HOFSTADTER AND THE HURONITE:

PRAIRIE PUNDITRY ON THE JAMES RIVER

1894 TO 1899

by

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For several decades after 1931, John D. Hick's evaluation of the agrarian unrest of the latter nineteenth century remained the standard interpretation. He maintained that the Populists anticipated the Progressive and New Deal reforms of the twentieth century. Thus, when Richard Hofstadter challenged that assessment, he provoked a dispute which sent authors back to the sources in an effort to defend, to reject, or to modify his revision. Subsequently, the controversy has ranged from his contention that Populism was an irrational reaction to misunderstood forces at work in modern society, to Norman Pollack's assertion that Populism was the major radical alternative of the period, to Walter Nugent's belief that Populism was basically a political response to economic problems. In the 1970s, Lawrence Goodwyn added a new dimension to the argument by maintaining that the generative force behind Populism was the cooperative movement which convinced agrarian dissidents that they could achieve individual freedom by working together collectively.[1] The activity engendered by Hofstadter's seminal criticism has generally been to measure Populist tenets against his allegations without considering whether or not the Populists can be so clearly delineated from others in their own time and in their own place. Thus, the question arises whether or not a study of local history will indicate significant differences in attitude from one political orientation to another toward the issues of the day.

This papet will examine the editorial policy of a Republican newspaper, the Daily Huronite, from 1894 to 1899, along the lines of Hofstadter's list of dominant themes and sub-themes in Populist history. Briefly, Hofstadter lists the dominant themes in Populism as the notion of a golden past, commonality of interests between farmer and laborer, the people versus the "interests," the conspiracy theory of history, and the primacy of money. The sub-themes implicit in Populist thought, according to Hoftstadter, ate provincialism, nativism, and anti-Semitism.[2] My purpose is to ascertain whether or not a clear-cut division can be made between Republican and Populist sentiment in a particular area of South Dakota in the middle 1890s. I will first determine the political bias of the Daily Huronite and then examine each of Hofstadter's themes. Since Hofstadter's theme of the people versus the interests is closely allied with the conspiracy theme, no attempt will be made to consider the former separately.

The year 1894 marked a turning point in American political history. In the elections of that year, the Republicans captured nearly every major city in the Northeast,

dominated the rural areas, and began an eighteen-year period of dominance in national politics. At the same time, the Democrats incurred their most serious defeats in the industrial cities, having experienced the loss of working-class wards because of the depression.[3] Meanwhile, the Populists even though they had elected fewer candidates than they had in 1892, entertained hopes of replacing the badly shattered Democrat Party as one of the major parties.[4] By 1899, however, the farmers' attitude toward big business had begun to change from one of hostility to one of accommodation and neutrality as farmers became less concerned with how large big business was and more concerned with what big business did.[5]

The Daily Huronite began publishing as a daily paper at Huron, South Dakota in 1886 with Davis, Longstaff and Crouch listed as publishers. By 1889, the editor-publishers were John Shannon and John Longstaff. On June 1, 1896, Shannon retired because of ill health, and John Longstaff became sole editor and publisher. The Daily Huronite continued publication until 1945 when it merged with the Plainsman, and in 1956 the name Huronite disappeared from the masthead.[6]

Through the years 1894 to 1899, the Huronite staunchly maintained that it was a Republican paper. In fact, from September to November 1894, the Resolutions of the Republican Party of the state of South Dakota were reproduced daily on the editorial page.[7] The editors made themselves explicit regarding their stand when they asserted, "The Huronite always stands by republican tickets until the victors are crowned and the dead decently buried; and happily, we are always able to do this without being unfaithful to the truth."[8] The particular bete noir of the Huronite in the election campaign of 1894 was not the Democrats but the Populists, since the Populists were a distinct threat to Republican ambitions in South Dakota that year. Sending out a thinly veiled plea to possible defectors to remain in the Republican ranks, the editors declared,

> But we have to take parties, as we have to take the world itself, with the ills that belong to them, and make the best of the situation. Convinced of the value and justice of their declared principles, their methods are to be improved by loyal work inside the lines . . . .
>
> The best organization in this wide world through which to discover and remedy political wrongs is still the really Grand Old Republican Party.[9]

Throughout the campaign of 1894, the editors of the Huronite fired editorial blasts at the Populists, such as, "Possibly you can argue the ears off a cast iron dog, but you cannot induce capital to invest where populism reign[s]."[10] One senses the ebullience of the Huronite in November, 1894, when it became evident that the Republicans had re-elected Governor Sheldon and had gained a sizeable majority in the state legislature. The editors called the Republican victory

> . . . a victory in the industrial and moral world as significant as that of Gettysburg in war. All true Americans may well rejoice in it, as all true Americans are sure to be profited by it.[11]

A year later the Huronite was already taking up the cudgels for the coming battle in 1896, and the paper pleaded for party harmony, taking no chances on what the Populists might do at the polls in 1896. In September, 1895, the editors warned,

> The republican party must be returned to power and kept there regardless of any minor questions of political economy . . . . The party has its faults as all parties have, but the good in governmental affairs that cannot be reached through its organization is hopeless. The next president should be one willing to leave the silver question to congress, and that is as far as the Huronite would make the issue for 1896.[12]

By the following spring, however, it looked as if the Populists were going to be a force to contend with in South Dakota politics, and the Huronite became even more implicit, indicating to its readers that the Republican Party had something for everybody. The paper declared that

> A man may be for or against women suffrage, prohibition of liquors, government ownership of railroads, and a great many other questions of interest, including the silver question, and reasonably remain in the republican ranks. Men right on the main test questions, but differing on the minor ones may well be encouraged to stay with the republican party until the main questions are definitely settled, and no longer divide men.[13]

The Huronite had consistently endorsed free silver[14] and in the spring of 1896 the paper also endorsed Senator Allison from Iowa as the Republican nominee for candidate for the presidency.[15] However, when it became apparent that the national Republican Party was not going in the direction that the Huronite would have liked, the editors began to shift ground, and by June 1896, the paper was enthusiastically supporting McKinley.[16] The editors exclaimed somewhat defensively, "The Huronite is a republican newspaper. It believes in the principles of the republican party, and it places those principles above men."[17] When challenged by the Plankinton Standard to explain its political somersault, the Huronite was equal to the task when it declared:

> The Huronite is not a free silver republican paper. It never has been and it is not now. True, the Huronite has been a bimetalist [sic] of the Allison school, but never, never an advocate of free coinage of the Pettigrew, Bryan, Tillman, Altgeld stripe.[18]

During the summer of 1896, it became evident that the Populist threat was more substance than shadow, and the

Huronite was not above mud-slinging and employing the technique of guilt by association. In June, the editors warned of, "Populism, anarchy, free trade, free silver, free whiskey, and free beer. These will be the demands of the new party."[19] Continuing in much the same vein a few weeks later, the editors claimed that

> The democracy of Jefferson from which have been drawn invariably the ideas which have given political stability and republican enthusiasm, to the country, has passed into the control of Jefferson's diametric opposite, the Socialist or communist, or as he is now known here, the Populist.[20]

Toward the end of the campaign the Huronite, sensing that the coming election was to be no land-slide for the Republicans, issued one more warning. The paper suggested darkly that,

> Murat [sic] and Robespierre were the Altgelds, Tillmans and Pettigrews of today. Let all men pause and consider whither we are drifting. Under Pettigrew and Bryan and Tillman to revolution? No! A thousand times no! There is but one alternative. A vote for Bryan is a vote for revolutionists. A vote for McKinley is a vote for peace and prosperity.[21]

When the tumult and the shouting died in November 1896, the jubilation of the Huronite was much more subdued than two years earlier. With the election of McKinley it announced that, "The honor of the nation has been preserved--the credit of the nation saved."[22] No mention was made of South Dakota. Perhaps the honor and credit of the state had been indelibly stained by the election of a Populist for governor. Through the years 1897 to 1899, the Huronite continued to affirm its Republican affiliation and continued to disparage the Populists.[23]

While the question rages whether or not the Populists were retrogressive, the problem here is to determine whether or not there might have been a tinge of yearning among Republicans for things that were past. The Huronite seemed to be casting nostalgic glances over its shoulder when it wrote,

> The Huronite stands up for American institutions, for American men; for American parties. It believes in old parties, in old constitutions, in the old Church and in the old-fashioned, common-sense ways. When any new unpatriotic, instable, fanatical, anarchistic or communistic fad comes swelling along [that is, the Populists], we like to set it onto the old democratic party first and watch the result.[24]

It is evident, however, that the editors were indulging in campaign rhetoric, promoting the cause of the Republican Party in November, 1894, and urging potential defectors to think it over. This seems to be borne out by the fact that, several months later, the editors advised, "Let party utterances made

in the roar of hot nominating conventions, at the moment of adjournment go for what they are worth."[25]

The editors, writing in a more positive vein, seemed to have caught the vision of the "American Dream" in the mid-nineties. Far from being pessimistic, even though the United States was then in the grip of one of its worst depressions, the editors could write,

> We are here to take the world as it is and make it as much better as we can. Civilization even after all these centuries, has just made a beginning--a mere opening in the wilderness. Its enemies, in overwhelming numbers, are all around us . . . .
>
> The world does move, and it moves forward. And every word of honest cheer, and every stroke of honest work, and every enlargement of human hope, and every expansion of human love, helps that movement along.[26]

No desire here to go back to the good old days. The world was full of change and challenge and the task of Americans was to meet it head-on. Nevertheless, a man had to meet certain qualifications in order to take up the tremendous task of remaking the world. The Huronite cautioned,

> To be a true republican [one] must believe in human liberty everywhere; the perpetual unity of American states; the dignity of all honest human labor . . . and he should believe in the practical means to bring about justice and perfect brotherhood among men.[27]

But of course the Huronite was a Republican paper, and it advised its readers that there was only one safe route to reform if one were to avoid the snares and pitfalls of revolution:

> America is distinctively a reform nation. It is always reforming. The controlling political party in this country for forty years past is a distinctively reform party. Society is always reforming wherever it is dominant. It means to leave nothing--no real need of just and happy national life--to be furnished by revolution.[28]

Or, as the Huronite exhorted in another instance,

> The Huronite holds that a man may still be a sound republican while opposing the free coinage of silver; that he may be just as sound--and a little more so--while advocating it; that he may be a good republican holding the faith that the government should own, and operate the railroads, and just a little better one opposing at this time any such revolution of methods of business . . . .[29]

The Huronite did not look backward. Indeed, it believed that the nation had to look forward. The people ought to and

could cure the ills of a developing society. Moreover, the paper believed that there was no need to change parties to achieve the goal of reform because the Republican Party since its inception had been the party of reform.

It is difficult to make any generalizations about the Huronite's policy regarding what Hofstadter calls, "the concept of natural harmonies," simply because the editors did not devote much time to labor questions. There seemed to be some sympathy for the urban workers on the part of the editors, but this concern was put into the context of the tariff question. Arguing for a high tariff, the Huronite expounded,

> From bottom to top it is a labor question. If men are to be slaves--if labor is simply a commodity--then free trade is right and politic. If men are to be freemen, and labor to be dignified, protection is indispensible (sic).[30]

In anticipation of the coming election year, the Huronite in the autumn of 1895 argued that the basic question of the day was the tariff and its effect upon the American way of life. The editors insisted that

> The Huronite denies that this silver question is to be the leading issue in 1896. The leading question is to be one more [sic] of business life or death. Shall America do business in her own interest, and thus be able to care for her toilers by giving them employment, or shall she abandon leadership to the other continent, and her labor to starvation wages, with its dangers of civil commotion?[31]

By the spring of 1896, it became evident that the Huronite's prediction of the previous September was inaccurate. Silver was rapidly pushing the tariff issue off center stage. However, the editors had not changed their minds, and in an attempt to convince their readers that both issues were paramount, they wrote,

> A high tariff, and a narrow redemption money! Statesmanship? If that is statesmanship, in the interest of American labor, then twice two make eight when you borrow money, and twice ten make six when you pay it.[32]

Furthermore, the Republican Party, the party of the high tariff, was the best agent for protecting the interests of the worker as the editors declared:

> When a person believes in a tariff for revenue only he is not a republican, but so long as he believes that it is the duty of this government to protect American labor and prevent the American workingmen from being reduced to the low level of the European laborer, he remains a republican.[33]

There is some evidence, however meager, that the Huronite was concerned with the plight of the eastern working man. An editorial on a strike in the Pennsylvania coal fields stated

that, "The coal miner's strike is going to be successful because the cause is just and has the sympathy of the people."[34] When it appeared that the strike was not going to be successful after all, the Huronite lamented,

> The striking miners may be forced by the necessities of nature to resume work. The distress in their families caused by an almost total lack of food is the strongest argument in favor of the early adjustment of the difficulty. It also illustrates the righteousness of the miner's cause. After hard work, day after day, the miner is not able to lay by enough to support a family a month when work ceases.[35]

Although there was compassion for the cause of the worker, nowhere in the editorials of the Huronite was there a plea for farmers and workers to get together to solve their mutual problems. In fact, the editorial page was silent on the crisis caused by the Pullman Strike and on the sensational trial of Eugene Debs that followed.

The editors of the Huronite were disturbed in the mid-nineties by what seemed to be a great inequity in the American system. The paper claimed that

> The masses are as restless today as ever. More and more are they impressed with the idea of this being a rich man's government. This idea must be corrected by legislation which shall place every man, rich or poor, high born or low, on equal terms in this free land before the law. Legislation must cease to be for the few, and become for all alike.[36]

Nor were the editors vague as to the sources of the evil that made the government of the United States a rich man's government. Certainly the gold manipulators had a hand in it, as the Huronite informed the public: "When it comes to personal interest, the silver-mine owner's so much talked about, isn't a speck of snow in a blizzard as compared with the money-speculating interest in the manipulation of gold."[37] Although the editors did not show exactly how it could be done, or where they got their information, nevertheless they cautioned that, "To manipulate gold is easy. An agent of Mr. Rothschild may land in Sioux Falls, and by conspiring with three men, take away nine-tenths of the gold in Minnehaha county within two hours."[38] Continuing to assert that gold could be and was being manipulated, the editors warned their readers that,

> Gold is manipulated by the strong against the interest of the weak. This is done because it can be done with comparative ease. It is the most natural thing in the world that it should be done, in a wicked world where men are selfish. Does any sane man expect the Rothschilds to fail to gather all they can get hands on? The way to prevent it is to make it impossible to do with profit.[39]

The Huronite became even more explicit regarding just who was benefitting from the gold standard. "The Huronite pointed out long since just how all the [gold] 'bugs' will be bimetalists [sic]. The masters who live on the blood of the people must give them a chance to renew the blood occasionally."[40]

But there were other conspirators on whom the Huronite leveled its sights. The coal trust also came in for its share of criticism. Loosing a verbal blast, the editors exclaimed,

> A great kick is made on the railroads and very little is said about the coal combine, a combination of soulless conspirators against the public weal who rob the people unblushingly.
>
> This $3.75 per ton [profit] goes into the pocket of the robber coal baron, and the coal consumers of the northwest pay their coal bills with grain and produce at lessened market values.
>
> It is no wonder men become populists when they are robbed daily by combinations which seem to prosper by reason of law.[41]

Nor did the pen of the Huronite editors spare the telegraph which was depicted as a villain preventing an honest man from earning his honest dollar. As late as 1899 the editors argued, "Give the people a good law regulating the telegraph and express tolls in this state. The leeches rob every one who transacts any business with them."[42]

That a conspiracy existed against the working man, the Huronite was convinced. That something had to be done about it, the paper was also convinced, and it reminded its public that America was at a crossroads. It warned that a decision had to be made,

> There are such things as powerful cormorant corporations. Rockefeller is not playing a lone or a lonely hand. There is such a thing as the great common, working struggling people. Their interests have clashed. They threaten to clash a great deal more sharply. The problem must be thought out and wrought out now, or fought out hereafter. Which?[43]

As if in answer to its own question, the paper fulminated, "Down with combinations and trusts. If the farmer could get a combination on his products he could get even with the rest of conspirators, but such a thing is impossible . . . ."[44]

Thus, the farmer was not able to meet the combinations on their own ground. An "equalizer" would have to be found, and the Huronite also had an answer for that. The paper suggested that there must be some kind of regulation, "Any combination to control prices on the necessaries of life ought to be knocked sky high and sooner or later it will be done."[45] The American way of life had to be preserved. The Huronite instructed its readers that

> Where combination is possible competition is impossible, and where free competition is impossible, as it is in all products, natural or manufactured, controlled by trusts, as well as in transportation companies, telegraph companies, insurance companies and other like corporations, the inherent rights of the people are infringed upon, and no constitutional provisions of a free people are intended to protect the few as against the many.[46]

Of course, being a good Republican paper, the Huronite reminded its readers that there was only one real agent qualified to carry out the needed reforms. Editorializing on a speech given by Senator Pettigrew which called for control legislation for railroads and other corporations as well as the remonetization of silver, the editor commented, "The [Republican] platform at Aberdeen must in still plainer language renew the republican promises of effective corporation control . . . ."[47] And a month later he again declared,

> If the republican party is to remain the mighty leader of human liberty, it must continue to set its face resolutely against the bad influences of concentrated wealth and power, and to speak and strike in behalf of Abraham Lincoln's "common people."[48]

However, it was not all that simple. What happened if one of these powerful combinations, which stifled competition, at the same time provided better and cheaper goods to the public?[49] Government ownership was not the answer, the Huronite indicated, as it reprinted an editorial from the Sioux Falls Argus-Leader:

> The great argument against government monopolies is that when competition disappears the great spur to progress is wanting and the great benefits derived now by the people from constantly progressing improvements and cheapness are not realized.[50]

The Huronite struck a middle-of-the-road stance in answer to the question that it posed. Absolute freedom was as undesirable as government ownership. What was needed was to distinguish between the service that the combination provided (which was beneficial) and the potential power that the combination might yield (which was not beneficial). The editor asserted that

> In the Huronite's view, the railroad is to be looked upon as an indispensible [sic] friend, whose conduct is to be the subject of special governmental scrutiny and supervision, because of its exceptional power.
>
> While we deal with the great corporations that manage them [the railroads] as dangerously powerful, there must be constant recognition of the beneficence of their rightful work. To hold them to

> right and justice between man and man while according them right and justice, freely, should be the object of all legislation, as well as the demand of all public and private opinion.[51]

"According right and justice" was not to be one-sided however. If the interests of the railroads were to be guarded, as they should be, this was not to imply that the public did not have its rights. The Huronite stated that

> It is right and proper that [railroad] interests should be protected and it is proper that they should have able tepresentatives in the state. But that the people should be controlled by them is all wrong; it is un-American and un-republican. The republican party of the state will never consent to the sacrifice of the people's tights in the interests of great corporations, neither will it allow these great commercial arteries to be so crippled as to weaken the great interest the people have in proper transportation facilities.[52]

On January 20, 1897, the South Dakota legislature passed the Palmer-Wheelet Bill which contained, in essence, the following provisions: the Railroad Commission was to have general supervision of railroads in the state as well as the power to examine the books in order to determine a railroad's gross earnings, and to set maximum rate schedules. In addition, the railroads were required to furnish cars to all who tequested them and were forbidden to practice rate discrimination.[53] Although this legislation was a Populist measure, the Huronite supported it.[54]

The railroad combinations were not the only trusts that came under the scrutiny of the Huronite. One has recurring visions of the Boston Tea Party as the editors recalled the heroes of old while reviling the sugar interests:

> The people have no rights that the sugar trust is bound to respect. Time was in this country when England tried to force its goods upon this country and the inhabitants refused to consume them in any manner. We would all hate to go without sugar, but the time may come when in order to curtail the rapacious hands of trusts that the plan adopted by the colonists will have to be practiced by their descendants now inhabiting the country made free by their heroism.[55]

Hawaiians beware, lest the sugar join all that tea in the harbor! If the Huronite could have its way, the coal trust also would be regulated: "Now let the courts get after the coal trust and destroy that infamous combination, which places a tax upon every fireside in the nation."[56] As summer became autumn, the Huronite fulminated again at the usurper of the hearth:

> The coal trust can soon get in its graft again. Jack Frost and coal trusts will dominate the northwest for the next six months. No one expects

> to control Jack Frost but it seems wrong that the coal trust should have the same undisputed sway in a free country.[57]

Even the Standard Oil Company was not immune from the attacks of the editor's pen. On hearing that Standard Oil was attempting to eliminate competition in Wisconsin, the Huronite was ready with its remedy: "If the Standard Oil people can kill off competition at pleasure . . . state laws should be passed to prevent their doing business."[58] One suspects, however, that the editor was more than a disinterested observer. Apparently his experience with Standard Oil products was not entirely a happy one. One senses his frustration as he wrote,

> The annual protest is being made against the quality of the non-combustible liquid now being unloaded on an outraged public in this state as kerosene. There is something radically wrong with the law governing the inspection of oil and the next legislature can do the people no better service than by providing a remedy.[59]

Evidently things did not improve rapidly because two years later he was still grumbling,

> The law governing the inspection of oils in South Dakota should either be repealed or amended so that it will ptove of some usefulness. The present grade of kerosene and gasoline sold by the Standard Oil Company is unfit for use--stinking and dangerous stuff which is not much above the standard of crude oils.[60]

Since people of several political persuasions subscribed to the quantity theory of money, the Huronite was right in the mainstream of things. Until the middle of 1896, the editors extolled the virtues of silver. Certainly, according to them, the use of silver would benefit the poor: "Silver is the money of the poor and the money of the poor should be as good as any."[61] Elsewhere in the same editorial they wrote, "The tendency of silver even when 'good as gold' is to jingle in men's pockets. The tendency of gold is to go off and hide."[62] But not only was silver good for jingling in men's pockets and for bringing gold out of hiding, bimetallism was good for the material prosperity of the nation. The editors cautioned, however, that silver was not to be a panacea.

> The Huronite persistently refuses to believe that the progress and happiness of the world hangs upon the slender thread known as the silver question. It believes that it would be vastly better for America's common people if both gold and silver were made, on proper ratio, the ultimate redemption money of this nation.[63]

The Huronite saw the need for bimetallism for several reasons. One was the need for a sound currency. The editors so informed their readers:

> We want both metals acting perfectly together, and all we can get of them, as the ultimate commercial standard of values; as the wood and the steel together constitute the standard of the strength of the bridge.[64]

A week later they reminded their public that "Silver coinage is wanted not so much to make more money, as to make better money, and a better distribution,"[65] and still a few days later as if to drive home the point: "Every silver man proposes to put a dollar's worth of silver into every silver dollar, and he wants a dollar's worth of gold in every gold dollar, not mere promises to pay a dollar."[66]

In addition to the concern for a sound dollar on a bimetallic basis, the Huronite endorsed silver for another reason: "Taking human nature as it is there is not gold enough in the world, nor likely to be this side of the millennium, to do the business of the world."[67] Thus, the paper argued that in an expanding economy there simply was not enough money on a gold basis to do the nation's business. Bimetallism would furnish a much-needed flexible monetary system. The editors called for

> One standard of value fixed and sustained through two historic metals. An elastic diversity of currency based upon silver and gold. All answering the progressive needs of progressive American trade. That's honest money.[68]

Thus, in the minds of the Huronite editors, the coinage of silver would not create inflation--a cheaper money--but it would stimulate the circulation of all currency and enable the nation to carry on its enterprise. The paper opined that

> The free coinage of silver might not inflate the currency one dollar. If you will count everything in the country that now passes for "dollars"--silver, gold, paper, check, drafts, etc.,--the free coinage might not add a dollar to the number. But its tendency would be to inflate the activity of all kinds of money.[69]

The Huronite was not just spinning theoretical webs when it espoused the cause of free silver. Obviously, action had to follow words, and, of course, the Republican Party was to be the vehicle of progress: "The real silver friends, like all other advocates of any good cause requiring political action, will best serve their cause by co-operating with the republican party."[70] However, when it seemed that the Eastern Republican politicians were uncomfortable with silver as a bedfellow, the Huronite urged action:

> When Americans begin to talk of being opposed to the "free coinage of silver on a ratio of 16 to 1, or upon any other ratio," as Morton and McKinley and others do, it is time for some counter activity on the part of all who believe, with Ex-President Harrison, and other real American statesmen that a "larger use of silver for money and free coinage of

> silver, upon a basis to be agreed upon, would be good for the whole world."[71]

As late as the spring of 1896, the Huronite was still arguing for a silver plank in the Republican platform.[72]

But the Huronite was a good Republican paper. Even though its readers must have blinked when they saw it, nevertheless, when the gold plank was written into the Republican platform at its national convention at St. Louis in June, 1896, the paper managed to write that "McKinley, protection and honest money will be the battle cry of the republicans in 1896, and overwhelming victory will surely be the result in November."[73] Furthermore, when the horrible news of Senator Teller's defection was verified, the Huronite wrote, more in sorrow than in anger that

> If Senator Teller and his associates are right on this great question and time demonstrates the correctness of their position, when the next generation peruses the history of this one, Teller and his associates will stand with Lincoln, with Grant, and with Sumner, in the hearts of the American people. If they are wrong they will be honored as men who had the courage of their convictions and at a critical time acted unselfishly for what they believed to be right . . . .
>
> No denunciation--no party score should follow them from the party.[74]

Senator Teller might leave the party for a principle, but for the Huronite, principle meant party first, last and always.

As the political campaign of 1896 progressed, the Huronite moved further and further away from its former position on silver until by November 1896, one would hardly have recognized its former affinity for silver. Writing in apparent reaction to the Democrat convention of July 1896, and in an attempt to rationalize his new position, the editor admitted that "It is among the possibilities that free silver coined at a proper ratio, and a proper tariff bill might [italics added] work well," but "free trade and free silver would bring untold disaster to every interest in the United States."[75] The following day, however, the editor fired a broadside against free silver that was to set the tone of the paper's position on silver from then to the end of the campaign. He warned that

> Free-silver coinage would be national dishonor and a monumental anachronism. Silver has had its day as a money standard. The commerce of civilization . . . has progressed beyond silver. It has adapted itself to gold, and to gold it will stick until it finds something still more convenient. The silver campaign is based on delusions which have no justification, and on statements which are not so.[76]

No longer was silver the metal that would benefit the poor man and stimulate the commerce of the nation.[77] Instead, at the height of the campaign, the Huronite was convinced that only a few would benefit from free silver. It wrote that

> Gold and silver are used as money in the United States to a greater extent than in any other nation. Why should we drive gold out of the country for the sole purpose of satisfying a few silver speculators.[78]

Then, just before the voters went to the polls, the Huronite believed it necessary to caution just once more what would happen if the Democrats won:

> The silver coinage under the ratio of 16 to 1 would be but fifty cent dollars; gold would be driven out of the country and the United States would be placed upon a silver nonmetallic basis along side of China, Japan, India, Mexico and other semi-civilized countries.[79]

Until the campaign of 1896, no political distinction could be made purely on the basis of whether or not one believed in free silver. Republicans endorsed the idea as well as Populists. The division came over the crucial question of whether or not to remain within the Grand Old Party in order to get the desired reform. The Huronite decided to remain and abandoned the cause of free silver in the process.

The editorials of the Huronite from September 1894 to February 1899 make scant references to Jewry, and the paper makes these allusions in connection with eastern banking interests. It suggested that

> The "crooked nosed" Wall street [sic] manipulators better take to the woods to save themselves from the oppressions of the horny handed tillers of the soil. This is the farmers' year . . . . The price of all kinds of farm produce is advancing. Wheat, corn, cotton--the three kings are having things very much their own way.[80]

If there was no real evidence of anti-Semitism during the years mentioned, yet there seemed to be a kind of provincialism--a feeling of western states versus eastern states--as well as a species of the "my country, right or wrong" type of patriotism. The Huronite favored Senator Allison from Iowa as the Republican nominee for candidate for President in 1896. Allison was in favor of silver, of course, but the Huronite put its reasons for supporting him in a somewhat larger perspective:

> Today there is not a pulse-beat of sympathy between Ohio and the ambitions of these states [Iowa and South Dakota] west of the Mississippi. With great numbers and great wealth concentrated on small area, the "Ohio man" [McKinley] always appears with his back to the west . . . . The Brices and the

> Shermans are representative men of the state [Ohio]. Good men. A good state. But neither the men nor the state which they accurately represent, have any use for the Dakotas . . . .
>
> The people will someday come to a better understanding, but we need to act with friends now. As we need strength . . . shall we not best secure it by friendly alliances at home? This west-of-the-Mississippi region should unite and make its power known and felt, if it is to get useful recognition from the eastward powers now careless of us or against us.[81]

Hofstadter contended that the Populists were misfits in a technological society and Pollack maintained that they were the first organized radical group to have a modern program but both claims are overstated. It is evident that characteristics ascribed to the Populists were not exclusively theirs, and that their proposed solutions were also championed by those within Republican ranks.

The Huronite did not accept the idea of a golden age--a nostalgic yearning for the good old days. Instead, Americans seemed on the edge of a golden or more accurately a silver future with all the benefits that a technological society could offer. It was not the machine that was bad; it was the man who controlled the machine who needed controlling, and in this respect there was no essential difference between the Huronite position and that of the Populists.

In the few references that the Huronite did make to laborers, it is evident that a feeling of kinship existed between the rural newspaper and the Pennsylvania coal-miner. Since Hofstadter and Pollack concur that such a bond obtained among the Populists, it is again difficult to determine the difference between the Republican Huronite and the Populists.

The Huronite was convinced that the trusts operated against the interests of the western rural areas, and it believed fully that the trusts would have to be controlled for the benefit of all. If Populists believed in a conspiracy, as Hofstadter asserts, then certainly they were not alone; and if controlling trusts in the interest of the general welfare is Populist radicalism as Pollack insists, then it is also true that radicalism was not the exclusive property of the Populists. Again, it is difficult to see a difference between Republican and Populist.

Concerning the money problem, the Huronite stood for an elastic currency and free silver until the paper was enticed from that position by the politics of the campaign of 1896. As to the doctrine of the primacy of money, both Populists and the Huronite may have been standing in good American tradition. The debate still rages over the merits of the quantity theory of money. At any rate, there was no real difference on the money question betwen the Huronite and the Populists until 1896.

The debate as to whether or not the Populists were anti-Semitic continues.[82] It is not the concern of this paper to weigh the merits of that debate except to note that the references to Jewry in Huronite literature are of the intensity and scope of that found in Populist literature. Thus, on this issue the difference between Populist and Republican is indiscernible.

The Huronite agreed with the Populists as to what was wrong with society. There was disagreement as to how to bring about change. When words came to action, the Huronite could not sever its ties to the Republican Party, preferring reform by evolution rather than by revolution.

Perhaps George McKenna said it best when he called populism "the perennial American 'ism.'" To describe populism as peculiar to a particular people in a particular region is to draw the lines too narrowly. According to McKenna,

> The populist believes that the "plain people" of America, which for him includes almost everyone, are in basic agreement with one another about what is right and wrong, fair and foul, legitimate and crooked. Fancy dialectics are unnecessary to discover these kinds of truths: we need only search our hearts. And our hearts are basically the same. The populist cannot bring himself to believe that the social environments of different Americans can set them thinking differently about fundamentals. Economic determinism is anathema to him.[83]

The fact that Republican Congressman Jack Kemp of New York and Democrat Congressman Tom Harkin of Iowa, certainly no political bedfellows, have recently taken to calling themselves populists seems to bear out the contention that the word "Populist" is a label and that "populism" is a state of mind.

NOTES

1. John D. Hicks, The Populist Revolt: A History of the Farmers' Alliance and the People's Party (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1931); Richard Hofstadter, The Age of Reform from Bryan to F.D.R. (New York: Vintage Books, 1955); Norman Pollack, The Populist Response to Industrial America: Midwestern Populist Thought (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1962); Walter T.K. Nugent, "Some Parameters of Populism," Agricultural History, 40 (1966), 255. Among those who take issue with Hofstadter's position are Walter T.K. Nugent, The Tolerant Populists (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963); Norman Pollack, The Populist Response to Industrial America; Norman Pollack, "Hofstadter on Populism: Critique of 'The Age of Reform'," Journal of Southern History, 26 (1960), 478. One of those who disagrees with Pollack's position is Irwin Unger, "Critique of Norman Pollack's 'Fear of Man'," Agricultural History, 39 (1965), 75. See James Turner, "Understanding the Populists," Journal of American History, 67 (1980), 354. See also Lawrence Goodwyn, Democratic Promises: The Populist Moment in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976) and Lawrence Goodwyn, The Populist Moment: A Short History of the Agrarian Revolt in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978). For an important challenge to Goodwyn's thesis see Stanley Parsons, et al., "The Role of Cooperatives in the Development of the Movement Culture of Populism," Journal of American History, 69 (1983), 866. Among those who weigh the merits of the arguments of each position are Oscar Handlin, "Reconsidering the Populists," Agricultural History, 39 (1965), 68; Theodore Saloutos, "Professors and Populists," Agricultural History, 40 (1966), 235.

2. Hofstadter, Age of Reform, 61, 62, 64, 65, 70, 75, 78 ff., 82, 85, 86.

3. Paul W. Glad, McKinley, Bryan, and the People (Philadelphia and New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1964), 93.

4. Ibid., 93-94.

5. Louis Galambos, "The Agrarian Image of a Large Corporation, 1879-1920: A Study in Social Accomodation," Journal of Economic History, 28 (1968), 353-356.

6. American Newspaper Annual and Directory (Philadelphia: N.W. Ayer and Sons). Consult the volumes for 1911, 1945, 1956.

7. The Daily Huronite, 1 September 1894, 2, and all succeeding issues to November 1894. (Hereafter cited as the Huronite.)

8. The Huronite, 8 September 1894, 2; 11 October 1894, 2; 12 October 1894, 2. In succeeding citations from the Huronite, the page reference will be omitted since all editorials are found on page two.

9. Ibid., 6 September 1894.

10. Ibid., 23 October 1894; 1 September 1894; 3 September 1894; 12 September 1894; 18 September 1894; 26 September 1894; 29 September 1894.

11. Ibid., 8 November 1894.

12. Ibid., 24 September 1895.

13. Ibid., 18 March 1896.

14. Consult almost any issue of the Huronite from 1894 to the spring of 1896.

15. The Huronite, 13 March 1896; 24 March 1896; 3 June 1896.

16. Ibid., 16 May 1896; 25 May 1896; 3 June 1896.

17. Ibid., 25 June 1896.

18. Ibid., 4 August 1896.

19. Ibid., 27 June 1896.

20. Ibid., 22 July 1896.

21. Ibid., 27 October 1896.

22. Ibid., 4 November 1896.

23. Ibid., 27 August 1897; 5 November 1897; 16 August 1898; 7 September 1898.

24. Ibid., 30 October 1894.

25. Ibid., 28 February 1895.

26. Ibid., 3 September 1894.

27. Ibid., 28 February 1895.

28. Ibid., 20 April 1895.

29. Ibid., 28 February 1895.

30. Ibid., 19 September 1894.

31. Ibid., 24 September 1895.

32. Ibid., 26 March 1896.

33. Ibid., 22 June 1896.

34. Ibid., 12 July 1897.

35. Ibid., 11 August 1897.

36. Ibid., 10 November 1897.

37. Ibid., 6 April 1895.

38. Ibid., 8 April 1896.

39. Ibid., 10 May 1895.

40. Ibid., 9 December 1895.

41. Ibid., 1 August 1896.

42. Ibid., 9 January 1899.

43. Ibid., 15 February 1896.

44. Ibid., 1 August 1896.

45. Ibid., 15 August 1896.

46. Ibid., 24 December 1897.

47. The Huronite, 28 February 1896.

48. Ibid., 23 March 1896.

49. Ibid., 15 May 1895.

50. Ibid., 14 May 1895.

51. Ibid., 1 February 1895. See also, 27 September 1894; 6 July 1896; 29 March 1897.

52. Ibid., 14 July 1898. See also 10 August 1897; 7 August 1897; 16 December 1896; 10 September 1898.

53. Kenneth E. Hendrickson, Jr., "The Populist Movement in South Dakota 1890-1900" (M.A. thesis, State University of South Dakota, 1959), 40.

54. The Huronite, 23 January 1897. Although the Huronite support for railroad regulation seemed genuine, it is interesting to note that the paper carried extensive advertising for the Great Northern Railway.

55. The Huronite, 5 June 1897. See also, 19 July 1897. One should remember that the Huronite actively promoted the cultivation of sugar beets in South Dakota. cf., The Huronite, 3 October 1894.

56. Ibid., 25 November 1896.

57. Ibid., 13 September 1897. See also, 6 August 1896; 25 August 1896; 31 August 1897.

58. Ibid., 24 Dember 1897.

59. Ibid., 24 December 1896.

60. Ibid., 10 December 1898.

61. Ibid., 13 November 1894.

62. Ibid.

63. Ibid., 30 April 1895.

64. Ibid., 1 May 1895.

65. Ibid., 9 May 1895.

66. Ibid, 11 May 1895.

67. Ibid., 1 May 1895.

68. Ibid., 8 April 1895

69. Ibid., 6 June 1895.

70. Ibid., 18 April 1895.

71. Ibid., 27 April 1895.

72. Ibid., 3 June 1896; 17 June 1896.

73. Ibid., 17 June 1896.

74. The Huronite, 19 July 1896.

75. Ibid., 21 July 1896.

76. Ibid., 22 July 1896.

77. Ibid., 27 July 1896. See also, 28 July 1896; 5 August 1896; 7 August 1896; 8 August 1896; 26 August 1896; 10 September 1896; 17 September 1896; 26 October 1896; 11 June 1897; 29 July 1897; 5 August 1897; 27 August 1897; 28 December 1897; 27 May 1898.

78. Ibid., 8 September 1896.

79. Ibid., 2 November 1896.

80. Ibid., 21 September 1897.

81. Ibid., 13 March 1896. See also, 24 March 1896.

82. Among those who agree or disagree with Hofstadter's position on this issue, see footnote 1.

83. George McKenna, ed., American Populism (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1974), xii, xiii. See also george B. Tindall, "Populism: A Semantic Identity Crisis," Virginia Quarterly Review, 48 (1972), 501; Simon Lazarus, The Genteel Populists (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974).