

# The Independent.

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## ..The Old Guard of Populism..

An Organization of Those "Who Have Come All the Way Over the Trail."

The Old Guard of Populism is the name of an association of populists now being formed, having for its objects several immediate purposes and one ultimate end in view. For the immediate present it is designed to secure, as far as it is possible to do, an enrollment of all populists who are still strong in the faith; who believe that the economic salvation of the American people depends upon the enactment into law and the enforcement thereof of the populist demands for reform in "money, land, and transportation" as set forth in the Omaha platform; who despair of accomplishing any of these reforms through the medium of either of the two old parties, and who are not ready to join with the socialists in their demand for the "collective ownership of the means of production and distribution."

As a convenient means of designating this enrollment, the name, "The Old Guard of Populism," was selected. Men who entered the "greenback" movement and voted for Peter Cooper in 1876; men who entered the people's party and alliance movement and voted for James B. Weaver in 1892; and men who have since then become converted to populist principles, are all eligible to enrollment in the Old Guard of Populism.

Another immediate purpose of the Old Guard of Populism is to bring its members in closer touch with each other and thereby assist in spreading the populist gospel. Ten or twelve years ago when populism was at its high tide, there were hundreds of books and pamphlets and thousands of papers being read and circulated, and every populist was on his mettle, with high hopes of soon securing the reforms he advocated. Since that time the tide has receded, ebb tide has been reached; but every indication points to the return of a higher tide of populism. Of the more than a million men who voted for James B. Weaver in 1892, very few, now living, who then sincerely believed in the wisdom and justice of the Omaha platform, have changed their minds. But the advanced ground taken by the democratic party in 1896, coupled with the known integrity and sincerity of its candidate for president, led many thousands of populists to believe that some immediate reform might be secured through that party. Other populists—and especially many of those who had been through the campaign of 1868 and the subsequent greenback uprising and later destruction by the democratic party—bitterly resented any alliance with either of the old parties. And hence, resulted a schism in the people's party—two antagonistic wings, popularly known as "mid-road" and "fusion."

No good can be accomplished at this time by an extended discussion of the wisdom or unwisdom of "fusion" or of "mid-road" tactics. It seems evident that the major portion of the million who voted for Weaver in 1892 were satisfied to vote for Bryan in 1896 and 1900, inasmuch as Barker, the "mid-road" candidate for president, polled only 50,373 votes in 1900. But it is also evident that the logical result of "fusion" has been to annihilate the people's party organization in nearly every state where it was practiced. The Nebraska populists alone have succeeded in retaining their organization and at the same time co-operating with the democrats on state issues. In most of the other "fusion" states, the populists abandoned their party organization and participated directly in the democratic primaries and conventions. Desiring economic reforms along the lines indicated by the Omaha platform, no earnest populist could object to these reforms at the hands of either of the old parties; and although the democratic platforms of 1896 and 1900 are by no means beyond criticism from a populist standpoint, they were a long step in the right direction. Hence, it is not strange that many earnest populists favored "fusion." But those who favored the "mid-road" course, remembering the rise and fall of the greenback party, saw no hope in the new step taken by democracy in 1896, and resolutely opposed it.

In a great many of the states where

the populists abandoned their organization and affiliated with the democrats in primaries and conventions, as soon as the populist organization had been completely destroyed the democratic state conventions began to repudiate the national platforms of 1896 and 1900, especially as to the money plank. As early as 1901 it became evident that with the people's party out of the way, the democratic party would return to its old-time tactics of being an echo of the republican party, except upon the tariff issue. It had been demonstrated that if ev-

ery populist should vote the democratic ticket, there would be enough democrats voting the republican ticket to secure a republican victory. So those who had favored "fusion" began to see what the "mid-roads" had urged all along—namely, that there is no hope for reform through either of the two old parties.

With the decline of the people's party organization began the growth of the socialist party—an offshoot of the old socialist labor party. Many populists of late years have voted the socialist ticket as a protest, because—

as National Committeeman E. Gerry Brown of Massachusetts aptly expressed it—they were "locked out" of their own party and "on strike" against the two old parties. Doubtless some who were populists are now genuine socialists, but the great majority of former populists who now vote the socialist ticket do not, when pressed for an answer, desire the "collective ownership of the means of production and distribution." What they do desire to accomplish is to secure public ownership of certain things usually designated as "natural monopolies"—which is nothing more than populism. For example, the public ownership of railroads and government operation is sneered at by socialists as "state capitalism" and vicious, because the employes would work for wages; and the aim of socialism is to abolish the wage system altogether. Socialist philosophy also contemplates the wiping out of the "middle class" before the co-operative commonwealth can be ushered in and the wage system abolished—the idea of securing happiness through the universal bankruptcy of the home owners, farmers, merchants and other small business men.

Even if we grant the truth of much that is taught by socialism, it is not reasonable to expect, for example, the owner of a blacksmith shop, small store, or a farm, operated by himself, to wish to turn over that shop or store or farm to the "collectivity" and then operate it under "orders" from some boss or overseer—even if he has a voice in electing him. History does not show that the disinherited of earth have ever accomplished for themselves any betterment of their condition by their own independent action. The slaves of ancient Greece did not free themselves; the serfs did not free themselves; and the practical unanimity with which the vast majority of the wage-slaves today vote the plutocratic ticket, is a strong indication that the socialist dream is an idle one which contemplates capturing the powers of government by means of a "proletarian," propertyless party. Even so eminent a writer as Achille Loria believes that the disinherited can do nothing independently in their own behalf; but believes that the property owners, if educated to understand the materialistic conception of history, can do much to ameliorate the condition of the non-property owners and thus assist in hastening the coming of what he considers the inevitable co-operative commonwealth.

However this may be, there is undoubtedly an economic necessity for a people's party, representing the "bone and sinew" of America, the so-called "middle class," as opposed to plutocracy. The republican party is firmly entrenched as the representative of the plutocratic interests—"the money power" as populists are wont to express it; and there are enough representatives of these plutocratic interests within the democratic party to prevent it from ever standing as a true representative of the small property owners. At least that has been the history of the democratic party for forty years. And it explains why so many democrats vote the republican ticket whenever the democratic party declares for any measure which, if enacted into law, would benefit the "middle class."

I need not recite the steps leading up to the Denver conference, or give a detailed account of what was done there. The forty or fifty present, both "fusionists" and "mid-roads," were unanimous in their opinion that experience has "demonstrated the futility of any attempt to secure the enactment of our principles through either the republican or democratic party;" and they said so in the address prepared by the resolutions committee, adding that "we believe the time is now at hand when the united people's party should declare itself emphatically opposed to any affiliation with either of those parties and unequivocally in favor of independent national political action." The national committee, headed respectively by Marion Butler and Jo A. Parker, met on July 29,

## THE ENROLLMENT

First Week: 62 Members Representing 23 States and Territories.

Although the 960 test letters were not mailed until late in the afternoon, Saturday, December 5, 1903, the enrollment for the first week, including last mail Saturday evening, December 12, is as follows:

Samuel M. Maund, Daleva, Ala.; farmer, merchant and teacher.

W. H. Burdyslaw, Jonesboro, Ark.; farmer.

A. W. Files, Little Rock, Ark.; lawyer; member national committee.

Oliver S. Jones, Prescott, Ark.; farmer and mechanic.

W. D. Wilson, box 122, Booneville, Ark. William Wallace Bates, 38 W. Second ave., Denver, Colo.; retired shipbuilder; author "American Navigation."

....., Washington, D. C.

D. L. McKinnon, Marianna, Fla.; lawyer.

A. C. Barton, Danville, Ill.; contractor and builder; author "Life and Labors of the Late Col. Jesse Harper."

J. S. Jones, Iuka, Ill.

Flavius J. Van Vorhis, Indianapolis, Ind.; lawyer; political economist.

Samuel W. Williams, Vincennes, Ind.; lawyer; member national committee; Central division organizer.

Abel D. Chase, Ardmore, Ind. Ty.; farmer and trader.

Lewis Iddings, Mapleton, Ia.; farmer and stock raiser.

A. Norelius, R. F. D. 1, Kiron, Ia.; retired farmer.

S. A. Black, R. F. D. 2, Manhattan, Kas.; farmer.

Anthony Dolezilek, Silver Lake, Kas.; farmer.

H. B. Hewitt, Stafford, Kas.; harness dealer.

M. Kozel, National military home, Kansas; physician.

Joseph A. Wright, Lebanon, Kas.; real estate; editor for 17 years until recently; secretary county committee.

James H. Lackey, Canton, Ky.; physician; member national committee.

F. W. Anthony, Mattawan, Mich.

A. T. D. Austin, Alden, Minn.; farmer, salesman and fruit grower.

J. H. Briscoe, R. F. D. 4, Harrisonville, Mo.; farmer.

George A. Campbell, Odessa, Mo.; farmer.

J. S. Cantrell, Northview, Mo.; farmer; secretary state committee.

Jacob Florea, Kirksville, Mo.; carpenter.

Oswald Hicks, Macon, Mo.; farm loans; member state committee.

A. H. Livingston, West Plains, Mo.; lawyer.

J. T. Polson, Laclede, Mo.; physician; chairman county committee.

A. C. Robertson, St. James, Mo.; retired farmer.

Chris Smith, R. F. D. 1, Bunceton, Mo.; farmer; chairman county committee.

J. H. Calderhead, Helena, Mont.; telegraph operator; at present state auditor; member national committee; secretary Denver conference.

John A. Barker, Franklin, Neb.; editor and publisher The Franklin Sentinel; chairman county committee.

Charles W. Beal, Broken Bow, Neb.; lawyer; editor Custer County Beacon.

W. S. Beebe, Seward, Neb.; farmer; chairman county committee.

L. A. Beltzer, Osceola, Neb.; nurseryman; former editor.

W. P. Brooks, Cook, Neb.; physician; author.

B. N. Cleveland, Fremont, Neb.; retired farmer.

H. E. Dawes, 1822 S. 15th st., Lincoln, Neb.; educator; assistant superintendent International Correspondence schools.

Chas. Q. De France, 1836 S. 25th st., Lincoln, Neb.; associate editor The Independent.

Frank D. Eager, 1328 O st., Lincoln, Neb.; business manager The Independent.

James R. Ferris, 1452 O st., Lincoln, Neb.; real estate; secretary state committee.

John H. Felber, Hartington, Neb.; merchant; chairman county committee.

L. R. Fletcher, Bancroft, Neb.; farmer.

G. H. Gilchrist, Mead, Neb.; blacksmith.

A. F. Parsons, North Platte, Neb.; lawyer.

Geo. A. Roberts, Edison, Neb.; farmer

J. O. Smith, Ord, Neb.; carpenter.

W. C. Starkey, Violet, Neb.; farmer; formerly coal miner.

T. H. Tibbles, 1328 O st., Lincoln, Neb.; editor The Independent; farmer, author and lecturer.

B. R. B. Weber, 514 So. 16th st., Lincoln, Neb.; farmer; real estate; chairman state committee.

J. J. Streeter, Vineland, N. J.; editor the Vineland Independent; East division organizer; author of the Cincinnati plan of organization.

E. B. Whitmore, 52 Reynolds Arcade, Rochester, N. Y.; solicitor of patents.

R. H. Reemelin, 36 Garfield Pl., Cincinnati, O.; physician.

H. C. Patzward, R. F. D. 1, El Reno, Okla.; farmer.

Wharton Barker, Philadelphia, Pa.; former editor The American; author "The Great Issues;" candidates for president (1900) "mid-road" people's party.

J. M. Mallett, Cleburne, Tex.; editor The Watchman; president National Reform Press association; chairman county committee.

Milton Park, Dallas, Tex.; editor Southern Mercury; treasurer allied people's party national committee; vice chairman Denver conference.

W. M. Sanders, New Salem, Tex.

R. T. Short, Putnam, Tex.; mechanic and farmer.

Newton B. Sandy, R. F. D. 19, Man-nington, W. Va.; farmer.

Total enrollment, 62.

Vocation: Farmers 23, editors and newspaper men 9, lawyers 7, physicians 6, not given 5, mechanics 4, merchants 2, real estate dealers 2, retired shipbuilder, teacher, nurseryman, telegraph operator, and farm loan agent, 1 each.

Former political affiliation: Republican 24, democrat 17, not given 16, greenbacker or independent 5.

Nativity: United States 40, not given 16, Canada 2, Austria, Germany, Sweden, and Switzerland, 1 each.

Age: Nineteen made no report; of the 43 reporting, 6 are over 70, 15 are 60 or over, 8 are over 50, ten are 40 or over, and 3 over and 1 under 30. The youngest is 28; the eldest 77, and the average a little under 54.

States and territories represented: Twenty-three.

Cash contributions, \$23.77.