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THE EAST TENNESSEE REPUBLICANS AS A MINORITY PARTY, 1870-1896*

By VERTON M. QUEENER

In a previous article,* it was made clear why and how the East Tennessee Republican party became a minority party of the state. In this article, the attitude of this minority party toward state issues and third party movements is the theme. The first consideration is the party's relationship to such state issues as the railroads, state debt, immigration, public education, taxation, and industrialization; and second, the position the party maintained toward such third party movements as the Greenback, the Granger, the Farmers Alliance, and the Populist.

Leadership of the Republican party in East Tennessee from the Civil War to the end of the century was interested in railroads. The relationship of the party to railroads during the Republican ascendancy has often been told and well told.¹ The interest on the part of this group did not cease with the return of the Democrats to power in 1870. This interest was not always political, but the interest often hinged around the possibility of using the railroads to further party plans. It is this phase of the relationship between party and railroads that is dealt with here.

As far back as 1865, Daniel Richardson, an early railroad lobbyist, wrote to the directors of the Knoxville and Kentucky Railroad Company, saying:

It is with profound regret that I announce to you the failure of our Railroad Bill in the Senate. Stanton and Senator Wilson have been the cause of its defeat. . . . I am compelled to say to *you*, and *all* of our people in East Tennessee, that we need not expect *any* legislation . . . as a division of a state, till we can be represented here by our men.²

*This is a continuation of two articles, "The Origin of the Republican Party in East Tennessee," and "A Decade of East Tennessee Republicanism," which appeared in *Publications* Nos. 13 and 14.

¹E. Merton Coulter, *The Cincinnati Southern Railroad and the Struggle for Southern Commerce, 1865-1872* (Chicago, 1922); S. J. Folmsbee, "The Radicals and the Railroads," Philip M. Hamer, *Tennessee A History*, II (New York 1933), 659-73; R. O. Biggs, "The Cincinnati Southern Railway: A Municipal Enterprise," *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications*, No. 7 (1935), 81-102.

²L. C. and John C. Houk MSS. (McClung Collection, Lawson McGhee Library, Knoxville, Tennessee), March 3, 1865.

Congressman Horace Maynard won approval from East Tennesseans partly because he stood for congressional aid to railroads.³

In the late 1860's and early '70's, Cincinnati proposed to build a railroad from that city to some southern terminus. Three Tennessee cities made strong bids for this honor—Knoxville, Chattanooga, and Nashville. Many a delegate trooped to Cincinnati to extol the advantages of his particular city as a terminus for this road. Knoxville sent such railroad officials as Mayor M. D. Bearden, C. M. McGhee, and John H. Crozier. Other cities sent equally well-known delegations. Finally, the choice having narrowed to Knoxville and Chattanooga, the latter won. The Chattanooga committee then set out to get a right of way through Tennessee and had a bill introduced in the General Assembly in 1869 providing that a right of way across the state be granted. Knoxville's representative, John M. Fleming, led the opposition which almost defeated the bill.⁴

While Republican papers of Knoxville like the *Whig, Chronicle* and *Journal* were advocating railroads, immigration, and industry, the Republican leaders were hoping to win elections partly by the use they could make of the railroads. One of these reported to his state political boss as follows: "With money, whiskey, the tariff, the railroads, and Bate as the Democratic nominee, we will have an excellent prospect!"⁵ Another Republican felt the same way about railroads and elections, writing:

Tennessee . . . [will] cast her electoral vote for the Republican ticket, and wheel squarely into line. . . . The whiskey organization will secede [from the Democrats], the astrayed [astranged] colored voters will return, self protection will drive the railroad influence to us, the obnoxious Sunday laws will have its effect and . . . the tariff question . . . swell our ranks. . . .⁶ This same writer felt that much would depend on the candidate for governor and on the platform. The platform, he said, should be so "broad and liberal" that all dissatisfied Democrats could come and stand on it.

Political letters on the railroad *motif* continued for some time between Republican party leaders who were trying to increase the vote of their party. For example, A. M. Hughes again wrote: "The hearty and active support of the railroads alone would give us the state next time. . . ." L. C. Houk, congressman from the second

³Knoxville *Chronicle*, March 1, 1873; *Congressional Globe*, 40 Congress, 3 Session (1868), 426, 914.

⁴Biggs, *op. cit.*, 89-93.

⁵A. M. Hughes, Jr., to L. C. Houk, March 14, 1884, Houk MSS. The Bate mentioned was the Wm. B. Bate, governor for two terms from 1882 to 1886.

⁶J. E. Stacey to Hon. L. C. Houk, April 9, 1884, *ibid.*

⁷A. M. Hughes, Jr., to L. C. Houk, January 19, 1885, *ibid.*

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district, and many of those who wrote to him were planning to use the railroads to further their party aims. A Mr. Watson wrote from Nashville: "It seems to me that the prospect is bright for our success in 1886 . . . we have fifty members of the Legislature. . . . The Railroad interest in the state is with us and, I think, can be relied upon to give us more effective support than in the last canvass."⁸ Some party leaders devised a plan in 1885 to get the support of the railroad interest. "I believe, now," wrote A. G. French, "if we are able to repeal the Railroad commission Act that Bate [the governor] will veto it; then, it will be so near the close of the session that it will fail to repass over his veto. . . ."⁹ The success of such a plan would have embarrassed the Democratic party.

As late as 1892, the Republicans were still thinking of railroads in their relation to elections as well as their relation to transportation. J. W. Baker, the Republican leader of Nashville, wrote:

Everything is getting along harmoniously . . . as far as the Republicans are concerned. The Democrats are completely under the dominance of the railroads. Consequently the[y, the railroads] do not fear any adverse R. R. Legislation. Formerly the R. Rds have been issuing passes to members of the Legislature . . . they are [now] refusing . . . and I can assure you, this has been a great disappointment to some of our Republican friends from East Tennessee.¹⁰

Not all Republicans were blind to the motives which were urging some of the railroad politicians along. One writer strongly hinted at these motives, saying: "The [state] Senator is engaged in a hot fight over his railroad matter. . . . I abandoned the Midlands on this account . . . The truth is, however, that there are many strong and valid reasons to be urged against the proposed large subscription—not the least of which is that a boodle set is manipulating it."¹¹ Many Republicans, however, were interested in railroads for other reasons than passes, influence, and boodle. There were private, as well as political, purposes to be served. Many Republicans were owners, officers, and builders; they felt that each new mile of railroad would be a paying investment and a worthwhile development in the state.

Aside from railroads, there were other state issues on which the Republicans took a stand as a party. One such issue was the state debt. John Randolph Neal says that "the most troublesome legacy Mr. Brownlow left the people of Tennessee was an increase

⁸Watson to L. C. Houk, February 3, 1885, *ibid.*

⁹A. G. French to Hon. L. C. Houk, March 2, 1885, *ibid.*

¹⁰J. W. Baker to Hon. John C. Houk (son and successor to L. C. Houk), January

26, 1892, *ibid.*

¹¹John J. Littleton to Hon. L. C. Houk, September 7, 1887, *ibid.*

in the state debt. . . ."¹² The debt-settlement question was one of the chief issues in the state for the thirteen years between 1870 and 1883. There are three points to remember about the debt: "the debt was large; the Democrats attributed it to the financial policies of the Republicans in Reconstruction times; and the bulk of it had been incurred for the benefit of railroads."¹³ In addition to the size of the debt and the poverty of Tennessee due to the war, there was, of course, the panic of 1873, the effects of which lasted for some years. The people of Tennessee, especially in the middle and western sections, were hard hit because of the scarcity of money in circulation.¹⁴

The people of the state were divided into three groups according to their way of thinking on the question of the debt settlement. One group "desired to see the state's credit preserved by paying the bonds in full." A second group "conscientiously believed that the state . . . would be unable to meet its just obligations." A third faction was for "outright repudiation." This third group made its stand on the grounds that the bonds had been issued in violation of the law laid down by the Internal Improvements Act of 1852, and that the Brownlow administration, which issued the bonds, did not represent the state, but was a revolutionary government by usurpation.¹⁵

The majority of Republicans were in the first group, for three reasons. First, they had created the major portion of the debt and, hence, felt some responsibility for it. Second, East Tennessee farmer folk are scrupulously honest, and politically Republican.¹⁶ To catch and hold these East Tennessee voters the party had to make "honesty the best policy." And finally, the Republican party nationally as a means of punishing further the southern states was throughout the reconstruction period writing a debt-payment plank in each national platform. The Republicans of Tennessee, in this situation as in regard to the Civil Rights Bill, stood with the party against state interest. Much of the debt had been an outright fraud on the people of the state. The reconstruction administration which had increased the debt so much was in no correct sense a government by a majority of the people of the state. Almost any sovereign state would have repudiated all or a great part of such a debt. Tennessee

¹²John Randolph Neal, *Disunion and Restoration in Tennessee* (New York, 1899), 45.

¹³Daniel M. Robison, *Bob Taylor and the Argarian Revolt in Tennessee* (Chapel Hill, 1935), 20.

¹⁴*Cong. Globe*, 43 Cong., 1 Sess. (1882), 777. The conditions in Tennessee were described by Senator Brownlow in a speech before the United States Senate.

¹⁵Neal, *op. cit.*, 48.

¹⁶"An American Letter—Knoxville," *Fortune*, August 10, 1939.

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compromised, but the road to a compromise was long and arduous.

By 1873 the debt had been reduced by almost one third—that is, to about thirty and a half million dollars. This reduction was brought about by solvent railroads taking advantage of two acts passed in 1868 and 1870. These acts provided that railroads owing the state might discharge such indebtedness or any part of it by paying the treasury, bonds of the state.¹⁷ Railroads that were able took full advantage of this opportunity because the state bonds were greatly depressed and could be bought on the market for a fraction of a dollar and turned in at par value. Then, too, some railroads were sold under the hammer and the proceeds turned over to the state.¹⁸ Finally, in 1883, an act was passed settling the troublesome question. By this act, the state "debt proper,"¹⁹ plus accumulated interest, was to be funded at par, the interest rate to be five per cent and five and one-quarter per cent. The remainder of the debt was to be funded at fifty cents on the dollar, with interest at three per cent. Thus the state debt was reduced to approximately \$15,750,000.²⁰

In emphasizing the stand of the Republican party on the question of the debt, one should not overlook the fact that many Democrats, including most of the leaders, were for paying the total debt. Others in the party were for a compromise payment, while a fairly large group of Democrats were for repudiating the bulk of the debt. The Republicans throughout the state were divided to a less extent, but along the same lines. The leaders of the party, East Tennesseans, were for paying the debt in full.²¹

The part played by the Republican party in the settlement was largely limited to platform pledges to uphold the "honor and credit of the United States and the state," in all the state campaigns from 1870 to 1882.²² The party won the governorship in 1880, but in spite of this it had almost no influence in settling the state debt. It denounced any proposal short of full payment as repudiation, and denounced repudiation as a crime against the state and nation. In this instance the Tennessee party had the backing of the national Republican party platforms of 1872, 1876, and 1880. But each

¹⁷*Acts of Tenn.*, 37 General Assembly, 1 Session, 1871, pp. 30-31. The companies had been largely responsible for the act's being passed. The railroad lobby brought great pressure to bear to keep the words "legal bonds" out of the state laws. See *Senate Journal*, 41 General Assembly, 1 Session, Appendix, 185-86.

¹⁸P. M. Hamer, *Tennessee A History*, II (New York, 1933), 675-92.

¹⁹This included debts contracted before the war, for such things as the Capitol, the Hermitage, and certain railroads, and amounted in 1883 to \$2,118,000.

²⁰Hamer, *op. cit.*, II, 692.

²¹*Knoxville Tribune*, January 3, 1878.

²²*Nashville Republican Banner*, September 23, 1870. See also *Appleton's Annual Cyclopaedia*, 1870-1882.

state campaign turned on something other than the state debt. In 1872 all attention went to a three-way congressional campaign between Horace Maynard (Republican) and B. F. Cheatham and Andrew Johnson (Democrats). The campaign turned on the relative merits of being a Radical, a Bourbon, or a Commoner. The Radical won.

In 1874 it was the Civil Rights Bill. In 1876 the Republican party was still suffering from the defeat on the Civil Rights Bill and did not formally nominate a candidate for governor. In 1878 the Republicans were handicapped by divisions, apathy, blunders, carpet-baggerism, and yellow fever. The Republican convention nominated Emerson Etheridge without getting his ideas on the debt issue or anything else. Etheridge refused to run.²³ Finally, Doctor E.M. Wight of Chattanooga was given the nomination. He was a native of Maine, came to Chattanooga as a soldier in the Federal army, had been mustered out in Chattanooga in 1866, and during the years following had practiced medicine there. On the side he had interested himself in public sanitation and welfare, and because of these interests had dabbled in local politics.²⁴ The *Chronicle* was never enthusiastic about Wight. Democratic papers forgot about Wight's worthy record in Chattanooga, his good qualities, and emphasized his being from Maine, his arrival with the Federal army, and his decision to stay in the South because of "revenue only." Before the campaign was over, an epidemic of yellow fever hit Chattanooga. Dr. Wight gave up the canvass to administer to the sick.²⁵ The outcome was an overwhelming victory for the Democratic candidate, Albert S. Marks, who personally stood for "scaling the debt" and whose platform proposed to "submit . . . to the people for their ratification or rejection of any adjustment of the State debt which may be made by the Legislature. . . ."²⁶

For the campaign of 1880, the Republicans nominated Alvin Hawkins for governor. They adopted a platform in keeping with former ones—pledging the payment of the state debt.²⁷ The Democrats nominated John V. Wright, a state credit man; whereupon, one hundred and fifty delegates walked out of the Democratic convention. In a meeting of their own, they nominated S. F. Wilson,

²³Nashville *Republican Banner*, August 24, 1878; Knoxville *Tribune*, August 24, 1878.

²⁴Knoxville *Chronicle*, September 17, 1878.

²⁵*Ibid.*, October 10, 1887.

²⁶Appleton's *Annual Cyclopaedia and Register of Important Events of the Year*, 1878 (New York), 783; Charles A. Miller, *The Official and Political Manual of the State of Tennessee* (Nashville, 1890), 170.

²⁷Knoxville *Chronicle*, May 8, 1880.

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who opposed paying that part of the state debt "contracted fraudu-
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In the campaign the *Nashville American*, probably the most
influential paper in the state, supported John V. Wright ardently,
and advocated the payment of the debt. This paper urged Wilson
to withdraw, as he was obviously the weaker candidate, and thereby
prevent the sure election of Hawkins.²⁹ Wilson did not withdraw,
and in spite of all that the Democratic papers could say about Haw-
kins and his concurrence in a supreme court decision which upheld
the Radical franchise law, Hawkins was elected. Now that the
election was over, the *Chronicle* wisely cautioned the Republicans
about their great responsibilities. Especially it cautioned them
about the responsibility of settling the state debt. This paper felt
that some fair compromise ought to be reached, say fifty cents on
the dollar and six per cent interest.³⁰ The *Chronicle* had adopted
the Democratic proposal!

The Republican party was in a position to use wise advice,
because it had campaigned for several years on the debt issue; now
it could attempt to settle the grave question. The first session
of the legislature passed an act, "To settle the state debt at one
hundred cents on the dollar and three per cent interest, and making
bond coupons receivable for taxes." Because of the last clause,
the act was declared unconstitutional.³¹ This decision was handed
down near the end of the Hawkins administration. The legislature
was hurriedly called into special session and rushed through an act
providing for the funding of the state debt at sixty cents on the
dollar with a graduated interest rate from two to six per cent. This
act put the Republicans very near the position of the main wing
of the Democratic party which stood for scaling the debt.

The campaign of 1882 was on, and the issue was the state debt
as usual.³² The candidates were Hawkins and William B. Bate.³³
Bate won by a vote of 111,621 to 90,860 for Hawkins.³⁴ In the
first session of Bate's legislature, an act was passed providing that:

On the grounds of public policy they [the people] will pay in full the
bonds held by Mrs. James K. Polk, and all bonds held by educational,
literary, and charitable institutions in this State; that they will pay in dis-
charge of their just obligation, what is known to them as the State debt

²⁸*Ibid.*, August 18, 1880.

²⁹*Nashville American*, October 31, 1880.

³⁰*Knoxville Chronicle*, November 25, 1880.

³¹Miller, *op. cit.*, 58; *Lynn and Others vs. Polk*, 8 Lea (Tennessee), 122 ff.

³²Miller, *op. cit.*, 59.

³³There was one other Democrat, J. H. Fussell, running on a so-called "Blue Sky"
ticket, which stood for repudiation.

³⁴Election Returns, Secretary of State's Office, Nashville.

proper, in full less war interest, and that in compromise of the remainder of the debt . . . , they will pay one half of the principal and accrued interest by issuing therefor bonds of the State bearing interest at the rate of three per cent per annum.³⁵

This act settled the troublesome state debt question, but for two or three campaigns the Republicans continued to "deplore and view with alarm."³⁶

Another topic which the Republicans almost lifted to a political issue was immigration. Tennesseans and more especially East Tennesseans throughout the period since the Civil War have wanted immigrants. Shortly after the war, the bid for immigrants was official on the part of the state. When "Parson" Brownlow returned to Tennessee in 1863, he began advocating immigration. He seemed to agree with the contention of some that the war left East Tennessee with a depleted population and that it should be replenished by loyal northerners.³⁷ Brownlow wanted northern immigrants for many reasons, especially because they would vote the Radical ticket. Brownlow felt that Tennessee offered inducement to both capital and labor, but he was far more interested in capital. An "increase in capital would, if taxes were increased, help to pay the state debt." It was during his régime that bureaus were incorporated and state aid given them to bring in immigrants. A commissioner was appointed to promote the work. The commissioner, Reverend Hermann Bokum, wrote a book and did other things to attract immigrants to the state, especially to East Tennessee.³⁸ These promoters contended that East Tennessee offered all the "advantages of choice and monopoly of a *New State*." They were interested, too, in industry of any sort far more than they were interested in agriculture.³⁹

Always the question of immigration had a political slant to it. When Grant became president, Brownlow said his election "means peace; it means that carpetbaggers are not to be molested in Tennessee; that capital, coming to us from abroad, whether of brains, or hands, or money, is not to be spurned, proscribed, and persecuted, because it comes from north of a given line."⁴⁰ On another occasion, he said: "We are not afraid of the politics of all the immigrants who will come to Tennessee. They are neither

³⁵*Acts of Tenn.*, 43 General Assembly, 1883, pp. 76-84.

³⁶Landis to L. C. Houk, March 14, 1884; N. A. Patterson to L. C. Houk, July 26, 1884, Houk MSS.

³⁷W. B. Hesseltine, "Tennessee's Invitation to Carpet-Baggers," *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications*, No. 4 (1932), 102-03.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 106-09.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 114.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 113, quoting an unnamed paper.

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such fools nor so corrupt as to cast their fortunes with the restless, unhappy party which calls itself Conservative, or Democratic. We say let them come. . . ."⁴¹

When Tennesseans gave immigrants surly treatment, they found themselves in conflict with Brownlow, who advocated that adjustments be made to suit newcomers. "Carpetbaggers who don't like the situation, have the privilege of staying where they are, and of making this situation as nearly what they would have it as they can. This is their right . . . [and] if old residents don't like the situation, they have the right to turn carpetbagger themselves."⁴² This controversy, which began with the advocacy of immigration at the close of the war, lasted on to the end of the century. From time to time the *Journal*, after it came into existence in Knoxville, carried extensive articles about East Tennessee and its attractiveness.⁴³ These articles were designed to attract primarily capital rather than labor. During the "coal miner's war" in the early nineties, the *Journal* preached law and order and the protection of property. It stood for making Tennessee and the South a safe place for investment and it proposed to show the world that "we are not afraid to enforce law and maintain order."⁴⁴

The desire for immigrants on the part of the Republicans was so strong that it overshadowed other and more important issues. For example, throughout the period the Republican party stood for improved public schools, but often this stand for better education was not advocated as an end in itself, but as a device to bring immigrants.

The question of improved education might have been of great importance throughout the period had it been treated seriously. From 1866 to the end of the century, Republicans supported better public education.⁴⁵ They were not alone in this, for the platforms of both parties contained planks calling for some kind of public school system or for an improved system. In 1870 the Republican party advocated "the establishment of free schools in Tennessee"

⁴¹Knoxville *Whig*, January 6, 1869.

⁴²*Ibid.*, February 17, 1869. The supposed quotation used by the *Whig* without naming the paper was possibly an awkward way of beginning a defense of carpetbag immigrants.

⁴³Knoxville *Journal*, September 3, 1886, and at various times thereafter.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, July 14, 1894 and later issues, for the month of July.

⁴⁵Joshua W. Caldwell, *Constitutional History of Tennessee* (Cincinnati, 1907), 292. Caldwell calls the school law passed by the Radicals in 1867 "perhaps the best single act that has been approved on the statute books . . ." But more recent writers call the Act of 1873 the "parent act" of Tennessee's public school system. See David H. Briggs, "Influence of Reconstruction on Education in Tennessee" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of North Carolina, 1924), p. 84; and Robert H. White, *Tennessee, its Growth and Progress* (Nashville, 1936), 236. See also *Acts of Tennessee*, 38 General Assembly, 1873, pp. 39-51.

because this would be "the best means of bringing in new residents." They also condemned private schools and claimed "a few of the rich men want to retain these advantages for their sons, and therefore they oppose free public schools."⁴⁶ In 1872 the party stood for a "liberal and judicious system of public schools."⁴⁷ Four years later the party simply "opposed the interference with public schools by any sect or denomination. . . ."⁴⁸ In 1878 the Republicans wrote quite an elaborate plank into their platform:

We favor a liberal system of public schools, to be supported by general state taxation, equal to the education of all children of the state, believing it an absolute necessity to the perpetuity of republican institutions. Intelligence and good government under a truly democratic form of government must go hand in hand, therefore we favor perfecting and perpetuating the common-school system on a broad and liberal basis, that a government of the people, by the people, and for the people shall not perish from the earth.⁴⁹

Two years later the Republicans renewed this pledge because they believed that "schoolhouses are cheaper than courthouses, and that intelligence is the mother of morality and liberty."⁵⁰

The Republicans contended for the Blair Educational Bill in the 1880's, but forgot to mention education in their platform in 1886, when the issue might have amounted to something.⁵¹ Not only did the party advocate schools in its platforms, but the party presses generally stood for better schools. They were, of course, far more articulate than the platforms. In 1873 the *Chronicle* listed as the first need of the state a good school law. "Woe be unto the man or the party that goes on record in opposition to such a necessity,"⁵² it declared. By 1888 the *Journal* was contending that the Republican party endorsed the Blair Bill because "knowledge, virtue, education, and temperance were the corner stones of government."⁵³

Neither the Republican platform nor the party leaders proposed much in the way of educational innovations. However, two of the leaders deserve at least a word of comment. They are

⁴⁶Knoxville *Chronicle*, December 2, 1870.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, September 7, 1872.

⁴⁸*Annual Cyclopaedia*, 1876, p. 744.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 1878, p. 783.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 1880, p. 678.

⁵¹Robison, *op. cit.*, 59-60. The Blair Bill proposed to "extend and vitalize" the common school system of the country by distributing among the states, on the basis of illiteracy, the sum total of \$120,000,000 in annual instalments covering a period of ten years." The bill was introduced in the U. S. Senate three times in the course of a few years but never passed the lower house. See *Dictionary of American Biography*, II, 335.

⁵²Knoxville *Whig*, January 6, 1869; Knoxville *Chronicle*, February 22, 1873; Knoxville *Journal*, throughout October, 1888.

⁵³*Ibid.*, September 1, 1888.

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Judge O. P. Temple and Horace Maynard. As early as 1873, a Farmer's Convention in Knoxville with Judge Temple presiding originated the proposal that agriculture be introduced as a subject in the public schools.⁵⁴ Horace Maynard was for years a trustee of the University at Knoxville. Among the last acts of his life were attendance at some committee meetings on the business of the University.⁵⁵

Most of the Republicans of East Tennessee as well as their Democratic contemporaries and the general population of the state sadly lacked education. For example, in L. C. Houk's long correspondence with community, county, and state Republican leaders, there is ample proof that he was almost totally uneducated. Yet his letters were classics in composition and grammatical construction compared to some he received. The following, typical not of the best nor the worst, may serve as an example of numerous letters in the Houk manuscripts: "our districts stand Claiborne Granger Union Campbell Anderson Knox Severe [Sevier] Blont [Blount] Rone [Roane] Morgan Scott I had a turable fight to hold Rone Morgan & Scott there were certain gentlemen that wanted to leave Monroe & Loudon [Loudon] on the 2 & take Rone Morgan & Scott to the 3rd—but they did not succeed."⁵⁶

The Republicans, unfortunately for the schools, were always on weak ground in contending for more adequate education, because Democratic papers invariably taunted them with the dissipation of the school fund. A typical passage which the Republicans could not successfully refute was as follows: "When Governor Harris was broken in fortune, apparently bereft of all political hope, an exile from his state, he returned to Tennessee the school fund. . . . Many then considered public money as fair game, but he was honest. When that school fund got into the hand of the Republicans . . . They stole it. Such was Republican care for the Schools!"⁵⁷ Such passages were not the whole truth, but they contained enough truth to make them difficult to answer. Even today there might be some slight controversy as to just how some two hundred thousand dollars was saved for the state school fund throughout the war.⁵⁸ So many

⁵⁴Knoxville *Press and Herald*, May 28, 1873.

⁵⁵O. P. Temple, *Notable Men of Tennessee* (New York, 1912), sketch of Horace Maynard.

⁵⁶J. W. Agee to L. C. Houk, April 15, 1882, Houk MSS. Agee was a Republican state representative from the second district.

⁵⁷Nashville *Daily American*, October 17, 1880.

⁵⁸White, *op. cit.*, 250-51, claims that he told the "whole story" of the "school fund" and the truth about it. He did as far as he went. White stops when he shows that Governor Harris did not steal the fund; that it was used for war purposes; that war bonds were substituted for the cash; and that at the end of the war the bonds were worthless. This is all correct. But among the assets of the bank which

of the leading Republicans were accused of being tarred with the "sacred fund" stick that for many years it was hard to find a group of leaders sufficiently large to carry on a campaign.⁵⁹ Some writers on education in the state point out that if the Republicans as a group had been really interested in better schools as an end in themselves and for better education, they could have had, within reasonable bounds, what they wanted in East Tennessee. They were in complete charge of the East Tennessee school districts and counties. But East Tennessee schools have been far from model schools throughout their history. Radical Republican rule was harmful to the "ordered development of public schools in East Tennessee" as well as the state as a whole.⁶⁰

On taxation the two parties sometimes agreed, but not always. The Republicans were definitely opposed to a state poll tax. The Constitution calls for the payment of any poll taxes assessed, as a prerequisite to voting.⁶¹ The Republicans have consistently opposed this provision, and they have urged that, if a poll tax is mandatory, it be set as low as possible. Although this tax was designed to keep as many Negroes as possible from voting, it also keeps many whites from voting. The difficulty is not simply the two dollars. There is a time element involved. The law provides that the tax shall be paid sixty days before any general election in which the voter wants to vote. Thus, non-property owners both white and black almost never remember to pay their poll tax unless some special issue or some live candidate is making the election interesting a considerable time before election day.⁶²

On the poll tax question, which affected the party directly, the Republicans sometimes became eloquent. In 1890 they declared that the poll tax was unjust because a poor man had to pay it before he could vote, but that nothing was said to the rich man about his property tax, before he voted.⁶³ In 1894 they wanted the poll tax law repealed because "every citizen should carry his sovereignty under his hat and not in his pocketbook."⁶⁴ In 1872 the Republicans combined with the Johnson Democrats to get con-

held the school fund were found assets which when salvaged from a bank in Augusta, Georgia, amounted to more than \$200,000.00. This was placed in a school fund during the Brownlow regime and then "stolen" or lost by actors in the regime in connivance possibly with some bankers in Memphis. See *Senate Journal*, 1870-71, Appendix, 291-326.

⁵⁹Nashville *Banner*, February 3, 1869.

⁶⁰Briggs, *op. cit.*, 85 ff.; White, *op. cit.*, chapters on public school system.

⁶¹*Journal of the Constitutional Convention*, 1870, p. 184; *State Constitution*, Article IV, Section 1.

⁶²Louisville *Courier-Journal*, April 9, 1939.

⁶³*Annual Cyclopaedia*, 1888, pp. 763-64, and 1890, p. 796.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 1894, p. 739.

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trol of the legislature and had only this one chance to do something about the poll tax in a long period of opposition. Johnson's party was called the "poor man's party." There was enough truth in this name to make the members willing to join the Republicans in repealing the law requiring a poll tax receipt as a qualification for voting.⁶⁵ The poll tax law was re-enacted by the next legislature.

Republicans were the first to advocate a household exemption as a means of reducing and equalizing taxation. In 1888 they urged that an exemption of \$1,000 be permitted for each head of a house, also that all property be assessed by a more just system. They urged both these policies again in 1890.⁶⁶ From time to time Republicans opposed the fee system by which some county officials made excessive incomes. The party, when making arguments against this system, contended that all fees, above reasonable minimum, should be turned into the county treasury.⁶⁷ The best plank in opposition to the fee system appeared in the platform of 1896.⁶⁸ Republicans, being the "outs," were willing to promise reforms in taxation, thinking this sort of platform would increase votes.

Republicans of East Tennessee sometimes tried to make the tariff an issue in the state.⁶⁹ They showed no originality on this subject, but merely fell in line with the national party's platform on the question. In the state, this was a sectional question because Middle and West Tennessee were not manufacturing districts and did not have ambitions to become manufacturing districts. East Tennessee, however, purported to be a manufacturing section and has always had ambitions to expand this interest. This being the case, they could stand for tariff and consider it a benefit, while to the rest of the state it might be actually harmful. In 1886 Republicans wrote quite a plank advocating a protective tariff, saying: "We declare it to be a high moral and political duty of our government to protect the educated laboring-man of free America from all manner of hurtful competition with the half-paid, half-fed, half-clothed, and half-educated laborers of despotic Europe. . . ."⁷⁰ Two years later, William Rule wrote Houk: "My plan would be to make the cam-

⁶⁵*Acts of Tennessee*, 38 General Assembly, 1873, p. 3. In East Tennessee counties and municipalities where Republicans are in complete control local poll taxes are maintained as a prerequisite for voting. The state poll tax law was repealed in February, 1943 largely by the efforts of the League of Women Voters and the leadership of Governor Prentice Cooper, but on July 3 the repeal law was declared unconstitutional by the state Supreme Court.

⁶⁶*Annual Cyclopaedia*, 1896, p. 728.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 1879, p. 783.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 1896, p. 728.

⁶⁹William Rule to Hon L. C. Houk, July 2, 1888, Houk MSS.

⁷⁰*Annual Cyclopaedia*, 1886, p. 812.

paign almost solely in favor of a protective tariff . . . eschewing . . . the bloody shirt business. In Eastern Tennessee, we want to make it lively and get out the fullest possible vote, which would mean a Republican majority, east of the mountains of at least twenty thousand."⁷¹ On the subject of taxation, as on others, the Republicans frequently wrote their platforms with an eye on the opposition. One of Houk's correspondents showed this when he wrote: "The main question this fall will be finances. The Democracy will use that argument freely and if we are not in condition to do likewise we are gone."⁷²

East Tennesseans of both political faiths wanted, and still want, more industries. Industrialization was not exactly a political issue between the parties, but the question was agitated so much that to ignore it would be slighting one of the points on which the Republican editors spent much time. The *Chronicle* throughout the 1870's carried many articles on the industrial development of East Tennessee. The editor was especially enthusiastic over the iron industry in Roane and Greene counties. He always drew political morals in writing about the industries and was therefore careful to point out that they were made possible by a protective tariff.⁷³

Of all the natural resources which were thought to be inducements to industry the water resources of the Tennessee River and contributing streams occupying the Appalachian Valley of East Tennessee were the greatest. But no local Republican ever dreamed of any comprehensive plan of development. The ambition of Republicans seems to have been that of securing more and more money to develop river navigation. But all the money appropriated for this purpose was not sufficient to make a beginning in solving the great problem of navigation on the Tennessee River.⁷⁴ As irony would have it, it remained for a Republican outside of the Tennessee Valley to dream the dream and for a Democratic administration at Washington to launch and complete a program of development on the Tennessee River and its tributaries. Often the local opposition to this development was from East Tennessee Republicans.⁷⁵

⁷¹William Rule to Hon. L. C. Houk, July 2, 1888, Houk MSS.

⁷²S. H. Haynes to L. C. Houk, February 15, 1886, *ibid.*

⁷³Knoxville *Chronicle*, November 1, 1871, ff. Following the expiration of the *Chronicle*, the Knoxville *Journal* kept up the clamor for more and more industries; see issues for the first half of 1887, and specifically August 14, 1887.

⁷⁴Knoxville *Chronicle*, March 1, 1873.

⁷⁵John T. Moutoux (copyrighted article), Knoxville *News-Sentinel*, February 12, 1939. East Tennessee Republicans in their Lincoln Day celebrations have often invited as their speakers men noted for their opposition to the Tennessee Valley Authority.

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The Republicans owed their interest in industry to two factors. The first factor was location and resources; the second was the old Whig tradition. Many men who were Republicans after the war had formerly been Whigs; and in East Tennessee, Whigs were likely to be industrialists, even if on a small scale, rather than operators of large plantations as in the other sections of the state.⁷⁶

There were two outstanding industrialists who not only helped to develop the section as the party wished, but dabbled in politics. There were H. Clay Evans and John T. Wilder. Both men lived in Chattanooga. Evans was a native of Pennsylvania who became an iron manufacturer of Roane and Hamilton counties. He made some money and was always interested in politics. He was prominent in all local movements for civic betterment in Chattanooga, serving several terms as a member of the school board. He had a reputation as being a public spirited man as well as an "accumulator of dollars." He was an able speaker and not only canvassed in Tennessee but often went into northern states to speak for the Republican party. He was a member of the lower house of Congress and for a while enjoyed the control of patronage in Tennessee during the Harrison administration. Evans was obnoxious to Tennessee Democrats because he supported the "Force Bill" in 1890. One Democrat paper wrote, "Whatever good qualities and accomplishments he may have, he supports the Force Bill and that puts him in his class."⁷⁷

General Wilder, like Evans, was primarily interested in iron manufacturing. He established the Roane Iron Company in Roane County in 1867. Later Wilder established the Roane Rolling Mills of Chattanooga. He invented the turbine wheel which he manufactured in Chattanooga. Wilder traveled in Europe to study manufacturing developments and was widely recognized and acknowledged by Tennesseans as a leading industrialist.⁷⁸ In 1876 the Republicans persuaded him to stand for Congress from the Chattanooga district. He was defeated by a small majority.⁷⁹ Although Wilder, like Evans, came near leading the Republicans to success, he, like Evans after him, helped to show that the Repub-

⁷⁶Robison, *op. cit.*, 21.

⁷⁷Knoxville *Tribune*, September 1, 1892; John Trotwood Moore, *Tennessee, the Volunteer State, 1760-1923* (Nashville, 1923), 581-82. The "Force Bill," introduced by Congressman Henry Cabot Lodge in June, 1890, proposed to establish federal jurisdiction over all polling places at national elections. The bill was admittedly aimed at southern states where allegedly the Negro was kept from the polls. In Massachusetts the bill reacted in Lodge's favor supposedly and aided him in being re-elected in 1890 by an "increased majority." See *Dictionary of American Biography*, XI, 347; Knoxville *Journal and Tribune*, September 5, 1900.

⁷⁸S. C. Williams, *General John T. Wilder* (Bloomington, 1936), 43, *et passim*.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 48.

lican party was a minority party and could rarely win an election in the state regardless of the quality of leadership.

One might think that Republican East Tennessee, regularly outvoted in state elections, and certainly unable to affect national elections, would be greatly discouraged after numerous defeats at the polls and that such a minority party would be easily broken up, but such was not the case. Through the thirty year period from 1870, when the two-party system began after the war, on to the end of the century, the East Tennessee Republicans were persistently cohesive. The following brief table shows that East Tennessee

| | 1884 | | 1888 | | 1890 | |
|------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | Rep. | Dem. | Rep. | Dem. | Rep. | Dem. |
| East Tenn. | 49,001 | 30,813 | 60,275 | 35,026 | 39,383 | 26,828 |
| Mid. Tenn. | 38,083 | 62,397 | 44,842 | 72,499 | 22,126 | 53,297 |
| West Tenn. | 36,076 | 40,060 | 33,871 | 51,254 | 14,572 | 33,424 |

was consistently Republican by a considerable majority, while the other two sections of the state were as consistently Democratic.⁸⁰ Other years might be added to the table and the results would change for only four of the seventeen elections. In two of these four elections the Democrats carried East Tennessee because of the race issue, and in the third and fourth elections, 1880 and 1894, the Republicans carried the state. But the results of the close election of 1894 did not accrue to the Republican party, as will be seen later.

Third parties, such as the Grange, Greenback, Agricultural Wheel, Farmers Alliance, and Populist—all, at one time or another, made inroads into political parties of the state. But never did a single third party movement succeed in even threatening to break the Republican hold in the eastern end of the state.

The oldest of all the post-war movements with which the Republicans of East Tennessee or of the state might have had some dealings was the Grange. Strangely enough, this organization, which was primarily social and economic instead of political, gave its name unofficially to several agrarian political movements.⁸¹ This movement, regarded as non-political, gained considerable strength in the state and some strength in East Tennessee in the 1870's. The state at one time boasted over a thousand Granges.⁸² East Tennesseans insisted that the movement was strictly non-political. They even contended that later agrarian movements were non-political. They took this attitude, it seems, to keep from

⁸⁰Figures for the table are found in Miller, *op. cit.*, 257-59 and 278-80.

⁸¹Solon J. Buck, *The Agrarian Crusade* (New Haven, 1921), 1-11.

⁸²Robison, *op. cit.*, 135.

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supporting any but the regular Republican nominees. One original Granger of Anderson County wrote: "[The movement] is under no obligation to any church or political party." There is no proof "that a Republican is under obligation to support [any Democrat]. . . . There is no politics in the order and we all understand it."⁸³

East Tennessee Republican party organs had no inclination to think of the Grange as a political substitute for the Republican party. As one reads the Republican party organs from week to week, it is rather astonishing to notice the lack of any mention of the Grange, while almost every county, if not every county, in East Tennessee had Grange organizations. Some of them were strong organizations.⁸⁴ When the Grange was given notice at all it was usually the merest mention. For instance, one Knoxville paper noted that the Grange had adopted a new constitution, and that their meeting was orderly. They were a "temperance group," the paper reported.⁸⁵

Individual Republican correspondents writing to the *Chronicle* did, now and then, give the idea that people throughout the counties were all members of the Grange and that they were on the verge of becoming active politically. A Jonesboro writer, signing himself as the "Second District Ranger," reported to the *Chronicle*:

The first thing of importance is the farmer's movement. They exhibit a strong disposition in this section to take into their own hands, what they consider the reigns of government, to the entire exclusion of all other classes. This move is considered by some of our best men (farmers of course) the death knell of the Grange organization in East Tennessee, which is composed exclusively of farmers. Such a move by the Grangers of East Tennessee, who are so few in number, considering the voting population in the counties where they are the strongest, would be political suicide.⁸⁶

This writer was simply saying that even if the farmers did see fit to turn the Grange into a political party, with the idea, of course, of voting some ticket other than the Republican, he and his kind (not farmers) would stand by the Republican party, and the Grangers by drawing away would be committing political suicide.

The Greenback movement, unlike the Grange, was from the start political in nature. In five different campaigns there was a Greenback candidate in the field, but never did the party become strong enough to affect the results of the elections.⁸⁷ The Green-

⁸³W. M. Clark to L. C. Houk, August 16, 1890, Houk MSS. This writer referred to the Populist movement.

⁸⁴Knoxville *Chronicle*, May 23, and June 17, and *passim.*, 1874.

⁸⁵Knoxville *Press and Herald*, February 24, 1874.

⁸⁶Knoxville *Chronicle*, May 23, 1874.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*; Robison, *op. cit.*, 136-43.

backers nominated their candidate for governor in 1874.⁸⁸ No Greenbacker was nominated in 1876, but for the next four elections a nominee was presented. W. G. Brownlow blessed their movement by saying, "Wise and moderate expansion, to bring the volume of our currency to the measure of our needs, is the talisman of safety, peace, and unhindered development."⁸⁹ But Brownlow's Republican neighbors did not follow him in his brief excursion into the Greenback field in 1874. Even he, himself, vacillated in this policy.

In the 1878 campaign, the *Chronicle*—no longer influenced by Brownlow, for he had been removed by death—stood firmly against the Greenbackers, criticizing them on various points. It pointed out that all prices, those of commodities as well as wages, had gone down since 1873 and therefore there was no need for greenbacks.⁹⁰ It further contended that the Greenbackers and Communists were closely related and all "stemmed from the Democratic party." By September the paper was boasting that it had given attention to all three platforms and had discussed them carefully. With reference to the Greenback party and its candidate it concluded that, "so far as the election of the governor is concerned, it has nothing to do with Greenbacks or Anti-Greenbacks. This is a question with which a governor has nothing whatever to do. . . ." ⁹¹ When the votes had been counted in November and the Greenback party had received only 15,155 votes, East Tennessee Republicans felt, if their paper can be trusted, that the "most interesting feature of Tuesday's results is the stand taken by the people on the money question. They have put a quietus to the irredeemable paper scheme."⁹²

The story for 1880 and 1882 is similar to the one of 1878. The Republicans were by 1880 definitely committed to a policy of resumption and contraction, and were fast-bound to a program of saving the state credit. The Greenback party attracted less and less attention as the year 1880 went by. The leading Republican paper of East Tennessee finally, in the excitement of electing a candidate in the state, as well as filling each issue full of national campaign material, lost sight of the Greenbackers completely. In the campaign of 1882, the *Chronicle* lent its support in an attempt to bring about the re-election of Hawkins.

The columns of the *Chronicle* may show how the Republicans of East Tennessee felt toward the Greenbackers while a few figures

⁸⁸Election Returns, Secretary of State's Office, Nashville.

⁸⁹*Cong. Record*, 43 Cong., 1 Sess., 1873, pp. 776-77.

⁹⁰*Knoxville Chronicle*, August 23, 1878.

⁹¹*Ibid.*, September 3, 1878.

⁹²*Ibid.*, November 7, 1878.

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from the election returns will show even clearer how they voted. In 1874 B. F. D. Brooks, Greenbacker, received 222 votes in the state and in Republican East Tennessee 35 votes. Four years later W. M. Edwards made his first campaign as a Greenbacker and received 15,155 votes in the state and 1,008 in East Tennessee. Two years later, in 1880, the same man received 3,459 votes in the state and 491 in Republican East Tennessee. In the next campaign, John R. Beasley, such a clever campaigner that he could be "well received" in East Tennessee, secured 9,660 votes, of which 708 came from East Tennessee. Then Buchanan, the last Greenback candidate in Tennessee, was able to inveigle 28 East Tennesseans to help him secure a total state vote of 549.⁸⁹ The average Republican vote for East Tennessee in all these elections was 26,500.

East Tennessee Republicans had a natural affiliation with the next third-party movement—the Prohibitionist movement. The eastern end of the state is politically "dry." The first test on the question of prohibition in Tennessee came in 1887. There was a state-wide election in that year on the matter of adding to the constitution an amendment that would prohibit the manufacture and sale of intoxicating beverages.⁹⁴ The state voted this amendment down by a fair majority, 145,198 to 117,504, but in East Tennessee the vote was 41,847 in favor of the amendment to 30,638 opposed to its adoption.⁹⁵ Here then was a section strongly Republican and strongly Prohibitionist. Prohibition as a party issue had its first test in the year 1888, when J. C. Johnson, a former Democrat, made the race for governor on the Prohibitionist ticket. In East Tennessee the Democrats seemingly paid more attention to bolting Democrats than Republican leaders paid to possible bolters, because of a "dry" predilection in the Republican party. Both the Democratic and Republican organs of Knoxville gave little attention to the Prohibition party. The Republican *Knoxville Journal* dismissed the prohibition possibilities with two short comments. In the first instance, it published a letter from a preacher in North Carolina which told of how he had been a Prohibitionist and had withdrawn from the party and was now condemning the party movement. The *Journal* later commented that "the Prohibition ticket, with its candidates for Vice-President, boasting that he was a rebel and a Democrat—but thanking God that he was never

⁸⁸Election Returns, Secretary of State's Office, Nashville; the candidate, platforms and results are given in the *Annual Cyclopaedia* for all the years except 1884, when the party is not mentioned.

⁹⁴Almira E. Jewell, "The Prohibition Movement in Tennessee" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Virginia, 1930), 41.

⁹⁵Election Returns, Secretary of State's Office, Nashville.

a Republican—will not get many votes in this section.” The paper was correct. When the campaign was over, Johnson had received a total of 6,843 votes, with only 1,615 of them coming from East Tennessee.⁹⁶

In 1890 the Prohibition party nominated David C. Kelly.⁹⁷ Kelly made a stronger race than Johnson had two years earlier. Presumably the party was growing. But the *Journal* almost completely ignored the Prohibitionists throughout the whole campaign. On the day following the election, it said: “Dr. Kelly succeeded in ‘stringing up the boys’ oftener and more thoroughly than any other man in the race. . . . Dr. Kelly is by no means a nonentity.”⁹⁸ Kelly received 11,082 votes, of which 2,220 came from East Tennessee. After 1890, the Prohibition party lost strength and was never near a tie-up with the Republicans until 1910.⁹⁹

The Agricultural Wheel and the Farmer's Alliance were the next organizations to tempt the Republicans. These two movements came to Tennessee about the same time and by 1889 were working together, but not of sufficient strength to be taken seriously as a third party. Hence, at first only slight consideration was given either or both of these organizations as possible fusion elements for the Republicans. As the election of 1890 approached, it looked to some Republicans as though the Alliance movement would divide the Democrats. Such a contingency the Republicans had long hoped for. They felt that the Bourbon Democrats and the “Wool hat boys” (the followers of the Alliance) ought never to work in harmony. At least twice before 1890, the Democratic party had split along this same line; first, in 1872, when Andrew Johnson campaigned against the “Brigadier-generals,” and again, but to a lesser degree, in 1886, when “Bob” Taylor, successor to Andrew Johnson as leader of the “small farmer element”¹⁰⁰ in the Democratic party, led the party to victory.

In 1890 the Republicans faced a real opportunity to become a majority party because of the peculiar situation in the Democratic party. Since the day of reconstruction there had been three more or less distinct factions in the Democratic party. Often these factions had threatened to disrupt the party, and now in 1890 it seemed, especially to wishful-thinking Republicans, that the time for the

⁹⁶Knoxville *Journal*, September 20, 1888; Election Returns, Secretary of State's Office, Nashville.

⁹⁷*Annual Cyclopaedia*, 1890, p. 796.

⁹⁸Knoxville *Journal*, November 5, 1890.

⁹⁹In 1910 Ben W. Hooper, Republican and prohibitionist, was elected and served two terms.

¹⁰⁰Robison, *op. cit.*, 32ff., *passim*.

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The Alliance movement captured the "Wool hat boys" by 1890 and with them the Democratic party for one campaign and took a two year turn at the governorship.¹⁰² In this year again, as in 1874, the Republicans found themselves standing for a national party platform which approved a civil rights measure, this time the Lodge Bill, called throughout the South the "Force Bill."

How clearly the Republican leaders saw the whole situation cannot be fully known. Some considered forming a combination with the Alliance, while others thought the party had no chance in 1890, and were willing to consolidate for 1892.¹⁰³ Some Republicans as late as August professed to believe that the Alliance was non-political; hence, they were in no sense obligated to vote for John B. Buchanan, the Democratic-ne-Alliance candidate. The Republicans in the agrarian organization seem to have been more anxious than others to be non-political,¹⁰⁴ because they were more firmly tied to their party. It is fairly obvious why the Republicans did not line up with this third-party movement. The new party took over the Democratic organization and became a Democratic party in 1890, if not the Democratic party. The Republicans came near making an agreement with the Populist party in 1892. But this effort more than the others was a disastrous failure.

As the plans for the primaries moved along slowly, in 1892, more and more dissatisfied Alliance-Democrats became followers of the People's or Populist party. Bourbon Democrats gained control of the old-line Democratic party. Buchanan, realizing this development, withdrew his name and left the field to Judge Peter Turney, the Bourbon candidate. On August 15, due to the insistent demand of "Buchanan Democrats," Populists and Alliance men, Buchanan announced himself as an independent candidate. The Republicans nominated George W. Winstead and

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, 15-21; Daniel Robison, "Tennessee's War of Roses," in East Tennessee Historical Society's *Publications*, No. 5 (1933), 125-41; J. A. Sharp, "Entrance of Farmer's Alliance into Tennessee Politics," East Tennessee Historical Society's *Publications*, No. 9 (1937), 80.

¹⁰²John D. Hicks, *The Populist Revolt* (Minneapolis, 1931), 243

¹⁰³J. W. Baker to L. C. Houk, May 26, 1890, Houk Mss.

¹⁰⁴W. M. Clark to Hon. L. C. Houk, August 16, 1890, *ibid.*

wrote a platform not greatly different from the Democratic or from the third-party platform so far as state issues were concerned.¹⁰⁵ The Tennessee Republicans might fall in line, since throughout the South, in 1892, the Republicans and Populists were pretty generally united and pitted against the Democratic party.¹⁰⁶

Many charges were bandied back and forth, one of the most persistent being that the Republicans were planning to withdraw from the gubernatorial race and throw their support to Buchanan. In return, it was alleged, the Republicans were to receive support from the "Independents and Populists for their Presidential candidate, Benjamin Harrison."¹⁰⁷ A second charge was to the effect that the Republicans and Populists had formed a combination. As the campaign neared its half-way mark, both parties admitted that they had an understanding on congressional and legislative candidates. Young John C. Houk, not so experienced in political ways as his father had been, wrote:

The understanding with the third party is that in all the other 7 Congressional Districts (the first arranged for satisfactorily) our people will clear the field in favor of the 3rd party candidate for Congress in consideration of the help the 3rd party will give us for our candidate for Governor and our electoral ticket. . . .

In counties that went Democratic in 1888 we are giving the 3rd party the right of way. In counties that went Republican in 1888 we are side-tracking, by mutual understanding, the 3rd party candidate.

This contract was entered into deliberately and with sincerity and so far as I have been able to observe is being carried out to the letter.¹⁰⁸

Before election day arrived, the Republicans had some misgivings and finally regretted their bargain. On October 1 Houk wrote:

You will observe from the enclosed clipping that McDowell has not yet cleared the field in this county [Knox]. . . .

Unless the 3rd party carries out its part of the understanding and clears the field for us here we expect to open a vigorous attack from the newspapers and from the stump against that party, and charge that it is being used in the interest of the Democratic party in this section.¹⁰⁹

The end came like a bombshell on October 23, 1892, when the whole story of the "deal" came to light in the form of two letters which had been exchanged on the subject by two prominent Republicans. The letters were published in all Democratic newspapers of the state and carried for days by those papers in prominent places so that even "those who ran might read" about the "awful fusion

¹⁰⁵ *Annual Cylopaedia*, 1892, pp. 727-29.

¹⁰⁶ Hicks, *op. cit.*, 246.

¹⁰⁷ Sharp, "Farmers Alliance and People's Party in Tennessee," *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications*, No. 10 (1938), 105.

¹⁰⁸ John C. Houk to Senator Anthony Higgins, September 23, 1892, Houk Mss.

¹⁰⁹ John C. Houk to Hon. J. W. Baker, October 1, 1892, *ibid.*

agreement between the Republicans and the Populists." The writers were Joseph J. Ivins, editor of the *Knoxville Republican*, and D. W. Hill, Republican national committeeman for Tennessee. According to Ivins, the Republican national committee agreed to pay McDowell \$15,000 in exchange for bringing Buchanan into the contest, for giving the Republicans a clear field for the Harrison electoral ticket, and for aiding the Republicans in electing congressmen and legislators. But the \$15,000 was not all. McDowell had been promised election to the United States Senate if and when the Republicans and Populists got control of the legislature. It was further understood that should there be a combination legislature, it would aid the Republicans by repealing the election laws which the Republicans thought kept them from having "permanent control of the state."¹¹⁰

Ivins expressed the disgust felt by most Republicans after the exposure of their bargain with the Populists: "[T]his is a remarkable predicament we find ourselves in with a man of insatiable greed, unblushing corruption, and the most determined political perfidy; a man who can command and be paid money without stint, and whom we, as Republicans, have agreed to put in the United States Senate, to the everlasting disgrace of Tennessee" Such actions Ivins thought would mean the ruin of Republican hopes in the state and in the South. "The question with me," he said, "is whether we are not equally guilty with McDowell unless we expose him boldly and denounce the whole scheme, and whether the temporary advantage we gain will not work permanent damnation" to the Republicans of Tennessee.¹¹¹

It was too late to be sorry, for the Democratic national committee had circulated the whole story with some embellishments in a campaign document.¹¹² The Democratic press let no one forget about the "Republican bribery" or the "treacherous McDowell." One of Houk's correspondents, A. G. Matthews, summed up the situation by writing that "Hell has now been played. The Ivins-Hill letters have shut out the last ray of hope for Harrison-Winstead & a combination legislature."¹¹³ If Matthews spoke for Middle Tennessee Republicans, one W. R. French of Blount County spoke for East Tennessee Republicans: "The Republicans is all soled for the party in this part. There will not be much chraching [scratching]

¹¹⁰Sharp, "Farmers' Alliance and People's Party," *loc. cit.*, 106.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*

¹¹²*Ibid.*, citing J. B. Brownlow to O. P. Temple, November 13, 1892.

¹¹³A. G. Matthews to Jno. Houk, October 24, 1892, Houk MSS. Matthews is quoting a West Tennessee Republican who had talked or written to him on the subject.

done here. No Tailes that the Dimocrats can start won't have no affect on old Blount."¹¹⁴

The denouement of this attempt of the Republicans to align with a third party consisted of general denials on the part of all concerned. Now that some of their leaders had been exposed, Republicans were all but ready to concede defeat. From almost all sides came notes of discouragement. One man wrote: "I read the *Chattanooga Times* with astonishment . . ."¹¹⁵ Another wrote to J. C. Houk, "We had things beat bad here [Wartburg] but if this proves to be true it will drive the Third Party back to the Democrats."¹¹⁶ In the election, the Bourbon Democrats with Peter Turney as candidate won with 126,348 votes to 100,577 for Winstead, and 29,918 for Buchanan.¹¹⁷

Though this attempted coalition of the Republican and Populist parties was a failure and an embarrassment to many Republicans, it did not prevent a second attempt two years later. The Republicans and Populists agreed on judicial candidates in the spring of 1894. Later in the year, A. L. Mims was nominated for the governorship by the Populists, who wrote a platform on which the Republicans might have stood, for it scored the Democrats for the state debt, and for "iniquitous election laws."¹¹⁸ But Republicans refused to accept the Populist candidate and platform. They nominated the defeated congressman, H. Clay Evans, of the third district, for the governorship. The Republicans used the third-party movement as far as they could in this election to defeat the Democrats. The coalition, as planned, was to capture the legislature; Republicans were to vote for Populists in certain counties, and Populists for Republicans in other counties. Republican papers were well pleased with this arrangement, because there were not "many Populists in East Tennessee" and therefore the Republicans were the accepted group there.¹¹⁹

The outcome of the whole thing was that on the face of the returns Evans was elected. The vote for Evans was 105,104 and

¹¹⁴W. R. French to John C. Houk, November 1, 1892, *ibid.* Joseph A. Sharp after considering many letters among the Houk manuscripts and many newspapers in Chattanooga and Nashville, points out that the whole bargain was exposed because the Republican political boss in the second district did not like H. Clay Evans, Republican candidate for Congress in the third district, who had every possibility of re-election because two Democrats, H. C. Snodgrass and Frank P. Dickey, were running. Snodgrass was elected. See Sharp, "Farmers' Alliance and People's Party," *loc. cit.*, 111-12.

¹¹⁵Will D. Wright to John C. Houk, October 24, 1892, Houk MSS.

¹¹⁶J. B. Riggs to John C. Houk, October 25, 1892, *ibid.*

¹¹⁷Election Returns, Secretary of State's Office, Nashville.

¹¹⁸*Annual Cyclopaedia*, 1894, pp. 738-39.

¹¹⁹Knoxville *Tribune*, October 4, 1894.

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for the Democrat nominee, Peter Turney, 104,356. But the Republican-Populist fusion lost the legislature to the Democrats and the Democrats took a page out of the national political history and counted Evans out of the governorship as the Democrats claimed the Republicans had counted Samuel J. Tilden out of office in 1876.

After 1894 third parties continued to appear in the political field, but the Republicans of the state under the leadership of East Tennesseans steered clear of all entanglements. The party continued to take such positions toward state issues that it remained a minority party but with more than sufficient strength to act as something of a gadfly to the Democrats. In fact, the party was an ever-present threat and could with a strong candidate or with a split in the Democratic party win an election, especially in a gubernatorial contest, which was much easier than getting control of the legislature.