CAVALIERS AND MUDSILLS: THE FARMERS' ALLIANCE AND THE EMERGENCE OF VIRGINIA POPULISM

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PREFACE

The late nineteenth century was a period of troubling change for most Americans. Railroad construction during the 1870's completed the expansion of the national market economy into even the most isolated areas of the United States. The structure of the economy also changed, and American patterns of work and leisure altered considerably. In the South and West, this rapid transformation in the late nineteenth century greatly affected the farmer. His fate, and his reaction to it, has been the subject of considerable controversy. To varying extents, John D. Hicks, C. Vann Woodward, and Lawrence Goodwyn have all portrayed the rise of Populism in economic terms and they have sympathized with the agrarians' intentions. From the inception of the Alliance in 1886 to the collapse of the Populist party in 1896, they write, farm protesters first posed valid solutions to real agricultural problems and then offered a productive and attractive third-party alternative. Led by Richard Hofstadter, an opposing school of historians has argued that southern farmers' motives and goals were irrational, and that they had a destructive impact upon the nation's political structure.[1]

Nonetheless, no historian has adequately explained

Populism's origins, successes, or failures. The most ambitious attempts, by Hicks and Goodwyn, fall short on critical problems, and both tend to confuse regional manifestations of agrarian protest with the national movement.[2] Both Hicks and Goodwyn did not research extensively enough on the state level to generalize about the movement. More important still, because both authors formulate their questions about Populism in states where it was relatively successful, the direction of their inquiry has been prejudiced. Perhaps future historians of agrarian protest might more fruitfully ask why the movement failed instead of why it succeeded.

Partly because Virginia provides such an excellent example of the failure of Populism, it has been neglected by historians for more than forty years. William DuBose Sheldon's Populism in the Old Dominion, which was written as a senior thesis at Princeton University in 1935, has been the standard reference for students of Virginia Populism.

Sheldon's work addressed the question of why Populism was "not quantitatively important" in Virginia. Sheldon accepted Hicks' explanation of the farmers' frustration in the late nineteenth century. Economic distress--primarily falling prices and the rise of share tenancy--made an agrarian revolt possible in Virginia, according to Sheldon. "To its credit," moreover, "must be placed an awakened interest in the plight of the farmers, a

determination on the part of the more progressive among them to better their own condition, and a widespread and distinctly audible acquaintance with the perplexities of the farm question."[3]

Sheldon listed four reasons why Populism did not follow the Alliance in Virginia. By the late 1880's, the Democratic "ring"--a collection of urbanized industrial and mercantile interests, their lawyers, and professional politicians--held an effective grip on Virginia politics. Led by men such as Senators John Warwick Daniel, John S. Barbour, and Governor Fitzhugh Lee, the Democratic party had a huge personal following. They also ran their campaigns skillfully and avoided real substantive issues (such as farm problems) by shifting the debate to the race question. Finally, a mass conversion from the Alliance did not occur simply because the rank and file of the order declined to follow their leaders.[4]

All students of Virginia Populism owe a great debt to Sheldon. He collected most of the currently available sources, including the Virginia Sun and the papers of the prominent Populist and allianceman Charles Herbert Pierson. Since this enormously useful work was published, however, little has appeared on the subject. Although it explores much of the same ground, this study differs from Populism in the Old Dominion. As it will show, Populism in Virginia encountered significant obstacles. As was the

case throughout the South, farmers in the Old Dominion were a deeply divided economic group. In Virginia, many agriculturalists grew tobacco, but many others raised wheat, corn, peanuts, and even vegetables for urban markets. Some farmers owned large portions of land; others owned none, and subsisted as sharecroppers or tenants. Virginia's topography created distinct natural regions in the state, and farmers' loyalties tended not to rise above their own area. Virginians were also deeply divided racially by the 1890's and tended to place racial solidarity above economic interest.

While it is significant to understand why Populism never took root in Virginia, it is equally important to understand that the agrarian crusade was not a continuous event. The Alliance attracted many farmers who wanted to modernize agriculture and to make their vocation more receptive to the obvious advantages of industrialization. As an exclusively agricultural organization, the Alliance was relatively successful, and the organization probably peaked at about 80,000 members by the summer of 1890.[5] When the order moved toward direct involvement in politics, Virginia farmers sensed a threat to the social and racial order, and deserted both the Alliance and the Populists altogether.

CHAPTER I

THAT "BRIGHT AND CHEERING SUN": BEGINNINGS, 1886-90

The 1870's, 1880's, and 1890's were crucial decades for American farmers. Suddenly, rural life became less assured, comfortable, and secure; the farmer became aware of massive social and economic changes that surrounded him. Late nineteenth century farmers articulated many grievances throughout the former Confederacy. As a contemporary later remarked of one of them in 1870, he made "two spears of grass grow where one grew before"; then, twenty years later, he struggled "hopelessly with the question how to get as much for the two spears of grass as he used to get for one."[1]

But the decline in prices after 1870 was not confined to agriculture, and, indeed, measured in terms of real wages or income, its relative position very likely increased (see Table 1.1). Real income for farm laborers in Virginia probably increased by about 30 percent from 1880 to 1890. The absolute material condition of the Virginia farmer improved during the decade of the 1880's, but his position relative to other groups declined. Higher wages clearly lay outside farming. The agricultural

laborer's wages, which rose by about 12 percent during the 1880's, did not keep pace with wage increases in other comparable occupations. In Virginia, for example, farm laborers in 1890 made only 28 percent as much as common laborers.

TABLE 1.1--Wholesale Prices, 1878-1899

Year	Index (100=1910-1914 prices)
1878	91
79	90
1880	100
81	103
82	108
83	101
84	93
85	85
86	82
87	85
88	86
89	81
1890	82
91	82
92	76
93	78
94	70
95	71
96	68
97	68
98	71
99	77

Source: Frank A. Pearson and George F. Warren, Prices (New York, 1933), Table 1, p. 13.

Southern farming became increasingly unattractive in other respects. In the cotton and tobacco areas, the crop lien system followed the collapse of the antebellum plantation agriculture and credit structure. Since most southern farmers lacked capital resources after the Civil War, merchants and wealthy planters sold them necessary

food, clothing, fertilizer, seed, and farm implements on the credit of their future crop. Partly because of the heavy risk involved, the merchant or planter imposed a "two-price" system--one for cash and another for credit customers--and added interest on the crop lien. In most instances, farmers paid enormous interest rates on the original debt--sometimes as much as 200 percent.[2]

Fewer people found agriculture attractive. In 1880, 56 percent of working Virginians were farmers; ten years later, that figure had declined by 10 percent. Most of the nation's economic growth that occurred during the 1880's took place outside agriculture. The number of iron and steel workers rose by 47 percent; miners by 212 percent; and railroad workers by 168 percent. The total number of farmers, in contrast, increased by only 1 percent during the decade, and this meager rise punctuated the shifting relationship between agriculture and industry (see Appendix E).

Meanwhile, southern farmers also watched their world and culture crumble under the impact of industrialization. Farmers might rejoice in some of its advantages, one farmer stated, and at the same time mourn this "astounding development and almost bewildering progress."[3] As they viewed the departure of rural young for the city and the shift of national and state political power to businessmen and industrialists, agrarians perceived that

the metropolis had replaced the farm as the center of national life. This "sad departure" from the healthy dominance of the farmer, lamented one Virginia agrarian, "is what is today sapping the very foundation of our country."[4]

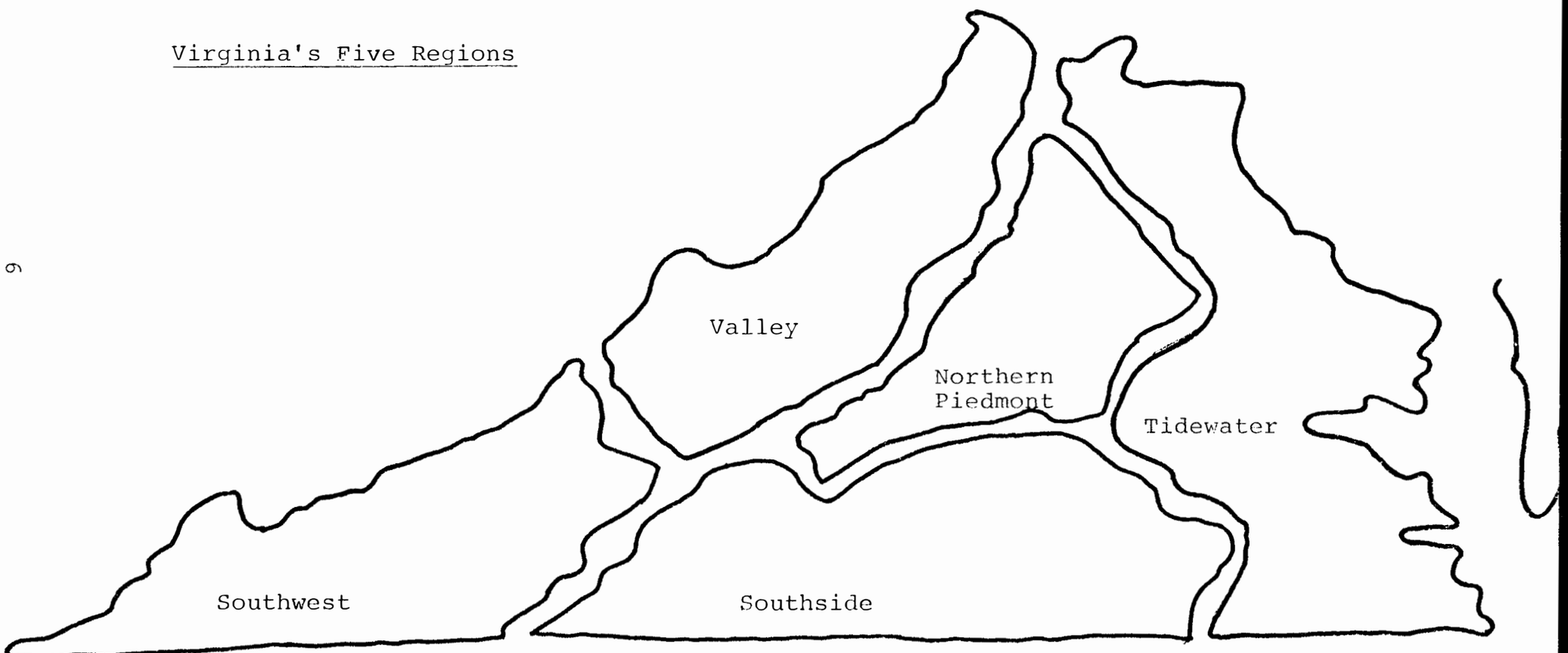
A cumulative result of these frustrations was the formation of the Farmers' Alliance. Although its origins are sketchy, the Alliance probably began in 1874 or 1875 in Lampasas County, Texas as a social organization and a frontier vigilante group. It dissolved quickly after supporting the Greenback party in 1878, but later grew under the dynamic leadership of lecturer-organizers S.O. Daws, William Lamb, and Charles W. Macune. The Texas Alliance expanded steadily during the mid-1880's until its meeting at Cleburne in August 1886, when membership reached 200,000.

By late 1887, the Texas organization had started spreading throughout the South. In January of that year, the Alliance sent a dozen organizers to Mississippi and Alabama, seven to Tennessee, and three to Arkansas. Farmers eagerly joined the order everywhere in the Deep South. One lecturer-organizer, J.B. Barry, reported back to Texas about his successes in North Carolina: "I have met the farmers in public meetings twenty-seven times, and twenty-seven times they organized." "The farmers," he added, "seem like ripe fruit--you can gather them by a

gentle shake of the bush."[5]

In September 1887, two brothers who had moved from Virginia to Texas, Gabriel T. and Joseph S. Barbee, arrived in Ottobine, Rockingham County as Alliance organizers. Virginia farmers approached the Farmers' Alliance cautiously, however, partly because the state consisted of many contrasting regions (see map on p. 6). The tidal basin of the major rivers of Virginia, the James, the Potomac, and the Rappahannock form the forty coastal counties known as the Tidewater. Part of the tertiary marine plain of the Eastern Seaboard, the Tidewater has numerous coves and peninsulas and is composed of flat ridges, from which the land, following the path of the rivers, descends into swamps, salt-marshes, and finally, the Chesapeake Bay. Well before 1890, the region's soil had been depleted by centuries of intensive tobacco production, and Tidewater farmers increasingly grew vegetables for nearby urban markets in Norfolk, Richmond, and Baltimore. As one observer noted in 1885, the Tidewater "is especially adapted to market gardening ... by its light, warm soils." Tidewater farmers produced staple crops such as peanuts, cotton, and tobacco, but as an overall postbellum tendency, crops in the region became specialized and diversified. The "wonderfully indented coast and many islands" of the Tidewater and (across the Bay) of the Eastern Shore also fostered

Virginia's Five Regions



growth in commercial fishing. In particular, a boom occurred in specialty crops of oysters as demand skyrocketed for the shellfish during the 1880's and 1890's.[6]

The middle section of the state, part of the red clay Piedmont area that extends down the Southeast, consists of about thirty counties. The James River divides the Piedmont into two regions. Above the river, in the northern Piedmont, farmers of this period produced fruits, corn, and, to some extent, tobacco. The Southside--the southern part of the Piedmont--had a high proportion of sharecroppers and tenants and a large black population. It resembled the one-crop agriculture of the rest of the South in that farmers there raised tobacco exclusively. The Southside was undoubtedly Virginia's poorest region, and most writers who passed through the area were struck by its poverty. Edward A. Pollard, a northern traveler who otherwise tended to glorify the Old Dominion, noted the Southside's "galled hills and old fields, worn to exhaustion by the plough and hoe in the culture of tobacco and corn. It is a level and barren picture. The old field pines, the broom sedge and persimmons are the memorials of 'improvement' under the past system of slavery."[7] Novelist Thomas Nelson Page, writing almost twenty-five years later, also thought that the Southside was the state's poorest region. "Outside of the towns," he wrote, Page had not seen "a single farm animal, this

in a section once filled with well-stocked and well-cultivated farms."[8]

West of the Blue Ridge, two regions stand in contrast to the rest of the state. The Shenandoah Valley, which lies between the Blue Ridge and Allegheny mountain ranges, possesses some of the richest agricultural land in the South. By the late 1880's, the Valley had little in common with the rest of Virginia. Because the plantation never established itself in the region, agriculture there was diversified and soil exhaustion never took place to the extent that it did in the eastern part of the state. According to Pollard, in the Valley "every view is of wonder, and admiration, and thankfulness."

> The fields are dressed with the green grass and the blue grass; the hills and the mountains and the valleys smile with verdue; there are golden harvests, and fruits of summer and autumn, and the wealth of flowers; the year is crowned with goodness; the pure 'encasing air' is as an invisible garment of inspiration; the pastures are clothed with flocks and herds, which are led into green pastures and lie down by still waters.[9]

In the mountainous counties surrounding and southwest of the Valley (known as the Southwest), the rise of extractive industries had resulted in a minor industrial and commercial boom in the area. Timbering and mining became large-scale and highly profitable industries. The opening of the Norfolk and Western railroad in the early 1880's, which linked the Southwest with Norfolk, spurred

on the boom during the rest of the decade.[10]

The economic growth of the end of the nineteenth century had a different impact on each of Virginia's regions (see Table 1.2). Two of them in particular, the Tidewater and the Southwest, became substantially more prosperous. During the early 1880's, land prices in both regions skyrocketed. One engineering journal, The Virginias, noted that the increase in truck vegetable counties of the Tidewater was "generally remarkable large." In the mountainous areas of western Virginia, all counties except three showed an increase in land prices. Allegheny County, a center of iron mining, watched its real estate rise by 56 percent; in Tazewell County, the heart of the state's coal mining region, land prices rose by about 27 percent. Other areas of the state, such as the northern Piedmont and the Valley, held their own in real estate values during the same period, while those of seven counties of the Southside actually declined.

TABLE 1.2--Land Prices in Virginia, 1885

Region	Price per acre
Tidewater	$ 5.70
Southside	$ 5.17
Northern Piedmont	$ 9.83
Valley	$10.50
Appalachia	$ 3.20

Source: The Virginias, V. (September 1885), 125.

Virginia, taken as a whole, was a relatively prosperous southern state. Agriculture was diversified; northern entrepreneurs had constructed a large railroad system; and some manufacturing even took place in the state. While the Old Dominion was not tied to one crop, it also possessed a low statewide rate of tenancy and sharecropping. The percentage of sharecroppers and tenants to all farmers was high in the rest of the South--49 percent in Alabama, 54 percent in Georgia, 44 percent in Louisiana, and 34 percent in North Carolina. Yet in Virginia it stood at only 27 percent in 1890. Furthermore, although tenancy and sharecropping increased by 2 percent in the South Atlantic states in the decade after 1880, as Table 1.3 illustrates, it declined by 3 percent in Virginia.

TABLE 1.3--Patterns of Landholding: Virginia, 1880-1890

	Total Farms	0-500[a]	500-1000	1000-	Tenants	Share
1880	118505	77861 (66%)	4349 (4%)	1309 (1%)	13392 (11%)	21594 (18%)
1890	126885	87757 (69%)	3810 (3%)	1092 (1%)	11960 (9%)	22266 (18%)
Net Change, 1880-1890	8380	9896	-539	-217	-1432	672
% Change[b]	+7%	+13%	-12%	-17%	-11%	+3%

[a]Measured in acres.

[b]This was derived by subtracting the 1880 figure from the 1890 amount and dividing the difference by the 1880 figure.

But another reality lies behind these statistics. Although the state as a whole contained few sharecropping and tenant farms, the rate was above 50 percent in four Southside counties, and between 35 and 50 percent in thirteen other counties. The statewide decline of share tenancy, moreover, occurred primarily among tenants, whose numbers diminished by almost 1500 (see Table 1.3). Sharecropping farms, by contrast, increased by 3 percent during the decade.

The overall statewide trends, nonetheless, worked in favor of the small farm. The number of farms under 500 acres rose by almost a thousand from 1880 to 1890, an increase of about 13 percent for the decade, while their proportionate share of all farms widened to nearly 70 percent. Larger farms above 500 acres, on the other hand, declined throughout Virginia. These tendencies also manifested themselves, as Appendices A and B show, in the five regions of the Old Dominion. The absolute number and percentage of small farms increased in all of them. Similarly, larger farms declined in all regions. The interregional differences are, however, perhaps more significant than their similarities. While tenancy declined in the three eastern regions--the Tidewater, the Southside, and northern Piedmont--it increased in the Valley and Southwest. The number of Southside tenant farms dropped from 1880 to 1890, but the sharecropping farms there increased by almost a thousand. In the Valley it rose by about 300 farms.

Appendix A demonstrates the type of landholding in each region, as measured against both region and state. In the Tidewater, for example, tenancy, although dropping absolutely over the decade, gained a larger share of the statewide total that it had possessed in 1880. The region had proportionately fewer numbers of middle-range (500-1000 acres) and large (above 1000 acres) farms over the decade. Similarly, although Southside farms composed only 20 percent of the state's total, the area possessed almost a third of Virginia's sharecropping farms by 1890.

The decline of larger agricultural establishments and the profusion of small owned and sharecropping farms, while helping to democratize land use in Virginia, did little to improve farmers' overall condition. In fact, if anything, the trend toward small farming only worsened tendencies manifesting themselves in the immediate post-war years. Small farmers, with few capital resources, tended to spend less time improving the soil through crop rotation and the application of commercial fertilizers and manure. Marginal farmers, who did not inevitably become tenants, nevertheless lived on the brink of subsistence.[11]

Politics in Virginia after the Civil War, too, had created an inhospitable climate for the Barbee brothers. The Readjusters, who were in power from 1879 to 1885, dramatically altered the pattern of politics in the Old

Dominion. Virginia Conservatives feared the votes of the emancipated slave and enacted a poll tax in 1877. With its repeal in 1880, however, Virginians voted during the 1880's on an unprecedented scale.[12] Three quarters of the eligible electorate turned out to vote in the presidential contest of 1884. The voting force rose to slightly less than 85 percent in 1888, and then dropped by about 5 percent in 1889.

TABLE 1.4--The Two-Party System in Virginia, 1881-1889

Election Year[a]	Democratic	Republican	Nonvoter[b]
1881	87,258 (26%)	101,332 (30%)	146,543 (44%)
1884	120,350 (35%)	119,273 (34%)	106,778 (31%)
1885	133,281 (38%)	122,088 (35%)	93,035 (27%)
1888	151,977 (42%)	150,438 (42%)	57,145 (16%)
1889	162,154 (45%)	120,477 (34%)	76,747 (21%)

[a]Gubernatorial elections were held during odd years.

[b]Nonvoters were estimated based upon population data in the Census of Population for 1880 and 1890.

As Readjusters became Republicans, in addition, a strong two-party system emerged in the Old Dominion after 1881. As Table 1.5 demonstrates, at least three out of every five Readjusters in 1881 voted Republican in gubernatorial elections in 1885 and 1889. G.O.P. ranks in the presidential contests of 1884 and 1888 also held remarkably firm, as only about one in every ten Republicans bolted party lines. Democrats exhibited even more resiliency during the 1880's, maintaining ranks until 1889 in

percentages ranging from 70 to 80.

TABLE 1.5--The Readjuster-Republican Party, 1881-1889[a]

		% Republican	% Democratic	% Nonvoter
1881 Readjusters voting in the election of:	1885	77	23	0
	1889	67	33	0
1884 Republicans voting in the election of:	1888	86	7	7
1885 Republicans voting in the election of:	1889	76	25	2

[a]These percentages are estimates computed by regressing a set of dependent variables (X_1, X_2, X_3...), in this instance, the later year party vote, with an independent variable, the vote of one party in the earlier election. The regression estimates above, for example, show that about 77 percent of those Virginians voting Readjuster in 1881 became Republicans in 1885, 23 percent Democratic, and so on. The estimates themselves were calculated with considerable help from the University of Virginia's computer center and the SPSS programs. Voting returns were coded by the author from the Tribune Alamanac (New York, 1881-1893). For the best discussion of the statistical technique itself, see J. Morgan Kousser, "Ecological Regression and the Analysis of Past Politics," Journal of Interdisciplinary History, 4 (1973), 237-262.

TABLE 1.6--The Democratic Party, 1881-1889

		% Republican	% Democratic	% Nonvoter
1881 Democrats voting in the election of:	1885	16	82	2
	1889	16	79	5
1884 Democrats voting in the election of:	1888	16	84	0
1885 Democrats voting in the election of:	1889	7	70	23

In addition to the change in the political system there was a change in attitude on the part of most white farmers. Most of them responded during the 1880's to the Democratic appeals for racial solidarity; they came to regard preservation of the Democracy as essential to the safety of their society and civilization. If most white Democratic farmers would not consider the alternative of joining the Republicans to obtain redress, then the Farmers' Alliance was also suspect. As the official Alliance historian put it, Virginians "generally mistrusted the order and would not take hold of it until they were thoroughly satisfied that it was the only way through which they could obtain relief."[13]

Alliance organizers, moreover, had to compete with existing farmers' groups. Southerners had a tradition of interest in agricultural organizations throughout the nineteenth century. By the eve of the Civil War, most Southern states had agricultural societies. These early farm groups, composed primarily of planters, did not try to expand their membership. In Virginia, planters and large-scale agriculturalists founded the Farmers' Assembly in the spring of 1885, while others rejuvenated the Virginia Agricultural Society in 1886. The Patrons of Husbandry, or the Grange, with a wider membership numbered some 16,000 members in Virginia during the 1870's.[14]

Colonel Robert Beverley best exemplifies the social

character of the Farmers' Assembly. A member of one of Virginia's first families, a Confederate veteran, and a large landholder in Essex and Fauquier counties, Beverley typified, as one journalist remarked, "the connecting link between the ideal Virginia gentleman of past and present days."

> Handsome, portly, with massive shoulders, gray hair and long mustache of the same color, ruddy of cheek, the manners of courtier, the tout ensemble became complete when he dofted his broad-brimmed soft hat associated with the Southerner of palmy days.[15]

Other leaders in the Assembly were equally well-placed. S. Wellford Corbin of King George County (Tidewater) was an "educated gentleman of fine address and a man of influence"; Henry L. Lyman of Charlottesville was a "man of education, information, and ability"; and Major Richard V. Gaines, who owned two thousand acres in Charlotte County (Southside), was a "gentleman of the old style."[16]

If the Farmers' Assembly represented the "best men" of Virginia agriculture, they were connected with a similar class in the South through regional farmers' organizations. These leaders of southern agriculture held numerous meetings in the late nineteenth century. Robert Beverley, joined by others, founded the Farmers' National Congress in 1875 at Atlanta. Then, from 1887 to 1889, the Interstate Farmers' Association (IFA),

composed of the "superior men of the South," held conventions in Atlanta and Raleigh, North Carolina. It consisted of "broad-minded, patriotic" southern agriculturalists and had representatives from eleven southern states. Prominent Virginia farmers, generally also members of the Farmers' Assembly, joined the IFA in 1888.[17] Meanwhile, such agricultural journals as the Raleigh Progressive Farmer, the Danville Tobacco Journal, and the Richmond Southern Planter preached crop diversification and restriction, urged the use of new scientific methods, encouraged immigration, and promoted southern industry.

During its four years of existence, the Farmers' Assembly was the most influential agricultural organization in Virginia. It pressured the state legislature into expanding the State Board of Agriculture. The reorganized board distributed seed sent from the United States Department of Agriculture, analyzed the quality of fertilizers, and sponsored farmers' institutes throughout the state. The Assembly also actively backed a bill to strengthen the state railroad commission. On the other hand, the organization suffered from crippling weaknesses. Its membership was generally limited to substantial farmers, who were more interested in or capable of making farming a productive and profitable business. The leading advocate of this "new" form of

agriculture in Virginia, the Southern Planter, saw an important role for the Farmers' Assembly in this forward movement. "Every trade and profession," it commented, "has its society, which unites their interests in common." More important, it also observed, "success attends" these organizations.[18]

Its obstacles were thus formidable, and the Alliance barely grew in Virginia in 1887 and 1888. The Barbee brothers, after founding the first suballiance in Ottobine, organized eighteen to twenty other lodges in Rockingham, Page, and Rappahannock counties. By January 1888, only twenty-eight suballiances and three county organizations had been formed.[19] The following year was not a happy one for Barbee, Secretary J.H. Silvey, and other Alliance organizers. At the end of 1888, ninety-seven counties were untouched by the order, while most of its meager expansion had occurred among small farmers.

The small Virginia Alliance received help in 1889 from Leonidas LaFayette Polk, president of the North Carolina Alliance, former Confederate general, and, as editor of The Progressive Farmer, one of the chief spokesmen of southern agriculture. Polk, along with a "few devout followers," conducted a successful recruiting campaign. The "clouds of doubt and despair began to roll away," Silvey later recalled, "and the bright and cheering sun of a new era arose." By August 1889, the

order had 460 lodges in thirty-two counties and a total of 8,000 members.[20] Hesitant acceptance by upper-class farmers--such as those attracted to the Assembly--blocked the large-scale expansion of the organization. As the Southern Planter said, "what is needed to secure success is not only that the small farmers, but also the wealthy, influential farmers of the State should join the ranks and thus ensure its work being done on a broad substantial basis."[21]

The restricted social and sectional character of the Alliance began to change during 1889. The order first grew out of its initial area of expansion, the Valley, into the more populous regions of the Tidewater and Southside. More importantly, richer farmers, formerly loyal exclusively to the Assembly, became alliancemen. By December 1889, when the Assembly held its fourth annual meeting in Richmond, more than four fifths of the organization, according to one estimate, had switched over to the Alliance. Most of these new converts favored uniting with the Alliance. Barbee, Alliance president and a member of the Assembly, flatly stated the terms of union. A marriage between the two organizations was possible, he maintained, only if the Alliance was the dominant partner in the union. The alliancemen, he added, could accomplish all that was necessary "for the good of the agricultural people in their own organization" without formally uniting

with the Assembly. In short, the Assembly needed the Alliance, not vice versa.

Many other prominent assemblymen, such as S. Wellford Corbin, H.M. Magruder, and Albemarle County lawyer (and future Populist) James Gaven Field, opposed an outright merger. The Grange had claimed that it was doing "as great and good work as the Alliance." Pointing to the antagonism between the Alliance and the Grange, Beverley opposed a union, because, he argued, only the Assembly could stand above such differences and "bring all farmers from every organization together." Magruder, chairman of the Assembly's executive committee, followed a similar line of argument and said that "there is no merging to do." The Alliance had not succeeded in uniting "farmers more closely than the Assembly." The Alliance had not embraced "all sections" and had not "become a body fairly representing the great mass of its [Virginia's] farmers." Only when the young order had reached these standards, Magruder concluded, would it "be in order for the Assembly to cease meeting."[22]

Despite this impressive opposition, the Alliance-Assembly faction had a majority of the votes and the leadership of such farmers as Barbee. In a last-ditch move, the recalcitrant assemblymen obtained passage of a face-saving resolution substituting "organic union" for outright merger. However, the Farmers' Assembly ceased

to exist as a functioning body after December 1889.

The merger had a dramatic effect upon the fortunes of the Alliance in the Old Dominion. Educated and articulate assemblymen joined the Alliance, if they had not already done so, in significant numbers. L.Q. Holt, who reportedly raised the "best crops in Southwest Virginia," and who "dressed in the best-fitting and most stylish of Tudor-made garments," developed into the "most brilliant orator" of the order.[23] After the merger, the Virginia Alliance News could proudly report that one Alliance lodge meeting was now "largely attended by our most substantial farmers."[24] Other planters, such as the indestructible Beverley, became, as one brother later recalled, "truly a power in the cause."[25]

The success of the Virginia Alliance in 1890 and 1891 was not the result of a rhetoric of protest, and because Virginians found it threatening and because the order's leadership was weak, the Alliance grew haltingly from 1887 to 1889. The conversion of assemblymen strengthened the order in two ways. In the Farmers' Assembly, the organization inherited not only experienced agricultural leaders but also farmers who commanded respect in many different rural areas of the state. Moreover, the conversion of the assemblymen lent credence to the order's claim that it was not a third party and did not intend to participate in politics in any way. The

Alliance in Virginia thus thrived as a voluntary farmers' group, and the order's organizational structure contributed directly toward its success.

CHAPTER II

"SPECIAL PRIVILEGES TO NONE": THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE, 1890-92

The Alliance appealed both to the sense of dignity and pocketbooks (about which more later) of Virginia farmers. Agriculture was a dismal, isolated, and increasingly unrewarding occupation in the late nineteenth century. "We believe," stated Mann Page, president of the order in 1890, "that we cannot get along by steadily tilling from daylight until dark--when we read or eat a hearty supper, and we are in bed in five minutes afterward, or else sleep in a chair. We find we have not found that profitable; there is something wrong."[1] Adding to the dreariness of farming was the fact that cultural centers were now in urban areas. Farmers sensed that the metropolitan areas posed a particular threat to their way of life. "The cities," Robert Beverley told farmers in 1889, "are living in ease and luxury and the country in toil and poverty; hence the people are congregating in the cities." Worse still, he continued, newspapers--"always located in cities or at court house towns"--reported urban prosperity and ignored rural life and the agricultural economy.[2]

Another allianceman, citing one advantage of rural life--the absence of urban temptations to the young--called on agrarians to "hand down to our country a youth morally trained."[3] In short, as the National Economist saw it, the farmer of "independent calling" had discovered that he could not "stem the current ... cityward."

> His products [it continued] are losing their preponderance in the markets; the "balance of trade" is against him. Desperately he struggles, inch by inch he is driven backwards; he fortifies by mortgages on crops, on stock, on farming implements, on lands, till at last the homestead itself--the pound of flesh nearest the heart--is given up, and he is an alien and a tenant upon his former birthright.[4]

The Alliance sought to cure the farmers' cultural deprivation by offering recreation, social contact, and a feeling of pride in being a tiller of the land. Just as the cooperative exchanges tried to redress the economic imbalance between agriculture and industry in the late nineteenth century, so the Alliance also set out to weld its members into a cohesive, class-oriented interest group which could regain its lost prestige. In an age of the large-scale organization of society, alliancemen realized that their order required a sophisticated structure for success. Farmers could combat oppression only by creating an organization superior to that of their enemies. But while the "fashion of organizing ... must be one and the same," wrote one agrarian, its "object and purpose could

differ."[5] Monopoly capital had, through excellent organization, effected an imbalance between government and society. The result was the end of participatory democracy as the nineteenth century had known it. Even the political parties "only favor measures for the moneyed few," declared The Union (Quicksburg, Va.) "while the Alliance is protesting, and fighting for that which will benefit all mankind alike."[6] The mass of people, that is, the farmers, had therefore to organize in "self-defense."[7]

At the bottom of the Alliance's federated structure were the suballiances. According to the order's constitution, an applicant had to meet certain standards. He had to be a "farmer, farm laborer, country physician, or country minister of the Gospel." He had to have white skin, possess "good moral character," believe in a Supreme Being, and "be of industrious habits." If the applicant met these qualifications and was a year's resident in the area of the suballiance, two of its members could then recommend him, and the president of the lodge could appoint a committee to "investigate the character of the applicant." If three fourths of the members accepted the applicant at a subsequent meeting, he was then inducted.

Once inducted, the allianceman's main duty was to attend the meetings and pay his dues faithfully. Meeting secretly twice a month, each lodge heard speakers and

held discussions on a variety of topics from the abolition of national banks to the proper use of fertilizers. The suballiance annually elected a president, lecturer, and other officers, and each quarter sent four delegates to the county alliance convention.

Suballiance meetings were, in addition, social affairs, where farmers had the rare opportunity to fraternize with their neighbors. All members were expected to "cultivate and cherish a brotherly feeling of charity and helpfulness toward each other," and if they disliked some of their brethren, they were admonished to sink their "personal preferences."[8] The "grand mission" of the Alliance, wrote S. Wellford Corbin, was "to brush away the asperities incident to the lonely life."[9]

The lodge, usually in conjunction with the county Alliance, sponsored picnics and dances. Piedmont alliancemen, for example, held a picnic in September 1891 attended by 200 of "the beaux and belles" of Goochland and Louisa counties. From five to eleven in the evening, the young of the Alliance danced, after which they took part in "an elegant repast, consisting of all the season's delicacies."[10] That same month, Albemarle County farmers held an "Alliance Day" in Scottsville. The Monticello band and a committee of three prominent citizens greeted President Page and State Agent Venable. The group then marched to Scottsville's picnic grounds, where an array

of Alliance leaders lectured the audience. Dr. Q.M. Holt, a prominent allianceman, spoke for just over two hours; he was followed by Venable, who spoke for forty-five minutes. The crowd of about 1,500 people took a break for dinner and then heard a speech by Page lasting one and a half hours.[11]

Above the suballiances were the county and state alliances. The county alliances annually elected their governing officers and committees and met quarterly to discuss pertinent local questions, issue resolutions, and bring the suballiances together. Each summer the county alliances sent delegates to a meeting of the state order. The summer state convention set policy for the coming year, which was carried out by three committees. The legislative committee acted as a pressure group in the state legislature; the judicial committee tried delinquent officers and disputes between alliancemen; and the executive committee ran the Alliance during the intervening year.[12]

The most important part of the Alliance's structure was its internal communications network, through which the national and state organizations transmitted issues and ideas to county and suballiances. Since, in the eyes of the order, an alien outlook tinged the usual channels of nineteenth-century communication--churches, newspapers, and political parties--the Alliance created an alternate

system, the main function of which was to "educate" the brethren to a new self-consciousness.

Each level of the Alliance--the local lodge, the county, the district, the state, and the national--had a lecturer. In February 1891, the southern Alliance created a "propaganda fund" which sponsored speakers in counties and congressional districts and instructed state organizations about appropriate topics for lectures.[13] By the summer of 1891, the lecture system was established both nationally and regionally. Under this plan, local and county lecturers received no salary except for donations, while the state order paid state and district lecturers.[14] It was through the lecture system that the Alliance relayed its ideas to the individual member. As one historian has written, the lecturer "was to the Alliance what the circuit rider had been to early Methodism. He provided the necessary point of contact between troubled farmers and an organization that offered them relief."[15]

An equally important part of the education of the brethren was the Alliance press. "Those who would be leaders must be teachers," advised the National Economist, "and those who teach must be informed."[16] To keep the brethren better informed by bolstering the order's newspapers, the southern Alliance formed the National Reform Press Association (NRPA) at its Ocala meeting in 1890.

The NRPA required a two dollar subscription fee and a signed oath of fealty to the national resolutions of the Farmers' Alliance.[17] The National Economist, edited by Macune, became the order's official organ and provided editorials, cartoons, and articles for agrarian newspapers across the South.

Spurred by the formation of the NRPA, alliancemen began newspapers throughout Virginia. County newspapers such as the Wytheville Virginia Alliance News, the Fredericksburg Necessity, and the Boydton Southside Alliance supplied a combination of anecdotes, local news, and Alliance education. The fledgling Virginia Alliance made Polk's Progressive Farmer in 1887 and the National Economist in 1888 its official mouthpieces. The next year it transferred its allegiance to the Petersburg Alliance Farmer and Rural Messenger, edited by Randolph Harrison. After the formation of the NRPA in 1891, the Exchange Reporter (later the Virginia Sun), edited by Pierson, became the official organ.

By subscribing to Alliance newspapers, the brethren were both informed of developments in the order and educated to the Alliance way of thinking. Henrico County Alliance leader H. Adolph Muller, for example, wrote Pierson that his Necessity was popular with Tidewater alliancemen because of its brevity. "The farmers are generally lazy readers," he observed, and "the majority

of our members want ... short articles."[18] President Page, returning from Ocala, told Pierson that more NRPA newspapers were needed to educate "our farmers as to their duties and responsibilities.[19] Indeed, as Pierson himself wrote in the Virginia Sun, "the whole reform movement depends altogether ... on setting our principles before the people." He continued:

> To do this essential work no agency is so potent as the right kind of newspaper, which shall by every line upon line and precept imprint in the hearts and minds of the people the nobility of our aims and purity of our motives.[20]

Naturally, the brethren were expected to read a reform newspaper regularly. As the constitution phrased it, it was the "duty of every member to subscribe for and read some reform paper advocating Alliance principles, in order that he may become fully posted in all those facts which are the proper equipment of an allianceman." "If a member is too poor to take it," it added, then "it should become the pleasant duty of some brother to make him a present of it."[21]

From a purely selfish point of view, the Alliance's newspapers and lecturers tried to sustain interest in the order. District Lecturer T.E. Cobbs, for instance, while visiting Montgomery County's suballiances, reported about the importance of Alliance lecturers, good newspapers, and cooperative buying and marketing to the Virginia Sun in

February 1892. Lodges in Chrisman Hill, Mount Tabor, and Elliston were examples of healthy organizations, and he reported that all three lodges were "in excellent trim." All read Alliance newspapers and regularly heard lecturers. "The first two," he continued,

> were trading with the State Exchange. Elliston has an Alliance Store, with Brother J.W. Barnett as storekeeper. The members are enthusiastic and increasing in numbers rapidly.

Cobbs contrasted this rosy account to the state of alliances in Flint Hill and Dog Run. Since they possessed no educational facilities, the district lecturer went ignored by the local populace and "failed to get any crowd."[22]

The main purpose of Alliance propaganda was to unite farmers as a self-conscious interest group. "The wealth producers," the Virginia State Alliance resolved in August 1891, "have been left far behind" in the "advancement the country had made in the last twenty-five years."[23] The farmer had been robbed of his wealth by private manipulation of the currency, industrial combination, and unsympathetic government. "Each citizen," argued the Exchange Reporter, "should have an equal right to the full fruits of his labor," and the government should "protect him in that enjoyment against the schemes of shrewder, stronger, or more cunning men, or combinations of men."[24]

The Alliance educational system, according to the Exchange Reporter, created "true, patriotic, prudent,

fearless leaders," committed to "righteous thinking and righteous living."[25] Another newspaper thought that alliancemen, once properly educated, would "develop a better state mentally, morally, socially and financially."[26] Since he possessed a new awareness of his position in the modern world, he would be able to reassert his proper place in America. "'Educate, educate, educate,'" one Princess Anne County lecturer exclaimed. "When our every citizen is educated as to the present dishonest conducting of our Republic, the power will be wrested from the trained and paid politician that is now so corrupting it."[27]

The Texas Farmers' Alliance Exchange, founded in August 1887, provided the Virginia brethren with a model for cooperative enterprise. The idea of cooperation was a novel and exciting one to Texas farmers. Through the exchange system, alliancemen hoped to eliminate the oppressive merchant middlemen, reform the crop lien system, and return agriculture to its proper position. "In one swoop," one recent historian has written, "they promised to revolutionize and civilize the cotton and tobacco cultivation systems [and] replace one-crop tenancy."[28]

Under Macune's management, the Texas Exchange had a daring quality which appealed to desperate alliancemen. In November 1887, he instituted a credit system called

the Exchange, which was designed to replace the onerous crop lien. Like the country merchant, the Exchange offered the brethren supplies on credit equal to three times the value of their future crops. Each sub-alliance issued a joint note on the total debt of its members, which the Exchange then used as collateral to finance its purchases. Yet enthusiasm was not enough. The Exchange lacked working capital, and bankers refused to extend it credit. The suballiances' joint notes were paid slowly and haphazardly, and, despite frantic efforts to save it, the Texas Exchange folded in 1889.[29]

The Virginia Alliance's cooperative enterprise took shape between 1889 and 1892 with a federated structure. County and local alliances sold the brethren manufactured goods and farm supplies at a saving of about 25 per-cent.[30] In July 1890, for example, alliancemen organized the Alliance Cooperative Company in Richmond to serve Tidewater brethren who normally traded there. The new company restricted its business to members of the order. "All Alliance men trading at the stores of this company," its charter promised, "shall show their cards to the store-keeper, or they will be treated as outsiders, unless vouched for by some Alliance man known to both parties."[31] By November, the Alliance Cooperative Company's secretary and treasurer, Franklin Guy, could write: "We are at work daily and our business is steadily improving." "All

we need," he added, "is a trial by our friends, ... and hope [that] our Brethren will come to our aid and take our stock freely."[32] Similarly, twenty-four Pittsylvania County suballiances established a county store in August 1890. While conducting "a general mercantile and manufacturing business," the Pittsylvania Alliance store sold members supplies at cost and in many cases even extended credit. By 1891, twenty counties in Virginia had such stores.[33]

District exchanges acted as wholesalers and provided the county stores or the brethren directly with farm implements, fertilizers, seed, and salt.[34] Charles Herbert Pierson, a former Anglican clergyman who had migrated to Caroline County in 1876, helped to found a district exchange at Fredericksburg in July 1890. It did a brisk business. Subscriptions came from all over the Tidewater during the autumn of 1890, and, by early 1891, the exchange had stockholders from five counties and forty-three suballiances.[35] Alliancemen throughout the state were excited and enthusiastic about the Fredericksburg Exchange system. H.G. Spellman, a member of the Leesburg Alliance, wanted to obtain breeding bulls through the exchange, while another allianceman commented ecstatically that "we need something of this kind in every town in the state."[36]

Alliancemen also organized district exchanges

elsewhere in the state. In Norfolk, an exchange catered to the North Carolina and Virginia brethren. Each participating county Alliance subscribed fifty cents per member, and could elect one man to the board of directors of the district exchange. "The object of the Exchange," its prospectus read, "is to handle Alliance productions and furnish supplies at the lowest possible cost to the producer or consumer."[37] Alliancemen established district exchanges at Petersburg and Richmond in July 1890, at Lynchburg in December 1891, and in Augusta County in January 1892.[38]

A group of alliancemen organized the State Exchange in Richmond in November 1890 in an attempt to unite the entire cooperative effort in Virginia, and they appointed as its manager A.R. Venable, a prosperous Danville planter and former member of the Farmers' Assembly. District exchanges and Alliance stores were notably competitive and jealous. In November 1890, for example, Venable called on the brethren to "sink personal opinion and loyally undertake to put in practice the system adopted," adding that "in order to obtain success there must be a united effort." "Of course I have no personal interest whether your Exchange or your suballiance cooperates or not," he added to Pierson. "It appears to me that, some have an impression that I am trying to get cooperation for personal benefit."[39]

Guy, as secretary of the Alliance Cooperative Company, feared losing power and trade to a strengthened State Agent. Although some alliancemen charged that the district exchanges and Alliance stores were "antagonizing" Venable, Guy saw no reason why they could not work together for mutual benefit. Seven months later, however, he wrote Pierson and cautioned him not to allow Venable to "fill any orders at all except for large quantities."[40]

The Alliance also went into manufacturing. In March 1889, for example, the State Alliance bought a farm machinery factory near Richmond for $25,000. Incorporated in that year as the Farmers' Alliance Cooperative Manufacturing Company, the new firm raised $5,000 in cash with "comparatively little effort." "The necessary wants of the farmer," President Barbee claimed in the National Economist in 1889,

> are being supplied with a degree of excellence in material and finish that will compare favorably with similar work anywhere in our land; and by virtue of the low prices at which they are sold, rare advantages and inducements are offered to our brothers of the Alliance.[41]

Tidewater alliancemen started a fertilizer factory in King William County in early 1891, while others in the state opened a textile factory called the Alliance Mills Company. In the tobacco regions of the Southside and Piedmont, warehousing became a large-scale business activity of the order. Alliances in Lynchburg, Danville, South Boston,

and Henry County all conducted warehousing of tobacco on a large scale.[42]

The Virginia cooperative system's most pressing problem was a chronic lack of capital. Short of cash themselves, farmers naturally balked at investing in the shaky exchanges. J.H.C. Beverley, who wrote as president of one Tidewater suballiance in July 1891, noted that subscribing to the Fredericksburg District Exchange involved a large risk. "If the thing falls thro," he asked Pierson, "will stock be refunded?" Noting that his suballiance had joined the State Exchange, Beverley advised that Pierson's exchange also "shd. do so."[43] Actually, the State Exchange itself was no less solvent. It held frequent discussions about shoring up its finances, and in July 1891, the district exchange business agents agreed to help raise $50,000 by requesting each suballiance to subscribe to $40 worth of stock. Then, in the fall of 1891, a new plan and request for funds was sent out. Under this revised plan, the State Exchange became a legally incorporated "parent society," which could issue charters to all Alliance exchanges and provide wholesale buying for the district exchanges. Each suballiance was asked to contribute $20 annually.

The most important tension within the exchange system stemmed from the order's diverse social composition. Farmers of substance had clear ideas about what

they wanted in the exchange; and many, such as Beverley, were "strong for the Rochdale plan."[44] Begun in England in 1844 by the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers, the Rochdale plan was generally the most financially secure of late nineteenth-century cooperative schemes because it provided for joint-stock stores, which bought and sold merchandise on strict business principles and distributed profits to stockholders.[45] The Rochdale plan endeared itself to farmers like Beverley, mainly because of its provision for buying and selling in cash only. "One of the best features" about the Virginia exchange system, commented Randolph Harrison, a farmer whose forbears ranked as high as Beverley's,

> is the buying and selling of all staple articles for cash. Credit is what has crippled so many farmers, and the only way to get out of this difficulty is to get down to cash basis for everything.[46]

Even with the guarantees furnished by the Rochdale plan, many wealthy farmers found the risk of investing in the exchange too large to make. Indeed, one allianceman was "amazed to see so many farmers of high standing, not only indifferent" to the exchange system, "but actually using their influence against it."[47]

Although the exchanges marketed the farmers' produce and offered lower prices, they did little to uplift Virginia's poorer farmers who had little. As

allianceman B.B. Turner succinctly argued:

> How are we to take stock which costs money, when we have no money? How are we to buy for cash, when we have no cash? How are we to make investments, even though they be ever so much for our benefit, when we have not the money to invest?[48]

While the Virginia Alliance conducted business in the name of "cooperation," it had to face a harsh world of intense competition for the cash and crops of the Old Dominion. To start with, the exchanges had limited resources. They also faced the hostility of their merchant competitors. "Outside parties," one allianceman advised Pierson," will sell, for a time, to farmers, cheaper than you can, even at a loss to themselves, in order to dissatisfy your patrons and break down the exchange."[49]

Outside competition and internal antagonisms hurt the exchange system throughout its short history. Pittsylvania County's Alliance store, one of the few in the state that extended credit to its customers, experienced chronic financial woes. In August 1891, a year after it began, the store treasurer, G.S. Norman, resigned because of its chaotic finances. But Norman returned and, in November, the governing board decided to "continue as a business." By the following spring, however, the board voted to close the store "as soon as possible."[50]

The Fredericksburg District Exchange was equally hard pressed to stay afloat. From April to October 1891, the cooperative's gross sales amounted only to $7,000, and it had only a "small balance" to show its stockholders. "There are too many Alliancemen," complained the members of the Old Hickory suballiance," who use the Exchange to beat down the price of outside merchants."[51] By January 1893, the Fredericksburg Exchange had to take drastic measures. President C.P. Massey favored the exclusion of lawyers and storekeepers, but he had to recommend opening up "the benefits of the store free to all whether eligible to [the] Alliance or not."[52] The Orange and Stafford County alliances, furthermore, favored closing the exchange altogether at this meeting. "We need money," concluded the Old Hickory brethren, "but we need trade worse than anything else."[53] In February, the Fredericksburg Exchange opened up its doors to all Virginians--"inasmuch," as Pierson put it, "as buyers are essential to success in any store"--and cut its ties with the Alliance.[54]

The collapse of the Alliance district and county exchanges led to the reorganization of the State Exchange itself. In early 1893, George Chrisman, the chairman of the State Alliance's executive committee, called a meeting to "command united support and co-operation of the various organizations now in existence." Represented

by only forty of the Old Dominion's 100 counties, the meeting concentrated the remains of the exchange system in the State Exchange. Local exchanges now served only local markets under the direction of a state agent. Henceforth, all purchases were made by the central agency and distributed by the local agents for cash.[55]

As the State Alliance newspaper commented in November 1891, the cooperative exchanges were the "very foundation" of the order.[56] "Most of our members joined the Order to secure the trading," it added on another occasion. "It was the promised financial betterment which compelled them to come in, and it is only the actual enjoyment of that betterment in the tangible shape of dollars and cents saved which can keep them in."[57] To other alliancemen, however, the exchange system represented more than just an exercise in saving money. Thus Pierson regarded it as a test of "the system" itself. "If cooperation is not a cheaper method of doing business," he declared, "then the present system is shaking in its shoes, and well it may, because the cheaper method is bound to prevail.... Every advance to a higher civilization is made by the saving of labor, and cooperation is the greatest of the labor saving agencies."[58]

Many Virginians flocked to the Alliance because of the savings in retail goods and the opportunity for recreation and interaction with like-minded agriculturalists

that the order extended. After the Alliance's plan for cooperative buying and selling had little effect upon the farmer's economic problems, many of the less loyal brethren left the organization and its future appeared dim. Partly because of the decline in membership, Alliance leaders searched for ways to attract new members. The order's spokesmen played down the exchange as the solution to all farm problems and instead argued the advantages that organization offered in sustaining and rejuvenating rural culture. Moreover, as a final solution to the twin problems of falling membership and an apparent impotency to affect the course of southern agriculture, the Alliance also became directly involved in state and national politics. In view of the organization's tense social, ideological, and regional composition, this decision had momentous consequences.

CHAPTER III

THE ALLIANCE IN POLITICS, 1890-93

Alliance social activities, the educational campaign, and cheaper prices at cooperative exchanges helped to attract new members during 1890 and 1891. In February 1890, Gabriel Barbee led a recruiting drive in the Piedmont and Southside;[1] the Old Hickory suballiance noted "a most encouraging attendance of outsiders," as sixteen new members had entered that month.[2] The order grew rapidly during the coming spring and summer. "The farmers have realized their condition, realized that they have been asleep," one allianceman wrote to Pierson. "There is a steady growing sentiment," he continued,

> all along the line, and those who were inclined to look upon the movement with fear and disgust are now beginning to look [well] upon the mighty movement which has started the new work, and which have [sic] started the masses to thinking. The people are reading and studying economic questions through new spectacles and the light will fully dawn upon them, and if they will stick together [and] do their duty, they will once more be free.[3]

The Richmond Dispatch reported in July 1890 that the Farmers' Alliance had become "a power in the land," and that in Virginia "they are great and growing."[4] By the time of its annual meeting at Lynchburg in August 1890,

the Virginia Alliance had fully organized eighty-seven counties and had 1,113 suballiances and approximately 30,000 members.[5]

The order continued to expand during late 1890 and early 1891. R.L. Campbell's suballiance met at "a most splendid room" near Richmond, owned by prominent "friend and Physician Dr. N.N. Corbin." "We haven't any Gould or Vanderbilts in our Alliance," he wrote, but Campbell promised nonetheless a $100 subscription to the Richmond Exchange.[6]

By the spring and summer of 1891, however, signs of serious trouble began to appear. In April, the president of an Orange County suballiance wrote pessimistically that "our Alliance is not commanding the interest or attention that it deserves, or could wish," and that the county organization was "about dead."[7] Another Alliance leader in King and Queen County complained to Pierson that visiting lecturers were not well attended.[8] Old Hickory alliancemen suggested in January that their meetings could be "more interesting," while another brother from a nearby lodge stated that his suballiance was closed.[9] Even the Alliance's official newspaper concluded that the order was "losing ground," and that interest was "flagging, dues are unpaid, our numbers are falling off."[10] By the summer of 1891, membership in the Virginia Alliance had declined by 10 to 25 percent from the previous summer.[11]

Virginia farmers were deserting the Alliance for several reasons. They were disillusioned with the failure of the cooperative exchanges to improve their economic condition. As the exchanges suffered financially, they became more like any other business. Because most of the cooperatives conducted business in cash only, moreover, they were unable to meet the needs of poorer farmers. Many alliancemen also were growing disenchanted with the order's increasing political activities. Most brethren agreed that the Alliance should act as a pressure group like the railroads or other industrial combinations, but many alliancemen resisted anything which resembled an independent political movement. The great majority of the members of the Southern Alliance belonged to the Democratic party and were as loyal to it as to church and family. To challenge the Democratic party was to challenge southern civilization. As the New York Times commented, most of the Virginia Alliance considered fealty to the Democratic party "a higher obligation than that of the farmers' organization."[12]

On the other hand, a sizable number of alliancemen--particularly the leaders--felt frustrated by the political system. As they saw it, state and national governments were dominated by the "money interest" and no longer represented the farming majority. Many of these

alliancemen believed that it would be impossible to correct the economic and cultural imbalance between farmers and urbanites without restoring the equilibrium in government.

Inexorably, yet with great hesitation, Virginia farmers shoved the order into the political arena. The Southern Alliance, very reluctant to break with the Democratic party, tried working within that party from 1890 to 1892. At the St. Louis National Convention in 1890 and at Ocala, again in 1890, the Alliance attacked the contractionist monetary policy which the federal government had pursued since the mid-1870's. Since they were endemically short of cash, alliancemen blamed the depression in agriculture on this policy, and offered the subtreasury plan to correct it. Under this scheme, farmers could store their produce at government-owned warehouses and could receive currency worth 90 percent of their crop.[13] The Virginia brethren greeted the subtreasury plan with mixed feelings. Some thought it impractical; others believed that it was an unconstitutional extension of governmental power. J.W. Porter of Albemarle County favored an expanded paper currency, but with "proper safeguards ... against inflation and contraction."[14] J.E.R. Crabbe, in contrast, thought that the subtreasury plan was "utterly impracticable." "Apart from its being the most objectionable form of

class legislation," he fulminated, "it would make a thousand speculators where there is one amongst the farmer, [and] would be attended with the curse of thousands of thousands of Federal office-hold[ers]."[15]

The Virginia brethren paid lip service to the Alliance's national program, but they were more concerned with local grievances, such as the inadequacy of the transportation system. The Richmond government sadly neglected country roads. As the Exchange Reporter wrote, the roads east of the Blue Ridge,

> are mostly ditches and a series of mud-holes running around every man's corn-field, leading everywhere and nowhere in particular .... The signs of the times seem to indicate that the modern Rip Van Winkle--the Farmer of Virginia--is about to rouse up from his indefinite nap to the fact that they are the mud-sills of humanity.[16]

In the Rappahannock valley, farmers complained of infrequent or expensive steamer service. F.W. Scott, a Tidewater allianceman from Mathews County, resented irregular freight service. "Our people are trucking [vegetables] quite extensively," he wrote to Pierson, and he thought that they could double their acreage with more frequent steamers.[17] While some Rappahannock alliancemen suggested establishing a competitive steamer, most favored regulating steamers by commission.[18] The area held a convention on steamboat shipping in June 1891 and sent a committee to Baltimore to press for rate

reductions.[19]

The unifying issue for alliancemen throughout the state was railroad regulation. Most Virginia farmers, rich and poor, eastern and western, wanted railroads controlled. Their reasons varied. The completion of the Norfolk and Western in 1883 helped to open up the Pocahontas coal mines and generated something of an industrial boom in the Southwest. The Norfolk and Western also ran through the Southside and changed the nature of tobacco farming by centralizing its markets in Lynchburg, Danville, and South Boston. In other areas of the state, farmers wanted better or more extensive service to transport their produce more efficiently.[20]

Although the costs of shipping actually declined during the late nineteenth century,[21] railroads became the focus of farmer hostility in Virginia. To farmers, the railroads' influence was disproportionately strong in Richmond. Legislators regularly received free passes and campaign contributions from the railroads, and some of the assemblymen even remained on the payroll as railroad lawyers while still holding their offices.[22] Although these sorts of practices were not new to nineteenth-century politics, many agrarians saw them as threatening the end of participatory democracy. "The control of the currency and the control of transportation," the Exchange Reporter declared, "together constitute an

absolute control of the destinies of the people for weal or woe." "We are slaves of the money kings and railroads. And we shall never be free, until these kings and lords are dethroned, and the people through the State become once more sovereign."[23]

Fourteen years earlier, in April 1877, Virginia had become the first southern state to create a railroad commission. The General Assembly annually elected one commissioner empowered to watch over the railroads. His duties were primarily advisory, however, and he possessed no power to supervise or regulate the railroads; indeed, to enforce a decision against railroad wrongdoing, he had to bring suit against the railroads.[24] Robert C. Kent of Southwest Virginia, backed by the Farmers' Assembly and the Alliance, introduced a bill into the House in 1888 to strengthen and expand the powers of the commission. It was modeled upon the Georgia railroad commission act of 1879 and created a board of three to set "just and reasonable" rates. It passed the House, only to meet a quick defeat in the Senate.[25]

The Virginia Alliance, in May 1891, decided to back the Kent bill actively. To receive Alliance endorsement, each candidate for the legislature had to pledge support for the Kent bill in the forthcoming session. The Democratic chieftains, well aware of the divisive potential of the railroad issue, tried accommodation with the

order. On July 8, 1891, C.H. Pierson, Southside alliancemen R.V. Gaines and J. Thompson Brown, and Venable met at the home of J. Taylor Ellyson, state Democratic party chairman. From all accounts, the conferees struck a deal. The Alliance promised not to attack the party openly in return for a pledge by the Democrats to pass a railroad bill. Both sides left the meeting convinced that an agreement had been reached.[26]

Although Alliancemen had pledged to remain sympathetic to or at least neutral vis-à-vis the Democrats, they did not restrain their fury against the hated railroads. When the Alliance held its annual convention at Richmond in August, Pierson and other leaders unleashed a fierce attack against the railroads. The Hanover County alliance in July had endorsed Henry Wickham for the House of Delegates and R.H. Cardwell for the Senate. Both were organization Democrats--Wickham a salaried railroad attorney and Cardwell "friendly" to their interests. Pierson succeeded in persuading the August convention both to denounce Hanover's endorsement and to request its withdrawal.[27] Meanwhile, the State Alliance's lecturers campaigned up and down Virginia. District and county lecturers were "almost daily speaking," according to the Norfolk Virginian, and State Lecturer Robert Snavely covered "every county in the State." National Alliance assistant lecturer Ben Terrell also spoke throughout

Virginia during August and September.[28]

Most of the Alliance's anti-railroad activities occurred during the summer and fall of 1891, when the two parties held conventions to nominate candidates for the legislature. Despite the Alliance's official position, some county organizations supported independent Alliance or Alliance-Republican tickets. In the Piedmont, Fluvanna County alliancemen were so angry at the Democracy that they nominated an independent candidate.[29] Independent Alliance tickets were also named in Newport News, Augusta County, and Emporia,[30] while other brethren combined with Republicans to form a ticket.[31] In other counties, alliancemen simply could not stomach Democratic candidates because of their association with railroads. In Pulaski County, in the Southwest, for instance, the county alliance met and recommended James T. Trollinger on September 15. Two days later, the Democratic organization defeated Trollinger and nominated a regular party man. The alliancemen then stormed off to run an independent candidate.[32]

Many county alliances that had sharply different political inclinations declined to become involved in the railroad controversy. After the Democrats nominated James T. Hutcheson over J. Thomas Goode in Mecklenburg County, Goode then ran as an independent. Substantial portions of the Southside Alliance, however, backed

Hutcheson, and the official county alliance newspaper, the Southside Alliance, threw up its hands and told the brethren to "think and act for themselves."[33] The James City County Alliance in the Tidewater similarly refused to support any candidate and added: "We will look with disfavor upon any move which will tend to throw the charge of affairs out the hands of white people."[34]

Most alliancemen preferred to operate actively within the Democratic party. An Alliance-Democratic convention in Danville, a hotbed of Alliance activity, agreed to a joint ticket even though not a single candidate was a member of the order.[35] The Scott County Democracy acquiesced in the Alliance candidate, John M. Hoge, while Nelson, Greeneville, and Sussex County alliancemen and Democrats united on their tickets.[36]

Democrats and alliancemen both claimed victory in the election of 1891. The Republican party, except when it united with the Alliance, sat out the election, and the new House of Delegates was overwhelmingly Democratic, with about fifteen independent members. For the first time since Reconstruction, moreover, the legislature contained no blacks. Still, most observers interpreted the election as an overwhelming mandate for a railroad bill. "The friends of the Alliance are our friends," commented the Democratic Charlottesville Chronicle.[37] "If the present Legislature," asked the Virginia Alliance News,

"which is composed largely of farmers, does not bring us some relief, where is relief to come from?"[38]

Alliancemen had high expectations for the Kent bill; indeed the state order had staked its reputation on the passage of strong railroad legislation. When the new legislature opened in December 1891, the legislative committee of the State Alliance joined with shippers, represented by the Richmond Chamber of Commerce's committee on inland trade, to endorse publicly a railroad commission with rate-making powers. Colonel John B. Purcell, president of the chamber, later met with the floor leaders of the Kent bill.[39]

The railroads counterattacked in January 1892. The presidents of the Chesapeake and Ohio, Virginia Midland, and Norfolk and Western--the Old Dominion's three largest railroads--appeared before the House Committee on Roads and Internal Navigation to oppose the rate-making provisions of the Kent bill. Virginia's economic development depended on the railroads, they warned; states with powerful commissions had suffered by driving away both railroads and investors. They also argued that the Alliance measure was an attack on private property.[40]

The arguments of the railroads apparently were more persuasive than those of the Alliance-shipper coalition. Stalled in committee during January 1892, the Kent bill was then reported unfavorably by the House Committee on Roads and Internal Navigation in early February. Farm leaders were impatient and irritated. If the Kent bill was not passed, vowed the Virginia Sun, its defeat would become

"the battle cry of the next state campaign."[41] The Old Dominion would be in a "questionable position," the Staunton Vindicator thought, unless a strong railroad bill was passed. "It will say to the world

> that a bill not containing one provision not already on the statute book of Virginia, has been defeated because it proposed to enforce those provisions which were already law. It will say to the world that the series of statutes, with the teeth extracted, to render them harmless to the railroads, were placed there with the collusion of the Commonwealth.[42]

While the Democratic legislature was reluctant to pass the Kent bill, most of its members saw the necessity for a new law. Some maintained that the Kent bill should be passed to prevent stronger legislation in the future; others thought that farmers were indifferent or desired a weaker act. B.J. James, a Democratic delegate from the northern Piedmont, stated that Virginians would blame the defeat of the Kent bill on bribery and railroad passes and vote the "downfall of our party."[43] Most legislators, however, agreed with a Valley delegate who favored "some railroad legislation," but not necessarily the Kent bill.[44]

At the end of February, John E. Mason of King George County offered a substitute which expanded the railroad commission, but gave it considerably less power than did the Kent bill. The Mason substitute expanded the railroad commission from one to three members. However, this commission had no rate-making powers, and the railroads would pay the salaries of the commissioners. The Mason substitute came to a vote on February 28, and, "amidst great silence,"

passed by a vote of 58 to 34. The Senate overwhelmingly endorsed the measure on the following day, and Virginia had an act far short of farmers' expectations.[45]

How did the legislature defeat the Kent bill, when, as one newspaper estimated, five out of every six Virginians favored the measure? Ironically, it was Democratic domination of the legislature which defeated a strong railroad bill. Democrats achieved one-party rule in the 1891-1892 legislature with help from the Alliance. The result was a complete collapse of party discipline, cohesion, and, ultimately, effectiveness. This fact made it difficult for any single interest group--and especially one as inexperienced as the Alliance--to exert its influence effectively.

To substantiate this view, the thirty-four Democrats who voted against the Mason bill were analyzed for their cohesion, disagreement, and success as legislative groups on five general issues and twenty-one roll call votes. The fifty-one remaining members of the party who either voted for the measure or not at all--the "regular" Democrats--were tested in a similar manner. The results of the roll call analysis of the 1891-92 legislature reveal that the core of delegates that favored the Kent bill were relatively ineffective and disorganized as a group. On only one issue, the regulation of the oyster industry, did the Alliance faction vote cohesively. Not surprisingly, the Alliance delegates did not frequently disagree with regular Democrats, and indeed their performance was

remarkably similar. The only distinguishing difference, using these criteria, was that regular Democrats were almost twice as effective as the supporters of a stronger railroad bill.

One Alliance leader, Captain Robert H. Tyler, blamed the order's legislative difficulties on ineffective leadership, specifically Robert C. Kent. According to Tyler, Kent's inexperience, lack of "backbone," and the superior tactics of the anti-regulation forces, which were led by James Hay of Greene County, resulted in the defeat of the Kent bill. On February 28, the day the House adopted the Mason substitute, Tyler wrote later,

> Hay commenced a system of successful filibustering, and though we had a majority and were placed squarely on an issue of endurance, Mr. Kent, without consultation or notice, broke us up by voting with Hay for adjournment. During the fight, Hay came to my desk and said: 'Captain, you might as well let us adjourn; we are determined.' My reply was 'Mr. Hay, you have not yet cornered all the manhood in Virginia. We will stay here until this building falls, if necessary.' (VS, November 2, 1893)

Shortly thereafter, Kent gave in and voted for adjournment.[46]

In 1892, regionalism was probably more important than either faction or party. Seven regional legislative groups of Virginia--the northern Tidewater, the Valley, the northern Piedmont, the southern Tidewater, the Southwest, the Southside, and the urban centers of Norfolk

and Richmond, were analyzed for their legislative performance in the 1891-1892 lower house. Without strong factional or party groupings, regional loyalties were the strongest variable. Of all regions, the Southside and northern Piedmont, where the Republicans and the alliancemen had the most influence, were the most inchoate and ineffective. Indeed, every other region aside from these two was more cohesive and effective than either the Alliance or regular Democrats.

By the spring of 1892, the results of the Alliance's involvement in state politics were disastrously clear. In the absence of a strong two party system, the order exerted a weak, disorganized, and ineffective influence upon the legislature. The Alliance's failure was particularly painful in that the railroads apparently had a leading hand in the defeat of the Kent bill. After the defeat of the railroad bill, the Virginia Alliance was under considerable pressure to enter politics by joining a third party. The proponents of this strategy pointed to the decline of the order in the Old Dominion. L.T. Beall, president and co-founder of the first suballiance in Virginia, noted the slackening interest in the organization among farmers. The Ottobine lodge, he reported to the Virginia Sun, "is about run into the ground." It is so hard to get them [the members] out to the meetings," he added, "and they do not pay up their dues."[47]

The order's split with the Democracy and the question of direct political involvement, in addition, brought out internal ideological differences in the Alliance. Robert Beverley and many like-minded farmers maintained that the organization should remain apart from the new People's Party. Beverley saw the Alliance's "political mission" as a lobby group, not as a threat to existing political structures. "The time is not yet come for [a] third party," he concluded in the Virginia Sun in March 1892.[48]

Nevertheless, the experience with the Democrats had deeply disturbed most alliancemen. Rightly or wrongly, most blamed the Democrats for the defeat of the Kent bill, and, if they were not disillusioned with the political process itself after February 1892, many brethren favored joining the Populists. One brother who acknowledged that many members feared involvement in a third party also saw support of the Populists as "a necessity." Not only had the order failed to get results on the national scene, but, with the defeat of the Kent bill, the Alliance had also lost in Virginia--despite the fact that "a majority of the Virginia legislature was elected by Alliance votes." He continued:

> Our people are tired of supporting men and electing them to frame our statutes, who are avowed enemies and belong body and soul to the railroad and other monopolies.[49]

"Modern Democracy," observed the Virginia Sun, "is false to its name, false to its principles, and false to its traditions."[50] T.E. Cobbs, writing in late April, warned of an internal enemy which threatened the order. This fiend, he wrote, "has been through our field sowing tares [which struggle] to choke out the wheat." "The question arises," he concluded, whether to "allow them to grow till harvest or root them out by discipline."[51]

By the end of April 1892, the advocates of third-party involvement took an important step toward rooting out the "tares" in the order. The Alliance legislative council met at Richmond and ordered, in essence, the purge of all non-Populist brethren. Earlier that spring, the Southern Alliance had met at St. Louis and adopted resolutions which supported the Populist party. The legislative council endorsed this move and ruled that loyalty to the St. Louis platform was "a necessary qualification for holding the Offices of president, vice-president, and lecturer in all county and sub-Alliances." The council further instructed the loyal brethren to "challenge" their leaders to be obedient to the St. Louis resolutions.[52]

The decision of the legislative council speeded the formation of the Populist party in Virginia during the late spring and early summer of 1892. Many brethren loyal to the Democracy were either purged or withdrew

voluntarily. In May, for example, the Rev. L. Cox, editor of the Southside journal, the Charlotte Gazette, lost his membership because he reportedly assailed "the principles and officers of our Order."[53] By late May, Populists had organized parties in twenty counties; in another two weeks, farmers had "temporarily organized" a third party in an additional thirty counties. On June 23, in a meeting of the state Alliance at Richmond, Populists made Pierson their state chairman, while other alliancemen became the district, county, and precinct chairmen of the party.[54]

Some of the disaffected rank and file of the Alliance joined the Populists. The Old Hickory lodge sent Pierson to the national Populist convention in Omaha in July and unanimously adopted a resolution which supported the third party, "not for the sake of party, but for the sole purpose of securing the enactment of our demands into law." "The Farmers Alliance," the resolution declared;

> has for the last eighteen months served notice on the political parties that we will support that party only which represents our principles .... Both old parties have ignored our demands and treated us with contempt while the Peoples' Party has adopted our platform as its own.[55]

But many, if not most, alliancemen found the route of third party politics too bitter a pill to swallow. It was a drastic step to take to leave the Democracy,

probably too drastic for most of the Virginia brethren. "All of our Alliancemen," S. Wellford Corbin reminded the Virginia Sun,

> are not yet educated to the belief that we should sever adherence from the political organization that we believe to be a safe and sure barrier to protect our personal liberties, the security of our firesides, and the civilization of our country against partisan tyranny.[56]

In late May, many alliancemen attended the Democratic state convention which was held to send delegates to the National Democratic convention in Chicago. Tidewater Alliance leaders J.R. Wingfield, Dr. Quesenberry, and Corbin attended, along with 200 "solid and earnest" brethren. Robert C. Kent was selected as a "silver delegate" to the Chicago meeting. "How people can keep on being fooled, simply because it is the Democratic party," noted the Virginia Sun, "is a striking instance of fetish-worship."[57]

The Populists' presidential and gubernatorial campaigns of 1892 and 1893 completed the breakup of the Alliance in Virginia. The Populist presidential ticket of Iowan James Baird Weaver and Virginian James Gaven Field attracted few votes in Virginia, as Table 3.1 reveals. Democrats skillfully persuaded alliancemen not to vote Populist by reviving their deeply rooted fears of racial conflict. Weaver was, after all, a Union veteran who would, they charged, not hesitate to suppress

TABLE 3.1--The 1892 and 1893 Elections in Virginia

Election Year	Democrats	Republicans	Populists	Prohibitionists	Nonvoters
1892	164058 (44%)	113217 (31%)	12160 (3%)	2681 (1%)	79569 (21%)
1893	101926 (30%)		72948 (21%)	4886 (1%)	161837 (47%)

southern liberties. As a Warrenton Democrat, Thomas Smith, put it, "The man blessed with a white cuticle is false if he does not in this emergency cooperate with the Democratic party."[58] All that the Populists would accomplish, explained one Democrat, would be "Republican supremacy." The victory of the G.O.P. would only result in more oppression--more taxation, less currency, and above all, the passage of the Force Bill.[59]

Although former Democrats held ranks, few Republicans joined the Populist cause in 1892. Indeed, the injection of Populism had a small direct effect upon Virginia politics, at least in 1892 (see Appendices I and J). According to regression estimates, Virginia Populists attracted roughly equal proportions of Democratic and Republican voters of the 1880's. Populists had even less success in wooing the nonvoters of those elections, as virtually none of them joined the third party in 1892. The fourth party, the Prohibitionists, garnered an even smaller percentage of the vote (1%) than the Populists and were composed almost exclusively of former Democrats.

These estimates also show a significant attrition in the Republican vote in 1892. More than two out of every five Republican voters of the 1880's left the party in 1892 and did not vote at all. Table 3.2 shows the racial composition of the 1892 electorate. Roughly twice the proportion of blacks sat out the election than did whites;

roughly equal proportions of each race joined the Populists; and roughly twice the proportion of whites as compared with blacks voted Democratic. Although blacks composed about 35 percent of the electorate, they composed almost 60 percent of the nonvoters in 1892 (see Table 3.3).

TABLE 3.2--The Gubernatorial Election of 1893, by Race

1893	Democrats	Populists	Prohibitionists	Nonvoters
% 1890 Blacks	29%	42%	0	29%
Whites	34%	16%	3%	47%

TABLE 3.3--The Racial Composition of Nonvoters, 1892 and 1893 Elections

	Black	White
1892 Nonvoters	57%	43%
1893 Nonvoters	25%	75%

The dramatic decline in political participation can be explained in several different ways. One explanation, readily accepted by J. Morgan Kousser in his pioneering study of late nineteenth century southern politics, is outright fraud. Kousser's explanation echoes the indictment made by Virginia Populists, and impressionistic accounts from several quarters verify it. Indeed, the estimates of the election of 1892 in Virginia by themselves seem to show that effective disfranchisement of about 40 percent of the Republican party occurred, and that, by inference, this was the result of deliberate design by the Democrats.[60]

The results of the gubernatorial election in Virginia in 1893 cast serious doubt upon this theory. The overwhelming defeat of Weaver and Field, in addition to the onset of the worst depression to this time in American history, hastened the tendency of many Virginians to give up on their political system. In June 1893, Republicans and Populists joined forces to nominate Edmund Randolph Cocke, a prominent Virginia farmer, for governor. The Populists spelled out their goals in their platform. They favored a state and national income and a duty on "foreign" (that is, out of state) corporations doing business in Virginia. They demanded expanded support of public education and amelioration of the problems of the "agricultural class." Most important,

they proposed rewriting the state law to insure "honest elections."[61]

Despite fusion with the Republicans, the Populists were crushed in the November elections. Only about one fifth of the eligible Virginia voters voted for the third party in 1893, while nearly one half of them sat out the election. Most of these nonvoters were former Democrats and white. In striking contrast to the previous election, exactly three quarters of those not voting were white (see Tables 3.2, 3.3 and Appendix K). The former Democrats participating in the four elections up to and including the one of 1892 in general preferred not to vote at all rather than to vote Populist.

The most dramatic revelation of these estimates is the breakdown of the two-party system during the elections of 1892 and 1893. While participation in Virginia's political system shrank by half--most of the decline occurring during 1893--it is not unreasonable to infer that many of the new nonvoters were former alliancemen who, finding unacceptable alternatives in the Democratic, Republican, and Populist parties, deserted politics altogether.

CONCLUSION

Since the publication of John Hicks' The Populist Revolt, American historians have portrayed the emergence of the Farmers' Alliance and Populism as a direct response to the economic problems of southern agriculture. The southern farm, to be sure, was in a troublesome and unsure position. Although they worked long hours, farmers were acutely aware of the small return that agriculture offered. As farmers saw it, there was a conspiracy to destroy the fabric of rural life--its economy, culture, and society--and its most obvious manifestation was that the nation's wealth--apparently their wealth--was flowing into the cities. To defeat this conspiracy, farmers realized, required the organization of a modern pressure group.

The Virginia Alliance confronted its own particular problems. The order proposed to unite farmers as a class in a state where their social, ideological, and regional differences were extremely pronounced. From 1887 to the end of 1892, these tensions were submerged only when the order avoided involvement in politics. Until the end of 1889, the order grew haltingly because Virginia's agricultural leadership saw it as another dangerous attempt at third party politics. From early 1890 to early 1892, most of these leaders joined the Alliance, and it led to

nonpolitical activities such as cooperative exchanges, rural newspapers, and social interaction. When the main stimulus to membership, the panacea of the exchange, appeared to have failed, membership dropped and the order became directly involved with politics. The Alliance's participation in legislative and third party politics ultimately destroyed the order in Virginia. Political involvement upset the equipoise between various groups in the order, and most alliancemen refused to vote against the Democracy either in 1892 or 1893.

In many respects, Virginia is a bad example of how the Farmers' Alliance expanded in the South after 1887. Most important, unlike other state alliances the order in Virginia did not have a large following. Farmers in Virginia and the South joined the Alliance for clear reasons. Everywhere agriculture and rural life were in a conspicuous decline, and specific grievances, such as the growth of share tenancy and the overall lack of available credit and banking structure, aggravated this problem. Never quite at ease with modern society, the average southern farmer was uncertain about how to "restore" his Jeffersonian status and still enjoy the benefits of industrialization. Just as he recognized the advantages of railroads and despised them for the changes that they brought, he also preached the virtues of modernizing agriculture and lamented its woeful

effects. If the Alliance offered a quick solution to these problems, it also offered its members recreation, education, the unusual prospect of social interaction, and pride in being a farmer.

The impact of the relationship between politics and the Alliance followed the same, if slightly less exaggerated, pattern in the deep South that it did in Virginia. State alliances that did control southern legislatures were ineffective and politically inept, and the move to Populism severely crippled the order. Democratic alliancemen found it impossible to accept either the Republicans or a third party. Those brethren who did join the Populists forgot the Alliance's emphasis on nonpolitical solutions, and after 1896 they either reunited with the Democracy or, more likely, left politics altogether. In short, exposure to politics revealed the diverse social and regional elements which composed the southern farmer and effectively ended the National Farmers' Alliance and Industrial Union.

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53. Ibid., May 4 and 11, 1892.

54. Ibid., April 20, May 25, June 1, 8, and July 6, 1892.

55. OHAMB, July 9, 1892, Pierson Papers.

56. Letter to the editor, Virginia Sun, May 25, 1892.

57. Ibid.

58. Quoted in Richmond Dispatch, August 25, 1892.

59. Quoted in Sheldon, Populism in the Old Dominion, p. 171.

60. J. Morgan Kousser, The Shaping of Southern Politics: Suffrage Restriction and the Establishment of the One-Party South (New Haven, 1974), p. 238.

61. In Sheldon, Populism in the Old Dominion, pp. 94-96, 172-175.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Virginia's Regions and Patterns of Landholding, 1880-1890

Region	Total Farms	0-500	500-1000	1000-	Tenants	Share
TIDEWATER						
1880 #	38347	25060	1182	302	5917	5886
% of regional total		65%	3%	1%	15%	15%
1890 #	41281	29037	914	254	5497	5579
% of regional total		70%	2%	1%	13%	14%
% change, 1880-1890	+8%	+16%	-23%	-16%	-7%	-5%
SOUTHSIDE						
1880 #	23606	12965	942	227	3216	6256
% of regional total		55%	4%	1%	14%	27%
1890 #	24802	13963	897	209	2550	7183
% of regional total		56%	4%	1%	10%	29%
% change, 1880-1890	+5%	+8%	-5%	-8%	-21%	+15%
VALLEY						
1880 #	13089	10531	495	173	543	1347
% of regional total		81%	4%	1%	4%	10%
1890 #	14117	11219	432	144	670	1652
% of regional total		79%	3%	1%	5%	12%
% change, 1880-1890	+8%	+7%	+13%	-7%	+23%	+23%

Region	Total Farms	0-500	500-1000	1000-	Tenants	Share
NORTHERN PIEDMONT						
1880 #	20997	13349	824	236	2791	3797
1880 %		64%	4%	1%	13%	18%
1890 #	21402	14482	794	178	2271	3677
% of regional total		68%	4%	1%	11%	17%
% change, 1880-1890	+2%	+9%	-4%	-25%	-19%	-3%
SOUTHWEST						
1880 #	22466	15956	906	371	925	4308
% of regional total		71%	4%	2%	4%	19%
1890 #	25283	19056	773	307	972	4175
% of regional total		75%	3%	1%	4%	17%
% change, 1880-1890	+13%	+19%	-15%	-17%	+5%	-3%

Source: United States Department of the Interior, The Tenth Census of Agriculture, 1880 (Washington, D.C., 1883), Table V, pp. 94-97; The Eleventh Census of Agriculture, 1890 (Washington, D.C., 1895), Table V, pp. 190-92.

APPENDIX B: Regional Distribution of Landholding, 1880-1890

Region	Total	0-500	500-1000	1000-	Tenants	Share
TIDEWATER						
1880	32%	32%	27%	23%	44%	27%
1890	33%	33%	24%	23%	46%	25%
VALLEY						
1880	11%	14%	11%	13%	4%	6%
1890	11%	13%	11%	13%	6%	7%
SOUTHSIDE						
1880	20%	17%	22%	17%	24%	29%
1890	20%	16%	25%	19%	21%	32%
PIEDMONT						
1880	18%	17%	19%	18%	21%	18%
1890	17%	17%	21%	16%	19%	17%
SOUTHWEST						
1880	19%	21%	21%	28%	7%	20%
1890	20%	22%	20%	28%	8%	19%

Source: The Tenth and Eleventh Censuses of Agriculture.

APPENDIX C: The Agricultural Work Force in Virginia: Planters and Laborers, 1880-1890

	1880	1890	% Increase
Agricultural Laborers			
Total	132,820	117,692	-11
White		56,298 (48%)	
Black		62,375 (53%)	
Planters, Farmers, and Overseers			
Total	119,623	138,298	+16
White		108,895 (79%)	
Black		29,403 (21%)	

Source: United States Department of the Interior, [The Tenth Census of Population, 1880 (Washington, D.C., 1883), p. 724]; The Eleventh Census of Population, 1890 (Washington, D.C., 1897), p. 618-19.

APPENDIX D: Annual Wages For Agricultural Laborers and Comparable Occupations

Farm Laborers	1870	1880	1890	1900
United States	$199	$140	$167	$175
South Atlantic	$119	$106	$114	$112
Virginia	$112	$102	$114	$125
Common Laborers				
United States	$566	$449	$533	___[a]
South Atlantic	$387	$350	$434	___
Virginia	$369	$365	$413	___
Cotton Textiles				
United States	$298	$244	$302	$280
South Atlantic	$200	$177	$202	$181
Virginia	$132	$157	$188	$228

[a]Data not available for 1900.

Source: Stanley Lebergott, Manpower in Economic Growth: The American Record Since 1800 (New York, 1904), Tables A-23, A-25, A-27, pp. 539, 541, 543.

APPENDIX E: Farming and Other Occupations, 1880-1890

	1880	1890
Total Farmers	252,433	255,990
Iron and Steel	1,254	1,848
General Labor	73,253	____[a]
Miners	1,260	3,926
Government	2,538	1,847
Steamboats	3,197	
Teachers	4,571	7,359
Manufacturers	470	1,230
Total Occupations	447,473	551,839

[a]Data not available in 1890.

Source: The Census of Agriculture, 1880-1890.

APPENDIX F: Factional Cohesion and Disagreement in the 1891-1892 House of Delegates

Issue[a]	Cohesion[g]		Disagreement[h]
	Alliance Dems	Regular Dems	Alliance--Regular Dems
Oysters[b]	68	83	11
Taxation[c]	55	43	17
Columbia Exposition[d]	17	38	25
Agriculture[e]	18	12	1
Debt[f]	59	56	25

[a]"Issues" were determined by those roll calls which exhibited a significant degree of factional dissension. In this case, the cutoff was when less than 90 percent voted similarly on a roll call.

[b]Several bills were submitted to deal with the Tidewater oyster industry which was apparently threatened by depletion. Governor McKinney's proposal, which eventually passed, provided for a licensing fee of one dollar to regulate the industry.

[c]This issue concerned raising or lowering state taxation.

[d]There was considerable disagreement about voting appropriations for a Virginia exhibit to the Columbia Exposition, or World's Fair, which was subsequently held, with Virginia participating, at Chicago in 1893.

[e]Votes on agricultural issues, such as a tax on fertilizers.

[f]This was a vote on a further solution of the debt controversy, which had its roots in 1870's Funder-Readjuster conflict.

[g]The index in this case was the Rice Index. This is calculated by subtracting the percentage of a given group voting yea from the percentage of those voting nay. If there were 100 Democrats voting in a roll call, for example, and 90 voted yea and 10 nay, the Rice Index would equal 80 (or 90 percent minus 10 percent). Other historians who have conducted roll call analyses of other periods of American history have demonstrated high levels in the Rice Index, around 80. For our purposes, anything below 60 should be considered a low level of cohesiveness. The index given is an average of the roll calls.

[h]The Disagreement Index was calculated by subtracting the percentage yeas of one group from the percentage yeas of another group. If 90 percent of one group and 10 percent of another group voted yea on a roll call, then the disagreement index would be at the rather high level of 80. The disagreement index used in these tables is also an average based on the number of roll call votes.

APPENDIX G: Factional Success Scores, 1891-1892 Virginia House of Delegates[a]

Alliance Democrats	.16
Regular Democrats	.37

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[a]The success score is calculated by adding the total number of "correct" and "incorrect" votes of a group, subtracting the latter from the former, and then dividing the difference by the total number of votes. If, for example, a group voted correctly (or with the winning side) 750 times and incorrectly 250 times (or with the losing side), its success score would be 500/1000 or .50. For information on these and other techniques of roll call analysis, see Lee Anderson, Roll Call Analysis (Evanston, Illinois, 1967) and Richard Jensen, Historians' Guide to Statistics (New York, 1970).

APPENDIX H: Regional Cohesion, 1891-1892 Virginia House of Delegates

Region	Oys	Tax	Agric	Debt	RR	Columbia Exp.	Avg[a]
Southside	77	55	18	21	35	13	37
Northern Tidewater	100	100	0	28	61	75	56
Southern Tidewater	97	46	58	58	49	26	56
Northern Piedmont	62	45	34	32	48	34	50
Valley	88	67	28	11	50	34	46
Urban	100	25	14	71	59	89	60

[a]The average rice index, equal to the total of the indices divided by the number of issues (6).

APPENDIX I: Regional Success Scores, 1891-1892

Region	Success Score
Southside	.16
Northern Tidewater	.75
Southern Tidewater	.40
Northern Piedmont	.75
Valley	.43
Urban	.47
Southwest	.52
Mean	.42

APPENDIX J: Regional Alignments, With Indices of Likeness, 1891-1892[a]

Issue	Pro	Moderate	Anti
Oysters	Northern Tidewater Urban (100) Southern Tidewater (98) Valley (94) Southside (88) Piedmont (81)		Southwest
Taxation	Northern Tidewater Southwest (82)		Urban Northern Piedmont (93) Valley (88) Southern Tidewater (86)
Columbia Exposition	Urban Northern Tidewater (93)		Northern Piedmont Southside (99) Southwest (95) Valley (86) Southern Tidewater (86)
Debt	Urban Southern Tidewater (93) Northern Piedmont (93)	Northern Tidewater Valley (93)	Southwest Southside (82)

[a]These regional alignments are based on the indices of likenesses, which measure the similarity with which groups vote together, between Virginia's regions on all 6 issues. The index of likeness, the obverse of the index of disagreement, is calculated by subtracting the index of disagreement from 100. An index of disagreement of 80 would thus mean an index of likeness of 20. In the case above, matrices were constructed of the average index of likeness for each region matched against every other one on all six issues. If there was a strong association between groups, as there was on four issues above, then the groups or alignments were listed and the strength of the association, measured by the index of likeness in parentheses, was recorded. The various "pro," "moderate" and "anti" listings indicate the position of the regional groupings on the issues. For a fuller discussion of this technique, see William A. Link, "Agrarianism, Regionalism, and Late Nineteenth Century Virginia Politics" (Unpublished Seminar Paper, University of Virginia, 1978).

APPENDIX K: The Presidential Election of 1892, Regression Estimates

1892		Democrats	Republicans	Populists	Prohib	Non-Voters
1884	Democrats	76%	18%	4%	1%	0
	Republicans	9	49%	4%	0	46%
	Nonvoters	16%	6%	1%	0	77%
1888	Democrats	84%	10%	5%	2%	0
	Republicans	0	53%	4%	0	43%
	Nonvoters	15%	13%	0	0	72%
1889	Democrats	81%	13%	5%	2%	0
	Republicans	0	56%	4%	0	41%
	Nonvoters	22%	11%	1%	1%	66%

APPENDIX L: The Presidential Election of 1892, Regression Estimates by Race

1892 % 1890[a]	Democrats	Republicans	Populist	Prohib	Nonvoters
Blacks	20%	38%	4%	0	37%
Whites	52%	27%	4%	1%	15%

[a]The independent variables in this case were the percentage of eligible black and white voters according to the 1890 census. See Kousser, "Ecological Regression," passim.

APPENDIX M: The Gubernatorial Election of 1893 in Virginia, Regression Estimates

1893	Democrats	Populists	Prohibitionists	Nonvoters
1881				
Democrats	46%	7%	4%	43%
Readjusters	36%	61%	0	4%
Nonvoters	15%	1%	2%	82%
1885				
Democrats	50%	6%	3%	40%
Republicans	18%	51%	0	31%
Nonvoters	12%	2%	2%	84%
1889				
Democrats	52%	0	4%	44%
Republicans	15%	65%	0	20%
Nonvoters	12%	4%	2%	82%
1892				
Democrats	54%	0	1%	45%
Republicans	13%	59%	0	28%
Populists	23%	77%	0	0
Prohibitionists	0	0	37%	63%
Nonvoters	10%	17%	0	73%

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