later calling it "the most special issue that has come off our press."[834]

Yucatan is useful for understanding the political ideologies of Right and Left Socialists as both held it up as an example, though for differing reasons. *The Milwaukee Leader* ran an editorial praising the actions of the revolutionary government of Yucatan, which expelled American Harvester and its monopoly over sisal, a fiber used in making rope and binder twine. In place of the American Harvester trust, the Yucatan government placed control of the sisal business in the hands of a government committee. In contrast, Texas Socialists praised the revolutionary government's proposal to confiscate land from wealthy landlords making use and occupancy the title to land. While the Right SP extolled the creation of a government bureaucracy, Texas Socialists applauded the

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[832] Quoted in Ginger, *Bending Cross*, 333. Debs published an editorial making similar statements in *The National Rip-Saw*, September 1915, 3.

[833] *The Rebel*, March 18, 1916.

[834] *The Rebel*, March 4, June 3, 1916.

distribution and right of land ownership to the laboring masses.[835]

In 1916, the conflict between the Left oriented Texas SP and the increasingly Right-dominated national SP came to an impasse. The first disappointment for the Texas rebels arose with the national party's choices for president and vice-president. The Meitzens, like most Texas Socialists, were strong supporters of Debs, the party's candidate for president in every election since its founding. By 1915, however, Debs had surpassed his physical limits. In the spring, he suffered a major collapse that left him bedridden for over six weeks from torn muscles and exhaustion. By the summer, though recovering, he remained in a sanitarium to regain his health. Despite the pleas of the party's rank-and-file, Debs announced in November 1915 that due to ill health he would not accept the party's nomination for president in 1916.[836] He did, though, seek to set the tone of the coming campaign. "The issue," he wrote, "is socialism against capitalism, imperial and militarism." Expressing his lack of faith of the party's right-wing leaders to carry out this clear position, he continued: "There has been a tendency in our party for some years, and it has been quite marked, to obscure the class character of our party to make it more acceptable to the middle class, and on this account many…working-class revolutionists…have deserted the party."[837] As the party's leadership continued to "obscure," the Meitzens would find themselves, in the following year, joining the desertion of revolutionaries from the SP.

Without a national convention planned for 1916, the SP conducted a referendum by mail to choose the party's national ticket. Notwithstanding his withdraw, Debs led the

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[835] *The Milwaukee Leader*, March 17, 1916; *The Rebel*, March 4, June 3, 1916.

[836] Salvatore, *Eugene Debs*, 275-276.

[837] *The American Socialist*, November 27, 1915; Quoted in Ginger, *Bending Cross*, 335.

early ballots as the membership's choice for president; coming in second was Charles Edward Russell. Debs refused to waiver in his decision to stay out of the race. After Russell gave a speech in favor of military preparedness, forcing him to drop out of the race, Allan Benson of Yonkers, New York surfaced as the leading candidate for the nomination. Benson had recently gained notoriety through a series of articles he wrote against militarism and for proposing that the people of the U.S. vote on any involvement in the war in Europe through a national referendum.[838]

In the absence of Debs, the Meitzens put their support behind Arthur Le Sueur, then of Kansas, for president and Kate Richards O'Hare of Missouri for vice-president. "We place him [Le Sueur] first because in *The Rebel*'s judgment he is the man who possesses all the parts that go to make a great nominee for the presidency." Citing Le Sueur's agrarian credentials, *The Rebel* proclaimed, "that the hope of the Socialists of America rests today as it did at the birth of the republic on militant farmers." Le Sueur by now was a veteran of the Socialist movement and in the early days had helped organize the state party in North Dakota. The paper cited the Walsh Commission calling him as a witness as proof of his expertise on finance and farming in America. "Like Debs," the paper added, "Le Sueur comes from French stock and like the Old Commander he possesses that fluency and brilliancy on the platform that captivates and charms the audience."[839]

When it came endorsing a vice-president candidate, the Meitzens and Texas Socialists were very familiar with O'Hare. She was a regularly featured speaker at Socialist encampments and according to *The Rebel* her name "in Dixie is a synonym for

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[838] *The Rebel*, August 28, December 25, 1915, February 19, 1916.

[839] *The Rebel*, February 19, 1916.

land revolution." *The Rebel* thought it was especially important to place a woman on the Socialist ticket as a way to demonstrate the party's support for woman's suffrage.[840] In the end, the national party membership chose two uncharismatic anti-militarist writers as their standard bearers--Benson for president and George Kirkpatrick for vice-president.[841] However, more disappointing for Texas Socialists than the party's choice of presidential ticket was the new composition of the national executive committee (NEC).

Concurrent with the presidential ticket referendum, the SP also carried out a mail-in referendum for its national secretary and NEC. Members nominated Southern Socialists Tom Hickey, Pat Nagel and Fred Holt of Oklahoma, O'Hare of Missouri, and Dan Hogan of Arkansas to each take a place on the five-person NEC. However, none of them received enough votes to make it past the first round of voting. Instead, Berger and Hillquitt, the national leaders of the party's right wing were elected on the first ballot. Joining Berger and Hillquitt on the NEC were fellow right-wing leaders John M. Work and John Spargo, and the centrist Anna A. Maley who received the highest number of votes and won the most states.[842]

In run-off for national secretary, after earlier balloting eliminated all of the left candidates, Texas Socialists faced a choice between Adolph Germer of Illinois, a centrist who was moving increasingly to the right, and Carl Thompson of Wisconsin, a veteran of the Right who had helped expel Left party members. "Of the two evils choose the worst," bemoaned *The Rebel*. Germer won the election and later after World War I would lead

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[840] *The Rebel*, February 19, 1916.

[841] *The Rebel*, March 18, 1916.

[842] *The Rebel*, December 25, 1915, March 25, 1916; Green, *Grass-Roots Socialism*, 136, 214, 221; Elliot Shore, *Talkin' Socialism: J.A. Wayland and the Radical Press* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1988), 193; *The American Socialist*, May 27, 1916.

the fight to expel from the SP the left-wing ethnic federations and other socialists who supported the Bolshevik Revolution. Due to support from the majority of party members in the Midwest and Northeast, the SP was now in the firm control of the right wing.[843]

As the national SP and its southwest sections grew further apart, an air of repression hung over the nation. This was especially so in Texas where Socialists had to confront not only preparations for war in Europe but also increased tensions along the Texas-Mexico border. Political collaboration between U.S. and Mexican radicals posed a direct threat to U.S. capital interests in Mexico and Texas. By 1914 U.S. investments in Mexico totaled $580 million.[844] Maintaining land and labor conditions that ensured a maximum rate of profit stood high on the agenda for capitalist financers and politicians. Quelling labor disputes on both sides of the border and preventing political collaboration between Mexican and U.S. radicals was crucial to continued profits.

As *The Rebel* continued to report on revolutionary gains in Mexico, reports of radical Mexican-American activities in Texas took a dramatic decline. After the first few months of 1916, the pages of *The Rebel* are devoid of any mention of F.A. Hernández, J.A. Hernández or any celebratory reports of organizing Mexicans that had once frequent its columns. As the year progressed, there were also fewer and fewer reports on the Land League and its significant number of Mexican-American members.

The patriotic fervor surrounding the U.S.'s involvement in World War I put immense pressure on working-class radicals—pressure from which Mexican-American members of the SP and Land League were not immune. Political repression surely prompted many Mexican-Americans to leave the Socialist movement. Also, some

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[843] *The Rebel*, March 25, 1916; *The American Socialist*, May 27, 1916.

[844] Raat, *Revoltosos*, 13; Hart, *Revolutionary Mexico,* xi; *The Rebel*, January 8, 1916.

Mexicans returned to Mexico in order to avoid the draft. At the same time, many Mexican-Americans viewed the war as a struggle for democracy, leading them to enlist or participate in war savings and bond drives. Each of these pressures can help explain the disappearance of reports of Mexican-Americans from the pages of *The Rebel*. The individual examples of J.A. Hernández and F.A. Hernández departures from the SP's milieu also casts light on the dramatic decline of Mexican and Mexican-American involvement in the Texas SP. That said, they each had different reactions, sending them in opposite directions.[845]

F.A. Hernández's political commitment to his comrades seems to have collapsed from the stress of wartime. He wrote three letters to the Committee on Public Information in August, October, and November 1918. In these letters, he documented his collaboration with government officials beginning in 1915 after the sinking of the *Lusitania*. Hernández regularly informed on German and Mexican-Americans who voiced opposition to the war and conscription, or openly supported Germany. He also brought to the authorities' attention incidents of discrimination against Mexicans, feeling that these made them more open to anti-war opinions. In the conclusion of one of the letters, Hernández wrote, "I have done all this for love of America. And not for the matter [sic] dollar: even when I am discriminated against and is such prejudice against Spanish American in Texas that we not allowed to go in a restaurant, hotel, barber shop or at cold drinks [sic]–even our children are separated in the school."[846]

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[845] The "Mexican Files" of the Bureau of Investigation contain numerous reports of Mexicans leaving the U.S. in order to avoid being drafted; Johnson, *Revolution in Texas*, 158-160.

[846] F.A. Hernandez to Committee on Public Information, August 17, October 4, November 18, 1918, Bureau of Investigation, "Old German Files," Roll 689. The Committee on Public Information was a government agency that used propaganda to influence public opinion in favor of the war and against anti-war activities.

The example of F.A. Hernández supports Benjamin Johnson's argument that in the aftermath of the Plan de San Diego and during wartime mobilization many Tejanos and Mexican immigrants put aside their purely Mexican identities and "instead struggled to claim their full rights as United States citizens."[847] Hernández maintained his basic socialist political beliefs that opposed the corrupting influence of money in politics. However, once the SP was labeled as anti-American by the government, Hernández chose to inform on comrades and others he deemed anti-American while still struggling against discrimination and for a more just society as a loyal U.S. citizen.[848]

While F.A. Hernández reconciled himself with U.S. nationalism, J.A. Hernández moved further to the left politically. After the mass arrests at Market Place, many socialists in San Antonio ceased meeting out of fear that they would be put in jail. The local socialists also knew that an undercover informant was in their midst. With a halt in socialist activism in San Antonio, J.A. Hernández now moved more so within anarchist, IWW, and PLM groupings. In August 1917, Hernández was working as a day laborer at the Camp Travis construction site. Camp Travis was being built to serve as a training camp for troops being sent to the war in Europe. Along with Cuban anarchist Antonio Ortiz, Hernández had organized the Mexican and black construction workers to go out on strike for better conditions and in opposition to the war. In the grand plan, area tenant farmers would also join them in order to stop cotton production as well. With authorities tipped off by an undercover informant, Hernández and Ortiz were arrested before the strikes could be carried out. However, the evidence against the two was "very weak," and

[847] Johnson, *Revolution in Texas*, 5.

[848] F.A. Hernandez to Committee on Public Information, August 17, October 4, November 18, 1918, Bureau of Investigation, "Old German Files," Roll 689; F.A. Hernandez to M.C. Rolland, November 16, 1916, Bureau of Investigation, "Old German Files," Roll 424.

in order to put them in front of a grand jury the Bureau of Investigation would have to expose its informant. Instead, the bureau agents convinced Hernández and Ortiz to allow themselves to be deported. Ortiz was put on a train to Galveston in order to catch the next ship bound for a foreign port. On August 31, authorities took Hernández to the international bridge in Laredo and ordered him to cross into Mexico.[849]

As the Texas SP was gaining and then struggling to hold onto its Mexican and Tejano members, it was seeking to reach more African-Americans. The first Socialist meeting for blacks in Texas had occurred in Fort Worth on April 2, 1915. The historical record is unclear as to what changed among white Socialists. One could, though, argue that the unexpected inter-racial political alliance of whites and Mexicans in the party led white Texas Socialists to reevaluate their racial beliefs. Additional contributing factors to this change in attitude could have been the anti-racist influences of Debs and Covington Hall, as well as the example of the Oklahoma SP, which had reached out to working-class blacks much earlier.[850]

While not as dramatic as his father's call for blacks to join the People's Party nearly twenty-five years, E.R. Meitzen in May 1916 urged blacks in Lavaca County to join the SP. E.R. Meitzen wrote in *The Rebel*, "the only come-back they [blacks] can have is to build up their own political party so that it will some day be strong enough to make it warm for the Democratic nominees …only one party in the county and

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[849] Manuel Sorola Report, June 30, 1916, P. Lopez Report, June 11, 1917, Diego E. Ramos Report, August 20, 1917, W.A. Wiseman Reports, August 23, 24, 1917, Barnes to Bielaski, August 27, 1917, Erby E. Swift Report August 31, 1917, C.E. Farland Reports, August 30, 31, 1917, Bureau of Investigation, "Old German Files," File no. 22998; Lonnie J. White, "CAMP TRAVIS," *Handbook of Texas Online*, Texas State Historical Association (http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/qbc28), accessed May 15, 2014, Uploaded on June 12, 2010.

[850] Green, *Grass-Roots Socialism*, 96, 236-237; *The Rebel*, April 3, 1915; *Dallas Morning News*, June 29, 1915.

state…seems to be thus building up at present, and that is the Socialist party, around which all anti-machinists will have to rally."[851] Little evidence exists as to how much blacks made the SP their own. Only tidbits exist, like the one from the SP chairman of Rusk County who reported in October 1916 that black Socialist R. Lane of Greenville was "stirring up the colored folks in the right way."[852]

More indicative of Texas Socialists change in racial attitudes was the growing prominence of Covington Hall within the Texas SP. Sometime in mid-1916, the Meitzens took Hall on as a staff writer for *The Rebel*. Hall's articles and poems regularly appeared in its pages. He frequently advocated for the equality of all workers, seeing them as workers first, not divided along racial lines.[853]

Texas Socialists were severely disappointed with the national SP's choices for the presidential ticket and NEC. However, they still had much enthusiasm for their own state organization. The Texas SP established the Southern Socialist Lecture System, which operated independently of the national office. W. J. Bell managed the lecture system and organized engagements at the county level for speakers to be out lecturing on socialism on a daily basis. [854]

The Boeer women once again provided the early finances to get the lecture system started. Their continued motivation for funding the Texas Socialist movement

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[851] *The Rebel*, May 13, 1916.

[852] *The Rebel*, October 14, 1916.

[853] *The Rebel*, September 16, 1916. Readers are encourage to use their imaginations as to what Hall, who was known for his poetic license, meant by "Boldivory."

[854] *The Rebel*, April 29, 1916; W.J. Bell to Hickey, July 27, 1916, Bell to "Dear Comrades," July 1916, Hickey Papers.

seems to have come in part from the failed Easter Rebellion of April 1916 in which armed Irish militants launched an insurrection to end British rule of Ireland. The uprising failed and the British Army executed many of its leaders, including the socialist James Connolly. "The shocking defeat of the Irish heroes affected us deeply," wrote Maria Boeer to her daughter Clara and Irish son-in-law Hickey. "I have to think of our good Tom who may have known most of Irish martyrs personally. And those noble martyrs died because the masses were too lazy, cowardish, stupid and oblivious to contribute to their own salvation." Maria Boeer made sure that her family contributed to their own salvation.[855]

As the lecture system focused on local and countywide organizing, the Socialist gubernatorial nominees embarked on a two-month speaking tour of central and west Texas. "The Red Automobile Tour," as they called it, of E.R. Meitzen and lieutenant governor nominee W.S. Noble, began in May and continued through June with the slogan "For Land and Liberty." Using Noble's automobile, the two candidates spoke daily, three times a day, at 11 a.m., 3 p.m., and 8:30 p.m., on the issues of land, money, cotton, and trusts.[856]

As the Red Automobile Tour progressed, however, the tides of war began to wash ashore the American continent. By the summer of 1916, the calls for preparedness and U.S. involvement in the war in Europe had become deafening. On June 15, 1916, A.M. Simons, then a writer for the *Milwaukee Leader*, wrote a letter to Hickey about presenting a land plank to the NEC. In closing the letter, Simons changed subject and asked, "This

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[855] W.J. Bell to Hickey, July 27, 1916, Maria Boeer to Clara and Tom Hickey, May 24, 1916, Hickey Papers.

[856] *The Rebel*, April 29, 1916.

damn preparedness and militarism is raising the devil up here. How is it down there?"[857] Texas Socialists had been dealing with the devil of preparedness for a few years by now, as they campaigned to prevent a war with Mexico. Now they faced the double, and more intense task, of preventing U.S. wars in Mexico and Europe.

When E.O. Meitzen and Hickey carried out a July Socialist speaking tour of Texas, speaking against preparedness was added to their list of topics to discuss along with land and finance. E.R. Meitzen continued his campaign for governor with "War: its cause and cure" becoming one of his main stump speeches. As part of the same effort, Socialists across the state involved themselves in opposing the war and creating non-partisan anti-preparedness clubs in their towns.[858]

As the nation moved to war having two candidates selected based almost entirely on their anti-preparedness credentials, prompted Texas Socialists to campaign for Benson-Kirkpatrick with more earnest zeal.[859] Benson, however, did not put forth as much effort into his campaign as party members in field. In fact, Benson avoided the field and ran his campaign primarily through articles written in his office. His lackluster campaign, though, was not the main hindrance to Socialists maintaining the successes they had with Debs as their candidate. As the nation entered the summer campaign season, Wilson made two key moves to mollify his critics. To appease farmers—a demographic vital for electoral victory—Wilson supported and signed into law the Federal Farm Loan Act which provided government loans to farmers. This was virtually

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[857] A.M. Simons to Hickey, June 15, 1916, Hickey Papers. Simons would eventually bend to preparedness himself, leaving the SP and becoming a supporter of the war.

[858] *The Rebel*, June 24, October 14, 1916; Hickey to J.J. Pastoriza, July 14, 1916.

[859] *The Rebel*, September 16, 1916.

the same act that Wilson had opposed in 1914, which drew him the ire of farmers. Supporting the act now made him appear as a champion of small farmers.[860]

Of more vital consequence to Wilson retaining the presidency was his new stance toward the war between the European powers. As the year progressed, many Americans turned against U.S. involvement in the war. Socialists had contributed a large part to bolstering this anti-war opinion. Seizing on the isolationist attitude, Wilson adopted the campaign slogan of "He kept us out of war."

Back in Texas, with the national administration having appeased farmers and those opposed to war, the Democratic election campaign returned to the persistent issue of prohibition. After their setback in the 1914 election, drys reorganized their state organization and were once again a major factor in state politics. As such, prohibition became the main issue of the 1916 Texas elections. To counter the resurgent prohibition forces, Ferguson formed an alliance with archconservative Joseph Bailey over their shared opposition to prohibition and woman suffrage.[861]

With Benson running a deficient campaign and Democrats once again stealing their thunder, Texas Socialists saw the writing on the wall. "We should say that in spite of the tremendous campaign that has been waged …the natural gain in the Socialist vote is not likely to be as great as we have been inspired to hope for," conceded *The Rebel* shortly before the election. "He kept us out of war" was a "powerful slogan," it admitted. This slogan along with Wilson's support for the child labor act, the paper felt, won Wilson the support of many radicals and pacifists who "might otherwise have given an ear to the Socialist message" and instead voted "the lesser evil" over Republican

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[860] Shannon, *Socialist Party of America*, 91-92; Green, *Grass-Roots Socialism*, 351.

[861] Gould, *Progressives and Prohibitionists*, 166-171.

candidate Charles Evan Hughes who called for increased preparedness.[862]

Due to these factors, *The Rebel* stated, "there has never been such an undertow away from our party." Nationally, Benson received 590,524 votes, representing just 3% of the national total and only two-thirds of what Debs polled in 1912. In Texas, the Socialists dropped nearly ten thousand votes from the previous election, with Meitzen receiving 14, 580 votes, dropping the SP back below the Republican Party. Ferguson handily won reelection. Looking to the future, the paper concluded its election analysis with "Let us remember whether we gain or lose, that the Socialist party is not a mushroom growth…that a loss in vote is not a loss. It merely means that our gains in the past have frightened the powers-that-be into 'reforms' that for a time lull the people to sleep… 'reforms' only get the people deeper into the mind and mire of capitalism and that REVOLUTION is the only way out, so will the masses see it. The fight is on. On with the fight!"[863]

Shortly after the elections, the Texas SP held its state convention in Waco on November 10-11. "The Socialist party of Texas is very much alive, thank you,"[864] declared *The Rebel* in it coverage of the convention, as if to counter public perception of a party in decline and maybe to assure some of its own members as well. In fact, Clarence Nugent, the SP's candidate for attorney general, made his last speech for socialism the day before the election. He told the crowd, "that Wilson's election was

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[862] *The Rebel*, November 11, 1916. This issue is dated after the election, but the articles were penned before the election.

[863] *The Rebel*, November 11, 1916; "Election of Texas Governors, 1845-2010," *Texas Almanac*, online; Leip, David. "1916 Presidential Election Results," *Dave Leip's Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections*, http://uselectionatlas.org/RESULTS/national.php?year=1916&f=0&off=0&elect=0 (accessed June 6, 2016).

[864] *The Rebel*, November 18, 1916.

inevitable," and he had "lost faith in the Socialists voting or working for their own organization" and that he was going back into the practice of law and "life as a private citizen."[865] Standing firm for socialism, state secretary W.T. Webb encouraged delegates to "redouble their efforts, so that Texas may be ours in 1920."[866]

Texas Socialists, at their convention, still held up the Mexican Revolution, specifically Yucatan's land reform, as an example of what needed to be done in Texas. "Across the Mexican line in Yucatan they have declared for use and occupancy," spoke Webb, "and if the Mexican peons can do this we can do more."[867] Absent, however, from *The Rebel*'s reporting on the convention is any mention of Mexican organizers or even the Land League—repression and preparedness had taken its toll.

In August 1916, after quietly dropping the Land League, *The Rebel* began promoting a new organization founded in 1915 called the Farmers and Laborers' Protective Association (FLPA), open only to tenant farmers and wageworkers. The FLPA toward the end of 1916 had gained between 5,000 to 8,000 members organized within 200 locals in northern and western Texas.[868]

Before the fall of 1916, the FLPA had been fairly inactive. It began as just another cooperative venture, establishing a couple of stores for the bulk purchasing of potatoes and flour. However, due to the continued decline of West Texas farmers into tenancy, the influence of the Mexican Revolution and the nation's movement toward war, its members began to radicalize. This radicalization was also due, in no small part, to the increasing

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[865] Clarence Nugent to Hickey, August 29, 1917, Hickey Papers.

[866] *The Rebel*, November 25, 1916.

[867] *The Rebel*, November 25, 1916.

[868] *The Rebel*, August 5, November 25, 1916.

prominence of SP members in the FLPA. Party member, George T. Bryant of Lueders, who also had ties to the IWW, became the national organizer of the FLPA. W.T. Webb of Cisco, who Socialists elected as their state secretary in January 1916, also joined.[869]

Bryant addressed the Texas SP's November 1916 state convention detailing the aims and objectives of the FLPA. "Membership" Bryant said, "was confined to working farmers and wageworkers … the purpose of the organization … is an industrial co-operative and educational union, taking in all workers." According to *The Rebel*, Bryant's "address was received with much enthusiasm by the membership present." Just before the convention, Bryant had finished an organizing tour of Central Texas and was next heading to East Texas.[870]

The FLPA held a state convention in Cisco in February 1917. The convention adopted strong resolutions against the U.S. government's move toward joining the world war and opposition to conscription. Reportedly, members were encouraged to arm themselves in order to resist conscription "to the death." The FLPA also decided to organize "negro lodges" and form an anti-draft alliance with the IWW in nearby Rotan.[871]

The Texas SP registered a further left movement through its 1916 convention and the supplanting of the Land League with the FLPA. Delegates adopted a resolution stating, "It is the sense of this convention that the Socialist party had no connection with the single tax movement which is based on the private ownership of the means of life." This must be seen as delegates rebuking Hickey's ongoing collaborative efforts with the

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[869] Joe R. Baulch, "Making West Texas Safe for Democracy: The 1917 Farmers and Laborers Protective Association Conspiracy," *West Texas Historical Association Yearbook*, Vol. 62 (1986), 119-120, 126.

[870] *The Rebel*, November 25, 1916.

[871] Baulch, "Making West Texas Safe for Democracy,"122.

middle-class based Single Tax League. The Texas SP was reaffirming itself as a working-class party.[872]

The Texas SP's promotion and active participation in the FLPA put it in direct confrontation with the Right SP's position on trade unions. The right wing advocated working within the existing craft union structure of the AFL. Left out of this approach were the growing scores of industrial and agricultural workers. The AFL had also aligned itself with the defense campaign and then the war effort. The FLPA on the other hand was open to all workers—skilled and unskilled, industrial and agricultural, and reached out to workers of all races. It also took a militant stance against war. The threads tying agrarian farmer-labor radicals in Texas to the Socialist Party were fraying.

A new form of agrarian radicalism bursting onto the scene drew the attention of Texas' farmer-labor radicals to the far northern reaches of Great Plains. As the SP suffered serious setbacks at the polls in 1916, the Nonpartisan League (NPL) in North Dakota was swept into power. The NPL called for state-supported and controlled grain elevators, mills, banks, and farm insurance—all long time demands of the farmer-labor bloc, especially its Socialist component. With these demands, North Dakota voters put NPL majorities in the state's house of representatives and supreme court (it would take the senate in 1918), elected NPL candidate Lynn Frazier as governor with 80% of the vote, and sent NPL member John Miller Baer to the U.S. House.[873]

The NPL began as the brainchild of Albert E. Bowen, Jr. Bowen grew up on a North Dakota farm before becoming a teacher at a one-room schoolhouse. North Dakota

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[872] *The Rebel*, November 25, 1916; William A. Black (Executive Secretary of the Single Tax League of Texas) to Hickey, September 12, 1916, Hickey Papers.

[873] Lansing, *Insurgent Democracy*, 19, 39.

faced similar economic conditions to Texas. In 1915, over two-thirds of the farms in North Dakota were mortgaged and a quarter of the farmers were tenants. These conditions led Bowen to join the North Dakota SP and in 1912 he ran as its candidate for governor. Just as the Meitzens helped move the Texas SP away from its old position of collective farming, Bowen along with Le Sueur did the same for the North Dakota SP. At the 1912 SP national convention, Bowen joined in the efforts of E.R. Meitzen, Hickey, and Le Sueur to make the party more responsive to farmers.[874]

By late 1914, Bowen had become dissatisfied with the SP's continued focus on industrial workers to the detriment of working farmers. He quit the party in February 1915 and immediately set to the task of organizing a "Non-Partisan Political organization" for farmers. Bowen's new organization drew on North Dakota's history of agrarian protest dating back to the Farmers' Alliance and Populist movement. He also solicited the support of the state's popular cooperatives, through which prominent Fargo attorney William Lemke joined the cause.[875]

Bowen originated the idea of the NPL, though; much of its organizational growth has been credited to Arthur Townley. Born in 1880, Townley grew-up on a farm in western Minnesota and taught school for two years before moving to North Dakota in 1904, becoming a farmer. By 1913, however, Townley's farm had gone bust and he was in debt thousands of dollars—leading him into the SP. In the SP, Townley became one of its most successful organizers, during which time he worked closely with Bowen. Once Bowen quit the party he reached out to Townley to take charge of building the new

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[874] Lansing, *Insurgent Democracy*, 6, 11-13; *Proceedings, National Convention of the Socialist Party Held at Indianapolis, Ind., May 12 to 18, 1912* (Chicago: M.A. Donohue & Company, 1912), 4.

[875] Lansing, *Insurgent Democracy*, 18-20.

organization.[876]

In May 1915, Bowen and Townley created an executive board for the NPL. Townley became president, and two other former SP members, Francis B. Wood and O.S. Evans, served as vice-president and secretary respectively. To help grow the NPL's membership, Townley hired former SP organizers to canvas the state. At the end of May, the NPL had a reported six thousand members and by September the number had increased to twenty-two thousand.[877]

Cooperatives had failed to change the economy of North Dakota and politicians once in office did not deliver on their campaign promises to working farmers. To bring about effective change, the NPL decided to enter the electoral arena itself. Rather than establishing itself as its own independent party, the NPL captured the North Dakota Republican Party. NPL leaders made Lemke the chair of the state Republican Party and used its statewide machinery to run NPL candidates on the GOP ticket.[878] This tactic, by forgoing independent working-class political action, led to the NPL's stunning early electoral successes but ultimately led to the collapse of the farmer-labor bloc.

Following its victories in the 1916 elections, the NPL eyed expansion. The NPL planned to establish state organization across the Great Plains, the Mountain West and into the South. In order to do so, Townley called upon many of his former Socialist comrades to join the NPL. Le Sueur, now head of the People's College in Fort Scott, Kansas was one of the early agrarian promoters of the NPL, and was soon followed by E.R. Meitzen.

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[876] Lansing, *Insurgent Democracy*, 14-19.

[877] Lansing, *Insurgent Democracy*, 20, 30.

[878] Lansing, *Insurgent Democracy*, 22, 38.

E.R. Meitzen revealed to Hickey that he wrote Le Sueur sometime before March 1917 telling him he "wanted to get in on this Non-Partisan business. Suggesting plans as to how to save Texas." That Texas needed saving in Meitzen's mind shows how tenuous the SP's position had become among farmer-labor radicals in the state. Le Sueur wrote Townley and suggested that Meitzen come to North Dakota and Minnesota for two or three months. He also proposed to Townley that bringing Meitzen north could lead to *The Rebel* becoming the organ of the NPL in the South. Meitzen thought this idea needing some sounding out, but suggested to Hickey "that in writing editorials" for *The Rebel*, "you pitch them along N.P. lines without directly citing it."[879] Meitzen was not yet ready to make an open break with the SP.

Townley approved Le Sueur's proposal and the NPL agreed to pay for Meitzen's expenses and put him on a speaking tour of the Upper Great Plains. "I am going to see what makes the N.P. move[ment] 'tick,'" wrote Meitzen to Hickey, "and I propose that we should get in on the ground floor as big as a house." Meitzen asked Hickey not to say anything in *The Rebel* about his trip, stating, "I will have to mull over the best way to break the news to our readers."[880] Hickey told E.O. Meitzen, "I figure he [E.R.] is on the biggest mission of his life. The result of his experience in North Dakota may revolutionize the politics of Texas."[881]

Besides Meitzen initially keeping his travel to North Dakota quiet, the auspices of his trip were less than honest. He joined the NPL speaking tour as a representative of the Land League of Texas--an organization that had been defunct, but not publically, for

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[879] E.R. Meitzen to Hickey, March 1, 1917, Hickey Papers.

[880] E.R. Meitzen to Hickey, March 1, 1917, Hickey Papers.

[881] Hickey to E.O. Meitzen, March 17, 1917, Hickey Papers.

close to a year. While Townley actively sought out Socialist leaders and rank-and-filers to help organize and join the NPL, he, and the NPL in general, publically distanced themselves from any ties to socialism and the SP. Emerging at a time of heightened nationalism and militarism, the NPL wanted to avoid the stigma of foreign radicalism associated with socialism.[882]

The NPL promoted Meitzen's North Dakota tour and gave him a big write-up in its paper the *Nonpartisan Leader*. The article presents Meitzen as a representative of "the Land League of Texas, the most vigorous expression of its people against …oppression."[883] Nowhere did the NPL mention that Meitzen was a prominent leader of the Texas SP who had twice served as its candidate for governor. In writing to Hickey, Meitzen said, "I will continue that Land League fiction for the present," calling the Land League a "handy old corpse."[884]

Historian Michael Lansing uses the NPL's disassociation from the SP to portray the NPL as not socialist or even radical. "The NPL drew on but did not emerge from the broad tradition of American socialism," states Lansing. "Confirming the gulf between the NPL and socialism," Lansing continues, "the national Socialist Party quickly turned on the NPL. It deemed the League insufficiently revolutionary."[885] For Lansing the NPL "proved neither entirely radical nor merely reform oriented," instead it "represented a new option for electoral politics in America."[886]

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[882] "Texas Investigates the League," *Nonpartisan Leader*, April 26, 1917; Lansing, *Insurgent Democracy*, 15, 19, 58-59, 68.

[883] *Nonpartisan Leader*, April 26, 1917.

[884] E.R. Meitzen to Hickey, March 1, 1917, Hickey Papers.

[885] Lansing, *Insurgent Democracy*, 25.

In Lansing's analysis, the "new option" of the NPL "came from a commitment to prosperity promised by middle-class ideals."[887] According to him, "Throughout the nation's history, the middle-class had challenged the unchecked accumulation of capital even as it remained committed to capitalism."[888] As to the NPL's "socialistic" demands of state run mills, banks, and insurance, Lansing reassures, "Far from promoting socialism, the League hoped to use state government to put private ownership of land and homes within the reach of more citizens." Equating socialism with a lack of democracy, he continues, "Anticipating charges of socialism, the NPL expanded the initiative and referendum rights of citizens."[889] If one follows Lansing's view of what is and is not socialism, then the Texas Socialist Party under the leadership of the Meitzens was not socialist either.

Lansing takes the proletarian centered socialism as the totality of socialist thought. Furthermore, using the argument that once the SP, whether coming from it right or left wings, calls something or someone not socialist, and then it is not-socialist, does not hold up. The SP and its factions hurled the anti-socialist label at many a known socialist from Haywood to agrarian radicals. Lansing also places socialism in opposition to democracy—a false dichotomy of comparing an economic system to a political system. Just as there is democratic socialism, there is also authoritarian capitalism. Lansing takes no account of the dynamic socialism envisioned not only by agrarian radicals in Texas, but also by rank-and-file Socialists of the early twentieth century across

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[886] Lansing, *Insurgent Democracy*, 21.

[887] Lansing, *Insurgent Democracy*, 27.

[888] Lansing, *Insurgent Democracy*, 25.

[889] Lansing, *Insurgent Democracy*, 146.

the U.S. The initiative and referendum was a long held demand of the farmer-labor bloc and was a regular plank in the platforms of the Texas SP. Texas Socialists put members of the Meitzen family into positions of leadership precisely because they placed working farmers in the working class and defended their rights of land and home ownership. They defended them not as capitalists, but as producers who were not exploiting anybody. This is the socialism that Marx came to through his experiences in the 1848 Revolution and the socialism agrarian radicals of the Meitzen type fought for.

True, the NPL struggled to publically distance itself from socialism. This is in large degree due to the tenor of the times and the ideological differences many NPL leaders held against the workerist influences within the SP. True also: many NPL members probably in way no considered themselves socialists. This does not, however, change the view that the NPL was part of same continuity of agrarian radicalism dating back to the 1870s that included socialism.

In joining the NPL, E.R. Meitzen's commitment to the SP had lessened, but not to socialism. "Not only are its [NPL's] principles socialistic," wrote Meitzen to Hickey after joining the NPL, "but most important of all, it is carrying out that vital fundamental principle of the Socialist movement which the American party (at least) has never done and will never do: organizing a class-conscious political movement of the workers for the purpose of calling the government in the interests of the workers." He concluded, "In other words … the revolution has gotten out of the hands of the Hillquit movement and is sweeping America like a prairie fire. We must get in on it not for profit; but because we two love to be where things are 'didding.' [sic]"[890] For Meitzen joining the NPL was not

[890] E.R. Meitzen to Hickey, May 9, 1917, Hickey Papers. Morris Hilquit was a right-wing leader of the SP.

a break from socialism; instead it was a break from the right-wing controlled SP.

As leaders of a once vibrant Socialist movement in Texas, the Meitzens did not want to simply abandon the thousands of workers and farmers they had drawn to the SP. They still saw uses for the SP that would only become clear later. Rather than creating a potentially disruptive public break, they aimed to ease rank-and-file Socialists into the NPL. The first mention of the NPL in *The Rebel* appeared on the back page of its January 13, 1917 edition with a brief report of the NPL electoral victories in North Dakota. Two weeks later, the next mention of the NPL was a bit more politically forward.[891]

Before *The Rebel* completely sprung the NPL on its readers, it ran a highly critical article of the SP's national leadership as a way to further erode the ties of farmer-labor radicals to the actually existing SP. "Wanted—A Socialist Party," declared the title of the article penned by Hall. Hall argued that the party's poor showing in the recent election was "that it did not have the INTELLECTUAL COURAGE to grasp and face the tremendous issues confronting human society and to offer boldly and without compromise the only solution therefor—SOCIAL REVOLUTION." He goes on to lambast Benson, blaming him for the party's recent electoral decline and casting him as more a reformer than a revolutionary through his economic speeches that talked "of effects and not of causes." For Hall, reformers only talk about how to alleviate the ill effects of capitalism; instead, revolutionaries point to the elimination of the cause itself—capitalism. Hall then blamed the SP NEC for not conducting a campaign for socialism that would put the working-class in power through industrial democracy.[892] With proclamations such as these, the move of farmer-labor radicals into the NPL cannot be

[891] *The Rebel*, January 13, 27, 1917.

[892] *The Rebel*, January 20, 1917.

viewed as a move to a more conservative reform based-electoral organization, but instead as a way to preserve their radicalism.

"The Rebel believes that Socialism is coming not through the Socialist party alone if at all, although it is the driving power of that positive revolutionary force," wrote *The Rebel* on its front page of January 20, 1917 under the bold headline: "The Revolution in the Northwest." In this one opening sentence, *The Rebel*, while acknowledging the "positive revolutionary forces" of the SP, also opened its readers to alternatives. "The fires of revolution in America are being fanned to flame from a thousand and one sources," continued the paper listing the examples of the peons in Yucatan, the land revolution in Texas, growing co-operative projects, and "from the drive through Socialist agitation to a more and more radical legislation." With this lead-up, *The Rebel* arrived at its destination: "Last, but not least, as an impetus to the impending Gigantic Change is the revolution of the actual farmers that began in North Dakota (started by Socialists)"—the paper makes sure to note, "and is now sweeping the Northwest like a prairie fire." *The Rebel*'s message, while not open, was clear: socialism would not just come from the SP, "if at all," and the NPL is the "impetus" for "the revolution of actual farmers."[893]

The Rebel refrained from any further bold promotions of the NPL for the next few issues. It perhaps wanted the idea of the NPL to sink in without pushing too hard. From March 1917 forward, *The Rebel* made news of the NPL a regular feature. In its March 10, 1917 issue the paper announced it "understands that [NPL] organizers will shortly come to Texas …this being a matter of interest to Socialists, The Rebel has decided to make a close investigation of the League plans and make report of its findings."[894] What *The*

[893] *The Rebel*, January 27, 1917.

Rebel left out was that one of the NPL organizers coming to Texas was the former state secretary of the Texas SP and twice its candidate for governor—E.R. Meitzen.[895]

"I feel more love and respect for this movement and its leaders than I ever did for the SP, at least in late years," wrote Meitzen to Hickey about his time with the NPL. "They are beginning to put a lot of confidence in my ability and trustworthiness," he continued. Initially, the NPL took Meitzen on as an organizer for four months, paying his expenses and providing a salary.[896]

Early on in his four-month stint, Meitzen met with Townley and Joe Gilbert, a former leader of the Washington state SP, who was now head of the NPL's National Organization Department. Shortly after, Meitzen became one of five national organizers for the NPL. He told Hickey that he would return to Texas as "the 'man behind' the N.P. organization work in Texas and Oklahoma." After Meitzen pointed out to NPL "head knockers" that the German language edition of the *Nonpartisan Leader* was "badly in need of someone who knows a little more than merely to translate," he convinced them to hire his father. E.O. Meitzen moved to Fargo and served as the editor of the paper's German-language supplement, receiving one hundred dollars a month for his work.[897]

The Meitzens were not the alone as SP leaders who joined the NPL. "All the big Reds are flocking to this movement," wrote E.R. Meitzen to his parents. "The SP is dead. The name will never be first across the people. We must cut lose completely … and join what I conceive to be the most revolutionary movement for workers America has ever

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[894] *The Rebel*, March 10, 1917.

[895] E.R. Meitzen to Hickey, May 9, 1917, Hickey Papers.

[896] E.R. Meitzen to Hickey, May 9, 1917, Hickey Papers.

[897] E.R. Meitzen to Hickey, May 9, 1917, Hickey Papers; De Leon, ed., *American Labor Who's Who*, 157; *Nonpartisan Leader*, September 20, 1917.

seen."[898] Hickey, Le Sueur of Kansas/North Dakota, George and Grace Brewer of Kansas, Walter Thomas Mills of Nebraska, H.H. Stallard of Oklahoma, Covington Hall of Louisiana/Texas, and Stanley Clark of Texas, in effect much of the core leadership of the SP's agrarian base, had or would eventually leave the party for the NPL.[899]

When the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI) analyzed the political situation in the U.S. at its June 1923 plenum it noted the movement of agrarian Socialists from the SP to the NPL: "The Socialist Party of America has also turned to the farming population but let itself to be persuaded to fuse with the Non-Partisan League and other similar parties, with the result that the Socialist Party has completely disappeared in several states."[900] In many ways the ECCI description of agrarian Socialists joining the NPL as a fusion is correct. The fusion, while not formal, represented more of a coming together of ideas rather than an ideological departure. Fusion, however, was not what Socialists in the NPL initially wanted. As seen in the proceedings of the SP's emergency convention of April 1917, Socialist NPLers sought to create distinct roles for the SP and NPL.

With war seemingly inevitable, the SP NEC at the end of March called an emergency national convention to take place in St. Louis to discuss the party's position toward the war. When the convention convened on April 7, Congress had just declared

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[898] E.R. Meitzen to Dear Folk, April 28, 1917, Hickey Papers.

[899] T.A. Hickey to Clare Hickey, March 5, November 11, 14, 1918, T.A. Hickey to Comrades, December 22, 1917, Thomas A. Hickey Papers; Shannon, *The Socialist Party of America*, 27-28; *Spokesman Review*, June 6, 1920. Kate Richards O'Hare, though never leaving the SP, also sympathized with and supported the NPL.

[900] Alexander Trachtenberg, speech at the June 1923 enlarged plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, (unpublished). I extend my gratitude and thanks to Mike Taber for making this material available to me. Taber is currently working on editing and translating the documents of the Executive Committee of the Communist International during Lenin's lifetime for publication.

war against Germany the day before. In this charged environment, not only would Socialists debate the war, but their stance toward the NPL as well.

Historians when looking at the SP's 1917 St. Louis convention have understandably focused almost entirely the on war debate. The debate though heated, ended with delegates, by a large majority, approving a resolution declaring that the U.S.'s "entrance into the European war was instigated by predatory capitalists" for their own profits. "We brand the declaration of war by our government as a crime against the people of the United States and against the nations of the world," the convention declared, calling for active opposition to the war.[901]

Much more contentious, and confusing to delegates, was the discussion over the NPL. On the fourth day of the convention, delegates approved a resolution "On Relation of Socialist Party to Non-Partisan League" by a vote of 114 to 56. Le Sueur, though not a delegate, presented the resolution. On the surface it reads as a resolution against the SP fusing with the NPL. This is how many delegates viewed it and approved it, focusing on the resolution's last line: "No compromise, no political trading."[902]

A closer reading, however, reveals that the drafters of the resolution had two distinct roles for the SP and NPL in mind. It begins by noting "that large numbers of comrades have affiliated with the league in the hope of speedy economic reforms though political victory …with a fair promise of success." On the other hand, "the purpose of the Socialist movement," the resolution states, is "the emancipation of the working class

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[901] *The Rebel*, April 21, 1917; Socialist Party, *Proceedings, Emergency Convention of the Socialist Party of America at St. Louis, 1917* (St. Louis: s.n., 1971), Fifth day evening session, 3.

[902] Socialist Party, *Proceedings, Emergency Convention of the Socialist Party of America at St. Louis, 1917*, Fourth day evening session, 2; The resolution, "On Relation of Socialist Party to Non-Partisan League" is reprinted in the *Milwaukee Leader*, April 12, 1917.

from economic servitude by the abolition of capitalist exploitation rather than the election to office of candidates for the purpose of speedy economic reform." The NPL would carry out the more immediate practical work of gaining elected office to enact "speedy economic reforms," while the SP would "maintain in the utmost possible vigor the propaganda of Socialism … [so it] may continue to lay the foundations for the social revolution"[903] In brief: the NPL would be the electoral party and the SP the propaganda party.

A month after the convention *The Rebel* printed an article titled "Nonpartisan Socialism" by W.H. Kaufman. Kaufman was a leader of the Washington state Grange, a single taxer, a member of the NPL, and, while apparently not a member of the SP an advocate for socialism. "I think Marx's whole philosophy may be summed up in this phrase: 'Enough public ownership to abolish all unearned incomes,'" wrote Kaufman for *The Rebel*. According to his reasoning the public ownership of grain mills, banks, and insurance that the NPL enacted in North Dakota and was attempting to spread to other states was Marxian Socialism.[904]

Socialist NPL members at the St. Louis convention supported Le Sueur's resolution, viewing the NPL as the best way to achieve more public ownership over the means of production and thus socialism. Other Socialists, feeling the resolution negated the SP's commitment to political action, opposed the proposal. "Our function, according to the resolution, is to till the soil of social ignorance and indifference, so that that Non-

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[903] *Milwaukee Leader*, April 12, 1917.

[904] *The Rebel*, May 12, 1917; National Civil Liberties Bureau, *War-Time Prosecutions and Mob Violence Involving the Rights of Free Speech, Free Press and Peaceful Assemblage* (Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Fredonia Books, 2004, 1919), 17; *Journal of Proceedings, Twentieth Annual Session of the Washington State Grange Patrons of Husbandry, Vancouver, Washington, June 2, 3, 4, 5, 1908* (s.n., 1908), 117.

Partisan League politicians can occupy seats in the various Legislatures," spoke George Roewer of Massachusetts against the resolution. Thomas Williams, a delegate from California, called a resolution "a covert political trick … to place the Socialist Party in an unfortunate position." Most delegates did not see the resolution as fully as Roewer and Williams and supported it just on the basis of opposing fusion. For the next four days those opposed to the resolution made attempts to have the convention reconsider the NPL resolution, but were unsuccessful.[905]

E.R. Meitzen was elected by a statewide membership referendum to represent the Texas SP at the St. Louis convention. *The Rebel*, reported him as being at the convention, however, the convention documents to do not list him as a seated delegate. It appears Meitzen decided that rather than sit as a delegate, he would instead work the corridors promoting the NPL.[906]

Back in Texas, one of Meitzen's closest allies, Hall, was less amenable to the continued existence of the SP. When a split occurred in the Wisconsin SP between pro and anti-war Socialists, and with the Democratic and Republican parties firmly behind the war efforts, Hall proclaimed: "The Socialist party is done for. The Republican party is done for. The Democratic party is done for. The Common People have no other choice but [to] organize a new party and a new union of their own." Hall concluded that "the most promising new political organization seems to be the Farmers Non-Partisan League" and "as for the new Union, the Industrial Workers of the World is the only real

[905] Socialist Party, *Proceedings, Emergency Convention of the Socialist Party of America at St. Louis, 1917*, Fifth day session, 1, Eight day session, 5.

[906] *The Rebel*, April 14, 1917.

thing in sight."[907]

Whether Meitzen would have decided to carry out dual work in the NPL and SP or completely abandon the SP, however, we will never entirely know. The state made the decision for him and others when it moved to repress the Socialist movement in Texas beginning in May 1917.

In April, Johanna Meitzen noticed that the family mail was arriving having been previously opened. She advised her son, E.R., to be careful about what political activities he mentioned in his letters, suspecting a government sleuth of monitoring their mail. Even before the U.S. entered the war, Bureau of Investigation reports show that agent Robert Barnes, the same agent responsible for counterintelligence operations against Mexican radicals, was monitoring E.R. and A.C. Meitzen's anti-war articles in the *New Era*. With the Meitzens having long been a thorn in the side of local authorities, the sheriff of Lavaca County, E.H. Houchins, offered his services to Barnes in monitoring the Meitzens. "The only evidence of hostility against the government are on part of two socialists or rather anarchistic newspapers published here … the Rebel and the Semi-Weekly New Era," wrote the Houchins to Barnes. "It is a pity that they can not be suppressed. If I can in any way be of service to you command me," he concluded.[908]

The Bureau of Investigation (BI) intensified its surveillance of the Meitzens from monitoring their writings and correspondence to their movements. Agents took note when E.O. Meitzen left Hallettsville in May to assume his editorial position in North Dakota.

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[907] *The Rebel*, May 19, 1917.

[908] E.R. Meitzen to Hickey, May 9, 1917, Arnold Meitzen to Hickey, [May 1917], Hickey Papers; R.L. Barnes, Report March 16, 1917, Bureau of Investigations Files, "Old German Files," Roll 312; Houchins to Barnes, April 28, 1917, Barnes Report, May 3, 1917, Bureau of Investigations Files, Roll 312.

What drew their attention in particular was the route Meitzen took. He did not head straight north. Instead, he headed west to Arizona.[909]

According to a BI report, E.O. Meitzen stopped in the mining towns of Globe and Douglas. He toured the mining and lumber districts giving political speeches, which the BI found were for the purpose of assisting the IWW and promoting the NPL. Meitzen was seemingly following the line Hall advocated in *The Rebel* of building the NPL as the new party and the IWW as the "new union" for the working class. His meeting appears to have been successful, as the Arizona NPL and IWW were still collaborating in May 1920.[910]

The BI was also fishing for ways to arrest Meitzen. The Lavaca County postmaster informed the BI that the Meitzens had printed an article in the *New Era* advising readers not to buy Liberty bonds. When the BI investigated the claim, though, they could find no such articles. What BI agents did find was that the Meitzens had a long history in the vicinity of Hallettsville, and the political organizations they had promoted over the years had, according to a report, "gained considerable strength." They also noted that the Meitzens have "a strong following among the lower class of people."[911] Unable to find any evidence of the Meitzens hampering the war effort and wary of arousing the "lower class of people," authorities needed a more vulnerable target to go after in their mission to suppress anti-war radicalism. They found their man in Tom Hickey.

Since November, Hickey had been editing *The Rebel* in relative isolation at a

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[909] J.J. Lawrence, Report July 26, 1917, Bureau of Investigations Files, Roll 399.

[910] Lawrence, Report July 26, 1917, Bureau of Investigations Files; C.E. Breniman Report May 29, 1920, Bureau of Investigation, Roll 778.

[911] Lawrence, Report July 26, 1917, Bureau of Investigations Files.

Boeer family farm in West Texas, outside of Brandenburg in Stonewall County. On May 17, 1917, Texas Rangers, without a warrant, forced Hickey into a car and kidnapped him, holding him incommunicado for two days. He was finally released on a $1000 bond after his wife Clara secured a lawyer.[912]

The next day, federal authorities arrested eight members of the FLPA in nearby Snyder. The following day, US Marshalls and Texas Rangers arrested twelve more members in Rotan and nearly forty in the area around Abilene. Authorities brought federal indictments of "seditious uprising" against the FLPA members. Among those arrested were FLUA organizer Bryant and the Texas SP's state secretary W.T. Webb. After the dust had settled, prosecutors would bring to trial fifty-five people—fifty-three of them were members of the SP and fifty-one were tenant farmers. Prosecutors made the charges based on a claim that the FLPA was organizing an armed uprising against conscription. In the subsequent trial, though, they failed to produce any tangible evidence of any such plot.[913]

The available evidence makes it clear that the arrests of Hickey and members of the FLPA was part of a government campaign to repress radicalism and those opposed to the war. This anti-democratic campaign had the backing of the U.S. Attorney General from Texas, Thomas Watt Gregory, and was carried out by U.S. Marshalls, Secret Service agents, and Texas Rangers with the assistance of local, state, and federal courts.[914]

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[912] German Americans founded Brandenburg, TX in 1904. Due to anti-German sentiments aroused by World War I, the town's name was changed to the more patriotic sounding Old Glory in 1918; *Dallas Morning News*, May 27, 1917; *The Rebel*, May 26, 1917;

[913] *Abilene Daily Reporter*, May 20, 21, 1917; Tom Hickey, "The Wreck in Texas," *Pearson's Magazine*, September 1917, 137; Baulch, "Making West Texas Safe for Democracy,"120.

News of the arrests and alleged FLPA plot resulted in headlines and sensational stories across the state. "WEST TEXANS ARM TO FIGHT DRAFT?" ran a banner headline across the *El Paso Herald*. Articles portrayed members of the FLPA as anarchists under the influence of German money. Authorities used the arrests of Hickey and Socialist members of the FLPA to portray the SP as a treasonous and disloyal organization deserving of a government crackdown.[915]

Coincidently, on the same day as the mass arrests of the FLPA members were occurring around Abilene on May 19, *The Rebel* printed the anti-draft resolution passed by the 105 members of the FLPA lodge in Olney. "A majority of us voted for Wilson's Prosperity, Preparedness and Peace, and we object to being paid off in Blood, Bull and Bullets," read the resolution. "We are willing to fight to the last ditch for the protection of foreign commerce when we have some," it continued, "but so long as foreign commerce rests in the hands of Wall Street we insist that said Street furnish the blood and gold to protect it." In warning, the resolution concluded, "The overwhelming majority of the working class is opposed to conscription, but if we are forced to stand for it, let the God of 10 percent beware lest the worm turneth which he is sometimes wont to do."[916] After the arrest, *The Rebel* championed the defense of the FLPA for the remainder of its

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[914] Baulch, "Making West Texas Safe for Democracy,"120-121; *Abilene Daily Reporter*, May 21, 1917; Charles H. Harris and Louis R. Sadler, *The Texas Rangers and the Mexican Revolution: The Bloodiest Decade, 1910-1920* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004), 25.

[915] *El Paso Herald*, May 21, 1917; *Abilene Daily Reporter*, May 21, 1917; *San Antonio Express*, May 21, 1917; *Sherman Daily Democrat*, May 21, 1917; *Houston Post*, May 23, 1917; *Temple Daily Telegram*, May 23, 1917.

[916] *The Rebel*, May 19, 1917. "The God of 10 per cent" is in reference to the practice of tithing ten percent to God. There are references in the Bible to bad things that will happen to those that do not contribute their share. The FLPA members of Olney Lodge No. 25 clearly felt that Wall Street must contribute its share.

unknowingly brief remaining existence.[917]

The government carried out a six-week show trial of the charged FLPA members beginning in September. Socialists were not the only ones to come to their defense. Numerous community members, including the mayor of Snyder, testified to their innocence. The jury found all but three of the defendants either not guilty or innocent. Despite a lack of evidence, the jury received enough pressure to pass guilty verdicts on Bryant and two other FLPA leaders, Z.L. Risley and Sam J. Powell, who each were sentenced to serve six years at the federal penitentiary in Leavenworth, Kansas.[918]

The arrest of the FLPA members and Hickey did serve the government's purpose of fanning public opinion against the SP and anti-war activism. Some people, however, had the opposite reaction. "We have been rushed with letters pouring in here," wrote A.C. Meitzen to Hickey after his release, "wanting to know all about it and the subs are pouring."[919] A.C. ran the daily operations of *The Rebel*, which before Hickey's arrest was in a dire financial condition. A week later, A.C. wrote Clara Hickey, "Today we received about two hundred new ones [subscriptions] and everyday the past week from 100 to 200. If that keeps up much longer we may get out of debt and then can begin to live like human beings instead of slaves. It seems it takes war and such horrible things to wake up the fool people."[920]

A.C. Meitzen and *The Rebel* staff appears to have been emboldened by the flood of new subscribers and letters of support. On the front page of their June 2, 1917 issue

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[917] Clarence Nugent to Hickey, August 29, 1917, Hickey Papers; *The Rebel*, June 2, 1917

[918] Baulch, "Making West Texas Safe for Democracy," 123, 127.

[919] A.C. Meitzen to Hickey, May 24, 1917, Hickey Papers.

[920] A.C. Meitzen to Clara Hickey, June 1, 1917, Hickey Papers.

they brazenly printed the blurb: "DON'T BUY BONDS" on the front page—just the type of statement authorities were on the look out for. On the same page Hickey promised readers that "the real story" of his arrest would appear in the next issue. Hickey never got to tell readers his story and none of the new subscriptions were ever filled.

On June 9, 1917, Postmaster General Burleson made *The Rebel* the first periodical to be barred from the U.S. mail under the Espionage Act. Burleson had helped draft the Act with Attorney General Gregory. Both men had axes to grind with *The Rebel*. The paper had exposed Burleson when he replaced the tenants on his land with convict labor and it had regularly attacked Gregory for not fully enforcing anti-trust legislation. Burleson was so eager to suppress *The Rebel* that he did so six days before Wilson signed the act into law. "I consider that the national administration has pilloried itself before the world, controlled as it is by Texas politicians of the landlord and banker stripe," wrote Hickey to *Rebel* subscribers, explaining the paper's suppression.[921]

Government repression effectively crushed the Texas SP and greatly hindered efforts to build the NPL in Texas. The previous year, violent state repression in South Texas had eliminated most forms of overt Mexican radicalism in the area. Persistent harassment and intimidate resulted in the disappearance of once lively Mexican-American dominated locals of the SP and Land League stretching from South to Central Texas. The mass arrests of Socialist and FLPA members in West Texas dried out an area that had once been a well spring of Socialist strengthen. Shortly after those arrests, U.S. Marshalls arrested five members of the Texas SP in East Texas, curtailing Socialist activity in that area. Instead of expending their resources to grow their movement as the

[921] Green, *Grass-Roots Socialism*, 356; For examples of *The Rebel* attacking Gregory, but not limited to, see *The Rebel*, October 17, 1914, March 13, 1915, January 8, 20, 1916, April 18, 1916, May 6, 1916, January 20, 1917; Hickey to Friends of The Rebel, June 20, 1917, Hickey Papers.

main organization opposing the war, Texas Socialists had to devote almost of its time and energy fighting legal challenges and getting their comrades out of jail.[922]

As a new organization and with the state waging a campaign against radicalism, the NPL had to tread lightly. Lansing aptly calls the national NPL's position on the war "complicated." Townley acknowledged the imperialist origins of the war begun by governments serving the profit motives of "gigantic corporations." Yet the NPL hoped the war could be used for the collective good of the people. As Lansing notes, the NPL "coupled clear-eyed support for the country's [war] efforts to a critique of war profiteering."[923] To remedy this situation, the NPL demanded that the government as "a war measure" (not an anti-war measure) "take over the railroads and distribution of food into their hands."[924] Opponents of the NPL held no room for such nuances and attacked Townley and the NPL as treasonous. Throughout the war, NPL leaders would face numerous indictments related to the Espionage Act.[925]

Through his time with the NPL, E.R. Meitzen moved away from the left-wing Socialist position on the war to that of the NPL's. "I for one think that the war will do good," wrote Meitzen to Hickey in May 1917, "even though it looks like a lunatic asylum." Meitzen cited the revolution in Russia, which overthrew the czar and "the steps toward collectivism everywhere," as evidence of the good the war was doing. He did not view this as a capitulation, but as a backdoor way to a revolution. He expressed to Hickey, "We can do this and that is what the Russian rebels did—take advantage of the

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[922] Carl Rossen to Hickey, June 5, 1917, Hickey Papers.

[923] *Nonpartisan Leader*, June 14, 1917; Lansing, *Insurgent Democracy*, 95.

[924] *Nonpartisan Leader*, June 14, 1917.

[925] *Nonpartisan Leader*, June 14, 1917; Lansing, *Insurgent Democracy*, 129.

discontent caused by the war gamblers." Further in the letter, Meitzen advised Hickey on how the NPL was approaching the war: "The tactic we are now taking politically it is best to let things alone so far as going directly against the war machine; we can't stop it; let's ride it out instead."[926]

By August, Hickey noticed a positive buzz going around for the NPL among the state's farmer-labor radicals. He wrote the NPL's national organization department to let them know and to offer his services. Meitzen wrote in reply, "The enthusiasm you speak off was partly due to 15,000 'composite' editions of the *Nonpartisan Leader* that I had sent to a select list of Texas and Oklahoma radicals and progressives. It was my opening gun."[927] One of the items contained in the composite edition Meitzen sent out was a Townley speech against war profiteers.[928]

Meitzen's "opening gun" had its desired effect. In addition to the enthusiasm Hickey noticed, some of the radicals and progressives on Meitzen's list wrote to the *Nonpartisan Leader* voicing their agreement with the paper and wanting more. A sampling of the letters read: "I received from some unknown source a copy of your paper …hope that you will grow…and finally overflow clear down here in Texas." "Go to them boys … I wish you could come here." "I received a copy of the special composite edition…it is surely a humdinger. Paid close attention to Townley's speech, …[it] is true in in every respect …But as long as we have a capitalist congress we cannot expect anything else. Your movement is good …so that America may have a government of the

[926] E.R. Meitzen to Hickey, May 21, 1917, Hickey Papers.

[927] E.R. Meitzen to Hickey, August 25, 1917, Hickey Papers.

[928] *Nonpartisan Leader*, August 30, 1917.

people, by the people and the people instead of for the capitalist class."[929] Another Texas farmer wrote in stating he had been a county secretary of the Farmers' Alliance and now "wanted to see Texas North Dakotaized."[930] Not only did Meitzen see the NPL as the next stage of the farmer-labor bloc that had evolved to the point of fighting capitalism, but so did many other farmer-labor radicals in Texas.

With such a positive response from farmer-labor radicals in Texas, the NPL made plans for Meitzen to leave where he was organizing in South Dakota and for him to head to Texas in early September 1917. Meitzen advised Hickey "to make no further public moves until you hear from St. Paul. When we come into the state we will come 'smoking!'"[931]

In addition to Hickey's requesting to become a paid organizer for the NPL, so too did Stanley Clark. "Shall see what they say about Clark's offer," Meitzen wrote to Hickey. "He had better stay straight—absolutely so—if he works under this bunch. They won't stand much monkey business. But Clark is wonderful otherwise," he concluded, "that I am willing to try him again."[932] Both Clark and Hickey had earned reputations as organizers who did not do things by the book, went off script, and enjoyed a good drink. As their comrades and friends, the Meitzens had tolerated such behavior while organizing the Texas SP--feeling the positives of Clark and Hickey out weighed the negatives. The NPL, however, ran a much tighter ship, especially in the current political environment of

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[929] *Nonpartisan Leader*, July 12, August 30, September 6, 1917.

[930] *Nonpartisan Leader*, September 27, 1917.

[931] E.R. Meitzen to Hickey, August 25, 1917, Hickey Papers.

[932] E.R. Meitzen to Hickey, August 25, 1917, Hickey Papers.

war and repression.[933]

"We shall be very pleased to have your assistance," wrote NPL national organizer Joe Gilbert to Hickey in agreeing to take him and Clark on. "One word of caution however," Gilbert made sure to include, "In order to obtain the results we are after, we must be a little circumspect and not go as far as to give our opponents an opportunity of putting a quietus on our work."[934]

Meitzen and Hickey followed Gilbert's advice—Clark did not. Clark based himself out of Jacksonville while organizing for the NPL in East Texas. In one of his organizing speeches in September 1917, he stated, "If profiteering does not stop and the lumber barons do not cease to rob and deport the Industrial Workers of the World, the United States will need 750,000 soldiers to keep the rest of the west quiet."[935] He was referring to the mass deportation of over 1,000 IWW organized striking miners in Bisbee, Arizona in July 1917. Authorities initially arrested him with for supposedly speaking out against conscription. Clarke denied opposing conscription, though freely admitted to speaking out against the deportations. Federal prosecutors used his speaking in defense of the IWW to include him in the mass trial in Chicago of 166 IWW members charged with conspiracy to sabotage the war effort. Clarke was found guilty and sent to Leavenworth where he remained jailed until July 21, 1922 when his sentence was commuted.[936]

The Wilson administration conducted an unrelenting drive to repress all forms of

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[933] E.O. Meitzen to Hickey, December 26, 1916, April 1, 1917, Hickey to Clara Hickey, April 12, 1917, Hickey Papers; Green, *Grass-Roots Socialism*, 277.

[934] Joseph Gilbert to Hickey, August 25, 1917, Hickey Papers.

[935] *Daily Herald* (Weatherford, TX), August 9, 1918.

[936] *Daily Herald* (Weatherford, TX), October 2, 1917, August 9, 1918; Hickey to Clara Hickey, November 17, 1917, Hickey Papers; Stephen M. Kohn, *American Political Prisoners: Prosecutions under the Espionage and Sedition Acts* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 1994), 91.

radicalism. Radical periodicals across the country were barred from the mail. Socialists elected to public office were prevented from taking their seats, while almost countless radicals were arrested and sentenced to jail. In July 1917, Kate Richards O'Hare was arrested for giving an anti-war speech in Bowman, North Dakota to a crowd compromised largely of NPL members. O'Hare never quit the SP nor joined the NPL; nonetheless she was an active supporter of the NPL. "My arrest and conviction is but an incident in great human drama that is being enacted on the plains of the great northwest," wrote O'Hare after being sentenced to five years in jail, "…and nothing more thrilling and dramatic has ever been enacted than the drama of the rise of the Non-Partisan League."[937] More famously, Debs in November 1918 was sentenced to ten years in prison for an anti-war speech he gave in Canton, Ohio earlier in June.

Federal agents were also watching E.R. Meitzen. The day after Christmas in 1917, Meitzen gave a speech for the NPL in Edgar, not far from his hometown of Hallettsville. As reported by BI agents in attendance, "In substance his speech was attacking the Wall Street gamblers, and Hoover [for] not lowering the price of food." However, the report continued, "He in speaking of the President Wilson, spoke of him as your President and then our President, and stated we should stand behind the President in this great war." In conclusion the agent said, "He did not speak disloyal concerning the Government or the President."[938] Meitzen tread much more lightly than O'Hare and Debs.

Throughout the fall and winter of 1917-18, Meitzen and Hickey soldiered on

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[937] *Social Revolution*, August 1917; Quote from Kate Richards O'Hare, "The Non-Partisan League," *Social Revolution*, March 1918, 10. O'Hare began serving her five year term in 1919. In 1920, Wilson, in response to a national campaign in defense of O'Hare, commuted her sentence after she served fourteen months.

[938] R.C. Clayton, "In Re John P. Craig and E.J. [sic] Meitzen, Socialists," December 26, 1917, "Old German Files," BI Report, Roll No. 501. The report refers to E.R. as "E.J.," but this is clearly in reference to E.R. Meitzen.

organizing for the NPL all over Texas. Clark's arrest shook them, but Hickey wrote to Clara that, "I am in good health, working hard, hoping my nerve and democracy triumph. However, Hickey also let Clara know that E.R. was dealing with personal issues as well, for "E.R.'s girl has put off the wedding engagement for one year."[939] All was not well in love and war.

With the SP pushed to the brink through repression and internal disputes, Meitzen and Hickey decided to make their public declaration for the Texas NPL in December 1917. "Dear Comrade: This is possibly the most important letter you have ever received," wrote Hickey in a December 22 letter, mostly likely sent out to Meitzen's list of radicals and progressives. "I believe," he continued, "that the Socialist Party cannot function in any agricultural state in the nation, while the present unpleasantness is on." Acknowledging that the SP "may make great progress in the great industrial centers," farmers, however, needed an organization of their own.[940]

The letter presented the platform of the NPL with its call for state run mills, grain elevators and insurance. Specific to Texas, this version of the platform added a plan of cotton grading "by responsible men." Membership in the Texas NPL cost farmers $5.33 a year, which included a subscription to the *Nonpartisan Leader* (with a weekly national circulation 150,000) as well as all other pamphlets produced by the NPL. Probably not by coincidence, May 1 was set as the day that local precinct conventions were to be held across the state to select delegates to the state nominating convention charged with

[939] A.C. Meitzen to Hickey, September 14, 1917, Hickey to Clara Hickey, November 14, 1917, Hickey Papers.

[940] Hickey to Dear Comrades, December 22, 1917, Hickey Papers.

selected candidates for state and federal offices.[941]

The arrival of the Texas NPL broke the farmer-labor bloc's decades-long practice of independent political action. The letter announced, "Texas being a Democratic state, no doubt, all or nearly all, of the candidates nominated will make the race in the Democratic primaries."[942] Trying to break working-class people's alliance to the "Party of Their Fathers," despite it being in their own political and economic interests, had been (and continues to be) one of the more frustrating tasks of farmer-labor radicals. The election tactics of the NPL in seemingly finding a way around this, had been one the things that attracted to E.R. Meitzen to the NPL. "We Southerners were born Democrats you know. We can't quit get over that," E.R. had stated in an earlier interview in the *Nonpartisan Leader*. "But," he went on, "we can still be Democrats and also be Nonpartisans. That is the beauty of your organization—that we can bring together the irreconcilable."[943]

The Texas NPL appeared to be growing, although the climate of repression continued. Not only were radicals at risk, but others suspected of disloyalty as well. "They are arresting people right and left these days for even so much as singing 'The Wacht am Rhein,' or eating 'German fried potatoes,'" observed E.R. Meitzen during this time.[944] For German Texans carrying out daily practices related to their heritage and culture that had once been seen as commonplace now made their loyalty suspect in the eyes of authorities. Carrying out one such practice brought federal agents to Fayetteville

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[941] Hickey to Dear Comrades, December 22, 1917, Hickey Papers.

[942] Hickey to Dear Comrades, December 22, 1917, Hickey Papers.

[943] "Texas Investigates the League," *Nonpartisan Leader*, April 26, 1917.

[944] E.R. Meitzen to Hickey, May 21, 1917, Hickey Papers.

in February 1918.

On February 12, 1918, federal agents in Fayetteville arrested eleven German Texans charging them with violating the Espionage Act. Among those arrested were the town's mayor and Charles F. Meitzen—the son of E.O.'s cousin Max. The charges stemmed from one of the arrested having raised the German flag in front of the Germania Club, a local dance hall and bar. The arresting agents loaded the eleven men onto a train bound for Houston where they were arraigned and formally charged by a U.S. District Attorney.[945] At a subsequent hearing it became apparent that the raising of the flag was a years long practice used by the club to announce a dance or other social event occurring the evening the flag was hoisted. Eventually, prosecutors dropped all charges.[946]

Anti-German hysteria gripped the nation. This hysteria, which as historian Matthew Tippens notes, "expressed itself in vigilante attacks and government actions that demanded explicit demonstrations of loyalty from German Americans and the suppression of symbols of German ethnicity."[947] Tippens found that German Texans fared better during the war years than their counterparts across the country, particularly in comparison to German Americans in the Midwest. The war years in Texas, however, nevertheless did result in diminished use of the German language and the holding of distinctly German events in public.[948]

The war hit home for the Meitzens on September 19, 1917 when E.O.'s son,

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[945] *Houston Post*, February 15, 1918; Matthew D. Tippens, *Turning Germans Into Texans: World War I and the Survival of German Culture in Texas, 1900-1930*. (Austin: Kleingarten Press, 2010), 1-2; United States Census, *Census Reports*, Tenth Census of the United States Taken in the year 1880.

[946] *Houston Post*, March 17, 1918; *Washington Post*, February 22, 1918.

[947] Tippens, *Turning Germans Into Texans*, 4.

[948] For a history of the survival of German culture in Texas see Tippens, *Turning Germans Into Texans*.

Martin Luther was inducted into the U.S. Army after being drafted. At the age of twenty-two, Martin was the only male family member of draft age. When the U.S. entered the war, the family had sought to have him classified as farm laborer in order to exempt him from the draft, but with no success. After training, he was sent oversees in April 1918. Serving in France, Martin fought in the Battle of the Argonne Forest. During the battle he was caught in a gas attack. He survived, but the gas caused permanent damage. At the war's end, he returned to his job on the railroad and, despite the injury, lived a full life.[949]

The stress and pressures of war and repression were mounting on E.R. Meitzen. Just as they deeply affected J.A. Hernández and F.A. Hernández, so too would they E.R. Meitzen. However, in Meitzen's case, the strains of friendship and unrequited love must be added. In April 1918, around the same time that E.R. would have received the news of his younger brother's imminent departure for the front, he received another personal blow. "E.R. is badly hit; he has had a row with his girl. He is so sore he feels like joining the Army as a volunteer next July (I am not joking)," as Hickey once again served as Clara's conduit to E.R.'s love life.[950]

When Hickey received his next letter from Meitzen, he probably hoped that Meitzen's thoughts of enlisting were just the product of a broken heart and would soon pass. Instead, not only did Meitzen reconfirm that he was enlisting, he also informed Hickey that he had been given the unpleasant task of having to fire Hickey from his position as a NPL organizer.

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[949] "Texas, World War I Records, 1917-1920," database with images, *FamilySearch* (https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QV18-JZFG : 3 April 2015), Martin Luther Meitzen, 19 Sep 1917; citing Military Service, Hallettsville, Lavaca, Texas, United States, Texas Military Forces Museum, Austin; *Washington Post*, January 15, 1919; Meitzen-Williams, *History of the Meitzen Family*, n.p.

[950] Hickey to Clara Hickey, April 4, 1918, Hickey Papers.

Hickey's firing was part of the Texas NPL's leadership's knee jerk response to a violent attack on NPL organizers. On April 4 a mob brutally beat four NPL organizers in the East Texas town of Mineola. E.R. Meitzen had been in town earlier on March 23 giving a publicized speech for the NPL. A few days earlier, the area head of the Red Cross gave a talk at the town's Methodist church and said, "The Nonpartisan League is another form of German propaganda financed by German money. The minister then spoke saying the NPL "shan't organize the farmers. I have a Winchester, and it will pop, too."[951]

On the day of Meitzen's talk a group of "leading citizens" from Mineola and nearby Tyler—the local postmaster, the mayor's father, local business owners, newspaper men, and a district attorney, arrived at the meeting with the intent of breaking it up. The farmers in attendance kept them from doing so and Meitzen was able to give his talk. While Meitzen was giving his talk though, the owner of a local restaurant stood three feet from Meitzen brandishing a knife. Refusing to be intimidated Meitzen and other NPL organizers vowed to carry on their work in the area.[952]

After hearing about what happened to Meitzen, M.M. Offut, an area stock farmer who was the first NPL organizer in Texas, realized he knew the minister who had helped stir up sentiments against the NPL. Offut decided to visit the minister with the hope of clarifying that the NPL was a loyal organization composed mainly of Democrats. According to Offut, the minister refused to listen and said he was "going to fight it [the NPL] in every way I can." Offut told him that was his privilege as long as he kept with

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[951] *Nonpartisan Leader*, April 29, 1918.

[952] *Nonpartisan Leader*, April 29, 1918.

the law. To this the minister replied, "I care nothing for the law. I would rather die and go to hell than turn this government over to a lot of dirty red Socialists, and your League is nothing but the Socialist Party under another name." Offut saw he was getting nowhere and went to leave. Before he could leave, however, a group of "ruffians" grabbed him. They took him into a nearby room and with a pair of sheep sheers hacked off his long grey beard and hair while kicking and beating him. Afterward they threw him on a train leaving town.[953]

Around the same time Offut was being assaulted, local police rounded up three other NPL organizers in the area and placed them in the town jail. Shortly before midnight a mob broke them out of jail and drove them to the woods just outside of town. The organizers recognized their captors as many of the same "leading citizens" that had attempted to break-up Meitzen's meeting—but this time they did not have the farmers to defend them. The "leading citizens" then stripped the organizers, forced them on their stomachs, beat them with a blacksnake whip 25 to 30 times each, and then poured salt and water into their wounds. The organizers were then allowed to get up and run away as guns were fired in their direction to hurry them on their way. All three eventually made it back to NPL headquarters in Waco.[954]

The Mineola attack deeply shook the NPL leaders from North Dakota that came to Texas to oversee organizing. They had heard the stereotypes of Texas as a rough and tumble lawless land, and now believed them. Unfortunately for the NPL, this type of violence targeting the NPL would become commonplace in the Upper Great Plains (even

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[953] *Nonpartisan Leader*, April 29, 1918.

[954] *Nonpartisan Leader*, April 29, 1918.

more so than in Texas), especially once the 1918 campaign season heated up. Opponents of the NPL hired and deputized thugs to break-up NPL meetings from Minnesota to Washington. Vigilantes beat, and in a few cases tarred and feathered, NPL organizers.[955]

The attackers in Mineola had specifically stated their opposition to socialism and viewed the NPL as just the SP with a different name. The *Dallas Morning News* had also run an article in between the time of Meitzen's talk in March and the mob attack in Mineola with the headline: "Nonpartisan League Branded as Bolshevikism." The NPL had consistently strove to distance itself being labeled socialists and Hickey was one of the highest-profile Socialists in the state. The same could be said about Meitzen. It appears, though, that Hickey had upset some of the NPL leaders with some of his old footloose organizing while in Wharton County.[956] By staying on as an organizer, "Mr. Hickey will be doing neither the organization nor himself any good by continuing," wrote Gilbert to Meitzen with the directive to fire Hickey. "I don't know all the motives of Gilbert in writing this," wrote Meitzen to Hickey, "but I presume the main motive is the peculiar condition that we now face as to our opposition and as to your own personality."[957] To continue to play on stereotypes, the German was a bit more reserved than the fiery Irishman and less likely to land himself in trouble.

"Now then 'me boy,' just continue hitting the ball and it will not be long before the superstition that it is dangerous to employ you will be gone from the mind of Gilbert," Meitzen advised Hickey.[958] In the meantime, Meitzen suggested that Hickey

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[955] Hickey to Joe Gilbert, May 14, 1918, Hickey Papers; Lansing, *Insurgent Democracy*, 118-124.

[956] *Dallas Morning News*, March 31, 1918; Hickey to Joe Gilbert, May 14, 1918, E.R. Meitzen to Hickey, April 27, 1918, Hickey Papers.

[957] E.R. Meitzen to Hickey, April 27, 1918, Hickey Papers.

contact Le Sueur about his situation and offer to work on commission. Le Sueur responded positively, "If you can make your way ...and stay out of trouble working on commission then I see no reason why you should not stay at it will all your Irish and all your American at work."[959] The question of Hickey's relationship to the NPL had been settled, but the of issue of E.R.'s enlistment remained.

"E.R. Meitzen at thirty seven years of age has volunteered for the army …a partnership of almost ten years is broken," wrote Hickey to Gilbert.[960] Hickey was clearly bothered by the prospect of losing his friend to the war. Meitzen divulged to Clara Hickey that his reasons for enlisting were not all related to a broken heart. "You remember that anonymous book 'J' Accuse' that your mother gave to us in 1914, it was very likely written by Liebknecht?," wrote Meitzen to Clara, recalling a book given to him by Maria Boeer. "Well, that book has had about as much to do with changing my mind about this war business than anything that was ever written." *J' Accuse* was a popular book that was widely distributed in Allied countries at the onset of the war. At the time the author was listed as "By a German." The book is highly critical of what the author saw as a growing spirit of war in Germany and blamed the war on Germany. Meitzen thought Karl Liebknecht authored the book. Liebknecht was a Left German socialist and was the only member of the Reichstag to vote against loans to fund Germany's war efforts and helped organize a demonstration in Berlin against the war for which he was jailed. He was a figure of admiration for the Meitzens as *The Rebel* regularly featured his writings and reported on his actions.

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[958] E.R. Meitzen to Hickey, May 16, 1918, Hickey Papers.

[959] Le Sueur to Hickey, May 24, 1918, Hickey Papers.

[960] Hickey to Joe Gilbert, May 14, 1918, Hickey Papers.

Meitzen made a gross misassumption by thinking that in enlisting he was following the ideals of Liebknecht supposedly contained in *J' Accuse*. Liebknecht was not the "German" who wrote *J' Accuse*. In fact, Richard Grelling, a German pacifist wrote *J' Accuse*. He was a founder of the German Peace Society and published the book anonymously to avoid detection. Liebknecht deeply opposed the war and the army forced him to bury the war dead on the Eastern Front for his refusal to fight. However, he was far from a pacifist and helped led the German Spartacus Revolt of January 1919. Liebknecht would by no means have advised Meitzen to enlist. Instead, he would have encouraged him to oppose the war at any costs.

Besides *J' Accuse*, Meitzen also had other political reasons for enlisting. "Another thing," he told Clara, "that has helped my mind is the growth of the Nonpartisan League, as well as the general trend toward democracy in this nation, has convinced me after all, that it is beginning to be a nation worth fighting for."[961] Meitzen had hopes that the electoral tactics of the NPL would spread across the nation and lead to the Cooperative Commonwealth.

In the end, continuing to fight for the Cooperative Commonwealth, not fighting in an inter-imperialist war, would be Meitzen's continued role in life. Despite repeated efforts to volunteer, he was each time denied entrance into the military. The medical examination for volunteers was much more rigid than that for draftees. Medical examiners found that Meitzen had a "defect," although the available sources do not reveal the nature of this defect. Meitzen did travel to Dallas for a minor surgery, attempting to correct the problem, but to no avail. He would soon head north once again to build the

[961] E.R. Meitzen to Clara Hickey, May 16, 1918, Hickey Papers.

NPL. Before leaving, Meitzen would officially resign from the SP.[962]

The mob violence in Mineola appears to have setback the NPL's growth in Texas. The attack occurred about a month before the statewide precinct conventions the NPL had planned for May. The conventions do not seem to have occurred and no known NPL candidates ran for office in the 1918 Texas elections. However, the attack did make the news across the state and did draw people's attention to the NPL. The NPL was able to capitalize on this attention when John Canada joined the NPL. Canada was the publisher of the *Southland Farmer*, a respected agricultural newspaper based out of Houston with a high circulation that extended not only across Texas but the entire South. After joining, Canada made the paper an official organ of the NPL.[963]

With expansion in the South on hold, the NPL diverted most of its resources to the election campaigns in the Upper Great Plains, Montana and Idaho. In July 1918, E.R. Meitzen traveled to St. Paul, Minnesota to assist the NPL election campaign. In a bitterly contested election, the NPL candidate for governor in Minnesota, Charles A. Lindbergh, had failed to win the Republican primary in June. After the primary defeat, the NPL joined with leaders of organized and Thomas Van Lear, the Socialist mayor of Minneapolis, to form an independent slate of farmer-labor candidates seeking to unite urban and agrarian workers. Most of the farmer-labor candidates lost. The effort, however, laid the groundwork for the Minnesota State Federation of Labor to pledge itself to independent political action the next summer.[964] Meitzen's experience with this

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[962] E.R. Meitzen to Hickey, July 19, 1918, Hickey Papers; *Dallas Morning News*, July 1, 1918.

[963] E.R. Meitzen to Hickey, May 16, 1918, Hickey Papers; *Nonpartisan Leader*, May 27, 1918.

[964] E.R. Meitzen to Hickey, July 15, 1918, Grace Brewer to Clara Hickey, July 18, 1918, H.J. Greenwood to Hickey, October 12, 1918, Hickey Papers; Lansing, *Insurgent Democracy*, 176-177.

campaign would prove valuable, as the NPL would attempt a similar farmer-labor/agrarian-urban campaign in Houston in 1920.

When Meitzen arrived in St. Paul, he convinced NPL leaders to bring Hickey north to assistant in its 1918 campaign. Hickey arrived in mid-July and would spend the next few months barnstorming in Minnesota and Nebraska. He would not last till the election. Once again Hickey got in a dispute with NPL, this time over pay and the firing of a fellow organizer. He quit the NPL in late October and returned to Texas, hoping to start a new radical newspaper with Covington Hall.[965]

The 1918 elections registered impressive gains for the NPL, especially in North Dakota where it solidified its control of the state government. In no other state, however, was the NPL able to seize control of one of the major parties like it had in North Dakota. Still, voters elected NPL candidates to state legislatures, state supreme courts, and local offices in Minnesota, Montana, South Dakota, Idaho, Colorado, and Nebraska. Meitzen stayed up north and became a prominent organizer for the League. He returned to Texas infrequently during the next year as he crisscrossed the Great Plains and western states. By early 1919, the NPL had over two hundred thousand members in thirteen states, representing the height of its power and influence.[966]

The 1918 election results in Texas registered the opposite for farmer-labor radicalism. During this time of extreme political repression the Texas SP defiantly ran W.P. Simpson for governor. Simpson, however, received only 1,660 votes--the party's lowest total since 1902. Six days after the election an armistice agreement was signed in

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[965] E.R. Meitzen to Hickey, July 15, 1918, Hickey to E.R. Meitzen, November 16, 1918, Hickey to Dear Comrade, December 9, 1918, Hickey Papers.

[966] Lansing, *Insurgent Democracy*, 141-144; Hickey to Clara Hickey, November 24, 1918, Hickey Papers.

France ending the Great War.[967]

Following the end of the war, the AFL and the Railroad Brotherhoods held high aspirations that their wartime truce with capital would be rewarded. They sought to restart the pre-war campaign against the open-shop and achieve formal recognition of unions organized during the war. However, the decreased production demands resulting from the conclusion of the war led to a sharp rise in unemployment and an increase in wholesale prices, both conditions unfavorable to organized labor. From the other end, war had brought about increased business opportunities and a general tolerance of corporations. The frayed wartime truce between labor and capital came to an immediate end. From the end of the war on November 11, 1918 through the following year over four million workers across the U.S. went on strike demanding higher wages, shorter hours, and union recognition.[968]

From early in its existence, organized labor had tied itself to the Democratic Party. In these immediate post-war years with Democrats pursuing a more open pro-business agenda, organized labor began to consider a more independent path. The NPL acting on this new political openness formed successful political partnerships with organized labor in North Dakota, Minnesota, Montana, and Washington. [969] A similar opening presented itself in Texas. To make the most of it, the NPL sent E.R. Meitzen back to Texas.

In early 1920, the Texas governor called a special election to replace the Houston

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[967] "Election of Texas Governors, 1845-2010," *Texas Almanac*, online.

[968] David Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor: The Workplace, The State, and American Labor Activism, 1865-1925* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 388, 395; Gould, *Progressives and Prohibitionists*, 250-251. Though Gompers as head of the AFL called for no labor stoppages during the war, this did not prevent many union locals from engaging in strike actions during the war.

[969] Lansing, *Insurgent Democracy*, 175-178.

area's state senator. The Texas NPL used this as an opportunity to duplicate the farmer-labor electoral alliances it had formed in the North. In January, E.R. Meitzen and another NPL organizer began canvasing Harris County (where Houston is located) building the NPL and promoting the idea of a farmer-labor political coalition. Having Canada's *Southland Farmer* based in Houston gave them a strong foundation to build on. Their efforts paid off when the Houston Labor and Trade Council agreed to hold a mass meeting in downtown Houston in conjunction with the Harris County NPL on February 6. The Council stated the purpose of the meeting was to bring organized workers and farmers together to vote on the plan of organized labor working with the NPL, and if so approved, to select delegates for a farmer-labor convention to be held the next day.[970]

The February 7 headline on the front page of the *Houston Post*, "Unions Join with Non-Partisans in Political Mission," attests to the success of the meeting. Unionized machinists, teamsters, musicians, city employees, telegraphers, and shipbuilders, among others, along NPL organized farmers attended the meeting. The article described the meeting as "the first instance in Texas where organized farmers and union men had met in joint convention to name candidates."[971]

E.R. Meitzen addressed the meeting detailing the gains the NPL had made in North and South Dakota, Nebraska and Minnesota. He said their achievements were the result of organized farmers getting involved in politics. Whereas, the *Houston Post* reported that old unions of farmers had avoided politics, the NPL, Meitzen said, was in politics "up to its celluloid collar." He went on to say that farmers and union men coming together to eliminate middlemen and selling directly to the people could reduce the high

[970] *Houston Labor Journal*, January 10, February 14, 1920; *Houston Post*, February 5, 1920.

[971] *Houston Post*, February 7, 1920.

costs of living.[972]

"The hayseeds have shown us union men the way," declared unionist Ray Barnhard of Houston, "and we ought to more willing to follow them in politics up to the neck." The next day they held their convention. Delegates adopted a platform calling for upholding collective bargaining; defending the rights of free speech, press, and assemblage; the initiative and referendum; abolishing the poll tax; state inspection and grading of agricultural products; and equal wages for equal work for women. The platform also included a plank calling for a tax on speculative land holdings similar to the single tax demand that helped elected Pastoriza mayor of Houston in 1917. The convention selected Charles Murphy, a state representative from Houston, as its candidate for state senate and S.B. Boone from Alief and H.W. Barkaloo of Cedar Bayou both farmers, and railroad engineer E.B. Hadsall as its three candidates for state representative.[973]

The *Houston Chronicle* noted in its coverage of the convention: "behind the movement as a state organizer is E.R. Meitzen." The paper then recalled for its readers that Meitzen was the SP candidate for governor in 1914. This seemingly innocuous observation was actually the paper opening the door to making opposition to the NPL's supposed socialism the focus of its election coverage. The NPL, and its closet socialists, did play the leading role in the election campaign. A committee of farmer and labor delegates selected Meitzen as the campaign manager. To assist him, the NPL sent down

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[972] *Houston Post*, February 7, 1920.

[973] *Houston Labor Journal*, February 14, 1920; *Houston Post*, February 8, 1920. The need for the special election was created when the state senator for the Houston area, R.M. Johnston, was appointed to head the state's prison commission. After he resigned, three state representatives, including Murphy, resigned to run for the senate seat, creating a need to fill their seats as well. *Houston Chronicle*, February 28, 1920.

George Brewer from the national office. Brewer had previous worked for the *Appeal to Reason* where he became Debs' manager and secretary for some of his speaking tours, and he was elected to a single term in the Kansas state house, 1914-1916, as a candidate for the SP before joining the NPL.[974]

Both the *Houston Chronicle* and *Houston Post* made saving Houston from Bolshevism the main issue of the campaign--ignoring all other issues. Murphy's opponent, Lynch Davidson, a politically connected lumber businessman, seized on the opening, announcing his campaign was in opposition to any form of radicalism. The weekly *Houston Labor Journal*'s articles promoting the positive gains for workers and farmers the NPL had implemented in North Dakota could not keep pace with the daily barrage of anti-NPL articles from the city's two daily newspapers.[975]

"Are the business men and citizens generally of Houston and Harris County going to permit the special election …go by default and have this district …represented …by members endorsed by the North Dakota Nonpartisan League?" asked a *Houston Post* editorial.[976] Two days later Houston business leaders organized a meeting to launch a campaign against the NPL. The meeting branded the NPL as "Reds" and "carpetbaggers" that were invading Texas.[977] "It was decided," the *Chronicle* reported, "that to permit the non-partisan league even a seeming victory in this county would be the beginning of propaganda detrimental to the best interests of the state." The report continued, "Meitzen, leader of the non-partisan league in Texas, formerly ran on the socialist ticket for

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[974] *Houston Chronicle*, February 8, 21, 22, 1920; *Houston Labor Journal*, February 21, 1920.

[975] *Houston Chronicle*, January 25, February 15, 29, March 1, 4, 1920; *Houston Labor Journal*, February 21, 28, 1920.

[976] *Houston Post*, February 25, 1920.

[977] *Houston Post*, February 29, 1920.

governor and that the main planks of the non-partisan league are rank socialism …its aims and ends are destructive of all constitutional government."[978] Texas National Guard Brigadier General Jake Wolters addressed the meeting, declaring that the 200 boys of Harris County who lay buried in France will have died in vain if the NPL wins.[979] Following the meeting, this group of local elites organized their own mass meetings to "expose' the NPL. One of the listed talking points of the meeting was: "Who is the Texas leader of the Non-Partisan League and what of his personal record?"[980]

"Bolshevism Snarle [sic] at Gates of Houston" read in part a banner headline on the front page of the *Houston Post* a few days before the election. The accompanying editorial titled "Democracy Against Socialism" railed, "The North Dakota carpetbaggers and the old socialistic crew of Texas are trying to put this un-American, undemocratic, unrepublican and unspeakable scheme of Leninism and Trotzkyism across …vote for the Democratic ticket and against SOCIALISM and the menace of RUSSIAN BOLSHEVISM and SOVIETISM."[981] Organized labor in Houston remained undeterred in its support of the NPL candidates.

"Union Labor Is Certain To Win Special Election If Members Go To Polls," ran the headline of the *Houston Labor Journal* in its last issue before the election. In fact, it felt its coalition with working farmers was what gave it a chance of victory.[982] Union members and working farmers did go to the polls in Harris County as Murphy carried the

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[978] *Houston Chronicle*, February 27, 1920.

[979] *Houston Post*, February 29, 1920.

[980] *Houston Chronicle*, March 2, 1920.

[981] *Houston Post*, March 1, 1920.

[982] *Houston Labor Journal*, February 28, 1920.

county by 400 votes. The senatorial district, however, also included Fort Bend and Waller counties. When the votes of these counties were added to the total, Murphy lost the election by 75 votes. The NPL had put so much of its efforts into organizing the much larger Harris County that it left the two rural counties unorganized.[983]

Still, the NPL and organized labor felt heartened by the election results. With only two months of organizing and in the face of a well-financed red baiting campaign they came with a hair's breadth of winning. "A new order in Texas politics is inevitable and imminent," wrote the *Houston Labor Journal*, "that and nothing else is the portent of the showing made by the Farmer and Labor Non-Partisan Leagues …through surprising solidarity at the polls they served notice to the special privilege brood."[984] Ten days after election, Meitzen was back in Houston as part of a week of activities to further political collaboration between workers and farmers.[985] Before the budding coalition could build any momentum, two factors altered course of farmer-labor politics in Texas—the Galveston dockworkers strike and the emergence of James Ferguson's American Party.

The previous year's gubernatorial race had registered the paltry state of the Texas SP, while once again the main race played out in the Democratic primary. The race was between incumbent governor William P. Hobby and Ferguson who had been impeached in 1917. Ferguson's opposition to prohibition and women's suffrage put him at odds with the state's Democratic leaders who solidly back Woodrow Wilson. They used Ferguson's veto of a popular appropriations bill for the University of Texas to start a successful campaign to impeach and remove him from office in September 1917. As part of his

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[983] *Nonpartisan Leader*, March 29, 19120.

[984] *Houston Labor Journal*, March 13, 1920.

[985] *Houston Labor Journal*, March 13, 1920.

impeachment Ferguson was disqualified from holding any office "under the State of Texas."[986]

After his impeachment, Ferguson had maintained a high political profile by creating his own newspaper, the *Ferguson Forum*, and by speaking out against prohibition and women's suffrage across Texas. Ferguson felt that women did not belong in politics and were "contented with the exalted position which the Creator of the universe gave them when he made them ruler of the home."[987] He also continued to appeal to his tenant farmer base that helped him win the governorship in 1914 and actively sought the support of organized labor by addressing the TSFL convention in March 1918. All of this was carried out as an effort to reclaim the governorship in 1918. Ferguson still had to contend with the terms of his impeachment that barred him from holding a state office, but the terms included nothing that prevented him from running in the primary. In Ferguson's view, winning the primary was the best way to challenge being barred from state office.[988]

Hobby, who as lieutenant governor had succeeded Ferguson in 1917, also sought the Democratic nomination for governor. Hobby had secured the allegiance of progressive Wilson Democrats due to his support of prohibition and women's suffrage. During his time as governor, Hobby signed into law legislation that gave women the right to vote in primaries, furthering his support among suffrage advocates. Women voters proved decisive in the 1918 Democratic Primary. Ferguson polled 217,012 votes, similar

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[986] For Ferguson's conflict with the University of Texas see Gould, *Progressives and Prohibitionists*, 211-218.

[987] *Ferguson Forum*, July 26, 1918.

[988] *Ferguson Forum*, December 6, 1917, June 6, 1918; Texas State Federation of Labor, *Proceedings of the Twenty-First Annual Convention … 1918*, 13-15; Gould, *Progressives and Prohibitionists*, 236.

to the 240, 561 that won him the primary in 1916. However, with women now voting, Hobby easily defeated Ferguson with 461, 479 votes. Hobby cruised to victory in the general election.[989] Though defeated Ferguson, and his opponents, took note that he could still command the support of over 200,000 voters and win twenty-two counties in three separate areas across the state.[990]

While progressive Wilsonian Democrats rejoiced in Hobby's victory and Ferguson supporters took heart in his healthy showing, a third faction within the Texas Democratic Party, the conservatives, were deeply troubled by the election results. Conservative Democrats vehemently opposed prohibition, women's suffrage, and just about every other progressive era reform that involved the federal government as a violation of state's rights. Some of their worst fears became true with the ratification of the Eighteenth Amendment in January 1919 and when Texas became the first southern state to approve the Nineteenth Amendment in June 1919. Conservative Democrats hoping to regain control of their party began to encourage longtime conservative leader former U.S. Senator Joseph Bailey to run for governor in 1920.[991]

Ferguson, no longer eying the state governorship, had now set his sights on the U.S. Senate seat coming up for election in 1922. To win he would need additional political allies beyond his electoral base of 200,000 poor farmers. Just as he had in 1916, Ferguson had been courting Bailey and his conservative followers. The front page of the *Ferguson Forum* on June 12 featured a large editorial by Ferguson declaring "I Am For

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[989] Brown, *Hood, Bonnet, and Little Brown Jug*, 8; For the election statistics see http://www.texasalmanac.com/topics/elections/elections-texas-governors-1845–2010 (accessed March 2, 2013).

[990] Gould, *Progressives and Prohibitionists*, 246.

[991] Brown, *Hood, Bonnet, and Little Brown Jug*, 8; *San Antonio Light*, August 11, 1919; *Brownsville Herald*, August 14, 1919.

Joe Bailey For President—Why." Ferguson's reasons depicted Bailey as a defender of Jeffersonian democracy against progressive Democrats who hold "the idea that the government should do everything … as though it were an apple tree that could be plucked at will and in time replenished by nature."[992]

Bailey and Ferguson's stance against suffrage was not just against women's equality but against black equality as well. As Ferguson stated in his newspaper, we (the legal voters of Texas) "do not want woman suffrage, and its attendant train of social equality with negroes, feminism, domination of elections by hypocritical political preachers and union of church and state in an unholy alliance."[993] The chairman of a Fort Worth conference of conservative Democrats declared, "This is a government of white men for white men and by white men."[994]

While Bailey and his conservative supporters had designs to recapture the Democratic Party, Ferguson and his supporters had other plans. Always the shrewd politician, Ferguson knew his chances of winning any election within the Democratic primary would be a repeat of 1918. With Hobby/Wilson Democrats in control of the party machinery and the suffrage vote lined firmly against him, Ferguson's group hoped to enlist Bailey and his conservative supporters in the creation of a new party.[995]

In a bit of political maneuvering Ferguson organized a meeting of four hundred of his supporters before Bailey's address to the Fort Worth conference to launch a new party styled the American Party. In announcing the creation of the American Party, a banner

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[992] *Galveston Daily News*, August 15, 1919; *Ferguson Forum*, June 12, 1919.

[993] *Ferguson Forum*, June 19, 1919.

[994] *Galveston Daily News*, August 15, 1919.

[995] *Galveston Daily News*, August 15, 1919; *Denton Record Chronicle*, January 30, 1920.

headline of the *Ferguson Forum* declared "Followers of the principles and teachings of Jefferson and Jackson organize to rescue true democracy from the despoilers."[996] This however, caught many of Bailey's followers off guard, and they then declined to attend the American Party meeting. Ferguson seeing this adjourned his meeting and led his supporters over to Bailey's speech, which had drawn over 2,000 listeners. During his speech Bailey made no references to Ferguson's new party.[997]

Though the Bailey and Ferguson forces held many similar conservative positions on social issues and state's rights, when it came to the labor question they stood at extreme opposites of the spectrum. Ferguson's electoral support came from poor farmers. To this end Ferguson called for changes in the Federal Farm Loan Act to help poor and landless farmers. He also sought the labor vote by supporting the closed shop, and the eight-hour workday. Bailey, on the other hand, adamantly called for the open-shop and opposed the eight-hour workday. By December, Bailey and Ferguson's brief courtship had ended with Bailey making clear his intentions to run for governor in the Democratic primary with an anti-labor platform. With the Bailey forces no longer in the equation the American Party reworked its platform in order to directly appeal to poor farmers and laborers .[998]

The new American Party platform directly addressed the demands of labor and agrarian radicals, stating, "Instead of a continual row about what we shall drink, let us think about something to eat and something to wear." The platform "demanded the right

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[996] *Ferguson Forum*, August 15, 1919.

[997] *Denton Record Chronicle*, August 15, 1919; *Ferguson Forum*, August 15, 1919.

[998] *Ferguson Forum*, August 15, September 18, December 18, 1919, February 12, 26, April 15, 22, 1920; Gould, *Progressives and Prohibitionists*, 270-271; *Galveston Daily News*, October 4, December 6, 1919; *Laredo Weekly Times*, August 17, 1919.

of labor to form a union" and to strike as well as denouncing the use of court injunctions "to make labor work, as a crime against human liberty." Calling the "land question the biggest question before the American people," the platform called for government issued tax-exempt loans for farmers with interest not to exceed five percent. Additional planks called for the enforcement of anti-trust laws against "that class that never labor, reap or sow … and [to] send them to jail;" opposition to compulsory military training; a pardon for Eugene Debs; greater funding for public education; and a pay raise for postal workers.[999]

The response of farm-labor activists to the American Party would transform the party from a disgruntled faction of the Democratic Party, made-up of Ferguson and his closest allies, into a farmer-labor protest organization joining the continuity of such organizations dating back to the 1870s. Evidence that farmers and laborers enthusiastically responded to the new American Party platform can be seen in the organization of party units in the agricultural areas north of Austin where the Farmers' Alliance was born, in Galveston with its concentration of union workers, and in Fayette and Lavaca counties, a longtime hotbed of Populist and socialist activity and home counties of the Meitzens. Even Hickey, a once extreme critic of the "Fake" Ferguson joined the American Party cause. Hickey in a letter to fellow socialist W.H. Flowers, related a conversation he had with Ferguson on cotton prices and the U. S. economy. He described the conversation as "a discussion that would be relished by not only live Marxists, but by every student of economic conditions regardless of what school they

[999] *Ferguson Forum*, April 22, 1920; *Semi-Weekly Farm News*, August 13, 1920.

belonged to."[1000]

As historian James Green pointed out, "Socialists had not created the southwestern class struggle; they had simply politicized it. Therefore, the destruction of the Socialist party did not put an end to class conflict or remove class issues from the region's politics."[1001] Hence when the American Party directly appealed to class issues, radical minded farmers, laborers, and middle class sympathizers responded and turned the party into their own. Another thing the American Party had in its favor was that since it was formed after World War I, its class struggle demands were able to avoid the smear of bearing labeled unpatriotic. When the SP raised similar demands leading up to and during the war, the government used patriotism as a justification for suppressing their class enemies in the Socialist Party.[1002] Avoiding the unpatriotic charge helped the American Party gain the endorsement of organized labor.

What allowed the American Party to supplant the NPL in Texas as the leading vehicle of farmer-labor radicalism was its immediate response to the Galveston dockworkers strike. On March 12, 1920 longshoremen in New York City went on strike demanding higher wages. The strike rapidly spread to ports along the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico. The strike reached Galveston on March 19 when 1,600 dockworkers and screwmen from eleven white and eleven black locals of the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) went out against the Mallory and Morgan shipping companies demanding higher wages.[1003]

[1000] *Ferguson Forum*, May 27, July 1, 22, 1920; *San Marcos Record*, July 30, 1920; T.A. Hickey to W.H. Flowers, March 15, 1920, Thomas A. Hickey Papers.

[1001] Green, *Grass-Roots Socialism*, 346-347.

[1002] Green, *Grass-Roots Socialism*, 346.

After an initial bout of violence in which strikers attempted to keep strikebreakers off the Mallory lines, the Galveston strike proceeded with relatively little violence. This did not keep local business associations from urging the governor to declare martial law in order to end the strike and resume normal business. Galveston business leaders desired state intervention because they felt the city government, including the police department, was prolabor and was doing little to stop the strike. In the 1919 elections a prolabor political coalition that included black and white dockworkers, under the name of the City Party, swept the Galveston elections. The local government stood as at least a neutral force attempting to maintain order and safety for both sides of the dispute.[1004]

Yielding to business interests, Governor Hobby on June 7 declared martial law in Galveston. Hobby's order sent more than a thousand state militiamen to the island in order to enforce a ban on public gatherings and loitering, and to protect strikebreakers. Galveston City Commissioners protested Governor Hobby's action and continued to support and enact prolabor demands such as higher taxes on the city wharfs. Seeing that the city government was overly sympathetic to the black and white striking dockworkers, Governor Hobby on July 14 suspended the mayor, commissioners, city attorney, city recorder, and the police force and gave General Wolter, of the Texas National Guard, control of Galveston. In October 1920, Hobby and state Democrats further infuriated organized labor by enacting an open port law that banned any actions (i.e. strikes) that might hinder the free passage of trade within the state. Supporters of labor correctly viewed the open port law for what it was, a piece of antistrike legislation, and denounced

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[1003] Andrews, "Black Working-Class Political Activism and Biracial Unionism," 646.

[1004] Andrews, "Black Working-Class Political Activism and Biracial Unionism,"628, 640, 647-648.

it as such.[1005]

Earlier in August, the American Party had held a national convention in Fort Worth. The convention confirmed former Democratic state senator T.H. McGregor of Austin as its candidate for governor and the pro-labor platform adopted earlier in the year. To keep up appearances as a national party Ferguson was nominated as the American Party's candidate for president of the United States.[1006]

The American Party was not a regional anomaly, but rather part of the nationwide farmer-labor political movement that existed during this era. In July 1920, Ferguson, representing the American Party, attended a conference in Chicago instigated by John Fitzpatrick, president of the Chicago Federation of Labor. This conference brought together a wide array of political organizations for the purpose of creating a national labor party. Éamon de Valera even attended as part of his mission to gain international recognition for the Republic of Ireland. Due to a number of political and tactical disputes the conference failed to produce a true national party. This conference, however, was the first in a series of conferences that proved instrumental in paving the way for Robert La Follette's run for the presidency in 1924.[1007]

Immediately upon returning to Texas, Ferguson ended the American Party's affiliation with the Chicago conference. He gave his reasons for leaving the national third party movement as "due to the lack of vision on the part of its leaders, the provincialism

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[1005] *Dallas Morning News*, June 8, 1920; Andrews, "Black Working-Class Political Activism and Biracial Unionism," 640-648, 652; *Dallas Morning News*, August 12, 1920, October 9, 1920; *Ferguson Forum*, October 21, 1920.

[1006] *Semi-Weekly Farm News*, August 13, 1920; Ferguson *Forum*, August 12, 1920.

[1007] *Dallas Morning News*, July 13, 1920; The first chapter of Lowell K. Dyson's *Red Harvest: The Communist Party and American Farmers*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982) provides an excellent brief history of the farmer-labor movement from 1919-1925.

of its platform ideas, and the restriction of its political geography."[1008] That Ferguson attended the conference at all was undoubtedly the result of the influence of individuals from the Texas farm-labor bloc that transformed the character of the American Party. For over a year before the conference, the Meitzens, Hickey, and Hall had been in dialogue with the Committee of Forty-Eight about Texas and Nonpartisan League representation at the Chicago conference. Even after Ferguson ended his affiliation with the Chicago conference, E.R. Meitzen and Hickey organized a meeting in Dallas between representatives the NPL, SP, the Union Labor Party, the American Party and the Committee of 48 to continue political collaboration.[1009] It can easily be argued that Ferguson used the American Party presidential nomination as a vehicle to keep himself before the Texas electorate with his sights on the U.S. Senate seat coming up for election in 1922. Ferguson did not campaign outside of Texas, and even within the state his electioneering was on a small scale.[1010]

While Ferguson's campaign for president was a fake, the American Party ran an extensive campaign for McGregor for governor. His campaign received a major boost when the TSFL endorsed him. When Hobby signed the open port bill, McGregor quickly denounced it. After a meeting on October 13, the executive board of the TSFL issued a statement saying that the Democratic Party had betrayed wage workers and a parting of ways between the party and labor had occurred. The TSFL executive board then endorsed McGregor over the Democratic candidate for governor Pat M. Neff—who supported the

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[1008] *Dallas Morning News*, July 18, 1920;

[1009] J.A.H. Hopkins to Covington Hall, May 1, 1919, Thomas A. Hickey Papers; C.E. Breniman Report July 24, 1920, Bureau of Investigation, Roll 778.

[1010] *Semi-Weekly Farm News*, August 13, 1920; Ferguson *Forum*, August 12, 1920.

open shop.[1011]

Hobby's actions only added to labor's growing disenchantment with the Democratic Party. Earlier in the year the TSFL had voted to endorse non-partisan political action at is annual state convention. In May, the TSFL state president and secretary attended a meeting in Waco, organized by Meitzen and the NPL, of labor unions and radical organizations on how to approach the 1920 elections. This meeting laid the groundwork for the TSFL's historic break from the Democratic Party.[1012]

With the state and national elections approaching, the strike and declaration of martial law put Galveston's working class, both black and white in a political quandary. Locally, the black Republican newspaper offered no public support to the striking longshoremen. The Black and Tan state leadership was on its way to endorsing the open shop at their state convention in August. They would also soon lose control of the state Republican Party to the Lily White faction of the GOP. When McGregor, declared his opposition to martial law in Galveston, he rapidly gained the support of labor in Galveston [1013]

In Galveston a public meeting was called for the night of June 28 for the purpose of organizing the American Party in the city and nominating candidates for office. In Houston, General Wolter had used words to attack the NPL. Now he used the force of the state against the American Party. On the night of the meeting, troops of the Texas National Guard broke up the gathering and prevented it from happening. Supporters of

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[1011] *Dallas Morning News*, August 12, October 9, 1920; *Ferguson Forum*, October 21, 1920.

[1012] Texas State Federation of Labor, *Proceedings of the Twenty-Third Annual Convention, Cleburne, Texas, April 26 to May 1, 1920*, 127; Robert E. Anderson, "The History of the Farm Labor Union in Texas," (M.A. Thesis, University of Texas – Austin, 1928), 15.

[1013] *Dallas Morning News*, August 11, 1920; Andrews, "Black Working-Class Political Activism and Biracial Unionism," 636, 654; Casdorth, *A History of the Republican Party in Texas*, 5-6, 40.

the American Party eventually did get together and nominated a slate of local candidates supported by black and white unionists and endorsed McGregor for governor. Galveston unionists continued campaigning for the American Party throughout the summer of 1920 and held a county convention on July 31. However, by October Galveston supporters of the American Party decided to no longer run their candidates on the American Party ticket and opted instead to run state representatives on the nonpartisan Independent Citizen's ticket. The historical record does not reveal the exact reasons for this sudden switch, though, actions by Ferguson and the top leadership of the American Party do offer some reasons.[1014]

On October 14 on the front page of the *Ferguson Forum*, James Ferguson issued an appeal titled "Republican Brethren; Let Us Dwell Together!" Ferguson states, "The first thing to be done to make political reform possible in Texas is to beat the democrats and forever drive them from power as a state or national organization." To achieve this Ferguson called upon Republicans who want a "new deal in Texas government" to vote for the American Party, being that the Republican Party realistic stood no chance of defeating the Democrats on their own and that both the Republican and American Parties opposed the League of Nations.[1015]

Ferguson in his statement appealed to Republicans in general; however, a few days later Black and Tan Republicans revealed Ferguson was addressing only a particular set of Republicans. A leader of the Black and Tans publicly exposed a deal between Ferguson and the Lily White Republicans that had been in the works for the previous

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[1014] *Ferguson Forum*, July 1, August 19, 1920; Andrews, "Black Working-Class Political Activism and Biracial Unionism," 655.

[1015] *Ferguson Forum*, October 14, 1920.

three months. He claimed that the Lily Whites agreed to endorse American Party candidates in "certain districts" and the American Party agreed to endorse Lily Whites in the ninth and fourteenth congressional districts. The fourteenth district, at this time, existed southwest of Houston, along the coast of the Gulf of Mexico to Calhoun County and headed inland and had a large population of African Americans and supporters of the Black and Tan faction. The ninth district was west of the fourteenth to Nueces County and went further inland north to include San Antonio. In 1920, the ninth district elected Black and Tan Republican Harry M. Wurzbach to Congress. Wurzbach went on to become the first Republican to be elected for more than two terms from Texas since Reconstruction. He also was the only representative from Texas to vote for the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill in 1922.[1016] In Galveston one could see how the American Party's political arrangement with the Lily Whites could easily compromise the biracial unionism and interracial political alliance that existed between the city's black and white workers causing them to leave the American Party.

As Ferguson's political chicanery lost the American Party much of the black vote, expected foes--Democrats and open shop supporters--stepped up their campaign against the American Party. Despite the official endorsement of organized labor, McGregor came in a distant third in the race for governor with 69,380 votes. While L.L. Rhodes, an old standard bearer of the Socialist Party received 6,796 votes. When the American Party and SP votes are combined, 15.8 % of voters chose a labor-based alternative to the two major parties.[1017]

[1016] *Dallas Morning News*, October 20, 1920, January 27, 1922; Jeanette H. Flachmeier, "WURZBACH, HARRY MCLEARY," *Handbook of Texas Online*; United States Census. *Census Reports*. Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the year 1920.

The 1920 election also revealed a conservative bloc of nearly 39% of the electorate. In this reconfigured electoral map, progressive Wilsonian Democrats no longer held a majority, but instead only a slim plurality. For the record Ferguson received 47,968 votes (9.9%) for president in his Texas only campaign, draining farmer-labor support from prison-bound Eugene Debs, who received 8,121 votes in Texas. Nationally, Debs received his highest vote total ever.[1018]

The American Party, though defeated in the big races, could take heart in a number of victories. For a party in existence for only over a year it had significantly reduced the margin of Democratic victory for statewide offices. It also won four counties---Austin, Fayette, Lavaca, and Washington--in the highly populated area of Central Texas. These counties also held large German populations, and blacks made up 44% of Washington County. Residents of Washington County elected H.J. Neinast to the State Legislature on the American ticket. The 127th District of Fayette and Austin counties did the same when Otto Memking of Ellinger defeated longtime prominent Democratic member of the House Leonard Tillotson, a banker from Sealy. This gave the American Party two representatives in the House. In Fayette and Lavaca counties, the old and current homes of the Meitzens, the American Party defeated every Democratic candidate it ran against for county office. Unfortunately, no copies of the Meitzen's *New Era* exist

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[1017] For election results see http://www.texasalmanac.com/topics/elections/elections-texas-governors-1845–2010 (accessed March 2, 2013); Andrews, "Black Working-Class Political Activism and Biracial Unionism," 656.

[1018] *Ferguson Forum*, November 18, 25, 1920; *Dallas Morning News*, November 4, 5, 7, 1920; In Galveston, the City Party candidates, backed by the city's black and white unionists, won every office on the City Commission. However, this election victory was not enough to prevent the defeat of the dockworkers' strike. In December 1920, after nine months on strike black dockworkers at Mallory returned to work with a modest raise, though now without a union as the open shop was forced on them. At Morgan white dockworkers returned to work along black strikebreakers the company kept on, creating racial tensions between black and white workers. Andrews, "Black Working-Class Political Activism and Biracial Unionism," 661-662.

from this period. One can surmise, however, from the available sources that the Meitzens supported the American Party. The offices won by the American Party in Lavaca County included J.A. Sommerlatte as county judge, as well as the offices of county clerk, sheriff, tax collector, tax assessor, and one seat on the four position county commission. Austin County also elected an American Party sheriff. With Prohibition in effect, having a county sheriff opposed to Prohibition, and thus likely to look the other way, was important to the drinking culture of area Germans.[1019]

While some Texas farmers might be able to hide their drink, none could hide from the deteriorating economic conditions. The national value of crops had dropped over half their value since 1919 from $15, 423, 000, 000 to $7, 028, 000, 000 in 1921. Cotton, the principle cash crop, took 20 to 35 cents per pound to grow, while much of the 1920 crop only sold for 10 cents per pound. Cattle bought earlier for $40 a head was by 1921 only worth $8 a head. Just about everything farmers produced they had to sell at less than the cost of production. At the same time consumer products sold near the level of high wartime prices.[1020]

Following a now old Texas tradition, sixty-nine farmers of Fannin County, along the Texas-Oklahoma border, got together and formed a protest organization in order to address their economic grievances. On October 30, 1920 the Farm-Labor Union of America (FLUA) was founded headed by W.W. Fitzwater. In describing the creation of the FLUA one of the founding farmers said, "The Farm-Labor Union of America is the

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[1019] *Ferguson Forum*, November 18, 25, 1920; *Dallas Morning News*, November 4, 5, 7, 1920; Walter D. Kamphoefner, "The Handwriting on the Wall: The Klan, Language Issues, and Prohibition in the German Settlements of Eastern Texas," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, Vol. CXII, No. 1 (July 2008), 54, 61, 64.

[1020] Robert Lee Hunt, *A History of Farmer Movements in the Southwest, 1873-1925* (College Station: A. and M. Press, A. and M. College of Texas, 1935), 147.

heir of all the good points of the … other farmers' organizations that have gone before."[1021] Another farmer stated, "I belonged to the Farmers' Alliance until it passed away and to the Farmers' Union as long as it lasted, but the Farm-Labor Union is the only dirt farmers' organization we ever have had and I feel proud of it principles. I am 66 years of age and do not miss a meeting."[1022] The FLUA thus fell into the direct line of farmer-labor protest organizations in Texas dating back to the 1870s. The new organization soon grew to 125,000 members in Texas and spread into Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida totaling around 300,000 members. The FLUA was unique compared to other agricultural organizations of its day in that it only allowed into membership working farmers, while the Farm Bureau for example allowed lawyers, merchants, and bankers into its ranks. Many of the eventual leading organizers and supporters of the FLUA were old Populists and socialists such as L.L. Rhodes (who had also joined the NPL), Hall, and E.R. Meitzen.[1023]

Like the Farmers' Alliance before, the FLUA fashioned itself as a nonpartisan organization claiming no political or religious affiliations. However, the FLUA followed a different political trajectory from that of the Farmers' Alliance. The Farmers' Alliance contained within it a number of members who advocated for independent political action separate from the dominant two-party system. They helped develop a movement culture

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[1021] Hunt, *History of Farmer Movements in the Southwest*, 145; Quote from *Dallas Morning News*, August 2, 1921.

[1022] *Constitution and By-laws of the Farm-Labor Union of America, March 1, 1924*, DeGolyer Library, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas; *Farm-Labor Union News*, September 18, 1925 quoted in Hunt, *History of Farmer Movements in the Southwest*, 146.

[1023] *Semi-Weekly Farm News*, December 12, 1922; *Dallas Morning News*, March 15, 1922; Hunt, *History of Farmer Movements in the Southwest*, 146; *Nonpartisan Leader*, June28, 1920; Covington Hall to William Lemke, April 26, 1924, William Lemke Papers, 1901-1950, Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, North Dakota. Hereafter referred to Lemke Papers.

that lead to the creation of the People's Party, which transitioned into the SP. Economic issues stood paramount for both the Populists and Socialists, though, they each also addressed social issues. The majority of Populists supported woman suffrage and the SP had a strong record of championing women's rights. Both movements also made genuine attempts to reach out to and organize African Americans and later Mexican Americans even though at times these efforts were often tenuous and strained by a non-violent form of white supremacy. The FLUA, however, never developed the movement culture of its predecessors or formed an independent political party of its own--fashioning itself as more of a business organization. More portentous, the FLUA focused overwhelmingly on economic issues and remained virtually silent on social issues. The purely economical objectives of FLUA left it ill prepared to combat another fledging organization on the rise at the same time as theirs--the Ku Klux Klan.[1024]

Three weeks before the creation of the FLUA, the United Confederate Veterans wrapped up their annual reunion in Houston with a parade on October 9, 1920. In the parade was William J. Simmons, the Imperial Wizard of the Georgia KKK, followed by a float and white-robed Klansmen. The Klan had arrived in Texas. Before heading back to Georgia, Simmons laid the groundwork for the Texas KKK that would grow to as many as 80,000 members. Before the Klan's just as swift implosion after 1926, the KKK in Texas gained partial or complete control of every major Texas city, except San Antonio and Galveston, and also elected a U.S. Senator and very nearly a governor.[1025]

[1024] *Constitution and By-laws of the Farm-Labor Union of America,* Article 1, Section 1; *Semi-Weekly Farm News*, December 24, 1920; On the movement culture of Populism see Lawrence Goodwyn, *The Democratic Promise: The Populist Moment in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976).

[1025] Charles C. Alexander, *The Crusade for Conformity: the Ku Klux Klan in Texas, 1920-1930* (Houston: Texas Gulf Coast Historical Association, 1962), 1, 5, 9, 13.

While the Klan drew almost everyone's attention with large torch-lit parades of hooded men carrying American flags and burning crosses, the FLUA attracted the attention of organized labor. Without having heard of the FLUA previously, TSFL president George H. Slater Slater noticed that the FLUA actively campaigned against the Industrial Domestic Court Bill in the Texas legislature. Industrial Courts, popular with Progressive reformers of this period, were being proposed and adopted by a number of states as a supposedly neutral court to mediate conflicts between labor and capital. However, almost universally the courts sided with capital and hence were opposed by organized laborers and farmers. Wanting to learn more about the FLUA, Slater reached out to an associate familiar with the FLUA and learned of its rapid growth and organizing across the Southwest. Acknowledging Slater's interest the FLUA invited him to its May 1921 convention. Slater reciprocated by inviting FLUA president W.W. Fitzwater to address the TSFL's convention later in the month where he was warmly received.[1026]

A month after the May 1921 TSFL convention, Samuel Gompers at the AFL convention in Denver made forming political alliances between organized labor and farm organizations a national policy of the AFL. Across Texas, FLUA members became regular participants in local labor councils and trade unionists participated in FLUA meetings.[1027]

Just as 1921 was a particularly devastating year economically for farmers, it was for workers as well. In the spring, the Railroad Labor Board gave approval for railroad corporations to cut wages at nearly one hundred railroads--even after railroad unions

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[1026] *Semi-Weekly Farm News*, May 24, 1921; Texas State Federation of Labor, *Proceedings of the Twenty-Fourth Annual Convention, Galveston, Texas, May 16-20, 1921*, 97-98; *Dallas Morning* News, May 18, 1921; Semi-*Weekly Farm News*, February 22, 1921.

[1027] *Semi-Weekly Farm News*, June 24, 1921, July 12, 1921, January 17, March, 24, 1922.

pointed out the average rail worker earned an average of $157.46 a month while incurring $153.50 a month in subsistence expenditures. The Open Shop campaign was also in full swing threatening the very existence of unions. Pushed to the brink of economic ruin the farm and labor organizations began to put their proclamations of farmer-labor political unity into action for the 1922 elections. They would have do so, however, without the American Party.[1028]

Workers and farmers of Texas had used the American Party as a vehicle to advocate their demands in continuity with the farmer-labor bloc, though Ferguson still held control of the party machinery. On January 28, 1922, the executive committee of the American Party officially disbanded the American Party. At the same time Ferguson announced himself as a candidate for the U.S. Senate in the 1922 election as a Democrat.[1029]

In early 1921, E.R. Meitzen, along with Hall, returned to North Dakota. The NPL in March 1920 had successfully gained approval of an amendment to the North Dakota constitution allowing for an election to recall elected officials. Just over a year later, the Independent Voters Association (IVA), an organization opposed to the NPL, would use the recall against it. The IVA gained enough signatures to call a special an election for the purpose of recalling the NPL"s governor Lynn Frazier, attorney general William Lemke, and commissioner of agriculture John Hagen.[1030]

Meitzen and Hall joined the campaign against the recall. That campaign failed. Voters made the NPL leaders the first statewide office holders to be recalled in U.S.

[1028] *Semi-Weekly Farm News*, April 22, May 10, 1922.

[1029] *Ferguson Forum*, February 2, 1922.

[1030] Lansing, *Insurgent Democracy*, 233-239.

history. The NPL had been ousted from power by its own democratic measures. Four days later, Townley entered a jail in Jackson, Minnesota to serve a ninety-day sentence after being found guilty of disloyalty during the war. The NPL was in tatters, and the organization would slowly fade away over the next few years.[1031]

Early in December 1921, Meitzen left North Dakota to return to Texas. Once back, he jumped into the work of continuing to bring organized labor and farmers together for joint political action.[1032] Meeting as the Nonpartisan Political Conference representatives of the FLUA, TSFL, the NPL, and the four Railway Brotherhoods met five times from late 1921 to April 1922 to discuss an electoral strategy for the coming election. Out of these meetings, they agreed upon a declaration of principles. The principles included exemption from taxation of farm and city homestead improvements, the establishment of a Texas state-owned bank, "the elimination of profiteering and all forms of fictitious future dealing in necessities of life," the abolition of the poll tax, a women's minimum wage law, the right to collectively bargain, improving the educational system, and opposition to convict labor. The conference chose Bonham lawyer Fred S. Rogers as its candidate for governor. The Nonpartisan Political Conference decided to work within the Democratic Party on a statewide level and on the local level to leave it to the judgment of local conferences as to how to approach municipal elections.[1033]

The political tactics of the NPL made a farmer-labor political alliance in Texas more palatable to organized labor than it had been during the Populist era of the 1890s.

[1031] Lansing, *Insurgent Democracy*, 238-239.

[1032] Covington Hall to William Lemke, December 10, 1921, Lemke Papers; *The National Rip-Saw*, January, 1922.

[1033] *Dallas Morning News*, October 30, 1921; Texas State Federation of Labor, *Proceedings of the Twenty-Fifth Annual Convention, El Paso, Texas, April 17-21, 1922*, 45-46; *Semi-Weekly Farm News*, April 25, 1922; *Ferguson Forum*, May 4, 1922.

These tactics then became the tactics of the FLUA after Meitzen orchestrate the merger of the Texas NPL with the FLUA sometime between April and December 1922. Through the merger, Meitzen became the editor of the FLUA's newspaper the *Farm Labor Union News*.[1034] Both organized labor and agrarian radicals had long shared a producerist ideology in which those that did the work to create products deserved the just rewards of their labor and political power equal to their numbers. However, up until the 1920s the organizations of the farmer-labor bloc agitated for their political demands through political parties independent of the two-party system, while much of organized labor worked within this system.

Since agrarian radicals in Texas now sought to run candidates within the Democratic primary instead of creating a separate party, this made it much easier for organized labor to join them in a political coalition. The TSFL's endorsement of the American Party in 1920 had caused dissention within the federation and not creating a new party was more in line with the stance of the national AFL. Slater, as president of the TSFL, also stated that he did not see the intentions of the Nonpartisan Political Conference as leading to the creation of a new labor party. The Railway Brotherhoods as well did not want to cut ties with the Democrats as they were backing the former head of the U.S. Railroad Administration, William Gibbs McAdoo, as the Democratic nominee for president in 1924.[1035]

The business union orientation of the FLUA also eased its political coalition with organized labor. Previous unions of the farmer-labor bloc, in particular the Land League

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[1034] Anderson, "The History of the Farm Labor Union in Texas,"15-16, 59; L.J. Sulak to C.F. Goodridge, undated (December 1922?), reproduced in Anderson, Ibid., 97.

[1035] *Semi-Weekly Farm News*, February 10, April 25, 1922; Sanders, *Roots of Reform: Farmers*, 415.

and FLPA practiced what today is termed social movement unionism. Organizing beyond immediate workplace issues and tackling broader social and political struggles characterizes social movement unionism. The FLUA did have a producerist critique of early twentieth century capitalism and endorsed political candidates; however, the organizations overriding concern was the economic interests of its members. The business union model also typified the AFL and Railroad Brotherhoods who represented the economic interests of their members above all else.[1036]

In previous electoral cycles an economically dominated platform would have sufficed for the farmer-labor political coalition of the Nonpartisan Political Conference. 1922, though, was not a normal election year. When the Klan entered politics in 1922 its opponents in the farmer-labor bloc and in the black community had few ways to fight the Klan through the ballot. The entirely economic demands of the FLUA left it unarmed to combat the social based politics of the KKK. In fact, some of the socially conservative positions the farmer-labor bloc acquiesced to while in the American Party were not far from those of the Klan. For example the FLUA endorsed former Populist turned Klansman, J.H. "Cyclone" Davis for U.S. Congress. At the July 1922 meeting of the Anderson County FLUA, whether one believed in unionism took precedence over whether or not one belonged to the KKK as the deciding factor in choosing candidates for county office.[1037]

This did not mean that the FLUA lacked black support as seen in a letter to the

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[1036] *Semi-Weekly Farm News*, May 19, 1922; For the business union practices of the FLUA see Hunt, *A History of Farmer Movements in the Southwest, 1873-1925*, 162-182.

[1037] *Farm Labor Union News*, July 22, 1922. This is the only know copy of this newspaper in existence and is held at the labor archive of the University of Texas–Arlington. A two-year run of the *Farm Labor Union News* was lost by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's history archive; *Dallas Morning News*, July 13, 1922. Anderson County is southeast of Dallas.

FLUA newspaper, the *Farm Labor Union News*, from George Starks of Independent Springs. He wrote:

> I am a colored man, one hundred per cent union and I am with you white people to the last ditch. I joined this F.L.U. of A., from a business standpoint and consider it the last resort for freedom. Our race never asks for anything, but we surely will take anything you white people will give us. Now you have given me the Union fever and I can not get set well until we get every man in office we want and carry out all the purposes of the Union.[1038]

He goes on to identify himself as belonging to a colored local of the FLUA. The letter shows the problematic political choices faced by African Americans in Texas. The lack of primary source materials on the FLUA leaves one without knowing whether segregated locals were the norm across Texas or if there were any integrated locals.

When the axis of Texas politics tilted on either pro or anti-Klan, as it did beginning in 1922, the economic issues of the farmer-labor bloc were drowned out. Rogers received 195, 941 votes in the Democratic primary, coming in second to Klan backed incumbent Governor Pat Neff with 289, 188 votes.[1039]

The combined farmer/labor vote clearly did not materialized to propel Rogers to the governor's mansion. The farm vote did turn out, though, as local FLUA supported candidates won in thirty Senate and House races. In seven counties practically the entire FLUA slate was elected. In Lavaca County, residents elected E.O. Meitzen as county surveyor—a position he held until 1929.[1040]

[1038] *Farm Labor Union News*, July 22, 1922.

[1039] For election results see http://www.texasalmanac.com/topics/elections/elections-texas-governors-1845–2010 (accessed March 2, 2013); Anderson, "The History of the Farm Labor Union in Texas," 57.

[1040] *Dallas Morning News*, July 28, August 29, 1922; Anderson, "The History of the Farm Labor Union in Texas," 65-66; *Semi-Weekly Hallettsville Herald*, October 31, 1924, November 12, 1926

While the elections results show that farmers in large supported Rogers, the same could not be said for unionized workers. There are a few reasons to possibly explain the lack of labor's support at the polls. During the campaign the *Dallas Morning News* reported that in the 1920 primary election Rogers supported Joseph Bailey for governor and attacked organized labor. A number of trade union officials came to the defense of Rogers as a supporter of organized labor. They stated Rogers made no such anti-labor statements and that his speech in support of Bailey was "along the line of Jeffersonian Democracy and urging people to stand by a man who believed in state rights." Bailey endorsing Rogers did not help his case.[1041]

Another factor in workers not voting for Rogers was the 1922 railroad strike. On July 1, a few weeks before the Texas Democratic primary, the Railroad Brotherhoods, in reaction to railroad corporations carrying out the Railroad Labor Board's approved wage cuts, went out on a national strike. In the lead-up to the primary election, Governor Neff, refused to call out the Texas Guard against the strikers and remained quiet on the strike. Neff's silence seems to have won him the good faith of organized labor. Once Neff won the primary, however, he declared martial law in strike centers and sent in the Texas Guard and Texas Rangers to put down the strike.[1042]

Despite labor being duped into supporting Neff, the FLUA stood by the strikers. It condemned Neff's declaration of martial law and lent material aid to striking railroad workers. FLUA president Fitzwater in addressing striking shopmen in Childress said, "Your fight is our fight, and you have got to win … I want to tell you that we are with

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[1041] "Union Record of Rogers Defended" and "To the Voters of Texas," *Southwestern Railway Journal*, Vol. XVI, No. 5, May, 1922, 10, 15; *Semi-Weekly Farm-News*, July 15, 1922; Texas State Federation of Labor, *Proceedings of the Twenty-Sixth Annual Convention, 1923*, 90.

[1042] *Semi-Weekly Farm-News*, July 18, 28, August 11, 1922.

you to the finish. If you need food, remember that we have bulls in the pasture, hogs in the pen, and peas and corn in the field. When you need it come and get all you need–it's free." After a federal injunction, the strike quickly collapsed to the detriment of the workers with union locals negotiating regional rather than national contracts.[1043]

While the primary election had produced a gubernatorial candidate for the Democrats in Neff, the U.S. senatorial race required a run-off. More than any other candidate in the 1922 election, former state senator and Texas railroad commissioner Earle B. Mayfield for the U.S. Senate received the full support of the Klan. Widely suspected to be a member of the KKK, Mayfield faced Ferguson in the run-off. The hotly contested campaign was waged almost solely on the Klan issue. Though holding racist white supremacist beliefs, Ferguson was firmly against the Klan. Ferguson believed in the rule of law and opposed the vigilantism of the KKK. He called a Klan member a "foolish fanatic," who is "wasting all them sheets and pillow cases to cover yourself up … scaring women and children and ignorant colored people." As a state's rights Jeffersonian, Ferguson supported the separation of church and state against the Klan's Christian Invisible Empire. Additionally, he opposed Klan supported federal prohibition. Mayfield defeated Ferguson 273,308 to 228,701. Ferguson having widely courted the labor vote in his campaign blamed his defeat on union workers voting for Mayfield. Ferguson offered little proof for his accusation. In fact, the Nonpartisan Political Conference had endorsed Ferguson. Mayfield's victory, though, could not have been

[1043] *Semi-Weekly Farm-News*, August 8, 11, 18, September 5, 1922; "The Farmer's Best Friend," *Locomotive Engineers Journal*, August, 1922, 575; George Norris Green and Michael R. Boston, Jr., "Looking for Lefty: Liberal/Left Activism and Texas Labor, 1920s-1960s" in *The Texas Left: The Radical Roots of Lone Star Liberalism*, ed. David O'Donald Cullen and Kyle G. Wilkison (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2010), 115-116.

achieved without working-class votes and he went on to win the general election.[1044]

After the 1922 election it was becoming clear that Black and Tan Republicans were losing their fight against the Lily Whites for control of the Republican Party. C.F. Richardson, Jr., secretary of the Houston NAACP and editor and owner of the newspaper the *Houston Informer* lambasted the election campaign stating, "Neither the republicans nor independent democrats made any concerted effort to secure the colored vote, and thus the black man took only passing notice of the grand political parade."[1045] Richardson also noted the growing trend of African-Americans across the U.S. voting Democratic. This was due in part to the failure of the Republican-controlled U.S. Senate to support the Dyer anti-lynching bill. As a result northern Democrats began to actively court black votes. In Texas African Americans had begun voting for anti-Klan Democrats. Ferguson, who despite his racism, ran an anti-Klan campaign, reportedly received 3500 black votes in Bexar County in the Democratic primary.[1046]

Though winning the 1922 elections, Texas Democrats were fearful of the latent possibility of a united farmer-labor and black vote. Blacks, where allowed, were now voting in the Democratic primary. The FLUA was encouraging its members and allies to run in the Democratic primary and the anti-Klan senatorial candidate achieved the significant feat of obtaining 130, 744 votes as a write-in. That these forces might unite to rejuvenate an old party was quite plausible. Richardson in an April 1923 editorial wrote,

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[1044] *Semi-Weekly Farm-News*, July 18, August 22, 1922; For election results see *Texas Almanac*, "Elections/senatorial-elections-and-primaries-1906–2008," *online*; *Ferguson Forum*, September 14, 1922; Anderson, "The History of the Farm Labor Union in Texas," 59; *Dallas Morning News*, August 4, 5, 10, 1922.

[1045] *Houston Informer*, November 11, 1922.

[1046] *Houston Informer*, December 23, 1922, April 21, 28, 1923; Brown, *Hood, Bonnet, and Little Brown Jug*, 150; *Semi-Weekly Farm News*, August 15, 1922.

"this paper [the *Houston Informer*] believes that both the republican and democratic parties, as such have outlived their days of usefulness and that sooner or later they must pass off the scene or be politically rejuvenated and renovated."[1047]

White supremacist Democrats saw the writing on the wall. The 1903 Terrell Election Law proved inadequate in stopping blacks from vote. This law empowered county executive committees of parties to decide who could vote in local elections. In many counties Democrats prevented blacks from voting. In others, they allowed blacks to vote, often in order to manipulate the vote. In theory, if farmer-labor activists gained control of a county's Democratic Party machinery they could allow blacks to vote. With pro-Klan legislators now in control of both Texas houses after the 1922 elections they took action to stop this from ever happening. Representative Douglas Davenport introduced a primary-election bill that was referred to as the "white man's primary law." Passed in May 1923 by a vote of 93 to 10, the new law effectively disenfranchised black Texans from the electoral process.[1048]

The farmer-labor bloc of Texas in fighting under the banner of the American Party during the 1920 election abandoned its often tenuous but at times progressive history of support for women's rights and racial equality. The attempts by farmer-labor activists over the decades to unite poor farmers and workers across the racial divide had continually resulted in violence against their movements by white supremacists. By the 1920s, white farmer-labor activists seemed to have decided to ignore racial and other

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[1047] *Farm Labor Union News*, July 22, 1922; *Houston Informer*, April 21, 1923.

[1048] *Semi-Weekly Farm News*, June 5, 1923; Brown, *Hood, Bonnet, and Little Brown Jug*, 144-145, 149; Texas Legislature, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the First Called Session of the Thirty-Eighth Legislature, Begun and Held at the City of Austin, March 15, 1923*, 41-42, 53, 376-378, 446.

social issues and focus purely on economics in the hopes of not once again bringing the wrath of white supremacists down on their movement.

The bridge connecting the farmer-labor bloc to social conservatives was a shared belief in Jeffersonian democracy. Throughout this period Jefferson democracy was invoked by both archconservatives, such as Joseph Bailey, and radical southern socialists, like the Meitzens. At the core, both conservatives and southern socialists shared a common definition of Jeffersonian democracy–an opposition to centralized authority. What divided the two was the farmer-labor bloc's producerist ideology, which stood in opposition to conservative's faith in free market liberalism. The farmer-labor bloc of the 1890s-1910s also still believed that the state could play a positive role if controlled by producers. This belief was manifested in the call for a Cooperative Commonwealth.[1049]

The seeds of social conservatism and a diluted producerism had long existed in the farmer-labor bloc. It took the state-sponsored repression of labor and agrarian radicals surrounding World War I for them to germinate. Being an outspoken radical became a danger that could lead to jail, deportation, or even death. Following the war the farmer-labor bloc in Texas avoided the outward appearance of radicalism that its members had previously embraced.

A transition from a producerist to a consumerist worldview among many farmer-labor intellectuals was also occurring at this time. Historian Kathleen Donohue sees the germ in the transition from producerism to consumerist liberalism in the consumer cooperatives advocated by labor organizations and agrarian organizations such as the Farmers' Alliance. The FLUA also advocated for consumer cooperatives and it as well as

[1049] Covington Hall, "The Confederate States of the World," *National Rip-Saw*, September, 1922; "Back to Jefferson," *The American Vanguard*, March, 1923.

the TSFL began to employ more consumerist than producerist language. As editor of the *Farm Labor Union News*, E.R. Meitzen became the leading voice of the FLUA's cooperative plans. He entered the ultimate halls of power, testifying in February 1925 before a Congressional committee in Washington in favor of the creation of a federal cooperative marketing board. [1050]

Consumerism took many intellectuals of the farmer-labor bloc down the slope from Marxism to Adam Smith. In this era when being a radical was dangerous, for many a workers cooperative, devoid of class struggle, seemed like an easier path to better the conditions of the working-class than revolution. This helped paved the way for the coming New Deal of the 1930s, which took more of a consumerist than producerist ideology.

The Russian Bolshevik Revolution also played a factor in the farmer-labor bloc's changing view of the state. After overthrowing Tsarist rule, the workers and peasants of the Soviet Union faced colossal obstacles in their efforts to implement a soviet form of government. The ever-changing news from the Soviet Union left many in the farmer-labor bloc wondering about their own demands for a producerist-run society. The FLUA did explore ways to sell cotton to the Soviet Union and FLUA president Fitzwater planed a visit to Moscow in August 1923. Neither happened. After V. I. Lenin's death in January 1924 and the rise of Joseph Stalin, the Soviet Union became more of a nightmare than a model workers state.[1051]

[1050] Kathleen G. Donohue, *Freedom From Want: American Liberalism and the Idea of the Consumer* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2003), 4, 27, 187, 191, 198; *Semi-Weekly Farm News*, March 31, 1922; Texas State Federation of Labor, *Proceedings of the Twenty-Sixth Annual Convention, 1923*, 46, 74; *Ogden* (Utah) *Standard Examiner*, February 19, 1925.

[1051] *Dallas Morning News*, August 24, 1923.

Within Jeffersonian ideology sits a basic contradiction–democracy versus individualism. Jeffersonian ideology champions the yeoman and artisan free from restraints of a centralized government, while it also advocates democracy--as in the common good of the people. Producers control of a regulatory state was the main contradiction in the farmer-labor blocs devotion to Jeffersonian democracy. The farmer-labor bloc had experienced how a capitalist-controlled state could crush its dreams for a Cooperative Commonwealth through court injunctions, martial law, industrial courts, and the Federal Reserve. A Stalinized Soviet Union made them question if the state could ever be used to the benefit of workers and farmers.

Ferguson and others like him held no contradictions in their interpretation of Jeffersonian democracy when it came to the role of government. They opposed what they saw as an excessive use of federal intrusions by the Wilson administration in the form of prohibition, women's suffrage, the Federal Reserve, and support for a global centralized authority in the League of Nations. The Jeffersonian beliefs of Ferguson bore a striking resemblance to the anti-state beliefs of today's Tea Party and rightwing libertarians. Much as did Ferguson, conservative talk radio host Glenn Beck hates Wilson, seeing him as the root of progressivism in America and thus everything that is wrong with America.[1052]

The FLUA, TSFL, and Railroad Brotherhoods continued their political alliance into the 1924 elections. The results were much the same as they had been in 1922 with

[1052] Glenn Beck, "On this date in 1924 Woodrow Wilson died," http://www.glennbeck.com/2012/02/03/on-this-date-in-1924-woodrow-wilson-died/ and http://www.glennbeck.com/becku/presidentsyoushouldhate.php (accessed May 28, 2013); See also Robert Johnston, "Long Live Teddy / Death to Woodrow: The Polarized Politics of the Progressive Era in the 2012 Election," *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, Vol. 13 No. 3 (July 2014), 411-443.

their candidates losing again in the Democratic primary and the Klan being the main campaign issue. After the electoral defeats of 1924, organized labor in Texas fell back on the practice of endorsing established Democratic candidates instead of running candidates of their own. The FLUA also began a rapid decline in membership and moved out of politics. [1053] E.R. Meitzen by this time had a growing family and he looked to a booming Florida to start anew. The political trajectory of the farmer-labor bloc would, in turn, follow that of Florida's economy, busting by the late 1920s.

The farmer-labor bloc of Texas, in adopting the election tactics of the NPL and losing, was now left without an independent political party of its own. The White Primary law completely prevented African-Americans from participating in the only meaningful election in Texas--that of the Democratic primary. When white agrarian radicals abandoned the black working class, a rejuvenated interracial political alliance reminiscent of the Populist era became an improbability. Instead the farmer-labor bloc led itself into a Democratic Party dominated by socially conservative, anti-statist Jeffersonian Democrats. Texas ceased being a hotbed of economic radicalism, but instead one of social conservatism--a transition that has had lasting political ramifications on the entire nation.

[1053] For the 1924 Texas Democratic primary results see "Election of Texas Governors, 1845-2010," *Texas Almanac*, online. T.W. Davidson was the candidate of the FLUA/TSFL/Railroad Brotherhoods. He came in fourth out of nine candidates; *Semi-Weekly Farm News*, January 5, 1926.

Conclusion

Eugene Debs Has a Bernie Sanders Problem

In 2016, Senator Bernard Sanders of Vermont ran for President in the Democratic primary. From the beginnings of his political career, Sanders has invoked the revolutionary Socialist Eugene Debs as his personal hero. In announcing his campaign, Sanders said, "we will begin a political revolution to transform our country economically, politically, socially and environmentally." He called "the issue of wealth and income inequality … the great moral issue of our time," leading one to recall Debs' presidential campaigns over a century earlier.[1054] "It is immoral and wrong that the top-tenth of 1 percent in this country own almost as much wealth as the bottom 90 percent," Sanders would repeat throughout his campaign.[1055]

The Vermont senator denounced big banks and the corrupting influence of Wall Street on democracy. To address what he felt were "the needs of the American people," he called for a federal works project to create jobs, raising the minimum wage, campaign finance reform, reversing climate change, and health care and a college education for all.[1056] Excluding climate change, all of these demands echoed those of the farmer-labor bloc of the 1870s-1920s. Sanders drew large and enthusiastic crowds, often into the tens of thousands. He took his campaign all the way to the June California primary, while in most recent presidential cycles the outcome had been already determined by March.

[1054] Bernie Sanders, "Text of Bernie's Announcement," May 26, 2015, https://berniesanders.com/bernies-announcement/.

[1055] Washington Post Staff, "The CNN Democratic debate transcript, annotated," *Washington Post*, October 13, 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2015/10/13/the-oct-13-democratic-debate-who-said-what-and-what-it-means/.

[1056] Sanders, "Text of Bernie's Announcement."

In the end, the Sanders campaign came up short and the nomination went to the Wall Street-backed corporate liberal Hillary Clinton. Many of Sanders supporters were indignant. They felt robbed and that the Democratic establishment had rigged the entire process in favor of Clinton. To them Clinton represented everything that is wrong with America and what they were campaigning against. "Bernie or Bust" had served as their rallying cry and with Clinton as the presumptive nominee some Sanders supporters called for him to make an independent run for the presidency.

If Sanders had chosen to run as an independent, in some ways it would have been reminiscent of Senator Robert La Follette's independent presidential campaign of 1924, and not those of Debs. Known as "Fighting Bob," the Wisconsin Senator was a leading advocate of progressive causes and legislation. In 1912, just as Sanders had sought to animate the progressive wing of the Democratic Party for his nomination, La Follette attempted to do the same with progressives in the Republican Party. His efforts were derailed when most progressive Republicans decided to follow Theodore Roosevelt and his Progressive "Bull Moose" campaign. By the 1920s the Republican Party had become an openly pro-business Wall Street backed party, with only a small progressive wing. In 1924, the Republican establishment quickly brushed aside any notion of La Follette being their candidate for president. With the backing of most of the nation's progressive organizations, including the remnants of the farmer-labor bloc, La Follette decided to run for president in 1924 as an independent.

Heading into 1923 it seemed as if decades of exhausting work by the farmer-labor bloc might finally culminate in the creation of a working-class-based political party that

could contend for power nationally. In the three years since John Fitzpatrick's Chicago labor party convention failed to produce a nationally cohesive Farmer-Labor Party in July 1920, conditions had changed dramatically. The election tactics of the NPL after the recall election in 1921 were no longer the poll of attraction they had once been. What the NPL did leave behind, however, were lasting organized farmer and organized labor political coalitions in the West and Upper Great Plains. Similar coalitions were also being built elsewhere, such as that in Texas headed by E.R. Meitzen. In addition, the pro-business attitudes of many leading Democrats created more space for trade union leaders who supported independent political action.

Sensing the sea change, Fitzpatrick once again called a national convention for July 1923 to build a national party based on an alliance of workers and farmers. He sent out invitations far and wide for those interested in building a farmer-labor party to attend. Fitzpatrick, though, did not realize how much the sea had changed. In western states, where the farmer-labor party idea had gained the most traction, communists dominated the movement. Coming out of the left wing of the SP after it was expelled in 1919, the communist Workers Party adopted the tactic of building a broad based farmer-labor party as a step toward a working-class revolution in the U.S. Many members of the Workers Party, particularly in the West and Upper Great Plains, had made the political journey from the SP to the NPL and now the Workers Party. As such, E.R. Meitzen had long standing political relationships with many of these people.[1057]

Fitzpatrick realized many liberal and progressive unions and organizations would not want to form a new party with communists involved. At the last minute he attempted and failed to change the character of the convention from forming a new party to instead

[1057] Dyson, *Red Harvest*, 11.

discussing a platform for a future party. As expected, the liberal and progressive did not attend but the radical farmers did. And maybe not as expected, "The farmers and the Communists found common ground at the convention almost at once," as described by historian Lowell Dyson. Together they cheered the cooperative plans of the Soviet Union, called for producer control of the economy, and for the nationalization of basic industry. The communists even compromised and agreed to adopt agrarian demands that they viewed as too Populistic. Over the objections of Fitzpatrick, who quit, delegates founded the Federated Farmer Labor Party (FFLP).[1058]

When FFLP organizers went into the field, however, they discovered that many states that already had a type of farmer-labor party and were not willing to merge or join the FFLP. The FFLP continued to play a role in the growing farmer-labor party movement, but would not lead it. Stepping into the leadership role would be the farmer-labor coalition of Minnesota—a coalition that the NPL had earlier started and E.R. Meitzen had helped organize. Minnesota farmer-laborers organized a small conference of progressives and farmer-labor organizations, including the FFLP, in November 1923. The conference decided to call a convention to form a new Farmer Labor Party that could rally around La Follette as its choice for president.[1059]

At the same time western farmer-labor radicals were organizing for the 1924 election, so too was the Conference for Progressive Political Action (CPPA). The railroad brotherhoods created the CPPA and organized its first conference in February 1922 attended by representatives of various unions and farm organizations, the Committee of 48, the SP, and advocates of a farmer-labor party. Chicago unionists and the SP desired

[1058] Dyson, *Red Harvest*, 12-13.

[1059] Dyson, *Red Harvest*, 15.

the creation of a third party. The CPPA decided, however, not to create a new party and instead to reward friends of labor within the two dominant parties. Moreover, the railroad brotherhoods saw the CPAA as an instrument to promote William McAdoo's candidacy for the Democratic presidential nomination. The railroad brotherhoods' hope for a McAdoo presidency came to a halt in February 1924 when he was implicated in the Teapot Dome scandal. The CPAA then got behind La Follette.[1060]

With the Farmer Labor Party (FLP) and the CPAA both supporting La Follette, all seemed set for an independent working class party to break the two-party system, make a real challenge for the White House, and have a lasting role in U.S. political culture. Instead the whole thing imploded. FLP supporters saw the 1924 election as the first campaign of a new party. The CPAA, however, did not see a La Follette campaign as the start of, nor did it want the creation of a new party. Instead, it saw his run as a onetime independent campaign devoid of any new party. They hoped La Follette would win, though more importantly they saw the campaign as a way to pressure the two main parties into being friendlier to organized labor. An aging Samuel Gompers also intervened, voicing his opposition to the creation of a new party. Most importantly, La Follette himself refused to be a part of creating a new party. As part of the CPAA coalition, the SP did seek the creation of an American Labor Party. The SP eventually conceded the campaign would only lay the groundwork for a future labor party and not be its first campaign.[1061]

Besides not wanting a new party, the CPAA also disparaged the presence of communists in the FLP. It used the leading role the Workers Party played in organizing

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[1060] Dyson, *Red Harvest*, 17-18.

[1061] *Milwaukee Leader*, April 11, May 16, 1924; Dyson, *Red Harvest*, 19.

the St. Paul convention to denigrate the FLP. The SP also engaged in a sectarian campaign against what it claimed was a communist-controlled FLP. Communists did have a large presence in the FLP. However, if all the delegations arrived in St. Paul that organizers expected to attend, the communists would have been in the minority.[1062]

Under mounting pressure, La Follette on May 28 released a letter in which he disavowed the St. Paul convention as communist-riddled and encouraged any supporters of his not to attend. The letter had its desired intent, and many progressive organizations previously committed to attending the convention pulled out. Not all listened. What Dyson described as "some dogged Farmer Laborites" from South Dakota, Nebraska, Minnesota, and E.R. Meitzen representing the FLUA of Texas, disregarded La Follette's decree and arrived in St. Paul intent on creating a new national party. Without the presence of the absent organizations, however, the communists were firmly in control.[1063]

The FLP convention carried on without the blessings of La Follette. It adopted resolutions endorsing the Women's Equal Rights Amendment, demanding the release of political prisoners, and opposing the KKK. The platform called for the public ownership of basic industries, protections for organized labor, the end of land tenantry, political and economic rights for women and Negros, diplomatic recognition of the Soviet Union, independence for the Philippine Islands, the right of self-determination for Puerto Rico and other U.S. colonies, and the withdraw of U.S. troops from Central America and the Caribbean. Undoubtedly due to communist influences, this platform had stronger anti-imperialist demands than any previous platform of the farmer-labor bloc. Delegates approved the platform and created a national committee to which Meitzen was

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[1062] *Milwaukee Leader*, April 15, 17, May 16, 1924.

[1063] Dyson, *Red Harvest*, 23.

elected.[1064]

Some delegates wanted to nominate La Follette regardless of his public rebuke of the convention. In the end, the FLP selected Duncan McDonald, a former president of the United Mine Workers of Illinois, as its candidate for president. Many delegates, and even McDonald himself, thought his nomination would only be as a placeholder. They hoped La Follette would eventually accept the FLP's endorsement after being nominated by the CPAA. More, though, was at play than most non-communist delegates realized in McDonald's nomination.[1065]

After the death of Lenin in January, a power struggle erupted for leadership of the Soviet Union and the Third International with each faction trying to out "left" each other. In the midst of this power play, the Third International directed the U.S. Workers Party to demand of La Follette, as a condition of his endorsement by the FLP, that the FLP be given total control of his campaign. They knew full well that La Follette would reject such a demand, thus allowing the FLP to nominate, in its view, a true revolutionary. When La Follette rejected the FLP even before the St. Paul convention, communists maneuvered to have McDonald nominated as a placeholder—for their own Workers Party candidate.[1066]

As expected, the Republican convention overwhelmingly went for Calvin Coolidge over La Follette with a vote of 1065 to 34. La Follette then accepted the nomination of the CPAA for president on the condition he be allowed to run as an

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[1064] William Mahoney, "Report of the National Farmer-Labor-Progressive Convention, St. Paul, MN, June 17, 1924," William Mahoney Papers, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, MN.

[1065] Mahoney, "Report of the National Farmer-Labor-Progressive Convention, 1924"; Dyson, *Red Harvest*, 22-24.

[1066] Dyson, *Red Harvest*, 22-23.

independent without the creation of a new party. Since La Follette refused to be backed by the FLP, the Workers Party withdrew their support from McDonald and announced their own candidate for president, William Z. Foster. The FLP was stillborn.

With this history in mind, a post-convention Sanders run for the White House would have resembled La Follette's 1924 campaign much more than any of Debs' presidential campaigns. The Democratic establishment lined up behind Clinton. Just as La Follette had the CPAA, there was a Movement for Bernie that encouraged Sanders to run an independent campaign without a new party. In this formation, the group Socialist Alternative assumed the role of the old SP in the CPAA. Socialist Alternative called for the creation of a Labor Party and saw an independent Sanders campaign as a step toward such a party. At the same time, the Green Party functioned as the FLP by offering to nominate Sanders as its candidate. This scenario did not play out. Sanders refused both the advances of the Movement for Bernie and the Green Party, and he ultimately endorsed Clinton. Just as in 1924, the political landscape of 2016 was left without a third party campaign, which might have seriously threatened the two-party system.[1067]

After the FLP disintegrated, E.R. Meitzen put his support behind La Follette's independent campaign. Meitzen stood as an elector for La Follette in Texas, along with fellow old-timer farmer-labor radicals L.L. Rhodes and M.A. Smith. While losing the election, La Follette's national vote total was the highest any presidential candidate supported by the farmer-labor bloc had ever garnered, receiving 17% of the popular vote,

[1067] see http://movement4bernie.org/; Dr. Jill Stein to Senator Sanders, April 22, 2016, http://www.jill2016.com/stein_invites_sanders_to_cooperate_on_political_revolution; Nolan D. McCaskill and Nick Gass, "Sanders says he will vote for Clinton," *Politico*, June 24, 2016, http://www.politico.com/story/2016/06/sanders-clinton-vote-224760.

winning Wisconsin and coming in second in eleven Western states.[1068] The farmer-labor bloc was seemingly at the zenith of its political influence and a serious oppositional force to the status quo of the American political system. Without a political party, though, the farmer-labor bloc was in a nebulous state.

The state of the farmer-labor bloc in Texas was especially bleak. Repression and deep internal divisions wracked the SP, moving it to the fringes of Texas political culture. Imported into Texas by Meitzen, the NPL's tactic of submerging farmer-labor radicalism into the two-party structure resulted in farmer-labor radicals in Texas no longer having a popular party of their own.

E.R. Meitzen had been living in Bonham, north of Dallas near the Oklahoma border, while editing the *Farm Labor Union News* until the fall of 1924 when he moved the paper's offices to Texarkana. In non-election years the FLUA devoted most of its energy into promoting its cooperative plans. After faring poorly in its political campaigns of 1922 and 1924, the FLUA put extra efforts in 1925 to making its cooperative marketing plan for cotton a success. The market plan failed and provided few benefits to FLUA members. Some of its state officials felt they could create a better marketing plan and left with a portion of the FLUA's membership to found a rival organization, the Southern Farmers Co-Operative Marketing Association.[1069]

Meitzen, however, was already planning for the next political battle. He told his old comrade Hall that he was dreaming of establishing a new radical paper, "and making a fight to build up a Farmer-Labor party in Texas, Oklahoma, and Arkansas." Hall wrote

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[1068] *Semi-Weekly Hallettsville Herald*, October 31, 1924; *Washington Post*, January 20, 1925.

[1069] Covington Hall to William Lemke, April 26, September 17, 1924, March 20, 1925, Lemke Papers; Hunt, *History of Farmer Movements in the Southwest*, 190-191.

to Lemke about the plan, "This I believe we could easily do once we get the paper going, for we stand in pretty strong with the rebel farmers all thru those states." He acknowledged the challenges of such a fight: "It will be hard sledding at the start, but the pendulum is bound to swing ere long against the reactionaries now in office."[1070]

When the FLUA held its state convention in Dallas in December 1925, Meitzen organized the first convention of the Texas Labor Party to take place concurrently. With representatives from the Texas State Federation of Labor and the railroad brotherhoods in town for the FLUA convention, he sought to reinvigorate the Texas farmer-labor political coalition begun in 1920. This time, however, in Meitzen's plan they would not run in the Democratic primary, but instead return to the tactic of independent political action by running candidates in their own Labor Party.[1071]

Leading up to the convention, Meitzen issued the first edition of his new paper *The Toiler*. Based out of Texarkana, the paper put into reality his dream of creating a paper to promote the organizing of an American Labor Party in Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and added to the list, Louisiana. He and Hall thought the best chance for success rested in Texas, though as Hall thought, once they "start the ball rolling, which, once started, we hope will roll over the Nation before it stops."[1072]

The farmer-labor coalition of the past few years in Texas, though, came to an end. The FLUA balked at the idea of joining the Texas Labor Party. Labor organizations, though not outright refusing to join, offered only nominal support. The FLUA's

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[1070] Covington Hall to William Lemke, May 19, 1925, Lemke Papers.

[1071] *Dallas Morning News*, December 10, 1925.

[1072] Covington Hall to William Lemke, August 2, 1925, Lemke Papers. Unfortunately, I have yet to find any surviving issues of *The Toiler* (not to be confused with the same named communist paper out of Toledo, Ohio.)

involvement in political campaigns had always been contentious among a section of its membership. Some even viewed its political dealings as causing the split of members who formed the new marketing agency in Dallas. Thinking that staying out of politics would save their organization, the FLUA leadership formally announced in January 1926 that "political activities will be left in the hands of individuals," and no longer a function of the organization.[1073] The FLUA ceased being a factor in state politics--and shortly after an organization at all.

Moving on without the FLUA, the band of farmer-labor radicals around Meitzen formed the Texas Labor Party in Dallas. Delegates elected Meitzen to lead the new party. Sometime during this period he resigned from the FLUA. On the same day the Texas Labor Party was formed on December 9, a similar convention in Arkansas created a Labor Party in that state. Delegates there chose the old-time member of the KOL and Socialist J.C. Thompson, who was then the real, but soon to became the former, president of the Arkansas FLUA, as their state chairman.[1074]

The Texas Labor Party moved forward, but with some unexpected allies, especially in light of the fate of the 1924 Farmer-Labor Party. The Workers Party decided after their miserable showing in the 1924 elections that it had made a number of tactical mistakes in its derailing of the FLP. In 1925, it returned to its original tactic of building farmer-labor or labor parties as a way to break workers away from the twin parties of capitalism.[1075]

[1073] *Semi-Weekly Farm News*, January 5, 1926.

[1074] *United Farmer*, March 1, 1926; De Leon, *American Labor Who's Who*, 228.

[1075] Bryan D. Palmer, *James P. Cannon and the Origins of the American Revolutionary Left, 1890-1928* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 238-239.

Specifically, to organize farmers in a fight against capitalism and build farmer-labor parties, the Workers Party created the United Farmers Educational League (UFEL) in March 1926. "The working farmers of America have taken a big step forward against their capitalist exploiters," proclaimed the UFEL's paper *The United Farmer* in its first issue, "by launching a movement whose great purpose is to bring about political and economic unity among the various farm organizations in the country, on the basis of a militant, class program." This first issue also promoted Meitzen's efforts to build the Texas Labor Party.[1076]

Alfred Knutson of North Dakota, one of the NPL's best-known former organizers, served as national secretary of the UEFL. Since joining the Workers Party, while still a member of the NPL, he had been a leader of the party's work among farmers. The UEFL, though under the control of the Workers Party and expressing a clear anti-capitalist message, imagined itself as a broad organization seeking to build farmer-labor parties. It worked with cooperatives and called for traditional farmer-labor demands such as nationalization of basic industries, land for the farmers who worked it, and the end of the tenant system.[1077]

In order to invoke an air of nonpartisanship, Knutson created a national committee that included a sizable minority of non-communists. The most recognizable non-communist on the committee was E.R. Meitzen. Outside of the national committee, other well-known and longtime farmer-labor radicals joined in the UEFL's efforts to build the Texas Labor Party, including Hall, M.A. Smith, L.L. Rhodes, Stanley Clark,

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[1076] *United Farmer*, March 1, 1926.

[1077] *United Farmer*, March 1, 1926; Dyson, *Red Harvest*, 10, 34.

and as listed by the *United Farmer*—"the two Meitzens."[1078]

Now entering his seventies, E.O. Meitzen had made a long political trek. He grew-up on stories from his father and uncle of their struggles during the 1848 Revolution. Entering adulthood, he became the learned blacksmith who joined the Greenback Labor Party. From here, he lived out the rest of his life as a farmer-labor radical committed to the cause of improving the lives of workers and farmers through the creation of Cooperative Commonwealth of political and economic democracy and a producer controlled government. He returned to Texas in the second half of 1920, after living in Fargo working for the NPL. He continued to work for the Texas NPL in Waco for the next couple of years, before returning to Hallettsville in 1922. Sadly, the next year, Johanna, his wife of nearly 46 years died. He continued his political activism as the elected surveyor of Lavaca County for the next few years, lent his well-respected name to causes such as the UFEL and wrote occasional letters to the editor of the *Dallas Morning News*--always championing the cause of workers and farmers rights.[1079]

During this same period of the UFEL, Workers Party leader James Cannon also enlisted E.R. Meitzen to serve on the national committee of the International Labor Defense (ILD)--an organization dedicated to defending working-class political prisoners. Cannon and Meitzen had worked together on committees at the 1924 Saint Paul convention. They also shared a common friend and comrade, William Haywood. Cannon, Haywood, and Rose Karsner had initially discussed the idea of the ILD in Moscow in

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[1078] *United Farmer*, March 1, November 1926, June 1927 (the paper become a monthly shortly after it started). Missing from this list is Tom Hickey who died on May 7, 1925 of throat cancer. Shortly before dying he had finally put out his own *Tom Hickey's Magazine*.

[1079] United States Census, *Census Reports*, *Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the year 1920*; *Weimar Mercury*, August 3, 1923; *Dallas Morning News*, February 21, March 15, June 9, 1928.

March 1925. A later trip to Moscow would find Cannon becoming a leader of the Left Opposition against Stalinism. As noted by historian Bryan Palmer, during this struggle, "Cannon converted the ILD into his own political fortress."[1080]

Meitzen's work with the UFEL and ILD would get him listed in Elizabeth Dilling's infamous *Red Network: A "Who's Who" and Handbook of Radicalism for Patriots* as a Communist organizer of farmer movements. During his time of involvement with the Workers Party, though, Meitzen listed his politics in De Leon's *The American Labor Who's Who* as "independent until further notice."[1081] Meitzen was never a public member of the Workers Party or later Communist Party. Meitzen and party leaders could have decided to keep his membership secret as a method to draw radical farmers closer to the communist movement—a tactic they were known to employ. While this is a possibility, from the available evidence it seems unlikely. Meitzen was presumably just a fellow traveler.

By 1926 it had become painfully clear that the Texas Labor Party was going nowhere. In September, Meitzen and M.A. Smith called a meeting in Dallas for a "working people's political meeting." The announcement stated, "All persons who are opposed to the capitalist parties and desire the formation of a political party devoted to the interests of the working class of people are urged to attend." The meeting must not have gone off well. Still wanting to give Texans an anti-capitalist option in the election, Meitzen and few other old Reds dragged out the Texas SP and put out a slate of candidates for state office on the Socialist ticket. Meitzen stood as the SP candidate for

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[1080] Mahoney, "Report of the National Farmer-Labor-Progressive Convention, 1924"; Palmer, *James P. Cannon*, 260-265, quote on p. 265; *Labor Defender*, January 1926.

[1081] Elizabeth Dilling, *Red Network: A "Who's Who" and Handbook of Radicalism for Patriots* (Chicago: by the author, 1934), 139, 306; De Leon, *American Labor Who's Who*, 157.

state comptroller, just as his father had twice before under the Populist banner. The election results did not signify the arrival of the farmer-labor bloc as a force in Texas as the turnout for his father had in the 1890s. Instead, the results showed the error farmer-labor radicals made in giving up their own political party in favor of the election tactics of the NPL and then joining the independent campaign of La Follette. Statewide, the SP vote did not even crack 800. Even in Lavaca County, E.R. received only 4 votes![1082]

Of more immediate concern to E.R. Meitzen, though, than election results was providing for a growing family. Sometime in the early 1920s, Meitzen married Lillie Carson McCullough. She was a war widow who married a soldier right before he was sent to war. Three months after they were married her husband was killed in France. Lillie and E.R. had their first child, Ernest Jr., in 1923 and their second, Johanna Lula, in June 1927. Throughout his working life, Meitzen had only worked as a paid political organizer and a newspaperman. He was now a man without an organization. At the same time, his newspaper, *The Toiler*, was never able to provide a living, or help grow the Texas Labor Party, due to government interference with his mailing rights.[1083]

After Lillie became pregnant with Jo-Lou, Meitzen purchased a newspaper in Live Oak, Florida. After Jo-Lou was born, the family moved to their new home in Florida. The Texas economy was in a runt, while Florida was experiencing a boom fueled by real estate speculation. For Meitzen's growing family a new start in Florida seemed like a great opportunity. Just as the Meitzens arrived in Florida, however, the bubble

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[1082] *San Antonio Light*, September 5, 1926; *Semi-Weekly Hallettsville Herald*, November 12, 1926.

[1083] Peter Gaupp to Tom Alter, July 5, 2010, email in author's possession; "Texas, World War I Records, 1917-1920," database with images, *FamilySearch* (https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QV18-JRSY : 3 April 2015), Earl McCullough, 26 Apr 1918; citing Military Service, Cuero, DeWitt, Texas, United States, Texas Military Forces Museum, Austin; Meitzen-Williams, *History of the Meitzen Family*, np; Hall to Lemke, November 5, 1925, Lemke Papers.

burst. Meitzen adjusted to the situation by moving the paper to the larger nearby town of Lake City. The new paper, the *Columbia Gazette*, eventually became Columbia County's paper of record, but it still was a struggle for the family financially, as it was for just about everyone, as the country entered the Great Depression.[1084]

For a brief period, Hall moved in with the Meitzen family in Lake City and helped run the paper. The Meitzen children affectionately called Hall, "Uncle Covington," and soon the Meitzen brood grew to five. Hall did not stay in Florida long. He did stay in regular contact with Meitzen through the years, though, as the two of them, along with Lemke, corresponded over what course of action to take to advance their lifelong project of fighting for the working class.[1085]

After being recalled as the NPL's attorney general of North Dakota, Lemke had joined in the efforts to create a national farmer-labor party. By the end of the 1920s, Lemke came to a conclusion. "With regards to the political situation," Lemke wrote Hall in 1929, "I believe a new party would be impossible at this time. We tried it for six years without success," he now was considering a return to the old NPL tactic, "it seems to me what we ought to be able to take over the Democratic party if it is worth taking over."[1086]

Hall, the old Wobblie, was not completely convinced at first: "Personally, I believe there is as much chance to launch a new Party as there is to take over the Democratic. For this reason: The Democrat party is split wide open."[1087] It took the extra

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[1084] Hall to Lemke, December 5, 1926, February 9, 1929, Lemke Papers; Nick Wynne and Joseph Knetsch, *Florida in the Great Depression* (Charleston, South Carolina: The History Press, 2012), 7. Only two issue and a few scattered clippings of the *Columbia Gazette* still exist.

[1085] Hall to Lemke, February 9, 1929, Lemke Papers; Meitzen-Williams, *History of the Meitzen Family*, np; Interview of Jo-Lou Gaupp by the author.

[1086] Lemke to Hall, July 3, 1929, Lemke Papers.

convincing of Meitzen, who had gone over to Lemke's position, to win him over. "I think I told you," Hall wrote Lemke, "I was attempting to launch a national weekly …the purpose of which would be to take over the Democratic party through its liberal wing … you and Ernest Meitzen put the idea in my head."[1088]

Hall was correct in his analysis of the Democratic Party as "split wide open." The party was in shambles after its utter defeat in 1924 and had not recovered in time for 1928. There was, however, another dynamic at work. These defeats resulted in a politically reconfigured Democratic Party that capitalized on the efforts of farmer-labor radicals.

The 1924 La Follette campaign had brought together a diverse coalition of agrarian and labor radicals, liberals, and progressive-minded Democrats and Republicans. This coalition came together due in large part to years of long work by farmer-labor activists. Just as the defeated 1964 Barry Goldwater campaign assembled a new conservative coalition that led to Republican control of the White House from 1969 to 1977, 1981 to 1993, and again from 2001 to 2009, the failed La Follette campaign brought together the various political elements that would make up the rank-and-file support for Franklin D. Roosevelt's presidential victory in 1932 and his New Deal programs of the early 1930s. This New Deal coalition would hold the White House until 1953 and have a strong presence in Congress through the 1980s.

Following the Democratic Party's electoral disaster in 1924, Roosevelt sought to reorient the party along more progressive lines. He felt Democrats had to make

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[1087] Hall to Lemke, July 14, 1929, Lemke Papers.

[1088] Hall to Lemke, September 23, 1929, Lemke Papers.

themselves "by definite policy, the Party of constructive progress, before we can attract a larger following."[1089] Roosevelt began actively courting the Bryan-McAdoo wing of the party to form an alliance with his northeastern base of support. In 1928 the hopes of Roosevelt's budding progressive coalition were setback when presidential candidate Alfred Smith allowed his campaign to run on pro-business lines.[1090]

Roosevelt's efforts did not go unnoticed by former members of the farmer-labor bloc who had Meitzen's, Lemke's and Hall's vision of a left-wing takeover of the Democratic Party. Lemke was looking for a Democrat who would support legislation he had drafted to assist economically struggling farmers. Roosevelt seemed more and more like the Democrat Lemke needed. Lemke soon found that Senator Burton Wheeler of Montana, who ran as La Follette's candidate for vice-president in 1924, was also looking at Roosevelt as a possible candidate to move the Democratic Party further to the left in 1932. Wheeler became the first nationally known Democratic leader to endorse Roosevelt for president.[1091]

Both Lemke and Burton played key roles in garnering support for Roosevelt from the farmer-labor bloc. This support helped Roosevelt win the Democratic nomination against conservative Democrats, and then the Midwest against Herbert Hoover in the general election. Roosevelt then used his sweeping electoral mandate to implement the early programs of the New Deal.[1092]

[1089] As quoted in Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Age of Roosevelt: The Crisis of the Old Order, 1919-1933*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1957), 103.

[1090] Schlesinger, *The Crisis of the Old Order*, 276-277

[1091] Edward C. Blackorby, *Prairie Rebel: The Public Life of William Lemke*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963), 185-186; Schlesinger, *The Crisis of the Old Order*, 277.

After Hall left Florida, an elderly E.O. Meitzen moved in with his son in Lake City. E.R. gave his father a desk in his paper's newsroom, while at home E.O. enjoyed playing with his grandchildren. E.O. cheered the election of Roosevelt and watched with satisfaction the implementation of the early New Deal programs that rang similar to many of the farmer-labor planks he had spent his life promoting. After all, was this not what E.O. had wanted? If the farmer-labor bloc could not get elected itself, then its secondary objective had always been to put left working-class pressure on the state.[1093]

E.O. spent only a few years in Florida before returning to Texas to live with his daughter Frieda and her family. Frieda had married a descendant of Sam Houston and they lived in Houston with their six children. Frieda's family fixed up a shack in their backyard for her father to live in. Years of activism and constant campaigning were now taking their toll. He spent the last year of his life with a persistent illness, although he was able to remain jolly to the end. He died on February 24, 1935 at the age of 79. A week before he passed he told his daughter: "Frieda, go to your two babies, as they need you more than I do. My parents are here with me. So are others whom I haven't seen for fifty years or more. They will help me across." E.O. crossed and so ended a grand chapter of farmer-labor radicalism.[1094]

E.R. had become a New Deal Democrat, but this did not mean he was right with the establishment. He actively participated in the campaign to repeal the poll tax in

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[1092] Blackorby, *Prairie Rebel*, 186; Kenneth Campbell MacKay, *The Progressive Movement of 1924*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1947), 13.

[1093] John Meitzen, *The Meitzen Type: The Texas Socialist Party and E.O. Meitzen*, unpublished manuscript, 18, CAH; Interview of Jo-Lou Gaupp by the author.

[1094] Interview of Jo-Lou Gaupp by the author; Meitzen-Williams, *History of the Meitzen Family*, np.

Florida. In sections of Florida with large white populations support for repealing the poll tax was not contentious. Democratic Senator Claude Pepper supported the campaign as a way to gain poor white support for New Deal programs. As such, those who favored repealing the tax ran their campaign more in terms of economics than race. In 1938, Florida became the first southern state to repeal the poll tax. One of Meitzen's long time farmer-labor demands had finally been achieved.[1095]

For Meitzen, however, his part in the anti-poll campaign did not go uncontested. He lived in Columbia County, bordering the southern Black Belt, with an African-American population of nearly 40%.[1096] Here race was a factor in the anti-poll tax campaign. In Texas, Meitzen had always walked the political tightrope of championing political and economic rights for the entire working class, while at the same time not desiring to upset racial norms rooted in white supremacy for fear of a violent backlash. In Florida, however, his support of the anti-poll tax campaign ran him directly afoul of the KKK---and this time Meitzen did not back down.

Most likely sparked by his support for repealing the poll tax, Meitzen got into, as one of his sons put, "a writing war against the KKK." Due to a lack of printed primary source materials, the exact sequence of events cannot be determined, though, Meitzen's children have vivid memories of what transpired. Around this time one of Meitzen's sons, John, who would have been around 10, had a mischievous habit of sneaking into places he should not be. Once he crept into the Baptist Church and went swimming in the

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[1095] "Rites For E.R. Meitzen Held Sunday," 1948, newspaper clipping given to author by members of Meitzen family, in author's possession; Charles D. Farris, "The Re-Enfranchisment of Negroes in Florida," *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 39, No. 4 (Oct., 1954), pp. 259-283, 267-269.

[1096] United States Census, *Census Reports*, Fifteenth Census of the United States Taken in the year 1930.

baptistery. Another time, in the middle of night, he got into the Catholic Church and rung the church bells, waking up a good portion of the town. On one such adventure, the local chief of police, who was known to Meitzen as a member of the KKK, caught John. Rather than take the young boy home for a scolding, the chief threw John in jail. Fortunately for John, a police detective, who was not a KKK member, removed John from jail, cursed the police chief, and took John home. Meitzen was outraged. He printed an article on the incident the next day in his paper, which resulted in the chief resigning.[1097]

The police chief was not the only one Meitzen outed from the Invisible Empire. He used his paper to publically name Klansmen. At church, an upset Klansman challenged Meitzen to fight, and as the children recalled, "daddy knocked him down."[1098] The Klan then escalated its campaign of intimidation against Meitzen. As his son William recalled, "Another time the Klan burned a cross in our front yard. My mother and sisters were all afraid but daddy didn't worry about it and went to bed!" His daughter Jo-Lou remembered another time when the Klan rode outside their home at night. Her father stood watch, but she hid underneath the bed.[1099]

The Klan attempted to extend their assaults to those nearest the family. Fortunately, word reached Meitzen that the Klan was preparing to ride on the home of the hired black woman who watched his children and helped clean the house. Meitzen moved her family to his home while the Klan carried out their night ridding. Having been

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[1097] William A. Meitzen to Tom Alter, June 13, 2011, email in author's possession; John Meitzen, "My Family History," unpublished paper, 1992, copy in author's possession.

[1098] William A. Meitzen to Tom Alter, June 13, 2011. The outing of Klansmen could very well be the reason only two copies of the *Columbia Gazette* exist.

[1099] William A. Meitzen to Tom Alter, June 13, 2011; Interview of Jo-Lou Gaupp by the author.

continually foiled, the Klan intended to inflict real harm on Meitzen. One night while Meitzen was walking home the Postmaster (apparently in the Klan as well) pulled a knife on Meitzen. This was not the first time someone had pulled on knife on him and Meitzen escaped unharmed. When word reached Meitzen that the Klan planned to tar and feather him, he borrowed a six-shooter--and the Klan seems to have finally backed down.[1100]

These had to harrowing and tiring experiences for the Meitzen family, which was also missing their friends and loved ones back in Texas. Meitzen stood for election as an at-large delegate to the 1940 Democratic national convention but was not selected. Shortly after, the family packed up and moved back to Texas. They settled in Yoakum where Meitzen ran the *Yoakum Times* and continued the tradition of exposing corrupt government officials. During World War II he sold war bonds to assist the Allied war effort. Later his daughter, Jo-Lou, would marry a German immigrant, who along with his family had narrowly escaped Nazi persecution.[1101]

Meitzen made one more move. In 1943 he moved to Dickinson in the mainland of Galveston County. He ran first the *Galveston County Press* and then, using the old family newspaper name, the *Dickinson New Era*. When asked if her mother was politically active, Jo-Lou said she volunteered at the polls for elections. She said her father did no such thing because it did not come near the level of politics he once engaged in. Her mother, though, was very active in their local Methodist church. When asked if her father was religious, she said no. He did, however, enjoy the choir and would sit in the back of

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[1100] Interview of Jo-Lou Gaupp by the author; Meitzen, "My Family History,"n.p.

[1101] R.A. Gray, Secretary of State, *Tabulation of the Official Vote, Florida Primary Elections, Democratic and Republican, May 2, 1944 and May 23, 1944*, 11-12; *Weimar Mercury*, May 14, 1943; *San Antonio Express*, October 8, 1943; Interview of Jo-Lou Gaupp by the author; Meitzen-Williams, *History of the Meitzen Family*, np.

the church by himself and listen to choir practice. He seemed to be reflecting. Like his father, E.R. had come a long way. When he was four, his father joined the Grange and from his childhood he watched him join the Populist Revolt. E.R. joined his father in the Farmers Union and thus became himself a part of the continuity and evolution of agrarian radicalism in the farmer-labor bloc. By 1948, the farmer-labor bloc was a fading memory. At the age of 67, E.R. Meitzen passed away at his home on November 27, 1948. Another Red Scare was approaching, with the example of the farmer-bloc to be temporarily erased from public knowledge.[1102]

E.O. Meitzen did not live long enough to see Roosevelt's second term as president. After Roosevelt's first term, the New Deal entered a new more conservative phase. This more conservative phase of the New Deal would eventually turn Lemke, and some other farmer-laborites against Roosevelt.[1103] But through New Deal programs, Roosevelt had won the allegiance of much of the old farmer-labor bloc, wedding them to the Democratic Party—E.R. Meitzen included. The farmer-labor bloc collapsed into New Deal liberalism.

To this day the U.S. political landscape has not seen a long-lasting political coalition, dedicated to radical economic reform, that functions outside of the two-party system as did the farm-labor bloc of the 1870s to the 1920s. Yes, agrarian radicalism did continue for a while, as witnessed in the Farm Holiday Association and Southern Farmers Tenant Union. Neither of these organizations, however, was tied to or grew into a popular political party, as had previous agrarian protest organizations of the farmer-labor bloc.

[1102] Interview of Jo-Lou Gaupp by the author; *Galveston News*, November 28, 1948.

[1103] See Alan Brinkley's *The End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1995) for a treatment of the transformation of the New Deal during Roosevelt's second term.

The nature of agriculture was also dramatically changing in the 1920s. Agribusiness came to dominate farming; as farm sizes grew, the number of farmers decreased. At the height of the farmer-labor bloc, farmers and rural people made-up the majority of the population. From the rapid descent begun in the 1920s, farmers today compromise only 2% of the population.[1104] They have moral weight as the growers of our food, but lack the physical numbers to be anything more than a special interest group.

Due to these changes, the heart of the battle between labor and capital moved from the field to the factory. Economic radicalism within a few short years, resided almost solely in the domain of industrial unionism amid the battles of the CIO through the 1940s until the Treaty of Detroit of 1950. After this, U.S. political culture would not witness a movement based on economic radicalism for over sixty years.

To be sure, the U.S. has seen a number of movements since the 1930s–Civil Rights, women's rights, immigrant rights, and gay rights. These movements, however, fell under the category of liberalism and its appeal for individual rights and liberties. Other movements have revolved around a single issue, such as opposition to a particular war. Economic issues were a factor in each of these movements but were secondary within the general call for social equality or winning the issue at hand. This does not mean that economic radicalism has not been present within U.S. political culture–it has. Just that since the 1940s, economic radicalism has been primarily advocated by small, mainly Marxist-influenced, parties and organizations that have been pushed to the margins.

Not until the brief Occupy movement of 2011-2012 would a movement based on

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[1104] Christopher Clark, "The Agrarian Context of American Capitalist Development" in *Capitalism Takes Command: The Social Transformation of Nineteenth Century America*, ed. Michael Zakin and Gary Kornblith (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), 15.

economic radicalism appear and flourish in the U.S. Up until this movement, the industrial critique of capitalism--with its focus on wages, workplace safety, and union rights--had been the main voice of economic radicalism for over three generations. Deindustrialization and the ascendancy of neo-liberal economic policy since the 1970s had significantly changed the economic landscape for working and middle-class Americans. Occupy, in turn, responsed to debt, interest, speculation, Wall Street corruption, influence of money in politics, corporate greed, and wealth inequality. In other words, Occupy was protesting the inequalities inherent in finance capitalism. Historically, Occupy therefore harkened back to the radical agrarian critique of finance capitalism that spurred the creation of the farmer-labor bloc.

Since the collapse of Occupy, radical economic movements have been a regular, even if small, feature of U.S. politics. The Fight for 15, the environmental movement with its slogan of "System Change Not Climate Change," and even the identity politics based Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, all have a radical economic message embedded in them. Each of these movements came about due to industrialization (damaging the environment) or deindustrialization (conversion to a low wage service-based economy that has disproportionally effected minorities), and they all incorporate the language of the 99% versus the 1% made popular by Occupy.

Seeing the reemergence of economic radicalism, and seeking to follow in the footsteps of his idol Eugene Debs by unabashedly calling himself a democratic socialist, Bernie Sanders launched his campaign for president. Initially the pundits of the corporate media brushed Sanders' campaign aside and focused their attention on the seemingly preordained nominee Hillary Clinton.

Early in the campaign, the *Washington Post* ran an article by its national political correspondent James Hohmann titled "Bernie Sanders has a Eugene V. Debs problem." The thrust of the article was not that Sanders has a Debs problem because Debs was a socialist—that seemed to be a given for Hohmann. Instead, Hohmann correctly identified Debs' own goal of his five presidential campaigns, when he wrote that "Debs never believed he had a chance to be president, but he thought he could foment a political revolution by running." According to Hohmann, "The Debs Problem is less about Sanders' ideas being radical—which many are—and more about the perception that he is running to make a point."[1105] This Hohmann felt, made Sanders unelectable; he needed to change this perception immediately if he really wanted to win. At the beginning of his campaign, Sanders might have quietly, off the record, admitted that his campaign was about making a point and that in his mind he was playing the Debs role by fomenting a future political revolution. By the end of his campaign, though, one could tell Sanders not only wanted to win, but thought he could win as well.

If Sanders now represents the legacy of Debs, it is not Sanders who has a Debs problem, but Debs who has a Sanders problem. Sanders by running as a Democrat completely disregarded one of the main lessons Debs sought to impart—class independence. When Debs opened his 1904 presidential campaign he said:

> The Republican and Democratic parties, or, to be more exact, the Republican-Democratic Party, represent the capitalist class in the class struggle. They are the political wings of the capitalist system and as such differences as arise between them relate to spoils and not to principles. With either of those parties in power, one thing is always certain, and that is that the capitalist class is in the saddle and the working class under the

[1105] James Hohmann, "Bernie Sanders has a Eugene V. Debs problem," January 22, 2016, *Washington Post*, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/powerpost/wp/2016/01/22/the-daily-202-bernie-sanders-has-a-eugene-v-debs-problem/.

saddle.[1106]

Throughout his political life as a socialist, Debs continually emphasized the fundamental importance of independent working-class political action. He demonstrated this not only with his words but in his actions as well. Sanders, by running in the Democratic primary, seriously setback the prospects of renewed independent political action in the U.S. He attracted many activists and followers of Occupy, the Fight for 15, BLM, and the environmental movement, all of whom had grown weary of the two-party system, and he led them back into the Democratic Party. Even if many of these activists left as soon as Sanders lost, valuable time was wasted that could have been spent building a new party or an anti-establishment party such as the Green Party.

The path Sanders took by running as a Democrat was the same the Meitzens took many times. The Meitzens did it as a tactic that they thought could lead the working class to power. Each time they did so, however, it proved wrong and had dire consequence for the farmer-labor bloc. For the Meitzens and other farmer-labor radicals, the tactic of running in the Democratic primary or dissolving their organization into a campaign without a party was new--or at least something only tried a few times before and thus worth attempting again. This tactic, however, persists to this day with results not much different than from the era when the Meitzens used it.

The farmer-labor bloc succeeded in influencing U.S. political culture the most when it was in its independent phases of the People's, and then Socialist, parties. As *The Rebel* saw it in 1916: "One vote for Socialism will do more to scare the ruling class into granting concessions and 'reforms' and into calling off war dogs, than a thousand votes

[1106] Eugene Debs, "The Socialist Party and the Working Class" in *Writing and Speeches of Eugene V. Debs* (New York: Hermitage Press, Inc., 1948), 127.

for even the most radical (non-Socialist) party. This is seen in the acts of both Wilson and Roosevelt who have frankly stated that if they were not permitted to make 'reforms' the Socialist party would march into power with ten league boots."[1107] After initially granting reforms, the ruling elites responses to the People's and Socialist parties serve as an additional cruel measure of their success. To hinder further independent working-class reform movements, they unleashed two of the most reactionary campaigns in U.S. history with the implementation of Jim Crow legislation and the first Red Scare.

One of the main reasons the farmer-labor bloc had such a forceful influence on Texas political culture was due to the guiding influence of the Meitzens. They and those they brought around them such as Maria Boeer, Tom Hickey, and Covington Hall, built democratic organizations from the ground up that responded to and represented the needs of working-class rank-and-file members. Workerist dogmas and schemes cloaked in pseudo Marxism were replaced with plain folk language and transitional demands, which while not always purely socialistic, they hoped would lead them to the Cooperative Commonwealth.

Moreover, the willingness of the Meitzens and other Texas Socialist leaders to actively court Christians by drawing connections between Christ's mission of service and mercy to that of a future Cooperative Commonwealth stands in stark comparison to socialists and other Marxist radicals since then, who more often than not belittle the various religious beliefs of working-class people as not sufficiently based on scientific materialism. Instead of religious spaces of the U.S. being contested political spaces as they once were, the overall retreat of socialists from this terrain, and their message of social regeneration for the benefit of the majority, has left the field to conservatives and

[1107] *The Rebel*, November 11, 1916.

their corporate-dominated message of individual regeneration.[1108]

While serving as a model of religious tolerance, the Meitzens do not, however, provide a useful model for today in fighting racial injustice. Their actions were often tempered by the then prevailing norms of white supremacy. The Meitzens did, though, probe the limits of white supremacy and even if they did not break its barriers they did weaken them.

Transnational influences critically, and continually, informed the Meitzen's worldview. The 1848 German Revolution gave the Meitzens a revolutionary heritage. Contact with Mexican revolutionaries challenged their previous held racial beliefs and galvanized tenant farmers into action. In his 1914 campaign for governor, E.R. Meitzen declared, our "only gauge of battle shall be the principles of International Socialism."[1109]

Historians often refer to histories of working-class radicalism as paths not taken. They conjure the great "what if?" What if workers won a particular strike? What if Debs won the presidency in 1912? When it comes to the history of the farmer-labor bloc, though, we should not be view this movement as a path not taken. Activists such as the Meitzens and their allies proudly strode down the path of the farmer-labor bloc was a path taken for over fifty years—and it's still there, waiting to be taken again. In today's world of growing economic equality, a return of the farmer-labor bloc of the Meitzen type could once again transform our political culture.

[1108] For how corporate influences have come to dominate Christian America see Kevin M. Kruse, *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America* (New York: Basic Books, 2015).

[1109] E.R. Meitzen, "E.R. Meitzen's Letter of Acceptance", *Platform of the Socialist Party of Texas*. 1914, Texas Socialist Party File, CAH.

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Film

Prairie Fire. 16 mm. 30 min. San Francisco: Cine Manifest Films, 1977.

Appendix

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Education

Ph. D., History, University of Illinois at Chicago, 2016
M.A., History, Texas State University–San Marcos, 2008
B.A., History, Indiana University–Bloomington, 1996

Publications

Articles:

"From the Copper-Colored Sons of Montezuma to Comrade Pancho Villa**:** The Radicalizing Effect of Mexican Revolutionaries on the Texas Socialist Party, 1910-1917," *LABOR: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (Winter 2015), 83-109.

"'It Felt Like Community': Social Movement Unionism and the Chicago Teachers Union Strike of 2012," *LABOR: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (Fall 2013), 11-25.

"Occupy and Labor: What Role for Historians?," *Labor and Working-Class History Association Newsletter*, Spring/Summer 2012. http://lawcha.org/wordpress/newsletters/spring12.pdf

Entries:

"Bryan, William Jennings," "Migration, Westward," and "Political Corruption," in Robert D. Johnston, ed., *Encyclopedia of U.S. Political History, Volume Four, From the Gilded Age Through the Age of Reform, 1878 to 1920* (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2010), 61-65, 240-243, 277-280.

Book Reviews:

Review of Gary R. Entz, *Llewellyn Castle: A Worker's Cooperative on the Great Plains* in *Western Historical Quarterly* (Winter 2014), 477.

Review of Theresa A. Case, *The Great Southwest Railroad Strike and Free Labor* in *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* (April 2011), 453-454.

Review of Kyle G. Wilkison, *Yeomen, Sharecroppers, and Socialists: Plain Folk Protest in Texas, 1870-1914* in *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* (April 2010), 543-544.

Review of Matthew Hild, *Greenbackers, Knights of Labor, and Populists: Farmer-Labor Insurgency in the Late-Nineteenth-Century South* in *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* (April 2008), 460-461.

Conference and Seminar Papers and Panel Participation

October 2015, "Inheritors of the Revolution: The Legacy of 48ers within Texas Agrarian Radicalism," at the North American Labor History Conference, "Labor, Law, and Progressive Activism," Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan.

May 2015, "Inheritors of the Revolution: The Legacy of 48ers within Texas Populism," at the Labor and Working-Class History Association and the Working-Class Studies Association joint conference, "Fighting Inequality," Washington, D.C.

April 2014, Comment, Darren Dochuk, "Children of Israel: The Faith, Politics, and Crises of Petro-Wealth in Depression-Era Texas," Labor History Seminar, Newberry Library, Chicago, Illinois.

June 2013, Moderator, "The Chicago Teachers Union Strike: Social Movement Unionism and the Defense of Public Education," at the Labor and Working-Class History Association conference, "Rights, Solidarity, Justice: Working People Organizing Past and Present," New York, New York.

June 2013, "From the Cooperative Commonwealth to the Invisible Empire: The Farm-Labor Bloc, Jeffersonian Democracy, and the Creation of the White Primary in Texas, 1919-1923," at the Labor and Working-Class History Association conference, "Rights, Solidarity, Justice: Working People Organizing Past and Present," New York, New York.

March 2013, "From the Cooperative Commonwealth to the Invisible Empire: The Farm-Labor Bloc and the Creation of the White Primary in Texas, 1919-1923," at Southern Labor Studies Association conference, New Orleans, Louisiana.

November 2012, Discussant, "Working in These Hard Times: The Union Movement and the 99%. A Program in Honor of Studs Terkel," Center for New Deal Studies, Roosevelt University, Chicago, Illinois.

October 2012, Panelist, "Roundtable: Occupy and Labor," at North American Labor History Conference, "Insurgency and Resistance," Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan.

June 2012, Panelist, "Poverty and Inequality: The Challenge of Our Time," community forum "Public Conversations on Big Issues" presented by Beverly Unitarian Church, Chicago, Illinois.

March 2012 "A Return to Economic Radicalism: The Farm-Labor Bloc of the 1870s-1920s and the Occupy Movement," Indiana University – Bloomington's Annual International Interdisciplinary Graduate Conference, "Occupied: Taking Up Space and Time."

March 2012 "From the Copper-Colored Sons of Montezuma to Comrade Pancho Villa**:** The Radicalizing Affect of Mexican Revolutionaries on the Texas Socialist Party, 1910-1917," at the Southwestern Council of Latin American Studies conference, Miami, Florida.

February 2012 "From the Copper-Colored Sons of Montezuma to Comrade Pancho Villa**:** The Radicalizing Affect of Mexican Revolutionaries on the Texas Socialist Party, 1910-1917," at Midwest Labor and Working Class History Colloquium, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee.

April 2010 "From the Copper-Colored Sons of Montezuma to Comrade Pancho Villa**:** The Radicalizing Affect of Mexican Revolutionaries on Texas Tenant Farmers, 1910-1917," at the 2010 Midwest Labor and Working Class History Colloquium, "Social, Economic and Academic Restructuring," University of Illinois–Champaign/Urbana.

October 2009 "From the Copper-Colored Sons of Montezuma to Comrade Pancho Villa**:** The Radicalizing Affect of Mexican Revolutionaries on Texas Tenant Farmers, 1910-1917," at the International Conference on Martí, Juárez, and Lincoln: In the Soul of Our America, Autonomous University of Nuevo León, Monterrey, Mexico.

Awards

2015-2016 Dean's Scholar Award, University of Illinois at Chicago
2015 Labor and Working-Class History Association Travel Grant
2014-2015 Marion Miller Fellowship, History Dept., University of Illinois at Chicago
2013-2015 Chancellor's Fellowship, Graduate College, University of Illinois at Chicago
2013 Graduate Student Council Travel Award, University of Illinois at Chicago
2013 and 2012 LAS Ph.D. Student Travel Award, University of Illinois at Chicago
2015, 2013, 2012 and 2009 Travel Grant, Grad College, University of Illinois at Chicago
2012 Provost Award, Graduate College, University of Illinois at Chicago
2012 Robert V. Remini Scholarship, History Dept., University of Illinois at Chicago
2011 Mary M. Hughes Research Fellowship, Best Research Project on Twentieth-Century Texas History, Texas State Historical Association
2009 Best TA Evaluation Spring Semester, History Graduate Society, University of Illinois at Chicago

2008-2012 History Doctoral Award, History Dept., University of Illinois at Chicago
2007 Graduate Research Grant, History Department, Texas State University
2004 Best Frontier Film (Experimental Short) Windsong Film Festival, Fort Wayne, IN
1995 Indiana University Student Association, Parker-Powell Student Activist of the Year

Employment History

August 2014 – August 2016
Research Assistant, University of Illinois at Chicago

August 2010 – August 2012
Editorial Coordinator for the journal *LABOR: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas*

August 2008 – May 2010
Graduate Teaching Assistant, University of Illinois at Chicago

May 2005 – August 2008
Reader, Texas Press Clippings Service, Austin, TX

May 2003 – July 2008
Independent Filmmaker, Wage Slave Films, Austin, TX

August 2005 – December 2007
Graduate Instructional Assistant, Texas State University – San Marcos

January 2005 – April 2005
Substitute Teacher, Austin Independent School District, Austin, TX

December 2004 – May 2005
Administrative Assistant, Austin History Center, Austin, TX

March 2001 – October 2004
Library Reference Associate, Austin Public Library, Austin, TX

February 2000 – December 2000
Park Ranger, National Park Service, Salem Maritime National Historic Site and Saugus Iron Works National Historic Site, Salem and Saugus, MA

March 1999 – December 2000
Lead Clerk, Borders Books, Fort Wayne, IN
Bookseller (part-time), Borders Books, Peabody, MA

December 1998 – March 1999
Bindery Worker, 408 Printing and Publishing, New York, NY

March 1997 – December 1998
Meat Packer, IBP, Inc., Perry, IA

Organizations

Member: Labor and Working-Class History Association, Organization of American Historians, Society for Historians of the Gilded and Progressive Era, Society for German-American Studies, Southern Historical Association, Southern Labor Studies Association, Texas State Historical Association.