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THE FARMERS' ALLIANCE AND THE PEOPLE'S PARTY IN TENNESSEE*

By J. A. SHARP

The high tide of the agrarian movement in Tennessee was reached in 1890. In that year, the Farmers' Alliance, under the political guidance of John H. McDowell, succeeded in dominating the Democratic party and in electing its state president, John P. Buchanan, to the governorship.¹ The Alliance was influential also in the Tennessee congressional elections of 1890, and pledged one Democratic congressman, Rice A. Pierce, to support all its legislative demands, and all the Democratic congressmen to support its demand for free coinage of silver. Although a majority of alliancemen and farmers were elected to the General Assembly of 1891, this legislature failed to enact many laws of an Alliance character. On the whole, Governor Buchanan's administration was as conservative as former Democratic administrations in Tennessee, and the fears of the Bourbons, or old line Democrats, were belied. Encouraged by his victory over the Bourbon Democrats in 1890, McDowell lost no time in organizing the "wool hat boys"² of the Farmers' Alliance for a similar victory in 1892. But this organization work of McDowell was complicated by the appearance of the People's party in Tennessee, and the disruption of the Alliance by this party. Furthermore, the Bourbons, regretful of their compromise with the Alliance in 1890, repudiated the leadership of McDowell and Buchanan and organized their forces for a battle to the death against the secret agrarian order. This conflict was bitterly contested in 1891 and 1892, and resulted in the return of the Bourbons to power in the latter year.

The conservative nature of Governor Buchanan's administration brought general expressions of public favor in 1891, but the Democratic-Alliance governor suffered considerable decline in prestige as a result of the East Tennessee coal miners' insurrections of that year.³ These insurrections were violent protests against the state's policy of leasing her convicts to mining corporations, thus bringing cheap convict labor into competition with free labor. The first outbreak occurred at the Tennessee Coal Mining Company's mine at Briceville on July 14, when

*Read before the Society at Knoxville, March 4, 1938.

¹See J. A. Sharp, "The Entrance of the Farmers' Alliance into Tennessee Politics," *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications*, No. 9 (1937), 77-92.

²This phrase was applied generally to the small farmers of the South during this period.

³Daniel M. Robison, *Bob Taylor and the Agrarian Revolt in Tennessee* (Chapel Hill, 1935), 154. See also Sharp, *op. cit.*, 90-92.

armed miners released the convicts and forced the company to take them to Knoxville. The Briceville miners also objected to the failure of the mining company to allow the employment of check-weighmen as permitted by state law, and to the company's policy of paying them in discounted scrip instead of money.⁴ A similar outbreak soon followed at Coal Creek. Governor Buchanan, acting promptly in this emergency, sent three companies of militia to the scenes of disorder, with the result that the convicts were returned to the mines.⁵ Although he recognized that many of the miners' grievances were just, the governor went to Briceville and announced to the assembled miners that he was obligated to enforce the law.⁶ The miners demanded complete abolition of the convict lease system, and received the promise of Buchanan to call a special session of the legislature to deal with the trouble. The legislature assembled, but did nothing toward correcting the evils of the lease system. After its adjournment the disappointed miners again released the convicts at Briceville and Coal Creek and also at Oliver Springs.⁷ Several companies of militia were now dispatched to East Tennessee, and the convicts were soon returned to the mines. These revolts did not end Governor Buchanan's troubles with the miners, because similar outbreaks occurred in 1892.

Although there was little criticism of Governor Buchanan's administration of state affairs in 1891, the Bourbon Democrats never fully accepted the governor that the Farmers' Alliance forced them to nominate in 1890. Buchanan further gained their distrust when he ignored them in patronage matters by appointing several of his Alliance friends to state positions. They objected particularly to the appointment of John H. McDowell to the lucrative position of coal oil inspector at Nashville.⁸ In order to devote his full time to his duties as president of the state Alliance, McDowell appointed an assistant to attend to his Nashville job and surrendered the editorship of the *Weekly Toiler* to L. K. Taylor of Fayetteville.⁹ McDowell now directed his efforts toward perfecting the Alliance organization for the campaigns of 1892. Early in 1891, Alliance organizations were formed in each congressional district of the state.¹⁰ In June, state Alliance officials met in Nashville

⁴A. C. Hutson, Jr., "The Coal Miners' Insurrections of 1891 in Anderson County, Tennessee," *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications*, No. 7 (1935), 103-121; *Tennessee House Journal*, 1891 (extra), 20.

⁵*House Journal*, 1891 (extra session), 18, 19; *Knoxville Tribune*, July 24, 1891.

⁶Hutson, *op. cit.*, 109; *House Journal*, 1891 (extra), 20.

⁷*Knoxville Tribune*, October 31, November 1, 3, 1891.

⁸*Nashville Banner*, April 7, 1891; *Knoxville Journal*, April 27, 1891; *Knoxville Tribune*, January 27, 1891. Other alliacemen to receive state positions were: James V. Fulkerson of Knox County, coal oil inspector at Knoxville; E. B. Wade of Rutherford county, superintendent of state prisons; D. G. Godwin of Shelby County, commissioner of agriculture; and J. H. Bitticks of Obion county, superintendent of the capitol.

⁹*Knoxville Journal*, April 27, 1891.

¹⁰*Knoxville Tribune*, March 28, 1891.

and developed plans for a thorough canvass of the state. After this meeting, McDowell and other Alliance speakers toured the state, speaking in the interest of the order's legislative demands, and McDowell challenged both Democratic and Republican leaders to meet him in joint debate to discuss these issues.¹¹

Like most Southern agrarian leaders of this period, McDowell was regarded as a political upstart by the Bourbon leaders of Tennessee. They were alarmed, nevertheless, by his renewed efforts to control the party, and charged him with having aspirations to succeed United States Senator William B. Bate in 1893. McDowell's denial that he was a senatorial candidate was not convincing, since he admitted that he was the choice of many Alliancemen, and that the Alliance intended to work for the election of a senator favorable to the Alliance demands.¹² In order to defeat his efforts, the Bourbon press now made McDowell the target of a volley of editorial derision, abuse and castigation unequalled in Tennessee journalism since the days of "Parson" Brownlow's *Whig*. Edward W. Carmack, youthful and brilliant editor of the *Nashville American*, was the leader in this editorial warfare.¹³ In reference to McDowell's reputed senatorial ambitions, Carmack wrote:

Of course Brother McDowell will go to the United States Senate. The first time we ever beheld him we were seized with the gift of prophecy and named him as a future Senator. We know that God-Almighty never gave him that mass of storm stricken and insurrectionary whiskers and made him look like a weather beaten tintype of Senator Peffer for nothing. United States Senator McDowell, noble knight of the horny hand and stone bruised heel, we, the played-out, Bourbon, moss-back, upper-case Democrats salute thee.¹⁴ Carmack also ridiculed the Alliance subtreasury scheme by proposing that the federal government should establish "Hog-Pen and Pig-Tail money" subtreasuries and warehouses in Tennessee, and that the farmers should be allowed to deposit their hogs in the warehouses as security for loans at nominal rates of interest. It was suggested further by the facetious Carmack that the offices of "tail-trimmer and abbreviator" and "tail-fitter and adjuster" be created, and that McDowell and Rice A. Pierce, the Alliance congressman, be appointed to fill these positions.¹⁵ Not content with mere ridicule of McDowell, Carmack, through the *American*, promoted attacks on the personal and political record of the

¹¹Nashville *Banner*, April 8, 1891; Nashville *American*, June 12, 1891.

¹²Knoxville *Journal*, April 9, 1891.

¹³Dr. Nathan D. McDowell (Rochester, N. Y.) to the writer, May 14, 1931. In reference to these attacks, Dr. McDowell wrote: "The Bourbon Democrats were ready to resort to almost any methods to defeat my Father's efforts. Senator Carmack, who was then editor of the *Nashville American*, sponsored personal attacks of which they were later no doubt ashamed for Senator Carmack later became a friend of J. H. McDowell."

¹⁴Knoxville *Journal*, April 11, 1891, quoting Nashville *American*.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, April 14, 1891.

Alliance leader. For instance, the *American* charged that McDowell, while living in Arkansas during the Reconstruction period, was a member of the "Loyal League," and as such fraternized closely with the newly enfranchised colored citizens. It was even said that while in Arkansas he dined with one Negro named Jehazy Cole.¹⁶ Presenting sworn statements from his former Arkansas neighbors to show that his record there was above reproach, McDowell denied these charges and announced that it was a Bourbon conspiracy to "ruin me politically because I have the courage to follow my convictions and advocate the demands of the Farmers' Alliance."¹⁷ That McDowell retained the confidence of the majority of Tennessee alliacemen in spite of such efforts to discredit him was shown by his unanimous reelection as president of the state Alliance soon after these charges were published.¹⁸

Such warfare between the Democratic press and McDowell made it evident that the Bourbons were determined to prevent the renomination of Governor Buchanan in 1892, and thus rid the party of Alliance domination. Perhaps, the Nashville *American* best expressed this determination soon after McDowell's reelection as president of the state Alliance by this announcement:

The Alliance under its present corrupt leadership is a menace to the Democratic party and utterly subversive of every sound principle of government. . . . This issue is joined and the battle is on. The Alliance leaders may as well understand it now, that if a secret, oath-bound, one-class political party captures the next Democratic convention they will realize that they have had a fight when they take the prize.¹⁹

Bourbon leaders, who were formerly willing to compromise with the Alliance, now expressed themselves in no uncertain terms against political domination by the agrarian order. Congressman Josiah Patterson, Buchanan's Bourbon opponent for the nomination in 1890, denounced McDowell and other Alliance leaders as the "most arrant set of knaves that ever masqueraded in any political guise or any so-called set of principles."²⁰ Senator Bate also was quite severe in his criticism of the subtresury and land loan demands of the Alliance.²¹ Even "Bob" Taylor, Buchanan's predecessor as governor and himself a favorite among Tennessee farmers, was opposed to the political activities of the

¹⁶Nashville *American*, June 25, 1891.

¹⁷Knoxville *Tribune*, July 14, 1891, quoting Nashville *Banner*.

¹⁸Knoxville *Tribune*, August 14, 1891. The other Alliance officers were: first vice-president, Frank M. Smith, Knox county; second vice-president, Matt Rhea, Fayette county; secretary and treasurer, L. K. Taylor, Davidson county; state lecturer, R. W. Tucker, Wayne county; executive board members, A. L. Mims, J. L. Baxter, W. F. Gynne, and T. B. Carson.

¹⁹Knoxville *Tribune*, August 16, 1891, quoting Nashville *American*.

²⁰*Ibid.*, September 18, 1891, quoting St. Louis *Republic*.

²¹Knoxville *Tribune*, December 17, 1891.

Alliance, and announced that the "time has already arrived when every Democratic orator in the state ought to be upon the stump, warning the people against the wild heresies which have been hatched for the overthrow of the Democratic government and the ruin of agriculture itself."²² At the call of the Democratic state executive committee,²³ Democratic speakers did take the stump against the Alliance, and at least two congressmen, Joseph E. Washington and H. C. Snodgrass, met McDowell in joint debate.²⁴ Before the end of 1891, Bourbon successors to Buchanan were mentioned freely; the most prominent of these was Peter Turney, chief justice of the state supreme court.²⁵

Judge Turney, the son of Hopkins L. Turney, who represented Tennessee in the United States Senate from 1845 to 1851, was born in Franklin county in 1827. He studied law under his father, was admitted to the bar in 1848, and began his career as a lawyer in partnership with his father in Winchester after the retirement of the latter from the Senate in 1851. In 1861, when Tennessee at first hesitated to leave the Union, Turney, an ardent secessionist, led the movement to withdraw Franklin county from Tennessee and attach it to Alabama.²⁶ After Tennessee joined the Confederacy, Turney became colonel of a regiment of Tennessee infantrymen in the Confederate army, and was wounded severely in the battle of Fredericksburg. After the war he resumed his law practice at Winchester. During the Reconstruction period, he bitterly opposed the Radical regime of Governor William G. Brownlow, and when the Democrats came back into power in 1870 he was elected to the supreme court. In 1886, he became chief justice.²⁷

Early in 1892, Democratic papers throughout the state were united in opposition to continued Alliance domination, and were insistent that Judge Turney accept the role of the Bourbon candidate against Governor Buchanan.²⁸ Turney was not averse to leading the Bourbon forces in the campaign, and announced his candidacy in a letter which warned the Democrats of the "danger of falling into snares and traps of designing men, who are organizing secret and oath bound societies for selfish purposes, and laboring to foist their heresies upon the Democratic

²²*Ibid.*, September 25, 1891.

²³*Ibid.*, October 3, 1891. The members of the Democratic executive committee were: T. M. McConnell, chairman, J. B. Frazier, S. P. Yoe, W. L. Ledgerwood, J. G. Aydelotte, J. N. McKenzie, E. B. Wade, S. A. Champion, J. W. Childress, J. H. Head, N. W. Baptist, W. W. Wade, J. S. Galloway, and J. T. Jobe.

²⁴*Nashville American*, October 5, 1891.

²⁵*Knoxville Tribune*, September 8, 1891, quoting *Memphis Commercial*.

²⁶*Knoxville Journal*, May 16, 1892.

²⁷John Trotwood Moore and Austin P. Foster, *Tennessee, The Volunteer State, 1769-1923* (Nashville, 1923), II, 241.

²⁸Robison, *op. cit.*, 158, 159; *Knoxville Weekly Tribune*, February 24, 1892, quoting *Nashville Herald*.

party."²⁹ Turney's announcement was hailed by the party press with great joy, and he was called the "grand old man," the "great Commoner," and a "Democrat from base to summit."³⁰ Equally as favorable were such expressions as: "To Democrats of Tennessee the name of Peter Turney is an inscribed legend"; "the party sorely needs a few copious hypodermic injections of Old Pete's Bourbon Democracy"; and "no one is better able to make the fight for the reassertion of Democratic principles than Judge Turney."³¹ The Republican *Knoxville Journal* aptly explained this faith in the following words:

One of Judge Turney's strong points in the estimation of his supporters is that he never changes. His policies are the same yesterday, today and forever. He was born a Democrat, was a Democrat when he chased butterflies over the verdant fields of his native heath, when he played marbles with the boys for keeps, and went in swimming on Sunday. He was a Democrat when he donned his first pair of red-topped boots, long before he became a voter he has stood by the old party. That is the way he was put up—he can't help it, and don't want to. He prides himself upon his consistency not only in politics but everything else.³²

Indeed, Judge Turney was a true representative of the old line Democrats, and was a good Bourbon candidate.

While the Bourbons united their forces behind the candidacy of Judge Turney, McDowell continued his work for the renomination of Governor Buchanan. McDowell's efforts to organize the alliancemen for the campaign, however, were seriously handicapped by the People's party which appeared first in Tennessee in 1891 after its organization at Cincinnati in May of that year.³³ This third party movement began in the West where the Alliance and other agrarian orders engaged in independent political action in 1890.³⁴ At first the movement met with determined opposition from Southern Alliance-Democrats who preferred to remain inside the Democratic party and control it as they did in 1890, rather than join the third party, which they feared would result in a divided Democracy and Republican and Negro rule in the South.³⁵ The third party received its first national boost in the convention of the Southern Alliance at Ocala, Florida, in December, 1890, when the Western delegates in spite of Southern opposition succeeded

²⁹*Knoxville Weekly Tribune*, March 2, 1892.

³⁰*Ibid.*, quoting *Clarksville Progress*; *Knoxville Journal*, April 5, 1892.

³¹*Knoxville Weekly Tribune*, March 2, 9, 1892, quoting *Franklin Review and Appeal*, *McMinnville Standard*, and *Nashville Banner*.

³²September 15, 1892.

³³John D. Hicks, *The Populist Revolt* (Minneapolis, 1931), 212-215.

³⁴Solon J. Buck, *The Agrarian Crusade* (New Haven, 1920), 132-136. See also, Hicks, *op. cit.*, 153-156.

³⁵Fred E. Haynes, *Third Party Movements Since the Civil War* (Iowa City, 1916), 245-247; Frank M. Drew, "The Present Farmers' Movement," *Political Science Quarterly*, VI (New York, 1891), 308-309.

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in calling the Cincinnati convention which formed the People's party. The actual launching of the new party occurred in a confederation gathering of agrarian and labor organizations at St. Louis on February 22, 1892. The platform of the People's party was merely a summary of the Alliance demands adopted at St. Louis in 1889 and at Ocala in 1890.³⁶

Like most Southern Alliance leaders, McDowell at first opposed the third party and denied that the Tennessee Alliance had any connection with the People's party. He still hoped that the Alliance would be able to control the Democratic party and secure Governor Buchanan's renomination.³⁷ Therefore, the Tennessee Alliance had no official representatives at the Cincinnati convention of May, 1891, when the People's party was organized.³⁸ In fact, the entire South had few delegates at this convention; many Southern delegates, however, attended the agrarian-labor confederation meeting at St. Louis in February, 1892, when the People's party was formally launched. McDowell attended the St. Louis convention as a representative of the Tennessee Alliance, but like other Southern delegates he opposed the nomination of a national Populist ticket at that time. These Southern Alliance-Democrats were still hopeful that the national Democratic convention would accept the Alliance demands and that the Democratic Congress would enact a free coinage of silver law.³⁹ The Populists did postpone the nomination of a national ticket, but called a convention for this purpose to meet at Omaha on July 2, 1892.

Returning to Tennessee from St. Louis, McDowell denied that he had deserted the Democratic party, but he started an agrarian-labor movement in the state, similar to the national movement, which was of undoubted third party significance. An assembly of labor and Alliance leaders, called the "State Labor Congress," was held at Nashville on February 29.⁴⁰ McDowell was chairman of the meeting and apparently

³⁶At St. Louis, in 1889, the Southern Alliance adopted its first demands which included the abolition of national banks, the prevention of the dealing in futures in agricultural and mechanical products, free coinage of silver, prohibition of alien ownership of land and government reclamation of excess lands held by the railroads and other corporations, tariff reduction, a graduated income tax, an increase of the currency, and government ownership of the railroads. At Ocala, in 1890, the demands for the sub-treasury and warehouse system and for popular election of United States senators were added to the Alliance platform; also Southern opposition to government ownership of the railroads caused the modification of this plank of the Alliance platform to strict governmental supervision and control of the transportation and communication systems. However, the platform of the People's party adopted at Omaha in 1892 demanded government ownership of the railroads, and also of the telephone and telegraph systems. For the Alliance and Populist platforms, see Hicks, *op. cit.*, 430, 431; Drew, *op. cit.*, 286-292.

³⁷Knoxville *Journal*, April 7, 1891.

³⁸*Ibid.*, May 22, 1891.

³⁹Chattanooga *Times*, February 23, 24, 1892.

⁴⁰Knoxville *Journal*, March 2, 1892.

moulded its proceedings. An organization similar to the state Alliance with secret rituals was formed. The miners' rebellions of 1891 and the dissatisfaction of Tennessee labor with the convict lease system were reflected in many of the demands adopted at this meeting. These demands included the abolition of the convict lease system, the removal of the state prison from Nashville, the requirement that mine operators collect the money from the miners to pay the check weighmen; the arbitration of labor disputes, prohibition of child labor, compulsory education, industrial schools for youthful criminals, cheaper textbooks, and better protection and ventilation in mines and factories.⁴¹ The apparent purpose of this agrarian-labor meeting was to unite the state labor forces with the alliancemen behind the candidacy of Governor Buchanan for the Democratic renomination.

The campaign between Governor Buchanan and Judge Turney began in the county primaries and conventions which selected the delegates to the state convention, and definite signs of the Democratic dissension appeared in several counties. The hasty action of Governor Buchanan's friends in Shelby county, who controlled the party machinery there, in calling a primary and convention before the date was set for the state convention, alarmed the Turney faction all over the state.⁴² The result was a meeting of prominent Turney supporters at Nashville on March 10 to organize for the state campaign. Ex-Governor James D. Porter presided at this meeting, and Edward W. Carmack, then editor of the *Memphis Commercial*, and the leading editorial spokesman of the Bourbons against Alliance domination, was also present.⁴³ The defiant tone of the Bourbons in the campaign was set at this meeting by Frank P. Bond, who proclaimed:

We will fight Jehazy McDowell, and teach true Democracy. We will fight from Dan to Beersheba, from Cape Cod to Kalamazoo, and from hell to breakfast. We will meet Ocalaites and third party men, and say to them, "You can't come in."⁴⁴

After this meeting, Buchanan's friends, who confidently expected the governor to win an early victory in Shelby county and thus start the campaign with greater prestige, were disappointed in the results of the Shelby county convention on March 16, because the delegates to the state convention were about equally divided between Buchanan and Turney.⁴⁵

The next signs of the Democratic inter-party warfare appeared in Rutherford county, where Governor Buchanan lived. At a Democratic mass meeting in Murfreesboro on April 2, the Buchanan faction, led by

⁴¹*Ibid.*

⁴²*Ibid.*, March 10, 1892.

⁴³*Ibid.*, March 11, 1892. See also, Robison, *op. cit.*, 164, 165.

⁴⁴*Knoxville Journal*, March 11, 1892.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, March 16, 17, 1892; *Chattanooga Times*, March 17, 1892.

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E. B. Wade, Buchanan's superintendent of prisons and a prominent allianceman, insisted that the county executive committee, which was controlled by Buchanan's friends, should appoint the county's delegates to the state convention. The Turney faction, bitterly opposing this proposal and demanding that the county's delegates be selected by a county primary and convention, withdrew from the meeting after the chairman, Reverend P. A. Lyon, pastor of Buchanan's church, ruled that the Buchanan supporters were in the majority and that the delegates would be appointed by the Buchanan controlled committee. The Turney faction now held a county primary and convention, and the result was two sets of delegates from Rutherford county to the state convention.⁴⁶ Similar Democratic division occurred in the Tipton county convention at Covington on April 16. After the Turney faction, which seemed to be in the majority, had selected delegates to the state convention, the Buchanan faction, under the leadership of N. W. Baptist, Covington lawyer and member of the Democratic state executive committee, withdrew from the convention and appointed Buchanan delegates.⁴⁷

As the campaign advanced through the months of March, April, and May, many Alliance-Democrats, who were Buchanan supporters, joined the People's party, thus disrupting the Farmers' Alliance and preventing Governor Buchanan's renomination by the Democratic party. Tennessee Bourbons displayed the utmost contempt toward these former Democrats, and disparagingly referred to them as "Populites," while charging them with giving aid to the Republican party and endangering Democratic control of the state. This was the general Bourbon attitude toward Southern Populists in 1892, which was described well by the Populist historian, Dr. John D. Hicks, when he wrote that

those who joined the People's party became in the eyes of their Democratic neighbors not merely political apostates but traitors to civilization itself, more to be reviled even than the Republicans into whose hands they played. They invited upon themselves every stinging epithet, every scandalous remark, that a host of scurrilous editors and orators could devise.⁴⁸

Indeed, the bitter and vindictive policy of Turney's Bourbon supporters toward Buchanan's Alliance supporters contributed much to the Populist movement in Tennessee. The fight centered upon the demands of the Alliance adopted at Ocala, Florida, in 1890—including the sub-treasury plan, abolition of the national banks, and government control or ownership of railroads, as well as other less radical proposals. Since

⁴⁰Knoxville *Weekly Tribune*, April 6, 1892; Knoxville *Journal*, April 3, 4, 1892.

⁴¹Information about the Tipton county convention was obtained from a scrapbook kept by N. W. Baptist, whose son, Judge R. B. Baptist of Covington, kindly allowed the writer the use of this material, which consists of clippings relating to the Tipton county convention from the Memphis *Appeal-Avalanche*, the Memphis *Commercial*, the Covington *Leader*, and the Tipton *Record*.

⁴²Hicks, *op. cit.*, 243.

the People's party made the Ocala demands a part of its platform, Tennessee Bourbons classified all alliancemen who believed in these demands as "Populities," and exacted Democratic pledges from them before allowing them to engage in Democratic primaries and conventions.⁴⁹ Such proscriptive methods caused many alliancemen to join the People's party and caused many others, who were believers in the Ocala demands but not third party men, to refuse to take part in the Democratic primaries and conventions.⁵⁰

By the first of June Bourbon control of the Democratic party was complete, and Judge Turney's nomination was assured. In the meantime the People's party completed its disruption of the Farmers' Alliance in Tennessee. In May, L. L. Polk, president of the Southern Alliance, advised Southern alliancemen to support Populist candidates in national elections.⁵¹ Following this advice, L. K. Taylor, editor of the *Weekly Toiler*, announced that the Alliance organ of Tennessee would support the Populist candidates for president and Congress in the approaching elections. Many Alliance-Democrats in the state opposed this endorsement of the People's party by Taylor; notable among these were Governor Buchanan, R. W. Tucker, state Alliance lecturer, and E. B. Wade, former secretary and treasurer of the state Alliance and Buchanan's superintendent of prisons. Governor Buchanan announced his position in relation to the People's party in a statement in which he said that as a "life-long" Democrat he could "bear no relation to any third party movement," and that he still advocated as he did in 1890, "tariff reform, free coinage of silver, an increase in the volume of the currency sufficient to meet the demands of business and commerce, and some constitutional democratic means of circulation at a less cost to the people than that now furnished by the national banks."⁵² The opposition of many Alliance-Democrats to the People's party was expressed best by the Alliance lecturer, Tucker, who said that he opposed any course which would "endanger the Democratic party in the state and turn the state over to the Republican party."⁵³

The official relation of the Tennessee Alliance to the People's party was shown by a meeting of alliancemen at Nashville on June 1. Division among the alliancemen resulted over a resolution to support the policy of the *Toiler* in endorsing national Populist candidates. The conservative faction opposed this resolution and favored remaining in the Democratic party and working for the Alliance demands as in the past, while the radical faction favored joining the People's party which already had

⁴⁹Knoxville *Journal*, March 2, April 14, 1892.

⁵⁰Robison, *op. cit.*, 164. See also, Sharp, *op. cit.*, 84.

⁵¹Knoxville *Weekly Tribune*, May 4, 11, 1892.

⁵²*Ibid.*, May 18, 1892, quoting Nashville *Banner*.

⁵³Knoxville *Journal*, May 16, 1892.

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adopted the Alliance demands. The conservatives were strong enough to defeat this direct endorsement of the Populists, but both Alliance factions agreed on an indirect endorsement of the third party by adopting a resolution that the *Toiler* should "fearlessly and boldly advocate the demands of our order regardless of party, and that it should support such men as shall adopt and endorse them."⁵⁴ Thus the Tennessee Alliance rather ingeniously placed its official stamp of approval on Populism, because the old party candidates did not endorse the Alliance demands in 1892.

The first People's party convention in Tennessee met at Nashville on June 28. By this time Alliance-Democrats had abandoned all hopes for Governor Buchanan's renomination by the Democratic convention, and McDowell and many other alliacemen had aligned themselves definitely with the People's party. McDowell was in complete control of the Populist convention which selected delegates to the national People's party convention to be held at Omaha on July 2.⁵⁵ The Tennessee Populists adopted a platform which condemned the Democratic Congress for its failure to enact a free coinage of silver law, and scored both old parties as the tools of corporations and Wall Street. Most of the platform was similar to the Ocala demands and the national Populist platform; therefore it favored free coinage of silver, an increase in the currency to not less than fifty dollars per capita, a graduated income tax, laws to prevent the dealing in futures in agricultural products, and popular election of United States senators.⁵⁶ Omitted from the platform, however, was any mention of the subtreasury plan, abolition of national banks, or tariff reduction, all of which were included in the Ocala demands and the national Populist platform. Neither did the Tennessee Populists ask for government ownership of the railroad and telegraph lines; they did, however, demand strict governmental regulation of the means of transportation and communication. In state affairs, Tennessee Populists insisted on the abolition of the convict lease system and the prohibition of child labor in factories and workshops.⁵⁷

After adopting their platform, the Populists considered the nomination of a candidate for governor, but decided to postpone such action until Governor Buchanan's definite course was known. Many Populists,

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, June 2, 1892.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, June 29, 1892. The delegates were: state at large, J. H. McDowell, Davidson county; L. K. Taylor, Lincoln county; T. H. Askew, Obion county; J. F. Nelson, Washington county; S. S. Bond, Madison county; and John M. Meek, Jefferson county. First district, John Jaynes; Second district, —; Third district, F. P. Dickey; Fourth district, M. P. Young; Fifth district, J. L. Baxter; Sixth district, W. K. Campbell; Seventh district, S. C. Galloway; Eighth district, William Rush; Ninth district, D. W. Toney; Tenth district, T. V. Nihil.

⁵¹*Appleton's Annual Cyclopaedia*, 1892, p. 726; *Knoxville Weekly Tribune*, July 6, 1892; *Knoxville Journal*, June 29, 1892.

⁵²Robison, *op. cit.*, 167, 168.

former Alliance-Democrats and supporters of Buchanan, were anxious that he make the race for reelection as an Independent, and submitted the Populist platform to him for his approval. McDowell proposed this course and promised Buchanan Populist support as an Independent candidate.⁵⁸ Some Alliance-Democrats, who had remained in the Democratic party, were as anxious as the Populists that the governor become an Independent candidate, and on July 25 a committee of such supporters from Montgomery county, who called themselves "Buchanan Democrats," asked the governor to announce his Independent candidacy.⁵⁹ Five days later Buchanan withdrew his name from the Democratic contest, since he was positive that the Turney faction would control the Democratic convention. In his statement of withdrawal the governor strongly condemned his opponents, whom he termed the "sky-blue bolters" or "Radicals," for their fight against him as a member of the Alliance, which he said was a "useful organization of honorable men, non-partisan in character and valuable in developing and guarding the agricultural interests of the land." He was likewise vigorous in his denunciation of the prescriptive pledges and "iron-clad oaths" which the Turney faction used to obtain control of the party machinery. Finally, Governor Buchanan insisted that he was still a Democrat, and that he was true to the Democratic party as well as to the Alliance.⁶⁰

The month of August, 1892, was an eventful one in the political career of Governor Buchanan. On August 9, the Democratic convention nominated Judge Turney. Buchanan received only a few votes, but while the convention was still in session word was passed to the governor's friends to meet after adjournment. These "Buchanan Democrats" could not unite on the course the governor should pursue. A resolution, asking him to announce as an Independent, was passed, although some of Buchanan's friends withdrew when they failed to pass a resolution asking him to support the regular nominee, Judge Turney.⁶¹ The demand from "Buchanan Democrats," as well as from Populists, became quite strong that the governor should make the race for reelection as an Independent.⁶² But before he could announce his candidacy, East Tennessee miners again rebelled, burned the convict stockades and released the convicts at Tracy City, Inman, Oliver Springs, and Coal Creek.⁶³ Two militiamen were killed in a conflict with the miners at Coal Creek, and the warlike spirit of the Old Volunteer State was aroused again. Criticism was heaped upon the governor by his political foes who charged him with indecision and sympathy for the

⁵⁸Knoxville *Weekly Tribune*, June 29, 1892.

⁵⁹Chattanooga *Times*, August 10, 1892.

⁶⁰Knoxville *Weekly Tribune*, August 3, 1892.

⁶¹Chattanooga *Times*, August 10, 1892.

⁶²Knoxville *Journal*, August 7, 1892; Knoxville *Weekly Tribune*, August 10, 1892.

⁶³Knoxville *Weekly Tribune*, August 17, 24, 31, 1892.

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rebellious miners. He received even more criticism when he commuted to life imprisonment the death sentence of H. Clay King, wealthy Memphis murderer. In protest, Memphis citizens burned the governor in effigy. In the midst of all this criticism and his efforts to restore order among the miners, Buchanan, on August 15, published his announcement as an Independent candidate for governor. He said his announcement came as the result of demands from "thousands of the voters of the state who have heretofore made solid the ranks of the Democratic party . . . , but who have been driven from their rightful share in party control by the unprecedented and undemocratic methods pursued by the sky-blue leaders of the Turney faction."⁶⁴

With his announcement, Governor Buchanan submitted a platform which showed unquestionably his Alliance and Populist sympathies, but like the platform of the Tennessee Populists it was more conservative than the national reform program of the People's party. In national affairs the governor favored such Populist proposals as free coinage of silver, an increase in the circulating medium sufficient to meet the needs of business, abolition of the national banks, a graduated income tax, popular election of United States senators, restriction of the dealing in futures in agricultural products, and prohibition of alien ownership of land; but there was no mention in the governor's platform of the sub-treasury scheme, land loans, or government ownership or control of the railroads. In two important respects the governor's reform program went beyond that of the Tennessee Populists; namely, in his advocacy of the abolition of national banks and prohibition of alien ownership of land. In respect to tariff reduction, which the Tennessee Populists omitted from their platform, Buchanan even went further than the traditional Democratic position, and placed himself on record as an advocate of free trade in his declaration for "free commerce with all nations, and a tariff restriction only when revenue from other sources are insufficient to meet the expenses of an economical government." Perhaps Governor Buchanan's Democratic sympathies were shown best by his opposition to federal interference with state elections. In state affairs the governor's experience with the East Tennessee miners' insurrections was reflected in his endorsement of labor's demands for the abolition of the convict lease system and the removal of the state prison from Nashville. He also made a bid for labor support by favoring laws for the arbitration of labor disputes and prohibition of child labor in mines and factories. Finally, Buchanan's platform asked for liberal taxes for the public schools and a convention to revise the state constitution.⁶⁵ On August 18, three days after the governor's announcement, the Populists assembled again in Nashville, and, as promised by Mc-

me, August 10, 1892.

⁶⁴Knoxville Journal, August 16, 1892.

⁶⁵Ibid. See also, Robison, *op. cit.*, 171.

Dowell, endorsed the Independent candidacy of Buchanan whose platform they said was "in accord with the reform movement."⁶⁶

At this point some consideration of the Democratic platform is necessary. In 1890 the Tennessee Democracy, under Alliance domination, accepted the Alliance demand for free coinage of silver; in 1892, however, with the Alliance disrupted and many of its members in the People's party, and Grover Cleveland the Democratic candidate for president on an anti-free silver platform, the Tennessee Democracy, under Bourbon domination, renounced its former position in favor of this Alliance demand. For this reason Governor Buchanan, whose platform favored free coinage, claimed that while the Democracy had changed, he had remained true to the platform of 1890. In regard to the convict lease system, the Democrats favored its abolition "at the earliest date legally permissible," but at the same time they announced their belief in the principle that the "support of our penal institutions should come from the labor of those legally confined in them, and not from a tax upon the honest people of the state."⁶⁷ Perhaps it should be said that few people in Tennessee had formed definite opinions on this problem, forced so suddenly to their attention by rebellion and bloodshed. For many years Tennessee Democrats had defended the lease system because it was an economical method of caring for the convicts. Therefore, they hesitated to tax the people to remove the convicts from competition with free labor, although they recognized the need for a change. Even Governor Buchanan, whose experience with the miners convinced him that the system must be discarded, did not favor abolition before expiration of the lease contract in 1896. He did recommend, however, that the state make the convicts self-supporting and remove them from competition with free labor by working them on public roads, state farms and in prison workshops.⁶⁸ Like Buchanan's platform, the Democratic platform also favored the removal of the state prison from Nashville and the construction of a prison large enough to hold all the state's convicts and to permit the separation of youthful offenders from the "association and influence of abandoned and hardened criminals."⁶⁹

In 1892 Tennessee Republicans presented the strongest opposition to the convict lease system because it brought convict labor into competition with Republican miners in East Tennessee. Their platform demanded immediate abolition of the lease contract, and denounced Democratic state administrations for fostering and protecting this iniquitous method of caring for the state's convicts. The Republican candidate for

⁶⁶Knoxville *Journal*, August 18, 1892.

⁶⁷Knoxville *Weekly Tribune*, August 17, 1892.

⁶⁸Chattanooga *Times*, September 23, 1892; Knoxville *Weekly Tribune*, October 5, 1892.

⁶⁹Knoxville *Weekly Tribune*, August 17, 1892.

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governor, George W. Winstead, like Governor Buchanan, advocated the employment of the convicts on public roads and in prison workshops.⁷⁰

In 1892 the distinguishing feature in Southern politics was the general cooperation between the Republicans and Populists against the dominant Democrats,⁷¹ and rumors of such cooperation appeared early in the Tennessee campaign. For instance, the Democrats charged that the Republicans intended to take Winstead out of the race for governor and support Buchanan, and that in return for such aid the Republicans would receive Independent and Populist support for their presidential candidate, Benjamin Harrison. The Republicans, denying any intention of withdrawing Winstead, said that they would not support Buchanan since he was a Democrat and opposed to Republican policies.⁷² McDowell, as chairman of the People's party executive committee, also denied that Tennessee Populists would support Harrison for president since there was an electoral ticket in the field for the Populist candidate for president, James G. Weaver.⁷³ It should be noted also that the Democratic press and orators frequently charged McDowell and the Populists with engineering Buchanan's Independent candidacy to divide the Democratic vote and thus cause the election of the Republican candidate. Republican leaders were not unaware of the aid rendered their party by a divided Democracy, and privately expressed themselves as confident of the election of the Harrison electoral ticket as well as of Winstead.⁷⁴ As the campaign advanced both Republicans and Populists admitted that they had fusion agreements on congressional and legislative candidates whereby the Populists would support the Republican candidates in congressional districts and counties where the Republicans were the strongest, and the Republicans would support the Populist candidates wherever the Populists were strongest.⁷⁵ Because of such fusion of their forces, the Republicans and the Populists hoped for the election of several congressmen and a majority in the legislature, and

⁶⁶Knoxville *Journal*, May 5, August 24, 1892.

⁶⁷Hicks, *op. cit.*, 245-248.

⁶⁸Knoxville *Weekly Tribune*, August 17, 1892; Knoxville *Journal*, September 1, 1892.

⁶⁹Knoxville *Weekly Tribune*, September 7, 1892.

⁷⁰George W. Winstead to John C. Houk, June 25, 1892; J. W. Baker to Houk, June 19, 1892; Houk to United States Senator Anthony Higgins (Delaware), September 23, 1892, L. C. Houk and John C. Houk MSS (McClung Collection, Lawson McGhee Library, Knoxville, Tennessee).

⁷¹Chattanooga *Times*, October 17, 1892; Knoxville *Weekly Tribune*, September 7, 1892; Knoxville *Weekly Tribune*, September 14, 1892, quoting Memphis *Commercial*.

planned in the latter event to repeal the "obnoxious" election laws and to elect a United States senator.⁷⁶

The final chapter in the campaign was written on October 23, when Democratic papers published a sensational account of the Republican-Populist fusion agreement. This story was in the form of two letters, revealing the crude though exaggerated details of the deal between the Republicans and Populists, written by prominent Republican leaders. One letter was written by Jo J. Ivins, editor of the Knoxville *Republican*, to D. W. Hill, Republican national committeeman for Tennessee, and the other was Hill's answer to Ivins. According to Ivins, the Republican national committee agreed to pay McDowell \$15,000 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. In addition to the \$15,000, according to Ivins, McDowell was promised election to the United States Senate by the Republican-Populist controlled legislature, which also would repeal the election laws and give the Republicans "permanent control of the state." Ivins, who deplored the whole deal, charged that McDowell, except for the candidacy of Buchanan, failed to carry out his part of the bargain, in that he allowed Populist candidates to enter the race for Congress and the legislature in Republican districts and counties. Furthermore, Ivins said that McDowell, when the national committee was slow in paying him the \$15,000, threatened to withdraw Buchanan. To prevent this J. W. Baker, chairman of the Republican state executive committee, and John C. Houk, Republican congressman from the second district, were forced to go to New York and urge the immediate payment of the money. Finally, Ivins summed up his dissatisfaction with the Republican-Populist deal by writing:

I go into details to emphasize the 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, and as I verily believe, the utter ruin of Republican hopes in the state and the South. The question with me is whether we are not equally guilty with McDowell unless we expose him boldly and denounce the whole scheme, and whether the temporary ad-

⁷⁶The election laws which were so "obnoxious" to the Republicans were passed by the Tennessee legislature in 1889 and 1890. The first of these was the "Myer's" registration law which required voters in the more populous centers to register in their voting precincts and present registration certificates to the election officials. The second was the so-called "Dortch" law, an application of the Australian secret ballot to the more populous counties and cities, which required voters to mark their own ballots secretly, unless blind or otherwise physically disabled. The third law required the payment of a poll tax. See Sharp, *op. cit.*, 85, 86.

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In his answer to Ivins, Committeeman Hill agreed that the payment of \$15,000 to McDowell was a mistake, and deplored the failure of the national committee to furnish any more money for the Tennessee campaign. Claiming that he did not know of the deal until he was informed about it by Chairman Baker, Hill stated further that he thought of protesting about the payments to McDowell, but was told by Baker that it was "no affair of mine, and none of my business." In addition, Hill wrote:

As I figure it out, we have now lost fifteen thousand dollars on McDowell and Buchanan and have gained nothing. We ought to save our principles and party from disgrace. Already, it is common talk on the streets and in the highways. I am not going to let it injure me. It cannot injure John Houk because he, like myself, was let into it after the bargain was made and since then has only endeavored to see that the Republican party was not imposed on by holding McDowell to the terms. Neither do I censure Baker. He believed that he was taking a near and legitimate cut to success and I am satisfied, expected to see out of it victory.⁷⁸

If a bombshell had been exploded in the Republican and Populist camps, no more consternation could have been created than the publication of the "Ivins-Hill" letters. Democratic papers both within and outside Tennessee filled columns with accounts of the Republican "bribery" of McDowell and of his "treacherous" attempt to sell the Populists and Buchanan to the Republicans.⁷⁹ There was little disposition to connect Buchanan with the deal; instead, the general opinion seemed to be that he was used as the "tool" or "unconscious victim" of the "wily and unscrupulous" McDowell.⁸⁰ Therefore, it is obvious that the Democrats published the letters to destroy the Republican-Populist fusion agreement by convincing Buchanan's Independent and Populist supporters, most of whom were former Democrats, that they had been betrayed by McDowell, and that they should support Judge Turney and the regular Democratic ticket. The general alarm of Republicans at this turn of

⁷⁷Knoxville *Weekly Tribune*, October 26, 1892. The October 23 issue of the *Daily Tribune*, in which the correspondence first appeared, was not available to the writer.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*

⁷⁹John B. Brownlow to O. P. Temple, November 13, 1892, O. P. Temple MSS (University of Tennessee Library, Knoxville, Tennessee). Brownlow, son of the Reconstruction governor, William G. Brownlow, wrote Temple from Washington: "The Hill-Ivins affair was kept standing in the columns of Democratic papers all over the country and was circulated by their national committee as a campaign document. . ."

⁸⁰Chattanooga *Times*, October 23, 1892; Chattanooga *Times*, October 23, 1892, quoting Memphis *Commercial*; Knoxville *Weekly Tribune*, October 26, 1892, quoting New York *World*, Louisville *Courier Journal*, Birmingham *Age-Herald*, Morristown *Gazette*, Memphis *Commercial*, Johnson City *Comet*, Memphis *Scimitar*, Nashville *American*, and Nashville *Banner*.

events was expressed well by one man who wrote Congressman John C. Houk of Knoxville that "Hell has now been played. The Ivins-Hill letters have about shut out the last ray of hope for Harrison—Winstead and a combination legislature."⁸¹ On the other hand, one of Houk's loyal Blount county constituents wrote that "No Tails That The Democrats Can Start wont have no affect in Old Blount."⁸² Denial statements were soon forthcoming from all those concerned in the correspondence. Committeeman Hill claimed that he did not write the letter accredited to him, but merely signed it for Ivins, who was collecting opinions from prominent Republicans on the deal with McDowell.⁸³ Editor Ivins countered with the statement that Hill and other Republicans corresponded with him on the deal and that all agreed that the affair should be exposed. He had intended to do so through the columns of his own paper, the *Republican*, but he explained that he had not intended to publish the exact letters, or "delicate details." Ivins insinuated that the letters were stolen from his desk by the Democrats in a manner "reprehensible and not to be justified on any decent journalistic ground, even in these days of degenerate enterprise in Democratic politics."⁸⁴ Chairman Baker denied that he had any connection with the deal, but did not deny that McDowell received the \$15,000 from the national committee. Neither did he deny the truth of the fusion agreement; in reference to it, he said:

There has been an explicit understanding between myself and the third party leader that wherever a Republican could be elected to the Legislature or to Congress and a Third partyite could not, the Third partyite would support the Republican. And vice versa, as you yourself can deduce from a study of the tickets in the various counties. As to the United States Senatorship, McDowell was not specified. Our agreement was in case an anti-Democratic Legislature should be chosen, our Republicans would vote for any man the Independents and Third partyites might select from their ranks.⁸⁵

The next denial statement came from McDowell, who said that he did not receive the \$15,000 from the Republican national committee, or any other Republican source, and that the letters were "specially prepared" by Ivins and published by the Democrats "for a campaign sensation to affect the result of the election." McDowell, like Baker, admitted the truth of the fusion agreement on congressional and legislative tickets, but said that he was not specified for the Senate and that he had not agreed to leave a "clear field" for the Harrison electoral ticket.⁸⁶

⁸¹A. G. Matthews to Houk, October 24, 1892. See also, Will D. Wright to Houk, October 24, 1892; J. T. Settle to Houk, October 26, 1892; and J. S. Riggs to Houk, October 25, 1892, Houk MSS.

⁸²W. R. French to Houk, November 1, 1892, *ibid.*

⁸³Knoxville *Weekly Tribune*, October 26, 1892.

⁸⁴Knoxville *Journal*, October 24, 1892.

⁸⁵Knoxville *Weekly Tribune*, November 2, 1892.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, October 26, 1892, quoting Nashville *Banner*.

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The complete exposure of the Republican-Populist fusion agreement by the publication of the "Ivins-Hill" letters left unanswered two important questions. Did McDowell receive the \$15,000 from the Republican national committee, or some Republican source? How did the Democrats obtain possession of the letters? The first of these questions has been answered satisfactorily by a letter to the writer from Nathan D. McDowell, son of John H. McDowell, in which he said:

I was closely associated with my father at that time and was aware that the Republicans contributed about \$15,000 to help the Buchanan campaign. I understand that this money was distributed through my father—several thousand were given to Buchanan personally to defray the expenses of his campaign, the rest to pay the expenses of Populist speakers and their meetings. As to the promise of the United States Senatorship to J. H. McDowell in case of success this may have been hinted but I feel sure there was nothing definite.⁸⁷

In justice to McDowell it should be said that his acceptance of this money was in no sense a "bribe," and that the fusion agreement he made with the Republicans was similar to the Republican-Populist combinations in all the Southern states.⁸⁸ It was more difficult to find a satisfactory answer to the second question. Ivins was denounced generally by the Republicans and Populists for the revelation of the deal, and was driven from his editorial position in Knoxville.⁸⁹ One Republican account said the Democrats bought the letters from the "traitor" Ivins, who prepared the correspondence especially for publication in coöperation with Democratic leaders.⁹⁰ The only explanation offered by the Democrats was that the Democratic Knoxville *Tribune* obtained the letters by a "stroke of newspaper enterprise."⁹¹

There is doubtless some truth in these explanations of the publication of the "Ivins-Hill" letters, but it appears that the real cause of the exposure of the fusion agreement was Republican factionalism. In

⁸⁷May 14, 1931.

⁸⁸In 1892 the Alabama political situation was very similar to the Republican-Populist combination in Tennessee. The Alliance leaders in Alabama failed to secure R. F. Kolb's nomination for governor by the Democrats. Kolb then announced as an Independent, or "Jeffersonian Democrat" candidate, as Buchanan did in Tennessee, and secured the endorsement of the Populists. The Alabama Republicans, unlike the Tennessee Republicans, did not nominate a candidate for governor, but endorsed Kolb's candidacy. In Alabama the Republicans and Populists also nominated fusion tickets for the legislature and Congress, but the entire fusion ticket was defeated by the Democrats. See Hicks, *op. cit.*, 249, 250.

⁸⁹Knoxville *Journal*, October 26, 1892; Knoxville *Weekly Tribune*, November 2, 1892. See also John B. Brownlow to O. P. Temple, November 13, 1892; Stewart L. Woodford to O. P. Temple, October 26, 1892, Temple MSS; J. T. Settle to John C. Houk, October 26, 1892; C. E. Harris to Houk, October 24, 1892; Houk to J. W. Baker, November 2, 1892, Houk MSS.

⁹⁰Knoxville *Journal*, October 25, 26, 27, 29, 1892.

⁹¹Knoxville *Weekly Tribune*, October 26, 1892.

1892 the Republicans of Tennessee were divided into two rival factions. One faction was led by John C. Houk, congressman from the second district, and its members called themselves "native born white Republicans." The members of the other faction, led by H. Clay Evans, Chattanooga business man and former congressman from the third district, were called "carpetbaggers" by the Houk faction.⁹² Factional rivalry was very bitter between these two groups of Tennessee Republicans, and both factions resorted to the usual methods to obtain political advantages. In 1888 Evans was elected to Congress, where he became a strong supporter of the Harrison administration and the dispenser of federal patronage in Tennessee. For this reason he was bitterly fought by Judge L. C. Houk as well as by his son and successor in Congress, John C. Houk; and for the same reason the Houk faction opposed Harrison's renomination in 1892 and favored the nomination of James G. Blaine. In 1890 Evans was defeated for reelection to Congress by the Democratic candidate, H. C. Snodgrass. But in 1892 he again had ambitions to represent the third district in Congress, and John C. Houk and his friends became almost frantic in their efforts to prevent him from receiving the Republican nomination.⁹³ Houk and his friends knew that if Evans received the nomination his election would be practically certain since the Democratic majority for Snodgrass was small in 1890. Besides, a Populist candidate, Frank P. Dickey, was in the third district contest, and it was believed that he would take enough votes from the Democratic candidate, Snodgrass, to assure the election of Evans.⁹⁴ The latter was nominated, however, by the third district Republicans in spite of the opposition of the Houk faction, and seemed headed for Congress, where he would control again the federal patronage in Tennessee in case of Harrison's reelection.

In addition to this attempt to prevent Evans' nomination for Congress by the third district Republicans, the Houk faction made other attempts in 1892 to reduce the influence of Evans in the Republican party of the state. In May Houk and his friends were successful in securing control of the Republican state executive committee.⁹⁵ And on June 27, Congressman Houk protested, in a telegram to President Harrison, against the appointment of Evans to the national Republican campaign committee.⁹⁶ Evans was not appointed, but he denied that he was an applicant for the position.⁹⁷ Evans, nevertheless, retained

⁹²John C. Houk to Senator Anthony Higgins (Delaware), September 23, 1892, Houk MSS.

⁹³Houk to Thomas L. Cate, July 16, 1892; J. W. Baker to Houk, July 6, 1892; D. M. Coffman to Houk, July 16, 1892, *ibid.*

⁹⁴R. E. Rhea to Houk, May 10, 1892; J. W. Baker to Houk, July 6, 1892, *ibid.*

⁹⁵G. W. Hill to Houk, May 10, 1892; G. W. Hill to Houk, May 20, 1892, *ibid.*

⁹⁶Houk to President Harrison, June 27, 1892, *ibid.*

⁹⁷H. Clay Evans to C. E. Harris, July 2, 1892; Houk to George W. Winstead, July 8, 1892, *ibid.*

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his influence with the Harrison administration, and was charged by Congressman Houk with using this influence among his "northern friends" in defeating the efforts of the state committee to obtain financial assistance from the national committee for the Tennessee campaign.⁹⁸ Houk was bitter toward Evans and his northern Republican friends, who, he said, knew nothing about "Southern politics," and believed that it was not worth while to spend money trying to break the Solid South. He was likewise bitter toward the national committee for its failure to supply the needed money for the Tennessee campaign.⁹⁹ Moreover, Houk knew that the \$15,000 which McDowell had received from the national committee was being used partially to keep the Populist candidate, Frank P. Dickey, in the third district race, and thus draw votes from Snodgrass, the Democratic candidate and cause the election of Evans.

The latter prospect did not please the second district Republican leader. Besides, Populist and Independent candidates for the legislature had entered the contest in Republican counties of the second district. This was a violation of the Republican-Populist fusion agreement, and Houk protested to McDowell, who promised to withdraw the Populist candidates. When he learned that McDowell was unwilling, or unable, to withdraw the candidates, Houk threatened "to open a vigorous attack from the newspapers and from the stump" against the People's party.¹⁰⁰ Then came the "Ivins-Hill" exposure of the fusion agreement. Congressman Houk denied any knowledge of the letters although both Ivins and Hill were his close Republican associates. The Evans faction charged openly that the exposure of McDowell's "sell-out" was planned by Houk, Ivins, and Hill in order to prevent the third district Populist candidate, Dickey, from drawing votes away from Evans' democratic opponent for Congress. In fact, this was the general consensus of Republican opinion throughout the state, as one of Houk's Republican friends in West Tennessee informed him in a letter in which he quoted another Republican as saying: "The Judas is in our own camps. John Houk knew all about this and he is at the bottom."¹⁰¹ Houk now placed the blame on Ivins, and denounced him as a "thief" and "traitor" to the Republican party. Ivins resented such accusations, and declared in a statement to the *Chattanooga Times*:

⁹⁸Houk to George W. Winstead, July 8, 1892, *ibid.*

⁹⁹Houk to Senator Higgins, September 23, 1892, *ibid.* See also James S. Clarkson to Houk, September 3, 1892; William O. Bradley to Houk, October 7, 9, 22, 1892; Houk to Lewis T. Baxter, October 15, 1892, *ibid.*

¹⁰⁰William O. Bradley to Houk, October 15, 1892; Houk to J. W. Baker, October 1, 1892, *ibid.* See also J. H. McDowell to Houk, October 18, 1892; William Allen to Houk, October 10, 1892; I. A. Dail to Houk, October 23, 1892; J. W. Baker to Houk, September 24, 1892, *ibid.*

¹⁰¹A. G. Matthews to Houk, October 24, 1892, *ibid.*

There was never any doubt as to the purpose of writing those letters. There was a distinct understanding. I was with those fellows [Houk and Hill] all along the line. The express purpose of the publication was to injure H. Clay Evans in the race for Congress in the third district, and subordinate him in public opinion, the whole aim being to render his influence a nullity.

The letters were written with a full realization of the effect they would produce. They were written after George Hill and John Houk and myself had frequently consulted. The effort was to suppress Evans in Tennessee and break down whatever influence he might have in the party at home and abroad.¹⁰²

The hopes of Houk and his friends were realized, because Evans was defeated. However, Dickey received enough votes to reduce the small majority of Snodgrass in 1890 to a small plurality. The Houk faction did not grieve over the defeat of Evans. One of Houk's friends wrote him after the election in the following terms: "Wonder how brother Evans in the 3rd feels about the situation. He is strictly in the 'Soup.'" ¹⁰³

The Republican-Populist fusion agreement was a complete failure. The Bourbon Democrats again triumphed in Tennessee. Turney received 126,348 votes, while Winstead received 100,577 and Buchanan, 29,918. Thus the combined vote of Winstead and Buchanan was 4,145 more than the total vote of Turney. Truly the Tennessee Democracy had traveled far from its great majorities in former years. All of the Democratic congressmen were reelected except Rice A. Pierce, the Alliance congressman from the ninth district. Pierce, like Buchanan, was read out of the Democratic party, and made the race as an Independent candidate. He was defeated, however, by the regular Democratic candidate, James C. McDearmon. The Republican-Populist fusion came nearest to success in the eighth district, where the Democratic candidate, B. A. Enloe, was almost defeated. The fusion candidates in the fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh districts were easily defeated by their Democratic opponents. The Republican-Populist attempt to control the legislature failed, and the usual Democratic majority was elected.¹⁰⁴

With the election of Peter Turney, the Bourbon Democrats returned to power in Tennessee. The Farmers' Alliance was hopelessly disrupted by the People's party and lost its control of the Democratic organization which it had achieved in 1890. But the victory of the Bourbons was won at the cost of party harmony, because the Tennessee Democracy was seriously weakened. The vote for Buchanan represented the alienated element of the Democratic party, the great majority of whom were former alliacemen. Many of the latter had joined the Populists; others,

¹⁰²Chattanooga *Times*, November 6, 1892.

¹⁰³James Jeffreys to Houk, November, 1892, Houk MSS.

¹⁰⁴Election results from Secretary of State's office, Nashville, Tennessee.

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who refused to join the new party, called themselves "Independents." These disaffected elements continued to oppose the Bourbons, with the result that Democratic control of the state was for a time endangered. Although the People's party declined rapidly after 1892, Democratic harmony was not restored until the economic depression had lifted and the Bourbons had adopted a more conciliatory policy toward the ag-grieved agrarian and labor elements of society.