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# *A Cycle in the History of Minnesota Republicanism*

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ON THE evening of October 12, 1896, an immense throng packed the Exposition Auditorium for the principal Minneapolis rally of William Jennings Bryan's presidential campaign. According to the next day's *Minneapolis Journal* Bryan's appearance before his audience evoked "one overwhelming human roar of the kind that is seldom seen outside of national conventions." The *Journal*, which was no free silver organ, added an observation reassuring to its own partisans: "The memory of such a scene will doubtless go far toward softening the bitterness of defeat."

In his Minneapolis speech Bryan acknowledged an open letter received earlier from ex-Senator William D. Washburn, Minneapolis industrialist and a leader of the McKinley campaign in Minnesota. Among other things this communication charged that Congressman Bryan of Nebraska had supported measures inimical to Minnesota. He had voted for free trade in lumber which favored Canadian timber at the expense of Minnesota, and he had supported the abro-

gation of reciprocity arrangements, thereby prejudicing the export trade in flour. Washburn requested Bryan to clarify his position on tariff protection and reciprocity.<sup>1</sup>

Bryan ignored this request in favor of an attack on his correspondent at a point of apparent vulnerability. Four years earlier, on July 11, 1892, Senator Washburn had delivered an impassioned address to the Senate in support of his antioption bill, a measure calling for strict federal regulation of trading in grain futures. In this speech the Senator had used an idiom strikingly similar to that of Bryan campaigners in 1896. He had been "startled . . . when the statement was made . . . that one-half of the volume of wealth of this country is owned by thirty-six thousand persons." The methods used to effect this concentration of riches heightened his alarm: "The millionaires, and the tens of millionaires, and the hundreds of millionaires have never created nor earned their wealth, and the royal road to wealth has been through illegitimate speculation, stock exchanges and grain gambling, railroad wrecking and trusts, and the whole volume of iniquities that have developed in the nefarious methods of the stock exchanges."<sup>2</sup>

After quoting several such passages, Bryan helped his listeners draw the proper in-

<sup>1</sup> *Minneapolis Journal*, October 12, 1896; William J. Bryan, *The First Battle*, 538-547 (Chicago, 1896).

<sup>2</sup> Bryan, *The First Battle*, 542; *Congressional Record*, 52 Congress, 1 session, p. 5991.

ferences: "Ought the Senator to be surprised if we are alarmed now at the same thing which scared him four years ago?" It also seems that Bryan accused Washburn of reversing himself. In 1892 the Senator had championed the oppressed agrarian West; now he supported the oppressors.<sup>3</sup>

Bryan had a point, though perhaps not as strong a one as he hoped. While worry about the concentration of wealth and support of tightened regulation of the grain trade did not equal commitment to free silver, it was nevertheless true that a perceptible gap separated Washburn's position in 1892 from the cause he served in 1896. Federal regulation of grain speculation and McKinley Republicanism were not theoretically antithetical, but Republican orators in 1896 stressed the theme that the national welfare required encouragement rather than restraint of corporate capitalism. If this suggests inconsistency on Washburn's part, many of his contemporaries are open to the same accusation. In the 1890s property-conscious citizens of the Middle West displayed extreme sensitivity to perils from two opposing fronts: the eastern financial and industrial community which allegedly aspired to control the nation's economic life, and the agrarian radical movement which seemed to endanger property values and to threaten the continued flow of capital into the region.

Fear of these two "enemies" and a disposition to react against the one which at the moment seemed more dangerous may well explain the wide swings from "conservatism" to "radicalism" which historians have perceived in the politics of Minnesota.<sup>4</sup> At any rate, this thesis can be used as a valuable tool in interpreting the state's political development in the 1890s.

Early in the decade, when concern over outside threats to local economic independence ran high, most politicians found it expedient to crusade against "the interests." A potentially strong Populist party emerged, and both Republicans and Democrats wrote political platforms advocating "reform." Before long a reaction against this line began to

develop. Populism sometimes invited charges of excessive radicalism and irresponsibility, and disorders like the Pullman boycott and the march of Coxey's "army," both in 1894, aroused fears for the safety of the social order as well as the security of property.

The silver movement complicated matters. At first free silver attracted many moderates, and in 1896 it promised to unite Minnesota's reform groups into an unbeatable coalition. But this did not materialize. A well-conceived Republican campaign which linked free silver with the destruction of both moral and property values convinced a majority of voters that "Bryanism" was more dangerous than Wall Street. Contrary to expectations, McKinley carried Minnesota by landslide proportions.

Defeat of free silver and the decline of Populism following 1896 created a new situation. The radical danger had lost potency, but the trend toward economic consolidation accelerated. As popular consciousness of this altered pattern developed, the so-called "interests" again came under sustained attack. Following the formation in 1901 of the Northern Securities Company, which brought the principal railroads of the region under a single management, the anti-big business ethos dominated state politics. Minnesota had moved into the Progressive era.

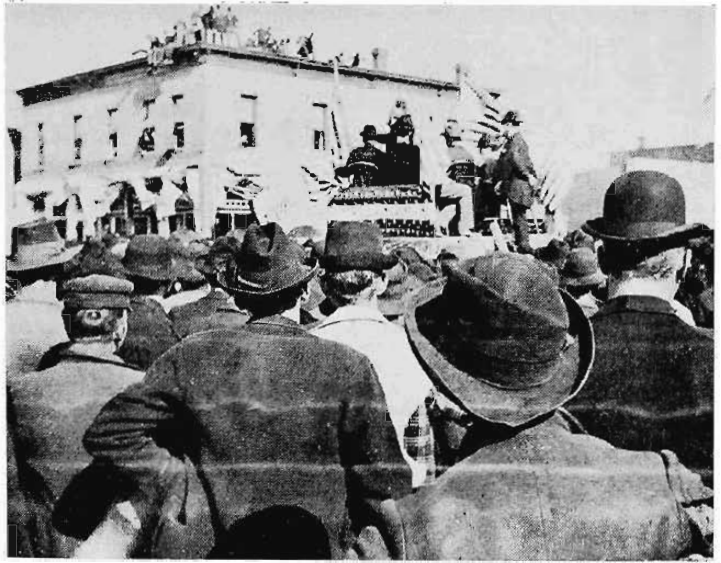
IN JULY, 1892, while Senator Washburn remained in Washington working for passage of his antioption bill, his Republican associates in Minnesota prepared for the fall campaign with a sense of real urgency. Two years earlier the party had suffered near disaster. Republican Governor William R. Merriam had narrowly won re-election, but the Democratic-Alliance opposition had captured the legislature and four of the state's five Congressional seats.<sup>5</sup> Several cir-

<sup>3</sup> Bryan, *The First Battle*, 541.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Donald F. Warner, "Prelude to Populism," in *Minnesota History*, 32:129 (September, 1951).

<sup>5</sup> Minnesota, *Legislative Manual*, 1891, p. 554-559, 574-576, 560-571.

RED River Valley  
farmers listening to  
William Jennings Bryan at  
Fargo, North Dakota,  
in 1896



cumstances had contributed to this reverse: agricultural discontent; the unpopularity of President Benjamin Harrison's administration; ethnic — particularly Scandinavian — discontent; internal bickering over the bossism issue; and a vague suspicion among the electorate that organized wealth ruled the Grand Old Party. Although in 1892 the opposition was handicapped by its unimpressive record in the legislature of 1891, the Republican situation still remained critical, and party leaders worked hard to devise a strategy for dealing with it.<sup>6</sup>

This they managed to do. A reasonably harmonious state convention indicated the containment, if not the resolution, of internal tensions. To the extent that official declarations can commit a party, the platform ranged Republicanism on the side of reform. "Trusts and combinations," proclaimed one plank, were "a great evil" with which government must cope. Another asserted that all "corporations or individuals charged with . . . public service or employment" were clearly amenable "to public control" — a ringing affirmation of Granger

doctrine at a time when the United States Supreme Court was limiting the police power of the states. Still another plank condemned as "un-American" the employment of "armed forces . . . other than the proper authorities of the state" when strike disorders threatened. This obviously referred to the private army employed by Andrew Carnegie to crush the Homestead strike. The platform also pledged a state reform program. One plank promised legislation to guarantee universal access to elevator and transportation facilities "without discrimination, at fair and reasonable rates." Another called for measures to protect "the health, life and limb of all employes of transportation, mining and manufacturing companies."<sup>7</sup>

More than the platform, the nomination of Knute Nelson for governor seemed an earnest of Republican intentions. Few politicians appeared better equipped than Nelson to preside over a reform administration. As state legislator and Congressman, he had practiced the kind of "independence" reassuring to suspicious agrarians. In 1875 he had won election to the Minnesota senate without party endorsement after Republican leaders in Douglas County had denied him the nomination. In 1887, during the last term of his six-year tenure in Congress, he

<sup>6</sup> Carl H. Chrislock, "The Alliance Party and the Minnesota Legislature of 1891," in *Minnesota History*, 35: 297-312 (September, 1957).

<sup>7</sup> *Journal*, July 28, 29, 1892; *Legislative Manual*, 1893, p. 367.

had supported tariff reduction by voting for the Mills bill, a Democratic measure. In 1890 the newly organized Alliance party had offered him its nomination for governor, an honor he had declined in favor of remaining with the Republicans.<sup>8</sup>

Nelson had other assets befitting a reformer. A resident of Douglas County, where he combined farming and the practice of law, he lived near the geographic center of political protest; presumably this endowed him with an understanding of agricultural discontent denied to Twin City politicians. As a native of Norway he symbolized the Scandinavian drive for political recognition. In 1890, as Nelson himself pointedly observed, Scandinavian defections from Republicanism had contributed to the large Alliance party vote in northwestern Minnesota.<sup>9</sup>

Despite identification with the insurgent tendencies of his time, Nelson did not fit the Bryan-LaFollette reformer pattern. The nomination for governor came to him with the assent, not over the opposition, of the so-called Merriam machine.<sup>10</sup> If his speeches are self-revelatory, he conceived the function of politics to be the reconciliation of divergent interests rather than the promotion of righteousness. In 1892 this meant acknowledging the justice of many current complaints and accepting the reform program laid down in the Republican platform. It also meant avoiding policies which unnecessarily alarmed investors.

The realities of 1892 being what they were, Republicans stressed the reformist side of their candidate's "conservative liberalism," and the election returns confirmed their wisdom. Notwithstanding a national Democratic tide which engulfed neighboring Wisconsin, Nelson's vote exceeded Democrat Daniel W. Lawler's by about 15,000 and Populist Ignatius Donnelly's by approximately 70,000. Compared to 1890, the Republicans materially improved their position, the Democrats held their own, and the Populist tide receded. Nelson's excess over Merriam's 1890 vote was gained largely in western Minnesota, which in 1890 had gone

heavily for Sidney M. Owen, the Alliance party candidate. Fortunately for Nelson, the Republican party recaptured the state house of representatives by a wide margin. The hold-over senate, which along with the house had been organized by a Democratic-Alliance party coalition in 1891, also came under Republican control in January, 1893, when two incumbent third-party senators switched to the Republican caucus.<sup>11</sup>

After the election an embittered Donnelly attributed his own poor showing to the injection of religion and nationality into the campaign by the Lutheran and Catholic clergy—a charge difficult to prove or disprove. Whatever part these factors played, however, the 1892 situation did not permit the shunting aside of economic issues. Recognizing this, Nelson and Lawler (an Irish Roman Catholic) combined ethnic and religious appeal with promises to bring the moneyed interests under effective control. For Nelson this strategy worked, with one significant exception—northwestern Minnesota, the state's most depressed region. Despite their large Norwegian-American populations, the counties of Polk and Marshall registered pluralities for Donnelly.<sup>12</sup>

IF REFORM can be measured by extension of state police power, the 1893 legislature deserves the "progressive" label. Its deliberations added several important statutes to the railroad and grain codes. The most important of the railroad laws effectively guaranteed access to elevator and warehouse sites along railroad right-of-ways by providing for condemnation proceedings where necessary. The session also significantly broadened regulation of the grain trade. The

<sup>8</sup> Martin W. Odland, *The Life of Knute Nelson*, 78–82, 142, 151–153 (Minneapolis, 1926).

<sup>9</sup> *St. Paul Daily Globe*, October 2, 1890.

<sup>10</sup> Robert C. Dunn to Knute Nelson, May 19, 1892, Knute Nelson Papers, in the Minnesota Historical Society.

<sup>11</sup> *Legislative Manual*, 1893, p. 462–477; *Globe*, January 3, 1893.

<sup>12</sup> *The Representative* (St. Paul), October 4, 1894; *Legislative Manual*, 1893, p. 462.

"governor's grain bill" placed all country elevators under the jurisdiction of the railroad and warehouse commission and established procedures designed to assure fair grading of grain. Another law provided for the construction of a state-owned terminal elevator at Duluth, but the Minnesota Supreme Court declared this statute unconstitutional, and the elevator never materialized.<sup>13</sup>

The labor laws of the session substantially redeemed 1892 Republican platform pledges. One measure converted the office of commissioner of labor statistics into the bureau of labor and endowed it with increased power and expanded personnel. Another prescribed minimal standards of safety for industrial plants and created the post of factory inspector within the bureau of labor to enforce them. Still another forbade management to require as a condition of employment the relinquishment of "any lawful right or privilege of citizenship, public or private, political or social, moral or religious."<sup>14</sup>

With State Senator Ignatius Donnelly's active participation and Governor Nelson's

apparent co-operation, the 1893 legislature also launched two wide-ranging investigations. One of these sought to determine how much timber on state school lands had been improperly harvested by private lumbermen; the other probed monopoly in coal. The sponsors of these investigations hoped for the prosecution of timber thieves and coal monopolists, plus legislation to safeguard timber resources and protect the consumer from price gouging.<sup>15</sup>

After adjournment, the legislature of 1893 received editorial praise from reform papers, and Governor Nelson's prestige stood high because many of his inaugural recommendations had been enacted into law. Nonetheless, the follow-up disappointed those who wanted new departures in public policy.<sup>16</sup> The timber investigation culminated in the settlement of claims against offending lumbermen at a fraction of the original estimates, and the legislatures of 1895 and 1897 effected relatively modest changes in forest policy.<sup>17</sup> The coal investigation led Governor Nelson to call a national antitrust convention which met in Chicago in June, 1893. This gathering directed public attention to the monopoly problem but left no identifiable mark on either state or national antitrust policy.

The labor and grain legislation of the 1893 session — along with that enacted previously — also failed to rectify the abuses which led to its passage. On December 19, 1902, Alexander G. Bainbridge, a Minneapolis labor leader, remarked in the *Mill City Union* that Minnesota had good labor laws on paper but complained that statutes prohibiting the "iron-clad agreement" could not be enforced. An investigation of alleged incompetence and corruption in the state department of grain inspection, instigated in 1899 by Governor John Lind, disclosed the charges to be well founded. And Governor John A. Johnson, soon after taking office in 1905, became convinced that the Minnesota railroad and warehouse commission displayed a sad lack of determination to use its statutory authority.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Minnesota, *General Laws*, 1893, p. 178-180, 131-138, 140-143; Rippe v. Becker et al, 56 Minnesota Supreme Court Reports 100-118 (1895).

<sup>14</sup> *General Laws*, 1893, p. 96-106, 128.

<sup>15</sup> William W. Folwell, *A History of Minnesota*, 3:500-518 (St. Paul, 1926); Martin Ridge, *Ignatius Donnelly: The Portrait of a Politician*, 312-315 (Chicago, 1962).

<sup>16</sup> Scholars disagree on Knute Nelson's effectiveness as a reform governor. Donald F. Warner calls Nelson's election in 1892 "a triumph for the farmers, for his administration was marked by as much reform as could have been accomplished by Owen or Donnelly." (Warner, in *Minnesota History*, 32:146.) Theodore Saloutos and John D. Hicks, on the other hand, deny "genuine progress" toward reform in Minnesota until the election of John A. Johnson in 1904. See Saloutos and Hicks, *Agricultural Discontent in the Middle West*, 47 (Madison, Wisconsin, 1951). A case can be made for either viewpoint. Statute book evidence supports Warner; administrative follow-up vindicates Hicks and Saloutos.

<sup>17</sup> *Leola Blade* (Leola, South Dakota), quoted in *The Representative*, September 20, 1893; Folwell, *Minnesota*, 3:511-514.

<sup>18</sup> George M. Stephenson, *John Lind of Minnesota*, 170 (Minneapolis, 1935); Winifred G. Helmes, *John A. Johnson: The People's Governor*, 175, 206 (Minneapolis, 1949).

To some extent, these difficulties were unavoidable. The lack of trained administrative personnel in the late nineteenth century made it difficult for state regulatory agencies to remain abreast of their responsibilities. But in Minnesota political circumstances also conspired against consolidation and expansion of Nelson's program. Nelson himself resigned the governorship in January, 1895, to become United States Senator, a post he won after a bruising battle with incumbent Senator Washburn. The Nelson-Washburn contest shattered the unity of the Republican party, rendering it incapable of the teamwork which had helped enact Nelson's program in 1893.<sup>19</sup> David M. Clough, the new governor, although closely associated with Nelson politically, lacked both the inclination and leadership required to push his predecessor's program toward completion.<sup>20</sup>

Nevertheless, this legislation provided a starting point for more ambitious reform efforts after 1900. Nor would it be correct to say that all of it remained ineffective. The substantial growth after 1895 of the farmers' elevator movement was possible because state legislation outlawing railroad discrimination had finally become effective.<sup>21</sup>

ALLIANCE-POPULISM could plausibly claim some credit for Republican flirtation with reform. Elections in the early nineties had warned that unless the Republicans responded to demands for change, their supremacy in Minnesota might end. Party politicians did not relish this prospect; neither did the influential business community, which dreaded the possibility that irresponsible radicalism might gain control of the state government. If change had to come, they argued, let it be supervised by politicians friendly to business needs and values.

So far as it goes, this explanation is correct, but it fails to interpret fully the politics of the business community. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, mid-western business was not an organized monolith. A real or fancied crisis situation

could forge impressive business unity in support of the *status quo*, as the campaign of 1896 demonstrated, but more often intra-business conflict led threatened segments of commerce or industry to condemn excessive concentration of private economic power and to call for redress from government.<sup>22</sup>

So it was in the early nineties. In 1889 an English syndicate acquired control of a substantial part of Minneapolis' milling capacity. This evoked cries of alarm from Twin City businessmen. "Henceforth," editorialized the *Northwestern Miller*, "the development of Minneapolis as a milling city may mean not the healthy expanding of individual effort, but the dropsical overgrowth of a mammoth institution listed in the London stock exchange, the profits of which will go largely into foreign coffers."<sup>23</sup> The Farmers' Alliance shared this concern. In early 1890 several county Alliance organizations passed resolutions viewing with alarm the acquisition by foreign capital of "our mills, elevators, and other industries . . . for the benefit of foreigners" who did not understand "our free institutions."<sup>24</sup>

Threats to Twin City economic independence did not come solely from abroad. The

<sup>19</sup> Robert E. Cushman, *The Independent Regulatory Commission*, 28 (New York, 1941); Folwell, *Minnesota*, 3:489-499; H. P. Hall, *Observations: Being More or Less a History of Political Contests in Minnesota From 1849 to 1904*, 242-245 (St. Paul, 1904).

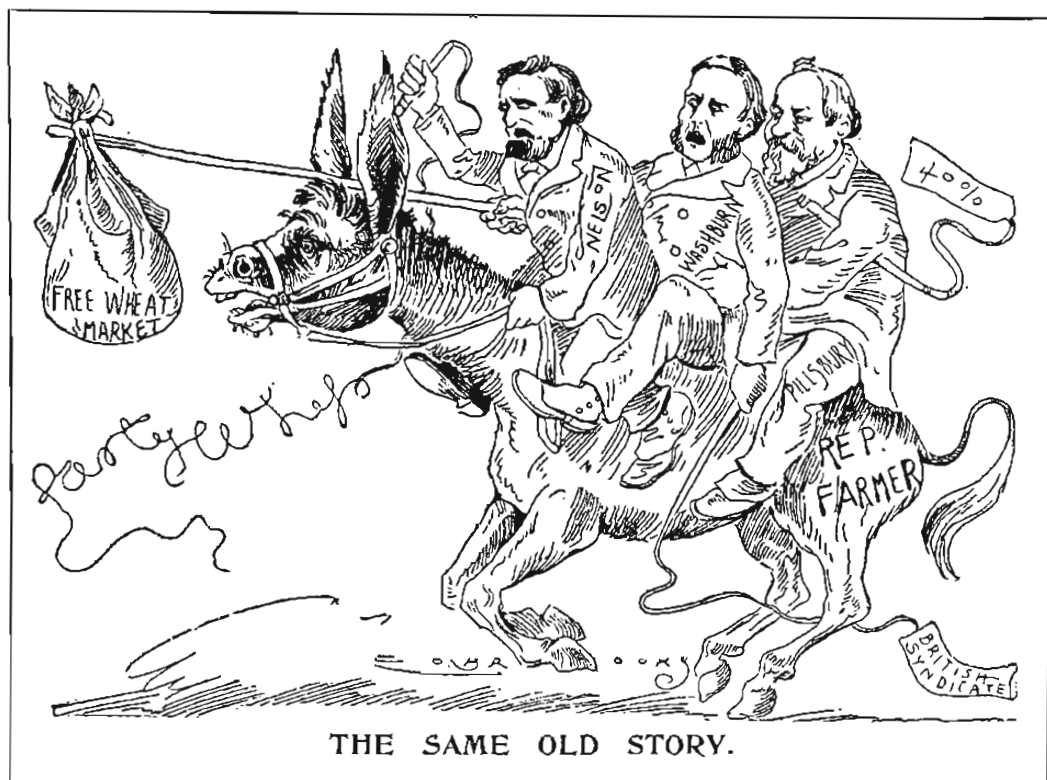
<sup>20</sup> Clough vetoed a bill establishing a merit system in the department of grain inspection. (*Journal*, April 26, 1895.) In dealing with failure of the 1895 legislature to push the pine land investigation further, Folwell comments: "Governor Clough naturally did not enjoin the legislature to pursue the inquest." (*Minnesota*, 3:512.) Clough was a lumberman.

<sup>21</sup> Henrietta M. Larson, *The Wheat Market and the Farmer in Minnesota: 1858-1900*, 245 (New York, 1926).

<sup>22</sup> Robert H. Wiebe, "Business Disunity and the Progressive Movement, 1901-1914," in *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 44:664-685 (March, 1958). See also Wiebe, *Businessmen and Reform: A Study of the Progressive Movement* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1962).

<sup>23</sup> Quoted in William C. Edgar, *The Medal of Gold*, 140 (Minneapolis, 1925).

<sup>24</sup> *Great West* (St. Paul), January 24, 1890.



A Democratic view of Republican reform promises in 1892

Chicago Board of Trade “wind” dealers allegedly rigged the wheat market to the disadvantage of Minnesota farmers, grain traders, and millers. It was to end this evil that Senator Washburn introduced his antioppression bill, which proposed to tax the more speculative transactions out of existence.

Washburn’s measure did not command universal backing within either the grain trade or the Alliance movement, but enough support came from both camps to create a temporary, fragile community of interest between the two.<sup>25</sup> To enlighten its readers on the practices of the Chicago Board of Trade, the *Great West*, spokesman for the radical wing of the Alliance movement, published an interview with Charles A. Pillsbury, prominent Minneapolis miller, in its issue of July 31, 1891. In an accompanying

explanation the editor, Everett W. Fish, firmly stated that he was neither forgetting nor forgiving the “enormous iniquities” of grain traders and millers. Opposition to Chicago “rascality,” however, demanded regional solidarity.

Along with monopoly and grain speculation, transportation problems aroused the concern of Twin City businessmen in the early nineties. In 1891 the millers of the Northwest initiated a campaign for tighter regulation of steamship companies to alleviate discrimination against overseas shippers. With major help from John Lind, then a member of Congress, they secured passage in 1893 of the Harter act, which embodied their major recommendations. In appreciation of Lind’s efforts, the millers tendered him a complimentary dinner.<sup>26</sup>

Twin City shippers, large and small, also complained about railroad discrimination. In the nineties, large Minneapolis shippers appealed to the Interstate Commerce Com-

<sup>25</sup> Larson, *The Wheat Market and the Farmer*, 215. “Wind” was the popular term for futures or options.

<sup>26</sup> Stephenson, *John Lind*, 70.

mission for a redress of grievances, and as early as 1885, the Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce had "requested that state legislative action be taken against the transit tyranny and discrimination in delivery, buying and shipping of grain as enforced by [James J.] Hill's road, the Manitoba."<sup>27</sup>

SENATOR Washburn's "Populistic" attack on the Chicago Board of Trade, business support of Nelson's reform program, occasional miller-farmer accord in support of regional interests, and demands from shippers that the government regulate transportation, did not mean the Minnesota business community had shed its deep suspicion of "radicalism." The story of usury legislation in 1891 illustrates how easily the reform impulse could be inhibited by a fear of disturbing the business climate. When the legislature of 1891 assembled, no one seriously disputed that interest rates, particularly in the western counties, approached usurious levels. Early in the session a number of bills setting an eight per cent ceiling on interest rates were introduced. Immediately a cry went up that such legislation would slow down — or dry up — the flow of capital into the state. Members of the Alliance party delegation who had come to St. Paul pledged to impose statutory discipline on the "money changers" were impressed, and the 1891 session failed to enact an interest law. Even so, some writers blamed the legislature for agitating a delicate issue.<sup>28</sup>

Entry of the Populist party into Minnesota state politics in 1892 heightened the fear of radicalism. Prior to the campaign of that year the "nonpolitical" Minnesota Farmers' Alliance shifted affiliation from its own creature, the Minnesota Alliance party, to the recently founded People's party, and Ignatius Donnelly, who had been barred from top leadership in 1890, assumed control of the new third-party organization. Both developments tended to "radicalize" the third-party movement. Donnelly was farther to the left than the leaders whom he displaced, and pressure from the national organization

pushed the Minnesota People's party in the same direction. In addition, Donnelly's chief lieutenant, Fish of the *Great West*, was an uncompromising dogmatist who during the campaign assailed both "deviationist" Populists and conservative Republicans with fury and stridency.<sup>29</sup>

Following Donnelly's defeat, Fish's tactics drew a chorus of denunciation from members of his own party. As the case against the *Great West* editor unfolded, he was accused not only of indiscretion but of venality. His intemperate attacks on fellow Populists, his lurid charges against the old-party opposition, and his preoccupation in the closing days of the campaign with dynamite plots in Kansas, allegedly were prompted, not by excessive zeal for the cause, but by Republican money in return for burdening the Populists with a reputation for extreme radicalism. Officially the case against Fish could not be established, but certainly he symbolized the mistakes of the 1892 Populist campaign.<sup>30</sup>

Realizing this, Populist leaders in preparing for 1894 sought to establish a responsible, respectable image. For a time it appeared that they might succeed. A harmonious state convention, meeting in early July, 1894, nominated a moderate state ticket headed by Owen. Old-party newspapers re-

<sup>27</sup> *Journal*, July 5, 1892; *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, January 6, 1893; Larson, *The Wheat Market and the Farmer*, 172.

<sup>28</sup> *Pioneer Press*, February 24, 28, 1891; *Globe*, February 27, March 18, 1891; *Great West*, March 6, 1891. The state bureau of labor statistics attributed the high foreclosure rate in northwestern Minnesota "mainly to the agitation concerning the legal rate of interest and the usury laws by the legislature of 1891." See "Mortgage Foreclosures and Land Values in Minnesota in the Years 1881 and 1891," in Minnesota, *Executive Documents*, 1892, vol. 2, p. 380.

<sup>29</sup> Warner, in *Minnesota History*, 32:141-145; Ridge, *Ignatius Donnelly*, 283-288. See also issues of *Great West* during the campaign of 1892.

<sup>30</sup> Ridge, *Ignatius Donnelly*, 310, 319; Carl H. Chrislock, "Sidney M. Owen: An Editor in Politics," in *Minnesota History*, 36:116 (December, 1958); *The Representative*, May 10, June 14, July 12, 1893; January 3, 17, 1894; *Freeborn County Standard* (Albert Lea), January 11, 1893.



marked that the convention had steered the party toward moderation.<sup>31</sup>

But 1894 was not a normal political year. Midsummer brought the Pullman strike in Chicago, and the nation was gripped by an intense fear that revolution was imminent. Since the Minnesota Populist convention had backed the American Railway Union (in a resolution which also condemned resort to violence), and since Owen subsequently refused to repudiate this stand, it followed, as one Republican paper put it, that "Populism and anarchy . . . [were] getting to be very nearly synonymous terms."<sup>32</sup> With variations this became the old-party keynote. "Populism is disloyal to the government of the United States," asserted the *Minneapolis Journal* on July 20. On October 25 the *Minneapolis Tribune* characterized the promise of Populism as "Ruined credit, paralyzed commerce, internal war and hopeless poverty."

While firing these barrages Republican campaigners occasionally recalled Nelson's reputation as a reform governor, and Nelson himself delivered a sober public policy speech at Argyle, in the heartland of Populism. But the major emphasis in both Republican and Democratic campaigns remained the identification of Populism with anarchism.<sup>33</sup>

The election yielded the Republicans their most decisive triumph since the early 1880s. True, Owen's 88,000 votes exceeded Donnelly's 1892 total by nearly 50,000, while Nelson gained less than 40,000 over his own 1892 vote. But this reflected Owen's personal strength and the weakness of the Democratic candidate, George L. Becker, rather than a gain in Populist support. Moreover, the spread between Nelson and Owen — who ran second — was an impressive 60,000

votes. The Republicans also elected all seven Congressmen, displacing one Populist and two Democrats, and achieved top-heavy majorities in the state legislature.<sup>34</sup>

"DEMOCRATIC news in Minnesota is a scarce article this year," reported W. W. Jermaine, the *Minneapolis Journal's* able political writer, on April 3, 1896. Some Democrats, wrote Jermaine, doubted whether party prospects justified holding a state convention, and it seemed improbable that a full state ticket would be nominated. Republican confidence matched Democratic gloom. The Populists, who had worked at reorganization since 1894, obviously would contest the election. But the narrow Populist base, consisting of a small legislative delegation without a single Congressman or state official, held small promise of victory.

The apparent certainty of their party's triumph in the fall encouraged factional strife among the Republicans. Still smarting from their defeat in the Senatorial battle of the previous year, a group of Minneapolis business and civic leaders, including ex-Senator Washburn, issued a manifesto in late January announcing formation of a "Committee of 100" to oppose the renomination of Governor Clough. For eight years, they charged, a "Clough-Merriam-Pioneer Press combine" supported and directed by the Great Northern Railroad had successfully conspired to dominate Republican and state politics. According to the antimachine group, Nelson's election to the Senate had been one stage of a long-range plan, completion of which was scheduled for 1899 when ex-Governor Merriam would replace Senator Cushman K. Davis. In the meantime the statehouse was to be occupied by Clough, a man totally unfit for the office.<sup>35</sup>

In his famous *Observations*, Harlan P. Hall, a veteran St. Paul newspaperman and intimate of Minnesota politicians for nearly fifty years, characterized the anti-Clough drive as "just an ebullition of 'goodness' on general principles," going on to say that "There are more 'good' people to the square

<sup>31</sup> *Freeborn County Standard*, July 18, 25, 1894; *Globe*, July 12, 1894.

<sup>32</sup> *Martin County Sentinel* (Fairmont), August 31, 1894.

<sup>33</sup> *Journal*, July 30, 1894.

<sup>34</sup> *Legislative Manual*, 1895, p. 462, 480.

<sup>35</sup> *Journal*, January 30, March 2, May 21, June 20, 1896.

inch in Minneapolis than any town of its size I ever knew. These 'good' people couldn't approve the bluff ways of the rough and ready lumberman, Dave Clough."<sup>36</sup>

There was undoubtedly more to it than that, although given Clough's reputation as a spoilsman, the "clean government" issue should not be underestimated. Rivalry between St. Paul and Minneapolis interests was probably involved also, as well as civic pride. Many Minneapolis people could not forgive their fellow townsman, Clough, for serving as a field marshal in Nelson's battle against Washburn.<sup>37</sup>

But Hall was correct in one respect: at the Republican state convention the anti-Clough people "were a minus quantity." Even the Hennepin County delegation supported the machine. On the first ballot the incumbent governor polled 868 votes to 178 for Samuel R. Van Sant, his nearest rival. Immediately afterward the *Minneapolis Journal* refused Clough the congratulations usually tendered by a defeated faction in an intraparty struggle. Instead it charged the Republican party with nominating a man "utterly unworthy . . . from the standpoint of . . . personal qualifications . . . education . . . moral character . . . habits . . . and . . . manner of life."<sup>38</sup>

Such bitterness usually presages a party bolt, but less than a week after Clough's renomination, the national Democratic party, meeting in Chicago, repudiated Cleveland, embraced free silver, and nominated William Jennings Bryan for the presidency. This momentous development promised to unite the fragmented anti-Republican forces in Minnesota into a formidable coalition committed to a radical program. Antimachine Republicans saw more peril in this than in a renewal of Clough's statehouse lease, and the party rift was hurriedly patched up.

MINNESOTA Democratic participation in the great decision taken by the national party in Chicago was slight. Early in the spring Cleveland supporters had opened a campaign against the massive free silver threat which was capturing one state Demo-

cratic organization after another in the West and South. According to the *Journal* of April 30, 1896, Cleveland himself requested James J. Hill to help the cause, particularly in Minnesota. Hill did perform one important service: he purchased the *St. Paul Daily Globe*, the state's leading Democratic newspaper, to keep it safe for Cleveland Democracy and the gold standard.<sup>39</sup>

The president could also depend on his friend Michael Doran, long-time Minnesota Democratic leader, whose power had blocked Democratic-third-party fusion in preceding campaigns. Doran's organization dominated the state convention called to select delegates-at-large to the national convention. But the silver men captured a number of the Congressional district conventions, and the Minnesota delegation as finally constituted included ten gold men and seven free silver supporters.<sup>40</sup>

Free silver capture of the national convention shattered the Doran organization. Three of the gold delegates deserted to Bryan on the decisive fourth ballot, two cast their votes for Adlai Stevenson, and five — the hard-core gold men — did not vote at all. Repercussions in Minnesota also came immediately. The Doran men, too demoralized to put up a fight, did not dispute control of the state nominating convention scheduled for early August.<sup>41</sup>

Before this convention met, Minnesota silver Democrats were relieved of another anxiety: finding an acceptable candidate for

<sup>36</sup> Hall, *Observations*, 303.

<sup>37</sup> In discussing the Nelson-Washburn contest, Folwell says: "It was common knowledge that James J. Hill was not friendly to Washburn, who had built the northwestern extension of the 'Soo' Railroad between the two lines of the Great Northern. . . . Hill was also known to be an admirer of Clough." (*Minnesota*, 3:494.)

<sup>38</sup> Hall, *Observations*, 304; *Journal*, June 30, July 1, 2, 1896.

<sup>39</sup> Harry Barnard, *Eagle Forgotten: The Life of John Peter Altgeld*, 354 (New York, 1938); Stephenson, *John Lind*, 147; Joseph G. Pyle, *The Life of James J. Hill*, 2:382-384 (New York, 1917).

<sup>40</sup> *Penny Press* (Minneapolis), June 12, 1896; *Journal*, June 11, July 6, 1896.

<sup>41</sup> *Journal*, July 10, 13, 1896.



CAPTURE of the Democratic party by the prosilver faction in July, 1896,  
as caricatured in the *Republican Minneapolis Journal*

governor. On July 2, before the Democrats nominated Bryan, sixteen prominent Minnesota Republicans, including ex-Congressman John Lind and incumbent Congressman Charles A. Towne, publicly split with their party on the currency question, and in mid-July the Swedish-born Lind accepted a silver Republican draft to run against Clough.<sup>42</sup> This made him available for Democratic and Populist endorsements, fusion being the order of the day. Lacking a candidate of comparable stature within their own ranks, Bryan Democrats enthusiastically

welcomed the opportunity to back him. So did most Populists, although a few third-party men grumbled about Lind's close association with ex-Senator Washburn and the milling interests.<sup>43</sup>

The Chicago convention of 1896 struck Minnesota Populism with an impact rivaling that felt by state Democrats. On July 11 the *Progressive Age*, edited by William R. Dobbryn, reported a tidal wave of Bryan support within the state People's party. This response was not engendered alone by the embrace of free silver. The Democratic platform also called for curbs on court injunctions in labor disputes, demanded an income tax, and proclaimed the need for stricter regulation of transportation. Dobbryn, a New England-bred urban reformer who could take or leave free silver, hailed this platform as "a century in advance" of its Republican counterpart. Donnelly's exuberance did not

<sup>42</sup> Stephenson, *John Lind*, 105, 107.

<sup>43</sup> Lind's "bolt" from the Republican party has been attributed to chagrin at Washburn's 1895 defeat. (Ridge, *Ignatius Donnelly*, 358.) His biographer, however, comments that Lind "was disappointed, not to say disgusted, over the outcome . . . but that it was the deciding factor which caused him to leave . . . cannot be proven by documentary evidence and is highly improbable." (Stephenson, *John Lind*, 101.)

match Dobbyn's, but even he conceded that the Democratic commitment was "very close to the Populist platform."<sup>44</sup>

Dobbyn's enthusiasm for the Democratic "revolution" in Chicago converted him into a passionate fusionist. A separate People's party national ticket, asserted his paper on July 18, would be "utterly absurd." Ex-Congressman Haldor E. Boen of Fergus Falls felt the same way. In musing about his responsibilities as a delegate to the national Populist convention, Boen wondered whether he would return from St. Louis "a Democrat or a Populist." But this was unimportant: "What is there in a name?" he asked a week later. "Principles," he wrote, "are eternal." Donnelly and Thomas J. Meighan, Populist state chairman, worried more than Boen about preserving Populist organizational identity, but confidence in Bryan and belief in reform unity weakened their capacity to resist the powerful fusionist pressures.<sup>45</sup>

In August the Minnesota Democratic and Populist conventions ratified a slate of candidates for state office agreed upon in advance by party leaders, while in the

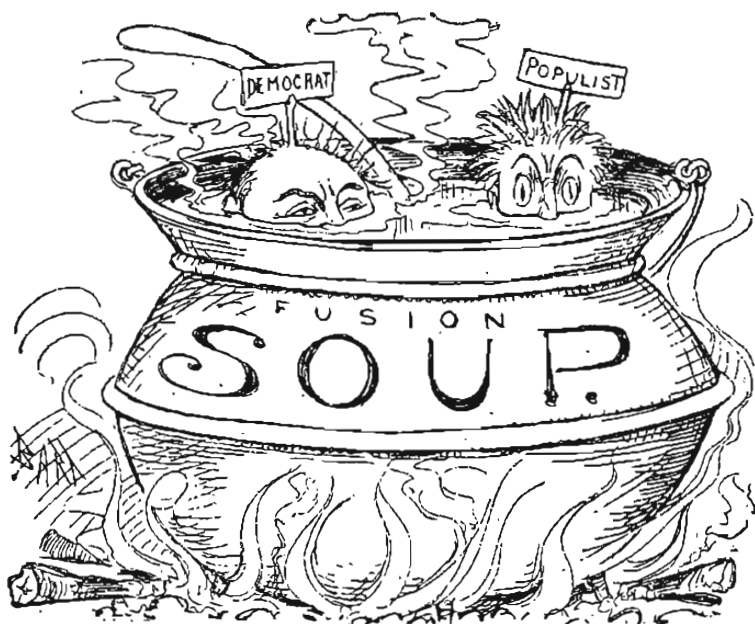
Congressional and legislative districts party managers negotiated similar arrangements. These delicate operations were accomplished despite a sordid quarrel which broke out inside the Minnesota delegation to the national Populist convention. Although Donnelly returned from St. Louis in an ugly mood, thoroughly convinced that the Owen faction had betrayed him, the party leaders managed to pacify him, and he subsequently campaigned vigorously for Bryan and Lind. He bitterly opposed Owen's bid for Congressional honors in the fifth district, however.<sup>46</sup>

BRYAN PARTISANS in Minnesota could easily persuade themselves that victory in the fall was inevitable. The Republicans were deeply divided, thanks to the Nelson-Washburn contest, while at the head of their ticket they had the vulnerable Clough,

<sup>44</sup> *Progressive Age* (Minneapolis), July 11, 1896; Ridge, Ignatius Donnelly, 352.

<sup>45</sup> *Fergus Globe* (Fergus Falls), July 18, 25, 1896; Ridge, Ignatius Donnelly, 351.

<sup>46</sup> *Journal*, August 3, 4, 26, 27, 1896; Ridge, Ignatius Donnelly, 353-363.



A Republican picture of fusion

seemingly no match for Lind, whose ethnic appeal rivaled that of Knute Nelson. Moreover, in rejecting free silver they had done what they had not dared in 1894 when their platform satisfied the silver men. This alone, it seemed, should alienate enough prosilver Republicans to make up the 10,000 votes by which the combined Democratic and Populist totals had lagged in 1894.

Lind-Bryan prospects were not as bright as the fusionists imagined, however. Minnesota was a Republican state, and party loyalty in a presidential year minimized defections.<sup>47</sup> Also, the relationship between silver and the entire complex of policy questions had changed between 1894 and 1896. In the former year silver had enjoyed support within all political camps; it had not been firmly affiliated with either conservatism or radicalism. There had been room for equivocation, too. The silver issue had enough complexities to make it possible for politicians to appear prosilver without actually favoring its free and unlimited coinage at a ratio of sixteen to one. Even William McKinley, campaigning in Minnesota in October, 1894, had charged the incumbent Democratic Congress with having "given silver the worst blow it ever received." He was, however, condemning repeal of the Sherman silver purchase act and not advocating free silver.<sup>48</sup> Two years later the lines were drawn tighter. Apparently the leaders of the nation's financial community feared that compromise and evasion were strengthening rather than stemming free silver sentiment and that only a frontal assault could eliminate the danger.

A case study in the dynamics of this assault appeared in Duluth following Congressman Towne's rejection of the Republi-

can gold plank. Jermane, reporting from the scene, commented that few politicians had experienced a more drastic reversal of fortunes than Towne. In 1894 the Duluth business community had supported him overwhelmingly. Now businessmen were opposing him almost unanimously, not from personal rancor, but because Duluth had to establish its credit in the money markets. One businessman told the *Journal* reporter how officials of an eastern banking house had coupled refusal of credit with the remark, "Why, Duluth is for free silver, isn't it?" Another had been told, "Minnesota we know is all right . . . but we don't know about Duluth." A prominent civic leader said he believed "it would be the very worst thing Duluth could do this year to send a silver man to Congress." In the city, wrote Jermane, the silver issue had "ceased to be a matter of sentiment" and become "a matter of business."<sup>49</sup>

It was not only in Duluth that economic pressures were applied. The manager of a Twin City wholesale firm predicted that a Bryan triumph would mean "a contraction in our business and hence in our forces." A story announcing early suspension of boom company operations hinted that a free silver victory would be followed by the discharge of hundreds of lumber industry employees.<sup>50</sup> The grain trade, too, apparently faced disaster. On October 22, 1896, a front-page *Journal* story reported the refusal of eastern bankers to extend the credit needed to move the wheat crop through trade channels because "If Mr. Bryan is elected we have no guarantee of what the future of government may be, and we must keep ourselves in readiness for the worst."

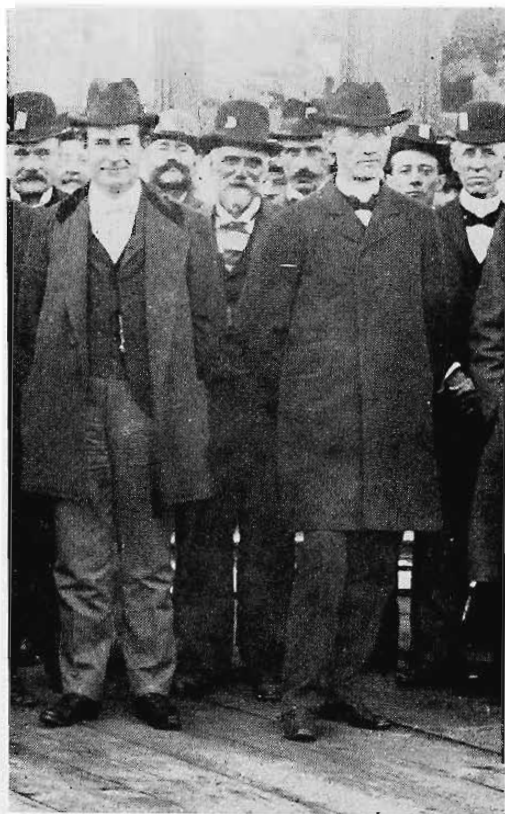
ALTHOUGH the issue remained in doubt through most of the campaign, the struggle for the state's nine electoral votes was hardly equal. Information on campaign finances is difficult to obtain, but the Republican treasury was certainly better supplied than the fusionist, although, thanks to the silver interests, the latter was not empty. The es-

<sup>47</sup> See Gilbert C. Fite, "Republican Strategy and the Farm Vote in the Presidential Campaign of 1896," in *American Historical Review*, 65:805 (July, 1960).

<sup>48</sup> *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, October 8, 1894.

<sup>49</sup> *Journal*, June 25, 1896. In 1894 Towne, even then a militant silver supporter, had easily defeated M. W. Baldwin, a gold Democrat.

<sup>50</sup> *Journal*, August 29, October 17, 1896.



BRYAN and Lind were again running mates in 1900, when this picture was taken.

tablished Twin City dailies, with the exception of the *Minneapolis Times*, which remained neutral, and the *Penny Press*, a short-lived tabloid, supported McKinley. So did most small-town papers and virtually the entire business community.

Through these channels the Republicans managed to stress the dominance of one simple theme: Bryanism, an evil compound of free silver, Populism, "Altgeldism," and anarchy, was morally and economically destructive. "The crisis is not less grave than that of 1860," said one clergyman, quoted in the *Journal* of September 5. He added: "The pulpit . . . must make no apology for insisting upon national honor, patriotic duty and religious obligation." With some exaggeration, the *Winona Republican* maintained there was "not in Minnesota a single clergyman of recognized standing . . . who does not oppose the free coinage of silver."<sup>51</sup>

Lind, it seems, should have been relatively immune to this kind of attack; in accepting the Populist nomination for governor he had felt obliged to explain his close association with the milling interests. On his extensive speaking tours he talked free silver, but by no means did he neglect state issues. A particularly effective one had been created by Clough, who, in defiance of a legislative mandate, had conveyed to the financier Russell Sage lands originally awarded a railroad company which never completed construction.<sup>52</sup>

Nevertheless, speaking in Little Falls on September 19, Knute Nelson asserted that Lind's election would persuade eastern investors that Minnesota was "the abode of wild, long-haired Populists."<sup>53</sup> And on October 31 the *Minneapolis Journal* published a full-page advertisement headed "Lind's Success vs. Minnesota's Credit," which contained statements by spokesmen of more than forty local, eastern, and Chicago business firms. Lee Higginson and Company of Boston voiced the consensus in stating: "Election of Populist governor of Minnesota would greatly injure credit and sale of Minnesota securities here."

On the same date Minneapolis lumberman Charles A. Bovey made an interesting reference to a concern which more important matters had by this time pushed aside. "We feel that so much is at stake in the present election," said Bovey, "that the wise thing to do is to vote for the entire state republican ticket. We will smash the machine later." Two weeks earlier Charles A. Pillsbury had made essentially the same point, saying: "I am particularly anxious for the success of the republican state ticket, because I believe that no matter how worthy the men may be who are running on the opposition ticket, if we should elect to the high offices of this state any men who are pledged to . . . the Chicago platform, it would give the credit

<sup>51</sup> Quoted in the *Journal*, August 20, 1896.

<sup>52</sup> *Penny Press*, October 2, 28, 1896; Stephenson, *John Lind*, 116.

<sup>53</sup> Stephenson, *John Lind*, 112.

of Minnesota a fearful blow.”<sup>54</sup> Identification with sound money may have failed to rehabilitate Clough, but the grave threat to Minnesota’s credit made his shortcomings and Lind’s virtues equally irrelevant.

The 1896 returns fully vindicated Republican strategy. Far from a fusionist victory, the election was not even close, but a resounding Republican triumph. McKinley’s 62,000 plurality exceeded Harrison’s 1892 margin by more than 45,000 votes. In other races the Republicans also captured the honors. Even Clough won. His 3,552 plurality fell short of a personal triumph, but as Harlan Hall observed, “it was sufficient for all practical purposes.” The Republicans made a clean sweep of Congressional seats and maintained a top-heavy majority in the state legislature.<sup>55</sup>

In seeking explanations of this outcome, Minnesota fusionists could hardly blame weakness on the state and local level. Lind ran ahead of Bryan by more than 30,000 votes, and the remainder of the state ticket polled about 10,000 more votes than the presidential ticket. Towne, who lost in the

sixth Congressional district race by a scant 719 votes, polled 1,200 more than Bryan in St. Louis County; and in Hennepin County Sidney Owen ran ahead of the presidential ticket by 1,000 votes. In the final analysis, then, Bryan, not his local supporters, lost the election in Minnesota.<sup>56</sup>

AS MIGHT BE expected, the *Minneapolis Journal* rejoiced at the outcome. Bryanism had been downed, and Clough’s narrow margin vindicated the paper’s judgment of him without placing Minnesota’s credit in peril. But its November 5 postelection editorial also emphasized the responsibility of the victorious Republicans to remedy the legitimate grievances of the agrarian West, including an ineffective antitrust policy, inadequacies in the banking and currency system, and extremes of tariff legislation.

The *Journal* spoke prophetically. After 1900 these three issues came to dominate national politics, and men who had battled one another bitterly on the issues of free silver and Populism now joined hands to support regional interests against the menace of “Wall Street” monopoly as they once had fought for the Washburn antioption bill.

The transformation did not come immediately, however. Following the intensity of

<sup>54</sup> *Journal*, October 17, 1896.

<sup>55</sup> Hall, *Observations*, 304; *Legislative Manual*, 1897, p. 416–498.

<sup>56</sup> *Legislative Manual*, 1897, p. 104, 416–498.

THE *Minneapolis Journal*’s view of “How Clough got through” in 1896





1896, spent political energies needed replenishment. The gradual return of prosperity made less acute the complaints which had sustained agitation earlier, and the Spanish-American War diverted public attention from domestic issues. In March, 1898, John Lind, on a trip from his home at New Ulm, told Twin City newspaper reporters that "out in the country there is no interest in politics now." Cuba and the *Maine* dominated all conversation, reported Lind. Unlike World War I, the Spanish-American conflict did not divide midwestern opinion. Following American victory, however, annexation of the Philippine Islands became controversial. Many conservatives who had been reluctant to take up arms against Spain became ardent annexationists, while most agrarians, many of whom had clamored for war, strongly opposed overseas expansion.<sup>57</sup>

This issue was debated in the 1898 Minnesota campaign. Lind, who again headed the fusion ticket, sounded the keynote of his campaign when he congratulated the convention for refusing to let the "shimmer of a proposed imperial policy in distant lands . . . blind the eyes of the people to existing abuses at home." The Republicans, however, courted identification with national pride by supporting expansion. Senator Nelson defied Lind with the somewhat irrelevant boast: "There ain't going to be any Spaniards elected . . . this year."<sup>58</sup>

At their state convention the Republicans "smashed the machine," dumped Clough, and selected former Minneapolis mayor William H. Eustis to run for governor. Although Eustis was "a man of ability and character" according to one historian, his difficulties multiplied as the campaign got under way.<sup>59</sup> Some of the Clough men temporarily retired from politics, and the governor barely concealed a hope that Lind would win. The Eustis campaign also lacked managerial talent; some Republicans grumbled that hapless "amateurs" had been put in charge. In addition, Eustis had to cope with the displeasure of influential groups and individuals, including organized labor, organized

Scandinavians, and (according to some opinions) James J. Hill.<sup>60</sup>

These Eustis liabilities obviously helped Lind, who also enjoyed other advantages, including some he had lacked in 1896. The *St. Paul Globe* vigorously supported him; service with the Twelfth Minnesota Regiment in the Spanish-American conflict gave him warrior status; and ethnic appeal worked for him. Voter apathy may also have helped Lind, since Eustis was less known in the state than his rival. The returns certainly suggest apathy: the 1898 vote for governor totaled 85,000 less than two years before, and despite his 20,000 plurality over Eustis, Lind polled 30,000 fewer votes than in 1896.<sup>61</sup>

The election was not an unqualified reform victory nor a mandate against imperialism. Neither was Lind's one-term administration a success by conventional standards. According to *Minneapolis Journal* calculations, the Republican legislature of 1899 adopted only four of his twenty-one inaugural recommendations.<sup>62</sup> Nonetheless, Lind's leadership helped to quicken revival of the reform spirit which was already stirring when he took office.

Although in his inaugural message he avoided radical Populist panaceas, he advocated a thoroughgoing state reform program. Among other things he called for the appointment of a commission to recommend comprehensive changes in the tax structure; immediate tax reforms, including an increase in the railroad gross earnings tax; a board of control to supervise the state's correctional and charitable institutions; reappraisal of trust regulation statutes; reservation of mineral rights in state lands disposed of in the future; and exploration of

<sup>57</sup> Stephenson, *John Lind*, 133; Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R.*, 271 (New York, 1955).

<sup>58</sup> Stephenson, *John Lind*, 145, 151.

<sup>59</sup> Stephenson, *John Lind*, 144.

<sup>60</sup> Stephenson, *John Lind*, 147; Hall, *Observations*, 306.

<sup>61</sup> *Legislative Manual*, 1899, p. 500.

<sup>62</sup> *Journal*, April 11, 18, 1899.



such direct government devices as the primary and the initiative.<sup>63</sup> Newspapers throughout the state voiced warm approval of the message. Apparently Lind was articulating and making coherent a growing reform consensus.<sup>64</sup>

THIS NEW SPIRIT became more and more evident during 1898 and 1899, when "almost every morning newspaper was filled

<sup>63</sup> See John Lind, *Biennial Message to the Legislature of Minnesota* (St. Paul, 1899). Theodore C. Blegen and Philip D. Jordan selected Lind's inaugural address for inclusion in their collection of readings, *With Various Voices* (St. Paul, 1949), because it is "an inventory of Minnesota life and problems at the turn of the century." (P. 345.)

<sup>64</sup> Stephenson, *John Lind*, 159; *Journal*, January 7, 1899.

<sup>65</sup> Herbert Croly, *Marcus Alonzo Hanna: His Life and Work*, 296 (New York, 1912); Folwell, *Minnesota*, 4:31; Edgar, *Medal of Gold*, 199-204; *Northwestern Agriculturist*, 13:370 (December 15, 1898); 16:164 (May 1, 1901).

with accounts of the formation of new railroad and industrial combinations." On the Minnesota iron ranges the Carnegie Company had acquired control of the Oliver Company in 1896, and this combination along with the Federal Steel Company became part of the United States Steel Corporation, founded in 1901. In the intervening years the Carnegie-Oliver concern "acquired, with a comparatively small capital, a large number of leaseholds and through them controlled an extensive reserve of tonnage." In 1898 the aspirations of Thomas A. McIntyre, a New York broker, to establish a flour trust caused worry in the Twin Cities business community. McIntyre failed, but his attempt heightened apprehension about the so-called trust evil. The actual and fancied expansionist operations of the Great Northern Railroad also aroused suspicious interest and tended to bring out the hostile side of the ambivalent public attitude toward Hill.<sup>65</sup>

In 1899 the *Northwestern Agriculturist*, which shortly before had denounced Populist radicalism in the strongest possible terms, was asserting that the trust "situation" contained "elements so momentous that the Civil War . . . becomes insignificant in comparison." With more restraint, the St. Paul



A midwestern consensus on the trust question is reflected in this 1902 cartoon.

Chamber of Commerce in early 1901 passed a series of resolutions deploring monopoly and urging elimination of import duties on articles that had become the subject of monopoly.<sup>66</sup>

Linkage of the tariff issue with the trust evil helped discredit excessive protectionism. So did milling and grain trade realization that high tariffs encouraged retaliation abroad against American wheat and flour at a time when competition for foreign markets was becoming intense. Concern about the issue began to show as early as 1900, when failure of the Minnesota delegation to support President McKinley's recommendation that tariff barriers against Puerto Rico be abolished brought a storm of protest and charges that Republican Congressmen were submitting to tobacco and sugar interests.<sup>67</sup>

Other concerns also moved into the realm of public discussion. Sharper consciousness of timber depletion widened support for conservation. Complaints that inability of banks to lend money on livestock made it impossible for many farmers to purchase feeder cattle pointed up a gap in credit facilities. And charges of railroad malpractice and discrimination—that hardy midwestern perennial—became more insistent, coupled with demands for government redress.<sup>68</sup>

WHEN VAN SANT, the Republican candidate, captured the governorship in 1900, it was by an even narrower margin than that of Clough in 1896. Soon after he took office the legislature of 1901 passed a measure which many people had despaired of ever seeing enacted—the long-discussed increase in the railroad gross earnings tax from three per cent to four per cent. Introduction and defeat of this bill had become part of the ritual of each session.<sup>69</sup>

If this made 1901 a memorable year, more was to come. In September an assassin's bullet put Theodore Roosevelt in the White House. Two months later the nation learned that Hill, J. Pierpont Morgan, and Edward H. Harriman had organized the Northern Securities Company for the purpose of "merg-

ing" into a single system the western railroads under their control.

This announcement "startled and alarmed even conservative men in the country."<sup>70</sup> In the affected region it produced an angry reaction which may be difficult to comprehend in the 1960s, but which early in the century went beyond the immediate issue and significantly fortified the anti-big business crusade already in existence. The "pro-merger" *Commercial West* hardly exaggerated when it complained that "Some of the papers in Minnesota that cried out against . . . populist sentiment in Kansas are today talking in about as populist a vein . . . as did the supporters of Kansas law."<sup>71</sup>

The *Commercial West* might well have said "in about as populist a vein" as Senator Washburn when he attacked the stock exchange millionaires on July 11, 1892. From 1892 to 1902 Minnesota Republicans had come full circle.

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<sup>66</sup> *Northwestern Agriculturist*, 14:72, 168 (March 1, June 1, 1899); James A. Tawney to Benjamin F. Beardsley, February 3, 1901, James A. Tawney Papers, in the Minnesota Historical Society.

<sup>67</sup> Morton Rothstein, "America in the International Rivalry for the British Wheat Market, 1860-1914," in *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 47:418 (December, 1960); *Northwestern Agriculturist*, 15:82, 104 (March 15, April 1, 1900); *Journal*, May 21, 1900; John Peterson to Nelson, August 29, 1900, Nelson Papers; Tawney to R. E. Shepherd, March 8, 1900, Tawney Papers.

<sup>68</sup> *Journal*, December 14, 1901; *Northwestern Agriculturist*, 16:204 (June 1, 1901); *Commercial West*, September 28, 1901, p. 8; Duluth Chamber of Commerce Committee to Nelson, March 5, 1898, Nelson Papers.

<sup>69</sup> For a dramatic account of this increase, see Charles Cheney, *The Story of Minnesota Politics*, 14 (Minneapolis, 1947).

<sup>70</sup> Helmes, John A. Johnson, 108.

<sup>71</sup> *Commercial West*, January 4, 1902, p. 5. For Twin City editorial comment, most of it hostile to the Northern Securities Company, see *Journal*, January 20, 1902; *Tribune*, January 30, 1902; *St. Paul Dispatch*, January 22, 1902.

THE PICTURES on pages 95 and 106 are from the Minnesota Historical Society's collection. Cartoons from the *Minneapolis Journal* are on pages 103 (July 16, 1896), 104 (October 11, 1892), 107 (November 5, 1896), and 109 (May 24, 1902). That on page 99 is from the *St. Paul Globe*, October 6, 1892.



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