

Southern Politics from Reconstruction to Restriction: An Overview

Twentieth-century Southern politics did not spring full-grown from the heads of those who negotiated the Compromise of 1877. What followed after Reconstruction was a period of transition, uncertainty, fluctuation that ended only with the restriction of the suffrage and the consequent stifling of anti-Democratic political parties. During the period from 1877 through the last decade of the century, the possibility remained that the Northern Republicans, because of a residue of humanitarianism left over from the antislavery and Reconstruction struggles, or merely for party advantage, would pass new national election bills, or even, white Southerners feared, pass civil rights acts. Moreover, since not all ambitious white politicians had yet been taught the absolute necessity of confining quarrels within the Democratic party, serious candidates continued to campaign under Republican, Independent, and Populist party labels. Then, too, blacks who had learned the techniques of politics during Reconstruction did not immediately turn to other, less dangerous pursuits. Many of the leaders continued to hold office, to trade the still substantial Negro vote for favors for the race or for themselves, and even continued to influence legislation.

This chapter will identify the dynamic elements in the structure of Southern politics during this period and outline the principal political events. Its purposes are to revise some standard views about the era; to show how the logic of the political situation first encouraged those damaged by the status quo to join the opposition to the Democrats, and then led the Democrats, in response, to restrict the suffrage; and to set the context for later chapters on the methods of disfranchisement and the identity and motives of the restrictionists.

THE POST-RECONSTRUCTION SOUTHERN POLITICAL SCENE

The gross election statistics may help to dispel the myth of Southern solidity and clarify impressionistic notions of the transformation in the political structure. Table 1.1 presents the percentages of total adult males voting for each party as well as the overall turnout in presidential races from 1872 to 1908 in the South, and it compares these figures to percentages for the rest of the states. Approximately equal proportions

Table 1.1. Turnout and Proportion of Adult Males Voting for Each Party in the South and Non-South in Presidential Elections, 1872-1908.

<i>Election</i>	<i>Democrat</i>	<i>Republican</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Turnout</i>
SOUTH				
1872	23.35	26.87	0	50.24
1876	38.73	26.70	0	64.94
1880	36.88	23.76	2.90	63.55
1884	37.20	25.70	0.34	62.84
1888	37.94	23.08	1.47	62.49
1892	33.87	14.58	9.71	58.16
1896	33.33	19.83	3.00	56.16
1900	26.54	15.35	1.22	43.10
1904	18.95	8.31	1.35	28.62
1908	19.44	9.58	1.15	30.18
NON-SOUTH				
1872	21.83	28.36	0.18	50.37
1876	31.88	32.95	0.84	65.67
1880	33.70	37.80	2.64	74.14
1884	33.11	35.77	2.39	71.24
1888	33.42	36.62	2.66	72.69
1892	30.56	32.94	6.83	70.35
1896	32.65	40.82	1.95	75.42
1900	31.00	39.04	2.00	72.05
1904	22.35	38.73	3.97	65.05
1908	26.21	34.89	3.58	64.68

SOURCE: All calculations are my own, based on interpolations from census data and election returns from W. Dean Burnham, *Presidential Ballots 1836-1892* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1955), and Edgar E. Robinson, *The Presidential Vote, 1896-1932* (Stanford, Ca.: Stanford Univ. Press, 1934).

NOTE: Because the 1870 census was notoriously inadequate, the percentages for the 1872 and 1876 elections have been computed on the basis of the 1880 population figures. The estimates of turnout are consequently low for these elections.

of citizens in each section voted in the elections during the seventies. In the next four races, Northern turnout topped Southern by only 10 to 12 percent, despite the enactment of various disfranchising laws (especially between 1888 and 1892), extensive fraud and violence, and weaker party competition in the South. In 1896, the heated contest inflated Yankee participation rates, while the collapse of Populism produced a lull below the Potomac. That Southern lull became permanent with the passage of harshly restrictive laws in several more states around the turn of the century. Though participation fell off in the North, too, the percentage of Northern turnout more than doubled that in the South in 1904, and similar gaps separated the sections through midcentury.¹

The table also shows the decline of opposition to the Democrats in the South. During the eighties, one of every four potential voters managed to have his ticket recorded for the Republicans. (Fewer than four in ten were Democrats.) The vitality of the Dixie GOP during this decade has been underrated. During the nineties, the passage of strong measures limiting the suffrage in six of the eleven states, in addition to the confusion of party allegiances as the Populists rose and fell, cut the percentage casting ballots for anti-Democratic candidates by a third. That percentage declined by another third from 1900 to 1904 as more states restricted voting, and as opposition electors who remained eligible drifted into apathy when disfranchisement reduced their parties' chances of winning.

The statistics for the three decades demonstrate the length of time required for the shift from the Reconstruction system of stiff party competition and high voter interest to the twentieth-century system of the solid, apathetic South. They also establish *prima facie* a case for the efficacy of the restrictive election statutes. But to understand how events unfolded and why the structure developed as it did, we must view the changing political condition of the South in more detail.

If the term "solid South" had gained currency by 1880, it signified

1. I used presidential figures in this discussion because governor's contests occurred in different years from state to state, and because the attraction of different candidates varied so much. The statistics from state-level races essentially confirm the findings presented in the text. In fact, they generally make the metamorphosis of the Southern political system even clearer. The GOP and the Populists were stronger in the eighties and nineties in many cases in the struggles for the statehouses than for the White House. Moreover, turnout often dropped off more precipitously in the series of gubernatorial races than in those for the presidency.

only that the Democrats carried each ex-Confederate state in that year's presidential election, not that opposition had been extinguished among voters of either race. Although violence and intimidation were the ultimate means of keeping Negro and white dissenters out of power, their effectiveness has been overrated. Nor did the Negro's economic dependence totally undermine his political independence, as some historians have stated. Staughton Lynd, for example, has written that since it lacked "an economic substratum, manhood suffrage [for blacks] was inevitably artificial," and that although Negroes continued to vote in large numbers after 1877, "rarely did they vote independently." Yet, as the Southern Redeemers often found to their chagrin, it was not as easy to control black votes as they had hoped.²

Table 1.2 contains estimates of voting by race in the 1880 presidential election. It indicates that a majority of the Negro adult males voted in that contest in every Southern state except two—Mississippi, where violence was extraordinarily thorough, and Georgia, which had adopted a cumulative poll tax. Not only did they vote. A majority of the black votes in ten states were actually counted for the Republican party, to which the Negroes overwhelmingly adhered. Moreover, a majority of the whites appear to have voted in every state except Louisiana, and there electoral chicanery in the black belt river parishes undoubtedly swelled my estimate of black participation and correspondingly diminished the estimate for whites.³

2. Staughton Lynd, "Introduction," in *Reconstruction*, p. 8. John R. Lynch, the last black congressman from Mississippi, told his House colleagues in 1882 that Negroes "have bravely refused to surrender their honest convictions, even upon the altar of their personal necessities. They have said to those upon whom they were dependent, you may deprive me for the time being of the opportunity of making an honest living. You may take the bread out of the mouths of my hungry and dependent families. You may close the schoolhouse door in the face of my children. Yes, more, you may take that which no man can give—my life. But my manhood, my principles, you cannot have." Quoted in U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on House Administration, Subcommittee on Elections, *Contested Elections in the First, Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth Districts of the State of Mississippi*, 89th Cong., 1st Sess. (Washington, D. C.: G.P.O. 1965), p. 49. On the naïve hopes of the Redeemers, see Allen W. Trelease, *White Terror*, pp. xl—xli. On Negro activism, see, e.g., William Warren Rogers and Robert David Ward, "Jack Turnerism: A Political Phenomenon of the Deep South," *Journal of Negro History* 57 (1972): 313–332.

3. Some historians have claimed that blacks generally voted Democratic in the South during this period. See, e.g., Ezell, *The South since 1865*, p. 177; Paul M. Gaston, *The New South Creed*, pp. 132–133. Contemporaries disagreed. "We all know," said Alabama Congressman William C. Oates, "that nine-tenths of the Negroes are Republicans, and that when they vote at all it will be, with few exceptions the Republican ticket." Quoted in *Congressional Record*, 51st Cong., 1st Sess., p. 6724. For similar statements see *Pine Bluff* (Ark.) *Weekly Com-*

Table 1.2. The Unsolid South: Estimates of Voting, by Race, in the 1880 Presidential Election.

State	% Democratic	% Republican	% Other	% Not Voting
WHITES				
Alabama	47	9	0	41
Arkansas	40	14	0	46
Florida	70	10	0	20
Georgia	49	7	0	44
Louisiana	31	5	0	64
Mississippi	55	12	0	33
North Carolina	58	21	0	21
South Carolina	86	11	0	4
Tennessee	41	24	2	33
Texas	48	4	7	41
Virginia	47	3	14	35
NEGROES				
Alabama	25	34	0	41
Arkansas	21	49	0	30
Florida	19	69	0	12
Georgia	11	28	0	61
Louisiana	30	27	0	44
Mississippi	16	18	0	66
North Carolina	17	67	0	17
South Carolina	31	37	0	30
Tennessee	37	54	0	8
Texas	19	49	4	28
Virginia	2	58	6	35

mercial, Nov. 9, 1890; *Jacksonville Florida Times-Union*, Sept. 20, Oct. 12, 1890; William Pledger, quoted in Olive Hall Shadgett, *The Republican Party in Georgia, from Reconstruction through 1900*, p. 118; John R. Lynch, quoted in *Knoxville (Tenn.) Journal*, Feb. 20, 1890; Richard Nelson, quoted in Lawrence Delbert Rice, *The Negro in Texas, 1874-1900*, p. 35; and numerous statements by Rep. James Phelan (D., Tenn.) and others in *L. B. Eaton, Contestant, vs. James Phelan, Contestee: Contested Election Case from the Tenth Congressional District of Tennessee*, 51st Cong. (Washington, D. C.: R. O. Polkinhorn, n.d.), pp. 5, 58-92. Because voting behavior in East Tennessee varied so much from the other two sections, estimates of black and white voting in Tennessee throughout this book were computed by section (East Tennessee and the rest), then weighted and summed to get a statewide estimate. Many of the North Carolina and Virginia estimates below were computed by dividing each state into two groups of counties—those above and those below 30 percent Negro. In each case where separate estimates were made for various groups of counties, inspection of relevant regression diagrams had shown that single straight lines did not describe the data well. Inspections of the diagrams for the grouped data as well as comparisons of the percentages of variance explained by each method led to using the grouped data estimates. For a fuller discussion of the methodological points, see my "Ecological Regression and the Analysis of Past Politics," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 4 (1973): 237-262.

The key Democratic appeal was simple racism, and accordingly, the bulwark of Democratic strength lay in the counties composed of a majority or a near-majority of Negroes. In the 1884 North Carolina gubernatorial election, for example, the Democrats received 53.7 percent of the estimated white votes in counties below 30 percent Negro, but 92.4 percent in the counties above 30 percent black.

The black belt had been the center of slavery and the slaveholding aristocracy. It was in these most fertile areas of the South that the contrast between white dominance and black submission, white wealth and black poverty, white education and enforced black ignorance had been most striking before the War. The vestiges of the antebellum ideology and social structure—the unqualified belief in the innate inferiority or even inhumanness of the Negro, the contradictory impulses to violence and paternalism, the acceptance of the hegemony of a tiny white elite—retained their greatest strength after the War among whites in these counties. It was here, too, that Reconstruction came closest to social revolution, as the black masses with a few white allies took over many of the local offices. After Reconstruction, political arrangements in the black belt took several forms. Whites in some counties adopted the “first Mississippi plan,” driving most blacks from politics by violence and intimidation. In others, whites appointed as local election officials by the state governments made elections a farce by manipulating the returns or by paying blacks not to vote for opposition parties. Elsewhere, whites and blacks negotiated “fusion” agreements dividing the offices along racial lines, or they continued the Reconstruction struggle, with each side winning some political battles and losing others.⁴ These settlements were neither mutually exclusive nor permanent. Intimidation and ballot box chicanery might go hand in hand. Violence might suddenly put an end to years of fairly peaceful political competition. And the possibility always existed that a party which hoped to attract Negroes would win control of the state or federal governments and promote fair and peaceful elections.

The affluent whites who dominated the black counties had the most to lose if a party based on blacks, upland whites, or an alliance of the

4. Wharton, *The Negro in Mississippi*, pp. 157–215; George B. Tindall, *South Carolina Negroes, 1877–1900*, pp. 62–64. For details on how two fusion arrangements began and how they worked, see *Pine Bluff (Ark.) Weekly Commercial*, April 6, Aug. 10, 1890; *Congressional Record*, 50th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 3564–3565.

two groups won control of a state. A government dependent on black votes would have to appoint some Negroes to office in the predominantly black areas and make it possible for them to elect a few of their fellows to other offices. The black belt whites would then have to pay taxes to Negro collectors, argue cases before Negro juries and judges, apply to a Negro legislator for favors. All these actions would be inescapable symbolic reminders of the dominance of a race that all Southern whites believed inferior. In addition, many of the Negro officials would no doubt *be* inferior to their white counterparts, for most whites seem to have thought that money spent on Negro education only made them more “uppity.” (As the slogan went, “To educate a ‘nigger’ is to spoil a good field hand.”) Caucasians who lived in counties with few Negroes, whatever the degree of their racial prejudice, did not have to fear having black officials rule them. But as long as Negroes retained the potential to bargain for office, the black belt whites had to fear Negro domination.

The methods that the Democrats had employed to end Reconstruction had not caused either turnout or opposition to cease by 1880. It was true that the Republican label had lost popularity in the South, especially the Deep South. Most white Republicans had been converted or coerced into the Democratic party, leaving blacks and ex-Unionist, hill-country whites in control of the GOP. Continued coercion, widespread Democratic fraud at the polls, poll taxes in Georgia and Virginia (before 1882), the registration and the eight-box law (after 1881) in South Carolina, and Rutherford Hayes’s naïve attempt to convert Southern aristocrats further stultified attempts to reorganize Southern Republicanism.⁵

Nonetheless, efforts to create a winning opposition party did not cease. As upper-class Redeemers cut back government expenditures, absconded with a good deal of the budgeted public money, prevented mountain whites from electing their own local officials, and instituted policies strikingly favorable to big Northern-owned businesses, many whites began to doubt the virtues of Redemption. According to most historians of the period, moreover, small farmers continually suffered from deflation, the lien system and its tendency to promote overproduc-

5. See below, chapters 2 and 3, for an explanation of how the poll tax, registration, eight-box, secret ballot, and other restrictive devices worked.

tion and inhibit crop diversification, and a regressive, malapportioned, and often dishonestly administered state and local tax system.⁶

Most important, the logic of the political system itself encouraged party opposition to Democratic control. Kill, intimidate, defraud dissenters though they might, the Democrats had not yet succeeded in equating political opposition with treason. The presence of a large potential Negro vote, which was for the most part alienated from the established order, tempted any enemy of those in power to bolt the Democrats. As a Negro newspaper in Little Rock noted in 1883, "The greatest danger that threatens [D]emocratic supremacy in the south is that the 'out faction' always gravitates toward the Negro and secures his aid to route [*sic*] the 'ins'." Finally, besides being rewarded with local office, bolters might expect patronage and other assistance from the national Republican organization.⁷ Until the sanctions against defection became too strong, until the blacks were disfranchised, until the GOP no longer needed Southern votes, political conditions fed the Independent and Populist movements.

Though the national Republican commitment to protect the former white Unionist and the former slave wavered, it did help stimulate revolt against the Dixie Democrats. A large proportion of the GOP leaders in the late nineteenth century had shared in the efforts to free the slaves, put down the Rebellion, and reconstruct the South on the basis of legal equality between masters and freedmen.⁸ That Republican

6. Alex M. Arnett, *The Populist Movement in Georgia*, pp. 33–36; Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, pp. 1–22, 51–74, 85–86, 175–188; Steelman, "The Progressive Era in North Carolina," p. 66; Francis Clay Elkins, "The Agricultural Wheel in Arkansas, 1882–1890" (Ph.D. diss., Syracuse Univ., 1943), p. 96. On the scandalous misreporting of real and personal property values under one leading Redeemer regime, see *Columbia (S.C.) Daily Register*, May 5, 6, 14, June 3, 1881.

7. *Little Rock Weekly Mansion*, July 21, 1883, quoted in Donald Norton Brown, "Southern Attitudes toward Negro Voting in the Bourbon Period, 1877–1890" (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Oklahoma, 1960), p. 73. On factionalism and defection, see also Claude H. Nolen, *The Negro's Image in the South*, p. 73; Charles Chilton Pearson, *The Readjuster Movement in Virginia*, pp. 75–76. On patronage, see Willie D. Halsell, "James R. Chalmers and 'Mahoneism' in Mississippi," *Journal of Southern History* 10 (1944): 37–58; Vincent P. DeSantis, *Republicans Face the Southern Question*, pp. 153–154.

8. The standard works on Northern Republican attitudes toward the South in this period are DeSantis, *Republicans Face the Southern Question* and Stanley P. Hirshson, *Farewell to the Bloody Shirt*. Both are harsher toward the Republicans' racial policies and more lenient toward the Democrats than either party deserves. For treatment of the Republicans, see Frederick H. Gillett, *George Frisbie Hoar*, pp. 1–34; Louis A. Coolidge, *An Old-Fashioned*

leaders took part in the antislavery and Reconstruction movements reflected for most a certain amount of egalitarianism and a consequent denial of the justification for racial oppression. Their actions also solidified these commitments—it was awkward for one who had defended Reconstruction before the electorate in the sixties and seventies to condemn similar policies later. Other Republicans found the conditions of Southern elections so outrageous that they joined in the effort to guarantee “a free ballot and a fair count.” The typical Republican atrocity stories about the South were not mere campaign gimmicks; many GOP politicians were genuinely horrified by the facts of Southern political life. To be sure, no important national figure embodied racial radicalism of the Stevens or Sumner stripe, but then few ever had. Yet the postwar Republican party did usually combine an appeal to those business interests that desired government protection and subsidies with a recognition of the need for active federal intervention to guard at least some of the rights of the Southern black man.⁹ As one of the most stalwart defenders of Republican humanitarianism, William E. Chandler, wrote to another conservator of that tradition, Congressman Thomas B. Reed:

Senator, Orville H. Platt (New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1910), pp. 4–54; Louis J. Lang, comp. and ed., *The Autobiography of Thomas Collier Platt*, p. 7; Richard E. Welch, *George Frisbie Hoar and the Half-Breed Republicans*, pp. 5–27.

9. Sen. William M. Stewart's tergiversations during the Force Bill debates in 1890 exemplify how difficult it was for a Reconstructionist to abandon his stand later. See *Congressional Record*, 51st Cong., 2nd Sess., pp. 678–683, 1707–1713. The moderate view of Reconstruction held by late nineteenth century Republicans is outlined in William E. Chandler, “Our Southern Masters,” *The Forum* 5 (1888): 508–520; James G. Blaine, “Ought the Negro Be Disfranchised? Ought He to Have Been Enfranchised?,” *North American Review* 128 (1879): 225–231; Lang, *Platt*, p. 70. For the effect of exposure to Southern election practices on otherwise conservative Republicans, see Daniel J. Crofts, “The Blair Bill and the Elections Bill: The Congressional Aftermath to Reconstruction” (Ph.D. diss., Yale Univ., 1968), pp. 238–239; Dorothy Ganfield Fowler, *John Coit Spooner, Defender of Presidents*, pp. 133–138; *Congressional Record*, 50th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 7826, 8523, 9001. For the “appeal to business,” see Leon Burr Richardson, *William E. Chandler, Republican*, pp. 414–415; Richard E. Welch, Jr., “The Federal Elections Bill of 1890: Postscripts and Prelude,” *Journal of American History* 52 (1965): 516–518; Gillett, *George Frisbie Hoar*, p. 280; William E. Chandler, “National Control of Elections,” *The Forum* 9 (1890): 705–718. The GOP also paid some attention to civil rights for Northern Negroes. On the passage of public accommodations bills in 18 Northern states from 1884 to 1897, see Johnson, *Development of State Legislation Concerning the Free Negro*, pp. 30–35. Cf. the analysis of Republican policies presented here with C. Vann Woodward, “The Political Legacy of Reconstruction,” in *The Burden of Southern History*, pp. 89–108.

A Republican can believe in tariff reduction or even free trade and yet properly adhere to the party. But he cannot fail to advocate the Fifteenth Amendment . . . and yet be a Republican So it is the duty of all Republicans to push on in all endeavors . . . to enforce the Fifteenth Amendment Failing to do this, the party . . . dishonorably dies.¹⁰

Nowhere was the contradiction between Republican and Democratic attitudes on Reconstruction, universal manhood suffrage, and racism better demonstrated than in the debates on the Lodge Elections Bill in 1890. To Democrats, North and South, Reconstruction represented an unconstitutional interference with the rights of the states, an era of outrageous fraud and corruption, an attempt, in the nature of things bound to fail, to impose Negro domination on the superior white race. The Fifteenth Amendment had been at best “a very unwise and mischievous error,” and at worst an “indefensible political crime” which in any case plunged the South into violent racial conflicts. According to Representative Allen D. Candler (D., Georgia), the ballot had been “thrust” upon the Negro, “when he was utterly and totally unprepared for it. He regards it as a bauble, a plaything, an article of merchandise. He regards election day as a public holiday. He goes to the polls as he goes to the circus or to a public execution—as a frolic.” Ninety percent of the Negroes, charged Senator Pugh of Alabama, were still “wholly illiterate and incapable of counting or casting their votes with any will, understanding, or comprehension of the objects, value, benefits, duties or responsibilities of suffrage or citizenship.” It was fortunate, therefore, that “a large majority of them have the good sense to voluntarily abstain from all participation in conventions and political meetings.” Yet at the same time that they denied suppressing the Negro vote through force and fraud, Democrats warned that any attempt by the federal government to guarantee fair elections in the South would lead to “Negro supremacy” as well as “revolution and the destruction of our Constitution and system of

10. Chandler to Reed, quoted in DeSantis, *Republicans Face*, pp. 205–206. Similarly, see Chandler, *The National Election Laws, Their Repeal by the Democratic Party* (Concord, New Hampshire: n.p., 1894, reprint of Senate speech of Feb. 5, 1894); George F. Hoar, “The Fate of the Election Bill,” *The Forum* 11 (1891): 127–128. Marriott Brosius, in *Congressional Record*, 51st Cong., 1st sess., p. 6706; E. S. Williams in *ibid.*, p. 6720; Joseph Dolph, in *ibid.*, 51st Cong., 2nd sess., p. 520. Of course, not every Republican believed Negro suffrage so central to the party’s identity. But that commitment did remain in the mainstream of Republicanism until at least the mid-1890s.

government.” The Democrats appealed to Northern businessmen who had investments or customers in the South to assist them in preventing a return to Reconstruction.¹¹

Republican speechmakers countered their party adversaries at every point. Although he acknowledged the presence of some mercenary men in the Southern Reconstruction governments, Daniel Kerr of Iowa still lauded those regimes for laying the groundwork of more recent Southern prosperity through their policies, especially their establishment of public schools. Jonathan Rowell of Illinois added that Negroes had to be enfranchised in the sixties for their own “self-defense,” to prevent their relapse into a “subject class” and to enable them to develop into full-fledged, independent citizens. Besides, unlike the traitorous Democrats, the black man had fought for the Union “upon a hundred fields of battle . . . with a loyalty that never was excelled.” “Can we forget,” asked Marriott Brosius of Pennsylvania, that “in the darkest hour of the night of our trial . . . we made our covenant with him,

11. Quotations from speeches by Rep. William C. Oates (D., Alabama), in *Congressional Record*, 51st Cong, 1st sess., pp. 6863–6865, and *Boston Daily Globe*, Dec. 21, 1888; Senator James N. Pugh (D., Alabama) in *Congressional Record*, 51st Cong., 2nd sess., p. 76; and Rep. Candler in *ibid.*, p. 6703. In a less guarded moment, Oates admitted that “nine-tenths of the Negroes are Republicans, and in some localities, all. . . .” (quoted in *Memphis Daily Appeal*, Dec. 5, 1888). For the Democrats’ view of Reconstruction and examples of the extreme racism of both Northern and Southern Democrats, see *ibid.*, 51st Cong., 1st sess., pp. 6715–6720, 6761–6763, 6765–6768, 6776–6779, 6806–6810, 6863–6865, appendix pp. 411, 562–564, and *ibid.*, 51st Cong., 2nd sess., pp. 50–55, 1412, 1614–1616. For the “Negro supremacy” argument, see Amos J. Cummings (D., New York), in *ibid.*, 51st Cong. 1st sess., p. 6680; Silas Hare (D., Texas), in *ibid.*, p. 6812. For similar comments from other Northern and Southern Democrats, see *ibid.*, pp. 6505, 6601, 6603, 6672–6675. (In the statements quoted here and throughout the rest of this book, the word “Negro” has been capitalized, in accord with modern usage.) Three U.S. senators, six congressmen, and four other Southern Democrats collaborated to produce *Why the Solid South? Or, Reconstruction and Its Results* (Baltimore, Md.: R. H. Woodward & Co., 1890). Dedicated “To The Business Men of the North,” this propagandistic work portrayed the horrors of corrupt rule by carpetbaggers, scoundrels, and ignorant Negroes during Reconstruction in an attempt to stop passage of the Lodge bill. Several chapters of the book were entered into the *Congressional Record* during the 1890 debates. There is little evidence that their appeal succeeded. Every Democrat in both houses of Congress opposed the bill anyway. Only two Northern Republicans broke ranks in the House, and they seem to have done so for other reasons. Only one non-western Republican, Senator Don Cameron of Pennsylvania, deserted the party on the crucial vote, and he clearly traded this vote for Democratic assistance in hushing up an investigation into his silver speculations. Crofts, “Blair Bill,” pp. 233–234, 339, 340; Edward Arthur White, “The Republican Party in National Politics, 1888–1891” (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Wisconsin, 1941), pp. 392–492.

sealed with his blood and ours and witnessed by heaven, that when the war was over and the nation saved he should enter into the enjoyment of the blessings and glories of citizenship? How are we fulfilling our covenant?" The reactionary post-Reconstruction governments of the South had instituted "new forms of servitude" for the Negroes, and "the policy of repression of the black men led to oppression of all laboring men, black and white." Yet the sacrifice of "free government . . . to get pure pure government by the Whites" had given the South neither. Witness, several Republicans pointed out, the recent extensive defalcations of Southern state treasurers.¹²

The triumph of reactionary regimes, Republicans charged, had also fertilized the seeds of reactionary political theory. Branding the increasingly influential view that suffrage was a privilege rather than a right as a doctrine foreign to "our form of popular government," Nils P. Haugen of Wisconsin countered with the declaration that universal manhood suffrage was "the cornerstone of our liberties." "Why are we to ignore the rights of a man because God made him black?" asked Iowa Congressman David B. Henderson. "The members of the colored race," the midwesterner continued, "have the same instincts, the same great impulses as ourselves." So strong did the current of humanitarianism still run within the party of Lincoln that it moved even the stolid William McKinley to a peroration:

This question will not rest until justice is done, and the consciences of the American people will not be permitted to slumber until this great constitutional right, the equality of the suffrage, equality of opportunity, freedom of political action and political thought, shall not be the mere cold formalities of constitutional enactment as now, but a living birthright which the poor-

12. Kerr in *Congressional Record*, 51st Cong., 1st sess., p. 6724; Rowell in *ibid.*, p. 6556; Spooner in *ibid.*, 2nd sess., p. 729; Hiscock in *ibid.*, p. 857. Then see Edward P. Allen (R., Michigan) in *ibid.*, p. 6799; Brosius in *ibid.*, p. 6707; J. P. Dolliver (R., Iowa) in *ibid.*, p. 6861; Louis E. McComas (R., Maryland) in *ibid.*, pp. 6677-6678; Henry L. Morey (R., Ohio) in *ibid.*, pp. 6897-6899; H. C. Lodge (R., Massachusetts), in *ibid.*, p. 6543; E. S. Williams (R., Ohio) in *ibid.*, p. 6721. In addition Benjamin Harrison's Annual Messages to Congress contained perhaps the last strong presidential defences of Negro rights until Harry Truman's time. See James D. Richardson, *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897* (Washington, D. C.: G.P.O., 1900), 9: 56, 127-129, 331-332. Republican concern with Negro rights is also evidenced in the Senate debates on the Elections Bill. See *Congressional Record*, 51st Cong., 2nd sess., for example, Stewart (R., Nevada), *ibid.*, pp. 679-680; Spooner (R., Wisconsin), *ibid.*, p. 729; Hiscock (R., New York), *ibid.*, p. 857; Dolph (R., Oregon), *ibid.*, p. 520; Higgins (R., Delaware), *ibid.*, pp. 763-772.

est and the humblest, white or black, native-born or naturalized citizen, may confidently enjoy, and which the richest and most powerful dare not deny It is our supreme duty to enforce the Constitution and laws of the United States.¹³

Even the humor of the debates harked back to the Civil War and Reconstruction era and clearly distinguished the antislavery lineage of the Republicans from the proslavery ancestry of the Democrats. When a Virginia Democratic congressman argued that he had been a friend to Negroes since he drew sustenance from a black wetnurse, Nils P. Haugen rejoined:

His obligations to the colored race the gentleman desires us to understand he fulfilled when at an early period of his existence he kindly condescended to receive the nourishment so essential to an infant statesman and constitutional lawyer from his dear colored nurse. It is not the first time that the "dear old black mammy" has been called into requisition on that side of the chamber. God only knows how many Democratic statesmen the dear old lady is responsible for. [Laughter on the Republican side.] We simply ask you, gentlemen, that you extend that same consideration to her brothers, her sons, and her uncles that you professedly and confessedly have for the "old mammy," her sisters, her daughters, and her aunts.¹⁴

Such small witticisms sounded more like Thad Stevens than Teddy Roosevelt.

The tight political battle in the North bolstered the idealistic Republican impulse not to leave the South to the mercy of the Democrats. A letter from William E. Chandler to James G. Blaine best illuminates the GOP dilemmas and policy after Reconstruction:

The situation is bad in New York and Pennsylvania. It is important to carry the House, for the next presidential election depends on it. We cannot carry as many seats in the North as two years ago. We must increase our Southern representation by ten to twenty. That depends upon the Republican support of the Democratic revolt in the South and the overthrow of the Bourbons there Our straight Republican and Carpetbag and

13. Haugen in *ibid.*, 51st Cong., 1st sess., pp. 6592–6594; Henderson in *ibid.*, p. 6686; McKinley in *ibid.*, p. 6934; similarly, see Bishop W. Perkins (R., Kansas) in *ibid.*, pp. 6934–6935; Robert M. LaFollette (R., Wisconsin) in *ibid.*, appendix, pp. 467–469; and F. T. Greenhalge (R., Massachusetts) in *ibid.*, pp. 6694–6695. That McKinley's florid speech seems bedewed with unconscious irony when exposed in the light of his later actions as president only proves how much the Republican party changed during the 1890s.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 6592.

Negro governments cannot be revived. Without the aid of independent Democrats we cannot carry enough seats there to save the next presidential fight.¹⁵

Northern Republicans fluctuated between two Southern strategies: the first envisaged men interested in rapid, federally encouraged expansion of Southern industry flocking to the banner of the party of the protective tariff and internal improvements subsidies; the second, never so precisely defined, counted on adding lower-class whites to the party's Negro base by stressing such positive themes as fair elections and the improvement of public services, and such Democratic foibles as corruption and boss rule. In 1876, Hayes chose the first, conservative path, and Presidents McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, and Taft later resurrected essentially the same alliance with the "best people."¹⁶ From 1880 to 1896, however, the GOP usually backed leaders who appealed to the enemies of the Southern upper class.

The bankruptcy of the Compromise of 1877 had been made clear to Republicans by their 1878 congressional defeats in the South and by the 1879 Senate investigation of Southern elections. Though Garfield never enunciated a definite Southern policy, his assassination brought to power the most vociferous critic of Hayes's genteel strategy. William E. Chandler functioned as Arthur's unofficial Minister for Southern Affairs as well as his naval chief. As the two statements quoted previously make clear, the New Hampshire Republican exemplified the combination of realism and idealism that motivated the Republican Southern policy between the administrations of Hayes and McKinley. His practical experience included managing Grant's presidential campaigns in 1868 and 1872, as well as Hayes's successful efforts to carry Florida, South Carolina, and Louisiana after the 1876 election. At the same time, Chandler was sincerely dedicated to protecting the civil rights of the freedman, and he was forever denouncing Southern

15. William A. Robinson, *Thomas B. Reed, Parliamentarian* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1930), p. 236; Woodward, *Burden of Southern History*, pp. 96-98; DeSantis, *Republicans Face the Southern Question*, pp. 11-12. Chandler to Blaine, Oct. 2, 1882, quoted in Richardson, *Chandler*, p. 346.

16. DeSantis, *Republicans Face the Southern Question*, pp. 73-74, 132; Theodore Roosevelt, "The Progressive Party and the Colored Man," *The Outlook* 101 (1912): 909-912; William Howard Taft, *The South and the National Government* (reprint of speech of Dec. 7, 1908, n.p., n.d.); Hugh C. Bailey, *Liberalism in the New South, Southern Social Reformers and the Progressive Movement*, pp. 189-199.

white oppression of Negroes. His wide correspondence with Southern Republicans and his cordial relationship with Arthur insured closer attention to Southern affairs from 1882 to 1884 than in any administration from Grant's to Wilson's.¹⁷

Historians have often noted that the Independent movements stood for diverse economic programs. In Tennessee, the administration-endorsed Republicans opposed reducing the state's obligations to its bondholders, while in Virginia they favored the Readjusters. In Alabama, Texas, South Carolina, Louisiana, and Mississippi, the Greenback party received national and local Republican support; in North Carolina, the antiprohibitionists; in Florida, those opposed to the Disston land giveaway; in Arkansas, the Agricultural Wheel, an organization which later fused with the Farmers' Alliance. In Georgia and in many districts throughout the rest of the states the GOP simply allied with anyone who ran as an "Independent" against the Democrats.¹⁸

But the administration's policy was not so opportunistic or illogical as it is sometimes represented.¹⁹ Every significant Independent candidate supported a "free vote and a fair count," a slogan that they applied to black as well as white ballots. The anti-Redeemers also pledged full support for public education, a necessity if the Southern poor, including the blacks, were to rise.²⁰ Moreover, nearly every Independent appealed openly for Negro votes, thereby legitimizing the race's participation in politics, sanctioning biracial political

17. *United States Senate Report No. 855*, 45th Cong., 1st sess.; Hirshson, *Farewell*, pp. 49-53, 93-98; Welch, *Hoar*, pp. 81-82; Vincent P. DeSantis, "President Garfield and the Solid South," *North Carolina Historical Review* 36 (1959): 442-465; DeSantis, *Republicans Face*, pp. 167-168; Richardson, *Chandler*.

18. Woodward, *Origins*, pp. 100-103; William Ivy Hair, *Bourbonism and Agrarian Protest*, pp. 70-72; Steelman, "Progressive Era in North Carolina," pp. 11-12; Edward C. Williamson, "Independentism; A Challenge to the Florida Democracy of 1884," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 27 (1948): 131-156; Shadgett, *Republican Party in Georgia*, pp. 62-73.

19. Woodward, *Origins*, pp. 105-106.

20. Chandler to Blaine, quoted in Richardson, *Chandler*, p. 346; DeSantis, *Republicans Face*, pp. 162-163; Clifton Paisley, "The Political Wheelers and Arkansas' Election of 1888," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 25 (1966): 5; David Y. Thomas, *Arkansas and Its People, A History, 1541-1930*, pp. 223-225; Allen J. Goings, *Bourbon Democracy In Alabama, 1874-1890*, pp. 52, 57-59; John B. Clark, *Populism in Alabama*, pp. 25-28; Edward C. Williamson, "Independentism," pp. 131-156; Ernest William Winkler, *Platforms of Political Parties in Texas*, pp. 181, 200, 257, 261, 275, 282; Lawrence Delbert Rice, *The Negro in Texas, 1874-1900*, pp. 53-67; Pearson, *Readjuster Movement*, pp. 142-147.

alliances, and accustoming many white leaders to politicking in the black community.²¹ Like the Populists who followed them, the Independents and Republicans derided Democratic charges that their apostasy from the “white man’s party” would lead to “Negro domination.” As the Virginia Readjuster William Mahone put it, the black issue “is employed as a mere scare-crow to excite prejudice and fear, in the hope of diverting the white working-man from casting his ballot for the candidate he honestly prefers.” Thus, the party policy promised additional congressional and electoral votes for the national GOP, political equality and education for the blacks, office for any white Southern Democrat disgruntled by a factional dispute, and a two-party system for the South as a whole.²²

Only the local politicians’ hopes were fully realized. The Democrats lost power temporarily in two states, Tennessee and Virginia, but maintained it everywhere else. In some places they falsified returns, in others they bought votes, elsewhere they prevailed by murder and intimidation. In Virginia the 1883 Readjuster defeat was widely attributed to the fact that Democrats murdered several Negroes three days before the election and then plastered the state with handbills rumoring a Readjuster-inspired black uprising. Mississippi newspapers testified that mules had developed a taste for ballot boxes in Independent precincts, while in Louisiana composing fictional election returns approached the status of a popular art form. Everywhere the ruling oligarchy stressed the threat of Negro domination and of a return to Reconstruction and the consequent necessity of solid support for the “white man’s party.”²³

21. Wharton, *The Negro in Mississippi*, pp. 201–205; James Harris Fain, “The Political Disfranchisement of the Negro in Arkansas” (M.A. thesis, University of Arkansas, 1961), p. 28; John William Graves, “Negro Disfranchisement in Arkansas,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 26 (1967): 206–208; Francis Roberts, “William Manning Lowe and the Greenback Party in Alabama,” *Alabama Review* 5 (1952): 100–121; *Charleston News and Courier*, Jan. 4, 23, 1882; Pearson, *Readjuster Movement*, pp. 127–128, 131.

22. Mahone is quoted in Nelson M. Blake, *William Mahone of Virginia*, p. 246. Writing in New York in 1884, the Negro editor T. Thomas Fortune counseled his Southern brothers to support the Independents in state and local contests. See his *Black and White*, pp. 126–127. On the presence of disgruntled Democrats in the ranks of Independent movements, see *Little Rock Daily Democrat*, June 11, 1886, quoted in Elkins, “Agricultural Wheel in Arkansas,” pp. 140–141; Willie D. Halsell, “Democratic Dissensions in Mississippi, 1878–1882,” *Journal of Mississippi History* 2 (1940): 135.

23. For an excellent recent account of the Virginia episode, see Walter T. Calhoun, “The Danville Riot and Its Repercussions on the Virginia Election of 1883,” in *Studies in the*

The assaults on the Democratic party came closer to success than some historians realize. As table 1.3 shows, the fusion efforts in governor's races failed very badly only in South Carolina, where the registration and eight-box law cut illiterates out of the electorate. Elsewhere, the Independents and Republicans garnered from a little less than a third to more than half of the votes. In seven of the eleven states, at least 40 percent of the voters opposed the ruling party, and in six of these states more than 60 percent of the potential voters participated. Given absolute Democratic control of the ballot boxes and their avowed willingness to fabricate returns in many black belt areas (particularly in Alabama and the river parishes in Louisiana), the opposition did remarkably well.²⁴

Table 1.3. The High Points of Independent or Republican Political Strength in Gubernatorial Elections during the 1880s.

State	Year	Opposition Party Label	% of Those Voting Supporting Independents or Republicans	% Turnout
Alabama	1882	Independent	31.6	49.2
Arkansas	1888	Fusion	45.9	75.5
Florida	1884	Independent	46.5	79.4
Georgia	1880	Independent	35.1	56.7
Louisiana	1884	Republican	32.9	57.5
Mississippi	1881	Independent	40.2	50.8
North Carolina	1880	Republican	48.7	80.6
South Carolina	1882	Greenback	21.0	56.8
Tennessee	1884	Republican	48.7	71.7
Texas	1882	Greenback	40.5	61.6
Virginia	1881	Readjuster	52.8	62.3

History of the South, 1875-1922 (Greenville, North Carolina: East Carolina College Press, 1966), pp. 25-51. On other states, see Wharton, *Negro in Mississippi*, p. 205; Hair, *Bourbonism*, pp. 112-117; Going, *Bourbon Democracy in Alabama*, p. 31; Pearson, *Readjuster Movement*, pp. 75-76. For an extensive and persuasive picture of election methods in Louisiana, see *Congressional Record*, 50th Cong., 1st sess., pp. 3564-3565, 7819-7829, 7865-7881.

24. The *Selma* (Alabama) *Times*, Dec. 6, 1895, commented: "The *Times* is one of those papers that does not believe it is any harm to rob or appropriate the vote of an illiterate Negro. . . . The first law of nature, self preservation, gives us the right to do anything to keep our race and civilization from being wiped off the face of the earth." Quoted in Malcolm Cook McMillan, *Constitutional Development in Alabama, 1798-1901*, p. 225. The common Louisiana aphorism that "a dead darkey always makes a good Democrat" reflects the conduct of elections in that state. Quoted in Hair, *Bourbonism*, p. 115.

Table 1.4. Estimated Voting by Party and Race in Key Gubernatorial Contests, 1880s.

<i>State</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>% of Adult White Males</i>			<i>% of Adult Negro Males</i>		
		<i>Republican</i>			<i>Republican</i>		
		<i>Democ- ratic</i>	<i>or Indepen- dent</i>	<i>No Vote</i>	<i>Democ- ratic</i>	<i>or Indepen- dent</i>	<i>No Vote</i>
Alabama	1882	43	18	39	36	16	48
Arkansas ^a	1888	49	29	22	23	46	30
Florida	1884	55	18	26	28	61	13
Georgia	1880	36	28	36	45	12	44
Louisiana	1884	56	24	20	29	22	48
Mississippi	1881	57	16	26	13	25	61
North Carolina	1880	56	20	24	17	69	14
South Carolina	1882	47	9	44	21	9	70
Tennessee	1884	38	31	28	25	42	33
Texas	1882	44	18	38	10	62	28
Virginia	1881	44	26	30	11	49	43

^aTwo deviant counties were deleted in making Arkansas estimate, because of evident tampering with returns.

Table 1.4 exhibits estimates of voting patterns separated by race in the same elections. Blacks gave the bulk of their votes to the opposition in at least seven of the states. In three of the others, the white leadership in counties with high proportions of Negroes probably tampered with the returns. A split in the Georgia Democratic convention resulted in a confused situation in which both candidates claimed to be Independents as well as Democrats. The racism of the more genuine Independent, Thomas M. Norwood, was widely known, and his opponent, with the help of the ex-Republican Joe Brown, courted the Negro vote openly and fervently.²⁵ Though the ruling party attracted large proportions of whites, from a sixth to a third of the white adult males bolted the "white man's party" in every state except South Carolina. Even the white South lacked solidarity.

Not only were the electors not unanimous, a large percentage of them still voted. After the turn of the century six or seven of every ten eligible Southerners neglected to vote. In the 1880s, however, about 75 percent of the white males over twenty-one years old turned out in

25. Mrs. Rebecca Latimer Felton, *My Memoirs of Georgia Politics*, pp. 273-274, 307.

six of the states, and 60 percent in four of the remaining ones. A majority of the black men participated—or were counted as participating—in elections in nine of the eleven commonwealths.

In sum, Southern politics in the eighties exhibited a fluidity and freedom unknown after disfranchisement. Politicians attempted to build up stable, continuous parties—a necessity if the voter's decision is to be rational. Both parties competed for votes among men of both races. And if the opposition could only guarantee a fair ballot count, it had a chance to carry several states—thus the bitter struggle over the Lodge fair elections bill.²⁶

SOUTHERN POLITICS IN THE NINETIES: CHALLENGE AND RESPONSE

The 1890s witnessed the greatest political turmoil in the nation since Reconstruction. The political stalemate that had prevented decisive federal action in the seventies and eighties broke in the Fifty-first Congress (1889–91) when the Republicans gained slight majorities in both houses of Congress. A massive shift in the 1890 election swept in a 147-seat Democratic majority. The deepening depression and the Populist revolt, however, unmade the Democrats as quickly as those events had made them: the GOP enjoyed a 140-seat edge in the 1895–96 House and maintained a majority until the Bull Moose split of 1912.

To return to the last years of the century, the Republicans in 1888 won firm control of both branches of congress and the presidency for the first time in fourteen years. After rewriting the rules of procedure in the House to prohibit minority disruption of the legislative process, the GOP passed a higher tariff, an antitrust bill, and a currency expansion measure. Despite one of the bitterest filibusters in United States history and a campaign of distortion and vilification perhaps unparalleled in the annals of American legislation, the party of Lincoln almost managed to pass the Lodge Elections Bill.²⁷ A mild piece of legislation, the much-maligned “Force Bill” would have extended the federal supervisory act of 1870, which by 1890 covered 34 Southern and 129 Northern cities, to every congressional district in which 100 citizens petitioned

26. Hirshson, *Farewell*, pp. 205–206; Crofts, “Blair Bill,” pp. 238–239.

27. White, “Republican Party,” p. 368. The two best narratives on the Elections Bill are White, “Republican Party,” pp. 367–504, and Crofts, “Blair Bill,” pp. 221–355. See also John R. Lambert, *Arthur Pue Gorman*, pp. 160–161; Welch, “Federal Elections Bill,” pp. 511–526; *Congressional Record*, 51st Cong., 2nd sess. (Senate), Jan. 20–22, 1891, shows the Democrats’ desperate tactical maneuvering.

to have the law go into effect. By requiring supervision of all phases of registration and voting in national elections, and in effect nullifying certain practices and laws that facilitated fraud and disfranchisement, the bill's authors sought to attain two chief ends: "publicity" of all election procedures, and "honest elections." Although it passed the House, where only two Republicans joined the Democrats in opposition, the bill was displaced from the Senate calendar on a surprise procedural motion by one vote. Only the defection of the representatives of the silver mine owners, the strongest single economic interest group of the period, defeated the bill in the Senate.²⁸

Despite the mildness of the Lodge bill, the Democrats were correct in fearing its possible consequences. Had it been enacted and enforced (and had the Southern states not passed disfranchising laws), the bill would have increased the number of Southern Republicans and Populists in Congress and focused attention on the malodorous Southern election practices. These exposures and the increased strength in Congress of Southerners opposed to the Democratic party might well have led Congress to pass stronger legislation, which would have added further to the erosion of Democratic power, and so on and on. As the radical Republican Harrison Kelley of Kansas noted during the House discussion, the Lodge bill itself was too weak to guarantee fair elections, but it might be the step "that will finally bring the crisis that will bring the remedy." To the Democrats, therefore, the bill was a Pandora's box.²⁹

28. *Congressional Record*, 51st Cong., 1st sess., pp. 6538, 6551, 6561, 6674, 6849, 6868; *ibid.*, 2nd sess., pp. 713, 855-856; Daniel Walker Hollis, "The Force Bill of 1890" (M.A. thesis, Columbia Univ., 1947), pp. 43-46; Robert A. Horn, "National Control of Congressional Elections" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton Univ., 1942), pp. 260-265; Crofts, "Blair Bill," p. 269. The connection between the 1870 and 1890 laws was dramatized by the key role John I. Davenport, elections supervisor in New York City, played in drafting the "Lodge Bill." See *Congressional Record*, 51st Cong., 2nd sess., pp. 253-254, 471-474, 500, 515, 713-716. The silverites' opposition to the Lodge bill obviously represented an overt or tacit agreement to trade votes for Democratic help on silver purchase measures. Six months before the crucial roll call in the Senate, a key Democratic congressman, Roger Q. Mills of Texas, predicted that "the help Democratic Senators rendered the silver Republicans will induce the latter to reciprocate" on the Lodge bill. *Alexandria (Virginia) Gazette and Virginia Advertiser*, June 18, 1890, quoted in *Congressional Record*, 51st Cong., 1st sess., p. 6685. See also George H. Mayer, *The Republican Party, 1854-1964*, pp. 229-230; Fred Wellborn, "The Influence of the Silver-Republican Senators, 1889-1891," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 14 (1928): 462-480; *Dallas Morning News*, Jan. 27, 1891; Hirshson, *Farewell*, p. 233; Fowler, *Spooner*, pp. 157-158. The crucial votes are given in *Congressional Record*, 51st Cong., 2nd sess., pp. 912-913, 1324, 1740.

29. Many Republicans stated at the time that they thought the bill exceedingly—several

The Lodge bill's narrow defeat and the Democrats' 1894 repeal of the remaining federal election statutes disheartened the proponents of national control of congressional elections. By 1896, the GOP national platform had dropped its earlier demand for legislative and executive actions to guarantee a free ballot and a fair count in the South.³⁰

Among the other factors in the final Republican capitulation to the Southern oligarchy was the fact that not only death but the overwhelming Republican defeats in 1890 and 1892 eliminated many leaders who had participated, though not always fervently, in the party's campaigns for human rights. James G. Blaine, John Sherman, Benjamin Harrison, John J. Ingalls, Henry W. Blair, George F. Edmunds, William E. Chandler, Thomas B. Reed, and many others either died or left elective office during the nineties. In their places rose younger men to whom abolition and Reconstruction seemed irrelevant, merely picturesque, or even evil. To the new generation of Republican leaders, domestic politics consisted almost entirely of the promotion and/or regulation of business.³¹ Those elder Republicans who continued to occupy important political positions after the turn of the century—Speaker Joe Cannon and Senators William B. Allison and Nelson W. Aldrich, for instance—abandoned the cause of Negro rights, which they apparently had not believed in very deeply anyway. Southern atrocity stories no longer seemed popular with Northern voters.

said excessively—mild. See, e.g., *Congressional Record*, 51st Cong., 1st sess., pp. 6544, 6554, 6602, 6721, 6929; Shelby Moore Cullom, *Fifty Years of Public Service* (Chicago, Ill.: A. C. McClurg and Co., 1911), p. 255. Democrats disagreed. Sen. Wilkinson Call of Florida called it "the most important bill that has ever been presented in the history of the legislation of this country," *Congressional Record*, 51st Cong., 2nd session, p. 804. Rep. Charles F. Crisp of Georgia denounced it as "the most outrageous and iniquitous measure ever brought before Congress for passage." Crofts, "Blair Bill," p. 262. See also *Congressional Record*, 51st Cong., 1st sess., pp. 6884–6885 where Kelley likened the Lodge bill to the fugitive slave law, inviting the next speaker, Charles H. Turner (D., New York), to refer to the Kansan as "this new John Brown." For another view, see Stewart (R., Nevada) in *ibid.*, 2nd sess., pp. 678–683.

30. George Frisbie Hoar, *Autobiography of Seventy Years*, pp. 157–158; Charles C. Cook, "The Penning of the Negro," in American Negro Academy, *The Negro and the Elective Franchise* (Washington, D.C.: The Academy, 1905), pp. 25–27.

31. Richardson, *Chandler*, pp. 414–445; Sen. John C. Spooner to James S. Clarkson, April 16, 1893, quoted in Hirshson, *Farewell*, p. 249; speech by Elihu Root to Union League Club in New York City, cited in *Harper's Weekly* 47 (1903): 306–307; Mayer, *Republican Party*, p. 215; Welch, *Hoar*, pp. 145–162. The response of Northern newspapers to a Southern disfranchisement law further indicates the changes in the GOP after 1890. See *Springfield* (Massachusetts) *Republican*, *Philadelphia Times*, and *Philadelphia Press*, quoted in *Mobile* (Alabama) *Daily Register*, February 26, March 2, 4, 1893.

Then, too, the depression and the labor troubles of the 1890s focused attention on economic problems. Bankruptcies, unemployment, and strikes seemed more immediate to the Northern electorate and politicians than the increasing oppression of white and, particularly, of Negro Republicans in the South.

Quite as weighty was the fact that the reaction against the party in power at the low point of the economic downturn created a stable national Republican majority. After 1894, the GOP did not need to carry a single Southern congressional district to control the federal government. To increase its majority by seeking Southern Negro votes risked alienating Northern racists. Moreover, pushing a broad range of programs, as the GOP found out in the Fifty-first Congress, endangered all of them; for the opposition might gather enemies of each separate bill into a coalition antagonistic to all the proposed laws. The Republicans might, therefore, lose on the tariff and other financial policies as well as the question of intervening in the South.³²

Most important, the Southern Democrats outflanked the forces pushing for possible federal election legislation by substituting legal for fraudulent control of the polls. As the *Jackson (Mississippi) Clarion-Ledger* noted at the time, one of the chief purposes of the Mississippi constitutional convention of 1890 was to "render [the Election Bill] largely nugatory" by expelling illiterates from the electorate.³³ When Senators George F. Hoar and John C. Spooner and New York Election Supervisor John I. Davenport were drawing up what became the "Lodge bill" at the end of the eighties, only Georgia and South Carolina had passed effective laws restricting the suffrage. By 1896, when the GOP regained national power, Florida, Tennessee, Arkansas, Alabama, and Virginia had adopted secret ballots and/or poll taxes; Mississippi and South Carolina had held dramatic disfranchising conventions. By 1903, every Southern state had enacted legislation limiting the vote. No longer would a Lodge bill guarantee fair elections by allowing federal

32. DeSantis, *Republicans Face*, pp. 213-214. For the Democrats' harangues on the Force Bill in the 1892 presidential campaign, see George Harrison Knoles, *The Presidential Campaign and Election of 1892* (Stanford, California: Stanford Univ. Press, 1942), pp. 81, 144-145, 162, 169, 174; Hoke Smith, "The Disastrous Effects of a Force Bill," *The Forum* 13 (1892): 686-692.

33. One of the chief reasons Albion W. Tourgée pushed a radically stronger alternative to Lodge's measure in 1890 was his understanding of the potency of legal disfranchisement and fear of the probability of its spread. See Tourgée to Thomas B. Reed, n.d. (1890), in Tourgée papers, Chautauqua County Historical Society, Westfield, N. Y.. *Jackson Clarion-Ledger*, Aug. 7, 1890, quoted in Mabry, "Disfranchisement of the Negro," p. 123. Similarly, see Wharton, *Negro in Mississippi*, p. 208.

supervisors to observe the registration of voters and guard against fraud at the polls.³⁴ For even if the supervisors managed to guarantee impartial administrative practices in registration—a difficult task, since registration took place at myriads of different places and times—a large portion of the Negroes and lower-class whites would be disfranchised by the literacy and poll tax qualifications. Fair administration would probably result in a smaller number of white voters rather than a larger number of Negroes, since registrars would have to offer real “understanding” tests to all illiterates. If so, federal intervention would diminish the chances of opposition parties in the South, not increase them. In such circumstances Republicans might well feel it was not worth the trouble to prohibit racial and political discrimination in voting. Republicans who believed the South still worthy of consideration turned increasingly to the reduction of Southern representation under the provisions of the Fourteenth Amendment as a means of forcing those states to loosen their suffrage qualifications.³⁵

In the South itself, two major developments dominated the political stage in the century’s last decade: Populism and suffrage restriction. The continual debility of the Southern economy inspired several agricultural protest organizations—the Wheel and the Brothers of Freedom in Arkansas, and the Farmers’ Alliance in Texas.³⁶ These groups fused

34. On the drafting of the Elections Bill, see Hoar, *Autobiography*, pp. 151–153. Republicans realized that laws like the 1890 Lodge bill would have no effect on states such as Mississippi which had legally limited their suffrage. See Senators George F. Hoar (R., Massachusetts) in *Congressional Record*, 51st Cong., 2nd sess., pp. 503, 867; John C. Spooner (R., Wisconsin) in *ibid.*, p. 728; Sen. Henry M. Teller (R., Colorado) in *ibid.*, p. 894; Sen. Evarts (R., New York) in *ibid.*, p. 1363; Rep. Henry Cabot Lodge, in *ibid.*, 51st Cong., 1st sess., p. 6544; and Andrew C. McLaughlin, “Mississippi and the Negro Question,” *The Atlantic Monthly* 70 (1892): 828–837. And one Southern Republican, Congressman Hamilton G. Ewart of North Carolina, predicted that passage of the Lodge bill would invite Democrats to pass legal disfranchisement measures. The threat alone proved sufficient. See *Congressional Record*, 51st Cong., 1st sess., p. 6690.

35. *Congressional Record*, 56th Cong., 2nd sess., pp. 517–521, 553–559, 590–619, 647–669, 707–748; *ibid.*, appendix, pp. 67–75, 153; *House Report No. 2130*, 56th Cong., 2nd sess., pp. 121–146; *Congressional Record*, 59th Cong., 1st sess., pp. 3885–3894; Ala. Con. Con. *Proceedings* (1901), vol. 3, pp. 2856, 2866; *The Independent* 52 (1900): 1876, 1935–1936; *ibid.*, 55 (1903): 3008–3010; James W. Garner, “The Fourteenth Amendment and Southern Representation,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 4 (1905): 209–216; Edgar Gardner Murphy, “Shall the Fourteenth Amendment Be Enforced?” *North American Review* 180 (1905): 109–133; Richard B. Sherman, “The Harding Administration and the Negro: An Opportunity Lost,” *Journal of Negro History* 49 (1964): 163; August Meier, *Negro Thought in America, 1880–1915*, p. 111.

36. Many of the factual statements about Southern Populism will be drawn, without further citation, from John D. Hicks, *The Populist Revolt*, and Woodward, *Origins*, pp. 175–290.

in the late eighties, and spirited organizers expanded the membership rolls until local units existed in nearly every Southern community.

At first, the Alliance, as the fused clubs became known, acted as a simple agricultural interest group, encompassing large as well as small farmers, Democrats as well as Independents, Greenbackers, and Republicans. In fact, many opportunistic Democratic politicians joined the Alliance just as they might join the Masons, the Confederate Veterans, or the Baptist church. Nonetheless, it was inevitable that many of the Alliance men would split with the Democrats. Several points in the Alliance program, particularly the subtreasury and anti-trust laws, required a strong, active federal government. But the national Democratic party traditionally stood for a weak central government, *laissez-faire*, and "no class legislation." As long as Grover Cleveland, David B. Hill, John G. Carlisle, August Belmont, and their followers dictated national party policy, backers of the Alliance's "Ocala platform" could not attain their goals within the Democratic party.³⁷

The prospect of electoral and monetary support from the Republicans and Independents must also have tempted agrarians to leave the Democrats. The "Jeffersonian Democrats" in Alabama flirted with the protective tariff and received large contributions from Northern Republicans. In Virginia, according to one scholar, three-fourths of the Populist votes came from men who had theretofore supported the GOP. In fact, throughout the South in the nineties, a large number of those opposed to the dominant party rallied around the Populists, who provided not merely an economic, but more important a *political* alternative to the Democrats.³⁸

The Alliance brought forward new, self-confident leaders whose power base existed independently of the Democratic party. Since they had not risen through the ranks of the party, they did not feel the same

37. Sheldon Hackney, *Populism to Progressivism in Alabama*, p. 55; Steelman, "Progressive Era in North Carolina," pp. 25-26; C. Vann Woodward, *Tom Watson, Agrarian Rebel*, pp. 136, 161-164.

38. Knoles, *Election of 1892*, p. 194; William Warren Rogers, *The One-Gallused Rebellion*, pp. 278-280; DeSantis, *Republicans Face*, pp. 230-248; William Du Bose Sheldon, *Populism in the Old Dominion*, p. 103; Albert B. Moore, *History of Alabama and Her People*, 1: 722; Edward C. Williamson, "The Era of the Democratic Country Leader: Florida Politics, 1877-1893" (Ph. D. diss., Univ. of Pennsylvania, 1954), pp. 310-315; Arnett, *The Populist Movement in Georgia*, p. 22; Hair, *Bourbonism*, pp. 228-233; *Pine Bluff* (Arkansas) *Weekly Commercial*, Sept. 18, 1892.

loyalty to it as the regulars. Furthermore, the men who finally split with the party tended to occupy less established social positions in their communities than their Democratic counterparts; therefore, they lost less from the social ostracism that resulted from party defection.³⁹

Finally, unlike the denizens of the black belts, Alliance men outside the areas of concentrated Negro population felt less constrained to maintain white unity; local Negroes were simply not numerous enough to dominate politics. Consequently, while Alliance members in counties with large proportions of Negroes generally refused to leave the party of white supremacy, those in the hill country readily followed their leaders into Populism.⁴⁰

Though the Populist insurgency copied some of the programs of the Greenback-Independent movement, though third-party men from the eighties often ended up in the Populist camp, though both political revolts attempted to weld the discontented of both races into a winning coalition, there were some important distinctions between Independentism and Populism. In the first place, the Alliance was much stronger than the old Granger organizations which had formed the nucleus of Greenbackism. The Populists, therefore, had a broader base of white support than their predecessors. The Populists also boasted a more elaborate economic and political ideology than the Independents. Like the Democrats, the Independents usually threw together a *mélange* of diverse appeals in an attempt to construct a jerry-built but successful coalition. Neither group in the 1880s seemed to prize a consistent philosophy. The Populists, on the other hand, evolved a broad and roughly consistent political theory in a much more self-conscious fashion.⁴¹

On the surface, too, the Populists seemed to have a better entrée to black voters, for the Colored Alliance claimed (exaggeratedly) a million members. Many Populists, therefore, felt that they could circumvent

39. On the social pressures to stay in the Democratic party, see William J. Cooper, Jr., *The Conservative Regime*, pp. 35, 71; Hair, *Bourbonism*, pp. 247-248. On the class composition of the Populists, see Roscoe C. Martin, *The People's Party in Texas*, pp. 60-65; Hackney, *Populism to Progressivism in Alabama*, pp. 23-31, 336-342; Rogers, *One-Gallused Rebellion*, p. 238.

40. Edwin Aubera Ford, "Louisiana Politics and the Constitutional Convention of 1898" (M.A. thesis, Louisiana State Univ., 1955), p. 21.

41. On the flow of Independent and Greenback ideas and voters into the Populist party, see Martin, *People's Party in Texas*, p. 72; Williamson, "Independentism," p. 156; J. E. Dovell, *Florida: Historic, Dramatic, Contemporary*, 2: 650; Hair, *Bourbonism*, pp. 214, 220, 231. On Populist ideology, see Norman Pollack, *The Populist Mind*, pp. 169-330.

the Negro politicians, whom they believed corrupt, by direct economic appeals to Negro farmers. But the tactic of identifying Negro and white agriculturalists as covictims of the same economic system ignored the fact that Negroes were often more concerned with social and political than with economic discrimination. In any case, Populists offered no panaceas for sharecroppers. And although some Negro politicians were no doubt venal, their influence was nonetheless real. Ignoring them sometimes provoked reprisals. Only when Populists conciliated local and state Negro politicians were they able to unify black voters in their cause.⁴²

The Populists might also have noticed the increasing Democratic control of black belt counties during the 1880s.⁴³ Whereas the Democrats' opponents in the early eighties could count on heavy majorities in nearly every predominantly Negro country in Arkansas, Florida, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia, and in many such counties in the other states, the dominant party by the end of the eighties had silenced opposition in most counties with heavy concentrations of Negroes. Only in North Carolina, Virginia, and in a few counties in Texas and Louisiana could the People's Party hope to gain substantial votes in the black belts. Even more crucial, Democrats could overcome white-county Populist majorities by illegally padding their majorities in the predominantly Negro areas.

Democrats countered Populist economic appeals with the old litany perfected during the Independent campaigns: if whites split, they warned, the Negroes would hold the balance of power. Blacks would then demand offices, favorable laws, appropriations, and ultimately social equality. The South would undergo another Reconstruction. Like the Independents before them, the Populists derided such pro-

42. On Populist economic appeals to blacks, see Tom Watson, "The Negro Question in the South," in Pollack, *Populist Mind*, pp. 367-372; Rice, *Negro in Texas*, pp. 68-85; Shadgett, *Republican Party in Georgia*, pp. 110-117; Moore, *History of Alabama*, p. 736; C. Vann Woodward, "Tom Watson and the Negro," *Journal of Southern History* 4 (1938): 23-24. For relations with Negro politicians, see Joseph Matt Brittain, "Negro Suffrage and Politics in Alabama Since 1870" (Ph.D. diss., Indiana Univ., 1958), pp. 105-111; Robert J. Saunders, "Southern Populists and the Negro, 1893-1895," *Journal of Negro History* 54 (1969): 257; Arnett, *Populist Movement in Georgia*, pp. 153, 183; Clarence A. Bacote, "The Negro in Georgia Politics, 1880-1908" (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Chicago, 1955), pp. 214-223; Tom Watson, speech in 1896 Populist convention in Georgia, quoted in *Atlanta Constitution*, Aug. 12, 1906; Martin, *People's Party in Texas*, pp. 93-99.

43. The Republicans did. See, e.g., *Congressional Record*, 51st Cong., 1st sess., pp. 6786-6787.

positions as bogies conjured up to mislead and frighten white voters.⁴⁴ Both sides were partly correct. Certainly the Democrats played on the racism inbred in virtually every white Southerner to cloud over other issues and thereby maintain their control. On the other hand, in localities where Negro political strength was important, blacks did demand and obtain patronage, protection of their political and civil rights, larger funds for governmental programs servicing Negroes, and finally the right to representation by men of their own race—a right that implied a broad, though not necessarily social, equality.⁴⁵

The Democrats' employment of white supremacy rhetoric may have been cynical. While chiding opponents for endangering the racial hierarchy, they often secretly courted black voters. Nonetheless, they undoubtedly internalized their campaign cries, so intertwining the Democratic party with the idea of white domination in their own minds that partisanship and racism became indistinguishable. For example, the official Democratic organ in Louisiana, the *Baton Rouge Daily Advocate*, referred to the Populists as "the most dangerous and insidious foe of white supremacy" and said of the Republican party that "the Africanization of the state was its cardinal doctrine." Constantly referring to the Democrats as "the party of the white man," it considered the fusion between Populists, Republicans, and sugar planters "a grave menace to our civilization." Conversely, the *Pine Bluff* (Arkansas) *Commercial* appealed to white Democrats to pass the poll tax in order to disfranchise blacks because "the most dangerous foe to democracy [the party] is the Negro. . . . The Negro is an uncontrollable objector to our ticket." A threat to the political establishment was a threat to the

44. The Democratic race-baiting appears in Sheldon, *Populism in the Old Dominion*, pp. 85–86; Woodward, *Burden of Southern History*, pp. 150–151; Thomas, *Arkansas*, p. 241; Williamson, "Era of the Democratic Country Leader," p. 311; Bacote, "Negro in Georgia," pp. 174–175; Mabry, "Disfranchisement of the Negro," pp. 286–292. For the Populist response, see William H. Skaggs, *The Southern Oligarchy*, pp. 60–61; Woodward, "Tom Watson and the Negro," pp. 26–28; *Raleigh* (North Carolina) *Caucasian*, March 12, 1896, quoted in Robert F. Durden, *The Climax of Populism*, p. 11.

45. Josephus Daniels, *Editor in Politics*, p. 285; John William Graves, "The Arkansas Negro and Segregation, 1890–1903" (M.A. thesis, Univ. of Arkansas, 1967), pp. 12–21, 71–90; Horace Mann Bond, *Negro Education in Alabama*, pp. 138–140; Rice, *Negro in Texas*, pp. 86–112; Shadgett, *Republican Party in Georgia*, pp. 109–117; Blake, *Mahone*, pp. 191–192; Brittain, "Negro in Alabama Politics," p. 115; Saunders, "Southern Populists and the Negro," pp. 254–256; *Baton Rouge Daily Advocate*, Feb. 4, 9, 18, 1896; Joseph L. Morrison, *Josephus Daniels Says . . .*, pp. 93–94; Steelman, "Progressive Era in North Carolina," pp. 49–53, 126; William J. Simmons, *Men of Mark*, pp. 501–502.

racial establishment, and vice versa. Only such rationalizations could have saved thousands of politicians from consciousness of their own self-serving hypocrisy. Few men could live with such an image of themselves.⁴⁶

This equation of the Democratic party with white paramouncy carried with it the implication that Negro domination threatened until all partisan opposition was eliminated. Not only black, but potential white dissent had to be eradicated. From such thinking arose violence, intimidation, gerrymandering, fraud, and curtailment of the suffrage. Even after almost every Negro ceased voting, Democrats instantly charged any partisan adversary with racial treason. The expression "white man's party" became popular dogma.⁴⁷

Not satisfied that the cry of white supremacy would save them, the Democrats also co-opted Populist issues and rhetoric. By the mid-nineties, no stump speech in the South was complete without blasts at the railroads, the trusts, Wall Street, the gold bugs, the saloonkeepers, or some similarly evil "Interest." Political machines likewise became objects of universal denunciation, even by organization stalwarts. Conservatives appropriated the Populists' call for fair elections under

46. On "secret courting of blacks," see Charles Grayson Summersell, "The Alabama Governor's Race in 1892," *The Alabama Review*, 8 (1955): 25; Arnett, *Populist Movement in Georgia*, p. 183; Bacote, "Negro in Georgia," pp. 175-179, 215-223. For the fusion of Democratic partisanship and racism, see *Advocate*, Jan. 3, 9, 1896. According to William A. Mabry, *The Negro in North Carolina Politics since Reconstruction*, pp. 29-30, the cry of white supremacy was the chief issue which kept the Democrats together and the "Bourbons" in power in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. A similar situation prevailed in Alabama, Mississippi, and Tennessee. See Going, *Bourbon Democracy in Alabama*, p. 31; Wharton, *Negro in Mississippi*, p. 205; Verton M. Queener, "The East Tennessee Republican Party, 1900-1914," in *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications* 22 (1950): 118; and then see *Pine Bluff Weekly Commercial*, July 17, 1892. The context makes clear that the reference to "democracy" is to the Democratic party.

47. Hackney, *Populism to Progressivism*, p. 47; unnamed Texas congressman, quoted in Stanley L. Jones, *The Presidential Election of 1896*, pp. 195-196; Skaggs, *Southern Oligarchy*, pp. 109, 118; Hair, *Bourbonism*, pp. 75-78. Virginia Democrats charged that the 1905 Republican candidate for governor favored miscegenation, and they race-baited extensively against the lily-white Republican Bascom Slemp in a 1910 congressional campaign. See Guy B. Hathorn, "The Political Career of C. Bascom Slemp" (Ph.D. diss., Duke Univ., 1950), pp. 33-35, 63. Josephus Daniels charged that a GOP victory in North Carolina in 1908 would mean a return to "nigger rule." See David Charles Roller, "The Republican Party in North Carolina, 1900-1916" (Ph.D. diss., Duke Univ., 1965), p. 170. Although at the time only 1 percent of the Negroes were registered to vote, the *Montgomery (Alabama) Daily Advertiser* in October 1902, reprinted the bitterly racist 1874 address of the chairman of the Alabama Democratic Executive committee under the headline "White Supremacy the Keynote of Campaign of 1902 as in that of 1874," *Advertiser*, Oct. 23, 1902.

the Australian ballot system and employed that system to disfranchise many potential converts to the People's Party.⁴⁸ The "horny-handed sons of toil" began to receive rhetorical attention once reserved for Confederate soldiers and Southern industrial magnates. The state Democratic party which could not boast of a leading farmer-turned-politician (or vice versa) during the nineties was poor indeed. The fusion behind Bryan in 1896 was only the last and most effective device to pull agrarians into the Democratic party.

If fraud, racism, and co-optation failed to quash the opposition, there was always disfranchisement. In the eighties and early nineties, Democrats developed a panoply of restrictive measures—registration and multiple-box laws, the poll tax, the Australian ballot, and the educational qualification. Each state became in effect a laboratory for testing one device or another. Indeed, the cross-fertilization and coordination between the movements to restrict the suffrage in the Southern states amounted to a public conspiracy.⁴⁹ Since newspapers

48. On the co-optation, see Sheldon, *Populism in the Old Dominion*, pp. 85–86, 140–142; Allen J. Going, "Critical Months in Alabama Politics, 1895–1896," *Alabama Review* 5 (1952): 273; Jones, *Presidential Election of 1896*, pp. 195–196; Thomas, *Arkansas*, 1: 223–225, 239, 248–252; Graves, "Arkansas Negro," pp. 65–67; Williamson, "Era of the Democratic Country Leader," pp. 306–307; Kathryn T. Abbey, "Florida Versus the Principles of Populism," *Journal of Southern History* 4 (1938): 465–468; Samuel Proctor, *Napoleon Bonaparte Broward*, pp. 60–62; Hair, *Bourbonism*, p. 239; Mabry, "Disfranchisement of the Negro," pp. 262, 285; Steelman, "Progressive Era in North Carolina," pp. 21–25, 123–125, 127–128, 165–167; Francis Butler Simkins, *Pitchfork Ben Tillman*, pp. 204–206, 265. See the denunciation of "machines" by Hal Flood, number two man in the Tom Martin organization, quoted in Burton Ira Kaufman, "Henry De La Warr Flood: A Case Study of Organization Politics in an Era of Reform" (Ph.D. diss., Rice Univ., 1966), p. 100. The Populist party platform, adopted at Omaha in July 1892, endorsed the secret ballot as a means of guaranteeing a free ballot and a fair count. Hicks, *Populist Revolt*, p. 443.

49. For evidence that Democrats in various states conspired with those in others and that the leaders of disfranchisement were cognizant of developments throughout the South, see Daniels, *Editor in Politics*, pp. 324, 374–380; Lambert, *Gorman*, p. 347; John B. Knox's Presidential Address and the Suffrage Committee's report in Ala. Con. Con. *Proceedings* (1901), pp. 7–17, 1256; McMillan, *Constitutional Development in Alabama*, pp. 272–275, 280, 346; Stephen B. Weeks, "The History of Negro Suffrage," *Political Science Quarterly* 9 (1894): 696; *Florida Times-Union*, April 24, 1889, Sept. 4, 17, 20, Oct. 13, Nov. 5, 20, 1890; *Pine Bluff Weekly Commercial*, Aug. 24, Oct. 26, 1890, Aug. 28, 1892; *Little Rock Arkansas Gazette*, March 3, 1891; Bacote, "Negro in Georgia," pp. 412–413; *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, Dec. 12, 14, 1897, Feb. 6, 9, 15–20, Mar. 9, 1898; Mabry, "Disfranchisement of the Negro," pp. 113, 123, 143, 300, 304; *Charleston News and Courier*, Oct. 10, 1894; *Nashville Daily American*, Jan. 12, Feb. 20, March 9, 1889; Charles K. Chamberlain, "Alexander Watkins Terrell, Citizen, Statesman" (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Texas, 1956), pp. 238–239; John Goode's Presidential Address, in Va. Con. Con. *Proceedings* (1901), pp. 20–21.

reprinted comments from their counterparts throughout the South, since politicians could often get firsthand information about the effect of laws through personal friends or through associates in Congress, and since state libraries traded lawbooks, any successful law could easily be copied. Thus, Florida copied South Carolina's eight-box scheme, and Alabama and Florida borrowed from Tennessee's secret ballot law; Tennessee, Arkansas, Florida, and Mississippi followed Georgia's example in enacting a poll tax. There was a slight pause after the first enactment of any particular mechanism, perhaps to test the reaction of Northerners and the state's own electors. When Congress did not intervene, and when voters did not rise up against the disfranchisers, legislators in other states felt free to write similar laws.

Though Mississippi's constitutional disfranchisement certainly impressed contemporaries as the most permanent and effective solution, politicians in the early nineties hesitated to follow Mississippi's lead. One reason was that calling conventions or passing amendments usually required two-thirds majorities in the legislatures, as well as majorities in referenda and in constitutional conventions. Moreover, in a time of political upheaval, few groups with strong interests in any aspect of the status quo dared to invite constitutional change. Many Democrats feared Populists might poll sufficient strength in such conventions to alter other sections of the constitutions; conservatives in South Carolina feared the Tillmanites would permanently enshrine the Dispensary system in the fundamental law; reformers feared that the railroads would destroy utility commissions; where no commission yet existed, railroad men feared reformers might create one.⁵⁰ Only after the Democrats had gained secure majorities did they call disfranchisement conventions, and then only in five states.

Tables 1.5 and 1.6 demonstrate the efficacy of even simple disfranchising devices in cutting the strength of opposition to the Democrats. At the height of Populist or Republican strength in gubernatorial elections in each Southern state, the opposing parties were

50. McMillan, *Constitutional Development in Alabama*, pp. 229-230, 249-250; Hackney, *Populism to Progressivism*, pp. 150-153; H. E. Poindexter, "From Copy-Desk to Congress, The Pre-Congressional Career of Carter Glass (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Virginia, 1955), pp. 198-199, 216-217, 271; *New Orleans Times-Democrat*, May 27, 1894, quoted in Mabry, "Disfranchisement of the Negro," p. 209; Ralph Clipman McDanel, *The Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1901-02*, p. 10; George B. Tindall, "The Campaign for the Disfranchisement of Negroes in South Carolina," *Journal of Southern History* 15 (1949) : 226-227.

Table 1.5. The Opposition at Its Crest in the 1890s: Populist or Republican Percentage and Turnout in Key Gubernatorial Races.

State	Year	Party	% Populist or Republican of Those Voting	% Turnout
Group 1 ^a				
Arkansas	1896	Republican	25.3	48.7
Florida	1892	Populist	21.3	38.9
Georgia	1894	Populist	44.0	49.6
Mississippi	1895	Populist	27.2	20.8
South Carolina	1894	Independent	30.4	22.3
Tennessee	1896	Republican	46.8	70.5
Group 2 ^b				
Alabama	1892	Populist	47.6	70.5
Louisiana	1896	Fusion	43.7	69.9
North Carolina	1896	Republican	46.5	85.4
Texas	1896	Fusion	44.4	85.6
Virginia	1893	Populist	40.8	54.3

^aGroup 1 is composed of states which adopted effective disfranchising statutes before 1894.

^bGroup 2 is composed of states which did not adopt effective disfranchising laws before 1894.

unable to garner a majority of the recorded votes. (The Populists were, however, undoubtedly counted out in the Louisiana and Alabama elections shown in the tables.)⁵¹ The opposition was virtually crushed in four of the six states that adopted restrictive statutes before 1894; in none of the four did the chief opposition party poll one-third of the votes. Less than a majority of the potential electors went to the polls in five of these six states. Low turnout appears to have correlated with Populist defeat.

In states which had restricted the vote, the opposition party survived suffrage restriction only where it had exceptionally strong white support. In Georgia, where the poll tax had long discouraged Negroes from

51. Rogers, *One-Gallused Rebellion*, pp. 221–228. Robert McKee, black belt newspaper editor and astute political observer, admitted privately in 1892 that “excluding Negro votes, or stuffed ballots, as you please, [the Populist] candidate unquestionably has a large majority,” quoted in Hackney, *Populism to Progressivism*, p. 23. The *Shreveport* (Louisiana) *Evening Judge*, Dec. 15, 1895, quoted in Hair, *Bourbonism*, p. 260, announced: “It is the religious duty of Democrats to rob Populists and Republicans of their votes whenever and wherever the opportunity presents itself and any failure to do so will be a violation of the true Louisiana Democratic teaching. The Populists and Republicans are our legitimate political prey. Rob them! You bet! What are we here for!”

voting, where the Republicans had been so weak since 1872 that whites had almost ceased to fear a return to Reconstruction, and where the Populists produced their most astute leader, Tom Watson, the People's Party did relatively well. The Peach State was the one polity where the Populists prospered despite a minority voter turnout. The mountaineer Republicans of Tennessee also continued to vote despite that state's adoption of a poll tax in 1890. In these two and other states, it is evident that the poll tax requirement was quietly relaxed or that parties raised money to pay the taxes of large numbers of their followers during fervent campaigns.⁵²

Table 1.6. Estimated Voting Patterns, by Race, in Key Gubernatorial Contests during the 1890s.

State	Year	Chief Opposition Party	White				Black			
			Democrat	Republican	Populist	No Vote	Democrat	Republican	Populist	No Vote
Group 1 ^a										
Arkansas	1896	Republican	37	15	12	40	21	5	0	75
Florida	1892	Populist	43	0	17	41	11	0	0	89
Georgia	1894	Populist	35	0	34	31	23	0	15	62
Mississippi	1895	Populist	35	0	19	45	0	0	0	100
South Carolina	1894	Independent	22	0	11	67	12	0	5	84
Tennessee ^b	1896	Republican	42	45	3	10	24	-4 ^c	5	74
Group 2 ^d										
Alabama	1892	Populist	27	0	53	20	49	0	14	36
Louisiana	1896	Fusion	22	58	0	21	62	7	0	31
North Carolina	1896	Republican	45	31	9	15	20	59	8	13
Texas	1896	Fusion	48	34	0	18	47	50	0	3
Virginia	1893	Populist	40	0	11	47	19	0	46	35

^aStates which restricted suffrage before first Populist Party election.

^bTennessee estimates computed by sections, North Carolina and Virginia by splitting the state into counties above and below 30 percent Negro. Estimates in table are weighted sums of the separate estimates.

^cFor an explanation of estimates outside the 0-100% limits, see my "Ecological Regression" article.

^dStates which restricted suffrage after first Populist Party election.

52. Many Southern voters probably had their poll taxes paid for them by political organizations. The best scholarly evidence of this practice is for Virginia elections, on which see DeSantis, *Republicans Face the Southern Question*, p. 153; Hathorn, "C. Bascom Slemg," p. 43; Andrew Buni, *The Negro in Virginia Politics, 1902-1965*, p. 31. For proof that Tennessee

Table 1.6 shows that the most accurate estimate is that at least 60 percent of the adult male Negroes in each of the states in Group 1 failed to vote in the decade's hottest elections. The five states that did not restrict the franchise prior to the mid-1890s present quite a different picture. In none of these states did the chief opposition party fail to gather 40 percent of the voters. A majority of the adult males of each state voted in the elections cited. In two of the five states turnout reached astronomical proportions, by twentieth-century standards, as 85 percent of those eligible voted. Estimated Negro turnout and party preferences in the states in group 1 provide a striking contrast with those in group 2. In the former, less than 40 percent of the blacks voted; in the latter, at least 64 percent. In the first group, the Democrats carried the recorded black vote by at least two to one except in Georgia, where the old party won by a five to three margin. In the second, group, the majority of blacks supported the dissenters, except in Louisiana and Alabama, where black belt ballot fraud had become a vocation.

The degree to which disfranchising laws adversely affected dissenting parties becomes even clearer when we compare the nineties with the preceding decade in Southern politics. Whereas the Democrats lost governors' races in two states during the eighties, they lost only one in the next decade. In the 1880s, Independents or Republicans had polled at least 40 percent of the votes in seven states; in the 1890s, in six states. Independents scored at least 30 percent of the vote in ten states, Populists or Republicans in only eight. In the 1880s at least 49 percent of the voters participated in the key gubernatorial elections in each ex-Confederate state; in the 1890s, four states fell below that mark. Despite increased economic grievances, a better organization, and a more coherent ideology, the Populists were, on the whole, somewhat less successful politically than the Independents.⁵³

The fact that franchise limitation was one of the chief reasons for Populist failure becomes unmistakable when we focus on three states. In Florida, Arkansas, and Mississippi the Independents had gained over 40 percent of the votes; the Populists won less than 30 percent in each state. In the key contests in the 1880s, overall turnout rates varied from

Republicans paid poll taxes for their followers in the 1896 contest and allegations that the tax requirements were relaxed in several East Tennessee counties, see below, chapter 5.

53. Cf. Monroe Lee Billington, *The American South*, pp. 211, 224.

50.8 percent in Mississippi to 79.4 percent in Florida; the range in the nineties was from 20.9 percent to 48.7 percent. From 39 percent to 87 percent of the Negroes are estimated to have voted in these three states in the Independent campaigns; from 0 percent to 25 percent in the Populist elections. Thus, the strong opposition movements in these three states in the eighties faded after the Democrats restricted the suffrage. The lesson must have been clear to politicians elsewhere.