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THE GREENBACK PARTY IN MAINE,
1876-1884

By

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B. S. in Educ., University of Maine, 1941

A THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
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THESIS ABSTRACT

THE GREENBACK PARTY IN MAINE,
1876-1884

The Greenback party was the strongest third party movement to make its appearance in Maine during the half-century following the Civil War. The party was founded on debtors' demand for an inflated currency during the hard times caused by the Panic of 1873.

The heavy taxation policy necessary to liquidate Maine's large Civil War debt proved most burdensome to the farmers and other holders of real estate and led many of the agrarians to throw in their political lot with the new party. Many Republicans also joined their ranks when they became disaffected with the machinations of the Grant and Hayes administrations, nationally, and the so-called Blaine ring in this state. Running on a retrenchment program, pledged to a reduction in the operating costs of the state government, and a more equitable system of taxation, the Greenbackers received strong support from the farming element and some backing from labor, especially from the organized stonecutters along the western shore of Penobscot Bay. The Greenbackers gained few

adherents in the more populous urban centers.

The Greenback party joined hands, politically, with the Democrats in the Fusion movement, in an attempt to oust the Republicans from their predominant position in the state government. This combination was successful in 1878, when it won control of the legislature, elected two of five Congressmen, one a union official, and a Democratic Governor.

The Supreme Court invalidated the attempt of the Fusionists to count-out on technicalities certain Republican candidates who they charged had been elected in 1879 only by intimidation and bribery at the polls. Their stand was partially vindicated in 1880, when a Greenback Governor, Harris M. Plaisted, was elected and the party's two Congressmen were reelected. The Republicans retained control of the legislature and the Fusionists lost an opportunity to choose a United States Senator in 1881.

A split developed in the Greenback party when one wing refused to ratify an agreement with the Democrats which provided for a single set of electors on a Fusion ticket for the presidential election of 1880.

The Republican victories in 1882 on all levels in the state election spelled an end to the political importance of the Greenback party.

The Democratic party picked up most of the Greenback supporters but enough of the third party members rejoined the Republicans to enable that party to maintain its dominant position in the state for the next thirty years.

The count-out scandal, fusion with the Democrats until its identity was lost, the party split, the poor showing of the Weaver ticket, and improving business conditions caused the rapid decline of the Greenback party in Maine.

The party's devotion to reform movements is illustrated by the following proposals which it sponsored: The abolition of imprisonment for debt, the adoption of the secret ballot, women's suffrage, the regulation of railroads, and the adoption of a shorter working day in manufacturing plants.

Nationally, and to a lesser extent in Maine, the Greenbackers served as predecessors of the Populists.

PREFACE

This paper traces the political career of the Greenback Party in Maine. Its aim is to survey the elements which contributed to the party's growth, the source of its political strength, the reasons for its decline and the major issues which it supported.

The writer should like to express his appreciation to those who have been of assistance in the preparation of this paper. Particularly, he should like to thank Mr. and Mrs. Otho Chase of Chase's Mills, Turner, Maine, for allowing him to consult their scrapbook on Solon Chase, the Bangor Public Library for permitting him to work in the stacks on their newspaper file, and to the owner and employees of the Ellsworth American, Ellsworth, Maine, for granting him access to their files and other kindnesses.

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1876-1884

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CHAPTER I

THE NATIONAL GREENBACK LABOR PARTY IN THE UNITED STATES, 1875-1884

The political activities of the Greenback party must be studied against the background of the social and economic conditions prevailing in the United States following the Civil War.

The Greenback movement must also be considered along with the other grassroots political protest organizations which waxed and waned from 1870 on into the 20th century. V. O. Key, Jr., points out the recurring agrarian political movements - "Although the 'farm problem' with the accompanying manifestations of political discontent has been with us almost continually since the Civil War, farmers' movements have risen and fallen during this time in something of a cyclical pattern reflecting, in part, changes in the economic status of agriculture."¹ While the Greenback movement at its inception was largely sponsored by urban workingmen²

¹ Key, V. O., Jr., Politics, Parties, and Pressure Groups, (Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York, 1946), p. 39.

² Haynes, Fred E., Third Party Movements since the Civil War, (State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City, 1916), p. 93.

its control soon passed to agrarian leaders in the upper Mississippi valley and owed its political strength to the farmers' support from that region. Buck writes of the post Civil War farmers' movements as "stages of the still unfinished agrarian crusade.... from its inception with the Granger movement, through the Greenback and Populist phases, to a climax in the battle for free silver."³ (He was writing in 1920.) Since the failure of the Populist campaign, when they fused with free silver Democrats in 1896, no effort has yet been made to organize a farm party on a national basis. The Bull Moose party in 1912 and the LaFollette progressives in 1924 were not primarily agrarian parties, though they appealed strongly to farmers of the Middle West.⁴ On a state wide basis the Farmers' Non-Partisan League was organized in North Dakota and in 1916 gained control of the state government there. While in power they authorized state-owned grain elevators and warehouses and granted special tax exemptions for farmers. "These laws," Merison and Commager write, "like the Granger and Populist laws of an earlier

³ Buck, Solon J., The Agrarian Crusade, (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1920), preface, pp. VII and VIII.

⁴ Fainsod, M. and Gordon L., Government and the American Economy, (W. W. Norton Company, New York, 1941), p. 42.

generation, were loudly denounced as class legislation throughout the East for no axiom of politics was more widely cherished in that section than the axiom that legislation for farmer or labor interests was class legislation, while legislation for manufacturing, banking, railroad and shipping interests was broadly national."⁵

The development of the direct primary may have made a national farm party unnecessary. Farmers may choose major party candidates on the state and congressional level who are sympathetic to their political views. "The direct primary has facilitated the process of 'boring from within' the major parties and made it less necessary for the leaders of movements of dissent to form new parties."⁶

The Congressional Farm Bloc was formed in the 1920's as a result of the agricultural depression following the return to normalcy after World War I. It was an attempt by western Republican Congressmen (the sons of the "Wild Jackass") from agricultural states to join on a legislative program with Southern Democrats to improve the lot of the farmer and to counteract the influence on the

⁵Morison, S. E., and Commager, H. S., Growth of the American Republic, Vol. II, (Oxford University Press, New York, 1937), pp. 212-213.

⁶Key, op. cit., p. 293.

Republican party by the business interests of the East. Unsympathetic presidents vetoed their major proposals which passed Congress.⁷

The plight of the farmer worsened with the deepening of the Depression to such an extent that during the 1930's one-fourth of all the rural households received public or private aid.⁸ By 1937 more than two out of five farmers were tenants who did not own the land upon which they worked, and their numbers were growing by 40,000 annually.⁹ According to the 1930 census farm tenancy in the leading corn and wheat producing states in the Midwest was above this national average, and in the South was much higher, rising in Mississippi to 72.2%.¹⁰ Between 1930 and 1935 bankruptcies and foreclosures took another 750,000 farms from their former owners.¹¹

⁷Binkley, W. E., American Political Parties, second edition, (Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1945), p. 355.

⁸Wecter, Dixon, The Age of the Great Depression, (MacMillan Company, New York, 1948), pp. 132-133.

⁹Ibid., p. 136.

¹⁰Morison, and Commager, op. cit., p. 204 and map chart opposite p. 203.

¹¹Wecter, op. cit., p. 135.

Beginning with the original AAA passed in 1933 (declared unconstitutional in 1935),¹² which provided for subsidy payments to farmers who cooperated with the Government to reduce surpluses on major crops,¹³ the New Deal attempted to do more for the farmer than any other federal administration in order, as Henry Wallace, then Secretary of Agriculture, stated, to overcome their (the farmers') "serious disadvantage in bargaining power with other groups and[will continue].... as long as low farm income makes it impossible for farm families to conserve our basic land and human resources for the future."¹⁴ Wecter quotes a Social Security Board historian on the reasons warranting the subsidies to farm families as saying "The most important agricultural surplus consists of young persons."¹⁵

The present agricultural subsidies based on parity with manufactured goods probably reached their height when the Government support payments for 1948 to potato growers in Aroostook County averaged \$15,000 for every farm in the county.¹⁶

¹²Kelley, A. H., and Harbison, W. A., The American Constitution, (W. W. Norton Company, New York, 1948), p. 728.

¹³Wecter, op. cit., p. 140.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 151.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶New York Times, August 21, 1949.

Agricultural groups now utilize their organizations as pressure groups and as lobbying agencies. Their major organizations, "from the extreme right to the left, are the National Grange, the American Farm Bureau Federation, and the Farmers' Union."¹⁷ The Grange, now revived and more conservative, has a claimed membership of 800,000 concentrated in the Northeastern states. The Farm Bureau claims 1,500,000 members and is strongest in the Midwest. The left wing National Farmers' Union has 500,000 members, largely in the Great Plains region.¹⁸

Although the rural population has steadily decreased in relation to urban population (By 1940 the rural farm population totaled 22.9 per cent, while 56.5 per cent of the nation's population was listed as urban dwellers),¹⁹ the political influence of the farmer is still strong; both major parties vie for his support. Democratic inroads into the traditionally Republican Midwest in 1948, climaxed by the capture of Iowa's electoral votes (Iowa had voted Republican in 1944),²⁰ contributed mightily to Truman's election to the presidency. The farmer's political allegiance, however, is not determined

¹⁷Key, op. cit., p. 55

¹⁸Fansod, and Gordon, op. cit., pp. 44-45.

¹⁹Hauser, P. M., and Taeuber, C., "Prospects for Future Growth," in Foundations of National Power, edited by Harold, and Margaret Sprout, (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1945), p. 656.

²⁰World Almanac, 1949, pp. 90-91.

wholly by his pocketbook. Arcostock County, for example, might well puzzle the Marxian economic determinist. The county remained safely Republican in 1948 by a vote of 9,459 to the Democratic total of 7,183.²¹

The period following the Civil War was characterized by the flowering of the industrial revolution; the pushing of the railroads to the Pacific; the rapid westward expansion of our population; and perhaps as much by the crossness of our society.

It was a period in which politics had sunk to a low point. Seemingly, little interested in the public welfare, the major parties concentrated their energies toward getting the spoils of office. Hofstadter calls his chapter on the politics of this period "The Spoilsmen: An Age of Cynicism" - "The parties of the period after the post Civil War were based on patronage, not principle; they divided over spoils, not issues."²² The above author quotes Sherman (Secretary of Treasury, Senator, and Republican presidential aspirant): "A party is in one sense a joint stock company in which those who contribute the most direct the action and management of the concern."²³

²¹Ibid., p. 72.

²²Hofstadter, Richard, The American Political Tradition, (Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1948), p. 167.

²³Ibid., p. 168.

The presidents between 1868 and 1884 were well-meaning but mediocre individuals. Ulysses S. Grant's administration was notable, chiefly, for the shady dealings of many of its leading officials who were Grant's personal friends. It was probably due only to the influence of the president that his private secretary, Colonel Babcock, involved in the so-called Whiskey Ring, escaped conviction and a jail sentence for his questionable "business" activities.²⁴ Schlesinger rates him (Grant) as one of our two presidential failures.²⁵

Hayes and Garfield, Grant's successors, received their party's nominations largely because they were available; that is, they had relatively few enemies and came from the politically strategic Middle West. They were compromise candidates agreed on by the real party leaders of this era - Blaine and Conkling - although in 1880 the Conkling-controlled delegates, supporting Grant for a third term, held out to the end and it was the Blaine and Sherman contingents that made possible the nomination of Garfield on the thirty-sixth ballot.²⁶

²⁴Josephson, Matthew, The Politicos, (Harcourt, Brace and Company, New York, 1938), pp. 203-225.

²⁵Schlesinger, A. M., Paths to the Present, (MacMillan Company, New York, 1949), pp. 96 and 99.

²⁶Josephson, op. cit., p. 160.

Morison and Commager depict Blaine as the typical politician of this period. With a keen intellect and magnetic personality, he was most interested in gaining personal power and office by whatever means were available. "For thirty years he exercised a controlling power in the councils of his party.... The perfect politician, he always knew how to influence votes and manipulate committees.... He was assiduous in cementing a corrupt alliance between politics and business. Deliberately and violently he [waved] the bloody shirt of the rebellion for partisan and personal purposes. His name is connected with no important legislation; his sympathies were enlisted in no forward-looking causes. He was as innocent of economic as of political ideas and ignored when he did not oppose the interests of the laboring and farming classes. His vision was narrow and selfish.... [and he had] little faith in democracy."²⁷

With the main purpose of both major parties during this period the gaining of office and the resulting patronage, the political campaigns were largely built on attacks on the opponent's candidate and oratorical flights for the benefit of the emotional - typified by Ingersoll's eloquence, "I belong to the party that believes in good crops that rejoices when there are forty bushels of wheat to the acre The Democratic party is a party

²⁷Morison, and Commager, op. cit., pp. 216-217.

of famine; it is a good friend of an early frost; it believes in the Colorado beetle and in the weevil."²⁸

Men of the integrity of Carl Shurz seemed to be exceptions rather than the rule, and during this period they were often reviled by the stalwarts.

The Democratic party appeared as devoid of ideas and principles as the Republican. In 1872 they endorsed the Liberal Republican candidate, Horace Greeley. About all Greeley and the Democrats had in common was an aversion to the radical reconstruction program for the South (and, of course, the desire to gain office).²⁹

Their candidate in the disputed election of 1876 was the conservative Samuel J. Tilden, known to his supporters as the Great Reformer, due to his efforts at breaking up the Tweed Ring while Governor of New York, but referred to by his opponents as the Great Forecloser, because of his war-time business activities.³⁰

In 1880 their nominee was General Winfield Hancock, a northern hero at Gettysburg, in an apparent effort to counteract the bloody shirt appeal of the Republicans and their candidate, General Garfield. A soldier president was inevitable in the 1880 election with General

²⁸Quoted in Josephson, op. cit., p. 289.

²⁹Ibid., p. 162.

³⁰Binkley, op. cit., pp. 303-04.

Weaver running as the Greenback candidate.³¹

In 1884 the Democrats were at last successful after a long patronage drouth. Cleveland won over Blaine in a close contest.³²

During this period neither the major parties' platforms nor their presidential candidates took cognizance of the farmers' problems. Little wonder that the more radical agrarian leaders turned to political agitation in an independent party in an attempt to correct what they considered to be discrimination against their interests.

While the politicians were engaged in their struggle for office great social and economic changes were taking place in America. The better agricultural land was being rapidly bought up from the Government or given away by the Homestead Act or to railroads; westward settlers were trying to grow their products in the semi-arid Great Plains region, and by 1890 the frontier was said to be nonexistent.³³

Probably the greatest phenomenon of this era was the tremendous growth in manufacturing and the concomitant growth of urban population and wealth. Urban wealth had increased from three billion in 1850 to forty-

³¹ Morison, and Commager, op. cit., p. 221.

³² Ibid., pp. 225-26.

³³ Ibid., p. 99.

nine billion dollars by 1890. Rural wealth during the same period had increased from four billion to only sixteen billion dollars.³⁴

Industrial growth, in many cases, was accompanied by the type of business ethics that we generally deplore today. Huntington, the California railroad builder, expressed a typical attitude when writing of his efforts on behalf of the Southern Pacific: "If you have to pay money to have the right thing done, it is only just and fair to do it..... If a man has the power to do great evil and won't do right unless he is bribed to do it, I think....it is a man's duty to go up and bribe [him]"³⁵ Darwin's theory in biology was applied to the economic field by the industrial leaders and their spokesmen. John D. Rockefeller indicated this with his statement: "The growth of a large business is merely a survival of the fittest."³⁶

It was the workingmen of the eastern cities who first brought the greenback issue up as a major plank in the political platform of the National Labor Union.³⁷

The greenbacks were paper currency notes issued to the amount of four hundred million by the Government

³⁴Buck, op. cit.

³⁵Quoted in Hofstadter, op. cit., p. 163.

³⁶Quoted in Ibid., p. 166

³⁷Haynes, Third Party Movements, pp. 92-93.

during the Civil War. By the end of the war in 1865, the greenbacks had fallen in purchasing power to roughly half of their face value.³⁸

Conservative leaders and business interests believed that the greenbacks should be redeemed in gold at the Treasury and retired. The Resumption Act was passed in 1875 and provided for the resumption of specie (gold) payment for greenbacks beginning January 1, 1879.³⁹

The cheap money advocates were opposed to this policy of currency contraction which they considered deflationary and detrimental to the interests of farmers and workingmen. J. B. Weaver expressed the Greenbackers' viewpoint on the Resumption Act in the following statement: "It [greenbacks] was to be redeemed in gold coin, and the coin was to be obtained by a new issue of interest-bearing long time [term] bonds, thus destroying our non-interest-bearing currency by converting it into interest-bearing debt." This would cause, "on the one hand, wrecked fortunes, suicides, helpless poverty, and broken hearts, and on the other exceptional individual fortunes, some of them so monstrous in magnitude as to be quite beyond the grasp of the human intellect."⁴⁰

³⁸Morison, and Commager, op cit., p. 66.

³⁹Ibid., p. 67.

⁴⁰Haynes, Fred E., James Baird Weaver, (State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City, 1919, pp. 222-23.

The inflationists also believed that greenbacks should be used in paying the interest and the principal on Government bonds. They were opposed, although belatedly, to the demonetization of silver in 1873. Weaver considered the demonetization unconstitutional, and on the floor of the House of Representatives held that "demonetization was the result of a great international conspiracy."⁴¹

The hard times following the panic of 1873 intensified the inflationary agitation. When the price of wheat had fallen from \$1.50 a bushel at the close of the Civil War to \$.87 in 1874,⁴² the farmer found it almost impossible to pay off mortgages and other debts which he had incurred in the more prosperous and inflationary war years. Largely because of this economic squeeze the more radical of the agriculturists turned to political action to alleviate their condition and joined the ranks of the Greenbackers. They believed that a further issue of greenbacks would raise the prices of their products.⁴³ "Inflate the currency," said Solon Chase, "and you raise the price of my steers."⁴⁴

The Independent party of Indiana, originating from the agitation of the Granger movement, adopted

⁴¹Ibid., p. 120.

⁴²Binkley, op. cit., p. 315

⁴³Buck, op. cit., p. 81.

⁴⁴Josephson, op. cit., p. 264.

Greenback ideas and called a political conference to be held in Indianapolis in November, 1874. Delegates from only seven states appeared. A program was adopted calling for the "proper solution of the money question." Many leaders in the Labor Reform Movement were on hand.⁴⁵

A Nominating Convention was held at Indianapolis on May 17, 1876. Two hundred and forty delegates from eighteen states were present. Their platform was centered on the issue of legal tender notes (greenbacks) interconvertible with bonds and repeal of the Specie Resumption Act. Peter Cooper, the New York philanthropist, then eighty-five years of age, was nominated for the presidency and Samuel F. Cary was selected as the vice-presidential candidate.⁴⁶

Cooper, who did not campaign actively, drew only 81,740 popular votes in the presidential election of 1876; a figure which represented less than one per cent of the total vote cast for all candidates.⁴⁷ In Illinois, the Greenbackers held a balance of power position which enabled them to designate Supreme Court Justice David Davis as Illinois Senator. As he was expected to be the independent member of the Electoral Commission which was called to decide on the election returns of 1876, it is possible that this move cost Tilden

⁴⁵Buck, op. cit., p. 264.

⁴⁶Ibid., pp. 83-85.

⁴⁷Morison, and Commager, op. cit., p. 663.

the presidency. Although Cooper himself was a New Yorker with strong labor support, 54,000 votes of his total, or 67 per cent, came from nine middle western states, ranging from Ohio and Michigan on the east to Kansas and Nebraska in the west.⁴⁸ This is an indication that the greatest strength of the Greenback party was now to be found among the discontented farmers in the upper Mississippi valley.

In 1877 the deepening agricultural depression and the growing industrial distress typified by the great railroad strikes that flared into violence and moved President Hayes to call out the Army to quell the disorder, and incidentally, to break the strikes, gained more converts to the Greenback cause.⁴⁹

The Greenbackers met in a conference at Toledo in February, 1878, to form a stronger organization. The delegates selected "National" as the party name and

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BUCK, op. cit., p. 88.

ments, and the prodigal waste of public lands."⁵⁰ Additional resolutions called for the suppression of bank notes and the issue of all money by the Government to be full legal tender and in sufficient amounts to insure full employment and low interest rates, coinage of silver, and reservation of public lands to those who actually settle there. Other planks aiming at labor support called for "The legislative reduction of the hours of labor, establishment of labor bureaus, abolition of the contract system of employing prison labor and the suppression of Chinese immigration."⁵¹ Marcus M. (Brick) Pomroy of Wisconsin, Greenback editor and organizer of the radical Greenback clubs, proposed (and the Conference adopted) a resolution forbidding fusion under any circumstances.⁵²

This resolution seemed to have little effect on the Greenback candidates for public office in the forthcoming election. General James Baird Weaver, the outstanding leader of the party on a national scale, owed his election to the House of Representatives from Iowa's Sixth Congressional District in the ballot of 1878 to the Democratic party's endorsement of his candidacy.⁵³

⁵⁰Ibid., pp. 88-89.

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 89-90.

⁵²Ibid., p. 90

⁵³Haynes, Weaver, pp. 102-103.

The outstanding vote-catching achievement of the Greenback party occurred in the off year Congressional elections of 1878 when the Nationals polled 1,060,000 votes across the country in electing fourteen Representatives to the Forty-sixth Congress.⁵⁴ Two Congressmen were elected from Maine and two from Iowa; all four took seats formerly occupied by Republicans.⁵⁵ The success of the Greenbackers on a state level, largely at the expense of the Republicans, enabled the Democrats to win control of the United States Senate for the first time since the Civil War.⁵⁶

General Weaver was considered the outstanding National Congressman, and in 1880 headed the Greenback ticket for the presidential election. An eloquent and respected Republican leader in Iowa following his war service, he was a relatively late convert to the Greenback movement. He had supported Hayes for the presidency in 1876, and it was not until the late summer of 1877 that he left his party for the Nationals' movement. He announced the break in a letter to the Republican candidate for Governor, Gear, dated August 29, 1877.

⁵⁴Josephson, op. cit., p. 265. Buck, in the Agrarian Crusade, gives the Greenback representation as fifteen.

⁵⁵Haynes, Weaver, p. 106.

⁵⁶Josephson, op. cit., p. 265.

"Differing as I do, so widely with the Republican party upon questions of finance, I find it impossible for me to go before the people and advocate a continuance of that policy.....I shall act with the independents."⁵⁷ He had additional reasons for leaving the Republican party. The railroad and the liquor interests (he was an earnest advocate of prohibition) had blocked his nomination for Congressman in 1874 and 1876 and for Governor in 1875.⁵⁸

The Greenbackers' hopes for a strategic bargaining position in the Forty-sixth Congress were dashed when the Democrats won an absolute majority of the House seats, 149 out of a total of 293. As a result their legislative influence was slight.⁵⁹ In 1879 Weaver introduced a bill, typical of the legislation demanded by the Greenbackers, authorizing the Secretary of the Treasury to issue six hundred million dollars of greenbacks as legal tender. His proposal, of course, got little support from the major parties, so had no possibility of enactment.⁶⁰

In April, 1880, General Weaver finally (he had been trying to get the floor for this purpose since early in the session) presented two resolutions to the House. The first stated that "all currency necessary for the use and convenience of the people, should be issued

⁵⁷Haynes, Weaver, pp. 92-93.

⁵⁸Ibid, pp. 76-77, and p. 103.

⁵⁹Ibid, p. 108.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 128.

and its volume controlled by the Government, and not by or through the banking corporations of the country." The second proposal urged the payment of the public debt (in form of interest-bearing bonds), and to do this, "the mints of the United States should be operated to their full capacity in the coinage of standard silver dollars, and such other coinage as the business interests of the country may require."⁶¹ Perhaps Weaver hoped for an irrevocable party split among the hard and soft money Democrats which would benefit the Greenbackers. The Democrats were reluctant to take a stand on this controversial issue so soon before the presidential election in the fall. The Republicans joined with the Nationals to force the issue to a vote. The final vote gave 84 in favor (eleven Greenbackers, one Republican and 72 Democrats largely from the Middle West and the South), 117 against (the Republicans and some Eastern Democrats) with 91 (Democrats for the most part) not voting.⁶²

Again in 1880 Weaver expressed the viewpoint of his party on the control of the fast-growing corporations in a speech before the House that anticipated the later Populist and the Progressive parties' demand for stronger Government regulation of these companies.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 133.

⁶²Ibid., p. 137.

They [the founders of the Nation] did not contemplate the creation of these corporations that are as real entities as are individuals - ideal persons that never die, and yet possess the power to acquire and hold property equally with real persons

The existence of such corporations seems to be necessary to the progress of our civilization; they are inseparable from it; but they should not be clothed by legislation with exclusive privileges over the citizen. The people must put hooks into the jaws of these leviathans and control them.

The accumulation of capital in the hands of these corporations of itself gives them immense power and tremendous advantage over individuals.... The corporation should seek no exclusive privileges, and the citizen should be just to the corporation.

....there is a growing tendency today in this country to concentration of power in the hands of the few.... And whenever....[Congress] has the opportunity to strike down that tendency, and to reduce all classes of citizens to an equal footing, and to remand them to common rights, they should avail themselves of the opportunity.⁶³

Weaver typified the growing fear and resentment of the rise of these industrial giants. Ten years later this concern led to the passage of the Sherman Anti-trust Act. The act itself, however, was emasculated in its early years by Supreme Court action and the reluctance of the administrative department to utilize it. ⁶⁴

The National Greenback Labor party held a conference in Washington, D. C., January, 1880. Congressman Murch from Maine was made permanent chairman of the National Committee and it was decided to hold the Nominating Convention in Chicago on June ninth. ⁶⁵

⁶³Ibid., pp. 148-150.

⁶⁴Kelley, and Harbison, op. cit., pp. 556-560.

⁶⁵Haynes, Weaver, pp. 157-158.

The anti-fusionist left wing of the Greenback party led by Pomroy met in St. Louis in March of 1880 but, when it was unable to find a candidate, adjourned to meet with the regular Nominating Convention in Chicago.⁶⁶

At the Chicago meeting Socialist Labor delegates were admitted to the convention and also other labor representatives. In all 830 delegates from thirty-six states attended. When the balloting for the presidential candidate got under way an informal poll showed Weaver ahead with 226 votes; Hendrick B. Wright, 126; Stephen Dillaye, 119; General Butler, 95; Solon Chase of Maine, 89; Edward P. Allis, 211; and Alexander Campbell, 21. As the formal balloting began several of the candidates withdrew their names and, as the Weaver vote began growing, delegates who had supported other candidates swung to the Iowa Congressman and made his selection unanimous. B. J. Chambers of Texas was nominated for the vice-presidency.⁶⁷

The program adopted was much like the Toledo program (see p. 16) except that no reference was made to the Resumption Act (which was already in effect and, as amended in 1878, provided that greenbacks would not be withdrawn from circulation). Additional planks were adopted favoring women's suffrage (Susan B. Anthony had

⁶⁶Buck, op. cit., p. 93.

⁶⁷Haynes, Weaver, pp. 160-161.

addressed the convention), a graduated income tax, and Congressional regulation of interstate commerce.⁶⁸

A committee (Solon Chase of Maine was a member) selected by the convention to notify Weaver formally of his nomination wrote to their candidate requesting him to devote his time "to personally addressing the people at public meetings during the campaign" because the press, the pulpit, and public speakers are to such an extent in the service and under the control of our political opponents.⁶⁹

General Weaver acted vigorously on this request. He said that he "traveled twenty thousand miles in his campaign, made fully a hundred speeches, shook the hands of thirty thousand people and was heard by half a million." He traveled the country from Arkansas to Maine.⁷⁰ "His campaign in Maine was described as a triumphal march. People were said to have traveled over two hundred miles to hear him at Portland."⁷¹

The results of the presidential election were disappointing to the actively campaigning Greenbackers. Weaver received 307,306 popular votes, or 3.34 per cent of the total cast.⁷² Weaver believed his party would

⁶⁸Buck, op. cit., p. 94.

⁶⁹Haynes, Weaver, pp. 161-162.

⁷⁰Buck, op. cit., pp. 94-95.

⁷¹Haynes, Weaver, p. 167.

⁷²Morison, and Commager, op. cit., p. 663.

win between twenty-five and fifty seats in the Congress (only ten were elected) and hoped to prevent either major party's presidential candidate from winning a majority in the electoral college, thus throwing the election to the House, where the Nationals might be able to dictate the choice.⁷³

Again the main strength of the Greenback party was to be found in the West. The ten states in the Midwest, Ohio to Nebraska, with Texas added (the home of E. J. Chambers, vice-presidential candidate), gave Weaver slightly over 210,000 votes, or more than 68 per cent of his total vote.⁷⁴

Many reasons have been advanced to account for the decline in Greenback supporters from over a million in the Congressional elections of 1878 to 300,000 in the presidential balloting of 1880. First, the party had no army of office holders, few professional politicians and very little money. Weaver's list of contributions to his campaign fund totaled only \$1,695,⁷⁵ a fantastically small amount for the traveling he undertook. Economic conditions had brightened somewhat for the worker and the farmer, making them less interested in political agitation. "The crop disasters in Europe in 1879, coupled

⁷³Haynes, Weaver, p. 172.

⁷⁴Computed from World Almanac, 1949, pp. 62-90.

⁷⁵Haynes, Weaver, p. 169.

with swollen harvests in America, marketed at most favorable prices, revived trade suddenly With the downward movement of prices checked at last, in 1879, and wheat worth more than a dollar a bushel reform became a dreary subject, and the crowds at the Greenback meetings dwindled to a fourth of their usual size."⁷⁶

Another explanation was "the usual disinclination of people to vote for a man who has no chance for election, however much they may approve of him and his principles, when they have the opportunity to make their votes count in deciding between two other candidates."⁷⁷

The political strength of the Greenback party waned rapidly after 1880. In the Forty-eighth Congress, elected in 1882, only one Representative was a member of the National party, although some Democrats were probably elected by fusion with the Greenbackers.⁷⁸ Fusion with the Democrats seemed to be the only path open to the Greenback party. General Weaver was defeated in the 1882 Congressional elections when the Democrats ran their own candidate, but when in 1884 and 1886 he received Democratic support he was able to win over his Republican opponent.⁷⁹

⁷⁶Josephson, op. cit., p. 266

⁷⁷Buck, op. cit., p. 95.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 96.

⁷⁹Haynes, Weaver, pp. 207, 214, and 258.

Weaver proposed fusion on a national scale to leading Democrats of the South and West in 1882 in accordance with Greenback principles.⁸⁰ While the Democrats ignored this proposal they nominated Thomas A. Hendricks of Indiana as their vice-presidential candidate in 1884.⁸¹ Hendricks was a soft money advocate⁸² who, running with the hard money Easterner, Cleveland, was expected to bring Western Greenback support for the Democratic ticket.

At the Greenback Nominating Convention in 1884 General Benjamin F. Butler was selected on the first ballot as the party's standard bearer.⁸³ Butler had an unsavory record in politics and it is said entered the race for the primary purpose of capturing "enough of the New York Irish Catholic vote to defeat the Democrats," and for this purpose he was aided by "funds of the Republican National Committee, secretly supplied him by William Chandler."⁸⁴ If true, the strategy failed to accomplish its mission, for Cleveland carried New York and the Nation. Butler did, however, get 17,000 votes in New York.⁸⁵

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 210.

⁸¹Morison, and Commager, op. cit., p. 226.

⁸²Haynes, Weaver, pp. 187-188.

⁸³Buck, op. cit., p. 96.

⁸⁴Josephson, op. cit., p. 368.

⁸⁵Morison, and Commager, op. cit., statistical table. p. 664.

Butler received only 133,825 popular votes, or 1.33 per cent of the total. Even St. John, the Prohibition candidate, exceeded the Greenback vote, with 152,000 popular ballots.⁸⁶ Much of Butler's support came from the labor element in the party. Three Eastern states, Massachusetts, New York and Pennsylvania, coupled with the increasingly industrial Midwestern state of Michigan, gave Butler 100,672 votes or almost 80 per cent of his total.⁸⁷

Western support of the Greenback candidate had fallen off sharply from the totals achieved by Weaver in 1880.⁸⁸ As a national political force the Greenback party was well on its way to oblivion. (However, a Greenback candidate and electors appeared on the presidential ballot in a few states in the 1948 elections.)

While the Greenback party itself disappeared, many of its principles and some of its leaders were to be found in the Populist party when that agrarian movement reached its height in the 1890's.⁸⁹ When the Silver Democrats won control of the party in 1896, they incorporated many of these demands in their platform.⁹⁰ When popular support of these measures became vocal and insistent

⁸⁶World Almanac, 1949, p. 79.

⁸⁷Ibid., Tables, pp. 62-90.

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹Buck, op. cit., pp. 143-145.

⁹⁰Morison, and Commager, op. cit., p. 261.

even the Republican party saw fit to use them.

"As year by year Republicans stole his [Bryan's] issues and enacted them into statutes, the Peerless Leader was wont to declare, good naturedly, that he could rule the Nation by losing the presidency."⁹¹

Most of the Greenbacker proposals have, in effect, if not to the letter, been put into law. The Federal Reserve Act of 1913 made for a more elastic currency and gave the Government a larger measure of control over its issue. The Greenbackers would have approved the inflationary move of going off the gold standard in 1933. Women's suffrage, a graduated income tax and popular election of United States Senators have been assured by Constitutional amendments.

The Greenback party never commanded the support of more than a small minority of the Western farmers it had hoped to enroll. Most of them apparently continued their allegiance to one of the major parties. Then too, the narrowness of their appeal, the belief that an inflated currency would cure most of the country's ills ruled out wholehearted support from reform elements in the East. While other planks were prominent in their party platforms, most of the leaders' energies were devoted to the currency issue alone.

⁹¹Binkley, op. cit., p. 319.

Commager points out that the attitude of most voters makes it extremely difficult for a minority party based on strict principles to grow on that foundation alone. They must have a wider appeal than to one economic group and must present a variety of issues rather than concentrate on one question, primarily.

"It would seem that Americans do not want, perhaps do not trust, parties that concentrate on particular issues and appeal to special groups, classes or sections..... It is this which will doubtless prevent either a farmer or labor party from attaining national status. And the suspicion that the Republican party had become an upper-class businessmen's party was not without effect in the catastrophic defeats of 1932 and 1936."⁹²

The Greenback party's importance lies in the fact it was the first manifestation of agrarian unrest on a national scale which indicated that the farmer was not wedded to the economic theory of laissez faire. It posed questions and issues which had to be taken up and solved at a later date.

⁹²Commager, Henry Steele, "Can Roosevelt Draw New Party Lines?" in New York Times, Sept. 4, 1938. Reprinted in Basic Issues of American Democracy, edited by Bishop, H. M., and Hendel, Samuel, (Appleton, Gentry Craft, New York, 1948), p. 234.

CHAPTER II

THE GREENBACK PARTY IN MAINE,
1878-1884

INTRODUCTION

The Greenback Labor political party, never more than a class, and, for the most part, a sectional party, really passed no threat to the major parties on the national scene. The Greenbackers could count no more than fifteen members of the national House of Representatives (1878), and their presidential candidate, General Weaver, in 1880 received less than four per cent of the popular vote.¹

In Maine, however, the Greenback party was able to cause the Republicans considerable political embarrassment. It supplanted the Democrats as the strong minority party, and with the support of that party elected a Greenback Governor, Harris M. Plaisted, in 1880 and gained control of the state House of Representatives in 1878. This break in the Republican vote in Maine after twenty years in power came, strange to say, when Maine's Republican delegation in Congress was considered to be unsurpassed in political acumen by that of any other state. All or almost all of Maine's representatives in Washington stood high in the party councils, a politically active and

¹See Chapter I, this paper.

vocal group. James G. Blaine, who was to head the Republican ticket in 1884, served as Senator, as President maker in 1880 and as Secretary of State until Garfield's death in 1881. Aging Senator Hannibal Hamlin, who retired in 1881, had been Vice-president during Lincoln's first term. Eugene Hale and William P. Frye had served in the House and were elected to fill the Senate seats of Blaine and Hamlin. Thomas B. Reed, later to be the autocratic Speaker, retained his Congressional seat throughout the Greenback era. Ex-Governor Nelson Dingley, Jr., was elected to Congress as Frye's replacement and later became well known for his tariff bill. The Greenback party sent two Representatives to Congress in 1878, Murch from the Fifth District and Ladd from the Fourth, and reelected them in 1880.

The growth of the party was phenomenal. In the election of 1876 only 520 votes were given to its gubernatorial candidate, Almon Gage, of Lewiston. Two years later the Greenbackers polled 41,000 votes for Joseph L. Smith, of Old Town, for Governor, elected two Congressmen and with the fusion-minded Democrats won control of the lower house of the state legislature. In 1880 Greenbacker General Harris M. Plaisted was elected Governor. The Greenback party's decline was just as

rapid as its growth. In 1882 the Republicans swept all the major offices, state and national, and the Fusion strength in the legislature was greatly reduced. By 1884 the Greenbackers were no longer a political force to be reckoned with by the dominant party.

As Democrat Eben F. Pillsbury editorialized in 1878, "The so-called Greenbackism will be short lived but it bids fair to kick up a devil of a dust while it does last."²

In Maine a large Civil War debt had been incurred and "from 1871-1889 the operating expenditures of the state were held to a minimum and efforts were directed toward liquidating the debt."³ In 1871 state revenue came "almost wholly" from the real estate tax. Taxes were later added on savings banks, railroads, telegraph and other utilities so that the real estate tax provided "only about half" the state revenue in 1889.⁴ "The panic of 1873 caused the state property tax to become a heavy burden on the people."⁵ This tax of course fell heavily on the farmers in the state and made them receptive to the Greenback party's call for retrenchment in the expenditures of the state government, then under Republican con-

²The Maine Standard, June 14, 1878, (E. F. Pillsbury and Company, Augusta), a Democratic weekly newspaper.

³Jewett, Fred E., A Financial History of Maine, (Columbia University Press, New York, 1937), p. 57.

⁴Ibid., pp. 56-57.

⁵Ibid., p. 57.

trol. It was customary to apply surplus revenue to the debt each year, but in 1877 the state closed its books with a \$36,000 deficit.⁶ This, in part at least, made for the large Greenback vote in the 1878 elections.

Many voters supported the Greenback party for purely political reasons. Some former Republicans had left that party because of the corruption exposed in the Grant administration.⁷ There was also a good deal of resentment toward the so-called ring in Maine that dictated patronage selections. Most of the opposition attacks were directed at Blaine, who they believed controlled the Republican party completely in this state. A Fusionist leader (unidentified) told General Chamberlain in 1880, "Distrust of Blaine more than anything is the origin and strength of the Greenback party in Maine."⁸ And, of course, as the Republican press emphatically pointed out, the new party attracted disappointed office-seekers from the older parties, men who attempted to use the rising tide of Greenbackism to advance their own political ambitions. The Democratic party, stigmatized as rebel

⁶Ibid., p. 43.

⁷Kennebec Journal, January 3, 1895. Republican Representative Bennett of Montville reported that he had joined the Greenback party because of the Salary Grab Act (1873). (Sprague, Owen and Nash, Augusta), a Republican Daily Newspaper.

⁸Joshua L. Chamberlain, A Sketch, The Twelve Days at Augusta, 1880. Author unknown, (Smith and Sale, Portland, 1906), p. 24.

sympathizers in the Republican "Bloody Shirt " campaigns, took the lead in urging fusion when the Greenbackers became a strong political force.

A combination then of political and economic conditions account for the rise of the Greenback party in the State of Maine.

CHAPTER III

THE GREENBACK PARTY IN MAINE,
1875-1878

Solon Chase, of Chase's Mills, Turner, is considered the founder of the party in Maine. A delegate to the Democratic State Convention in 1875, Uncle Solon proposed a soft money resolution which was voted down. Chase then withdrew from the Democratic party and set out to find converts for the new party.¹ In December, 1875, he began publishing Chase's Chronicle, a Greenback weekly newspaper. Throughout the Greenback era, Chase was extremely active in enunciating Greenback doctrines through the newspapers he edited and in speechmaking tours throughout the country.²

Solon Chase had twice been elected to the state legislature (1862, 1863) during the War as a Republican. He was appointed collector of internal revenue by President Johnson, and when the Senate refused to confirm the appointment, Solon left the party and joined the Democrats.³

"The Greenback religion fell on me out of a

¹Coe, op. cit., p. 189.

²Davis, Reverend B. V., The Turner Register, 1903-04, (H. E. Mitchell, Kents Hill, Maine, 1904), p.46.

³Coe, op. cit., p. 189.

clear sky. I was converted...."⁴ he is reputed to have said.

Even the Republican papers concede that Uncle Solon was a very effective campaigner. Dingley describes him as follows: "He was a rare and shrewd character. He used the vernacular of the farmer.... that captivated the tillers of the soil.... he was a quick-witted man.... dangerous to the Republican party."⁵ A reporter of the New York Tribune, after hearing Solon speak at Mechanic Falls, wrote: "He is not an office seeker. He is a zealot.... and is all the more dangerous for that."⁶ A more partisan reporter took a dimmer view of Chase's eloquence, saying, "Solon Chase hypnotized the gullible with his panacea for all financial ills."⁷

Almon Gage, of Lewiston, was the Greenback candidate for Governor in the state election of 1876. He received only 520 votes out of the nearly 137,000 cast; 315 of these votes came from Androscoggin County with Turner giving Gage the largest total, 96. Gage received 192 votes from Oxford County and 107 of this total came from the small town of Buckfield (which is only three or

⁴Solon Chase Scrapbook (unpublished), clippings. The above quote is taken from a High School paper written by Catherine Chase on her great uncle. The collection is owned by Otho Chase of Turner.

⁵Dingley, Edward Nelson, The Life and Times of Nelson Dingley, Jr., (Ihling Brothers and Everard, Kalamazoo, Michigan, 1902), p. 135.

⁶Solon Chase Scrapbook, unpagued.

⁷Ibid.

four miles west of Chase's Mills.)⁸ This indicates that the Greenback strength in 1876 centered around the home of Solon Chase.

Solon Chase ran for Congress in the Second District (Androscoggin, Franklin, Oxford and Sagadahoc Counties) on the Greenback ticket. He ran a poor third, getting only 550 votes. Frye, a Republican, was the winner with 13,683. S. Clifford Belcher, a Democrat, had 10,223. Over 200 of the Chase ballots came from Turner and Buckfield.⁹ The Greenbackers did not elect any members to the state legislature.¹⁰

In the presidential election in November, 1876, no Greenback vote is listed in the Maine Register. However, 824 votes were listed as scattering and, as 261 of these came from Androscoggin County, with Turner and Auburn giving the largest totals, and 205 from Oxford, with most of them credited to Buckfield, it is probable that most of these scattering votes were meant for Greenback electors. Peter Cooper was the Greenback presidential candidate in 1876.¹¹

In the off-year state election, then held annually, of 1877, the Greenback gubernatorial candidate,

⁸Maine Register, 1877, (Hoyt, Fogg and Donham, Portland), p. 99.

⁹Ibid., p. 100.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 144.

¹¹Ibid., p. 99.

Henry C. Munson, received 5,291 votes, or roughly two per cent of the ballots cast. The Greenback strength was concentrated in the central region of the state.

Somerset County gave Munson 1,410 votes, Androscoggin 1,123, and Oxford 962, while Aroostook County, later a fusion stronghold, gave only two votes, Knox, later to be controlled by the Nationals, gave only six, and Waldo 63.¹²

Two Greenback candidates were elected to the state House of Representatives, both from Somerset County, Michial Dyer of Pittsfield and Charles F. Dore, representing Athens and Harmony.¹³ Both were former Democrats. Dyer was a farmer and Dore a school teacher and farmer with a "large farm, well stocked."¹⁴

In 1878 the Greenbackers began a very active campaign. Greenback clubs were formed in the towns and several more newspapers swung over to the soft money cause; among them the Belfast Progressive Age, edited by William R. Rust, and formerly Republican, the Camden Herald, edited by W. W. Perry, and the Calais Times, edited by C. R. Whidden, Jr.¹⁵

Solon Chase, attired in a large white hat and

¹²Maine Register, 1878, p. 99.

¹³Ibid., p. 143.

¹⁴Kennebec Journal, January 3, 1878, biographical sketches of legislators.

¹⁵Maine Standard, April 26, 1878.

often with "them steers," stumped the state, spreading the Greenback gospel. A typical speech included the following: "I bought a pair of steers three years old and paid a hundred dollars for them. After I had kept them a year they were worth no more.... If I had bought a [Government] bond for the hundred dollars I would have received interest on the bond which would have increased in value as fast as a pair of steers grew."¹⁶

Business conditions grew steadily worse. Between March, 1877, and March, 1878, there were 190 bankruptcy cases in the State of Maine.¹⁷ With a \$36,000 deficit for 1877¹⁸ and with state taxes, largely on real estate, up 33-1/3 per cent for 1878,¹⁹ the Greenbackers found fertile ground for their retrenchment campaign.

The party in power of course had to bear the political blame for the unfavorable economic conditions. "Tramps are the walking advertisements of Republican misrule" and "Developments of fraud and failures in business keep pace together.... [under] Grantism"²⁰ were typical statements of the anti-Republican press.

The Republican party leaders and the Republican

¹⁶Solon Chase Scrapbook.

¹⁷Maine Standard, April 26, 1878.

¹⁸See Chapter II, this paper.

¹⁹Maine Standard, April 5, 1878.

²⁰Ibid., February 22, and April 26, 1878.

press had little sympathy with the debtors who were forced to the wall by the financial depression and the deflation of the currency."...the fault was in the borrowing [They should not have] borrowed beyond their means."²¹ The Republicans, however, were extremely worried about the growth of the new party in the state. Representative Llewellyn Powers, Houlton, of the Fourth Congressional District, and Thomas B. Reed, Portland, from the First District, came back from Washington for a quick political check on their districts and reported that they were "greatly disheartened" by the political outlook. They said they had found the Greenbackers "far more formidable" than they had thought.²² Eugene Hale, of Ellsworth, in the Fifth District, in the House, and Blaine in the Senate, considered it politically expedient to vote with the soft money Congressmen against further withdrawals from circulation of greenbacks by the Treasury when they were sent in to be redeemed.²³

Blaine later stated in a campaign speech at an Ellsworth Republican rally August 26, 1878, "It was a great misfortune to a commercial people to have the question of finance become a political question."²⁴

²¹Ellsworth American, August 29, 1878.

²²Maine Standard, May 31, 1878.

²³Ibid., May 10, and June 7, 1878.

²⁴Ellsworth American, August 29, 1878.

Apparently he preferred the less controversial (in the North, at least) Bloody Shirt campaigns which he and the Republican party traditionally found useful.

The Greenback State Convention was held in Lewiston June 4, 1878, with Solon Chase presiding, as temporary chairman. Over two hundred delegates heard speeches by Solon Chase, F. M. Fogg of Auburn (later a councillor), W. W. Perry, editor of the Camden Herald, and Peter Cooper's secretary, a Mr. Carsie, from New York.²⁵

Thomas M. Plaisted of Lincoln, Chairman of the Committee on Resolutions, presented the following platform, which was adopted:

The National Greenback Party is an independent party, forced into existence by the exigencies of the times and intended to restore to the country that purity of administration and wisdom of legislation, which is in accordance with the civilization and intelligence of the nineteenth century. The National Greenback Party of Maine endorse the platform laid down by the Toledo Convention,, February 22nd, 1878 [See Introduction p. 16] and briefly enunciate the policy of the Greenback party in Maine in the following propositions:

1. We declare our fealty to the American monetary system; the abolition of all bank issues; the free and unlimited coinage of gold and silver; and the issuing by the government of full legal tender paper money, receivable for all dues, and payable for all debts public and private, in accordance with existing contracts and in amounts sufficient to meet the wants of trade, to give employment to all labor, and to enable the people to do a cash business, and to relieve them from the debt system, which has made the industrial and commercial classes the slaves and

²⁵Ibid., June 6, 1878.

drudges of the credit managers of the world.²⁶

3. We declare our opposition to every measure looking to the resumption of specie payment, the monarchical system of finance which puts all the interest of industry, trade and commerce in the hands of the few, and enforce a monopoly of wealth destructive of the highest material good of society.

4. We proclaim our uncompromising hostility to the perpetuation of the system of Government bonded indebtedness which is calculated to burden unborn generations, and declare that the Government should use all funds now hoarded for resumption purposes to pay and cancel outstanding bonds.

5. The contraction policy now being pursued is proving ruinous to all the business and industrial interests of the country and ought to be removed.

6. We demand that all legislation shall be enacted and so administered as to secure to each man as nearly as practicable the just rewards of his own labor.

7. We denounce the red flag of Communism imported from Europe, which asks for an equal division of property.

8. We favor simple, plain and economical governments; as few laws as possible, and they rigidly enforced; as few officials as possible, and they held to close accountability. To this end we demand the abolition of all useless offices.

9. We are opposed to the nomination for office of the old politicians, especially those who have been for a long time, and are now in the employment of the Government, but we favor the nomination of new men, representing the business and industrial classes.

10. Biennial sessions of the legislature be submitted to the people (as proposed amendment to the Constitution.

11. A reduction of all salaries to a reasonable amount.

²⁶Ibid.

12. The abolishment of imprisonment for debt.²⁷

Solon Chase, as chairman, expressed pride in the growth of the party and prophesied: "...the vote we are going to throw this fall will strike both parties like a bolt of chain lightning," and summarizing the Greenback financial theory stated "We say to John Sherman [Secretary of the Treasury] unlock your hoard, go to England and pay fifty million of our debt. You inflate the currency and you rise [sic] the price of my steers and at the same time you pay the public debt."²⁸

Chase withdrew his name from the gubernatorial canvass and Joseph L. Smith, a successful lumberman from Old Town, was nominated as Greenback candidate for Governor. Smith had been a pre-war Democrat, then a Republican. As a Republican he had served in the state legislature both as representative and as senator.²⁹ Smith, in accepting the nomination, is reported to have said "God only knows, but if I can do you any good, I am willing to do so. I never saw such a body of earnest men. You can do wonders if you will."³⁰

The Democratic State Convention, held in Portland, June 18, went half way over to Greenback principles -

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid.

one resolution opposed the further issue of Government bonds and another stated, "We are opposed to an irredeemable currency and the present national banking system; but favor the gradual substitution of greenbacks for national bank bills."³¹

Only a small delegation came to the Democratic Convention from Aroostook (eleven), Penobscot (seventeen), and Piscataquis (thirteen), compared to York (100) and Cumberland (123). It was believed that many of the Democrats in Northeastern Maine had followed the lead of Marcellus Emery, editor of the Bangor Commercial, in going over to the Greenback party.³²

There was some Greenback or fusion sentiment in the convention, with five votes given to Joseph Smith as Democratic candidate for Governor. The convention nominated Dr. Alonzo W. Garcelon, a Lewiston physician and former Republican.³³ He had served in the Maine House and Senate and was mayor of Lewiston in 1871. He had been defeated for the Republican Congressional nomination from the Second District in 1868 by Samuel P. Morrill.³⁴ He followed Greeley in 1872 and "drifted" into the Democratic party.³⁵

³¹Ibid., June 20, 1878.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid., June 27, 1878.

³⁴Coe, op. cit., p. 137.

³⁵Ellsworth American, June 27, 1878.

The Republican Convention met in Portland, July 30, 1878, with Blaine as chairman, and renominated Governor Connor. It adopted "sound" money planks and denounced "the mischievous agitation of demagogues in and out of Congress for measures which . . . would bring permanent disaster and ruin to business, discredit and dishonor upon the nation."³⁶

Apparently, the transportation companies wished to have the ruling politicians favorably disposed, for the steamboat company running between Machias and Portland offered free return tickets to accredited delegates who used their services, and most of the railroads in the state followed suit.³⁷

The Greenback party nominated Congressional candidates in all districts in the state. In only the Fourth District (composed of Penobscot, Piscataquis and Aroostook counties) was fusion between the Democrats and the Greenbackers effected. There George W. Ladd, a Bangor merchant and former Democrat, was running on the Greenback ticket. The Democrats had no candidate in the field.³⁸

In the Fifth Congressional District (composed

³⁶Dingley, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

³⁷Ellsworth American, July 25, 1878. The Great Eastern and the Boston and Maine Railroads did not offer this bargain to the delegates.

³⁸Ibid., August 1, 1878. Ladd had run unsuccessfully for Congress as a Democrat in 1868.

of Knox, Waldo, Hancock and Washington counties) the Greenback party nominated Thompson H. Murch of Rockland, former Democrat and Secretary of the National Stonecutters Union Local.³⁹ The opposition made much of the fact that Murch had had little formal education and owned no property. The Kennebec Journal called him "a striker and Communist."⁴⁰ Although the Democrats nominated a candidate in that district, Joseph H. Martin of Camden, fusion sentiment was strong and the Democrats did not campaign actively for their candidate. The race boiled down to a contest between Murch and Eugene Hale of Ellsworth, the Republican candidate, who had served five consecutive terms in the House of Representatives.⁴¹

The Republicans and their newspapers worked assiduously to discredit the new party as a dangerously radical group and expressed the hope that hard money Democrats would recognize in the Republicans "the most fitting exponents of their views and will break through party lines and rally to [their] support."⁴²

The anti-fusion Democratic press urged party members to keep out of the Greenback party, which was

³⁹Ibid., July 4, 1878.

⁴⁰Ibid., July 25, 1878.

⁴¹Ibid., August 22, 1878.

⁴²Ibid., August 8, 1878.

sure to be short-lived; but added when the choice lay between a Greenbacker and a Republican that "anything was preferable to a Republican [and his party's] organized system of scoundrelism."⁴³

With the excesses of the Paris Commune of 1871 fresh in the public's mind, the Republican press attempted to attach the Communist label to the Greenback party, a tactic still in favor with some elements of the conservative press to discredit groups and organizations that they consider politically or economically radical.

"Once in power, the better element of the [Greenback] party will be overridden by the Communist element, which will not stop until all the horrors of the red flag Communists have been enacted in this country." Let this be "a loud warning to the farmers of Maine to beware how they encourage the Communist spirit in this state by patronizing the Greenback party...."⁴⁴

Congressman Burrowes of Michigan, speaking at a Republican rally, along with Senator Blaine, at Ellsworth on August 26, 1878, indicated "how closely allied with the Communistic element the [Greenback] party has become."⁴⁵

The Republican papers also tried to counteract the Greenback appeal to the working man by decrying the

⁴³Maine Standard, May 3, 1878.

⁴⁴Ellsworth American, August 1, 1878.

⁴⁵Ibid, August 29, 1878.

appeal to class interests, also a time-honored device, and pointing to the Republican party as the true friend of the laborer. An editorial in the Ellsworth American stated: "There is no capitalist class in this country. Almost every rich man in America began life as a poor boy....[This is] a way open to all....[Anyone by hard work and frugal living may reach] a position of affluence"
46

The Lewiston Journal, in attacking a speech by Leo Miller of New York, a Greenback campaign speaker, roughly paraphrased the famous words of George Baer, president of the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad, given some twenty years later. "The capitalist is a truer friend of the laborer than any of those loud mouthed demagogues who so loudly denounce him...."⁴⁷

Miller was one of the most effective campaigners in the Greenback camp, and one who may have received some of his ideas from Marxist theory. In a speech at the Hancock County Greenback Convention in Ellsworth, August 10, 1878, he is reported to have announced, "All property is the result of labor, therefore, all property by right belongs to the laborer."⁴⁸ He was cordially detested and often maligned by the Republicans. He was referred to alliteratively as "Malodorous" Miller,⁴⁹

⁴⁶Ibid., August 15, 1878.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ibid., August 29, 1878.

presumably because of his offensive political ideology, and as "Free-lover" Miller, as he was accompanied by his common law wife on the speaking tour.⁵⁰

In addition to the political leaders in the state, the Maine Republicans brought in a delegation of out of state speakers. This group was led by James A. Garfield, who appeared in Lewiston on September second.⁵¹

Not disposed to overlook any political bets, the Republican papers, after warning honest money Democrats, and Republicans also, of course, to stay clear of the revolutionary Greenbackers, and urging them to support the Republicans, now counseled the Republican Greenbackers, "that the Democrats are using the Greenback party in an attempt to ride to power," and suggested that they return to the Republican fold.⁵²

With the election at hand (September ninth), the Ellsworth American suggested to its readers that "gratitude be shown" to Congressman Hale, who was responsible for the federal appropriation of forty thousand dollars for dredging the Union River (which runs through Ellsworth),⁵³ a piece of typical pork barrel legislation, and urged Republicans, "you should aid in getting every

⁵⁰Ibid., August 8, 1878.

⁵¹Dingley, op. cit., p. 137.

⁵²Ellsworth American, September 5, 1878.

⁵³Ibid.

man to the polls who thinks as you do."⁵⁴ The Bangor Whig and Courier, edited by Charles Boutelle, later Republican Congressman, one of the most vituperative of the Republican organs, reviled the Greenback party as "a combination against national honor and decency."⁵⁵

The results of the 1878 election were generally favorable for the Greenback party and served a staggering blow to the Republicans. With commendable understatement an American editorial reported "The result is not what we would have wished nor what we expected We did not look for so complete a sweep...."⁵⁶ The Lewiston Journal was more crestfallen and worried about the future of democratic government, "[The result] is a most unfavorable commentary on the capacity of the people for self-government."⁵⁷

Out of a total vote for Governor of 126,169, Seldon Connor, the Republican candidate, received 56,554, or forty-five per cent of the ballots cast; Alonzo Garcelon, Democrat, 28,208, or twenty-two per cent; and Joseph L. Smith, National Greenback, 41,371, or thirty-three per cent of the popular vote. As no candidate won a majority of the popular votes, the contest must be re-

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Quoted in Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid., September 12, 1878.

⁵⁷Quoted in Ibid., September 19, 1878.

ferred to the state legislature according to the Constitutional provisions in effect at that time. Smith ran ahead of the field in Penobscot, Somerset and Waldo counties, indicating the shift of Greenback strength toward Eastern Maine.⁵⁸ Alonzo Garcelon was elected Governor by the legislature.⁵⁹

The Republicans lost their control of the state legislature; 65 Republicans, 57 Greenbackers, 27 Democrats and 2 independents were elected to the House of Representatives. Twenty Republicans, ten National Greenback candidates, and one Democrat were chosen for the Senate. A majority of representatives from Penobscot, Piscataquis, Somerset and Waldo counties were Greenbackers. In Penobscot County fourteen of the eighteen representatives were Greenbackers. Of the four Republican representatives, two came from Bangor and one from Brewer. Only Washington, Oxford and Sagadahoc Counties failed to seat a single Greenback House member. The great majority of the Greenbackers came from small towns and rural areas. One was elected from Bangor, one from Westbrook and one from Ellsworth. The remainder were elected from smaller communities.

In the Senate, all four Penobscot members were Greenbackers; both of Waldo's; and one each from Knox,

⁵⁸Maine Register, 1879, p. 99.

⁵⁹Kennebec Journal, January 4, 1879.

Piscataquis, Somerset and Aroostook counties.⁶⁰

In the Congressional elections the Greenbackers were successful in the Fourth and the Fifth districts. In the other districts the Republicans won only by a plurality.

In the First District, composed of York and Cumberland counties, Thomas B. Reed of Portland, the Republican incumbent, was reelected. He received 13,483 votes; Samuel J. Anderson, Democrat, of Portland, 9,333; Edward H. Gove, Greenback, of Biddeford, 6,348. This was the only district in the state in which the Democrats ran ahead of the Greenbackers. The Greenbackers received most of their support in the smaller towns of the district. They received less than 500 votes in Portland (the home of Anderson and Reed) and failed to carry Gove's home city, Biddeford.⁶¹

In the Second Congressional District, which includes Androscoggin, Franklin, Oxford and Sagadahoc counties, William P. Frye of Lewiston, the Republican Congressman, won his seat with 11,434 votes. Solon Chase, Greenback, of Turner, received 8,472 votes. S. Clifford Belcher, Democrat, of Farmington, ran third, with 3,332 votes. The Republican candidate won handily in the cities but was given smaller margins in the less

⁶⁰Maine Register, 1879, pp. 106-144.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 100.

populous communities.⁶²

In the Third District, composed of Kennebec, Somerset, Lincoln and the western part of Knox County, Stephen D. Lindsey, Republican, of Norridgewock, ran ahead of his opponents with 11,373 votes. William Philbrick, Greenback, of Skowhegan, received 8,351 and Franklin Smith, Democrat, of Waterville, got 5,895. The Greenbackers were given a very small vote in the larger cities, Augusta and Waterville, and lost Philbrick's home town, Skowhegan, to the Republican candidate.⁶³

In the Fourth Congressional District the Fusion movement was successful. Llewellyn Powers of Houlton, the Republican incumbent, lost his seat to George W. Ladd, a Bangor merchant, Greenbacker and former Democrat. The combined forces of Democrats and Greenbackers gave Ladd 12,921 votes. Powers received 10,095. Ladd carried his home city, Bangor, by fewer than a hundred votes but built up his margin in the smaller towns in the district.⁶⁴

In the Fifth District, Eugene Hale, Republican, of Ellsworth, was unseated by Thompson H. Murch, Greenback candidate and former Rockland stonecutter. "....The

⁶²Ibid., p. 100.

⁶³Ibid., p. 101.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 104.

head centre of all strikes and troubles which have occurred on the granite islands" [off Rockland].⁶⁵ Murch received 11,353 votes to Hale's 9,911. Joseph H. Martin, Democrat, Camden, whom the Republicans accused of making a half-hearted campaign, ran a bad third with only 2,177 votes. Murch won Ellsworth, Hale's home city, by less than a hundred votes, and Belfast by thirty, but in the other cities in the district (Rockland, Calais, Eastport and Machias) the Republicans ran ahead of the opposition.⁶⁶

Of the total vote for Congressional candidates, the Republicans received forty-five per cent, the same percentage they polled of the gubernatorial vote. Due to the Fusion movement in the Fourth and Fifth districts, the Greenbackers received thirty-eight per cent of the total, against thirty-three per cent in the vote for Governor. The Democratic percentage fell from twenty-two per cent to seventeen per cent. (The Democrats, of course, had no candidate running under their banner in the Fourth District.)⁶⁷ The Greenbackers elected two of the state's House members, and as the three winning Republican aspirants received only pluralities in their districts it gave the Fusion movement added emphasis. Professional politicians and would-be professionals in

⁶⁵Quoted from Belfast Age in Ellsworth American, July 11, 1878.

⁶⁶Maine Register, 1879, p. 105.

⁶⁷Computed from Ibid., pp. 100-105.

the Greenback and Democratic parties, with an eye on the 1880 Congressional and presidential elections, urged their supporters to unite against the Republicans.⁶⁸

Solon Chase, though opposed to fusion except on the Greenbackers' terms, saw the Republican party as the real obstacle to the new party's rise to power. He is quoted as saying, "We cannot afford to waste any powder on the old Democratic party, but we must pour the hot shot into the Republican camp."⁶⁹

On the county level the 1878 election results favored the Republicans. Only Somerset and Waldo counties elected a full slate of Fusion officials. In Aroostook, the Fusionists elected a County Treasurer; in Hancock, a Fusion County Commissioner; in Knox, a Fusion Treasurer and Commissioner; Lincoln, Sheriff, Register of Probate and a Commissioner; York, Sheriff and County Attorney. The remaining counties elected Republican county officials.⁷⁰

The year 1878 brought high hopes to the Greenbackers for future success and threw a political scare into the Republican camp. In one year they had jumped from an insignificant group in this state to control of

⁶⁸From the Belfast Age and Bangor Commercial in Ellsworth American, November 21, 1878.

⁶⁹Ibid., October 3, 1878.

⁷⁰Ibid., September 12, 1878.

the state legislature, elected two of the five Congressmen and made possible the election of a Democratic Governor. By so doing they struck a blow at Blaine's hopes for the Republican presidential nomination in 1880. Little wonder that the Republicans began to lay the ground work for an all out campaign to recapture the state in the 1879 election. As the American editorialized after the 1878 election returns were in,"Gentlemen Greenbackers, the fight has just begun."⁷¹

The Greenback party in Maine, as has been pointed out, received its strongest support from rural agricultural communities, with the organized workers in the stone quarries along the coast (strongest in Waldo and Knox counties) also strongly for the Greenbackers. Generally speaking, the Greenback party received relatively few votes from urban centers where the Republican party was usually dominant. Its strength was not based on the logic of its financial theory but, like its political descendant, the Populist party, made its appeal to the tax-burdened, debt-ridden farmers who saw as their only salvation a retrenchment policy on the part of the state government and legislation to control what they considered the oppressive money power. The Greenback leaders, with the possible exception of the so-called

⁷¹Ibid.

political hacks, believed with Wendell Phillips,
"that once awake, the masses will smash rings, journals
and parties....."⁷²

The Greenback party could look back on 1878
with a good deal of satisfaction.

⁷²Letter from Wendell Phillips to James G. Blaine, dated September 16, 1878, printed in Ibid., October 10, 1878.

CHAPTER IV

THE GREENBACK PARTY IN MAINE,
1879

Nine of the ten Greenbackers in the Maine Senate for 1879 are included in the biographical sketches published by the Kennebec Journal. Four of the nine gave their occupation as farmers (three as merchants or traders). Five of these members had been Republicans. Four of these five left the Republican party to support Greeley in 1872 and had then gone to the Democratic party until 1878.¹

Of the fifty-seven Greenbackers in the House, five failed to return their biographical questionnaires. Of the fifty-two answering, thirty indicated they were former Democrats, twenty-two were formerly Republicans. Thirty, or nearly sixty per cent, reported that farming was their chief occupation. Seven were merchants and four were mechanics. The laboring man was poorly represented with only two carpenters, one mason, one expressman, and one millworker on the legislative rolls.²

One Greenbacker, Amosa Hatch, Jr., of Alton, reported he "...left the Republican party because it favored the rich at the expense of the poor."³

¹Kennebec Journal, January 2, 1878.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

One of the knottiest political problems to face the Democrats and the Greenbackers was the equitable selection of deserving applicants for state offices from both parties. The State Committees of both parties had met for a conference at the Gardiner home of Charles H. White, the chairman of the Greenback State Committee, early in November to discuss the appointment question.⁴

The Democratic and Greenback members of the legislature, caucusing together on the evening of December 31st, 1878, in the Senate Chamber, nominated Edmund Madigan, a Houlton Democrat, for President of the Senate, and Melvin Frank, a Democratic lawyer from Portland, for Speaker of the House. Frank was subsequently elected Speaker. J. Manchester Haynes, Augusta Republican, was chosen President of the Senate.⁵ Haynes was considered a strong Blaine lieutenant. The Democratic Boston Post reported "James G. Blaine has been chosen President of the Senate. The duties will be performed by J. Manchester Haynes."⁶

At the Fusion caucus, on January 1, 1879, the suggestion of Representative Hill of Exeter that the Greenbackers have the Secretary of State and the State Treasurer, and the Democrats fill the offices of Attorney General and Adjutant General, was adopted.⁷ On January

⁴Ellsworth American, November 21, 1878.

⁵Kennebec Journal, January 2, 1879.

⁶Ibid., January 7, 1879.

⁷Ibid., January 2, 1879.

2nd, the House and Senate convened together and elected the following officials: Edward H. Gove, the unsuccessful Greenback Congressional candidate in the First District in the fall election, Secretary of State; Charles H. White, the chairman of the Greenback State Committee, State Treasurer; William H. McLellan, a Belfast fusion-minded Democrat, Attorney General; Samuel D. Leavitt, an Eastport hard-money Democrat, as Adjutant General.⁸ The members of the Governor's Council, who were later to be the focus of the count-out dispute, were: The radical Greenbacker Frank M. Fogg of Auburn; Edwin C. Moody, York; Charles H. Chase, Portland, Simon S. Brown, Fairfield; Halsey H. Monroe, Thomaston; John B. Foster, Bangor; and Fred Parker, Presque Isle.⁹

As no candidate for Governor received a majority of the votes cast, the selection devolved upon the legislature. According to the legal provisions, the House must choose two names from the top four candidates. The Senate must then select the Governor from the two candidates chosen by the House. On a strictly party vote the Fusion House gave Smith (Greenback) and Garcelon (Democrat) eighty-five votes and Connor and Robie (Republicans) sixty-four.¹⁰ The Republican Senate was thus confronted with the names of only the opposition candidates, Smith

⁸Ibid., January 3, 1879.

⁹Ibid., January 4, 1879.

¹⁰Dingley, op. cit., p. 146.

and Garcelon. They decided to choose "of the two evils the one it believed to be the least [sic]"¹¹ So the twenty Republicans and Democratic Senator Madigan, who had been the Fusion candidate for President of the Senate, voted for Garcelon, while the ten Greenbackers supported their candidate, Joseph L. Smith.¹² Thus Garcelon, the candidate with the fewest popular votes in the fall election became Governor of the state.

In his inaugural address, on January 8, 1879, Governor Garcelon stressed the unfavorable business conditions and suggested certain legislative reforms....

....Financial distress prevails to an unusual extent; property has depreciated in value; business interests are prostrated; and thousands of our people are out of employment, and other thousands [can] barely keep themselves and their families from the poor house; interest and taxes are paid with extreme difficulty or not at all and in all circles there is a feeling of despondency in relation to business enterprises.

Our state expenditures have quadrupled during the last twenty years unnecessary offices should be abolished and personnel in every department reduced to a minimum."

Garcelon also called for biennial sessions of the legislature and a change in the time of the state elections to coincide with the national elections to save expenses.

He denounced the existing tax system as un-

¹¹Ellsworth American, January 9, 1879.

¹²Kennebec Journal, January 4, 1879.

fair to farm and real estate holders and suggested that invested capital and savings accounts be taxed.

Garcelon asked that the legal interest rate of six per cent be restored to prevent usurious interest charges.

On the controversial free high school question the Governor held that while the state should provide more help to the poorer towns to support the common (elementary) schools whose object "is the education of the masses within certain limits," he asserted that "the study of the dead languages and abstruse sciences in these schools [free high schools] is of very questionable utility" and felt those schools should be the responsibility of the towns. Very few students from the rural areas attended these schools, the Governor reported, and so the general public should not be called upon to support them.

On the money question Garcelon favored redeemable treasury notes to replace bank notes. He called the banks a money monopoly, and while not against them per se, thought they should not be allowed to issue money bills and so control the currency.¹³

Greenback members of the legislature elected on their retrenchment program advocated the cutting of

¹³Governor's Message reported in Ibid., January 9, 1879.

all possible expenses and the reduction of appropriations. Representative Amos Pickard, a Bangor Greenbacker, opposed the customary free newspapers, paid for from the State Treasury, in a House debate January 2, 1879. He stated that he "came here this year determined to vote for no appropriation which was not absolutely necessary."¹⁴ Greenback Senator Randall Ellis of Belfast proposed a committee to investigate the state civil service to see if cuts could be made in their offices and reductions in salaries "to correspond with the times."¹⁵

The House failed to effect any economy on the newspaper question, however. It was voted that all members would receive a daily copy of both the National Democrat, the Fusion organ, edited by Eben F. Pillsbury in Augusta, and the Kennebec Journal.¹⁶ The Journal was referred to by the Springfield Republican as "Blaine's home organ" and a "bloody shirt" newspaper.¹⁷

The House, however, cut the free allotment of stationery to its members from the customary three to two boxes, the Senate later concurred, and voted against the traditional free jack knife to each member.¹⁸ As members of the legislature received only one hundred and fifty

¹⁴Ibid., January 3, 1879.

¹⁵Ibid., January 4, 1879.

¹⁶Ibid., January 10, 1879.

¹⁷Maine Standard, May 10, 1878.

¹⁸Kennebec Journal, January 10, 1879.

dollars, plus one round trip mileage allowance, for the annual session which usually lasted over two months, perhaps there was some justification for their failure to economize further on what they considered their prerogatives.

The legislature later indicated its disapproval of economy when applied to itself. A bill to double the mileage allowance, then ten cents a mile each way for one round trip, for legislators passed both Houses but was vetoed by Governor Garcelon. He called it an unconstitutional measure, as members cannot legally raise their own pay during a session. Both Houses failed to override his veto.¹⁹

Representative Amos Pickard's proposals for biennial elections and a change of the election date to correspond with national elections was referred to the Judiciary Committee.²⁰ Although the committee reported unfavorably on the biennial session proposal, the resolve passed the House 109 - 21 with only a minority of the Republicans opposed, and then passed in the Senate without a dissenting vote, 26 - 0.²¹ Having passed the legislature by the required two-thirds majority, the resolve then went to the people for a decision in the next general election. While most of the Republican press seemed to favor the

¹⁹Ibid., March 5, 1879.

²⁰Ibid., January 14, 1879.

²¹Ibid., February 25, and 27, 1878.

biennial sessions,²² the Kennebec Journal remained strongly opposed.²³ Probably the chief reason for this opposition was because of their interest in state printing contracts and additional subscriptions during the legislative sessions.

The Judiciary Committee voted against a proposal by Republican Representative Farrington of Fryeburg, providing for the election of the Governor by a plurality vote.²⁴ The committee also reported unfavorably on a bill sponsored by Fusion Democrat Wallace, Representative from Belfast, to abolish the Executive Council. An unsuccessful attempt to accept the minority report, favorable to the bill, was made in the House.²⁵

The Republicans made some political capital over the contract for state printing. Although the bid of Sprague, Owen and Nash, publishers of the Kennebec Journal, was some \$2,700 below the bid of E. F. Pillsbury and Co., the latter was given the contract by vote of the House. When the Senate voted for Sprague, the House agreed to leave the decision to the Governor and Council (Fusionists). They, of course, gave the contract to Pillsbury.²⁶ The Greenbackers regarded Sprague's low bid as a political

²²Ellsworth American, January 16, 1879.

²³Kennebec Journal, January 16, 1879.

²⁴Ibid., January 10, and February 12, 1879.

²⁵Ibid., February 12, and 18, 1879.

²⁶Ibid., February 3, and 18, 1879.

maneuver. W. W. Perry, editor of the Camden Herald and Greenback Representative, stated that Sprague had always received the state printing when the Republicans controlled the legislature and that they had often charged more than the contract price. Representative Amos Pickard summed up the Fusionists' position thus:

Are they [Sprague, Owen and Nash] to have the work while the Republicans are in power at their own rate, and then when the opposition is in control, obtain it by being able to underbid others by reason of their [previous] gains?

Shall we use our patronage to compass our own destruction? The lowest bidders did not expect to get the printing, but put in the bid to get a little cheap political capital.²⁷

Greenback Representative Simpson of Searsport stated that the printing last year had cost the state \$20,000 and now Sprague had bid to do the work below cost and planned to cut the workmen's wages in order to save themselves from loss.²⁸ Simpson's statement proved true as Sprague admitted a year later. In 1880, with a Republican legislature in the statehouse, Sprague received the printing contract at the same price it had been given to Pillsbury in 1879, nearly \$3,000 more than Sprague's 1879 bid. In 1880 bids were not solicited but the contract was given, over Fusionist protest, to Sprague.²⁹

²⁷Ibid., February 18, 1879.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid., February, 3, 4, and 7, 1880.

Regardless of the validity of their reasons for so doing, the fact that the so-called retrenchment legislature had given the printing contract to the highest bidders furnished political ammunition which the Republicans used to good effect in the fall campaign.

The Greenbackers were opposed to the state support given the free high schools because of the heavy tax on rural and city workers to support schools they could not afford to attend. The legislature, after the Senate reversed its original unfavorable vote, passed the bill to suspend for one year the \$500 given annually to each of the free high schools. This bill suspended an 1873 law with that provision.³⁰

In accordance with their retrenchment promises during the campaign, the Greenbackers introduced bills, which were passed later, reducing the salary of the Governor from \$2,500 to \$1,500. Salaries of other government officials were cut in about the same proportion. This salary reduction was extended to include judges and county officials. The Fusionists believed that the salaries of government officials "were out of line with the times" as they had been originally set during "inflationary conditions."³¹ Salary cuts did not include members of the legislature.

³⁰Ibid., February 21, 22, and 24, 1879.

³¹Ibid., January 30, 1879.

Another law provided that bank and corporation officials must send to assessors annually a list of stockholders, amount of stock held by each, and the dividends received. This list was to serve the assessors as a basis for taxation.³² A Greenback proposal to tax mortgages passed the House but failed in the Senate.³³

The appropriation for normal schools was cut from \$22,500 to \$18,000. The Fusionists were opposed to cuts in the mill tax used for the benefit of elementary schools but apparently they thought little of public support for any educational institution higher than grammar school.³⁴

Many of the laws passed by this legislature were aimed to benefit the workingman, the fisherman and farmer. A law was passed over some Republican opposition, forbidding the use of purse or drag seines, commonly used behind boats which were owned and operated by or for the factory owners in taking porgies and herring within one mile off the shore. This law was requested by small time independent fishermen who felt that the netting procedure of the factory fishermen was rapidly depleting the numbers of fish off the coast.³⁵ Apparently, in some respects, this

³²Fairfield Chronicle, undated extra, contains laws passed by 58th Legislature, 1879. Bound in a volume with the 1879 issues of the Ellsworth American.

³³Kennebec Journal, February 17, 1879.

³⁴Fairfield Chronicle, and Kennebec Journal, February 22, 1879.

³⁵Fairfield Chronicle.

action was comparable to locking the stable after the horse was stolen, for the porgy left the Maine coastal waters the next year and did not make its reappearance until last summer (1949), some seventy years later. Workingmen could attach vessels for the labor or materials furnished, and miners and stonecutters could have liens placed on granite and lime which they had quarried, and for which labor, wages were due them.³⁶ Liens could not be placed upon poultry if the farmer had fifty or less. This law gave some protection, no doubt, to the small farmer who was in debt.³⁷ The Greenback House approved a bill providing for the abolishment of imprisonment for debt but the Republican Senate voted against it.³⁸

Two laws were passed to regulate the railroads. One increased the fine for wilfully making a false return to the state from \$100 to \$1,000 and the other forbade discrimination against freight or passengers coming from, or going to, another road.³⁹

Senator Ellis, Waldo Greenbacker, hoped to extend economy measures to the National Government. He proposed a resolution to be sent to all of Maine's

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Kennebec Journal, March 1, 1879.

³⁹Fairfield Chronicle.

Senators and Congressmen, providing that the President's salary be cut to \$25,000 (from \$50,000) and the salary of Congressmen be reduced to \$3,000 (from \$5,000). This proposal was referred to the Committee on Federal Relations and was never reported for a full Senate vote.⁴⁰

The major changes effected by the 58th Legislature were the biennial election resolution, the suspension of state support to free high schools, and the reduction of government officials' salaries.

With the municipal elections coming up in the spring the Greenbackers urged their supporters to organize for the municipal election, which "will have great significance" on the fall election. The Greenback newspaper, The New Era, stated in an editorial that a good showing in the spring elections would enable them to "rout the enemy [in the fall election] whom it had only checked in the last election."⁴¹

While the Fusionists elected the mayor of Portland by a close margin, the Republicans were successful in the other large Maine cities. The Republican press termed the results a victory.⁴²

Some of the Greenbackers were very strongly against fusion with the Democrats. W. W. Perry, in his

⁴⁰Kennebec Journal, February 15, 1879.

⁴¹Ibid., February 8, 1879.

⁴²Ibid., March 4, 1879.

Camden Herald, advocated "a square stand-up fight against the two old parties at the polls in September."⁴³ Congressman T. H. Murch opposed the amalgamation, saying it was "Too much off a load for the Greenbackers."⁴⁴ Solon Chase, in an editorial in his newspaper, Chase's Chronicle, denounced those Greenbackers "who are cooperating with the Democrats for office and are undermining Greenback principles."⁴⁵ Probably most of the Greenbackers joined with the Democrats in supporting the Fusion movement. The chief spokesman for the Fusion element was Eben F. Pillsbury, editor of the Standard, and the National Democrat. The National Democrat called for the "permanent wedlock" of the Greenbackers and Democrats.⁴⁶

The Democrats and Greenbackers supported a common slate of officers (except in Knox County) below the gubernatorial level. In the Governorship campaign it was felt a vote for either of their candidates would help to throw the election to the legislature again. The New York Tribune reported that the parties were not uniting "for fear of driving [hard-money] Democrats into the Republican party and repelling some Republican Greenbackers."⁴⁷

The fusion-minded Democratic State Committee met at Portland, June 4, while the Greenback State Convention

⁴³Ibid., January 23, 1879.

⁴⁴Ellsworth American, June 12, 1879.

⁴⁵Ibid., June 19, 1879

⁴⁶Kennebec Journal, February 17, 1879.

⁴⁷Ellsworth American, July 17, 1879.

was being held, and apparently hoped to work out some arrangement, but the Greenbackers showed little interest and the Democrats withdrew to meet in Bangor.⁴⁸

In their platform the Greenback Convention "re-affirmed the Lewiston platform, adopted 1878," and:

Looks with pride and satisfaction at the endorsement of the same by the people at the September election; the rapid growth of the party in the country at large and the vote by the latest election showing an unprecedented increase....

This Convention also congratulates the people of Maine on the reforms inaugurated by the Nationals and carried forward by the last legislature of Maine, whereby the expenses of the state and counties have been greatly reduced, while the efficiency of the public service has in no way been impaired, and we demand the continuance of the policy of retrenchment and all true reform and that practice of the most rigid economy in all departments of the public service. The decay of American shipping is a subject that justly causes anxiety and alarm, and its revival should enlist the closest attention of our entire people, and we demand such legislation as shall cause its revival.

The increase of the coin bonded indebtedness of the Government in a time of profound peace from 1.1 billion dollars in 1865 to 2 billion dollars in 1879 is a fact so startling as to alarm every friend of the country. The reduction of the rate of coin interest and at the same time increasing the principal to such an amount as to vastly increase the coin interest continually under the pretext of economy, is such a deception and fraud upon the people as to merit the most severe condemnation.

1. Resolved: That we favor the unlimited coinage of gold and silver to be supplemented by full legal tender paper money, sufficient to transact the business of the country.

2. Resolved- That we favor the immediate use of the coin in the Treasury for the reduction of the

⁴⁸Lewiston Weekly Journal, June 5, 1879,
(Published by Nelson Dingley, Jr.).

bonded debt.

3. Resolved - That we favor the substitution of greenbacks for national bank notes.

4. Resolved - That the value of our money should not vary in the chance production of the precious metals or the caprice of corporations.

5. Resolved - That a graduated tax on incomes is imperatively demanded, to the end that the capital of the country may equally bear its burdens.

6. Resolved - That we oppose all subsidies or legalized monopolies and denounce as one of the highest crimes any corruption of the ballot box. We favor few and simple laws and those vigorously enforced.

7. Resolved - That we denounce Communism in all its forms.⁴⁹

Frank M. Fogg, member of the Governor's Council, denounced the platform as an attempt "to physic greenbackism out of the people and prepare them to ride the democratic horse in the presidential race next year."⁵⁰

On the first ballot for the candidate for Governor, Joseph L. Smith, the party's candidate in 1878, received 851 votes to 57 for Solon Chase. Solon, who had been promised Hamlin's seat, moved to make it unanimous and predicted "The ticket will roll through the state like a ball of fire."⁵¹

At the Democratic State Convention in Bangor, July 1, Governor Garcelon was nominated by acclamation for reelection. Their platform came out for governmental

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Ibid., June 19, 1879.

⁵¹Ibid., June 5, 1879.

economy and for paper money kept at par with gold. A complete Fusion ticket for county officers and legislative candidates was urged.⁵²

The Republican Convention was held in Bangor, June 26, with James G. Blaine presiding. The platform stressed "bloody shirt" planks first, followed by one hard-money resolution, one temperance resolve and an equivocal plank on economy in the state government.⁵³

In the balloting for a gubernatorial candidate Daniel F. Davis of East Corinth was chosen on the third ballot. William Wirt Virgin, Superior Court judge in Kennebec County, withdrew his name after the second ballot and paved the way for Davis' nomination. Davis was called a "ring" candidate by the opposition press, who implied that Davis had been groomed for the position by Senator Blaine.⁵⁴ Whether he had been selected by Blaine or not, he was certainly an "available" candidate. He came from a rural community in Eastern Maine and was obviously meant to appeal to those who had been tempted to support the Greenbackers previously. Davis had served as a corporal in the Civil War, which made him a natural for the bloody shirt campaign planned by the Republicans. He had served apparently without distinction in the Maine House and Senate and had been defeated for reelection to

⁵²Ibid., July 3, 1879.

⁵³Ellsworth American, July 3, 1879.

⁵⁴Ibid.

the state Senate in 1876. Davis had been a school teacher and then a lawyer.⁵⁵

In his acceptance speech Davis treated the money question as all settled and set the tone of the coming campaign. "The last gun at Appomattox sent booming through the nation the announcement that we were not a confederation of states but a nation. A solid South aided by a party anxious for power seeks to reopen this question of states' rights. We must now settle this question by the ballot as we then settled it by the bullet."⁵⁶

The Republican party took the stump in an effort to counteract the Greenback movement. Daniel F. Davis was scheduled to make twenty-eight speeches from Biddeford to Calais, from July 30th - August 30th. Eugene Hale was to make nearly as many, and Congressmen Reed and Frye had about twenty-five appearances scheduled between them.⁵⁷ Senator Blaine, of course, was active and a large group of prominent out of state Republicans were brought in for the campaign. Among those speaking in Maine were Secretary of the Treasury, John Sherman, who, incidentally, did not concentrate on financial questions, James A. Garfield, Zachariah Chandler of Michigan (Hale's father-in-law), John D. Long of Massachusetts,

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Ibid, July 31, 1879.

and William McKinley, Jr., of Ohio.⁵⁸

The Republicans, who had concentrated most of their campaign fire against the Greenbackers and their financial theories in 1878, now focused on the Democrats in an apparent effort to bring Republican Greenbackers back into the Republican camp. Ex-Union General Green B. Baum, a commissioner of internal revenue in Illinois, while speaking at a Republican rally in Ellsworth, referred to the "Southern question," saying, "a far greater danger than any question of finance threatens the country."⁵⁹

The Republicans called upon veterans to "vote as they fought." At a Republican rally in Dover-Foxcroft the following sign was in evidence: "Our Davis - Daniel; your Davis - Jeff."⁶⁰

The following poem illustrates the type of campaign run against the Republicans' opposition:

Who plunged the United States billions into debt?
The Democratic party.
Who filled the land with widows and orphans,
Wooden legs and empty sleeves?
The Democratic party.
.....
Who are afraid of the "bloody shirt"?
Democrats old and young.
Who is swallowing the Greenback party?
The Democratic Anaconda.

- Gettysburg⁶¹

⁵⁸Dingley, op. cit., p. 155

⁵⁹Ellsworth American, August 28, 1879.

⁶⁰Ibid., September 4, and August 28, 1879.

⁶¹Ibid., August 21, 1879.

While the poetic value of the above verse may be questionable, there can be no doubt of the political ideas that inspired it. The Republican efforts were aimed at driving a wedge between the Greenbackers and the Democrats and at preventing fusion by any means available.

An attempt was also made to discredit Joseph Smith, the Greenback gubernatorial candidate. An unsigned letter, supposedly written from Bangor, and dated August 4, appeared in the Boston Journal and was widely recopied in the Republican newspapers in the state. The letter stated that Smith offered to make a deal with the Republican Senators in early January, 1879. If they would support him instead of Garcelon, he would "soft-pedal the currency question and join the cry against Southern bulldozing."⁶² Smith, in a letter to the Bangor Commercial, vigorously denied the charge as "lies made from whole cloth."⁶³

Like Calvin Coolidge, who is said to have remarked "that the business of the United States is business," the Republicans of 1879 also believed that by encouraging the business interests the workingmen would automatically benefit. The workers would get the crumbs from the capitalists' loaf. In a reply to a question asking what the Republicans had done for the workingman

⁶²Ibid., August 7, 1879.

⁶³Ibid., August 14, 1879.

since the War, the American replied, "It has protected the business interests of the country against the anarchists, so that now every branch of trade is reviving and the workingman is the master of his own services."⁶⁴

The Greenbackers also waged a vigorous campaign. Out of state speakers included James B. Weaver (who only spoke once - in Portland); Rev. Gilbert DeLaMatyr of Indiana, a Greenback Congressman; Leo Miller stumped the state again; and in an effort to offset the "bloody shirt" emphasis of the Republicans, Colonel Jesse Harper of Illinois appeared on the Greenback platforms.⁶⁵ General Harris M. Plaisted (Governor in 1880), a recent Republican convert, addressed Greenback rallies, much to the hearty disapproval of the opposition press who termed him a disappointed office seeker.⁶⁶

Solon Chase stumped the state effectively. In an interview with a Lewiston Weekly Journal reporter Solon stated that he was very happy over the situation in Aroostook County where he had been campaigning.... "All the old farmers are speaking in Greenback meetings. Men with barns full of hay are going on the stump. That's the kind of men for me, the hundred ton of hay men. I'd rather have them than all your Zachariah Chandlers and John Shermans. They are making a stir in the bottom tier

⁶⁴Ibid., August 21, 1879.

⁶⁵Ibid., August 7, and September 4, 1879.

⁶⁶Ibid., August 7, 1879.

and that's what we want."⁶⁷ Solon called on Secretary Sherman in Portland while the latter was on his Maine tour, to discuss the financial question with the Cabinet officer. When Blaine, who was present, pointed out that Solon had published a hard-money pamphlet some ten years previously, Chase replied, characteristically, "A man can change his views, a mule won't."⁶⁸

The Greenback press also turned to poetry of sorts during the campaign. The following verse from Chase's Enquirer is typical:

Little boys true come blow your horn,
Banks eat the meadow, the cows, and the corn.
Where are the big boys that look after the sheep?
Down in the Capitol, fast asleep.⁶⁹

The active campaigning brought out a record vote for an off-year election. About thirteen thousand more votes were cast than in the Congressional and state election of 1878 and several thousand more than in the presidential election year of 1876. The vote of the Republicans and Greenbackers increased at the expense of the Democrat candidate. Daniel F. Davis ("Honest Frank," and "the Little Corporal") nearly won a majority of the ballots for Governor, receiving forty-nine per cent of the total vote (to forty-five per cent given the Republican candidate, Connor, in 1878). Smith received thirty-five per cent of the vote (an increase of two per cent over the

⁶⁷Lewiston Weekly Journal, September 4, 1879.

⁶⁸Ellsworth American, July 31, 1879.

⁶⁹Solon Chase Scrapbook.

1878 results), while Garcelon, the Democratic candidate, received only fifteen per cent of the popular vote, a drop from his 1878 total of twenty-two per cent.⁷⁰ As no candidate received a majority, the Governor again had to be selected by the legislature. Smith ran ahead of the field in only Knox and Waldo counties. Henceforth, those two coastal counties were the center of Greenback strength in the state. The New York Tribune attempted to explain this by pointing out that this district had been hit harder by the bad times than other sections of Maine as "the farms as a rule are quite small and are not productive of much besides rocks." In order to gain a living the farmers along the coast had worked part time at lumbering, fishing, etc. "When the business depression hit these small industries they were seriously embarrassed. In their poverty, the soft-money theorists found them a ready prey."⁷¹

The newspapers following the election gave the Republicans a working majority in both houses of the legislature. On the face of the returns the Senate was to be composed of nineteen Republicans and twelve Fusionists; the House ninety Republicans and sixty-one Fusionists. However, when Governor Garcelon issued election certificates to twenty Fusionists and only eleven Re-

⁷⁰Maine Register, 1880, p. 99.

⁷¹Ellsworth American, September 4, 1879.

publican Senators and seventy-eight Fusionists and sixty-one Republican Representatives, with twelve vacancies listed, the famous count-out controversy arose.⁷² The Republicans felt that they were being cheated out of their election success and organized indignation meetings in every city in the state. Blaine, speaking at such a meeting in Augusta, incited the partisan crowd with the following statement: "A great popular uprising will avert these evils, and the people are already moving. . . . A day of reckoning is at hand."⁷³

The Fusionists protested the indignation meetings calling them "incendiary and treasonable."⁷⁴ They believed that the Republican success at the polls was due to intimidation and bribery, and several cases of Republicans buying votes were prosecuted, unsuccessfully, in Washington County court.⁷⁵ The charge of election fraud "was not merely the usual angry excuse of beaten and disappointed men."⁷⁶ The Governor and Council reported that "numerous affidavits were sent in showing actual cases of bribery and fraud beyond question. . . . [the Republican majorities] were the result of corrupt and improper means used at the poles [sic]." This fraud was especially apparent in dis-

1880, p. 99.⁷² Ibid., December 11, 1879, and Maine Register,

⁷³ Ellsworth American, December 25, 1879.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid., October 23, 1879.

⁷⁶ Coe, op. cit., p. 191.

tricts where the Republican candidates for the legislature won by a close margin, they charged. In those districts, although the Fusionist vote for Governor and county officers was greater, the Republicans would be found to hold a majority in the Senate and House vote. In other areas, where no close contest developed, the returns for all offices ran along party lines. This result was preposterous, they held, that the "minority" party should have a thirty majority in the House and seven in the Senate, when the Democrats and Greenbackers fused against the Republican opposition in nearly every district.⁷⁷ With the above in mind, the Governor and Council apparently decided to use what legal technicalities there were available to gain the control of the legislature, which they believed should have been theirs in a fair election. "They took the returns as they found them, allowing no changes or substitutions of any kind, and tabulated them, acting strictly in accordance with the decisions of the court and the precedents established by their predecessors."⁷⁸

The Constitution provides that the results of the election of Senators and Representatives "shall be determined by the Governor and Council from returns signed and sealed up in open town meeting."⁷⁹ The municipal officers

⁷⁷Garcelon Report, The Hale Report Shown Up, (Pamphlet printed in reply to Hale Report, 1880, Publisher and Author not listed), p. 5.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 7.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 8

"shall in open meeting at the close of the election day sort, count, and declare, the votes cast and form a list of all the persons voted for, and after the name of each person thus voted for, shall write the number of votes received by him." The list must also give the total number of votes cast. A copy of the list must be signed by the town officers (selectmen), attested by the clerk, sealed up and sent to the Secretary of State.⁸⁰ They rejected many returns not made up as indicated above and they "received evidence when offered, to show the returns were not made up according to law."⁸¹ Many candidates lost out when votes cast for them were not counted for them if the return had a slight error in their name. For example, votes listed for Charles Rolfe in the Danforth return were not counted for Republican candidate Charles A. Rolfe of Princeton, but for a separate candidate. John T. Wallace, Jr., Democratic candidate from Washington County, lost several small towns there because the "Jr." on his name was omitted in the returns. Oliver P. Bragdon, of Gouldsboro, lost that town's vote when the return gave the middle initial as a "B." The Hale Committee charged that this change was a forgery, which the Council of course denied. Many other candidates were affected as the above

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 9.

individuals were.⁸²

Portland's vote for Representative was thrown out because of the large number of votes listed only as scattering. Returns from Rockland, Lewiston, Saco and Bath were not accepted as a majority of the aldermen in each case failed to sign the returns. These cities accounted for the twelve House vacancies. The Governor and Council planned to turn these returns over to the House when it convened for their action. Each House acts as judge of the qualifications of its own members.⁸³

Garcelon pointed out in his testimony that of the returns thrown out from fifty-seven towns, thirty of these towns had Fusion majorities and twenty-seven had Republican margins.⁸⁴ The Hale Committee believed that something more was wrong that could cost the Republicans 29 Representatives and 8 Senators, charging that "the Fusionists suppressed defective returns where they were in the majority or had new records sent and substituted for those in error. Republican majorities were rejected wherever possible and no chance given them to make new records."⁸⁵

⁸²Ibid., p. 10, and Hale Report - Report of Joint Select Committee to Inquire into the Condition of the Election Returns of September 8, 1879, (Sprague and Sons, Augusta, 1880), p. 17.

⁸³Garcelon Report, p. 12.

⁸⁴Hale Report, p. 624.

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 12.

On November the 17th, Senator Blaine called a meeting of Republican leaders at his home in Augusta. A committee of three, Nelson Dingley, S. D. Lindsey, and L.A. Emery, called on the Governor and asked to check the returns for errors. The Council had not finished the tabulation but later ruled that the returns might be opened for examination from December 1st to 13th.⁸⁶ The Republicans charged that they were not allowed to see the returns until December 9th.⁸⁷ The Council declared, however, that, "there was no attempt made to withhold the returns from any proper inspection by the parties interested. They were examined more than in former years and every correction allowable under the Constitution and laws, as the Governor and Council understood the matter, was permitted."⁸⁸

Early in December the Republicans had applied to Judge William Wirt Virgin, in Fryeburg, for a writ of mandamus to force the Secretary of State, Edward H. Gove, to open the election returns for their inspection. In his opinion, Judge Virgin (who had been a strong candidate for the Republican gubernatorial nomination in 1879) held that the court could not force the Executive Department to give up the returns, but added perhaps for political reasons, that the Republicans should have a "reasonable right" to

⁸⁶ Ibid., pp. 9-10.

⁸⁷ Ellsworth American, December 25, 1879.

⁸⁸ Garcelon Report, p. 26.

⁸⁹ Ellsworth American, December 11, and 18, 1879.

inspect the returns,⁸⁹

When the certificates of election were issued to candidates for the legislature, the Republicans, under the direction of Senator Blaine, aimed "at resisting the outrage at every step with all appropriate means that could be devised."⁹⁰

Lot M. Morrill suggested in a letter to Governor Garcelon that the court's opinion should be asked on the election claims but "the recognized Republican leaders did not seem to favor this method, perhaps not quite liking to trust the issue to the opinion of a tribunal imbued with legal habits and ideas; so the indignation policy was pushed."⁹¹ Many of Garcelon's advisers cautioned the Governor to call out the militia. This he refused to do but he added some hundred men to the Statehouse police force.⁹²

And as the year drew to a close, the Republican press was calling to the "counted-in" Fusionists to refuse to take their seats and so use their influence against "Mexicanizing Maine."⁹³ (And also help out Blaine's strategy of preventing a quorum in the legislature.)

⁸⁹Ellsworth American, December 11, and 18, 1879.

⁹⁰Dingley, op. cit., p. 162.

⁹¹Joshua L. Chamberlain Sketch, p. 5.

⁹²Ibid., p. 4.

⁹³Ellsworth American, December 25, 1879.

So the new year opened on a scene of political turmoil in Maine. Public excitement had reached a high pitch and little was done by the partisan leaders and the press to dampen the incendiary spirit. The Fusionists believed that they were legally correct in throwing out the Republican majority which was obtained by bribery and had followed the Constitution in so doing. The Republicans, on the other hand, believed they had been cheated out of their election victory by chicanery perpetrated by unscrupulous politicians who were determined to keep control of the state by any means available.

CHAPTER V

THE GREENBACK PARTY IN MAINE,
1880

Following Lot M. Morrill's suggestion, although not using the questions Morrill had thoughtfully provided, Governor Garcelon asked a ruling from the Supreme Court. In a reply on January 3rd, 1880, the court ruled that ballots were not to be discarded because of "idle technicalities."¹

In a letter dated January 5th, the Governor ordered Major General Joshua L. Chamberlain to protect the state property until his successor had qualified for the office. Chamberlain, an ex-governor, assumed his duties on the 8th and after Garcelon had sworn in the members of the legislature and presented the court's decision to them on January 7th he withdrew from the political scene, "being anxious to preserve the peace."²

The Republican strategy called for the House members of that party to refrain from joining into its organization so no quorum could be sworn in. The Governor stated that 76 members took the oath in the House, 75 Fusionists plus Republican Representative

¹Ellsworth American, January 8, 1880.

²Chamberlain Sketch, p. 6, and Kennebec Journal, January 8, 1880.

Eugene Hale of Ellsworth, who was Blaine's chief lieutenant in the legislature. Hale called "no quorum" at every opportunity, and other Republicans in the background tried to interrupt by shouting and heckling. Walker Blaine, Senator Blaine's son, was reported to have snatched, unsuccessfully, at the gavel in the hands of the Clerk of the House.³ The Senate organized with the Republicans joining in, and James D. Lamson was elected President of that body. This legal organization of the Senate became the basis of his later claim to be Acting Governor.⁴

It is not the object of the writer to follow in detail the controversy over the counting-out issue. Much has already been written on this episode in Maine's political history, and this paper will only touch lightly on the major happenings.

Both parties, Republican and Fusion, were reported to have offered Chamberlain a United States Senate seat in return for favorable action on their appeals.⁵

The Fusionists presented two candidates for the Governor's chair; first, Senate President Lamson, and later, after the Republican legislature met, Joseph L.

³Kennebec Journal, January 8, 1880, and Garcelon Report, p. 29.

⁴Kennebec Journal, January 8, 1880.

⁵Chamberlain Sketch, p. 24.

Smith was elected by the Fusion legislature. To both of these and to Joseph A. Locke, President of the Republican Senate, Chamberlain indicated a court decision must be given in favor of them before he could recognize their claim to the office.⁶

The Republicans organized their own legislature on the evening of January 12th. All of their counted-out candidates and those certified by Garcelon were present. Under Hale's leadership the House drew up questions to put to the Supreme Court, and the legislature adjourned until Saturday, the 17th.⁷ Dingley reported that the decision to organize the Republican legislature followed a conference between Nelson Dingley, Jr., publisher of the Lewiston Journal and later Congressman, and Supreme Court Judge Charles W. Walton.⁸ This action did not increase the respect of the opposition for the nonpartisan character of the court. Councilman Moody testified before the Hale Committee that the Councilors were reluctant to consult the courts as they "never had much faith in courts or judges since 1876."⁹

In the court's opinion to the Republican legislature, the unanimous bench held that the action of the

⁶Ibid., pp. 11, 12 and 15.

⁷Kennebec Journal, January 13, 1880.

⁸Dingley, op. cit., p. 170.

⁹Hale Report, p. 483.

Governor was illegal and the Republican legislature was the legal one.¹⁰ On the same day the Republican legislature met and elected Daniel F. Davis, Governor. Chamberlain turned over his trust to Davis and left the state when he heard that the Governor planned to call out the military forces to guard the Statehouse.¹¹ Armed men kept the Fusion legislature from the legislative chambers in the Statehouse, and until January 28th, when they adjourned, they met in a down-town hall.¹² The court had replied to Fusionist questions on January 27th, calling them an illegal body and subject to legal action as any criminal would be.¹³

On January 23rd several companies of the militia from Augusta, Gardiner and Auburn were called and stationed in the State Capitol to counteract violence from the Fusionists. All of the troops finally were sent home by January 30th, 1880.¹⁴

Following the election of Davis, the Journal rejoiced: "Next to the invisible powers of justice that fought with us, let us give honor to James G. Blaine, whose powerful brain, great experience, untiring energy, and unflinching courage made him the real leader in the

¹⁰Coe, op. cit., p. 200.

¹¹Kennebec Journal, January 19, 1880, and Chamberlain Sketch, pp. 16 and 26.

¹²Kennebec Journal, January 20, and 29, 1880.

¹³Ellsworth American, February 5, 1880.

¹⁴Kennebec Journal, January 24, 1880, and Garcelon Report, pp. 16-17.

struggle.¹⁵

The author of the Chamberlain Sketch feels that much of the credit for a peaceful settlement of the dispute should go to Lot M. Morrill, whose moderate counseling was largely ignored by the fire-eaters, and adds in an effective cut at James G. Blaine: "It is curious to note that this settlement was no sooner effected than the whole credit of it was characteristically claimed by the very persons who were largely responsible for the incitements to violence; and indeed, whose political methods had called, or driven, together as a protest, the political combination known as 'Fusionists' which carried the state the next year."¹⁶

The attitude of the Greenbackers toward the tense political situation varied from the radicals' call for the use of force to the more responsible leader's plea that they should accept the Republican coup and go to the people for vindication in the next election. F. M. Fogg expressed the fire-eaters' sentiment when, in a letter to the Hale Committee, he challenged the validity of the legislature in a simile familiar to Republican orators, - "Jefferson Davis was no more rebel to the general government [during the Civil War] than the other Davis [Daniel, the Governor] is to the legal government of the

¹⁵Kennebec Journal, January 19, 1880.

¹⁶Chamberlain Sketch, p. 26.

State, now.... And when such a mob plants itself in the Statehouse behind a wall of muskets and gatling guns,....¹⁷ loyal citizens ought to meet them with bayonets and cannon." Solon Chase set a more moderate tone in a letter to the Portland Leader, a Fusion newspaper, "The Greenback party cannot afford to adopt a course that must be defended by technicalities and special pleading.... If the Republicans see fit to count in men elected by fraud, the Greenbackers can stand it better than [they] ..."¹⁸ Later Solon advised the Fusion legislature to consult the court.¹⁹

Joseph L. Smith made a vigorous denial of the Republican charges that the Fusionists planned to use violence to regain control of the state government, and added,, "We rely upon the Constitution and the laws of the state, and the honest judgment of the people for the vindication of our course."²⁰ When the court reported unfavorably on the questions submitted by the Fusion legislature, Smith is quoted as saying, "I'm glad it's settled."²¹

The Fusion legislature which met from January 7th to January 28th was unable to accomplish anything in the way of law making, of course, and devoted itself for the most part to investigations of alleged Republican at-

¹⁷Hale Report, pp. 776 and 779.

¹⁸Ellsworth American, November 27, 1879.

¹⁹Kennebec Journal, January 15, 1880.

²⁰Ibid., January 27, 1880.

²¹Ibid., January 28, 1880.

tempts to bribe and intimidate the voters and members of the legislature.²² The Republicans in the Fusion Senate refused to investigate bribery cases but the Fusion House began the investigation of the Wallace R. White case which was reluctantly carried on by the Republican legislature later in its session.²³ Most of the Fusionists, that were entitled to do so, joined in the Republican legislature by the end of January. Senator James D. Lamson was an outstanding exception. He returned to his home in Freedom and refused to have anything to do with the court-approved legislature.²⁴

The Senate was now composed of nineteen Republicans and twelve Greenbackers. The House now had ninety Republicans, eleven Democrats, and fifty Greenbackers. A majority of the House delegations were Greenbackers from Knox, Waldo, and Somerset counties. Penobscot, York, and Oxford counties were also well represented in the House by Greenbackers. All of the Greenback Representatives came from small communities. Bangor, Ellsworth, and Westbrook, the only cities that had Greenbackers in the previous House, were now represented by Republicans. The Greenback Senators came from Oxford, Somerset, Penobscot, Knox, Waldo, and Aroostook - all agricultural

²²Ibid., January 19, 1880.

²³Ibid., January 28, 1880.

²⁴Ibid., February 4, 1880.

counties. In Knox and Waldo counties, however, the Greenbackers were well supported by quarry workers and fishermen.²⁵ Of the ten Greenback Senators answering the biographical questionnaires for the Journal, five had been Republicans and five gave their occupation as farmers full or part time.²⁶ Of the forty-two Greenback Representatives answering the questionnaires, fifteen gave farming as their chief occupation while five others were farmers in conjunction with other work (e.g. farmer and lumberman; farmer and fisherman). Twenty-one had been Democrats while nineteen had belonged to the Republican party.²⁷

The legislature spent much time going over the count-out affair. The Hale Committee hearings aroused much partisan feeling. The opposition charged that the Hale Report "was a campaign document, published at state expense to palliate the effect of their unauthorized usurpations before the public mind."²⁸

One of the first legislative moves of the Republican legislature was to pass a resolution on January 27th for a Constitutional amendment providing that the Governor would henceforth be elected by a plurality. As originally offered in the House by Representative Hutchinson, the proposal was to go to the people at the next

²⁵Maine Register, 1880, pp. 100-144.

²⁶Kennebec Journal, January 27, 1880.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Garcelon Report, p. 17.

election and to go into effect at that time, if approved.²⁹ The proposed amendment served to make for complete fusion between the Democrats and Greenbackers in the coming election.

On February 26, a bill was passed (to remove any trace of illegality in the organization of the legislature) providing for the repeal of the statute which forbade any one from taking part in the organization of either house as a member "unless his name appears on the certified roll of that branch."³⁰

Some of the laws passed by the Greenback legislature were repealed or changed. State support of the free high schools was set at \$250. The law providing for an annual \$500 appropriation for these schools had been suspended for the year 1879. The Governor's salary, cut from \$2,500 to \$1,500 in 1879, was raised to \$2,000, and the porgy law was revised to allow factory seiners to fish along the coast line except in bays and harbors. By the 1879 law they were not allowed to net fish within one mile of the coast.³¹ The salary reduction applied to the judges of the Supreme Court in 1879 was repealed and their original pay scale restored. The number of judges on the court was raised from seven to eight.³² Governor Davis

²⁹Kennebec Journal, January 23, 1880.

³⁰Ellsworth American, March 4, 1880.

³¹Ibid., undated extra, contains Public Laws of Maine for 1880.

appointed W. W. Virgin to the vacancy. Virgin was a strong candidate for the Republican gubernatorial nomination in 1879, and while he had refused a mandamus writ against Secretary of State Gove in the count-out dispute, at the same time he had upheld the right of the Republicans to check the returns.³³ The Fusionists, of course, opposed these measures almost to a man. The Greenbackers were also in opposition to a bill (which passed) appropriating money to re-uniform the State Militia.³⁴ Other bills termed class legislation by the opposition and settled on strict party lines provided that cider could only be sold in five-gallon lots (strongly opposed by the orchardists);³⁵ that stock in mining companies could go untaxed for a period of five years after their organization (this period marked the beginning of Maine's mining boom, centering on Hancock County);³⁶ and another, aimed at preventing strikes on the railroad, called for a \$300 fine on any one urging a work stoppage on the railroads. The law also provided a \$500 fine for secondary boycotts.³⁷

Greenback-sponsored bills received little consideration. Senator Atwill, Greenbacker of Penobscot County, offered a proposal outlawing imprisonment for debt

³³Ibid., March 25, 1880.

³⁴Kennebec Journal, February 27, 1880.

³⁵Ellsworth American, March 11, 1880.

³⁶Ibid., March 18, 1880.

³⁷Ibid., undated extra, 1880.

as "a relic of barbarism," which was referred to the Judiciary Committee and reported unfavorably from that group.³⁸

One of the most illuminating debates took place on the Senate floor March 9th over the proposed use at general elections of the secret ballot, an institution which is today considered the sine qua non of free elections. The Republicans were strongly opposed to the adoption of the secret ballot. Senator Coombs, Republican of Hancock, announced the typical attitude of his party when he said he "liked the open method of voting. It is the style of the American people." Greenback Senator Nelson Thompson of Knox, taking the floor in rebuttal, gave several examples of intimidation at the polls under the present system, and added, "the freedom from political proscription and espionage at the polls is the demand of the hour; and I know of no remedy but a secret ballot." After a heated debate, a motion to indefinitely postpone was carried by a strictly partisan vote, fifteen to nine. All the Republican Senators present voted to postpone, while the Fusionists were solidly opposed.³⁹ The Republican opposition to the secret ballot may have indicated that charges of bribery and intimidation at the last election were not without foundation.

³⁸Kennebec Journal, February 7, 1880.

³⁹Ibid., March 10, 1880.

The Fusionists in the legislature concentrated on the prosecution of the W. R. White investigation. It was charged that White, acting as an agent for Blaine, had bribed Fusion Representative T. B. Swan and Representative Harriman with \$1,000 each for affidavits swearing that they would not take part in the organization of the legislature. Swan testified that he had consulted with Secretary of State Gove, and Solon Chase before taking the bribe and deposited the money in an Augusta bank. He then took part in the organization of the House on January 7th.⁴⁰ White testified that Swan had had a change of heart, politically, and so had signed the affidavit with no money offered to him.⁴¹ The Kennebec Journal, in an editorial, admitted that "it was only Mr. White's simple denial against the evidence of Swan and Harriman," but adds, even so, better believe White, "a young man of character."⁴² The investigating committee exonerated White on a party vote. The minority Fusionists held that the bribery charges were sustained.⁴³ When Swan left the state, rather hurriedly, a year later, after swindling some farmers through the mails and embezzling town funds from Minot, the Republicans hailed his unlawful actions as a vindication of their acquittal of White.⁴⁴ White, a

⁴⁰Ibid., February 28, 1880.

⁴¹Ibid., March 4, 1880.

⁴²Ibid., March 5, 1880.

⁴³Ibid., March 20, 1880.

⁴⁴Ibid., February 23, 1881.

young lawyer, moved to Idaho, then a territory, and was well taken care of by the Federal Government, being appointed to the position of United States District Attorney there.⁴⁵

In the spring municipal elections the Republicans were very successful. Ellsworth was the only city in the state to elect a Democratic mayor (which may have had some influence on Hale's decision not to run for Congress in his district). The Republican spring victories made them optimistic over their prospects in the general election. "In most towns the contest was made squarely on the counting-out issue....When next September's election comes look out for a Republican victory that will be memorable."⁴⁶

It was generally believed by the Republican press that their party would roll up a 10,000 majority in the coming September election.⁴⁷ The Republican case in the count-out dispute, buttressed by the widespread distribution of the Hale Committee's Report, was expected to bring many additional supporters to the Republican party. The Journal happily reported "This [Hale Committee] report has driven the last nail in the coffin of

⁴⁵Ibid., February 12, 1883.

⁴⁶Ibid., March 2, 1880.

⁴⁷From the Lewiston Journal quoted in Ellsworth American, April 22, 1880.

the Fusion party."⁴⁸

Leaders in the Greenback party had similar misgivings. In a letter to Frank M. Fogg, Leo Miller, the ubiquitous stump speaker, wrote from Indiana that the count-out "will cost the Greenbackers 25,000 votes in Maine," and as the September election in Maine will set the trend for the other states, it will, he predicted, "sound the death knell of the party in the country."⁴⁹ While the Republicans probably used their version of the Maine count-out to good advantage in the Western states, the fact that wheat (No. 2, red winter) was selling in February on the Chicago grain market at \$1.24,⁵⁰ probably, had more to do with the drop in the Western Greenback vote in 1880.

With 1880 a presidential election year, interest developed early in the national party conventions. A Greenback Convention was held in Augusta, February 20th to select delegates to the national convention scheduled for Chicago, June 9th. Four delegates at large were selected, Charles A. White of Gardiner, ex-State Treasurer, Congressman Thompson H. Murch of Rockland, Edward H. Gove of Biddeford, ex-Secretary of State (and soon to be a renegade) and Thomas M. Plaisted of Lincoln, Representative in

⁴⁸Kennebec Journal, March 20, 1880.

⁴⁹Ellsworth American, April 29, 1880.

⁵⁰Kennebec Journal, February 26, 1880.

the state legislature. A committee was appointed to draw up resolutions "recognizing the valuable services rendered by Solon Chase of Turner," and proposing him for President. These resolutions were to be presented at the Chicago convention.⁵¹

At the Greenback Convention in Chicago, Thompson Murch's name was put in nomination but he was on the floor and declined, deferring to Solon Chase.⁵² Although Murch was usually referred to with contempt by the Republican press in Maine he had some national support for the presidency. A report from the New York National Journal over a year before paid him high tribute:

The working men of California demand a working man for a candidate in 1880, and they have their eye on Thompson H. Murch of Maine. As the people twice elected Abraham Lincoln, 'the rail-splitter,' and he made one of the best presidents the country ever had, who knows but Thompson H. Murch, 'the stonecutter,' would make the next best president the country ever had?⁵³

On an informal ballot at the convention Solon Chase stood fifth with 89 ballots (Butler - 95) to Weaver's 224½. Then Weaver was nominated unanimously on the first formal ballot. B. T. Chambers of Texas won second place on the ticket over A. W. West of Mississippi to give the South representation on the ticket.⁵⁴

⁵¹Ibid., February 21, 1880.

⁵²Ellsworth American, June 17, 1880.

⁵³Ibid., April 10, 1879.

⁵⁴Ibid., June 17, 1880.

The Greenback State Convention met in Bangor on June 1st with over 1,500 delegates present. E. H. Gove, chairman of the state committee, called the convention to order and ex-Councilor John B. Foster of Bangor was elected convention chairman. In a convention speech, Frank M. Fogg called for the people to send back to Augusta next fall such a majority that, "they will not be welcomed to the embrace of a Gatling gun. The fight is not to be over the financial question....it is imperialism against democracy."

General Harris M. Plaisted of Bangor was nominated for the Governor's office by acclamation. (The Democrats meeting in separate convention the same day also nominated Plaisted, as had been prearranged.) The Greenbackers reiterated their support of their 1878 and 1879 platforms and condemned the Republican "usurpation" of the state government.⁵⁵

Plaisted, a lawyer, had an excellent War record and had served as Republican Representative to the state legislature, state Attorney General and Congressman.⁵⁶ While the Republicans denounced him as a disappointed office seeker,⁵⁷ the Greenbackers declared that he left the

⁵⁵Ibid., June 3, 1880.

⁵⁶Life and Public Services of General Harris M. Plaisted, A Campaign Biography, Author not listed, (New Era Publishing Company, Portland, 1880), p. 31

⁵⁷Ellsworth American, June 10, 1880.

Republicans when he saw that they were working for the "money power."⁵⁸ The political leaders extolled his advantages as the party's candidate (and of course, he was probably the best candidate that they could have chosen.) "The matter of availability is also important. The Greenbackers cannot afford to ignore the soldier vote.... then there are thousands of honest Republicans who would gladly support the principles of the Greenback party were [they not deceived by] Republican fuglemen [who call it] the intermediate step toward the Democratic party With our candidate a convert from that [Republican] Party [it] will tend to inspire timid Greenbacker Republicans with confidence. This could not displease honest Democrats knowing as they do that the party in power is to be defeated."⁵⁹ This statement summarizes the Greenback political maneuvering. They felt that the Democratic party had no place to go anyway and would inevitably join their ranks without any concessions. Their real strength must come, they believed, from the Republican ranks if they were to become the major party.

The Republicans renominated Daniel F. Davis. They condemned the Fusionist party and its "infamous" record and called on "every honest man of every party [to] work and pray for its speedy and complete overthrow."

⁵⁸Plaisted Biography, p. 31.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 25.

Another resolve favored prohibition.⁶⁰

With the major candidates selected, the campaign got under way. Fusion on candidates was practically complete on the state level (between Greenback and Democratic parties). In Knox County, however, the Democrats opposed fusion on the county level. Rockland, the shire town, had been largely Democratic in politics and, according to an article in the New York Tribune, Rockland "got the set of its politics before the War from its ship owners engaged in the cotton-carrying trade who were intense pro-slavery men."⁶¹

The Republican leaders and the press worked valiantly to split the opposition party and called for dissidents to join the Republicans. "They [Greenbackers and Democrats] are now one party and every man who votes with them endorses the errors of the whole party. Hard-money honest Democrats must vote Republican and honest Greenbackers cannot support the party of treason."⁶²

The Republicans were incensed when the Prohibition party put up a candidate in the gubernatorial race. They had good reason to believe that the opposition was sponsoring the organization. Of William

⁶⁰Ellsworth American, July 1, 1880.

⁶¹Ibid., September 4, 1879.

⁶²Ibid., June 17, 1880.

Joy of Ellsworth, prohibitionist candidate for Governor, the American reported, "He went early into the Greenback movement for the sake of office, and failing there was largely instrumental in giving life to the Prohibition party (so-called) in this section of the state.... He is pushing the prohibition movement for the sole purpose of drawing votes from the Republican party."⁶³

Among the Republican speakers campaigning in the state were Walker Blaine, a Minnesota lawyer and son of the Senator, Congressman J. Warren Keifer of Ohio, General Logan, Blaine's running mate in 1884, William McKinley, Colonel Robert Ingersoll, A. L. Morrison of Illinois, General Sheridan and many lesser lights. Most of the speakers appeared here before the September election. Very few stumped the state after the state election and before the November balloting. Apparently the old saw, "as Maine goes, etc.," had more validity then than now. Anyway the party that could roll up a decisive lead in Maine in September believed it had a psychological advantage going into the national elections. The Republican speakers concentrated on the count-out, warning the voters against supporting "the dishonest, law breaking, state stealing crowd represented by H. M. Plaisted and the Fusion party,"⁶⁴ the bloody shirt issue,⁶⁵

⁶³Ibid., August 5, 1880.

⁶⁴Ibid., July 1, 1880.

⁶⁵Ibid., September 9, 1880.

"the results of the War should not be neutralized by the ballot"; and on the free trade policy of the Democrats. To catch the Irish vote the free trade policy was denounced as influenced by the English, and warned shipyard workers that free trade would bring foreign ships into our merchant marine. Because of the Democratic trade policy, the worker who votes for Fusion "will vote to take the bread out of the mouths of his wife and babes."⁶⁶

The leading Greenback speakers were General Samuel Cary of Ohio, and General J. B. Weaver, the National's presidential candidate. Weaver lashed out against the bankers and bondholders who "had usurped the money creating power of the people." This power, he held, should lie with the Congress. He used anti-fusion phrases in describing the growth of the soft-money party. "The people could have their wrongs righted by neither of the old parties and so come over to the Greenback party."⁶⁷

In an extremely close election, Plaisted, the Fusion candidate for Governor, won over Davis by a plurality of less than two hundred votes. While the Prohibition candidates received less than five hundred votes, they may have taken enough Republican votes to prevent Davis from being reelected.⁶⁸

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸Maine Register, 1881, p. 100.

This result of the voting for Governor in September was a blow to the Republican party and of course a victory for the Greenbackers. Blaine admitted that there were times when he was more proud of Maine.⁶⁹ And in a disillusioned mood the Portland Press reported, "Apparently, the way to gain the affections of Maine voters is to go out and steal something."⁷⁰

In the Congressional elections, the balance reached in 1878 was maintained. All incumbents retained their seats. In the First District Thomas B. Reed ran ahead of General Samuel J. Anderson of Portland, a Democrat running on the Fusion ticket, winning by less than 120 votes out of nearly 34,000 cast. Reed held a 220 vote margin in Portland and ran behind Anderson elsewhere in the district.⁷¹ The nomination of Anderson as Fusionist candidate was instrumental in causing E. H. Gove's withdrawal from the Greenback party. The ex-Secretary of State and chairman of the Greenback State Committee denounced the Fusion movement and returned to the Republican fold.⁷²

In the Second District, William P. Frye defeated Greenbacker Frank M. Fogg of Auburn, 14,417 - 12,343. Frye built up big margins in Auburn, Bath and Lewiston and ran about even with Fogg in the hinterland. Turner

⁶⁹Ellsworth American, September 30, 1880.

⁷⁰Ibid., September 23, 1880.

⁷¹Maine Register, 1881, p. 100.

⁷²Ellsworth American, September 2, 1880.

and Buckfield in Solon Chase's bailiwick went decidedly for Fusion.⁷³

In the Third District, Stephen D. Lindsey received 15,131 votes to William Philbrick's 14,664. Philbrick running for the second time on the Greenback ticket ran 1,000 votes behind Lindsey in the cities of Waterville, Skowhegan, Gardiner, and Augusta, but ran ahead of the winner in the smaller communities. In Augusta 160 votes for William E. Philbrick were not counted for candidate William Philbrick.⁷⁴

Congressman Ladd, the Fusionist candidate, was again successful in the Fourth District. He defeated Charles A. Boutelle, Republican candidate and editor of the Bangor Whig and Courier, 14,047 - 13,192. The Republican candidate won Bangor by 85 votes and Brewer by 180. Ladd built up his majority outside the larger cities.⁷⁵

Thompson H. Murch was again successful in the Fifth District, defeating the Republican nominee, Seth L. Milliken of Cherryfield, 14,942 - 13,977. Murch ran behind in the cities in the district. Rockland, Ellsworth, Belfast, Calais, Machias and Bucksport were all found in the Republican camp.⁷⁶

Governor Plaisted ran ahead of Davis in Cumber-

⁷³Maine Register, 1881, p. 101.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 102.

⁷⁵Ibid., pp. 103-104.

⁷⁶Ibid., pp. 104-105.

land, in an extremely close vote, Aroostook, Knox, Lincoln, Penobscot, Somerset and Waldo counties.⁷⁷

The Republicans won control of the state legislature by a wide margin. The House was to be composed of eighty-four Republicans, forty Greenbackers and twenty-seven Democrats. (The Greenback and Democratic candidates ran as Fusionists.) The membership of the Senate included twenty-three Republicans, six Greenbackers and two Democrats. Three of the Greenback Senators came from Penobscot County and one each from Waldo, Lincoln and Somerset. Of the House, in only the Penobscot and Waldo delegations were there a majority of Greenbackers.⁷⁸

While the Fusion movement met few hitches during the state campaign, it began to run into difficulties on the question of choosing electors. The original plan called for the Democrats to choose three of the seven electors with the Greenbackers naming the remainder. The Greenback State Committee met in Augusta July 27th and selected Solon Chase, Benjamin Bunker of Fairfield, J. F. Turner of Portland and C. R. Whidden of Calais to fill up the Fusion electoral ticket.⁷⁹

Solon Chase had stood out solidly against Fusion on the national level, however. He wrote "A Fusion electoral ticket with either of the old parties

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 109

⁷⁷⁸Ibid., pp. 110-144.

⁷⁹Ellsworth American, July 29, 1880.

is an abandonment of the great national principles that gave the Greenback party existence."⁸⁰

Fusion unity ended after the state election when a Greenback convention met in Portland, September 21st, to ratify the Fusion ticket agreed upon by the state committee in July. Solon Chase was strongly opposed to accepting the ticket. After a hectic session, the convention affirmed the action of the state committee. When the main convention then adjourned Solon Chase led the straight Greenback bolters (one hundred forty of the four hundred sixty-five delegates) to the City Hall where another meeting was held. Chase presided and a straight electoral ticket was nominated. Solon Chase, J. F. Turner, C. R. Whidden (already on the Fusion ticket), J. F. Hilton, St. Albans, Thomas G. Burdin, Turner, George W. Wooster, North Bangor, and E. B. Frye, Bethel, were named as Weaver electors. The convention declared, "that the late fusion and confusion in this state was wholly due to the exigencies of state issues and that in national matters we vote with our brethren elsewhere in the Union for Weaver and Chambers."⁸¹

Solon's Crusade was not to work out to his satisfaction in the November election. Perhaps this split in the Fusion ranks drove some voters into the Republican camp, or perhaps, they felt a vote for Weaver was

⁸⁰Ibid., August 5, 1880.

⁸¹Ibid., September 23, 1880

a vote wasted. Garfield carried the state over the Hancock-Weaver Fusion ticket, 74,052 - 65,211. The straight Greenbackers received only 4,429 votes. With a slightly smaller vote cast than in September, Garfield electors received a larger vote than Davis, the Republican gubernatorial candidate, in the state election. The Fusion ticket ran ahead in only Aroostook, Lincoln, Knox and Waldo counties. The straight Greenbackers received only scattered support.⁸²

1880 was a banner political year in Maine. There was a threat of civil war in January in the struggle to control the state government. Favorite son James G. Blaine almost won the Republican nomination for the presidency. The Greenback party, whose future was then unknown, had joined, for political purposes, the Democrats, and was already beginning to lose its identity.

And while the Greenbackers might look upon the election of Plaisted as a party triumph, the disappointing showing of the Weaver ticket nationally indicated that the Greenback party would never be a strong political force above local levels, and without hope of Federal patronage state parties wither on the vine. The Nationals in the Congressional elections only returned about one-half of the candidates it elected in 1878.

Most of the Greenbackers in Maine, however,

⁸²Maine Register, 1881, p. 99.

could bask in the sunlight of Plaisted's September victory and view it as Frank M. Fogg did when he called the election of Plaisted an endorsement of the "honor and integrity" of Garcelon and his Council, and a "condemnation of the Supreme Court, 'Benedict Arnold' Chamberlain, the Davis Government and the Hale Committee."⁸³

As the Republicans won a large majority of the seats in the legislature, Plaisted's victory must be an empty one for the Greenbackers. The Republican viewpoint held "Mighty little harm can General Plaisted do,.... hemmed in by a Republican House and Senate and surrounded by a Republican Council."⁸⁴

The Republicans also had a slight edge in the election of county officers. The entire Republican slate was returned in Androscoggin, Franklin, Hancock, Oxford, Sagadahoc, Washington and York counties. They also won in Cumberland with the exception of a Fusion Sheriff, in Kennebec except a Fusion Judge of Probate, and in Piscataquis with the exception of a Fusion Treasurer. The entire Fusion ticket was elected in Aroostook, Lincoln, Penobscot and Waldo counties. They were successful in Somerset with the exception of a Republican Clerk of Courts. In Knox, a non-Fusion county, a Republican Sheriff, Judge of Probate and a County Com-

⁸³Ellsworth American, September 23, 1880.

⁸⁴Ibid., September 16, 1880.

missioner were elected. A Democrat became Clerk of Courts and Greenback candidates for Register of Probate, County Treasurer and County Attorney were successful.⁸⁵

The Constitutional amendment providing for the election of the Governor by a plurality vote was approved at the September election and was planned to go into effect at that time.⁸⁶ After Plaisted had won the election by a small plurality, some Republicans asserted their belief that as the amendment could not have been passed until after the polls had closed it would have to have a retroactive provision to make it apply to that election. They suggested that the question be given to the Supreme Court for a decision, or better to revert to the old law which provided that when no candidate had a majority the election was to be made by the legislature (which happened at this time to be controlled by the Republicans).⁸⁷ Most of the party leaders, apparently, felt that the defeat of Davis was a rebuke to their reliance on the Supreme Court the year before, and rather than further alienate the electorate they did not push the issue.

⁸⁵Maine Register, 1881, p. 99

⁸⁶Ellsworth American, September 2, 1880.

⁸⁷Ibid., December 9, and 16, 1880.

CHAPTER VI

THE GREENBACK PARTY IN MAINE,
1881 AND 1882

The year 1881 opened with what seemed to be an upward trend in business activity throughout the country. The New York Times reported "increased commercial and industrial prosperity" and reports from the Chicago grain and packing houses hailed the "great increase in business prosperity in 1880 over 1879." Even in Maine, economic conditions seemed to be brightening. The Bangor Commercial announced that, "deposits in Bangor savings banks increased nearly \$100,000 in the past year."¹ The Greenback party whose growth resulted largely from the depressed conditions following the panic of 1873 stood to gain little, politically, from the business upswing.

The legislature, after some wrangling, voted to accept the original intention of the plurality amendment and declared Plaisted elected. The House voted 129-8 and the Senate 27-3. The minority held that the question was one for the Supreme Court, not the legislature, to decide.²

The Governor's inaugural address was widely praised by his followers and loudly denounced by the

¹Kennebec Journal, January 4, 1881.

²Ibid., January 13, 1881.

Republicans. The Greenbackers later had additional copies of his speech printed for distribution as a campaign document. In his speech, Plaisted pointed out:

Taxation falls heavily on some because it does not fall equally upon all. Too large a proportion of the public burdens falls upon real estate. This is especially true of the farming interests.... Many people are leaving Maine because of our imprisonment for debt [law]

.... [The Treasury] should retire Government bonds for greenbacks....The Vanderbilts with tens of millions of U. S. bonds, spending the interest in Europe, and the tens of thousands of lesser bondholders, who produce nothing and do nothing except clip coupons - what are they to this country and its industries but a class of gilded paupers supported by the labor of this country. If not controlled, the moneyed aristocracy will rule the country with venial legislatures.

....

If we are a nation of sovereigns today, it is only so far as we are a nation of freeholders.

The last sentence indicates that Plaisted derived more of his radicalism from Jefferson than from the Paris Commune.

He called for the repeal of the law granting tax exemptions on mining stocks. An inheritance tax was needed, Plaisted said, and the railroads should bear heavier taxes. And he added that the state railroad commissioners should have rate-fixing powers.³ This last suggestion was strongly denounced by the Republican press in language comparable to that used by some of our conservative press today in protesting the extension of the Federal Government's regulatory power. "Taking rate-

³Ibid., January 14, 1881.

making power away from the directors and stockholders
 [is a move on]the road to Communism. The next step will
 be to set prices at which the farmer shall sell his hay."⁴

The Governor's program had no chance of being enacted by the Republican legislature. In fact, a joint legislative committee composed wholly of Republicans, called the Joint Committee on the State of the Commonwealth, was set up, apparently, for the express purpose of refuting the conclusions offered in the Governor's address. The committee's report found the system of taxation equitable, imprisonment for debt just, and business conditions (except for shipbuilding) recovering from the post-War depression. The report further censured the Governor for the tone of his speech, cautioning him that one should not appeal to class interests. "Public tranquility is necessary to public prosperity.... [No citizen] is jealous of any man who achieves even a large fortune. This country offers ample rewards to honest industry."⁵

Of the eight Fusion Senators in the legislature, six were recorded as being Greenbackers. Of the five answering the biographical sketch questionnaires four reported that they were at least part-time farmers. The other, Smith of Old Town, Greenback candidate for Governor

⁴Ibid., January 15, 1881.

⁵Ibid., March 14, 1881.

in 1878 and 1879, gave lumbering as his occupation. Four said they were formerly Republicans, while one had been a Democrat. One Senator, J. W. Clarke of Lincoln County, had been a counted-in member of the Fusion legislature the previous year. He had charged the Republicans with bribery then and was partially vindicated in September when he won the Lincoln Senate seat.⁶

Thirty-five of the forty Greenbackers in the House answered the questionnaires. Eleven of these listed themselves as full-time farmers. Nine said their part-time occupation was farming. Twenty-three reported that they had been Republicans, eleven came from Democratic ranks and one failed to answer that question. A typical reply to the question of changing party affiliations was given by Greenback Representative John White of Levant. He was, he reported, a Republican until he found that the party "legislated in the interest of the few to the starvation of the many."⁷

The number of Fusionists in the legislature was reduced by one when Thomas B. Swan of Minot (a leading figure in the Wallace R. White investigation a year before) left the state and went out West. Swan, who had been the Fusionist candidate for Speaker of the House, had been swindling New England farmers through the mails.

⁶Ibid., January 7, 1881, biographical sketches of the legislators.

⁷Ibid.

The mowing machine sharpener he sold consisted of a triangular piece of white pine, shellacked and coated with emery dust. He was also treasurer of Minot and took along with him some \$1,600 in that town's funds. The House voted to expel him, and a Republican, D. B. Perry, was elected to replace him.⁸ A Fusion newspaper, the Portland Argus, suggested "looking for Swan in Washington. Perhaps he has followed his great exemplar to the National Capital for the purpose of taking a 'flyer' in Little Rock bonds or some other 'good thing.'"⁹ Blaine continued to be the Fusionists' bête noire.

Two United States Senators were elected during the legislative session. Hamlin's term expired on March fourth and Blaine resigned his seat on March fifth to accept the Secretary of State's portfolio. The Republican legislature elected Eugene Hale, ex-Congressman from Ellsworth, to replace Hannibal Hamlin. The Fusionists supported Joseph L. Smith, the state Senator and former Greenback gubernatorial candidate, as a gesture of courtesy.¹⁰ William P. Frye, the Congressman from the Second Maine District, was chosen to fill Blaine's seat in the Senate.¹¹ In the Fusion caucus to select a candidate to oppose Frye a wide split developed. The Greenbackers

⁸Ibid., February 4, and March 5, 1881.

⁹Ibid., February 8, 1881.

¹⁰Ibid., January 19, 1881.

¹¹Ibid., March 16, 1881.

wanted Fusion support for Governor Plaisted while the Democratic element backed Samuel J. Anderson who had lost in a close contest for Reed's First District Congressional seat in September. A compromise finally gave the nomination to Richard Fry of Bethel, a man with no legislative experience.¹²

Greenback-sponsored bills fared poorly in the legislature. The House Judiciary Committee reported legislation inexpedient on the bill to abolish imprisonment for debt.¹³ Greenback Representative H. B. Eaton of Camden, in a stirring speech on the House floor, demanded that the practice be stopped. "To treat poverty as a crime, to imprison a man for debt is a shame, a crime against civilization.... The rich go into insolvency or bankruptcy; but a poor debtor for ten dollars goes to jail, and then has to pay his way out."¹⁴

Fusionist Senator Dudley from Aroostook introduced a proposal for a Constitutional amendment providing for women's suffrage,¹⁵ but the Senate Judiciary Committee reported unfavorably on the resolution and it failed to pass on an unrecorded floor vote.¹⁶

The House Committee on Legal Affairs reported legislation inexpedient on a Greenback-sponsored bill to

¹²Ibid., March 10, 1881.

¹³Ellsworth American, March 17, 1881.

¹⁴Kennebec Journal, February 3, 1881.

¹⁵Ibid., January 8, 1881.

¹⁶Ellsworth American, February 17, 1881.

make ten hours of work a legal working day except for agricultural and maintenance workers.¹⁷

The House Railroad Committee reported against a bill that would empower the railroad commissioners to supervise rate and freight charges.¹⁸

On a vote that split party lines, the House passed a resolve for a Constitutional amendment changing the state election date from September to coincide with the national election in November. The Senate, however, voted against it, with most of the Republicans and some of the Fusionists joining the majority side.¹⁹

A reapportionment of legislative districts based on the 1880 census passed both houses but was vetoed by the Governor. He called the bill "arbitrary, unfair, unjust, and as it seems to me unduly partisan." He held that Waldo and Somerset, Greenback strongholds, were under-represented in comparison with the Republican counties, especially with Kennebec.²⁰

The biennial election and legislative session had been approved (1879), so there was to be no election for state office in 1881, except the by-election to fill Frye's seat in the House of Representatives, and no legislative session until 1883. The Congressional re-

¹⁷Kennebec Journal, February 4, 1881.

¹⁸Ibid., February 11, 1881.

¹⁹Ibid., March 2, and March 4, 1881.

²⁰Ibid., March 19, 1881.

apportionment in effect for the 1882 Congressional election reduced Maine's representation in the House to four members.²¹

The spring municipal elections were a disappointment to the Greenbackers. Republican Mayors were elected in all cities except Ellsworth, where a Fusion Democrat won out. The Town of Camden remained staunchly in Greenback hands, however, as it did throughout the heyday of that party.²²

The split in the Greenback ranks which originated over the selection of presidential electors in the last election appeared to be ever widening. The two wings of the party met in a conference in Augusta early in January and a second was held there a week later. They were unable to reach any agreement. F. M. Fogg, who now led the Fusionist wing, believed that they "should present an unbroken front to the Republicans." Solon Chase, spokesman for the straight Greenbackers, called for "no alliances or entanglements with either of the old parties."²³ The two state committees met again in Lewiston, February ninth, and again the straight Greenbackers refused to unite with the Fusionists.²⁴ Solon Chase expanded his views on fusion in a speech in Spring-

²¹Ibid., March 4, 1881.

²²Ellsworth American, March 10, 1881, and Kennebec Journal, March 15, 1881.

²³Kennebec Journal, January 8, and 15, 1881.

²⁴Ellsworth American, February 17, 1881.

field, Missouri, on March 18:

A man who claims to be a Greenbacker and voted for either a Democrat or a Republican is not a man to be proud of.... The straight Greenbackers believed both old parties to be enemies.
....

One of the results of fusion was that Greenbackers who came out of the Republican party went back. They could not stomach affiliation with the Democratic party and be counted as Democrats. The Republican Greenbackers do not want to give it [the Democratic party] a new lease on life....

Now, there is standing room for only two parties, and there is graveyard room for the Democratic party. Maine has been a Republican state for 25 - 30 years and now she has elected the first Greenback Governor in the nation. It was done by fighting the straight fight.²⁵

His political analysis seems to be correct as far as the place of third parties in the country is concerned; but his prediction of the demise of the Democratic party was not too realistic. The party that was to be the immediate successor of the Greenback party had already been organized. The Anti-Monopoly League held an organizational meeting at Cooper Institute in New York, January twenty-eighth. As the title indicates, the party believed that the growth of monopolies threatened the existence of democratic government. Their platform called for government control of railroads and telegraphic lines.²⁶

An election was held in the Second Congressional District on September twelfth, to choose a replacement for

²⁵Ibid., April 7, 1881.

²⁶Kennebec Journal, January 29, 1881.

William P. Frye who had resigned his House seat on election to the Senate. The District Greenback convention nominated Judge W. R. Gilbert of Bath for its standard bearer. Gilbert pledged "to stand with the Greenback party and for Greenback principles and to vote with the Greenbackers.... in case he should be elected."²⁷ The Democrats met later and also nominated a candidate, Franklin Reed of Bath.²⁸ And although the Democrats withdrew their candidate about two weeks before the election and urged party members to support Gilbert, Nelson Dingley, Jr., the Republican candidate, won by a 5,000 vote majority.²⁹

The Greenback State Committee met in Auburn on November third with John White of Levant as chairman. One of its main objects seemed to be to solicit contributions to purchase Solon Chase a press and type for a new Greenback paper. Wendell Phillips, the old Massachusetts abolitionist, contributed a check of twenty-five dollars to the cause. Solon had been discharged as editor of the Enquirer for a more fusion-minded newspaper man, Samuel A. Berry of Deering.³⁰

The deadlock between Governor Plaisted and his Republican Council reached a climax toward the end of the the year when the Council took its case to the Supreme

²⁷Ellsworth American, June 30, 1881.

²⁸Ibid., August 11, 1881.

²⁹Ibid., September 5, 1881, and Dingley, op cit.,

³⁰Ellsworth American, October 27, and November 10, 1881.

Court. The Council had refused to approve his appointments and in at least two instances the Governor had refused to sign salary warrants for those officials that he had tried unsuccessfully to discharge. The court ruled that the officials were only removable "by and with the consent of the Council." Two judges, however, had the temerity to "doubt if the court should act on the question!" Plaisted, as far as possible, ignored the court's ruling.³¹

The improving economic conditions boded ill for the political fortunes of the Greenback party. R. G. Dun & Company reported that business failures in the United States in 1881 were less than fifty per cent of the 1878 rate (based on the proportion of failures to the total business establishments).³² Even B. J. Chambers, vice-presidential candidate on the Weaver ticket in 1880, admitted that the party was "disorganized everywhere," although he added that he was hopeful of future success.³³

The anti-fusion straight Greenbackers held their State Convention in Bangor, May thirtieth, with Chairman R. M. Springer of Georgetown presiding. Fusionists were kept off the floor, and when J. J. Maher, Kennebec delegate on the Resolutions Committee, proposed a resolve praising Governor Plaisted as a Greenbacker, it was quickly

³¹Ibid., July 7, and December 8, 1881.

³²Ibid., January 5, 1882.

³³Ibid., March 16, 1882.

tabled and not again taken up. Raverend W. F. Eaton of Cape Elizabeth nominated Solon Chase for Governor and the convention voted in his favor, 103 - 21. Solon Chase, who was now editor of his own paper, Them Steers, "a Greenback battering ram," announced that they planned "to sail under their own flag, hereafter."³⁴ He charged that "The Democrats have played a sharp game. They have come into the Greenback party, claimed to be good Greenbackers and then went back with what Greenbackers they could carry."³⁵

The Fusion Greenbackers held their convention in Bangor on June first and unanimously renominated Plaisted for the Governor's chair. They divided the state into four provisional Congressional districts and left the nomination of Congressmen to the district conventions.³⁶ Joseph Dane of Kennebunkport, Daniel H. Thing, ex-master of the State Grange, Congressmen Ladd and Murch were their Congressional nominees.³⁷

As the state had not been redistricted since our Congressional representation had been cut from five to four, the Congressmen were to be elected at large.³⁸

Governor Plaisted was renominated by acclamation at the Democratic State Convention at Lewiston. They later approved the Fusion Greenback Congressional nomi-

³⁴Ibid., March 23, and June 1, 1882.

³⁵Ibid., August 31, 1882.

³⁶Ibid., June 8, 1882.

³⁷Ibid., June 29, and July 6, 1882.

³⁸Ibid., February 9, 1882.

nations.³⁹

The Republican State Convention chose a politically available candidate in Frederick Robie, a gentleman farmer of Gorham. As a member of Plaisted's Republican Council, his name had become well known throughout the state, but his biggest political asset was his position as head of the State Grange. In December, 1881, there were one hundred and forty local granges in the rural areas of the state with a total membership of nearly 10,000.⁴⁰ The Grange's support of Robie gave the Republicans an opportunity to draw votes from the main strength of the Fusionists, the farmers. The State Convention chose its Congressional candidates. In order to combat the Fusionist threat in Eastern Maine, Congressman Lindsey of Norridgewock was dropped from the Republican slate, and Thomas B. Reed, Nelson Dingley, Jr., Charles Boutelle of Bangor and Seth L. Milliken of Cherryfield became the Republican Congressional nominees.⁴¹

The Fusionists claimed that Republican money won the election for them. William P. Frye, who had replaced Blaine as chairman of the State Committee,⁴² promised that the national party would give the Maine Republicans "all the money they need to win."⁴³ Governor

³⁹Ibid., June 29, 1882.

⁴⁰Ibid., June 15, 1882, and December 29, 1881.

⁴¹Ibid., June 15, 1882.

⁴²Ibid., November 17, 1881.

⁴³Ibid., August 17, 1882.

Plaisted, in a stump speech in Cleveland, after the Maine election, reported that the Republicans had used over \$200,000 in the state campaign.⁴⁴ The Belfast Journal charged that the Fusionists also had received outside financial aid, although on a much smaller scale, with a \$3,000 contribution from the Anti-Monopoly League.⁴⁵

The September election was a complete Republican victory, a blow to the Fusionists, and it removed Solon Chase and his straight Greenbackers as a political force of consequence. The Portland Argus, a Fusion newspaper, called it "a Waterloo" but added caustically, "Farmer Robie can now remove his cowhide boots, take back his gold watch and come into town and not be afraid to meet the State Committee."⁴⁶

Robie received 72,481 votes to Plaisted's 63,921, while Solon Chase received only 1,324 votes. Plaisted ran ahead of Robie only in Knox and Waldo counties. Chase's vote was scattering.⁴⁷

The four Republican Congressional candidates were successful. Their average plurality over their Fusion opponents was roughly 9,000. In only Knox and Waldo counties the Fusion candidates ran ahead of the Republicans. The leading vote getter among the straight

⁴⁴Ibid., November 2, 1882.

⁴⁵Ibid., September 7, 1882.

⁴⁶Ibid., September 14, 1882.

⁴⁷Maine Register, 1883, p. 97.

Greenbackers in the Congressional contest was Dr. H. B. Eaton of Camden who received slightly fewer ballots than Solon Chase's total for Governor.⁴⁸

The Republicans won control of the state legislature by a wide margin. Twenty-eight Republican Senators and three Greenbackers were elected. Two of the Greenback Senators came from Waldo County, the other from Knox. The House was to consist of one hundred and ten Republicans, twenty-five Democrats and sixteen Greenbackers. Waldo, Knox and Penobscot elected four Greenback Representatives each, two were elected from Cumberland, and one each from Lincoln and Androscoggin (from the Turner district - Solon Chase's home town).⁴⁹

This debacle caused the Democrats to abandon the Fusion experiment, and although the Greenbackers ran candidates in the next election they were without hope of success and the party was soon to be a memory. The Republican victory in Maine loomed even larger to the opposition as 1882 was, nationally, an off year for that party. The Democrats won control of the House of Representatives from the Republicans and the atage was set for the election of a Democratic President in 1884. As the Republican press dryly observed, "politically speaking, Maine don't [sic] seem to Dirigo this year to any considerable extent."⁵⁰

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 116.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 142.

⁵⁰Ellsworth American, November 16, 1882, and Morison, and Commager, op. cit., statistical table, p.661.

CHAPTER VII

THE GREENBACK PARTY IN MAINE,
1883 AND 1884

Governor Robie attempted to refute Plaisted's charge that Maine's imprisonment for debt law was causing people to move from the state, by declaring, "I repel the flippancy insinuation that Maine is a good state to emigrate from."¹ He further cautioned the opposition "It is not right to stir the masses and point out inequalities in the distribution of property." The Governor also urged the legislature to remove the one per cent tax levied on savings banks' deposits.²

The Senate included only three Greenbackers. One of these, W. R. Rust, editor of the Belfast Age, went over to the Democrats after the session closed and served as a delegate to the Democratic National Convention in 1884.³ Elijah J. Gushee of Appleton, who had served in the House in 1880 as a Greenbacker (and was still so listed in the legislature at its 1883 session) now called himself an Anti-Monopolist.⁴ He was elected to the House in 1884 as a Greenbacker, but before the legislature met in 1885

¹Ellsworth American, January 11, 1883.

²Kennebec Journal, January 5, 1883.

³Ellsworth American, July 10, 1884.

⁴Kennebec Journal, January 9, 1883.

termed himself a Democrat.⁵

Of the sixteen Greenbackers in the House, eleven reported that they were full or part time farmers and thirteen replied that they had been Republicans before joining the Greenbackers.⁶

The Greenbackers and Democrats in the legislature caucused together and because the Democrats were in numerical superiority, C. A. Spofford, Democratic Representative from Deer Isle, was selected as the Fusion candidate for Speaker of the House.⁷

Senator William P. Frye was elected to a full term by the legislature (in 1881, he had been chosen to fill out Blaine's unexpired term). The Fusionists had supported ex-Governor Plaisted for the position.⁸

The most controversial bill to appear before the legislature in this session was the new Congressional apportionment plan. According to this scheme, which passed both Houses on a party vote, the state was to be divided thus:

<u>District</u>	<u>Counties</u>	<u>Population</u>
First	York, Cumberland	148,525
Second	Androscoggin, Oxford, Sagadahoc, Lincoln, Knox	172,983
Third	Somerset, Kennebec, Hancock, Waldo	155,999
Fourth	Aroostook, Washington, Piscataquis, Penobscot	171,067 ⁹

⁵Maine Register, 1885, and Ellsworth American, November 27, 1884.

⁶Kennebec Journal, January 5, 1883.

⁷Ibid., January 3, 1883.

⁸Ibid., January 17, 1883.

⁹Ibid., January 31, 1883.

The Fusionists protested this arrangement largely because of the fact that it separated their strongest counties, Knox and Waldo, putting them into districts with strong Republican counties. Senator Gushee of Knox called the plan "Republican gerrymandering," and speaking of the Second District, charged, "the serpentine windings of a reptile are not more devious than the lines of this district."¹⁰

Greenback-sponsored legislation, naturally, failed to pass the Republican legislature. Senator Gushee sponsored a bill providing that ten hours be considered the legal working day in manufacturing plants, but the Senate Judiciary Committee reported it unfavorably and no further action resulted.¹¹

Most of the Greenbackers opposed the Prohibition amendment which was approved at this session. They favored an amendment, to the proposal, which would have removed cider from the list of intoxicants that were to be prohibited.¹²

The Democrats were now following Solon Chase's lead in denouncing the Fusion arrangement but hedged with an appeal to the Greenbackers for their support. At the Democratic State Committee meeting in Augusta January eleventh, it was decided that they should "return to the

¹⁰Ibid., February 26, 1883.

¹¹Ibid., February 21, and 22, 1883.

¹²Ibid., March 17, 1883.

'Simon-pure' Democratic principles" but should show a "spirit of conciliation" to the Greenback wing and try to retain them in the party.¹³

The Fusion Greenbackers, however, were reluctant to withdraw from their alliance with the Democrats. A Fusion meeting was held in Augusta, February twenty-eighth with Isaac Hobson presiding and ex-Governor Plaisted in attendance. They decided to act with the Democrats and ignore Solon Chase's Greenbackers. It was suggested that they call themselves the "Union" party but no action was taken on the change of name.¹⁴ F. M. Fogg, who had been a leader of the Fusion Greenbackers, now renounced their stand with the statement that the Greenbackers will not support the Democrats in the future.¹⁵

The Belfast Age, edited by William R. Rust, urged a merger of Greenbackers and Democrats under the latter party so that the state would have a stronger voice in the 1884 National Democratic Convention.¹⁶ The Fusion Greenbackers, or the remnants of that group, were opposed. Dr. H. B. Eaton presided at a stormy session of the State Committee in Auburn September nineteenth. It was decided that a State Convention would be called for April 1884, and they declared their opposition to fusion

¹³Ibid., January 12, 1883.

¹⁴Ibid., March 1, 1883.

¹⁵Ellsworth American, May 31, 1883.

¹⁶Ibid., September 13, 1883.

with either of the old parties.¹⁷

Actually the Greenback conventions of 1884 were political formalities. Most of the Greenbackers had already returned to one or the other of the old parties.

The State Convention of the Fusion Greenback party was held in Lewiston, April 24, 1884. The convention turned down the gubernatorial bids of ex-Governor Plaisted and ex-Congressman Ladd and nominated Dr. H. B. Eaton for Governor.¹⁸

The straight Greenbackers held their State Convention in Augusta, April thirtieth, with seventy-five delegates in attendance. After John White of Levant and J. F. Turner of Deering had refused to become candidates, Reverend W. F. Eaton of Cape Elizabeth was selected as the gubernatorial nominee.¹⁹ Solon Chase had been sent as delegate to the National Greenback Convention at Indianapolis, May twenty-seventh, where he led the unsuccessful movement to prevent Ben Butler from receiving the presidential nomination.²⁰

Luther C. Bateman, in accepting the Greenback nomination for Congress in the Fourth District, showed unwarranted optimism about the future of the party, when he wrote, "As long as a national bank or an interest bearing

¹⁷Ibid., September 27, 1883.

¹⁸Ibid., May 1, 1884.

¹⁹Ibid., May 8, 1884.

²⁰Ibid., May 29, 1884.

bond remain, the Greenback party will live."²¹ Bateman, apparently, remained attached to Greenback principles for he later campaigned for Governor on the Peoples party ticket.

The Greenbackers failed to nominate a candidate for Congress from the First District. W. W. Perry of Camden was their candidate in the Second District (where he received but 1,400 votes). Daniel H. Thing, who had run as a Greenbacker in 1882, now ran as a Democrat in the Third District.²²

The campaign was a comparatively quiet one in Maine. The Republicans were concentrating on getting out a big vote in September for its psychological effect on the presidential election in November. The opposition had little hope of success on a state level due to their disorganization, and in the national elections the Republican candidate Blaine would naturally pick up some more Democratic and Greenbacker votes, all in all, a discouraging prospect for Greenbackers and Democrats alike.

In a light vote, Robie was reelected, receiving almost a 20,000 plurality over John B. Redman, Democrat, of Ellsworth. The Governor ran ahead of Redman in every county. Dr. Hosea B. Eaton, the Fusion Greenback candidate for Governor, received only 3,136 votes and nearly a

²¹Ibid., August 28, 1884.

²²Maine Register, 1885, pp. 103-110.

third of those came from Knox County (his home county). The straight Greenback candidate, Reverend Wm.F. Eaton of Cape Elizabeth, was practically ignored at the polls, getting only 103 votes.²³

The State Senate was to be composed of thirty-one Republicans and in the House were to be found only two Greenbackers (and one of those professed himself now a Democrat).²⁴ An ignominious end to the political hopes that seemed so sure of fulfillment in 1878 and 1879.

In the presidential election in November, Maine threw a very light vote (some 13,000 below the 1880 totals). Blaine rolled up a 20,000 vote plurality over Cleveland, and Butler received 3,900 votes with his supporters most numerous in Knox and Androscoggin counties.²⁵ During the presidential campaign the Republican press largely ignored the candidacy of Greenbacker (and Anti-Monopolist) Butler but grew increasingly vitriolic toward the Democratic standard bearers. It was charged that Hendricks was "openly rejoicing over every rebel victory" during the War, and the press called on "all Christians to vote against the immoral and licentious Cleveland."²⁶ After Cleveland's election the dismal headlines read "Confederacy in the Saddle" and "Appomattox Avenged."²⁷

²³Ibid., p. 102.

²⁴Ibid., p. 152.

²⁵Ibid., p. 121

²⁶Ellsworth American, October 2, and October 30, 1884.

²⁷Ibid., November 20, 1884.

The Greenback party faded into oblivion in Maine, and elsewhere as well, after the 1884 campaign. They ran no ticket in the next election, 1886.²⁸

While the party itself had disappeared, the greenback ideas continued in part at least, and were re-asserted when the silver question arose. Writing to the Lewiston Sun in 1891, Solon Chase reported, "Eugene [Senator] Hale sent me the Congressional Record this winter. [Hale had been born in Turner and had attended school there when Solon was the schoolmaster] We had the discussions on the silver question read aloud at our reading meetings and the result is there has been a revival of the Greenback religion at Chase's Mills."²⁹ But the Free Silver question hardly raised a ripple on Maine's political waters and the Republican control of the state was never threatened until the Bull Moose Progressives caused a party split, more than thirty years later.³⁰

²⁸Cos, op. cit., p. 212.

²⁹Letter clipped from the Lewiston Sun, undated, in Solon Chase Scrapbook.

³⁰World Almanac, 1949, p. 72.

SUMMARY

The Greenback party, as has been pointed out, grew from the demand for an inflated currency following the economic depression of 1873. It strongly opposed the Resumption Act which called for redemption of the war-time greenbacks at par in specie and also provided for the destruction of the emergency bills when they came into the Treasury. This latter section was amended to prevent further destruction in 1878, largely because of pressure from the soft money advocates. The party held that the people, through Congress, should control the volume of the country's money and not the banks and the miners of precious metals. Money value is not intrinsic. The specie reserve in the Treasury should be used to pay off the bonded debt and sufficient paper money (unbacked) should be issued to meet the needs of business.

The Greenbackers were not economic theorists who were debating financial questions in an ivory tower. They were, for the most part, agrarians who had contracted debts and mortgages during inflationary times and now squeezed between the deflated currency and high real estate taxes, seized upon political action to better their condition. During the Civil War, Maine had failed to follow a "pay as you go" tax policy and as a consequence

had a large bonded debt to pay off. And until additional sources were tapped, stocks, railroads, telegraph and telephone, and savings banks, the real estate owner had to bear the brunt of the heavy taxation. So the Greenback retrenchment campaign to cut government officials' salaries and pare the government's operating budget, appealed strongly to the farmers in Maine.

Many Greenbackers had become disillusioned with the old parties and looked to the new party as a reform movement. Many of their members in the legislature reported that they had left the Republican party because of the excesses of the Grant administration and disgust with the machinations of what they termed the Blaine Ring in this state. Carl Shurz is reported to have said before he joined the Mugwumps, that "Blaine wallowed in spoils, like a rhinoceros in an African pool."¹ The Democratic party, still bearing the stigma of the "bloody shirt," was glad to ride the new party vehicle into power. Disappointed office seekers from both old parties joined the Greenbackers, of course, in an attempt to gain political prominence.

The more astute leaders, such as Solon Chase, worked for a realignment of parties on the financial issue. Most of them had seen the Republicans grow from a

¹Ellsworth American, October 5, 1882.

minor party before the War and hoped that the Greenbackers, drawing support from both old parties, would supplant the Democrats as a major party. The Fusion arrangement, backed by those more interested in immediate personal political success than in long-range political principles, spelled the end of the Greenbackers as a permanent party. Fusion with the Democrats closed the Republican ranks against Greenback recruiters and prevented its further growth. Actually, the Greenback party's best year was in 1878, in its first active campaign in the state, before the Fusion arrangement had been perfected. Although its candidate, Harris M. Plaisted, was elected Governor in 1880, its legislative membership never again reached those heights. Probably, it is impossible for any state party to long remain an active political force without a strong national party affiliated with it. Nothing succeeds like success, it is said, or hope of success, and the utter failure of the Weaver ticket in 1880 caused the Maine Greenbackers to give up all hope for permanent status.

The Greenbackers struggled through the election of 1882 and barely put in an appearance in 1884, their last appearance on the ticket. The light vote in 1884, 1888 and 1892 may indicate that many of the old Greenbackers failed to align themselves with either of the old parties and merely kept away from the polls.

The business prosperity which followed, because of, or in spite of, the Resumption Act (which went into effect January 1, 1879) may have removed the party's chief reason for being, and it remained as a political force only by acting as a component part of the Democratic party. However, its appeal was on a wider basis than merely a theory of currency. Currency reform, after all, was a matter for the national not the state Government. And as its full title indicates, the National Greenback Labor party attempted a political union of the laborer and the farmer. This combination was brought out in this state, when the Greenbackers twice elected to Congress a union official and former stonecutter. Knox and Waldo counties remained staunchly in the Greenback ranks when other counties faltered, in part at least, because of the support given by the quarrymen and shipyard workers in those coastal areas. It is unfortunate that the Greenback party is remembered today for its part in the "count-out" dispute and the wide range of reform measures which the party supported is largely overlooked. Some of these measures were: Abolishment of imprisonment for debt, biennial sessions of the legislature, abolition of the Governor's Council, women's suffrage, the secret ballot, the ten-hour working day in manufacturing plants, regulation of the railroads, taxation of intangibles (stocks,

chiefly), and the change of the state election date to coincide with the national election. All proposals have long since been passed into] two measures, the abolition of the Executive Council and the change of the election date to November. And, but for reasons of political strategy, these changes might have been effected.

The Greenback party served a purpose, however, in a like manner with other reform-minded minor parties, e. g., the Grangers, the Populists, the Socialists. The party raised issues and posed questions which received increasing public support. When individual issues became popular enough, in their vote getting influence, one (or both) of the catch-all and inclusive major parties would include the issue in its campaign platform, thus stealing the political thunder of the minor party. This flexibility in the principles of our major parties caused Norman Thomas, looking back at the Socialist party's platform of 1912, to accuse the Republicans and Democrats, half-jokingly, of stealing his program.

Time removes much of the radicalism of reform issues and their advocates. As Solon Chase declared, in 1886, with pardonable pride in his own reform efforts, "A hundred years hence, they will look back to the cranks of today and call them far-seeing philosophers."²

²Solon Chase Scrapbook.

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