Considering Why Populism Succeeded in South Dakota and Failed in North Dakota

D. JEROME TWETON

On 4 June 1890, the North Dakota Farmers' Alliance met in Jamestown to decide whether it should continue to work within the traditional parties or organize an independent third party. North Dakota alliance president Walter Muir urged his membership to form an independent party, for "the farmer's interests fared no better in the last legislature than would a flock of sheep in a convention of wolves." The majority of alliance members, however, rejected an independent political course. Before adjourning, they adopted a platform calling for antilottery legislation, the vigorous enforcement of state prohibition, and the reform of the nation's financial system through the unlimited coinage of silver and the subtreasury system. Two days later, the South Dakota Farmers' Alliance, convened in Huron, considered the same question. At the urging of Henry L. Loucks, president of the South Dakota Farmers' Alliance, the South Dakotans overwhelmingly approved the third-party plan. In addi-

1. Daily Pioneer Press (St. Paul, Minn.), 5 June 1890.

^{2.} The subtreasury system called for the establishment of government warehouses for holding agricultural commodities until farmers could sell at suitable prices. Upon depositing his crop at the warehouse, the farmer would receive credit for eighty percent of its value—money he could use to meet his current obligations. He would receive the balance when he sold the crop. This system was designed to increase the amount of money in circulation, thus freeing producers from the control of the national banking system. In addition, the farmer would receive the profits that had previously gone to the speculator, who bought at harvest time when supplies were high and prices low and sold later when they went up. John D. Hicks, *The Populist Revolt: A History of the Farmers' Alliance and the People's Party* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1931), pp. 187-88, 192-93.

tion to endorsing prohibition, free silver, and the subtreasury system, their platform reiterated longstanding alliance demands like government ownership of the means of transportation and communication and a ban on excessive landholding by railroads and aliens.³

North and South Dakotans had shared a common territorial alliance dedicated to ending the exploitation of producers by eastern railroads, banks, and speculators. Through the Dakota Farmers' Alliance, members had been subject to the same cooperative and educational activities until the Dakotas achieved separate statehood in 1889.⁴ The two alliance meetings of June 1890, however, symbolize the divergent courses that Populism took in the two states. Why, when it grew out of a common alliance experience, did Populism develop in such dramatically different ways? Leadership played a key role.

North Dakota alliance president Walter Muir was not content with his organization's June 1890 rejection of independent political action. Prior to the alliance's endorsing convention later that year, he urged the membership to reconsider forming a third party, writing: "When a considerable number of our people feel that they cannot vote for some of the candidates nominated, it is their right and duty to meet, and put in nomination men of their choice. . . . Principle should always be considered first, and party second." Muir cleverly scheduled the alliance meeting for 25 September in Grand Forks, the same date and place another discontented group—the state's Prohibitionists—were to meet. Concerned that North Dakota's antiliquor constitutional amendment was going to be resubmitted to a vote of the people, prohibition advocates were planning to organize their own independent party. They endorsed Republicans and Democrats who opposed resubmission and nominated their own candidates for positions for which the other parties had not nominated "drys." In a joint meeting with the North Dakota Farmers' Alliance, the Prohibitionists also agreed to support the alliance platform, and the two organizations selected a slate of five candidates for statewide office, nominating Walter Muir for governor. While Muir had thus succeeded in establishing an independent party, he had, in fusing with the Prohibitionists, wed the alliance to

^{3.} Grand Forks Daily Herald (N.Dak.), 7, 11 June 1890.

^{4.} The history of the territorial alliance under the leadership of Henry L. Loucks is explored in Larry Remele, "'God Helps Those Who Help Themselves': The Farmers Alliance and Dakota Statehood," *Montana, the Magazine of Western History* 37, no. 4 (Autumn 1987): 22-33.

^{5.} Grand Forks Daily Herald, 16 Sept. 1890.

332

a narrow issue that had little to do with the central concerns of Populism.6

Even with their combined forces, the North Dakota Independents could not muster the support needed to defeat the state's traditional parties. The Republicans swept to victory in November 1890. Their gubernatorial candidate, Andrew Burke, received 19,053 votes; Democrat William N. Roach, 12,604; and Walter Muir, just 4,821. Predictably, state and local concerns preoccupied attendees of the annual convention of the North Dakota Farmers' Alliance later that month. Alliance members removed the subtreasury plan—the very heart of the Populist effort to force economic change—from the platform for the coming year and inserted a list of specific demands for the state legislature, including the enactment of elevator and platform laws that favored the farmer.7

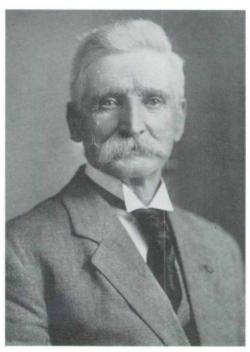
Although only eight Independent legislators had been elected, the 1891 legislature responded to several alliance demands. It gave the state railroad commissioners power to regulate grain warehouses, equalize unreasonable freight rates, and require railroad companies to build loading platforms at designated stations. It also prohibited railroads from charging more for short hauls than for comparable distances on long hauls. A bill requiring railroads to grant elevator sites in right-of-ways for a one-dollar annual fee passed the house unanimously and the senate with only two dissenting votes.8 However, machine Republicans, who in large measure supported the railroads, had voted for the measure knowing that the governor would veto it. Burke's veto came too late for an override and brought down the wrath of the alliance newspaper, the North Dakota Independent, whose editor wrote, "The representatives of the corporations doing business in this state are a power greater than the majority of our legislature."9

In February 1892, leaders of the state Independent party and the North Dakota Farmers' Alliance attended the organizational gather-

^{6.} Ibid., 11, 25, 26 Sept. 1890. For earlier treatments of North Dakota Populism, see Elwyn B. Robinson, History of North Dakota (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), pp. 218-25; Glenn L. Brudvig, "The Farmers' Alliance and Populist Movement in North Dakota, 1884-1896" (M.A. thesis, University of North Dakota, 1956); and Brian J. Weed, "Populist Thought in North and South Dakota, 1890-1900" (M.A. thesis, University of North Dakota, 1970).

^{7.} Ibid., 29 Nov. 1890; LaMoure County Chronicle (LaMoure, N.Dak.), 5 Dec. 1890. 8. North Dakota, Journal of the House of the Second Legislative Assembly (Bismarck, 1891), pp. 261-62, 701, 817-18; Journal of the Senate of the Second Legislative Assembly (Bismarck, 1891), pp. 415, 541; Laws Passed at the Second Session of the Legislative Assembly (Bismarck, 1891), pp. 259-60. 9. North Dakota Independent (Grand Forks), 27 Aug. 1891.

ing in Saint Louis of a national third party to be called the People's party. There, the North Dakotans worked in vain for the inclusion of a national prohibition plank in the platform. Upon returning home from the Populist gathering, the Prohibitionists called a state meeting of the Independent party. Alliance members discovered to their dismay that the Prohibitionist majority intended to require every delegate to sign an oath pledging to support prohibition as



Walter Muir, president of the North Dakota Farmers' Alliance, urged members to form an independent party to champion their own interests.

the main issue and to vote for the national Prohibitionist presidential ticket. Reluctant to yield full control of the Independent movement to the Prohibitionists, the alliance men walked out, and Muir announced that the Independents would meet in June to select a state ticket and delegates to the People's party convention in Omaha.¹⁰

10. Ibid., 3, 10 Mar. 1892; Grand Forks Daily Plaindealer (N.Dak.), 8 Mar. 1892; Jamestown Daily Alert (N.Dak.), 10, 11 May 1892.

Sharing the Independents' frustration at the power Republicans wielded in the state, North Dakota Democrats began to talk about fusing with the Independents early in 1892. When the Independents met in June, the Democratic state committee attended, urging fusion. Although they initially refused, the Independents nominated a full slate of mostly Democratic candidates. Recognizing that the Independents had appropriated their most capable men, the Democrats endorsed all the candidates except those running for Congress and the state legislature. During the campaign, Eli C. D. Shortridge,



Elected governor of North Dakota as an Independent, Democrat Eli C. D. Shortridge continued to favor his old party at the expense of the Independent movement.

the Independent gubernatorial candidate, expounded on the traditional alliance topics of elevator and railroad regulation. Likewise, the Independents' most articulate and accomplished campaigner, attorney-general candidate William H. Standish, traveled the state extolling the virtues of free silver as the solution to farmers' economic woes. With the exception of the race for secretary of state, the Independents won slim victories over the Republicans in the contests for state offices. (Shortridge, for example, won by just 1,759 votes out of more than thirty-six thousand cast.) Without Democratic

Why Populism Succeeded

335

support, the Independents could not have won, as seen in the defeat of the Independent candidates for Congress, who lost by sizeable margins. In addition, the Independent party succeeded in sending only eighteen members to the state legislature.¹¹

Although Governor Shortridge had campaigned on Populist issues, his message to the legislature gave listeners little inkling that he belonged to a party that had endorsed the platform of the Populists' 1892 Omaha convention. While speaking of economy in government and pointing out that monopolies threatened the best interests of the state, he omitted any mention of specific Populist demands except for a constitutional amendment calling for the Australian ballot.¹²

With Shortridge providing little or no leadership, the 1893 North Dakota legislative session was a fiasco for the Independents. The selection of a senator took sixty-one ballots and left only twelve days for other legislative business. Shortridge firmly opposed the senatorial bid of Walter Muir and was instrumental in the selection of William N. Roach, a conservative Democrat whom even machine Republicans came to support.13 "How strange it seems," wrote the editor of Normanden, the Norwegian-language Independent organ, "to see the man, who of all others should stand by Mr. Muir, turn his back upon the man to whom he owes so much for his present position? The only aim the governor has in view seems to be to turn the Independent party over to the democrats."14 Shortridge claimed that Muir and his supporters were acting in self-interest and "would rather be at the head of a Corporals Guard of voters, than stand in the ranks with a multitude of reformers fighting for their bread and butter."15 The Northwest Weekly News, an Independent paper, apologized to North Dakotans for inflicting the current governor on them and warned that "the treason of Shortridge . . . will not escape unscathed."16 In appointments and in support, Shortridge

^{11.} Elwyn B. Robinson, *History of North Dakota* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), p. 223; L. J. Wehe, "The Life of William H. Standish," 1942, p. 3, State Historical Society of North Dakota, Bismarck, N.Dak.; Lewis F. Crawford, *History of North Dakota*, 3 vols. (Chicago: American Historical Society, 1931), 1:379; *Grand Forks Daily Herald*, 18 Dec. 1892.

^{12.} North Dakota, Journal of the House of the Third Legislative Assembly (Bismarck, 1893), pp. 29-33.

^{13.} Northwest News (Grand Forks, N.Dak.), 25 Feb. 1893; Robinson, History of North Dakota, p. 224.

^{14.} Normanden, reprinted in Northwest News, 25 Feb. 1893.

^{15.} Eli C. D. Shortridge to "Dr.," 11 Mar. 1893, Eli C. D. Shortridge Papers, State Historical Society of North Dakota, Bismarck, N.Dak.

^{16.} Northwest News, 18 Feb. 1893.

336

remained a Democrat who appeared embarrassed to be called a Populist.

The legislature's Republican majority, taking direction from boss Alexander McKenzie, toyed with the Populists and Democrats. They supported several Populist-type resolutions to use up time and ward off serious discussion of railroad and grain-trade regulation. For example, the Republicans supported the Independents' pet bill, which allowed for a state-owned elevator to be built on the Great Lakes in Wisconsin or Minnesota, knowing that funds would not be available for implementation. Feven after the legislature overwhelmingly approved the bill, Shortridge delayed signing it because he questioned its constitutionality. The State elevator bill of \$100,000 vetoed itself, Shortridge declared in 1895, by reason of its unlawful provisions.

Although the governor had often spoken in favor of railroad regulation and control of their interests, his private correspondence revealed quite the opposite. At the conclusion of the 1893 legislative session, Shortridge, speaking through his private secretary, assured Northern Pacific officials that "there has been no radical legislation this session of the Legislature" and that "the people will realize that the railroads are not their enemies." To James J. Hill, he wrote, "I am anxious to establish and maintain a better feeling between the railroads and the people of our state." Cautious and conservative, Shortridge expressed his political philosophy regarding the rail interests to Senator William Roach: "Go slow is my advice, for great issues are pending."

Even after the Shortridge debacle, the North Dakota Independents continued on a course of fusion with the Democrats, but the state's voters rejected the fusionist tickets in 1894, 1896, and 1898, returning power to the Republican party and its boss, Alexander McKenzie. Throughout the 1890s, the Independents continued to push free silver as the solution to the farmers' problems. "Without free silver coinage," predicted William Standish, "our wheat, cotton and all other property will fall in price and we will be ruined." The handful of North Dakota newspapers that exhibited Populist leanings rare-

^{17.} Journal of the House of the Third Legislative Assembly, pp. 734-35.

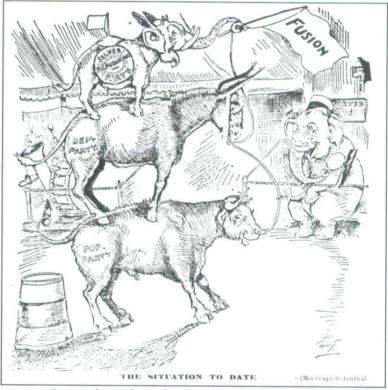
^{18.} North Dakota, Biennial Message of Governor E. C. D. Shortridge to the Fourth Legislative Assembly (Jamestown, 1895), p. 7.

^{19. [}Shortridge] to W. S. Mellen, 10 Mar. 1893, Shortridge Papers.

^{20.} Shortridge to Hill, 20 July 1893, ibid.

^{21.} Shortridge to Roach, 24 July 1893, ibid.

^{22.} Dakota Ruralist (Aberdeen, S.Dak.), 19 Oct. 1893.



Support from other political parties helped Independent candidates win elections, but many Populists believed fusion to be an unworkable compromise as this Minneapolis Journal cartoon implies.

ly wrote about anything else. "There is idleness and misery on every hand; there is discontent and strife that cannot be appeased until we have more silver money," declared the *Grafton News and Times* in a typical appraisal.²³ As late as 1899, the sole surviving Populist paper, the *Valley City People's Advocate*, affirmed that "the first great reform necessary in this country, is to restore the money of the constitution, to crush the gold octopus. . . . After this matter is settled, and settled right, then the others will be easy to handle. Crush the

338

gold clique of vampires that are eating away the very foundations of our government. $^{\prime\prime24}$

In part because of its narrow focus, Populism in North Dakota never developed as a vital force. Wed to fusion, at first with the Prohibitionists and later the Democrats, it downplayed the subtreasury system and other Populist proposals that would have altered the nature of government and society. Shortridge, the only Independent to hold the state's highest office, never fully accepted the phi-

losophy of Populism and, indeed, worked against it.

In South Dakota, things went differently from the start. A month after the South Dakota alliance decided to chart an independent political course, it nominated its president, Henry L. Loucks, for governor along with a complete Independent slate. Loucks had worked tirelessly for almost a decade to establish the alliance in Dakota Territory and to strengthen it in Minnesota, Iowa, and Nebraska. He saw as "the great necessity" an urgent need to "start the farmers thinking, reading, studying the science of government."25 Loucks firmly believed that the alliance's independent political action was an educational exercise for South Dakota's farmers and laborers. In the election of 1890, Loucks polled 24,591 votes, nearly ten thousand less than the victorious Republican but over six thousand more than the Democrat. During the legislative session that followed, a combination of Democrats and Independents succeeded in electing Independent James H. Kyle to the United States Senate. Kyle, a Congregational minister, was not a radical but had taken strong pulpit positions against monopoly and corporate wealth.²⁶

In the 1890, 1892, and 1894 elections, the South Dakota Populists rejected fusion with the Democrats and played active roles in the Cincinnati, Saint Louis, and Omaha conventions of the People's party. Loucks ardently fought to keep the new party free from alliance with the Democrats, believing that such would dilute Populist philosophy. Although the South Dakota People's party lost in 1892 and 1894, it polled considerably more votes than did the Democrats. By 1895, it was firmly entrenched as the state's number two party. Two events that took place at its July 1896 convention reflect its strength. First, Republican United States Senator Richard F. Pettigrew, a convert to silver, bolted his party to form the Silver Republicans and joined ranks with the Populists. Then, after the Populists

^{24.} Valley City People's Advocate (N.Dak.), 16 Mar. 1899.

^{25.} Dakota Ruralist, 5 Jan. 1893.

^{26.} South Dakota, Legislative Manual (1913), p. 286; Herbert S. Schell, History of South Dakota, 3d ed., rev. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975), p. 229.

selected their candidates, the Democrats canceled their convention and endorsed the Populist slate.²⁷ "We have fought fusion from the start," remarked Loucks in his role as the editor of the *Dakota Ruralist*. "In our judgement we never will succeed in this state until we can assure the dissatisfied republican voters that populist success does not mean semi-democratic victory." In 1896, fusion came in South Dakota, but the Populists dictated the terms and maintained their separate identity.

From its birth in 1890 down to 1896, the South Dakota People's party philosophy and direction revolved around its founder, Henry



Henry L. Loucks, president of the South Dakota Farmers' Alliance, staunchly opposed fusion on the grounds that it would dilute Populist philosophy.

Loucks. As editor of the *Dakota Ruralist*, he forged an ideology that moved South Dakota Populism beyond the 1892 Omaha platform and toward a humanitarian concern for the "toiling masses." To

^{27.} Kenneth E. Hendrickson, Jr., "The Public Career of Richard F. Pettigrew of South Dakota, 1848-1926," South Dakota Historical Collections 34 (1968): 243, 246-48; Legislative Manual (1913), pp. 293-99, 305-14.

^{28.} Dakota Ruralist, 16 May 1895.

Loucks, Populism was "not the outgrowth of drought and grasshoppers, but instead the result of a better understanding of the drift of legislation which gives to many an undue power over the productive forces of the country." Loucks and the South Dakota Populists echoed general Farmers' Alliance and Populist demands, but after 1892, they placed more emphasis on "socializing" the capitalistic system. "The question for the American citizen to decide . . . ," the *Ruralist* explained prior to the election of 1894, "is, which kind of paternalism he prefers, special or general? For the few or for the many?" Loucks viewed capitalism as a stage through which society must go, but it too would yield to a more humanitarian system. "Nihilism, communism, paternalism, agrarianism, home-ruleism, socialism and a general protestism in its various forms are," the editor proclaimed, "but the tokens of an evolution, that must inevitably revolutionize the present system of competitive labor."

A number of South Dakota Populists, including Senator Kyle, became increasingly uncomfortable with what they thought to be a radical socialist tinge to South Dakota Populism. Kyle resigned from the board of directors of the Populist organ, the Aberdeen Star, "because of its radical position" supporting government ownership of almost everything.32 Undaunted by such criticism, the Ruralist noted unequivocally that the planks of the Omaha platform "are the demands of socialism."33 The Marshall County Sentinel, one of two dozen Populist newspapers in South Dakota, was not as radical as the Ruralist but opposed what it termed "'trimming' the platform," reporting that "we have failed to find a single Populist exchange in the state that has ever mentioned trimming the Omaha platform."34 In its editorial stance, the Ruralist consistently stressed that "South Dakota populists have followed the socialists beyond the Omaha platform." It pointed to their support for the "nationalizing [of] coal mines, so that our people may keep from freezing," and for state-owned liquor stores. "Both of these measures are socialism," the Ruralist remarked, "but they are good Populism in South Dakota."35

Although the vision of some South Dakota Populists narrowed as silver became an issue in the mid-1890s, Hermie Hardin summar-

^{29.} Ibid., 4 July 1891.

^{30.} Ibid., 4 Oct. 1894.

^{31.} Ibid., 7 July 1892.

^{32.} Ibid., 20 June 1895.

^{33.} Ibid., 7 Mar. 1895.

^{34.} Marshall County Sentinel (Britton, S.Dak), 11 June 1896.

^{35.} Dakota Ruralist, 11 July 1895.

Why Populism Succeeded

341

ized the mainstream position when he wrote to the *Ruralist*, "The promulgators of the narrow-minded one-idea, one-eyed, one-legged silver party do not wish to see the people in power." He concluded: "We want no men who think that the remonetization of silver is the panacea for all the ills that affect the masses. These one-idea men are a positive detriment to any party." The *Ruralist* supported silver but did not consider it central to the reform of society. "Let us dispose of the whole system of capitalism at one job," the editor wrote, "and not make two bites of a cherry." South Dakota Populists were not of one mind on the importance of the silver issue, and, unlike North Dakotans, did not sacrifice the fundamental and broader concerns for the promise of a single cure-all.

Populist Andrew E. Lee, former Republican and Vermillion reform mayor and merchant, won the governorship in 1896, 41,187 to 40,868. The People's party gained control of the state legislature and elected two United States representatives, the attorney general, and the members of the railroad commission. A long struggle for the senate seat, which eventually went to Kyle against the wishes of most Populists, did not completely immobilize the Populist legislators. The 1897 legislature placed railroads in the state under a railroad commission that was then granted power to set maximum rates. passed pure food and drug legislation, provided for a state dispensary plan for liquor to be put to a vote of the people, and approved the initiative and referendum. In 1898, the Populists lost their separate identity when the Silver Republicans, Democrats, and Populists fused in convention and selected a ticket that included all three groups. Lee won re-election by 325 votes, but the Republicans swept the other offices and won a sizeable majority in the legislature.³⁸

During the 1896 campaign, Lee had written that in the contest "now going on between the money power—seeking further power—and a people struggling at cross purposes to maintain the[ir] rights," he belonged with the "common people." Throughout his four years as governor, Lee carried forward the principles upon which Populism had been founded. "There can no longer be any doubt," he declared near the end of his tenure, "that the conditions of this country are rapidly working against the best interests of the masses, and if permitted to continue for a short time longer as they now exist under the present system, it will be a government for the mil-

^{36.} Quoted ibid., 10 Apr. 1895.

^{37.} Ibid., 21 Feb. 1895.

^{38.} Legislative Manual (1913), pp. 316, 332; Schell, History of South Dakota, pp. 237-38.

^{39.} Lee to Thomas Ayres, printed in Marshall County Sentinel, 25 June 1896.

lionaires and trusts and not for the people." ⁴⁰ Lee believed that four measures would help change the system: the initiative and the referendum, the direct election of senators, government ownership of transportation and communication systems, and abolishment of trusts. He wrote to Robert LaFollette of Wisconsin that the initiative and referendum was "the greatest safeguard ever placed in the hands of the people." ⁴¹ The direct election of senators provided "escape from vassalage to wealth." ⁴² Although Lee had been more sympathetic toward the concept of control rather than ownership



During his tenure as South Dakota governor, Andrew E. Lee (shown here with his daughter) worked to implement Populist principles.

40. Lee to C. M. Young, 11 Feb. 1899, Andrew Lee Papers, South Dakota State Historical Society, Pierre, S.Dak. (hereafter cited as Lee Papers, SDSHS).

41. Lee to LaFollette, 7 Jan. 1899, Andrew Lee Papers, University of South Dakota, Vermillion, S.Dak. (hereafter cited as Lee Papers, USD).

42. Lee to G. S. Cassels, 27 Dec. 1897, ibid. See also Lee to W. P. Martin, 31 Dec. 1900, ibid.

of railroads when he became governor, his first term convinced him otherwise. "In my opinion," he noted in 1899, "the only remedy remaining is government ownership of transportation and other vast industries that are now being manipulated by the capitalists directly against the interests of the masses."

Lee's concern for equality and justice extended to American involvement in Cuba and the Philippines following the 1898 Spanish-American War. He warned that the "monied interests of the East" should not be allowed to "make a financial conquest of the rich fields which have been drenched with the blood of soldiers who fought for humanity and not to advance the interests of money."44 In early 1899 while South Dakota volunteers were serving in the Philippines, Lee became more explicit: "It is the money power and the greed that is at the bottom of the whole affair. While the people are paying the burden they are accumulating their millions, and it appears that they care nothing for life so long as they are gainers financially." 45 In April, he demanded that President William McKinley return the South Dakota volunteers to the United States. Lee insisted that South Dakotans at home "have reason to regard the further sacrifice of our soldiers in a conflict waged against liberty and in the interest of exploiting capitalism as totally incompatible with the spirit of our institutions and a more grievous hardship than we should be compelled to bear."46 Whether advancing the cause of the Filipinos against the United States or the masses against capitalism, Lee was a staunch advocate of raising the human condition. "The people aspire to something better than they have," he declared. "They yearn for a higher state; they demand a more benevolent life."47 To Lee, Populism could best achieve that change.

Andrew Lee's concern for the common man and his active leadership in the movement point to important reasons why Populism took contrasting directions in North and South Dakota. The differences certainly cannot be explained in economic terms. The 1890s were difficult years whether one farmed near Sioux Falls or near Bismarck. Low prices and erratic production due to drought plagued both states. Mortgage indebtedness in relation to farm value was also about the same for each state. Indeed, the per-farm debt was higher (\$902) in North Dakota than in South Dakota (\$712). South Dakota

^{43.} Lee to J. D. Sayers, 6 July 1899, Lee Papers, SDSHS.

^{44.} Lee to Chicago Record, 29 July 1898, Lee Papers, USD.

^{45.} Lee to R. W. Warne, 7 Mar. 1899, Lee Papers, SDSHS.

^{46.} Lee to McKinley, 10 Apr. 1899, ibid.

^{47.} Lee, speech, ca. 1900, Lee Papers, USD.

agriculture was a bit more diversified but not enough to explain the sharply contrasting Populist experiences. Nor does there appear to be an ethnic explanation. Old-stock Americans from the East and Anglo immigrants controlled the political apparatus in both states, and each had a fairly similar mix of northern European immigrants.

Because the territorial Farmers' Alliance had been headquartered in southern Dakota and because the leadership for it was concentrated there, South Dakotans may have had a stronger "sense of movement." The fact that Henry Loucks was a South Dakotan also worked for the relative success of Populism in that state. His drive, determination, and thoughtfulness gave South Dakota Populism a cohesiveness that Walter Muir was unable to equal in North Dakota. Loucks charted the course that avoided the early pitfalls of fusion, drew in Republicans like Pettigrew and Lee, allied with Father Robert Haire's Knights of Labor, and kept the principles of Populism alive and expanding through 1896. The vital role of Loucks, and later Lee, in the life of South Dakota Populism emphasizes the importance of leadership to a movement. Division of the territorial Farmers' Alliance left North Dakota virtually leaderless. Walter Muir and Eli Shortridge, both of whom were concerned more with office than principle, could not do in North Dakota what Loucks and Lee accomplished in South Dakota, In North Dakota, boss Alexander McKenzie's tight control of North Dakota politics, made possible with the generous financial support of the state's two powerful transcontinental railroads (the Northern Pacific and the Great Northern), did not allow the Independents much chance. Between 1889 and 1906, he handpicked most of the congressional delegation and all but one (Shortridge) of the governors. 48 Lack of leadership in the Independent ranks and the power of the McKenzie Republican machine account for the early failure of Populism in North Dakota.

^{48.} For the best treatment of McKenzie, see Robert P. Wilkins, "Alexander McKenzie and the Politics of Bossism," in *The North Dakota Political Tradition*, ed. Thomas W. Howard (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1981), pp. 3-39.

Copyright © 1993 by the South Dakota State Historical Society. All Rights Reserved.

Copyright of South Dakota History is the property of South Dakota State Historical Society and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listsery without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.

All illustrations in this issue are property of the South Dakota State Historical Society except for those on the following pages: front cover (Haire) and pp. 337, 378 (right), 381, 382, 389, 423, from Dacotah Prairie Museum, Aberdeen, S.Dak.; back cover (Muir) and p. 333, from Clement A. Lounsberry, North Dakota History and People, Vol. 2 (Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1917); back cover (Pettigrew) and pp. 353, 396, from Siouxland Heritage Museums, Sioux Falls, S.Dak.; back cover (Wilder) and p. 416, from Lorrie Strand, Baldwin, Mich.; pp. 311, 312, 317, 323, 327, 393, 420, from Dakota Ruralist; pp. 320–21, from Harper's Weekly, 27 Oct. 1894; pp. 324, 392, 397, from Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, Kans.; p. 334, from State Historical Society of North Dakota, Bismarck, N.Dak.; pp. 360, 363, from Doane Robinson, A Brief History of South Dakota (New York: American Book Co., 1926); p. 372, from George W. Kingsbury, History of Dakota, and George M. Smith, ed., South Dakota: Its History and Its People, Vol. 5 (Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1915); p. 374, from Presentation Heights Archives, Aberdeen, S.Dak.; p. 375, from State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines, Iowa; p. 385, from Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln, Nebr.; p. 405, from Center for Western Studies, Augustana College, Sioux Falls, S.Dak.; p. 409, from Memorial and Biographical Record (Chicago: Geo. A. Ogle & Co., 1898); p. 419, from Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University, Detroit, Mich.; p. 425, from Centennial Archives, Deadwood Public Library, Deadwood, S.Dak.