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# The Tradition of Protest and the ROOTS of the FARMER-LABOR PARTY

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THE DOUBLE-HYPHENATED character of Minnesota's Democratic-Farmer-Labor party name makes it unique among contemporary state political organizations. It alone, among the ninety-six major state political bodies, proclaims itself as something different from simple Republican or Democratic. The presumed difference, as signified in the letters DFL, reflects the legacy of the once-predominant Farmer-Labor party — a legacy that was formally embraced in 1944, when the then separate Democratic and Farmer-Labor parties were merged into the Democratic-Farmer-Labor party.[1]

While some may claim that the passage of twelve years since the fusion has made the Democratic-Farmer-Labor party indistinguishable from other state Democratic parties as a political organization, others will insist that the Minnesota party is distinctive in more than its name. The latter believe that its program and spirit reflect today, in a somewhat attenuated form, the militance and progressivism that have characterized the successive movements of agrarian and industrial protest — a protest that has, in various forms, existed during much of the period of almost a century since Minnesota became a state in 1858.

In tracing the Farmer-Labor roots of the Minnesota party, one finds them buried deep in the recurring pattern of protest, each cycle of which seems to have had a specific expression in the state's politics. It is possible to trace the genesis of the Farmer-Labor movement in a virtually unbroken line back to the earliest days of political activity in the state, from the national Grange of the late 1860s, through the Anti-Monopoly and Greenback parties of the 1870s, the Farmers' Alliance of the 1880s, the People's party and Populism of the 1890s, and, finally, in the present century, to the Nonpartisan League, out of which emerged the Farmer-Labor party.

Minnesota's tradition of protest was nurtured first by the economic oppression and social privation that fell upon the farmers

[1] Among the sources used in preparing the present study are such general works on the state as volume 3 of William W. Folwell's *History of Minnesota* (St. Paul, 1926), and volume 4 of *Minnesota in Three Centuries* (Mankato, 1908), contributed to the series by Frank R. Holmes; and numerous special studies and monographs. The latter include John B. Andrews, "Nationalisation (1860–1877)," in John R. Commons, *History of Labour in the United States*, vol. 2 (New York, 1918); Solon J. Buck, *The Granger Movement* (Cambridge, 1913); Nelson A. Dunning, *Farmers' Al-*

of the Midwest. The settlers of the 1860s came to Minnesota's frontier land with buoyant spirits. They were sustained at first by the dream of fashioning a glamorous new life out of the wilderness country, but the harsh realities of frontier life changed their mood. Vernon L. Parrington describes the change in outlook: "Disappointment and disillusion settled upon a land that before had smiled in the spring sunshine. The harvest was not fulfilling the expectations of the seedtime." The ferment bubbled up from a deep social and economic frustration. "It is no holiday job," Parrington continues, "to subdue an untamed land and wrest abundance and comfort from a virgin soil. Only for the young who can project their hopes into the future is it endurable; for the middle-aged and the old it is a heart-breaking task. The history of the western frontier is a long drab story of hardship and privation and thwarted hopes, of men and women broken by the endless toil, the windows of their dreams shuttered by poverty and the doors to an abundant life closed and barred by narrow opportunity." [2]

The social unrest collided with economic depression and the flames of political protest were ignited. The market value of produce dropped and the debtor farmers of the West were further strained. They mortgaged their farms and watched their earnings slip away in interest on their mortgages. In the growing gloom of economic depression, the farmer became preoccupied with the immediate symptoms of the economic order that he was finding increasingly oppressive. He was enraged, according to Parrington, at "a complex middleman organization that gouged him at every turn." The farmers fulminated against the elevator companies which fixed "monopoly tolls, swindled the farmer in their grain-gradings, and combined to force down the market price at harvest time and raise it after the crop came under their control." On the one hand his profits were controlled by the monopolies, and on the other, when he bought his tools or groceries, "he was at the mercy of a non-competitive market, protected by patent-rights and tariffs, to which were added extortionate transportation and middleman charges." [3]

In short, the farmer in Minnesota, as elsewhere in the new West, was the victim of an expanding and violent economy on which powerful industrial interests to the East could and were exerting a predominant influence. Given the tradition of Jacksonian democracy that the farmer transported with him, it was inevitable that he would seek to redress his grievances by organizing politically. It was inevitable that he would come to identify his lot with that of his neighbors and that a definite class consciousness would emerge.

As the turn of the century approached, the rise of the organized labor movement in Minnesota added a new dimension to the protest. The industrial revolution and the nationalization of industry had fas-

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*liance History and Agricultural Digest* (Washington, 1891); Nathan Fine, *Labor and Farmer Parties in the United States, 1828 to 1929* (New York, 1928); Frederick E. Haynes, *Third Party Movements since the Civil War* (Iowa City, 1916); John D. Hicks, *The Populist Revolt* (Minneapolis, 1931); and George M. Stephenson, *John Lind of Minnesota* (Minneapolis, 1935). Among briefer studies are Hicks' article on "The Political Career of Ignatius Donnelly," in the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 8:80–132 (June-September, 1921); articles by George B. Engberg on "The Rise of Organized Labor in Minnesota" and "The Knights of Labor in Minnesota," in *Minnesota History*, 21:372–394 (December, 1940), and 22:367–380 (December, 1941); and an item on the first Farm and Labor party in *Appletons' Annual Cyclopedia and Register of Important Events*, 1888, p. 559. Unpublished studies include Engberg's "Rise of Organized Labor in Minnesota, 1850 to 1890," and Maude A. Gernes' "The Influence of the Labor Element in the Populist Party," both owned by the Minnesota Historical Society. The society's manuscript resources include vast collections of the papers of Ignatius Donnelly and Knute Nelson and the records of the North Star Grange. The society also has a file of the *Anti-Monopolist*, the weekly newspaper founded by Donnelly in 1874, and Donnelly's pamphlet collection, with many pertinent items like *Facts for the Granges* (1873).

[2] Quoted from Parrington's *Main Currents in American Thought*, 3:260 (New York, 1930).

[3] Parrington, *American Thought*, 3:261, 262.

tened the factory system on the American economy and the worker became an urban counterpart of the oppressed farmer. The factory system had developed at a time when free land still existed in ample quantities. Free land had speeded the development of the factory system by constantly draining off surplus labor, thus forcing the introduction of time-saving machinery. High wages for skilled workmen and an ever-growing market for manufactured goods accelerated the introduction of machinery and increased specialization of labor, and thus came the factory system and inevitably the rise of a group-conscious laboring class. But, while the westward movement was speeding the rise of the factory system, it temporarily, at least, slowed the rise of organized labor, because as the frontier moved westward it drained off from the older sections the discontented farmer and laborer, who, instead of fighting for a better life at home, moved west to begin life anew.

By 1900 the end of free land and the closing down of the frontier had brought to the laboring man a realization of his permanent dependence upon the industrial system and an awareness of the need to organize if he were to obtain a just wage for his work. To him the downswing in the business cycle meant unemployment or at best decreased wages. He was at the mercy of his employer, just as the farmer was at the mercy of those who controlled the price of the farmer's produce.

The workingman found that the comforts and conveniences of the urban center were denied him unless he had the money to buy them. When wages fell or he lost his job, he was unable to provide even minimum necessities, let alone enjoy the new comforts that the modern industrial society was making possible. Like the farmer, the laborer was frustrated by social and economic conditions over which he seemingly had little control. Soon he, too, was fulminating against his real or fancied oppressors. It was inevitable, once he had accepted his class role in society, that he, too, should seek to redress his grievances by political action. And it was inevitable, too, that the farmer and the laborer, both in quest of fundamental changes in the social and economic order, should periodically attempt a fusion of their forces.

IN THE DECADE following its admission to the Union in 1858, Minnesota feverishly developed its virgin resources, quite oblivious to political and economic trends. In the older parts of the nation, the first portents of protest were becoming visible. The workingmen of the East sought to develop a national political movement in the form of the National Labor Union, but the conventions of this organization in 1864, 1866, and 1867 involved no direct participation from the state, although they were concerned with matters of land reform, currency, taxation, and antimonopoly which were shortly to occupy the minds of Minnesota farmers.

It was in 1868 that the first definite expression of the protest occurred in Minnesota with the formation at St. Paul of the North Star Grange, the first local of the Patrons of Husbandry. This secret agricultural organization had been founded less than a year earlier on a national scale by a Minnesota farmer, Oliver H. Kelley. The declared objectives of the St. Paul lodge were to promote the farmer's education, to dignify his profession, to collect and diffuse crop and market statistics, to establish depots for the sale of farm produce in the cities, to exchange seeds and stock, to test new farm implements, and to protect the farmers against fraud in general and against the machinations of corporations in particular. Presumably these objectives were to be pursued outside politics, and the Grange attempted to prohibit political discussions at its meetings. Under the pressure of the times, however, the rule was relaxed in Minnesota and the Grange became the main forum for the farmer's expression of his political views. In fact, it

was at meetings of the Grange that organizers for the Anti-Monopoly party, which was to emerge in 1873, were able to bring their message to the farmers.

The Minnesota Grange succeeded in influencing some scattered items of legislation during its early years. In 1871, the state legislature established maximum fares and rates and set up the office of railroad commissioner, and in 1874 it created a board of railroad commissioners with power to establish a schedule of rates. This early regulatory legislation proved ineffective, but it did establish the doctrine that industries "clothed with public interest" are subject to government control—a doctrine that has been of fundamental importance in every phase of the history of political protest.

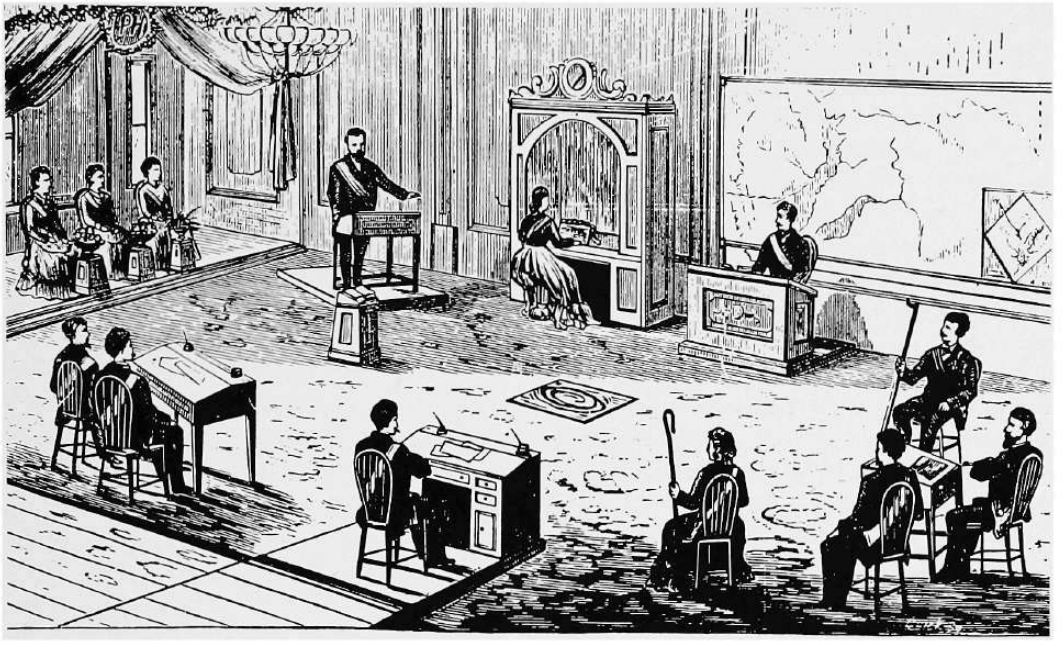
Although the Grange was exclusively a farmers' organization, its leaders frequently recognized the political proximity of the workers. There were appeals to the workers of the East to "join hands with the farmers of the West" and many Granges reported receiving assistance from the workers in the smaller towns. The mutuality of interest between the Grange and labor was further reflected in the founding of the Order of Sovereigns of Industry, which, while primarily emphasizing better working conditions, had a pattern of organization and a program similar to those of the Grange.

The Grange flourished in the early seventies, but the panic of 1873 led to the bankruptcy of the railroads and the consequent repeal of Granger legislation. It created, moreover, serious financial difficulties in the management of Grange enterprises. In the wake of the panic, the Grange suffered eclipse as a political force, although its importance as a social and economic organization continued for several decades, and it remains today a prominent farm organization.

THE SECOND major manifestation of the tradition of protest in Minnesota was the emergence in 1873 of the Minnesota Anti-Monopoly party. This movement was a direct outgrowth of Grange activity. It swept over a vast section of the Midwest, scoring important successes in a number of states. In some it held the balance of power in the legislature, and, in a few, it was able, by fusion with the Democrats, actually to control the state assembly. Its leader in Minnesota was the dynamic and colorful Ignatius Donnelly, whose influence in state and national politics was to extend over several decades. He was a brilliant writer, speaker, and literary figure, and today he is remembered as much for his writings as for his contribution to politics. He was one of those rare political figures whose colorful personality dominated the events around him. In 1869 he was elected to Congress as a Republican, but in 1872 he bolted the party after he failed of reelection in a bitter intraparty feud. He forthwith became an independent and took up the Anti-Monopolist cause on behalf of the farmers.

Donnelly early and consistently agitated for a fusion of farm and labor forces. In the first issue of a weekly newspaper, the *Anti-Monopolist,* which he founded in St. Paul on July 16, 1874, he proclaimed there to be "no real antagonism between the farmer and the mechanic," and in 1873 he wrote a pamphlet, *Facts for the Granges,* inviting both farmers and laborers to an Anti-Monopoly county convention.

The short-lived Anti-Monopoly party of Minnesota was born in a state convention in Owatonna on September 2, 1873. With Donnelly dominating the proceedings, a platform was adopted expressing vigorous opposition to protective tariffs, to monopolies of wood and coal, and to extravagant corporation salaries. As a clear indication of the movement's concern with labor's welfare, the platform called for a reasonable limitation of hours in shops and factories. The new party concluded its convention by asserting its determination to support for public office only candidates



FROM JOHN G. WELLS, THE GRANGE ILLUSTRATED

OFFICERS *of a Grange conducting a lodge meeting*

who subscribed to the platform and by nominating a full ticket for the 1873 state election.[4] The party survived only one election. Its life was complicated from its inception by the emergence of the liberal Republican movement of 1872, and by the appropriation of the Anti-Monopoly symbols and program by both the Republican and Democratic parties.

The excesses of the Grant administration and the ferment of the times had created a division within the Republican party. The dissidents actively sought an alliance in Minnesota with the Democrats and the Anti-Monopolists. In the face of this threat, the Republican regulars nominated Cushman K. Davis for governor. This was a devastating blow to the Anti-Monopolists, for by presenting a vigorous argument against railroad abuses in a speech entitled "Modern Feudalism," which he gave in all sections of the state, Davis established a reputation as a sound progressive.

In his day, Davis filled a role not unlike the one Harold Stassen was to play when he first sought state office as a liberal Republican in 1938, some sixty-five years later. Like Stassen, Davis presented himself as an enlightened Republican in tune with the needs of the times but opposed to radical excesses. The conservative Republicans in 1873 nominated Davis, not to give support to his mild program of reform, but because they saw in his nomination their best hope for the maintenance of power. Davis' popularity, the looseness of the coalition of protesting elements, and the appropriation of the Anti-Monopoly cause by the Republican party combined to give the Republicans a sweeping victory in the election of 1873. The Republican triumph abruptly ended the Anti-Monopoly movement in the state, and whatever

[4] The present system of holding biennial state elections on even-numbered years went into effect in 1883, when an amendment to the constitution, which became section 9 of article 7, was adopted. It provided that the next such election should be held in November, 1884, and that thereafter general elections should be held biennially. Incumbents were to remain in office an extra year. Folwell, *Minnesota*, 3:145; William Anderson, *A History of the Constitution of Minnesota*, 175 (Minneapolis, 1921).

protest sentiment remained was absorbed in a fusion with the liberal Republicans.

Labor's participation in the Anti-Monopoly party, despite Donnelly's appeals, was not significant. In 1873, with only a handful of trade unions in existence, there was no organized agency through which an effective appeal to the workers could be carried. For all practical purposes, the Anti-Monopoly party was an exclusively agrarian matter.

THE ANTI-MONOPOLY party had hardly passed from the Minnesota political scene when Greenbackism emerged as a new phase in the continuing tradition of protest. It was closely related in spirit and program to the Anti-Monopoly party, but its main emphasis was given to identifying the causes of the depression that followed 1873 with the financial policies of the national government. As its central objective, the Greenback party demanded the repeal of the Resumption Act, thereby making greenbacks legal tender for all debts.

The dominant personality in promoting the movement in Minnesota again was Donnelly. He also attained national prominence as temporary chairman of the Indianapolis convention of 1876, which marked the culmination of the preliminary organizational activity that began on a nationwide basis as early as 1874. The national Greenback party nominated candidates for the presidency in 1876, 1880, and 1884, and in Minnesota the party ran candidates for state office in 1877 and for Congress in 1878, but in no case did it develop strength sufficient to constitute a threat to the major parties. Despite Donnelly's leadership in the movement nationally, it caused only a minor ripple in Minnesota. This is clearly revealed in the state election results of the period:

| PRESIDENTIAL VOTE, 1876 | |
|---|---|
| Rutherford B. Hayes, Republican | 72,955 |
| Samuel J. Tilden, Democrat | 47,787 |
| Peter Cooper, Greenback | 2,389 |
| VOTE FOR GOVERNOR, 1877 | |
| John S. Pillsbury, Republican | 57,071 |
| William L. Banning, Democrat | 39,147 |
| William Meighen, Greenback | 2,396 |
| VOTE FOR GOVERNOR, 1879 | |
| John S. Pillsbury, Republican | 57,524 |
| Edmund Rice, Democrat | 41,844 |
| William Meighen, Greenback | 4,264 |
| PRESIDENTIAL VOTE, 1880 | |
| James A. Garfield, Republican | 93,903 |
| Winfield S. Hancock, Democrat | 53,315 |
| James B. Weaver, Greenback | 3,267 |

While the Greenback party was only a small side eddy in the course of the state's protest movement, it was important as a connecting link with the more vital and more powerful Farmers' Alliance. The decline and death of Greenbackism coincided with the economic recovery that appeared to be complete by 1879. Nationally it lingered on and made what amounted to a token showing in the presidential race of 1884.

THE 1880s brought the first real flowering of effective political protest in Minnesota, for during this decade the Farmers' Alliance and the Knights of Labor emerged to challenge the conservative status quo. The Grange activities of the seventies had introduced Minnesota farmers to the art of politics. It had given them a group consciousness and some understanding of the nature of co-operation. Above all, it revealed to the farmers the political gains that awaited successful organization. By 1880, however, the Grange had abdicated leadership in this field, and the Alliance had become its spiritual heir. By the end of 1881 there were eighty local Alliances and a state organization in Minnesota.

In the meantime, the Knights of Labor organization was finding a growing response among the workers in the cities. As early as October, 1878, the first local assembly was organized, and by 1880 the movement had a small and promising base in several cities. At the same time, organization of workers was proceeding rapidly

along strictly economic lines among railroad men, who were beginning to form their numerous brotherhoods, and among craftsmen, who were developing local units of the American Federation of Labor. By 1884 at least seventy-three unions had been organized in Minnesota, and, although many were short-lived, "the leaven of unionism had spread over a great portion of the state" and some ninety additional unions emerged in the next five years. In this period of early development, the Knights of Labor became, in effect, the political arm of the labor movement. It joined in the program of the Trades and Labor Assembly and sought to influence that body in political activity. Discussions at its meetings covered the full range of current grievances from land reform to a shorter working day.

The Alliance and the Knights of Labor constituted a dual threat of far-reaching effect upon the politics of Minnesota. More direct in its approach to politics than the Grange had been, the Alliance was soon urging the election of candidates pledged to its program, although maintaining the official policy of not endorsing parties. In 1884 so many friends of the alliance were elected to the Minnesota legislature that they came close to capturing the House. The legislature of 1885 reflected the influence of the Alliance and the Knights of Labor by adopting a series of laws which incorporated a number of their demands. Among them were acts creating the railroad and warehouse commission, establishing a uniform system of grading and weighing grain, regulating employment offices, and limiting hours for railroad workers. The effectiveness of the protest was thus increasing; it had arrived at the point where it was a factor in Minnesota politics that could not be ignored by politicians aspiring to power.

In the years after 1879 the return of prosperity tended to diminish the intensity of the protest, but in 1886 a new economic crisis reinvigorated the protest spirit. By now organized labor was an established economic institution in Minnesota and the Alliance was at the peak of its strength. During the summer of 1886, in advance of the elections of that year, all the variegated elements of protest — the Knights of Labor, the Alliance, the Grangers, the Anti-Monopolists, the Greenbackers — were summoned to a national convention in Indianapolis. This meeting was the impetus for the formation in February, 1887, of a new political party, which, although made up mostly of farmers, declared itself in favor of uniting with labor and therefore assumed the name of the National Union Labor party.

IN THE MEANTIME, a similar pattern of farm-labor unity was evolving in Minnesota, and out of it developed the first direct effort at the formation of a farm and labor party in the state. Until 1886, the Alliance had co-operated with one or the other of the two major parties, endorsing individual candidates who professed support for the Alliance program. Now labor was gaining strength, and the advantage of joint political effort became increasingly apparent. Thus, in September, 1886, the Minnesota Alliance and the Knights of Labor called a joint convention in St. Paul. Represented, in addition to the sponsoring bodies, were the Grange and the Trades and Labor assemblies of Minneapolis and St. Paul. Once again, Ignatius Donnelly was the moving spirit, and the convention, while refraining from nominating for state offices, selected a committee of thirty to go before the older parties with a political platform which included demands of both farmers and wage earners. The labor planks emphasized a bureau of labor statistics, protection for mine and factory workers, workmen's compensation, equal wages for men and women for like work, prohibition of child labor in mines, workshops, and factories, and recognition of the incorporation of trade unions.

Both major parties responded by incor-

porating in their platforms labor planks which were even stronger than labor anticipated. In the campaign of 1886, the Democrats and the Republicans competed for the support of the Knights of Labor and the Alliance, but labor appeared to line up behind the Democratic candidate for governor, A. A. Ames, who as mayor of Minneapolis had supported the strike of switchmen earlier in the year. He lost by only a small margin to Andrew R. Mc Gill, the Republican candidate. The growing effectiveness of labor's political activity was reflected in the election of some candidates with union endorsement to municipal offices and the state legislature.

Encouraged by the events of 1886, the Alliance and the Knights of Labor planned to continue their political co-operation. The Alliance scheduled its 1887 meeting for the same time that the Knights' organization was to hold its national convention in Minneapolis. This resulted in a conference meeting at which mutual support was pledged, and the ground was prepared for joint action in 1888.

As the election of that year approached, the farm and labor representatives met in St. Paul on August 22, and there was founded the first political movement in the state ever to bear the name of Farm and Labor party. Again Donnelly appears as the dominant personality, and he was nominated to head the new party's ticket. The platform incorporated all the protest demands of the day; it favored revision of the tariff, governmental control of telegraphs, further control of railroads, the Australian ballot, woman suffrage, reduction of railroad rates, factory inspection laws, an eight-hour working day, and a host of other farm-labor demands.

Despite an impressive and promising launching, the Farm and Labor party of 1885 disintegrated almost immediately after its formation. The volatile Donnelly, always an unpredictable factor in the protest ranks, withdrew from the gubernatorial nomination, and the entire ticket collapsed. In the election, William R. Merriam, the incumbent Republican governor, was re-elected by an overwhelming vote, and the new Farm and Labor party passed from the scene as suddenly as it had appeared.

THE ECLIPSE of the Farm and Labor party once again isolated the protesting elements. The major parties, despite their promises in 1886, when the vigor of the protest prodded them to include strong labor measures in their platforms, now ignored labor's demands. Labor was to remain without a political home until the emergence a few years later of the Populist party, which was to gather in one movement the various elements of protest that had been developing during the preceding three decades.

The Populist party in Minnesota was born on July 16, 1890, at a nominating convention called by the state Farmers' Alliance, to which were invited both farmers and workers. "It is a cry from the farthest retreats of a desolate country," the call said, "from the prairie farmer and from the toiler who looks out from his factory window as from a hopeless prison house." Fifty-five delegates claimed to represent labor organizations, although their credentials were under heavy suspicion. Some were charged with being paid agents of the Alliance's enemies and were peremptorily expelled. It was, however, almost entirely a farmers' convention, and the leaders, in an effort to provide for more complete joint activity with labor in the future, were careful to include many labor planks in the platform.

The convention nominated a ticket for state offices with Sidney M. Owen, editor of the *Minneapolis Farm Journal*, as the candidate for governor. He was nominated as a dark horse in an effort to break a deadlock resulting from a feud between R. M. Hall, the Alliance president, and Donnelly, both of whom eagerly sought the nomination. Owen was a Democrat, and

it was hoped that his nomination might lead to a coalition with protesting Democrats and would push that party out of the political picture. The election, however, was a three-way fight with the Republicans winning all but one state office. The vote for governor was William R. Merriam, Republican, 88,111; Thomas Wilson, Democrat, 85,844, and Owen, 58,514.

It is significant to note that, in its first entry in Minnesota politics, the Populist party, also frequently referred to as the Farmers' Alliance party, drew its strength chiefly from the Scandinavians in the Republican party. Since the 1890s, and particularly during the period of the Farmer-Labor party's ascendancy, members of the Scandinavian nationalities have played a predominant role in Minnesota protest politics.

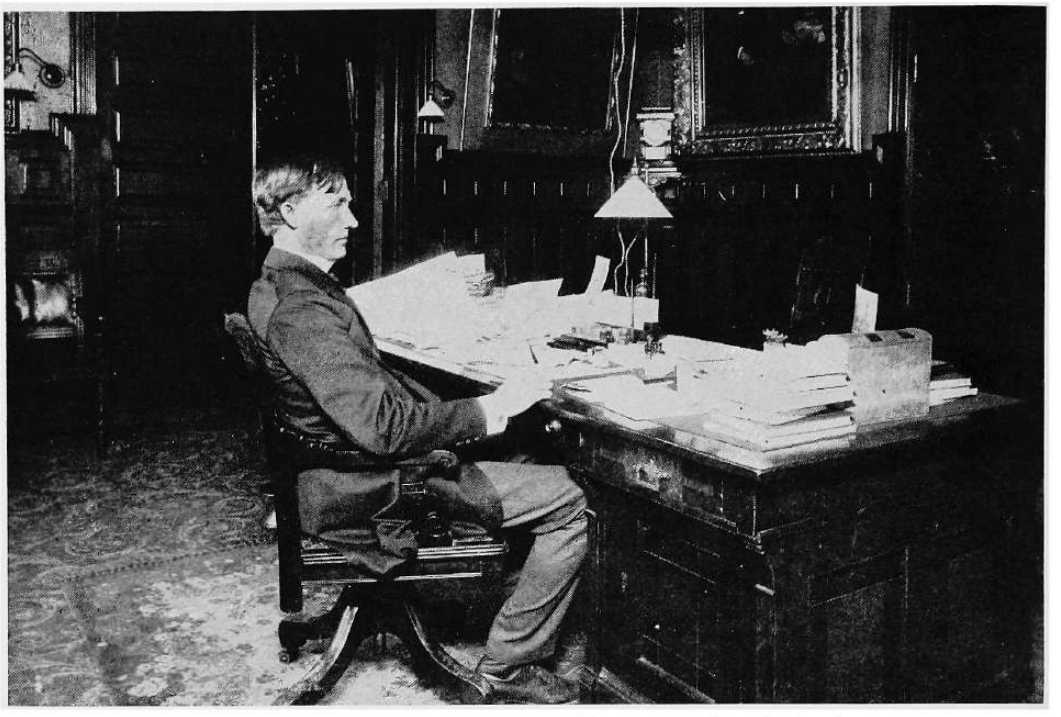
While unsuccessful in electing its candidates to state office in 1890, the Alliance did score significant victories in legislative contests, including the election of Donnelly to the state Senate. The Alliance-sponsored legislators, in fusion with the Democrats, were able, in fact, to organize both houses in the session of 1891. The future looked promising as the session opened under Donnelly's leadership, but formidable obstacles blocked the Alliance program. The farmer members of the legislature were inexperienced, the old party machines were still effective, and Governor Merriam was opposed to the Alliance program. The session ended amid confusion and defeat for the Alliance farm and labor demands.

THE SUCCESS of the Alliance in Minnesota and in other states inspired once again efforts to form a nationwide independent party with a farm-labor base. In May, 1891, after several abortive moves, a national convention, called by the remnants of the Knights of Labor but dominated by the Farmers' Alliance, met in Cincinnati and founded the People's or Populist party. Again Minnesota was represented by a delegation headed by Donnelly, who became one of the national leaders in the new party.

The successes of 1890 held out great promise for the Minnesota Populists in the election of 1892, but the promise was not fulfilled because the different elements that made up the party fell to quarreling, and the Farmers' Alliance and labor groups were antagonized by the efforts of Donnelly and his People's party contingent to dominate the proceedings in the convention of 1892. Donnelly, however, was nominated for governor, and hopes were high that the Populists would extend the gains of 1890. But the Republicans had learned well the reasons for the growing Populist strength, and they took skillful steps to check further depletion of their ranks. First, they appropriated the program and symbols of the protesting Populists, and, second, they took into account the political aspirations of the Scandinavians of the state. Accordingly, they nominated Knute Nelson, a Republican Congressman from western Minnesota, who was to become the first in a long line of Minnesota governors of Scandinavian extraction. Nelson was not only Scandinavian, however; he also was in accord with the Alliance program. In fact, the Alliance itself had considered nominating Nelson for the governorship.

The Populists encountered further difficulties when Donnelly refused to unite with the Democrats in 1892. He claimed fusion efforts had always ended in failure for the protestors. His candidacy suffered also by the loss of part of his heavy Irish Catholic following to the Democratic candidate, Daniel Lawler, who, Donnelly charged, was nominated for the purpose of splitting this section of the Populist leader's support. The 1892 vote for governor was Nelson, 109,220; Lawler, 94,600, and Donnelly, 39,863. The high tide of Populism appeared to be subsiding in Minnesota.

The Populists did, however, elect one Congressman, and they did obtain the bal-



JOHN *Lind in the governor's office of the Old Capitol*

ance of power in the state Senate of 1893. In the legislative session of that year, the Populists co-operated with the Republicans and achieved satisfaction on a number of issues. Laws were passed extending inspection of weighing and grading, increasing antitrust regulation, and establishing a state elevator, but the latter never was put into effect. Donnelly through this period continued vigorous agitation against the trusts and the price-fixing practices of the coal and lumber industries. Governor Nelson, while less extreme than Donnelly, also engaged in antitrust agitation. He called an anti-monopoly convention in Chicago in June, 1893, to demonstrate against the Sherman Act of 1890. The Populists, however, left Nelson's meeting, and, in rump session, endorsed Donnelly's more extreme views.

The hard times of 1893 turned the attention of Minnesota Populists to national issues in 1894. Their platform now placed primary emphasis on the silver question, and they were confident that they would extend their gains in the state election. Owen was nominated again for governor, and he was decisively defeated by Nelson as the Republicans swept the entire state ticket and all Congressional offices. Although badly beaten, Owen ran ahead of the Democratic candidate, George L. Becker, who was alleged to be under the influence of the railroads and consequently suffered a loss of support. The vote was Nelson, 147,943; Owen, 87,890; and Becker, 53,854.

The defeat of 1894 impressed upon the Populist leaders the futility of refusing to merge with the Democrats. When the latter nominated William Jennings Bryan in 1896, the stage was set in Minnesota for a fusion of the Populist forces with the Democrats and the Silver Republicans. An agreement was made whereby the candidate for governor would be a Silver Republican, those for secretary of state and treasurer would be Democrats, and those for lieutenant governor and attorney general would be Populists. The fusion led to

the nomination of John Lind, who, although defeated in the election of 1896, later became the first governor of Minnesota ever elected with the support of the protest elements. In the election of 1896, David M. Clough, who had succeeded to the governorship when Knute Nelson was chosen by the legislature for the United States Senate, was re-elected, but only by a slight plurality over Lind. The vote was Clough, 165,906 and Lind, 162,254.

Democratic-Farmer-Labor orators of the present occasionally claim John Lind as one of the early Minnesota prophets of protest, and his name is sometimes linked with those of John A. Johnson and Floyd B. Olson. Actually, Lind was a political moderate, even for his day. He was not, for example, a consistent supporter of free coinage, although he was usually on the progressive side of political issues.

Lind declined to run for re-election to Congress in 1892 after serving three terms, and it was only after much persuasion that he consented to run for governor in 1896. He was attracted by the idea of fusion with the People's party and the Democrats in part at least as the result of his early friendship in Congress with William Jennings Bryan. His strongest political assets were his Swedish origin and his reputation for honesty. The voters of Minnesota could rally to him, despite his defection from the Republican party in 1896, because they had confidence in his integrity and were impressed by his sincerity.

In 1898, Lind was elected by a fusion of Democrats, Populists, and Silver Republicans, becoming the state's first Democratic governor since Sibley's day. He received 131,980 votes to 111,796 for the Republican candidate, William H. Eustis.

The election of Lind is sometimes regarded as a high point in the Populist movement in Minnesota. Actually, Lind's election cannot be laid to the protest fervor. In 1898 he polled thirty thousand fewer votes than he did in 1896, and the total vote was sixty thousand under the figure of two years earlier. The explanation of Lind's triumph is to be found not in the popularity of the protest issues, but rather in the local factors of internal strife within the Republican party and the inexperience of Eustis' managers.

The decline of Populism is reflected in the make-up of the 1899 legislature, which had only eight Populists in the House and three in the Senate. The course of Populism was running out as the nineteenth century came to an end. Many of its leaders remained active politically and participated in the Nonpartisan League and the Farmer-Labor party, but by 1900 Populism was no longer threatening the dominance of the major parties.

In 1900 Lind was defeated for re-election and the Republicans were restored to power, as Samuel R. Van Sant polled 152,905 votes to Lind's 150,651. This defeat by only a narrow margin marked the beginning of a period of conservatism in Minnesota politics that was to continue until the rise of the Nonpartisan League after 1916.

During the period from 1860 to 1900, the parties of agrarian protest in Minnesota followed a pattern common to other Midwest states. It was a pattern of ups and downs, in which the protest parties were alternately strong and weak, depending on how economic conditions grew worse or improved. As the protest progressed through the last half of the nineteenth century, it triumphed periodically, it influenced some state legislation, and it accomplished a portion of its ambitious program. But it was not until the 1930s that the protest, feeding on the great depression, reached its peak of power and influence. The movements of the nineteenth century had prepared the way for the Nonpartisan League, out of which was to come the Farmer-Labor party of the 1920s and 1930s, and that party's turbulent experience created the legacy to which Minnesota's Democratic-Farmer-Labor party now lays claim.