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**BLACKS AND THE SOUTHERN FARMERS'
ALLIANCE MOVEMENT**

by *Gerald Gaither*

The last quarter of the nineteenth century was a period of intense agrarian ferment in the South. As prices declined and costs soared, a number of agencies were created to express the discontent and aspirations of the Southern farmer. By the late 'eighties the Farmers' Alliance had become the most important of the lot. Originating in Lampasas County, Texas, as early as 1874 or 1875 as a cooperative effort toward purchasing supplies, the Farmers' Alliance furnished effective opposition to land sharks and cattle barons and thwarted cattle rustling.¹ Under the charismatic leadership of C. W. Macune, the organization spread rapidly across the South, introducing itself, in Macune's words, as "a strictly white man's non-political secret business organization."²

As the order spread eastward, it encountered other agrarian organizations having similar aims and natures; obviously the most expedient process of expansion was a union of forces. Perhaps the most important of these mergers was made with the Louisiana Farmers' Union in 1887; the National Farmers' Alliance and Cooperative Union of America, commonly referred to as the Southern Alliance, came into official being with this union. In 1888, a similar merger with the Agricultural Wheel was proposed. After considerable debate, consolidation took place in December, 1888, at a gathering of delegates in Meridian, Mississippi.³

In the early days of the Alliance movement, the Negro, as a potential recruit, received only minor consideration. There were many factors and variables involved, but the intensification of racial prejudice impinged upon the white agrarians and forced them to take a path that would minimize conflict with the region. Any aberrant action in white ranks was regarded suspiciously in the mind of the white South as an attempt to revive the "horrors" of Black Reconstruction and open identification with blacks at this point probably would have produced pressures that would have quickly eliminated the Alliance. It was not only expedient but necessary, therefore, for the Alliance to disregard the Negro in its formative period during Reconstruction. With the passage of time and the rise of a new generation, however, the Alliance movement presents an interesting hindsight study in transitional ideology with regard to the black man.

In 1882, the prevailing spirit of racial distrust, coupled with a hostile barrage of propaganda, was probably the motivating factor that caused the Southern Alliance to restrict officially its membership to whites and to discourage strongly its membership from becoming involved in or endorsing any "distinct political party."⁴ While the Alliance chose not to admit Negroes into its ranks, the numerical preponderance of black population engaged in agrarian pursuits made it imperative to create a parallel Negro organization, if for no other reason than self-interest.

It was impossible to establish a profitable agricultural system in the South while the Negro acted as a potential competitor and a cheap source of exploitable labor, and the small white farmer soon realized that he could rise no higher on the ladder of prosperity than his black counterpart. As a *National Economist*,

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the official organ of the Southern Alliance, observed in 1891,

No one realizes better than [the Southern white farmer], if he allows sharpers to swindle the colored man by paying him excessively low prices for his cotton, by taking advantage of his necessity for money, . . . such low prices will tend to keep prices low until [the white farmers] . . . are compelled to sell . . . and . . . perpetuate the low prices. The fact is that the law of self preservation compels the Southern white farmer to . . . hold [the Negro] out of the clutches of the exploiter . . .⁵

Thus while expediency necessitated the Negro's early exclusion from the order, it also required that he later be included in the grandiose agrarian design for the same reason.

Coupled with this fact, the Northern Alliance was instrumental in promoting the idea of a black order in the South. The Northern Alliance, unlike its Southern counterpart, accepted the philosophy that anyone, regardless of color, should be included in the movement if born on the farm or related to agrarian pursuits.⁶ Because of the concentration of Negro population in the South, a Northern-based Colored Alliance would have been of little practical value.

Milton George, editor of the *Western Rural* of Chicago, suggested the delicate task of organizing a separate Negro order in the South. He reasoned that the farmer class should organize to protect its interests and that a working coalition with the Negro agricultural class would only serve to further this goal.⁷ Thus, Southern self-interest and Northern pragmatic idealism were the chief progenitors of a Colored Alliance.

The first Colored Sub-Alliance was founded December 11, 1886, in Houston County, Texas.⁸ Attracted by ritual, secrecy, and the possible economic benefits of the order, the increase in membership of the organization at the local level was not only instantaneous but phenomenal. Within a few days it had spread to such an extent throughout Houston and neighboring counties that it was deemed necessary to call a convention at Good Hope Baptist Church in Weldon to discuss the possibility of a sub-Alliance merger. All of this took place within a mere eighteen days after the founding of the first local. Recognizing the need for black solidarity at the outset, the delegates "unanimously agreed" that "union and organization" were absolute necessities to the "earthly salvation" of the Negro farmer.⁹ The convention also set forth a "declaration of purposes," stating its reasons why a separate Colored Alliance was necessary, and outlining goals the organization hoped to achieve. With the settlement of this declaration, the entire convention of "sixteen colored men and citizens of Texas" signed the document and adjourned.¹⁰

The Colored Alliance was well aware of the difficulty, if not the actual impossibility, of being able to work with the white Alliance. They recognized that a necessary arbiter of Alliance policy for both races was the requirement of loyalty to the Southern racial norm, and as such, any organizational integration was highly undesirable to the well-being of both organizations. They did, however, make it clear from the very beginning that they desired ideological integration and unity of purpose with the white Alliance, through any means that would be mutually beneficial to both races.

One resolution stated succinctly:

That though we are organizing separate and apart from the Farmers' Alliance now existing in Texas, composed of white members, we believe it will be to our interest to work in harmony with that organization. That we ask the members of the white Alliance throughout the United States to aid us in perfecting our organization.¹¹

R. M. Humphrey of Lovelady, Texas, a white Baptist missionary working in the black community, was elected General Superintendent and presented with the awesome responsibility of organizing and spreading the Colored Alliance gospel throughout the South. Undoubtedly Humphrey was aware of the magnitude of this task as well as his meager chances of making a success of the organization. This was, he later wrote, an organization that "had no money, no credit, few friends, and was expected to reform and regenerate a race which, from long endurance and oppression and chattel slavery, had become extremely besotted and ignorant."¹²

Despite such seemingly insurmountable obstacles, Humphrey apparently possessed the necessary missionary zeal and initiative required of his office. The order presently began to spread to other states; newly organized orders adopted the Texas pattern and purposes, with some slight modifications to fit local problems. One can only surmise whether this early success was due mainly to the organizational talents of Humphrey, the destitute condition of the Negro farmer, or a combination of the two.

Once the Colored Alliance achieved interstate proportions, it became legally necessary to obtain a federal charter. A convention of the various state Colored Alliances, which assembled in Lovelady on March 14, 1888, discussed the procurement of this Charter. After some debate, the delegates decided to regard the Colored Alliance as a trade union for legal purposes. A charter application was then forwarded to the necessary legal authorities, using this classification. The federal government apparently concurred with the definition of the order since a charter was granted and duly filed with the Recorder of Deeds in Washington, D. C. on March 14, 1888.¹³ Thus, the Colored Farmers' National Alliance and Cooperative Union was born.

While little is known about the organizational methods of the Colored Alliance, it seems probably that, like the white Southern Alliance, it sent out organizers in teams, probably recruited on the state level. According to Leonidas L. Polk, president of the Southern Alliance, "most of its organizers [were] white."¹⁴ A white Texas organizer who came to Alabama in 1889 expressed his hope that "the Farmers' Alliance men everywhere will take hold and organize or aid in organizing the colored farmer, and placing him in an attitude to co-operate intelligently and systematically."¹⁵ This indicates that, at least in Alabama, a certain unity of endeavor existed between the orders of both races with regard to recruiting and organizing the Negro farmer.

Within months after the first Texas sub-Alliance was founded, locals were to be found in nearby Arkansas, and within months after the founding of the National chapter state organizations were to be found in widespread areas of the South. The rapid manner in which these orders came into being was probably due more to the inordinately difficult times being experienced by the Negro faction than to any public relation efforts of the central office in Houston. Aided by this unfortunate situation, as well as white Alliance sympathy, the order symbolized "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" to the oppressed Negro, as well as to the white farmer.¹⁶

An economic motif, then, threaded through the Negro's early attraction to the Alliance. As a result of this unity and emphasis on self-help, the Negro began to play a somewhat more active role in his economic development. By the fall of 1891, it was reported "throughout the South [that] the colored man has been able to get more money for his cotton and pay less for his bacon,"¹⁷ While the Negro's progress was slow, very slow, here was tangible proof indeed that the

agrarian black masses, through unity, might rise out of their oppressed state. This was perhaps the greatest black agrarian expression of the ideals of self-help and solidarity since reconstruction whereby the Negro farmer had organized on such a broad scale to take the initiative and work out his own economic salvation in a hostile environment. Always the emphasis was on struggle and success through penurious economy, thrift, and hard work. If his white agrarian counterpart refused to grant the black man this "privilege," he could be forced to pay an increasingly high price in terms of economic disorders which would disrupt the price and labor index of the South. Always in the background, the threat of self-interest loomed as an ever present reminder to the white Alliance that it could not fight the battle alone. In order to prosper, the white farmer realized that he "must take with him all engaged in that occupation."¹⁸ A collective interracial endeavor would be necessary to elevate the agrarian masses of both races.

The Colored Alliance depended to a great extent upon the good will of the white South at large. Unfortunately, when Negro Alliance initiative sharply conflicted with what the surrounding white community viewed as being in its best interest, the dispute was more often than not resolved to the dissatisfaction of the Negro.¹⁹

Whether the Alliance movement agreed with the political philosophy of the Bourbons was of lesser importance than the fact that the proposals they espoused had come largely to be a norm for regional acceptance. When any constructive agitation emanated from the Alliance, especially the Negro order, the Democrats, in a skillful adoption of reconstruction techniques, accused the Alliance of political heresy which would revive Black Republicanism. For the Negro to become involved in or even merely accused of using political means to achieve his goals usually resulted in internecine strife—at the expense of the Colored Alliance in this case.

Though in theory the Colored Alliances were of a non-political and non-partisan nature, the presence of such a large organized body of potential Negro voters conjured up the specter of Black Republicanism and the fear of a political coup. By 1890-1891, when many orders had participated in or had been accused of political complicity, the Bourbons began to subject the Alliance to an intense "ghost dance . . . of 'Negro supremacy.'"²⁰ By the fall of 1890, an election year in many states, a black Virginia Allianceman remarked that "the great gun of white supremacy has been loaded and primed and trained upon our ranks . . ."²¹

The Bourbons hoped—futilely, as it later developed—that this appeal to poor white agrarian prejudice, always just under the surface, would stem the mounting tide of political rebellion in the Alliance ranks. If, as a result of these tirades, the Conservatives could heal the split in white ranks and isolate the Negro, a class combination of considerable weight could be removed from the political landscape. The prejudices of the upland farmers were being courted vigorously in an effort to divest them of any thought of organizing around any ideology except white supremacy.

Financial dependence, especially upon the white Alliance, was also a factor which militated against the various Colored Alliances establishing themselves on a firm and independent footing. The Texas order was a notable exception and by the summer of 1889, reportedly was worth \$135,000 "above all liabilities."²² In addition, the order had \$80,000 in cash backing besides buildings and other property. Much of this money was obtained by circumventing local cotton merchants and shipping the crop directly to the Liverpool exchange. Humphrey later

reported that in 1888 the Texas order had made "at least" \$15,000 extra "on one crop" by this process.²³ The Tennessee order, unlike Texas, had not managed to accumulate \$10,000 to establish their own exchange by the summer of 1889.²⁴ Furthermore, they were never able to establish their own exchange but, rather, traded through the white Alliance exchange at Memphis.

If the white orders failed to take an active interest in the Negro brethren their own orders might prove ineffective. It should be noted that for the most part the leadership of the white orders express a marked degree of paternalism for the Colored Alliances.²⁵ Class or self-interest forced the rank-and-file to render aid to the Negro orders. All elements, despite the diversity of their racial philosophy, ultimately had the same purpose in mind: the uplifting of the farmer class.

Since the Negro was financially destitute and unable to support large cooperatives or exchanges in his behalf, it should not be surprising to find many members of local orders rendered only token financial assistance to their clubs. The *National Alliance*, under the editorship of Humphrey, counseled the orders to stop "buying Alliance badges and regalia and all that kind of thing" and pay up their dues and subscribe to the paper to keep themselves better informed. While emphasizing the fact that "the [Colored] Alliance was organized to do you good," it was rather sharply pointed out that this had to be a reciprocal process.²⁶ While the extent of the practice is not known, the financial straits of the order were such that the neglect of only a small segment of the membership would create financial havoc in any local chapter.

When viewed with an objective eye, the purported strength of the Colored Alliance appears to have been exaggerated. While faulty tabulations on the local level and misquoted press releases could have assisted in the confusion, the Colored Alliance administration must take the blame as the chief perpetrator of these claims. In August, 1891, it was reported that "over 2,000 sub-Alliance charters have been issued for Colored Alliances since the Ocala convention" of December, 1890.²⁷ In June of the same year (1891), the *National Alliance* reported that "more than 1,600 voters join the Colored Alliance every day that the sun rises."²⁸ If this astonishing rate of growth had continued for as long as a year, this would have produced approximately 585,000 new "voters"—a sign of potent growth, indeed, if true! If Humphrey authorized these figures—a reasonable assumption in light of his position as General Superintendent—he ostensibly accrued no personal gain as a result. While such activities are "unusual," to say the least, for a Baptist missionary, his only intentions were probably to elicit influence and attract prospective members, all in hopes of furthering the order.

Equally as perplexing a problem is the difficulty of ascertaining the aggregate strength and geographic distribution of the Colored Alliance. An 1891 membership analysis by the General Superintendent revealed the following breakdown: 300,000 females, 150,000 males under twenty-one years of age, and 750,000 adult males—a total membership of 1,200,000 "in more than twenty states."²⁹ In December, 1890, however, the Colored Alliance president, J. S. Jackson, reported that the order represented only twelve states but had a membership of two million black farmers³⁰—800,000 more than Humphrey would report nearly a year later. The picture is further confused when the *Progressive Farmer*, quoting Humphrey from an interview, credited the organization with a membership of 1,200,000 and representing thirty states rather than twenty as

reported by Jackson.³¹ Paradoxically, these last two statements were made within two weeks of each other!

The diversity of these statements points out rather clearly that the extent of the order was probably unknown, even among its own officers. Moreover, in their eagerness to display an impressive total, the officers possibly exaggerated the number of their organization in order to curry political favor. Once a member was accepted by the order, it is highly doubtful that he was ever dropped from the roll whether his membership was in good standing or not. As previously noted, dereliction of some members in paying their dues probably detracted from the whole but with no discernible differences being indicated by the officials.

The diversity of opinion within its own ranks about the range and strength of the Colored Alliance exemplifies the difficulty of making any sort of calculated elaboration. Historians have assessed the membership of the order from 800,000 to 1,300,000,³² depending on the individual and the period of interpretation, but the figure of 1,000,000, in all probability, represents the peak strength of the Colored Alliance. Evidence from both primary and secondary sources points to the fact that this peak was reached during the summer of 1890. (See Table I)

The bulk of the order was concentrated in the South Atlantic and Gulf States, with the remainder scattered in Delaware, Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, and some few clubs in Nebraska.³³ All states of the South possessed orders but in varying degrees of strength.

Near the end of 1891, rapid deterioration was evident in the order's size and effectiveness. One historian has concluded that the order "collapsed about the end of 1891."³⁴ This viewpoint is further substantiated by a Negro paper, *The Republican*, which made the comment in January of 1892 that the Colored Alliance went "up like a rocket and down like a stick, a mere pull, a fizzle and she is gone."³⁵

TABLE I
COLORED ALLIANCE MEMBERSHIP, 1890

STATE	MEMBERSHIP	
	July, 1890	December, 1890
Alabama	75,000	100,000
Arkansas	100,000	20,000
Florida	20,000	*
Georgia	100,000	84,000
Louisiana	20,000	50,000
Mississippi	60,000	90,000
North Carolina	100,000	55,000
South Carolina	50,000	90,000
Tennessee	100,000	60,000
Texas	150,000	90,000
Virginia	50,000	50,000
TOTALS	825,000^a	689,000^b

*Figure not available.

^a*Appletons' Annual Cyclopaedia*, 1890, p. 301.

^b*Progressive Farmer*, December 23, 1890; *Western Rural*, December 13, 1890, in Saloutos, *Farmer Movements*, p. 81; *Atlanta Constitution*, December 4, 1890, in Jack Abramowitz, "Accommodation and Militancy in Negro Life," p. 30.

By 1891 the "want of funds" and declining membership was rapidly draining "the crystal draught of reform." While Humphrey maintained that the order was "prospering beyond all precedent" and "increasing beyond count," a closer examination indicates that this was a dressing up, a smoothing over of the true picture in order to reinvigorate the organization.³⁶ While the order lingered through 1892, it never again possessed its former degree of importance. After 1892, the Colored Alliance was but a shadow of its former self in both strength and importance.

But however effective prosperity was as a rallying cry it was not enough for many members to accept Humphrey's easy assumption of surface prosperity. A more critical view of individual self improvement forced the Colored Alliance leadership into taking a rather unpopular stand in behalf of its members. As previously noted, it was the economic potential of the order that attracted a large segment of the early membership. In accordance with this philosophy, the order was forced to dedicate itself to a great extent to a policy of uplifting the Negro farmer. Back of such a commitment lay a heritage of nearly three centuries of prejudice and poverty which worked against the achievement of such a program. Once the organization dedicated itself to such a goal, however, it was forced to produce some tangible results—or, obviously, it could not long exist. The Colored Alliance officials recognized this fact, and their efforts during these years were directed toward accomplishing an essential part of this philosophy.³⁷

If the white farmer felt the pinch of declining prices and rising costs, the Negro experienced it even more. The process of economic erosion had mitigated against the possibility of the Negro developing an adequate financial margin by the 'nineties. The presence of the few black farmers who did command a comparative degree of prosperity only served to distress the average Negro tenant farmer. By the spring of 1890, the *National Alliance* reported solemnly that many of "our wives are barefoot, our children naked and our home[s] mere hovels."³⁸ In essence, the black farmer had his financial back to the wall and looked to the Colored Alliance to provide him with some measure of relief.

There soon occurred an event of such crucial importance that the Colored Alliance could ill afford not to become involved. In the fall of 1891, a number of merchants and planters, notably in the Memphis and Charleston areas, agreed to combine themselves into a series of organizations for the purpose of wage and price control. The major objective behind the formation of these organizations, however, was the reduction of the proceeds paid to the cotton pickers of the South.³⁹ Such a measure would increase their profits at the expense of the lower paid agricultural worker. Since the Negroes were predominately engaged in agrarian pursuits as hired hands they would be among those hardest hit by the scheme.⁴⁰

Coming at a time when many black farmers were living at a subsistence level, any reduction of the prevailing wage scale, however small, would further push the Negro agrarian down the economic level.⁴¹ As members doubtless expressed their vehement antagonisms to the state and national chapter, the Colored Alliance leadership was faced with the realization that it must decide on a course of action. If the order failed to aid the cotton pickers, many of whom were probably members, there could be little doubt about waning membership. Furthermore, if it became involved in a dispute with the economically powerful merchant-planter class, it also stood to lose.

After some vacillation, the Colored Alliance decided to support the cotton pickers and proceeded with plans to organize a general Southwide strike. The

chances of success for such a strike were not as remote as they first appeared. Even at this late stage of its development, the order still had approximately 1,000,000 members;⁴² in addition, the crop involved was to some extent a perishable commodity that had to be harvested within a reasonable time. The basic problem, therefore, appeared to be one of holding out a short while until negotiations were made.

The plans of the order were clandestine; not even the white Alliance was taken into confidence, possibly indicating the anticipated response of the white Alliance. With the Texas branch directing the plan of attack, the order agreed not to pick cotton for less than \$1 per hundred pounds plus board each day. With September 20, 1891 set as the target date, circulars were than mailed out from the National Headquarters at Houston to every sub-Alliance in the South informing them of the proposed strike, what methods were to be employed and the target date.⁴³

The plan appears to have suffered a setback for two major reasons: the blacks failed to strike in sufficient numbers and the target date was not properly synchronized. In Tennessee, for example, the reported strike date was September 12; a minor strike was reported in the area of Florence and Orangeburg, South Carolina as early as September 10—ten days before the Texas strike date.⁴⁴ Cotton maturing at different times throughout the critical zone probably added to the disjointed nature of the strike.

In Tennessee the strike "did not come to time," according to one white Alliance paper, because the Negroes "had more sense" than Humphrey, who reportedly organized the movement. Approximately three weeks after the proposed strike the picking was "going bravely on" and "fast pickers," at least in Tennessee, were receiving \$1.75 a day plus board and those "not so fast" from \$1 to \$1.50 a day plus board.⁴⁵ Faced with a potential crisis at harvest time the merchant-planter class, because of their own improvident actions, had forced the Colored Alliance to act and thereby create a reevaluation of the existing wage scale in certain parts of the South.

While other minor strikes also occurred in Arkansas and South Carolina, a general Southwide strike never occurred.⁴⁶ By September 26, 1891, the *National Economist* noted that "one thing seems certain, if a [general] strike was ordered, it has proved a failure as it certainly deserved to be."⁴⁷ Limited funds on the part of the black community and imminent economic coercion on the part of the merchant-planter class probably contributed to a last-minute withdrawal of the proposed strike.

An independent daily, *The New York Herald*, viewing the whole situation somewhat humorously, remarked:

This is not what the white Alliance expected when it kindly consented to receive colored men as members. A black man's vote being as good as another, when it is counted, it was thought well to secure as many [colored] votes as possible to take part in the grand strike against capital. But the colored man struck for himself. Who says he never learns anything?⁴⁸

The strike, however, was no laughing matter to Leonidas L. Polk, president of the white Southern Alliance. He soundly condemned the plan as an attempt by one group to advance itself at the expense of the whole farmer movement.⁴⁹ This hostile response by President Polk is revealing of the black's earlier failure to notify their white Alliance counterparts of their plans. Coming under attack by the press as favoring the strike in his actions and speeches, Polk replied in

the negative, stating that he knew nothing about the matter except what he read in the newspapers.⁵⁰

At any rate, the Colored Alliance experienced general failure and strong public disfavor out of this venture. When this is added to growing political distrust on the part of the Bourbons, financial pressure, and increasing disappointment on the part of the black community toward its program, survival of the order was hardly to be expected.

In addition to external pressures the problem of deep-seated discordance helped bring about the downfall of the Colored Alliance. As of late 1889, two Colored Alliances were in existence, both competing for the support of the Negro farmer and thereby creating a certain amount of disunity and internal dissension. Minor differences existed in the orders, not only in their rituals but in their methods as well. Antagonism between the two groups became so pronounced that it was reported to have "divided our churches, broken up our schools, embittered our communities and created discord in our families . . ."⁵¹

In early 1890, the two orders decided to compromise their differences. In the mediations that followed, R. M. Humphrey represented the parent group and Andrew J. Carothers the rebel group. Out of this conference the proclamation of a merger between the two orders was announced. It was also decided that the national headquarters would remain at Houston and the official name of the order would be retained as the Colored Farmers National Alliance and Cooperative Union. February 22, 1890, was set aside as "a day of thanks and prayer" for the merger to be cemented in friendship. Alliance stores and exchanges were also urged to enter into the festivities on this special day of reconciliation.⁵²

No sooner had this dispute been settled than another schism occurred in the South Carolina Colored Alliance in 1890. Under the leadership of W. J. Grant of Charleston, an independent state group was organized. While little is known about the results of this schism, it appears, however, that it proved to be an abortive effort with few practical accomplishments.⁵³ It is probable that the South Carolina order, as with Texas, nursed its wounds and returned to the fold, save all but a few diehards.

At a time when black solidarity and self-help was called for in the agrarian campaign, it is painfully evident that personal grievances and psychological disunity created a degree of estrangement within the order. Such a division of loyalty also further served to change the complexion of strained Alliance finances. These small divisions of loyalty were important, for among them were enterprising leaders and members who were not afraid to take the initiative. Such a group comprised a significant minority in this as well as any other movement.

When evaluating the importance of the Colored Alliance as it is related to the Southern Alliance and the Alliance movement in general, historians are divided into two distinct viewpoints. To the earlier school of the thirties, the Colored Alliance was "a mere appendage," an "aspect of minor significance" that served as the lackey of the white movement.⁵⁴ More recently, however, interpreters of the Southern scene tend to view the order as an important ally in the total movement; it was "something more" than a mere "appendage" of the white movement.⁵⁵

While organically separate, the order was ideologically in tune with the aims of the total agrarian movement. Despite the paucity of its actual gains, however, the Colored Alliance achieved limited success by making the total agrarian movement aware of the conditions of the Negro farmer. Either through agitation or stimulation, it managed to aid black farmers by indirectly influencing

the actions and attitudes of the white Southern Alliance. As it did to a great extent with the white Alliance it seems probable that the last vestiges of the order were absorbed into the Populist movement. The black farmer, like his white counterpart, was coming to realize that independent political action was the only possible solution to achieve his ends.

NOTES

¹Theodore Saloutos, *Farmer Movements in the South, 1865-1933* (Lincoln, 1960), 10-71; John D. Hicks, *The Populist Revolt* (Minneapolis, 1931), 104-105. A good discussion of the white Texas Alliance can be found in Ralph Smith, "The Farmers' Alliance in Texas, 1875-1900," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, XLVIII (October, 1948), 346-369.

²*Progressive Farmer* (Raleigh), September 9, 1887. For a discussion of the background and plans of C. W. Macune, see Fred A. Shannon, "C. W. Macune and the Farmers' Alliance," *Current History*, XXVIII (June, 1955), 330-335; Ralph Smith, "'Macuneism' or the Farmers of Texas in Business," *Journal of Southern History*, XIII (May, 1947), 220-244; Annie L. Diggs, "The Farmers' Alliance and Some of its Leaders," *Arena*, V (April, 1892), 598-599; W. Scott Morgan, *History of the Wheel and Alliance and the Impending Revolution* (St. Louis, 1891), 298-300.

³Saloutos, *Farmer Movements*, 69; C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge, 1951), 190-191; Ina W. Van Noppen, (ed.), *The South: A Documentary History* (Princeton, 1958), 404-405. See also Clifton Paisley, "The Political Wheelers and the Arkansas Election of 1888," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, XXV (Spring, 1966), 3-21; *Appleton's Annual Cyclopaedia*, 1886, XI (New York; Appleton-Century Company, 1887), 42; *ibid.*, 1890, XV, 299.

⁴Saloutos, *Farmer Movements*, 72.

⁵*National Economist* (Washington, D.C.), July 4, 1891. See also Paul Lewinson, *Race, Class and Party* (New York, 1932), 71; William D. Sheldon, *Populism in the Old Dominion* (Princeton, 1935), 3-4.

⁶Saloutos, *Farmer Movements*, 69-70, 74, 77, 79; August Meier, *Negro Thought In America, 1880-1915* (Ann Arbor, 1966), 44; Hicks, *Populist Revolt*, 108.

⁷*Ibid.*, 98; Saloutos *Farmer Movements*, 69-70, 79; Roy V. Scott, "Milton George and the Farmers' Alliance Movement," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XLV (June, 1958), 92-93, 107-108.

⁸R. N. Humphrey, "History of the Colored Farmer's National Alliance and Cooperative Union," in *The Farmers' Alliance and Agricultural Digest*, edited by Nelson A. Dunning (Washington, 1891), 288.

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰*Ibid.*; *Weekly Toiler* (Nashville), March 27, June 19, 1889; *Progressive Farmer* (Raleigh), July 31, 1888 in Van Noppen, *South: A Documentary*, 405.

¹¹*Ibid.*

¹²Humphrey, "The Colored Alliance," 289; Frank M. Drew, "The Present Farmers' Movement," *Political Science Quarterly*, VI (June, 1891), 287-288.

¹³*Ibid.* The Charter is located in the Office of the Recorder of Deeds, Corporation Division, Instrument #1606, Incorporation Liber 4, Folio 354, Washington, D. C. See also *Weekly Toiler* (Nashville), March 27, April 3, 10, 1889.

¹⁴Woodward, *New South*, 102. For further evidence, see *Weekly Toiler*, July 4, 18, 25, August 1, 8, 1888.

¹⁷William W. Rogers, "The Negro Alliance in Alabama," *Journal of Negro History*, XXXV (January, 1960), 40.

¹⁸John D. Hicks and John D. Barnhart, "The Farmers' Alliance," *North Carolina Historical Review*, VI (July, 1929), 268.

¹⁹Ottawa Kansas *Journal*, quoted in *National Economist*, August 15, 1891.

²⁰*National Economist*, February 28, 1891.

²¹See George Tindall, *South Carolina Negroes, 1877-1900* (Columbia, 1952), 114-118; Rogers, "Negro Alliance in Alabama," 41-44.

²²*National Economist*, June 13, 1891.

²³*Ibid.*, August 16, 1890.

²⁴Saloutos, *Farmer Movements*, 95.

²⁵*Weekly Toiler*, June 19, July 31, 1889.

²⁶*Ibid.*, July 31, 1889. For evidence of financial shortages in the white Tennessee Alliance, see *Nashville Banner*, October 4, 1891.

²⁷This fact is unwittingly revealed in the *National Economist* when it describes the Negro in Darwinian terms as "an infant race just growing into manhood." *National Economist*, July 12, 1890. See also J. H. Turner, "The Race Problem," in *Farmers' Alliance Digest*, 272-279. Turner was the Secretary-Treasurer of the Southern Alliance.

²⁸*National Alliance* (Houston), quoted in *National Economist*, April 4, 1891. Founded at Houston, Texas, in 1889 under the editorship of R. M. Humphrey, the *National Alliance* was the official organ of the Colored Alliance. An extensive correspondence has failed to uncover a single issue of the paper. Earlier inquiries also yielded similar results by another student. Jack Abramowitz, "Negro in the Agrarian Revolt," *Agricultural History*, XXIV (2950-51), 91-92. See also Emma Lou Thornbrough, "American Negro Newspapers, 1880-1914," *Business History Review*, XL (1966), 468-469; *Weekly Toiler*, June 11, 1890.

²⁹Ottawa Kansas *Journal*, quoted in the *National Economist*, August 15, 1891.

³⁰*National Economist*, June 20, 1891.

³¹Humphrey, "Colored Alliance," 290; Drew, "Present Farmers' Movement," 287; *Weekly Toiler*, February 12, 1890.

³²*Congressional Record*, 51 Cong., 2 Sess., 158. J. J. Shuffer was the first elected National Colored Alliance President as of December, 1886.

³³*Progressive Farmer* (Raleigh), December 23, 1890. See also *Appleton's Annual Cyclopaedia*, 1890, 301; *Atlanta Constitution*, December 4, 1890.

³⁴Sheldon, *Populism in the Old Dominion*, 35; Saloutos, *Farmer Movements*, 80; Hicks, *Populist Revolt*, 115; Van Noppen, *South: A Documentary*, 404-405; Woodward, *New South*, 192; Abramowitz, "Negro in the Agrarian Revolt," 91; Drew, "Present Farmers' Movement," 287.

³⁵Saloutos, *Farmer Movements*, 81; *Progressive Farmer* (Raleigh), December 23, 1890.

⁸⁴Jack Abramowitz, "Accommodation and Militancy in Negro Life, 1876-1916" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1950), 50.

⁸⁵Quoted in *ibid.*

⁸⁶*Weekly Toiler* (Nashville), June 3, December 3, 1891.

⁸⁷An example of this was the establishing of trading posts and exchanges by the National Headquarters in the cities of Houston, New Orleans, Mobile, Charleston, and Norfolk. A \$2 fee was charged each member for trading privileges. Humphrey, "Colored Alliance," 289-290; Rogers, "Negro Alliance in Alabama," 42.

⁸⁸*National Alliance*, quoted in the *National Economist*, June 21, 1890. Testifying before the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry in the spring of 1890, Humphrey noted that "the great majority of the colored farmers of the South and . . . their women spend the season in cotton fields, with a single thin garment, without shoes, and they live upon the coarsest, commonest food. . . ." *Ibid.*, June 7, 1890.

⁸⁹*Cleveland Gazette*, September 26, 1891 in Herbert Aptheker, *A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States* (2 vols.; New York, 1964), II, 810.

⁹⁰"Our muscle is our stock in trade," Humphrey reported, "and . . . labor is the basis of all our wealth. . . ." *National Economist*, June 7, 1890; United States Bureau of the Census, *Negro Population in the United States, 1790-1915* (Washington, 1918), 459-461, 503-506.

⁹¹The Negro, a perennial debtor class, reportedly paid interest rates as high as one hundred percent, which prevented him from realizing any yearly profit from his labor. Humphrey "Colored Alliance," 290.

⁹²See *supra*, ff. 33.

⁹³*Cleveland Gazette*, September 26, 1891, in Aptheker, *Documentary*, 810.

⁹⁴*Weekly Toiler*, October 14, 1891; Tindall, *South Carolina Negroes*, 117-118.

⁹⁵*Weekly Toiler*, October 14, 1891.

⁹⁶Tindall, *South Carolina Negroes*, 117-118; Abramowitz, "Accommodation and Militancy," 43.

⁹⁷*National Economist*, September 26, 1891. Emphasis added.

⁹⁸Quoted in Abramowitz, "Accommodation and Militancy," 43.

⁹⁹*National Economist*, September 26, 1891.

¹⁰⁰*Weekly Toiler*, October 14, 1891.

¹⁰¹Saloutos, *Farmer Movements*, 80.

¹⁰²*Ibid.*

¹⁰³Tindall, *South Carolina Negroes*, 118.

¹⁴Hicks, *Populist Revolt*, 115; Sheldon, *Populism in the Old Dominion*, 35; Alex M. Arnett, *The Populist Movement in Georgia*, *Columbia University Studies in History, Economics, and Public Law*, CIV, No. 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1922), 83, 124, 125, 132, 153.

¹⁵Jack Abramowitz, "The Negro in the Populist Movement," *Journal of Negro History*, XXXVIII (July, 1953), 258; Rogers, "Negro Alliance in Alabama," 38, 40; Woodward, *New South*, 192, 220. Cf. Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* (New York, 1967), 66-67.