

Dan Leahy's Book Outline:

THE POPULIST MOMENT **By Lawrence Goodwyn (1978)**

INTRODUCTION

The largest democratic mass movement in American History; about Democracy, why Americans have much less democracy than they think they have, AND what would have to happen to alter this.

When economic promise post civil war collapsed in 1873, farmers worked harder; moved west and worked harder -- this did not work.. began to look for explanations.. and created an effort leading to a massive upsurge of democratic hopes.

WHY DIFFICULT TO INTERPRET?

We are not only culturally confused, but it is difficult for us to even imagine our confusion.

- (1) The system works. The present is better than the past and the future will be better. How do you then explain protest - "when times are hard."
- (2) Absence of popular vigor is not due to apathy, but due to the fact that they have been "instructed in deference."
- (3) SHAPING: "The creation of mass modes of thought that literally make the need for major additional social changes difficult for the mass of the population to imagine."
- (4) STABILITY: "when the population has been persuaded to define all conceivable political activity within the limits of existing custom."
- (5) An important juncture in the political consolidation of the industrial culture came at the culmination of the Populist movement in the 1890's.

MASS FOLKWAYS OF RESIGNATION

- (1) Focus on material acquisition
- (2) Public life is lowered

- (3) Disappearance of visible public ethic
- (4) Deference is an essential ingredient to survival
- (5) Decline in individual political self respect
- (6) If protest existed, the protesters made mistakes.
- (7) Past actors "foolish" to have had such hopes.

ANOTHER DIFFICULTY OF INTERPRETATION: SEQUENCE

"...mass protest requires not only a high order of cultural education and tactical achievement, it requires a high order of sequential achievement." FOUR STAGES

1. CREATION OF AN AUTONOMOUS INSTITUTION WHERE NEW INTERPRETATIONS CAN MATERIALIZE THAT RUN COUNTER TO PREVAILING AUTHORITY. - the movement forming
2. CREATION OF A TACTICAL MEANS TO ATTRACT MASSES - the movement recruiting.
3. ACHIEVEMENT OF A HERETOFORE UNSANCTIONED LEVEL OF SOCIAL ANALYSIS - the movement educating.
4. CREATION OF AN INSTITUTIONAL MEANS WHEREBY THE NEW IDEAS CAN BE EXPRESSED IN AN AUTONOMOUS POLITICAL WAY -the movement politicized.
5. MOVEMENT ARE INITIATED BY PEOPLE WHO HAVE A HIGH LEVEL OF PERSONAL POLITICAL SELF-RESPECT
6. STEPS TWO-FOUR DEPEND ON ORGANIZERS ABILITY TO DEVELOP WIDESPREAD METHODS OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATION WITHIN THE MASS MOVEMENT. - A new way of looking at things, a movement culture...

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT WAS SEQUENTIAL

(1877 - 1892)

1. The National Farmers Alliance and Industrial Union created by men of discernable self-possession and political self-respect.
2. The mechanism of mass recruitment was the world's first large-scale working class cooperative. - farmers joined the Alliance to join the Cooperative.
3. Their experience within the cooperative "educated" them about the prevailing forms of economic power with the help of their 40,000 members of the lecturing system.
4. They created their own political institution, the People's Party, in 1892 and challenged the corporate state and the creed of progress it put forward.

They certainly had their difficulties in linking with the urban working class and their black counterparts.

THE POPULIST MOVEMENT CAME AT A TIME WHEN THE RANGE OF CULTURALLY SANCTIONED POLITICAL TRADITIONS WAS BROADER THAN TWO - as it is today, ie East and West.

They didn't know the Russian revolution nor Chinese revolution nor multi-national corporations.

PART ONE: CREATING A DEMOCRATIC POLITICS

PRELUDE TO POPULISM

1. Politics after civil war defined by sectional, racial and religious loyalties, not ideas.
2. GOP became much more narrow in focus - focused on business by 1877; gave up Black reconstruction; realized it could rule with just its base in the North.
3. Just as Blacks became alienated from GOP, so did white farmers become alienated from Democratic party "conceived in white supremacy and clothed in the "Lost Cause."

4. Business and financial entrepreneurs achieved effective control of a restructured American party system.

5. SECTIONALISM, ISSUELESS POLITICS AND BUSINESS DIRECTION OF BOTH PARTIES... (8)

6. THE ALMOST WHOLLY NON-IDEOLOGICAL CLIMATE CREATED BY SECTIONAL POLITICS WAS ALSO TO PROVE THE THIRD PARTY'S PRINCIPAL OBSTACLE.

THE FINANCIAL QUESTION:

This question arose out of the War. Who created it, distributed it and what was it? Money.

The government issued treasury notes (Green ink - "greenbacks) and suspended specie payments. \$450 million at the end of the war.

Bankers wanted to redeem their notes in gold at pre-war prices. The nation's taxpayers would pay the difference between 50 cent dollars and pre-war one hundred cent dollars. (Same arguments as Hamilton (11))

Two Methods: Raise Taxes or Keep Money supply constant so that as population and economy grew contraction would occur over the long run.

Contraction was mass tragedy for farmers and a boon to bankers and creditors. The US went back to the gold standard, January 2, 1879.

(The Crime of 73 was the passage by Congress of a bill that had an amendment which "demonetized" silver with little public knowledge. Backed by Gold interests.)

THE ALLIANCE DEVELOPS A MOVEMENT CULTURE

THE SYSTEM. The crop lien system -- farmer would remain in debt year after year because the price he received for his cotton crop did not "pay out" his debt.

This system was the result of the War. The south had little capital or banks. The merchant would get goods from the North and had a two price system: cash and credit -- with enormous interest rates.

Plus, decreased prices for increased production. (24) High interest rates and low commodity rates. No cotton, no credit. Merchants took over land.

GTT -

EARLY ORGANIZATION. JR Allen's ranch in Lampasas County Texas, 1877, formed Knights of Reliance; changed its name to The Farmers Alliance, started idea of trade store, hired SO Daws, a 36 year old Mississippi boy as a Traveling lecturer. Join the Alliance and form a trade store.

William Lamb (Tennessean) became a leader, 1884-85, organized more than his mentor, DAWS, saw a need to align with KOL in North Texas, plus cooperative buying and selling.

How does a democratic culture get created? People seeing themselves acting, the sense of hope, of autonomy, sense of possibility.

POLITICS: Lamb initiated an argument to support KOL strike against Gould -- asked farmers to rethink themselves. Dunlap was his opponent.

DAWS: "Capital is thoroughly organized, but when the laboring classes begins to organize, they call it communism and other hard names, which is unjust" (42).

THE CLEBURNE (NEAR DALLAS) DEMANDS

LABOR Planks: (1) recognition. (2) national bureau of labor statistics (3) an improved mechanics lien statute, (4) abolish leasing state convicts to private employers (5) National labor conference to discuss measures as may be of "interest to the laboring classes. " (47)

RAILROAD Planks: (1) RR assessed at full value (2) same rates of freight for same commodities (3) prevent pooling and rebates.....

LAND Planks: (1) all land held for speculation should be taxed (2) stop aliens from speculating in land (3) forfeited railroad lands be given to govt

and open to settlers (4) fences be removed from public school lands (5) stop the dealing in futures of all agricultural products.

FINANCIAL Planks: (1) National banking system of flexible currency replacing federal treasury notes of the private banks (2) immediate and unlimited coinage of gold and silver to liquidate public debt

PASSED 92 TO 75 IN AUGUST OF 1886.

Charles Macune (Wisconsin, orphaned at 10, in Texas at 19, writer, economist, medicine and law) brought the factions together in WACO in January, 1887. The Alliance was 200,000 members in 3000 chartered suballiances.

Macune suggested organization of a Farmers Alliance Credit Exchange and organize the cotton belt states.

Henry Vincent of Kansas.

Could a cooperative commonwealth coexist with a Banker centered American capitalism (74). They marched to save the exchange, but Credit was still the problem.

Concl: The Alliance cooperative stood little chance of working unless fundamental changes were made in the American monetary system (84)

The Alliance was attempting to construct, within the framework of American capitalism, some variety of cooperative commonwealth. (90)

THE PEOPLE'S PARTY WAS TO WAGE A FRANTIC CAMPAIGN TO WREST EFFECTIVE OPERATING CONTROL OF THE AMERICAN MONETARY SYSTEM FROM THE NATION'S COMMERCIAL BANKERS AND RESTORE IT ... TO THE UNITED STATES TREASURY. (93)

PART TWO: THE PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT ENCOUNTERS THE RECEIVED CULTURE

CHAPTER FOUR: THE NATIONAL ALLIANCE

"... So pervasive have been these habits of thought that established hierarchies have tended to be defended as venerable repositories of good sense when they are, in fact, merely powerful and orderly." (97)

"A complementary presumption is that insurgent movements are nonsensical."

(To see the populist moment, you need to overcome conceptual barriers:

1. The system works.
2. Progressive evolution of democratic forms.
3. Hazards remain awesome for an organizer: overcoming sectionalism, patterns of deference, racism and ethnic differences.)

THE NATIONAL ALLIANCE

1. Experimentation in the Dakotas (Crop Insurance) and Minnesota (Donnelly) and Kansas, etc.
2. Macune calls for "confederation of industrial organizations" in St. Louis, 1889.
3. Platform - government ownership, equitable taxes, coinage, etc.
PLUS - plan of sub-treasuries (109)

4. Sub-Treasury: Fed govt. builds warehouses in counties; farmers get negotiable certificates of deposit and sell at will, etc.

5. This plan admitted that the cooperative crusade had failed and that to get this they had TO ACT POLITICALLY TO OPPOSE CAPITAL.
(overcome sectionalism)

6. 1890 campaign. Public debates, lecturers, official newspapers,

7. The Colored Alliance. Difficulties. White Bourbons and Negro Republicans. No way for them to "see themselves" acting. (123)

8. In 1890, the coast to coast million member Alliance tried both reform (within the two party) and revolution - overthrow of that system with a "third party of the industrial millions." (124)

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CHAPTER FIVE: REFORM AND ITS SHADOW

By summer 1890, the movement had not "politicized" itself as yet. It was only "democratic" in economic terms and was still reform in that it sought change within or through established political parties.

NOTE: He contrasts "hierarchical" politics and "democratic" politics.

1. KANSAS WHERE CULTURE TOOK ROOT AND ELECTION VICTORY LED TO DRIVE TO CONVERT SOUTHERN BRETHERN TO INDEPENDENT POLITICS.

2. NEBRASKA baseless politics of reform. William Jennings Bryant. Couldn't control numerical majority -- no program... No beliefs nor organizational discipline. (144)

3. Despite electoral victories, leadership was worried: How to deal with the new Democratic politician with anti-Alliance platforms, but populist anti-railroad rhetoric. (Ben Tilman in South Carolina or James Hogg in Texas.

Evan Jones (1889 National Alliance president), HSP Ashby (St. Louis leader), JM Perdue (sub-treasury theoretician), RM Humphrey (white founder of Colored Alliance), Harry Tracy (greenback advocate of large scale cooperatives) and William Lamb.

4. DRAW THE LINE -- Lamb began to do this. The Alliance sub-treasury plan or the Democratic party. One or the other. Let the lecturers debate.

5. Macune passed a compromise at Ocala, Florida in December, 1890. Reform within the Democrats until 1892 and then reassess and possibly consider third party. Radicals agreed, but began to act earlier.

6. MODEL NEEDED. Lamb needed a "model" and organized TEXAS on the "politics of the sub-treasury" with EVANS called a four day convention in Waco to improve lecturing system. He outmaneuvered Macune.

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LEADERSHIP INTERACTION (LAMB/MACUNE)

1. Lamb's radicalism brought Macune to power in 1886.

2. Macune's organizational creativity constructed a national constituency of farmers which made Lamb's dream of a third party possible.

3. Their shared vision of economic parity for farmers in an industrial society (symbolized by the sub-treasury plan) which Macune saw as economic reform and Lamb converted into political revolt.

7. 1892 at St. Louis convention, LL Polk was leader; Donnelly with great rhetoric and march to third party nominating convention, July 4, 1892.

8. 1400 certified Populists appeared in Omaha to form People's Party ... the new party of the industrial millions.

LL POLK DIED just before the Convention. The one man who could have broken the solid south. (171)

James Baird Weaver instead (ex Union General) and Field (ex-confederate).

9. SHARED FAITH -- though the democratic heritage was imperiled by the demands of the industrial age, the people were not yet helpless victims.

(FOOTNOTE: Insurgent democratic movements (1) form (2) recruit a mass base (3) achieve a heretofore unsanctioned level of economic analysis (4) find a way to express this new understanding through

autonomous political acts. These steps sequentially obtained as a result of development of (1) individual self-respect (2) collective self confidence gained via successful act (3) economic lessons learned form dominant culture (4) creation of mass based third party. (164)

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CHAPTER SIX

REFORM POLITICIANS, REFORM EDITORS AND PLAN PEOPLE

How was Populism going to become the institutional voice of the "industrial millions."

1. KOL now down to 100,000 and not interested. AFL and Gompers were cautious, avoiding politics and industrial masses, the CIO was years off. Workers were "aware" but not politicized.

2. The "hireling standing army" (Pinkertons) were ready for hire, as was the government to stop workers getting recognition from corporations.

3. Not a great deal of thought given as to how to create analogous insurgent culture in urban workforce. The cooperative experience gave no lessons.

4. Few institutional means to attract the "industrial millions."

5. State races depended upon relationship to alliance base.

6. WASHINGTON STATE: Organizers arrived in 1890, 200 suballiances by 1891, The Alliance Manifesto launched in Spokane, Whitman farmer ran a strong 3rd party in 1892.

7. Macune drops from site and Lamb, sued, becomes politically liable.

8. The Reform Press Association. 1000 journals.

9. 1893 Depression. Jacob Coxey's Army.

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PART THREE: THE TRIUMPH OF THE CORPORATE STATE