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PEASANT SOCIALISM IN AMERICA?:

THE SOCIALIST PARTY IN OKLAHOMA

BEFORE THE FIRST WORLD WAR

by

ELLEN I. ROSEN

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

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Chapter I

A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE UNDERSTANDING OF PEASANT SOCIALISM IN AMERICA

Many explanation have been offered for the failure of the Socialist movement to spread its roots deeply into the mainstream of American life.[1] Historians and social scientists of the left[2] have sought to emphasize little known aspects of the Socialist tradition. While their contributions certainly add balance to the history produced by the "American celebration,"[3] nevertheless, one is forced to conclude that there is a decided absence of Socialist thought and culture as well as actual Socialist organization in the American experience as compared to Europe or the Third World.

While it is not my purpose to directly confront the theoretical or empirical disputes raised by the question of the "failure of socialism in America," this treatment will try to shed some light on the issue by dealing with it indirectly. Lipset and others have argued that in

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[1] Seymour M. Lipset, Agrarian Socialism (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday-Anchor, 1968), pp. 13-14; Daniel Bell, "The Failure of American Socialism: The Tension of Ethics & Politics" in The End of Ideology (Glencoe, N.Y.: The Free Press, 1962), also in Persons, Stow & Egbert, Donald Drew, Socialism and American Life (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952); Letters of Engels to Sorge, London, Dec. 2, 1893 - as quoted in Feuer (ed.), Marx, Engels, Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday-Anchor, 1959), pp. 457-58.

[2] Weinstein, The Decline of Socialism in America (New York: Random House-Vintage, 1967).

[3] Louis Hartz, The Liberal Tradition in America

exploring a "deviant case," a social or historical anomaly, one can learn more about the utility of a particular theory for explaining cases which are typical. To this end I will try to elucidate the social and historical conditions responsible for the strength of the Pre-World War I Socialist Party of America in the state of Oklahoma.

At the peak of the Party's strength in the United States, the 1912 Presidential election, in which Eugene Debs running on the Socialist Party Ticket polled over one million votes (6% of the popular vote), the state to give him the highest proportion of its popular vote was Oklahoma. With a population of over one and a half million (1,657,155)) in 1910, Oklahoma voters cast 42,262 votes for Debs, or 16.61% of the total vote cast. Lest this surprising phenomenon be thought merely fortuitious, there is evidence which casts doubt on such an interpretation. Since 1900 in Oklahoma, voters had been voting for local Socialist Party candidates.[5] Since that year the Socialist Party of Oklahoma consistently increased both its membership as well as its electoral strength. In fact, the peak of the Socialist strength in Oklahoma was not 1912 but 1914 when the gubernatorial candidate on the Socialist ticket polled over 50,000 votes, over 21% of the vote cast. At its peak of membership there were

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[4]Seymour M. Lipset, Union Democracy (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday-Anchor, 1956), pp. 12-13; In addition to Lipset see Patricia Kendall and Katherine Wolf, "The Analysis of Deviant Cases in Communications Research 1948-49," in Paul I. Lazarsfeld and Frank Stanton (eds.), Communications Research, 1948-1949 (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949) p. 153.

[5]Howard L. Meredith, "The Socialist Party in Oklahoma," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation in History (Norman: University of Oklahoma), 1970.

more Socialist Party card holders in Oklahoma than in New York State. In Oklahoma the high proportion of Party members to voters confirmed a solid grass roots support for the organization.[6]

These results occurred in a state in which the overwhelming proportion of the population was rural (86%) and white, native born (79.5%).[7] Historical studies of the Socialist Party in Oklahoma[8] consistently demonstrate that the Socialist vote came from an agricultural constituency. Thus, it is clear we are dealing with a left wing, agrarian radicalism, agrarian socialism, within, perhaps, the most advanced industrial society of the 20th century, America. This finding runs counter, of course, to a set of assumptions which posits an inevitable hostility to socialism as an integral part of American social traditions and culture.[9]

When the reader thinks of agrarian radicalism in America, Populism immediately comes to mind. Historians of the Oklahoma Socialist Party[10] have tended to see the response of Oklahoma agriculturalists to

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[6]James R. Green, "Socialism and the Southwestern Class Struggle: A Study of Radical Movements in Oklahoma, Texas, Louisiana and Arkansas," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation in History (New Haven: Yale, 1972).

[7]Thirteenth Census (1910), vol. I, Population.

[8]Green, pp. 236-48; Meredith, pp. 40-47, 64-65.

[9]Bell, pp. 276-77; Lipset. It is also unusual in the light of the traditional Marxian formulation which posits an urban proletariat as the vanguard of socialist movements. Certainly peasant-based revolutions in Russia, China and most recently Vietnam have posed serious challenges to Marx's conclusions concerning the agents of socialist revolutionary change.

[10]Robert F. Hoxie, "The Rising Tide of Socialism: A Study," in Journal of Political Economy, xix, Oct. 1911; Meredith.

Socialism as an extension of Populist grievances which merely occurred a decade or so later. Yet after some fairly intensive exploration of the situation I am convinced that an explanation of agrarian Socialism as merely a latterday "Populism" cannot serve as an adequate explanation of the complex socio-political situation in Oklahoma in the Pre-World War I period which led to significant Socialist support. Firstly, historians who take this position never distinguish between the western and southern forms of agrarian radicalism which comprised the Populist movement. Populism was merely a unified political movement at a specific historical period which expressed separate forms of agrarian protest and radicalism. The expression of discontent is not an explanation of it. If agrarian radicalism existed in America we need to explain its generation, i.e. the causes which provoked it. Populism itself needs to be explained (which is of course beyond the scope of this treatment). It is tautological to explain it in terms of itself.

Peasants & Farmers

I will argue that theoreticians of peasant radicalism and rebellion are more helpful in formulating models that can help us to explain the conditions which generated the Oklahoma Socialist movement. In this thesis the work of Eric Hobsbawm, Eric Wolf and especially Barrington Moore, Jr. will guide the theoretical formulations. I will argue that the socialist radicalism in Oklahoma was a manifestation of social and economic discontent which had its origins, to some degree, in the conditions of peasant life. While these conditions were not generally present among the vast majority of American agrarians in the

late 19th and early 20th century, I will try to show how the anomalous historical development of Oklahoma created a social matrix in which a constituency which had many of the characteristics of a peasantry was created. I will try to demonstrate how the atypical economic and social development of the state led to the formation of left wing political discontent which was expressed in Socialist voting.

The primary and inevitable objection that this formulation of the issue will provoke is that it is inappropriate to discuss American farmers as "peasants." The absence of a feudal past in America will be cited as prima facie evidence that America has known no peasantry. I will try to demonstrate that agrarians cannot automatically be excluded from this category solely on the basis of this particular antecedent. In formulating a definition of a "modern peasantry" so that we can contrast this concept with that of "farmer" we must remember that when we were discussing contemporary peasantries, we are not discussing feudal serfs in the 14th or 15th centuries. We are not dealing with groups that have remained untouched by the impact of industrialization, either the economic, social or cultural aspects of modern life.

All modern peasantries, although they may in some important ways culturally be rooted to their preindustrial, corporate past, have nevertheless had to make some kind of accomodation to modern market forms of exchange and production brought about by the growth of national and international commodity markets. Although peasants may resist new forms of economic behavior (as Eric Wolf puts it, they try to keep the market at "arms length" while they "cleave to traditional arrangements which guarantee . . . access to land and to the labor of

kin and neighbors"),[11] the contemporary peasant has been forced to engage in a type of agriculture which has become increasingly based on exchange rather than on production for use. Thus, in order to try to maintain the traditional stability of peasant life (assuming that peasants even have some choice and modernization does not occur forcibly) they try to negotiate a modus vivendi with forces which emanate from the metropolis.

This has meant that the village, the local community, no longer sets the boundary which delimits the peasants' social universe. Although peasants may be geographically isolated from the metropolis and live in a rural setting they have at least a tenuous cultural and social relationship to metropolitan events.[12] Peasants are not always bound to their ancestral land; they are frequently geographically mobile; they may even be found on the frontier.[13] Thus, modernization has meant that empirically such agrarians (i.e. those who till the soil) may have characteristics of both farmers and peasants. As groups they can be seen as falling somewhere between both categories on a peasant-farmer continuum. Contemporarily and empirically there are no pure types any longer.

Other criteria which may be thought of as defining peasants as opposed to farmers must also be reevaluated. Peasants have been referred to as "peons." This is to say that they are often associated with the meanest forms of poverty. They are also seen as victims of

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[11] Eric Wolf, Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), p. xiv.

[12] Robert Redfield, Peasant Society and Culture, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), p. 30.

[13] Ibid.

political and social bondage which is seen as a function of their ascribed status. The "free" market and bourgeois individualism are seen as providing the farmer with liberty and the possibility of upward mobility through achieved status. Since among peasants control or "ownership" of the land is vested ultimately in the prerogatives of the gentry, the failure of peasants to "own" land is seen as the basis of their political oppression as well as of their economic servitude. The farmer on the other hand, because he may have outright legal title to his land, is perceived as having no master and is potentially heir to unlimited economic success.

Yet, according to Redfield,[14] the pattern of land tenure does not necessarily provide a criterion for defining of a peasantry. Peasants may indeed by tenants or sharecroppers, but they may be freeholders as well; i.e. they may have legal title to the land they till. Farmers may also be tenants and sharecroppers. What is more, American agricultural history clearly shows us that the economic individualism of the farmer has never been a guarantee of the perpetuation of his access to the soil.[15] Continued access to the use of the soil has frequently been more secure among peasants than among American farmers. Furthermore, stratification among traditional peasants themselves suggests that some "middle peasants" may experience higher standards of living than some American farmers have.[16]

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[14] Ibid., pp. 27-28.

[15] Paul Gates, The Farmer's Age, 1815-1860 (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1962).

[16] Theodore Saloutos and John D. Hicks, Twentieth Century Populism: Agricultural Discontent in the Middle West 1900-1939 (Lincoln: University

Definition of Peasantries

The reader will now ask, if the lines between peasant and farmer seem to be so indistinguishable what are the criteria of a peasantry as opposed to a farmer? There are criteria by which anthropologists, who study peasantries as embodying distinctive forms of social organization, define them. My definition of a peasantry will be based on the work of Robert Redfield and Eric Wolf. Three variables seem to comprise the elements which are critical to peasant life. They involve particular forms of 1) orientation to production, 2) status and authority, and 3) culture.

1. Orientation to Production

For peasants agriculture is seen as the embodiment of a total vocation and a traditional way of life. For them land is not a commodity and agriculture is not a business in which profits must be maximized by learning how to buy cheap and sell dear. The normative attitude of rational calculation is either absent or secondary. The economic goal is the getting of a traditionally acceptable level of subsistence, not the infinite increase of status or economic expansion. To this end a stable and secure land tenure, if only infrequently a reality, is the prescribed and desired social goal. Eric Wolf, in his book, Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century, offers perhaps the most adequate discussion of the economic difference between farmers and peasants. He writes,

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Of Nebraska Press, 1951); and, Fred Shannon, The Farmer's Last Frontier, 1860-1897 (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1945); Wolf.

> The major aim of the peasant is subsistence and social status gained within a narrow range of social relationships. Peasants are thus unlike cultivators, who participate fully in the market and who commit themselves to a status game set within a wide social network. To ensure continuity upon the land and sustenance for his household, the peasant most often keeps the market at arms length, for unlimited involvement in the market threatens his hold on his source of livelihood. He thus cleaves to traditional arrangements which guarantee his access to land and to the labor of kind and neighbors.

In essence the peasant is oriented away from the market. He regards changes in the traditional patterns of cultivating the soil with suspicion.

> In contrast, the farmer enters the market fully, subjects his land and labor to open competition, explores alternative uses for the factors of production in the search for maximal returns, and favors the more profitable product over the one entailing smaller risk. The changeover from peasant to farmer, however, is not merely a change in psychological orientation; it involves a major shift in the institutional context within which men make their choices.[17]

2. Status & Authority

Peasant society also embodies certain types of authority and political relationships. From the point ov view of bourgeois notions of liberty and equality these may be seen as oppressive. The peasant recognizes and accepts the permanency of his own inferior social status and this inferiority as legitimate vis-a-vis the gentry. To owe deference to ones' betters is only right and proper. While by right of tradition the gentry visibly exploit the peasant (they make formal and often heavy exactions of surplus)[18] the gentry is not perceived as tyrannical because of this. There are, of course, some individuals who

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[17] Wolf, pp. xiv-xv.

[18] The term "surplus" will be used in this thesis in the Marxian sense. It will refer to wealth extracted by those who own the means of production (land, capital) and do not work from those who labor.

go beyond the normative exactions and hence are seen as not fulfilling their roles appropriately. The good gentry is the paternalistic gentry, guarantors and administrators of traditional economic, political and social justice, a justice which guarantees individuals access (differential access of course) to the land by virtue of their membership in the social order. Status is ascriptive; just as it cannot be achieved neither can it be totally lost by arbitrary fiat. The limits of exploitation are defined and enforced by the same tradition. Thus, peasants recognize the guidance of the gentry in the moral and political sphere.

3. Culture

Peasants are pious; much of their lives' activity is imbued with the sacred. Thus, peasant culture is all of a piece, an organic whole. Since peasants feel themselves "tied" to the land by sentiment and tradition agriculture is also endowed with an aura of the sacred. Peasants are concerned with, often deeply involved in, patriarchal religion and the patriarchal family. As the peasant family is an economic unit, the basis of labor recruitment and cooperation, peasants have strong kinship ties. Peasants exalt rustic, rural "salt of the earth" virtues in themselves. While they respect "high" culture which emanates from the metropolis, which usually has modified their culture to some extent,they are also resentful of it and defensive about their ignorance of it. Thus, they reject the city as being the seat of artifice and vice,as opposed to their own virtues which they identify with simplicity and authenticity. The defensiveness, however, provides

them with a sense of identity and class consciousness in addition to a sense of moral self-worth.[19]

Some Theories of Peasant Radicalization

We can now begin to examine the relevant theories of peasant radicalization. Both E. J. Hobsbawn[20] and Eric Wolf[21] (Hobsbawm writes about European peasant movements and Wolf focuses on the Third World) have come to similar conclusions in offering explanations for the radicalization of peasantries. The work of Barrington Moore, Jr.[22] is consistent with the formulations of Hobsbawm and Wolf but adds to it by providing further specifications of the conditions which are necessary for peasant insurgency to occur.

Certainly Third World and European peasant radicalism and rebellion, which Hobsbawm, Wolf and Moore discuss, differ from each other. They differ, most importantly, in terms of the magnitude of the movements as well as in terms of the likelihood of their success. Modern European peasant radicalism has tended to be short lived in comparison to its Third World counterparts. It has obviously been more sporadic, and involved less of the total population of society (which has a firmer industrial base and a larger urban working class). Ultimately, European peasant radicalism has been destroyed by military force (see

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[19] Redfield.

[20] E. J. Hobsbawm, Primitive Rebels (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1959).

[21] Wolf.

[22] Barrington Moore, Jr., The Social Origins of Dictatorship & Democracy (London: Penguin, 1969).

Hobsbawm's description of peasant movements in Spain and Italy and Tilly's[23] discussion of the peasant uprising in the Vendee) or transformed into urban trade unionism as peasants moved off the land and into industrial as opposed to agricultural labor. (See E. P. Thompson's discussion of this in The Making of the English Working Class).[24] On the other hand peasant radicalism in the Third World has spanned decades and generations (China and Vietnam are the more obvious examples of this) and frequently has led to successful socialist revolutions.

Yet despite the differences between peasant movements in industrialized countries and those of the Third World, it appears that the conditions which generate peasant radicalism and/or rebellion (as opposed to the conditions which are necessary for them to succeed) are similar for both types. The following will be an attempt to make generalizations as to what these conditions are.

Wolf and Hobsbawm argue that peasant radicalization is likely to occur when the introduction of modern, capitalist forms of economic, political and social relationships threaten to undermine the stability of a peasant community and victimize the members of a society hitherto on the periphery of these types of relationships. On the other hand, where the intrusion of such market relationships tends to raise the social status and economically benefit a relatively traditional peasantry by potentially converting it into a stable and prosperous bourgeoisie, market relations are frequently welcomed rather than rejected. Thus, the

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[23]Charles Tilly, The Vendee (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964).

[24]E. P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (London: Gollonez, 1963).

traditionalism of preindustrial communities is not seen by these scholars as a purely cultural-psychological disposition to cherish ancient ways; these traditions are frequently voluntariy cast off when the adaptation of rational calculation and delayed gratification promise social and economic reward. Only when a judgement is made that to accept these new forms is to participate in ones' own victimization is refuge sought in allegiance to the old ways.

Certainly the introduction of market forms of exchange and production do not introduce exploitation to the peasantry for the first time. Exploitation, the extraction of the surplus, exists in all traditional societies; it may appear severe to the peasantry as well as arbitrary. Yet, traditional peasant societies have deeply embedded norms and values which govern the forms as well as the extent of political, social and economic tribute which may be legitimately exacted by the gentry. When the introduction of the free market (usually a commodity market) alters the forms and magnifies the content of the pre-capitalist relations of exploitation, belligerancy may follow. What is important to remember is that it is not only the threat of economic loss or the decline in the "standard of living" (although these may be important concomitants of such a situation) which tends to motivate the peasantry to rebelliousness; natural disaster and war are often greeted with an accepting fatalism. What is particularly salient is that the change in social relations undermines the old forms of social justice.

The ultimate goal and conclusion of the transformation of traditional forms of agriculture into modern capitalist forms must be to create a disciplined agrarian labor force out of an undisciplined peasantry (see

Max Weber); a rural commodity producer who is willing to accept the market as the final arbiter of his production and also of his social relationships. Peasants must be motivated to accept that land and labor be treated as commodities to be bought and sold. They must be encouraged to perceive wealth as capital which is to be used for investment. Peasants must learn to understand that land and labor are no longer merely part of nature to be used to satisfy their needs directly. Wolf writes of modernizing peasants,

> Where previously market behavior has been subsidiary to the existential problems of subsistence, now existence and its problems [become] subsidiary to marketing behavior.[25]

The ways in which the introduction of market relationships tend to victimize peasants are manifold. What may happen is that peasants may lose their guarantee of access to the utilization of land. Consequently their means of subsistence and/or a stable place in the community (however humble but guaranteed by their having been born members of it) may be forfeited. The loss of land utilization may ensue. Changes in the social organization of work may lead to increased work discipline, and/or a decreased standard of living. This may be accompanied by a loss of social status. Traditional kinship ties are likely to become disrupted. This may be accompanied by a loss of the self-respect and moral self-worth that was generated as a function of having a stable place in the community. These kinds of changes

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[25]Wolf, p. 279.

in the dominant forms of social relationships have been referred to by social scientists as anomie[26] and alienation.[27]

The political accompaniment of economic and status loss is the delegitimation of the gentry. The right of the traditional rulers to rule, once taken for granted, may suddenly become problematic. The transparency of the new forms of exploitation may undermine paternalistic rationalizations for dominance. This can occur whether the bourgeoisie actually replaces the gentry or whether the gentry itself turns to market relationships. The administration of social justice and social order, so crucial for peasants in their acceptance of the gentry's moral authority and superiority, may be undermined.

The Contribution of the Work of Barrington Moore, Jr.

Thus far we have only developed a partial theory of peasant radicalization. We have offered some generalizations specifying some necessary conditions for peasant radicalization. The process of change from one system of social relations to another is what Moore calls "modernization."[28] However, Moore argues that not all instances of modernization have the consequence of generating political left-wing peasant rebellion or radicalism; instead there are three routes rather than just one route to the modern world, the bourgeois democratic, the

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[26]Emile Durkheim, Suicide, trans. John A. Spaulding and George Simpson (New York: The Free Press, 1951).

[27]Karl Marx, The Economic & Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, ed. Dirk J. Struik, "Estranged Labor" (New York: International Publishers, 1967).

[28]The term "modernization" in this thesis will be used to mean the introduction of modern market forms of economic relations into the countryside. The term will be used synonymously with "economic development."

fascist or the communist. He attempts to generate hypotheses concerning the factors responsible for each of the potential outcomes.

For Moore (who, it has been, I think, rightfully claimed[29] takes a Marxian approach to the questions at hand) each potential outcome is a result of the interplay of class forces; not two classes, but three classes figure in the process of modernization, the aristocracy (gentry) the bourgeoisie and the peasantry. Moore writes,

> No longer is it possible to take seriously that the peasant is an "object of history", a form of social life over which historical changes pass but which contributes nothing to the impetus of these changes.[30]

A significant part of the struggle, however, is both politically and economically waged between the bourgeoisie and the gentry who, in any given situation, may each attempt to dominate the process of modernization. The approach to modernization in which an independent, commercially minded bourgeoisie, which because of special opportunities for commerce and capital accumulation, emerges from the "womb" of the feudal order, is not the only tenable model for Moore but only one of three possibilities. Moore shows how modernization was controlled by the aristocracy in Germany and Japan while peasant revolutions were the prelude to modernization in Russia and China.

Moore is not an economic determinist. For him, classes struggle for control of resources and political and social institutions which will tend to enhance and lead not only to an increase of their own individual wealth and power, but to the supremacy of their respective class hegemony.

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[29]Theda Skocpol, "A Critical Review of Barrington Moore's Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy," Politics & Society 4 (1974).

[30]Moore, p. 453.

Changes in class rule are seen not merely as the substitution of one ruling elite for another, but the creation of new forms of institutional life, technology and culture. Changes in forms of class domination is fundamental, a process which leads to the transformation of social relations between people.

Moore's work is consistent with and an extension of the work of Hobsbawm and Wolf in this sense. All three argue that the impact of modernization changes the social relations among people. This change in the social relations of peasants (who are the victims of modernization) is of such great magnitude that the impetus to rebel and resist the changes is almost inevitable. Yet Moore sees that this initial impetus frequently goes unexpressed and that hostility to the changes does not always take the form of political rebellion or radicalism in instances where some aspects of the social system are not compatible with it.

Moore's models, his three models, must be seen as ideal types. They cannot describe any empirical situation perfectly. Nevertheless we will first attempt to describe them and then they will be utilized to explain the case of Oklahoma socialism.

Route 1--Bourgeois Democracy

The most successful way to prevent peasant revolution in the process of modernization is to insure the destruction of the peasant social structure and thus the social cohesion of the peasantry which could potentially provide the source of resistence to modernization. This has historically been the consequence (unintended of course) of the introduction of what Moore calls commercial methods of market agriculture

into the English countryside. The English case is Moore's prototypical example of the bourgeois democratic route, although he demonstrates that the same consequence was produced in France and the U.S. under very different historical and social circumstances. In England, as early as the 16th century,commercial forms of market agriculture were introduced by the gentry. The gentry's need for additional land for sheep raising, generated the enclosures, essentially the removal of the peasants from the land and a concomitant destruction of the village community. Subsequent agricultural policy, Moore argues, intensified this condition. Finally industrialization in the 18th century provided opportunities for a landless peasantry to become industrial laborers, and the surplus agrarian population was absorbed into British factories.

Moore scoffs at the supposed superiority of "peaceful" as opposed to "violent" social change in discussing this process. He points out that in all cases of modernization it is the peasant who is victimized. The form this victimization took in England (and perhaps in France as well as America) was a vast degree of unemployment in the countryside[31] as well as the infamous brutalizing degradation of the British factory and colliery workers in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Moore argues that the British gentry adopted bourgeois forms of economic behavior while allowing enterprising elements of the aspiring middle class of entrepreneurs to gain access to political power and social status. The gentry itself became "bourgeoisified." Thus,

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[31] Poverty and starvation did mobilize the English peasants to organize and make political demands that the parish provide additional poor relief. Thompson.

the opportunity which presented itself in the 16th century to sell wool at a profit meant that the British aristocracy needed land rather than men. The peasantry, turned off the land and left to fend for itself, was destroyed as a source of potential revolt. Its radicalism and rebellion was later expressed by a class conscious labor movement but a movement which operated within the framework of the new rather than the pre-modern social institutions.

Route 2--Fascism

In Germany and Japan, Moore argues, where no opportunities for the introduction of commercial forms of market agriculture developed, labor repressive forms of market agriculture were established instead. A labor repressive form of market agriculture means that the gentry proceeded to sit back and merely increase the exactions demanded from the peasantry in order to raise money for wars and later for industrialization. As opposed to the English case the peasant community remained on the land intact. The increased exactions which were an abrogation of traditional amounts of exploitation required the application of political and military force in order to maintain social control. Furthermore, commercial impulses emerging from an incipient bourgeoisie were also checked by feudal prerogatives and/or the bureaucratic authority of the strong central government, a phenomenon which was absent in England. These repressive acts are seen by Moore as having prevented the emergence of political liberties and democracy which he sees as being carried by the bourgeoisie.

What is also crucial for the development of fascism in addition to a labor repressive form of market agriculture is the degree to which the social bonds between the peasants and the gentry are maintained. Where the traditional deference and respect persists the potential for the fascist alternative increases. Moore argues that the bonds between peasant and gentry are maintained where the gentry continues to fulfill traditional social functions. One critic[32] faults Moore for this aspect of his explanation by arguing that this sort of generalization does not lend itself to operationalization and cannot be empirically tested. How can we know, she argues, whether an overlord fails or succeeds in fulfilling his traditional social functions?

Moore must have foreseen this objection when he wrote,

> It is not hard to tell when a peasant community gets real protection from its overlord and when the overlord is either unable to keep enemies out or is in league with them. An overlord who does not keep the peace, who takes away most of the peasants, food seizes his women . . . is clearly exploitative.[33]

Here we see a conjunction between the thinking of Moore, Hobsbawm and Wolf. Moore is discussing the situation in which the moral authority of the gentry may or may not be called into question because new forms of market relations create the potential for new forms of exploitation. These new forms are not acceptable to peasants within the parameters of traditional notions of social justice. Under such conditions the legitimacy of the ruler's authority may be called into question if labor

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[32] Skocpol.

[33] Moore, p. 471.

repressive systems of agriculture cause the bonds between peasant and gentry to be ruptured. If a labor repressive system of agriculture nevertheless leaves the bonds between these two classes intact, peasants can be potentially mobilized for fascism. Yet, this occurs only if yet another condition is fulfilled, a condition which will be discussed below.

Route 3--The Communist Route

Modernizing peasant societies which experience labor repressive agricultural systems may go either fascist or communist. The communist route is potentially taken, according to Moore, when the bonds between peasant and overlord are broken and the gentry loses its moral authority and legitimacy. Yet still another factor must be taken into consideration before the differentiation between the fascist and the communist route is fully described theoretically. This factor Moore calls the type of peasant solidarity; it can be either revolutionary or conservative. Conservative solidarity is best exemplified by the Indian example while revolutionary solidarity was typical of the pre-revolutionary Chinese village. Moore describes conservative solidarity as follows,

> . . . it derives its cohesion by tying those with actual or potential grievances into the prevailing social structure. This takes place . . . through a division of labor that has behind it strong sanctions while at the same time it provides a recognized if humble niche for those with little property.[34]

Revolutionary solidarity is defined in this way:

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[34] Ibid., p. 476.

> In order to be a full member of the Chinese village and come under the conservative influences of the network of kinship and religious obligations, it is necessary to have a certain rough minimum of property. The process of modernization apparently increased very considerably the number of those peasants below this minimum. . . . Japanese and Indian villages, on the other hand, provided a legitimate if lowly status for those with little or no property. . . .[35]

Here again there is a conjunction between Moore's theoretical framework and that of Wolf's. Wolf argues that modernization creates anomie and alienation, individual experiences which are produced by the destruction of the traditional social cohesion of the preindustrial Gemeinschaft. Membership in such a community, as Redfield has shown, provides peasants (and perhaps all people) with a sense of self-respect and moral worth. When the ties that bind people to the community are suddenly disrupted human beings who are social animals are cast adrift. According to Moore in those peasant villages, "modernization" which is organized such that the introduction of market relations excludes significant numbers of people from participating in community life as opposed to integrating them in some way, peasants tend to become potentially radicalized. According to Moore not all cases of modernization generate revolutionary solidarity; where indigenous social structures fail to respond to modernization in this way Moore argues radicalization will not occur.

Thus, with three conditions satisfied the stage is set for the development of peasant radicalization and/or the birth of a peasant revolutionary movement. To reiterate, these conditions are:

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[35] Ibid., pp. 476-77.

1. the introduction of labor repressive forms of market agriculture
2. the disruption of traditional social bonds between the peasantry and gentry
3. radical solidarity among the peasants

Yet, both Moore as well as Wolf and Hobsbawm argue that peasants do not generate revolutionary movements themselves. All three scholars believe that only if peasant hostility towards the new conditions of life is mobilized by an exogenous, radical or revolutionary force, usually led by urban intellectuals, will left-wing peasant radicalism be generated.

Revolution & Radicalism

In comparison to the world historical developments upon which Moore's theory is based, the generation and growth of the Socialist Party in Oklahoma before the First World War must be seen as a short lived epiphenomenon within the broader context of American history and social development. In total, the Socialist Party in the state lasted less than 20 years; during its existence it made few ripples on the sea of the American polity and society. Although some of its members engaged in sporadic violence the violence perpetrated against it probably caused more human suffering. The Socialist Party represented a "peaceful" radicalism, expressing its opposition to capitalism at meetings and at the polls. Thus, in no way is the utilization of Moore's theoretical models an attempt on the part of the author to liken its significance to those other revolutions or to enhance its importance for American history.

The study of the Socialist Party in Oklahoma is important only for its potential to demonstrate the utility of a set of generalizations based on a particular conceptual scheme and to highlight the uniqueness of Oklahoma in American history.

Finally, the critic will ask whether the utilization of Moore's model for explaining revolutionary movements is appropriate for understanding an agrarian radicalism which never resorted to armed violence and which was ultimately unsuccessful. Yet, this task is undertaken in the hope that we can extend Moore's thesis to cover not only agrarian revolution but agrarian radicalism as well, i.e. the predisposition of peasant populations to engage in political activities which have as their goal the transformation of capitalism market relations to socialist ones.

Theories of Peasant Radicalization & Oklahoma Socialism

In this dissertation I will attempt to demonstrate that the theoretical models offered by E. J. Hobsbawm, Eric Wolf and Barrington Moore, Jr., which have been discussed above, can enable us to understand the growth and unusual success of the Socialist Party in Oklahoma before World War I. More specifically, I will try to show in Chapter II that the population that settled Oklahoma were the inheritors of social and cultural antecedents that made them comparable to modern peasants in other countries in terms of the criteria we have discussed above.

In chapter III, I will explore the history of Oklahoma's social and economic development. I will argue that the anomalous circumstances of this development led to the growth of an agricultural society within

the state, which, although it had many Southern and Western elements, was qualitatively different from both Southern and Western social structure. I will show also how the unusual rapidity of economic modernization or development within the state generated many of the same problems that traditional peasants undergoing the process of modernization have suffered.

In Chapter IV, I will analyze the patterns of Socialist voting in Oklahoma during the peak years of Socialist strength. The results of this comparison of voting statistics and selected indicators of agricultural structure will serve to demonstrate how both the tenants and small farm owners who were most likely to vote Socialist faced a loss of the use and occupancy of the soil they had only recently acquired. This occurred in the context of a system of agriculture that was essentially labor repressive.

In Chapter V, I will demonstrate that the relationships that developed between the agricultural producers in the countryside and the merchants, landlords and creditors in the nearby towns, were functionally equivalent to relationships between peasants and gentry in more traditional peasant societies. These relationships, however, had none of the cultural or ideological sanctions which would legitimate the economic, political and social dominance of these local elites. Thus the middle class businessmen were not perceived as fulfilling any necessary social functions. As a result, their extraction of the farmers' and tenants' surplus was seen as nakedly exploitative, as "parasitic." In this chapter I will also examine the place of the

rural poor within the local community. We will show how they were ideologically and socially excluded from the social institutions which were dominated by the "middle class gentry."

In the final chapter I will attempt to explain how the Socialist Party of America, as a secular and modern left-wing political organization, was able to capture the discontent of the poor farmers and tenants of Oklahoma. By utilizing elements, particularly religious elements, within the cultural repertoire of the native American agrarians, the Oklahoma Socialist organizers were able to transform alien notions of socialism and class struggle into a language and rhetoric which the rural poor could easily understand and accept.

Chapter II

PEASANTS AND MODERNIZATION IN AMERICA

Before we attempt to explain the relevance of theories of modernization and Moore's third route, the Communist route, to the growth of agrarian radicalism in Oklahoma,we need to justify the formulation which sees certain American agrarians as peasants. American agrarians, it might be argued, were not peasants but farmers. However, although this may have been true for the agrarians who settled the west, the white yeoman farmer of the ante-bellum American South was, in fact, quite different from his western counterpart. In this chapter I will argue that if we look at the southern white yeoman as situated somewhere on a peasant-farmer continuum he will be found to bear closer resemblance to the peasant than to the farmer type in terms of his orientation to production, his relationships of status and authority, and his culture. The need to consider this white yeoman is crucial to an understanding of socialism in Oklahoma because it was largely this constituency which finally populated Oklahoma.

The Relevance of Modernization In The South For Oklahoma

Until the Civil War what later became the state of Oklahoma was Indian Territory. Only after the War was there the beginnings of white migration into this area. The migration began in the early 1870's

and reached its peak in the twenty years between 1890 and 1910, the latter part of which was the period in which the Socialist Party experienced its greatest strength. Significantly, a large proportion of the immigrants into this region were poor white southerners who, as a result of the dislocations produced by an industrializing South, found their way to the developing agricultural regions of Louisiana, Arkansas and Texas and later to Oklahoma.[1] By 1910, out of a population of 1,657,155 (1,616,713 of whom were born in the U.S.) only 515,212, less than one-third, had been born in Oklahoma. Out of the 1,101,501 people who were born elsewhere in the U.S. but were residents of Oklahoma in that year, more than twice as many were born in Southern states or border states than had been born in the West or Midwest. Thus, in 1910 more people living in Oklahoma had been born in Southern or border states than had been born in Oklahoma. (See Table 1).

Oscar Handlin suggests[2] that American industrial growth may have been the "frontier" and the "safety valve" not for American workers but for dispossessed European peasants. It appears that the available and undeveloped land in the Gulf Southwest in the late 19th century may have acted as a safety valve for the class conflict produced in the industrializing South. The spur to opening this region

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[1] Woodward, p. 109.

[2] Oscar Handlin, The Uprooted (New York: Grosset & Dunlop, 1951), pp. 24-36.

Table 1. Original State of Birth of Oklahoma Residents--1910

Southern States		Midwestern States		All other states	
Texas	205,462	Kansas	101,179	Pennsylvania	15,135
Missouri	162,266	Illinois	71,085	All others	80,095
Arkansas	132,763	Indiana	41,431		
Tennessee	62,445	Iowa	41,186		
Kentucky	43,431	Ohio	33,094		
Alabama	33,198	Nebraska	16,844		
Miss.	28,261				
Georgia	20,485				
Louisiana	13,313				
Total	701,624	Total	304,819	Total	95,230

Born in Oklahoma	515,212
Born in South	701,624
Born in Midwest	304,819
Bon in all others	95,230
Total Native	1,616,713
Foreign Born	40,442
Total population	1,657,155

Source: Thirteenth Census of the U.S. (1910), Statistics for Oklahoma, p. 595.

to agricultural development was the international demand for cotton and the land hunger of many dispossessed agrarians in adjacent states. As can also be seen from Table 1 the states to contribute the largest number of immigrants to Oklahoma's population came from Texas, Missouri, Arkansas and Kansas. Many of the poor white Southern migrants looking for a better life were rapidly converted into an agricultural proletariat in Texas and Oklahoma. Oklahoma was the "last frontier" and rapidly became an agricultural system which, I will try to show, led not to economic security but to increasing immizeration.

Jeffersonianism and the Concept of "Yeomanry"

The term "yeoman" is defined in Webster's dictionary as follows:

> A small proprietor who cultivates his own land, lower in rank than a gentleman, . . .
>
> Hence, a common man, or one of the commonalty of the first or most respectable class; a freeholder; a man free born.

The role of yeoman has its origins in British society.[3] It suggests neither a feudal serf whose economic obligations require of him fealty or service to an overlord. Nor, does it refer to a modern, rationally calculating "farmer." The yeoman was generated in an era that was both post-feudal and pre-capitalist. The man "free born" was neither of the nobility nor a serf, but more or less resembles what can be seen as a free peasantry. Theoretically, the role and status of the yeoman can best be understood in the context of the agrarian

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[3]Webster's New International Dictionary, 2d ed., unabridged (Springfield, Mass.: G & C Merriam Co., Publishers, 1955).

ideals of Thomas Jefferson[4] who, I will argue, saw America, with its abundance of free land, as offering the possibility for the social and moral regeneration of European peasantry. In the vast, empty territory of the New World, an attempt could be made to extend the hitherto aristocratic privilege of land (property) ownership to the common man. For Jefferson, this could be justified by reference to the Enlightenment philosopher Locke who argued that property ownership was a "natural right." The Physiocratic and aristocratic notion that moral virtue was associated with tilling the soil was extended by Jefferson to all men.

For Jefferson the dependency of serfdom was corrupting to human nature. To eliminate this dependency was to give mankind his freedom. Equality of property was seen as a means to freedom rather than vice versa. Freedom was essential to self-government. Thus, the yeoman farm, tilled by its owner, was conceived as the backbone of popular self government and democracy.

These ideas sanctified the practice of agriculture in the context of the American family farm. The ideals that the family farm were seen to express were the secular embodiment of a moral and sacred creed. The family farm in American folklore and myth has provided not only a livelihood for its families, but has embodied a total way of life. The patrimony a farmer left to his son, as among traditional

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[4] Whitney A. Griswold, Farming & Democracy (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952); Joseph Dorfman, "The Economic Philosophy of Thomas Jefferson," Political Science Quarterly LV (March 1940): 98-121. My discussion of Jeffersonian democracy is based primarily on these two works.

people, was a monument to his own life--a sign of his industry and thrift--his virtue. This form of agrarian society was rooted in the value of hard work and its potential to earn one's "salvation" as well as a living. The acquisition of property was also sanctified by this inner worldly asceticism. The cultivation of the family farm was seen as morally superior to the life found in cities.

The yeoman farm, like the peasant holding was to be the economic mainstay of the household, from which, also like the peasant's, it would draw its own labor. Production was for use; the locus of exchange not yet the international commodity market but the local town. There the sale of a small surplus was to enhance the family living by providing a few manufactured luxuries. The yeoman was the embodiment in many ways of the "free peasant." Eric Wolf writes,

> The peasant utopia is the free village, untrammelled by tax collectors, labor recruiters, large landowners and officials.[5]

The yeoman's goal was to live an economically solid and respectable life, unburdened by the indignities of poverty and the struggle for existence. His economic freedom was not yet directed at unlimited acquisition; he was not yet the competitive individualist. Liberated from the social and economic obligations owed aristocratic masters he could acquire property, and with his peers govern his community.

For Jefferson, no strong central authority should ever dominate the free yeoman popular democracy. A strong central government

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[5]Eric Wolf, Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century , p. 294.

composed of bankers, large landowners or manufacturers should never interfere with the autonomy of the town meeting. Hobsbawm writes of the Spanish peasant anarchist Communes during the Spanish Civil War,

> Villages had run themselves, both economically and politically, in their primitive way with a minimum of actual organization for administration, government and coercion, and it seemed reasonable to assume that authority and the State were unnecessary intrusions.[6]

Potential encroachments on this type of popular democracy were percieved as emanating from both the past and the future; on the one hand the development of a landed aristocracy similar to the European one, on theother hand the growth of manufacturing, trade and industry. An aristocracy threatened to create a class of serfs, while the industrial revolution which Jefferson saw exemplified in the English workshops of the 18th century generated wage slaves. Jefferson wrote,

> . . . let our workshops remain in Europe. . . . The mobs of great cities add just so much to the support of pure government, as sores do to the strength of the human body.[7]

The opportunity that presumably Americans had to build a democratic and egalitarian society was predicated on the potential for building an eqalitarian society unfettered by a class hegemony of either a feudal aristocracy or an industrial bourgeoisie.

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[6] E. J. Hobsbawm, Primitive Rebels (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1959), p. 82.

[7] Griswold, pp. 30-31.

Agrarian Myth

Throughout American history, rural and agricultural life have been glorified. Hofstadter[8] calls this ethos which exalted the special virtues and mission of the yeoman farmer in American life the "agrarian myth." He argues that from even the earliest period in American history, this myth has never corresponded to the economic and social realities of American agrarian life, although it has been deeply embedded in the consciousness of American farmers. He argues that wherever transportation (rivers, canals, railroads) have made it possible for rational calculation and commodity mindedness to "pay off," American farmers have tended to cleave to production for the commodity market. If the native American yeoman was ever a subsistence farmer, he and his immigrant brethren eagerly responded to the opportunities for participation in agricultural modernization that the continuously growing industrial society has required. Hofstadter's view is consistent with Moore's argument that wherever modernization provides real opportunities for social and/or economic gain, traditional (non-commodity market oriented) forms of agriculture are likely to be abandoned in favor of rational calculation, competition and economic expansion.

Although in part the Homestead Act later offered to transplant the mythical yeoman to the western frontier, Moore argues that by the 1850's the demand for agricultural commodities by the East and Europe made subsistence totally untenable on the frontier. Those who finally settled the western hinterlands were required to adopt the

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[8] Richard Hofstadter, The Age of Reform (New York: Knopf-Vintage, 1955), Chapter 1.

cultural and behavioral prerequisites for maximizing market oriented economic opportunities. Moore writes,

> Under the technological conditions of the day the family farm [became] an efficient social mechanism for the production of wheat, corn, hogs and other marketable products. The family farm [became] a successful commercial venture in western soil.[9]

However, in contrast to this general modernizing tendency, it is important for our analysis of the Southern agrarian to stress that as with other forms of economic growth, the modernization of agriculture in America took place unevenly. For the yeoman farmer of the ante-bellum South, there were fewer opportunities for agricultural modernization than for the western farmer. Thus, here the Jeffersonian yeoman ideal and Hofstadter's agrarian "myth" corresponded more closely with the actual social and economic conditions of the poor white farmer. In the South the small freeholder can therefore be seen as being closer to the peasant end of a peasant-farmer continuum than his western counterpart.

The Southern Yeoman
Historical Roots and Orientation to Production

The Southern white yeoman originated as a frontiersman, moving west from the southern coastal states of Virginia, the Carolinas and Georgia in the early part of the 19th century into western Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Kentucky and Tennessee. Whether by choice[10] or

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[9] Barrington Moore, The Origins of Dictatorship & Democracy (London: Penguin, 1966), pp. 128-29.

[10] F. L. Owsley, Plain Folk of the Old South (Louisiana State University Press, 1949), p. 34.

economic coercion[11] the yeoman settled in the upcountry pine barrens and mountains[12] while the planters who moved west into the developing South at this time because of their access to large amounts of capital, gained access to the fertile lowlands and riverbottoms. There, soil productivity was high and cotton could be grown at great profit on large slave plantations. One historian[13] tells us that in the early years of westward migration, the yeomen frontiersmen were primarily, though not exclusively, herdsmen, who pastured their cattle and hogs on the empty and vast public domain. When transportation permitted access to markets, livestock were sold for cash. This herding economy was supplemented by hunting, fishing, trapping and the cultivation of fields of corn, sweet potatoes and vegetables. As the public domain gave way to increased settlement, these "herdsmen" were forced to give up their grazing economy. Additional waves of migration inevitably drove land prices up and turned the herdsmen into agriculturalists.[14]

Although slaveholding families in the American South during the period 1850-1860 comprised about one-third of the total white population, only 40% of all of these families owned more than ten slaves.[15]

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[11] Paul Gates, The Farmer's Age: 1815-60 (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1960), pp. 1-20.

[12] Owsley, p. 8; Shugg, pp. 9-10.

[13] Owsley, p. 24.

[14] Shugg, pp. 44-45; Owsley, pp. 20-32.

[15] Owsley, pp. 8-9.

Thus, while very few white families were slaveholders even a smaller percent were wealthy planters with numerous slaves. Yeoman farmers with a few slaves were frequently not much different from those without them; the line which separated the large farmer from the small planter was blurred indeed. Agriculturists in the South were not either "poor whites" who lived in crude cabins in the back country or wealthy plantation owners; there were many strata in between. Without a systematic quantitative empirical study it is difficult to say precisely what the nature of the stratification was. Yet, assuming the above figures are accurate, the white yeoman (with or without a few household slaves) was probably numerous.

The information we have about white yeomen suggests that their agricultural economy was <u>not</u> primarily market oriented. In the later ante-bellum years they continued to raise some livestock which they could sell for the little cash that was needed for taxes and/or a few luxuries not produced on their farms. Mostly they raised small fields of corn, potatoes, cabbage, collards, peas, beans, pumpkins, turnips and a few acres of tobacco and cotton.[16] Theirs was

> . . . a diversified self-sufficient type of agriculture where the money crops were subordinated to food crops where the labor was performed by the family or the family aided by a few slaves.[17]

Generally, these people owned their own farms but many were tenants on land owned but not worked by large planters.[18] One

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[16] Ibid., p. 35.

[17] Ibid., p. 135.

[18] Gates, pp. 1-20.

historian estimates from census reports from 1850-1860 that,

> Over 60% of the nonslaveholders outside the upper seaboard states . . . were also landowners. In the lower south and in portions of the upper south central states an estimated 70% owned farms . . . .About 75% of these non-slaveholding farms ranged from a few to 200 acres.[19]

Status & Authority

Although it would be impossible to generalize about the nature of all relationships between the poor whites and the upcountry yeoman before the Civil War, deference and respect on the part of the poor white for the large planter seems to have been the rule. The planter had political legitimacy; as the embodiment of a certain form of class rule he had moral authority.[20] In an aristocratic and hierarchical form of society[21] blacks, whites and planters all had their "place," while at the same time status was not abscribed but achieved. There was a "code of honor" in the South which partially served as a source of legitimation for the economic exploitation of blacks by the planters as well as for the political, economic and social disenfranchisement of the "poor whites." This code was accepted by all and had important ramifications on the yeoman's consciousness.[22] To step out of place would be a breach of "honor"; to deal with the "Negro" on a basis of equality would be just as much a

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[19] Owsley, pp. 8-9.

[20] Owsley, p. 134.

[21] Eugene Genovese, "Marxian Interpretation of the Slave South," in Barton Bernstein, ed., Towards a New Past (Random House-Pantheon, 1968). Genovese argues that the Southern plantation system was both "feudal" and "capitalistic," that it had elements of both. He calls it "prebourgeois."

[22] Shugg, pp. 28-31. Shugg can find no evidence to support a hypothesis of class antagnoism towards the planter by the poor white yeoman despite his original predilection that it somehow must exist.

breach of this code as it became in post-bellum society to buy and sell his vote.[23]

Perhaps both the absence of an economic relationship between the yeoman and the gentry, and their actual geographic and physical isolation from one another, was to some degree responsible for this state of affairs. Despite the fact that the wealthy planter had pre-empted most of the fertile lowlands which produced cotton so that the yeoman was relegated to the sandy loams of the back country, there was no actual link of exploitation between them. The yeoman, although poor was independent. For the most part he owned his own land or squatted on it. Some who were tenants paid rent in kind or cash to their landlord, but the arrangement was not qualitatively different from the tenant who rented land in the North and West.

Although there was not a uniform poverty in all of the regions of the upcountry South, there is evidence that the black belt slave plantations were regionally segregated from the less fertile areas of the large and small farmers, and small planters. Thus life for the yeoman was probably not a day to day experience of direct exploitation

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[23]John Dollard, Caste & Class in a Southern Town (Garden City: Doubleday-Anchor, 1957). John Dollard shows this 19th century Southern code operated well into the 20th century.

or confrontation at the hands of the planter; nor was it one of vivid contrasts of his own poverty with the planter's wealth.

It is perhaps these factors which made it possible for the Southern code of honor to exist side by side with egalitarian ideals of Jeffersonian democracy and equality. Shugg writes of the Louisiana back country,

> In the hill country, unlike the black belt, people were everywhere so poor that they shared the levelling democracy of backwoods poverty.[24]

Thus, the upcountry yeoman farmer could glorify the virtue of the "common man" while at the same time recognizing the hegemony of the planter.

Ethnicity and Culture

The white southern yeoman was part of a relatively homogenous culture. Theirs was a community connected by kinship and was comprised of people of a relatively unified ethnic background. In the early 19th century when frontiersmen were first settling the southern hinterlands, groups of relatives, church groups and even entire communities moved west together and generally settled in the same locale or region. In some regions endogamy cemented these original ties.[25] Secondly, the ethnic background of southern yeomanry was likely to be of English or Scotch-Irish descent; they were the forbears of those who had originally settled the southern coastal plain.

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[24] Shugg, p. 28.

[25] Ibid., pp. 62-63.

> Southern folkways were in part the folkways of rural England, Scotland and North Ireland of the 16th and 17th centuries, modified by the impact of the New World environment; and in part they were the indigenous growth of the South.[26]

While European immigrants played a significant part in peopling the agricultural regions of the Northwest Territory (the region which later became Indiana, Illinois, Ohio, Michigan and Wisconsin) as well as the more western prairie states several decades later, few Europeans settled the South in the late 19th century. Historians argue that Europeans deliberately avoided the South in order to avoid competition with the cheap labor of black slaves.

> The Irish and Germans who had come to New Orleans by the tens of thousands before 1860 . . . the great majority sailed up the river to the Middle West.[27]

The presence of slavery in the South can be seen, therefore, as having inadvertently preserved ethnic homogeneity among the white population.

The Modernization of Agricultural America--The Southern and Western Routes

While the population which settled Oklahoma was largely Southern, the history of the state was complicated by the fact that until about 1890 Oklahoma was Indian Territory. Two major results occurred as a consequence of this. Firstly the region was closed to white settlement until most of the surrounding states were under the plow. Secondly, as results of its special status (as will be explored

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[26] Ibid., p. 91.

[27] Shugg, p. 258.

later) Oklahoma experienced two distinct paths of development. Oklahoma became a composite of both Southern and Western elements. Eastern Oklahoma came to resemble the South in its social structure while western Oklahoma shared important similarities with the American West. Yet, both regions were significantly different from their sectional counterparts.

Thus, before we can understand the process of modernization in each of the two regions of Oklahoma we must first understand the ways in which the impact of modern market relations affected the agrarian populations in the South and the West. Subsequently we will be able to understand the ways in which modernization in eastern and western Oklahoma differed from that of the South and West. Finally, we will see how the particular set of circumstances of Oklahoma's development led to a form of modernization in both regions of the state which led to rapid immizeration and the generation of discontent which expressed itself in support for Socialism.

Modernization in the American South: The Impact of Reconstruction on A Quasi Feudal Social Order

With the Civil War and Reconstruction, modernization in the South began.[28] The entire social and economic order founded on plantation slavery collapsed. While slavery had been abolished, the plantations soon re-established themselves under share-cropping arrangements. Though many former members of the planter aristocracy were impoverished

[28]The forthcoming analysis is based primarily on C. Vann Woodward, Origins of the New South, 1866-1913 .

others had retained the means to enable them to participate in the new wealth. Joined by northerners and parvenus the former planter aristocracy (significant elements of it at least) began to embrace the market. Railroads, cotton mills, coal mines and many other forms of industrial development sprang up. While the quasi-nationalistic, ethnocentric attitudes of all whites united Southerners against the Yankee "carpetbaggers" during the Reconstruction period, the Compromise of 1877 saw the opening of the old sores of class antagonism felt by poor whites towards the old planter-new industrialist aristocracy. The poor white was inevitably victimized by being drawn into the matrix of modern social relations in the agricutlural as well as in the industrial sector. The increase in land speculation and the development of crop lien laws led the isolated hill farmer to be drawn into the circle of tenantry, cotton production, and debt. Pressure on the land encouraged the development of a proletarianized work force in the rural as well as the newly developing urban areas. Inevitably vast dislocations among the poor white population led to strains in their relationships with the former gentry and/or new elites.

The old Bourbon, Whig aristocracy, i.e., those who remained among the elite in the upsurge of industrialization, could only maintain their position through control of their respective state governments. This required the electoral support of the poor whites and the purchase of black votes. To gain the white vote Democractic politicans made appeals to the common man in the language of traditional Southern aristocratic values which had claimed his allegiance in the

past. Southern Democratic politicians donned the white hat and gloves of the defunct planter aristocracy and acquired the titles of Colonel and Major in an attempt to re-evoke the ancient sentiments of loyalty and deference.

Yet when the ante-bellum moral and social order collapsed, when it became clear that "honor" had been supplanted by "greed" (economic individualism is always perceived as greed by adherents to an aristocratic tradition), class conflict, always just beneath the surface, erupted. The Grange, the Wheel, the Southern Alliance and finally the Populist Party, were active all over the South throughout the 1870's, 1880's and 1890's. The protest of all of these movements was clearly directed against the "New South", an industrializing South. The indigenous industrial elites were perceived as dominated and controlled by northern capital. Nevertheless, these protests contained a strong component of reaction against the local gentry, which was seen as betraying the very South they romanticized on the hustings. Thus, the Southern experience after the Civil War can be seen as an instance in which the introduction of market relations or modernization can have a tendency to rupture the traditional social relations between peasants and the gentry.

Blacks in the South

No discussion of the post Civil War South would be complete without an analysis of the role of the blacks in the emergent society. It stands to reason and follows from the past analysis that the more poor whites were victimized and dislocated by the new social order, the

more they would be likely to seek refuge in the traditional values of heirarchy and order. The 1880's and 1890's brought with it an increasing necessity for whites to compete economically with blacks, both on the land as well as in industry. Black sharecropping and convict labor was rapidly introduced. Certainly the Civil War called the social position of blacks into question; they were free but in no way equal, a very ambiguous position in terms of status. Industrialization heightened the economic tensions between blacks and poor whites. Thus, both morally and economically, from the point of view of the poor white, the blacks must be relegated by force, if necessary, to the bottom of the heap. It is not surprising, therefore, that as blacks seemed to be making inroads into white preserves, however small, as aristocratic and paternalistic social relations gave way to the requirements of bourgeois ideals about free competition in the 1890's, that we should see the debut of Jim Crow laws and political disenfranchisement for blacks all over the South.

Modernization in the West

Following Moore's discussion, what is perhaps most salient for understanding the process of modernization in America is not necessarily the absence of a feudal aristocracy. In fact Moore argues that we have indeed had one in America. He compares the Southern ante-bellum planter to the German Junker making the point that there are functional similarities between them if they are not totally congruent in terms of their economic, social and political functions. What is most significant for American history is the absence of a

pre-industrial agricultural population on the land. Thus, in direct contrast to Europe there was a superabundance of land and an absence of agricultural producers to till it. Seen with hindsight, of course, the goal of modernizing agriculture was to settle the producers on the land in such a way as to be compatible with the growth of other bourgeois democratic institutions. There was no need to remove them from the land, but to place them there in such a way that their interests would coincide with interests and ideals of bourgeois democracy. (This is not to argue that there was any intentionality, any over-arching master plan hatched in the corridors of power to do this.) Moore writes,

> The actual effect of the Westward trek, nevertheless, was to strengthen the forces of early competitive and individualist capitalism by spreading the interest in property.[29]

Yet Moore buys the "Turner hypothesis" that the frontier was a "safety valve" for urban proletarian political discontent.

> The existence of free land gave a unique twist to the relations between capitalists and workmen in the beginning stages of American capitalism, stages which in Europe were marked by the growth of violent radical movements. Here energies that in Europe would have gone into building trade unions and framing revolutionary programs went into schemes providing a free farm for every workman whether he wanted it or not.[30]

Yet, in understanding the process of land settlement and its importance to the advent of bourgeois democracy, the important issues are not: 1) whether the frontier was indeed made available to an urban

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[29] Moore, p. 131.

[30] Ibid., pp. 130-31.

proletariat; or 2) whether the frontier acted as a "safety valve" for siphoning off urban worker's discontent. What we must ask is the following: 1) What were the consequences of settlement in generating a system of agricultural enterprise which was conducive to agrarian support of rather than hositility towards bourgeois forms of modernization in the agricultural sector?; 2) How was an agricultural population settled on the successive frontiers which to a great extent supported a society based on individualism and private property, rather than generating an impetus from the left or the right to destroy it?; 3) How was an agricultural population generated which was willing to accept the market as a mechanism for arbitrating questions of economic and hence social justice?

In order to answer these questions, if only cursorily, we must look at public land policies in America. I will argue that the creation of a rationally calculating businessman-farmer on the frontier succeeded not because free or cheap land gave the common man an "interest in property" (peasants also have a deep and abiding interest in owning their own property), but precisely because the principle of "free land for the common man," so deeply embedded in the agrarian myth and the Homestead Act, were not a success but a failure.

Paul Gates writes,[31]

> Uncle Sam's acres were numerous and far-flung by 1815. The business of surveying, sectioning, advertising, selling and collecting the proceeds constituted the largest single area of economic activity in the country

[31] Gates, p. 51.

> and a major obligation of the federal government. It is difficult for people of later generations to realize the extent to which the government was engaged in the land business in the ninetheenth century. (emphasis mine)

Gates goes on to demonstrate[32] how federal land policies until the Homestead Act of 1862 ultimately had the consequence of preventing those of little means from acquiring land. Vast acreages of the public domain were acquired by eastern land companies and private individuals through cash purchase to the highest bidder. Lands held not for settlement but for speculation drove prices beyond the reach of the common man.[33] Speculation did not end with the series of pre-emption acts which began in the 1830's[34] (acts which permitted squatters to cultivate the public domain for a number of years at the end of which they would have to purchase it at public auction). Nor did it end with the Homestead Act either, but became almost a national pasttime engaged in by agricultural producers and capitalists alike. Hofstadter writes,

> Frequent and sensational rises in land values bred a boom psychology in the American farmer and caused him to rely for his margin of profit more on the process of appreciation than on the sale of crops.

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[32] Ibid., Chapters III & IV; Paul Gates, "Land Policy and Tenancy in the Prairie States," Journal of Economic History I (May 1941); and "The Homestead Law in an Incongruous Land System," American Historical Review XLI (July 1936).

[33] Hallie Farmer, "The Economic Background of Frontier Populism," Mississippi Valley Historical Review 10 (1924); R. C. Miller, "The Background of Populism in Kansas," Mississippi Valley Historical Review 11 (1925); Gates, The Farmers Age; and Fred Shannon, The Farmer's Last Frontier, 1860-1897 (New York: Farror and Rinehart, Inc., 1945).

[34] Gates, The Farmer's Age.

> It took a strong man to resist the temptation to ride skyward on lands that might easily triple or quadruple their value in one decade and then double again in the next. It seemed ultraconservative to improve existing possessions if one could put savings or borrowings into new land. What developed in America was an agricultural society whose real attachment was not to the land but to land values.[35]

He sees the consequences of these economic opportunities as the following:

> In a very real and profound sense, then, the United States failed to develop (except in some localities, . . .) a distinctively rural culture. If a rural culture means an emotional and craftsmanlike dedication to the soil, a traditional and pre-capitalist outlook, a tradition-directed rather than career-directed type of character, and a village community devoted to ancestral ways and habitually given to communal action, then the prairies and plains never had one. [It] was not simply that it produced for a market but that it was so speculative, so mobile, so mechanized, so "progressive," so thoroughly imbued with the commercial spirit.[36] (emphasis mine)

Most attempts to make cheap land or free land available (pre-emption, military counties) were stymied by attempts to promote the economic development of the West rapidly and at a profit. Gates writes,

> In the eight years after the passage of the Homestead Law five times as much land was granted to railroads as had been given in the twelve preceding years: 127,628,000 acres were granted between 1862 and 71 to aid in the extension of the railraod net and 2,000,000 acres were granted for wagon roads and canals. Such imperial generosity was at the expense of future homesteaders who must purchase the land.[37]

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[35] Hofstadter, p. 41.

[36] Ibid., p. 43.

[37] Gates, p. 657.

Shannon confirms this trend.

> By June 30, 1890 only 327,659 homestead entries had been perfected. . . . By that date more than four times as much land had been given to the railroad companies.[38]

Shannon[39] also tells us that these perfected homestead claimants were about one-third of those who had originally staked out claims. Land available to homesteaders was usually of inferior quality and/or far from transportation facilities.[40] Both Gates[41] and Shugg[42] agree that the more fertile and productive land was usually purchased at high prices and thus fell into the hands of capitalists who frequently held it as an investment to sell it later when the influx of population should make it more valuable still. What is more,

> . . . most of the choice land in the country (land suited for general agriculture, and having sufficient rainfall to ensure crops) had been picked over before the Homestead Act was passed. . . .[43]

Leading agricultural historians[44] are in agreement that most likely few poor families ever settled the frontier. It appears that a very small proportion of those who went west started as homesteaders or even as squatters, and those who did manage to acquire free farm homes probably did so on the poorer, less productive land.

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[38]Fred Shannon, "The Homestaed Act & the Labor Surplus," American Historical Review XLI (July 1936): pp. 637-51.

[39]Ibid., p. 645.

[40]Gates, p. 655.

[41]Gates, Chapters III & IV.

[42]Shugg, Chapter I.

[43]Shannon, p. 638.

[44]Shannon, The Farmer's Last Frontier; Gates, The Farmer's Age.

Economic viability (not to mention a great success) on the frontier usually required captial for the purchase of relatively large tracts of land. Farmers could then most readily plug into the specialized farming[45] which was profitable only with relatively large farms and relatively large amounts of operating and investment capital for improvements (barns, silos, fences, wells) and mechanization.[46] Those who could not muster the needed capital, or who in lean years defaulted on their mortgages, became tenants[47] or were probably forced to leave the countryside for the cities.

For both the farmer who failed as well as for many of the sons and daughters of those who succeeded, the city, it has been argued, was a "safety valve" for the excess farm population. By a careful comparison of urban and rural census figures Shannon[48] has concluded that the frontier was not the destination of the urban worker but the source of both its proletariat as well as its businessmen and professionals. He writes,

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[45]Although most farmers grew a considerable variety of crops the tendency was to specialize in a particular type of product or crop best suited to the climate or soil. Farmers grew corn, to sell or feed to livestock, wheat, or raised dairy or beef cattle. Theodore Saloutos, and John D. Hicks, Twentieth Century Populism: Agricultural Discontent in the Middle West 1900-1939 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1951), p. .

[46]Everett Dick, The Sod-House Frontier (New York: Appleton-Century Co., 1937), p. 302.

[47]Tenantry in the western states by 1880 was quite substantial, ranging from 6-31% in the plains and prairies. W. J. Spillman and E. A. Goldenweiser, "Farm Tenantry in the U.S.," U.S. Department of Agriculture Yearbook, 1916, pp. 321-46.

[48]Shannon, p. 34.

> At least 20 farmers moved to town for each industrial laborer who moved to the land, and ten sons of farmers went to the city for each one who became the owner of a new farm anywhere in the nation.

Thus, it appears that the free market aided by the public land policy unintentionally ensured two things; firstly, that no excess impoverished agrarian community would remain in the countryside which could ultimately be the source of a revolutionary agrarianism; secondly, that the majority of those who did remain on the land would be loyal to bourgeois democracy and the free market system which was its foundation, because through it they had managed to "succeed." Thus, it was not the Homestead Act which assured the loyalty of the western farmers, but its very failure in fact.

Moore sees the settlement of the west as the functional equivalent of the British enclosures. In his discussion of the Civil War as "the last capitalist revolution," he furthermore argues that the Southern Planters were the functional equivalent of the German Junkers. He compares them to the gentry, as they were the masters of a form of agriculture which was labor repressive as opposed to the western variant which was commercial. The "irrepressible conflict," the Civil War, was for him a contest over which type of market agriculture, and which form of class hegemony, should prevail. The conflict was, he argues, decided on the battlefields in favor of the industrial Northeast. He argues that the Homestead Act must be seen as a political statement addressed to the Western farmer and Northeastern working class requesting their support for the destruction of the Planters' quasi-

feudal society in exchange for free homes. Moore claims that it was the belief in the future availability of free farm homes, which gave the western farmers an interest in allying with the industrial Northeast against the South.[49] Yet, as we have seen, although land was indeed available, it was neither free nor cheap. The promise of the Homestead Act was never fulfilled.

Agrarian Protest--South & West

Agrarian protest manifested itself in America in both the South and the West in the late 19th century. Both these southern and western forms of Populism were responses to economic victimization of the small farmer generated by the industrialization of agriculture. Nevertheless, there was a difference between the forms agrarian protest took in the South and the West.

Firstly, it must be remembered that on the relatively unpeopled western frontier the original settlers encountered no existent gentry or elite. With time, of course, local elites developed in the form of merchants and professionals. Yet, in the 19th century West industrialization was limited generally to railroads, banks and commodity monopolies of various kinds (commercial capitalism as opposed to industrial capitalism). Although the agents of these institutions were on the scene they were not held personally responsible for the plight of the threatened farmer, but were reviled in terms of the

[49] Whether a real belief in this possibility actually existed among various worker and farmer constituencies is not subject to verification here.

institutions they represented. The commodity exchanges, the railroads, and the big banks all emanated from Wall Street, New York, and even London. Thus, as Hofstadter has argued,[50] western agrarian protest was a struggle between small businessmen and large monopolies. Agricultural cooperatives were seen as a way to oppose monopoly with counter-monopoly, and to alter the way the market system conferred its advantages, not necessarily to abolish it. On the other hand, the South, as Moore and Woodward have shown us, emerged from a quasi-feudal social structure. The gentry was superseded and/or transformed into a class of modern capitalists. It was against this new class, represented by the Democratic Party, that impoverished southern farmers primarily directed their hostility, rather than towards exogenous agents of capitalism. Yet, neither Southern or western Populism was the same type of movement that was represented by the Socialist Party which emerged a decade after the end of the 19th century in Oklahoma. The reasons why a qualitatively different type of agrarian protest movement was generated in this state are to be found in the special conditions of Oklahoma's development. It is to a discussion of these conditions and their historical roots that we will now turn.

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[50] Hofstadter, pp. 94-121.

Chapter III

THE HISTORY OF OKLAHOMA

As we have already mentioned, Oklahoma's anomalous development was largely a function of its having been Indian Territory. The policy of the Federal government in the post-Civil War period led to the division of this territory into two separate regions; the western part became known as the Oklahoma Territory and the eastern part Indian Territory. The "Twin Territories" as they were called, were later rejoined to form a single state in 1907. As a result the eastern and western parts of the state experienced two separate and divergent histories and hence different processes of modernization.

In this Chapter I will trace the history of Oklahoma from before the Civil War until statehood. I will treat the history of eastern and western Oklahoma separately in order to lay the foundations for an understanding of the different social structures which emerged from the divergent forms of historical growth.

Oklahoma Before the Civil War

The Five Civilized Tribes--Southern Indians

All of Oklahoma, with the exception of the panhandle (which was originally part of Texas) was part of the Louisiana Purchase made by the U.S. government in 1803. At that time the Kansa and Osage Indians were the tribes indigenous to the

region;[1] they occupied what later became Kansas and Oklahoma until the region was ceded to the Five Civilized Tribes by the U.S. government in the early 19th century, during the period from about 1817 to 1838.[2] The Five Civilized Tribes, as they were called, consisted of the Choctaws, Chickasaws, Cherokees, Creeks and Seminoles. They were originally from what later became the American South. The Creeks were from Georgia and Alabama, the Cherokees from Tennessee and Georgia, the Seminoles from Florida, and the Choctaws and Chickasaws from Alabama and Mississippi.[3]

All of these Southern tribes had had contacts with European settlers in the colonial period. Because of a more sophisticated tribal culture, they had managed, through a complicated pattern of alliances between the original French, Spanish and English settlers, to preserve their tribal integrity and territorial domain by playing one group off against another. It may have been as a result of some special aspect of their cultural life or because of their practice of freely intermarrying with whites, that they assimilated many elements of European technology and culture that the colonials brought with them in their forays into the Indians' domain. By the late 18th and early 19th centuries all the tribes but the Seminoles (who remained primarily a hunting and gathering people), had assimilated into their tribal life many aspects of western technology and culture.

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[1]Annie Heloise Abel, The American Indian As Slaveholder and Secessionist (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Co., 1919), pp. 19-20.

[2]Edward Everett Dale and Morris L. Wardell, History of Oklahoma (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1948), pp. 95, 115.

[3]A. H. Abel, The American Indian as Slaveholder and Secessionist (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Co., 1919), p. 20.

From the whites the Indians learned to domesticate animals and to raise horses, cattle, hogs, and poultry. They learned how to make and use spinning wheels and looms; they learned to make farming implements and to plant orchards and cotton. As the plantation economy moved westward over the Appalachians, many Indians acquired Negro slaves and as a result developed large plantations, cultivating cotton with slave labor. These plantation owning Indians were a small minority of the Indians, as were the white planters a small minority of the whites. They lives in large spacious houses "in a fashion not unlike that of the White Planters of the Old South."[4] The great majority of the Indians, as with their white yeomen counterparts, owned no slaves. They lived in log cabins, cultivated small gardens of cotton and corn, and owned a few horses, hogs, and cattle, which roamed the woods and fattened on nuts and acorns. As can be seen by a comparison of the white southern yeoman described in the previous chapter, this class of Indian resembled his white frontiersman counterpart in this region in the early 19th century.

By about 1820 Protestant missionaries had Christianized the Indians and a phonetic alphabet had been invented which permitted the Cherokee Indian language to be written as well as spoken.[5] The Indians even had tribal governments by this time, which were modeled on the state governments' constitutions in which they resided.[6] The

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[4]Dale & Wardell, p. 83.

[5]Ibid., pp. 80-88.

[6]Abel, pp. 32-33.

tribes also had a system of public education. Thus, by the early part of the 19th century two classes had developed among the Five Tribes which paralleled the white Planter aristocracy and poor white yeoman farmer.

With the advancing settlement of the American whites after the Revolutionary War, the Indians' lands, held communally by the tribes, began to be coveted by the encroaching settlers. With the help of the Federal government the Indians were finally forced (this was formally accomplished by a series of treaties extending from 1817-1838) to cede their land to the U.S. in exchange for monetary indemnities and a new homeland to be given to them in perpetuity west of the Mississippi River.[7] This homeland given to the Five Tribes was politically considered a nation (each tribe had its individual nation) under U.S. protectorate.[8] These nations were located in what later became Oklahoma. From 1819 on, the geopolitical boundaries of the Indian domain changed continuously. Figure 1 illustrates the changing boundaries until 1866.

Indian Civilization in Ante-Bellum Oklahoma

By about 1840 the Indians had re-established themselves in Oklahoma after a long migration westward filled with hardship and suffering, which the Indians later remembered as the "Trail of Tears."

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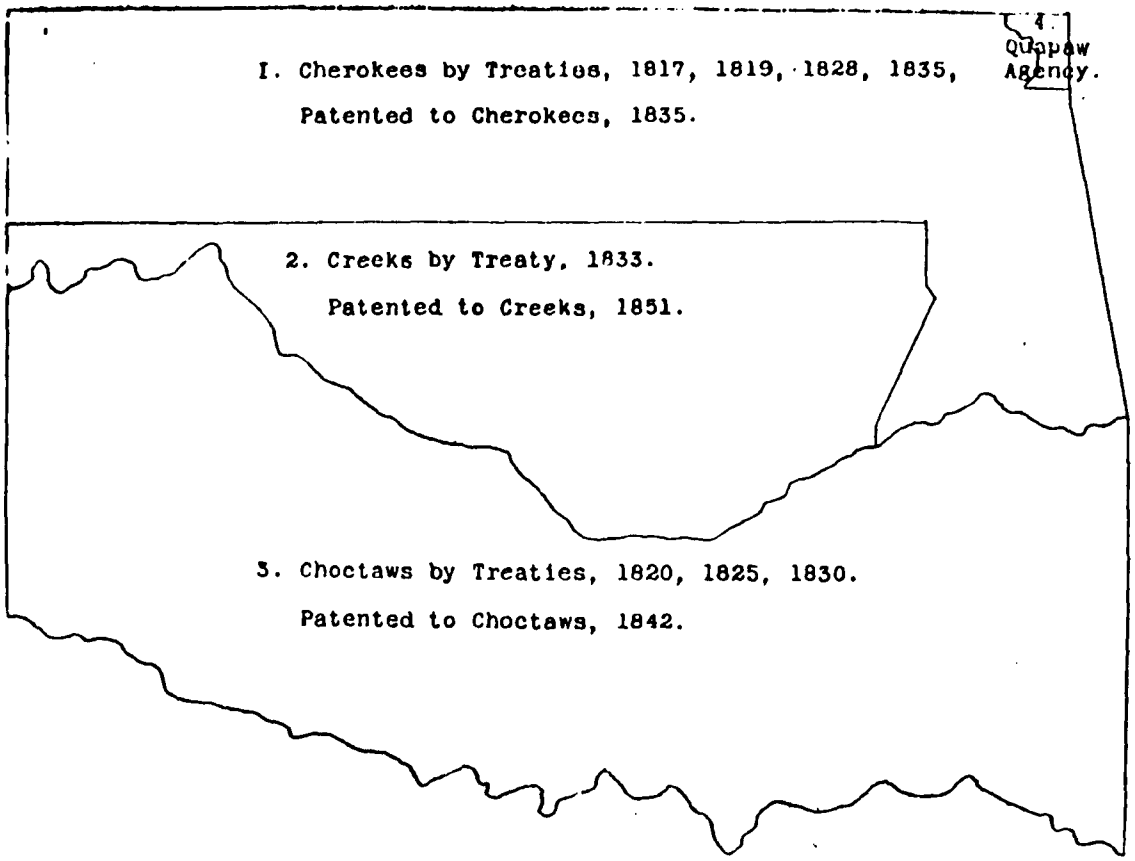
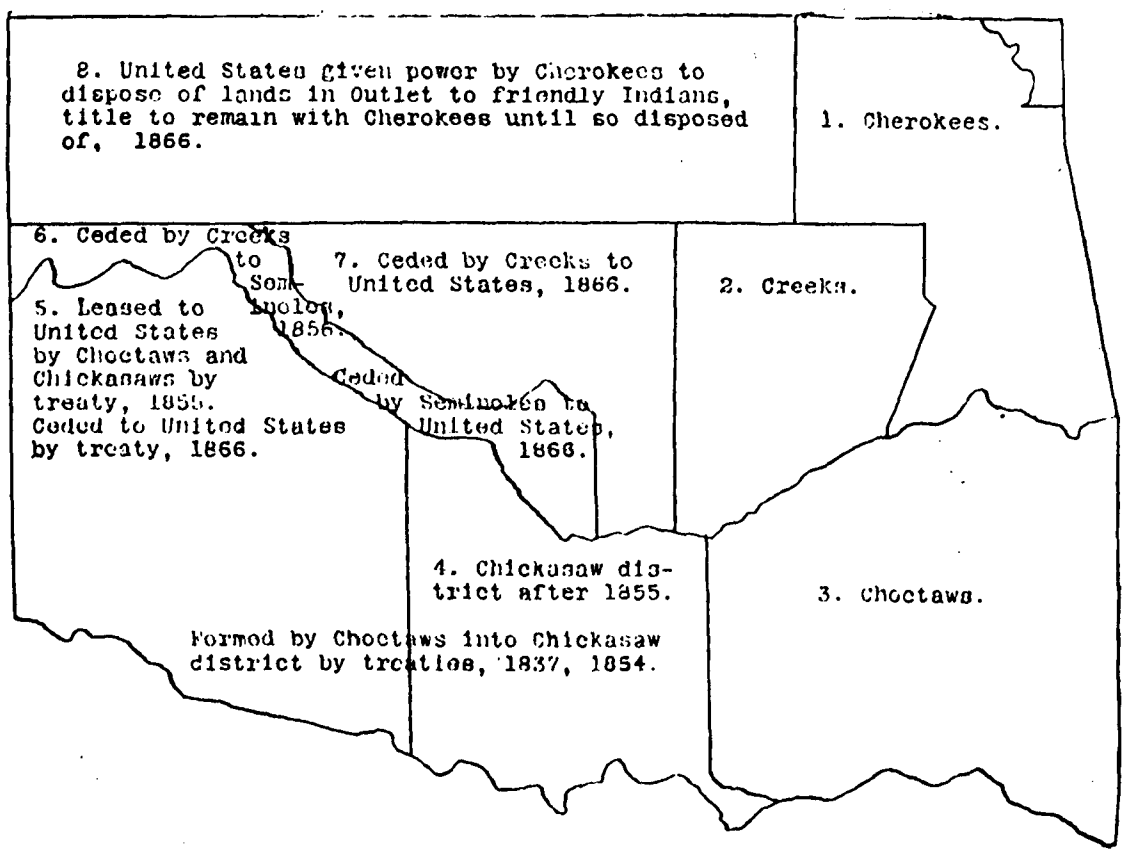
[7]Solon J. Buck, "The Settlement of Oklahoma," Transactions of the Wisconsin Academy of Arts, Sciences and Letters I (1905): pp. 325-80; Angie Debo, And Still the Waters Run (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1940), pp. 6-7.

[8]Dale & Wardell, p. 115.

Figure 1



INDIAN TERRITORY: THE ORIGINAL CESSIONS.



INDIAN TERRITORY: DIVISIONS TO 1866.

Source: Solon J. Buck, "The Settlement of Oklahoma," Transactions of the Wisconsin Academy of Arts, Science and Letters Vol. 1, (1905), plates IX and X.

there they reconstituted their former way of life, and for a few years they prospered.[9] Eugene Genovese[10] claims that the average number of slaves on ante-bellum plantations was fifty. Thus, we can see that some of these Indians, although the ones mentioned above were probably exceptionally wealthy, may have been no less properous than many white planters further to the east. Some Indians brought their slaves with them when they left their ancestral homes. Other Indians, probably the vast majority, rebuilt their log cabins and lived as they had in the past. One historian[11] estimates that a population of 74,000 Indians found their way to Oklahoma from east of the Mississippi at the close of the removal period. In 1834 the Intercourse Act forbade settlement of whites in the "Indian country," as it came to be known,[12] leaving the Indians to reconstitute their society for a short period of time before the additional incursions of the whites began to disrupt tribal life again.

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[9]Although there is no systematic inventory of the extent of property holding, some fragmentary evidence exists which gives us some idea of the extent of the wealth of some prosperous slave-holding Indians who re-established their plantations in Oklahoma. Edna Laura Baum, "Agriculture Among the Five Civilized Tribes" Masters Thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1940.

John Ross had a farm of over 1,000 acres.

Joseph Vann owned a large cotton plantation with 300 Negro slaves.

R. M. Jones owned five plantations, 500 slaves and several steamboats.

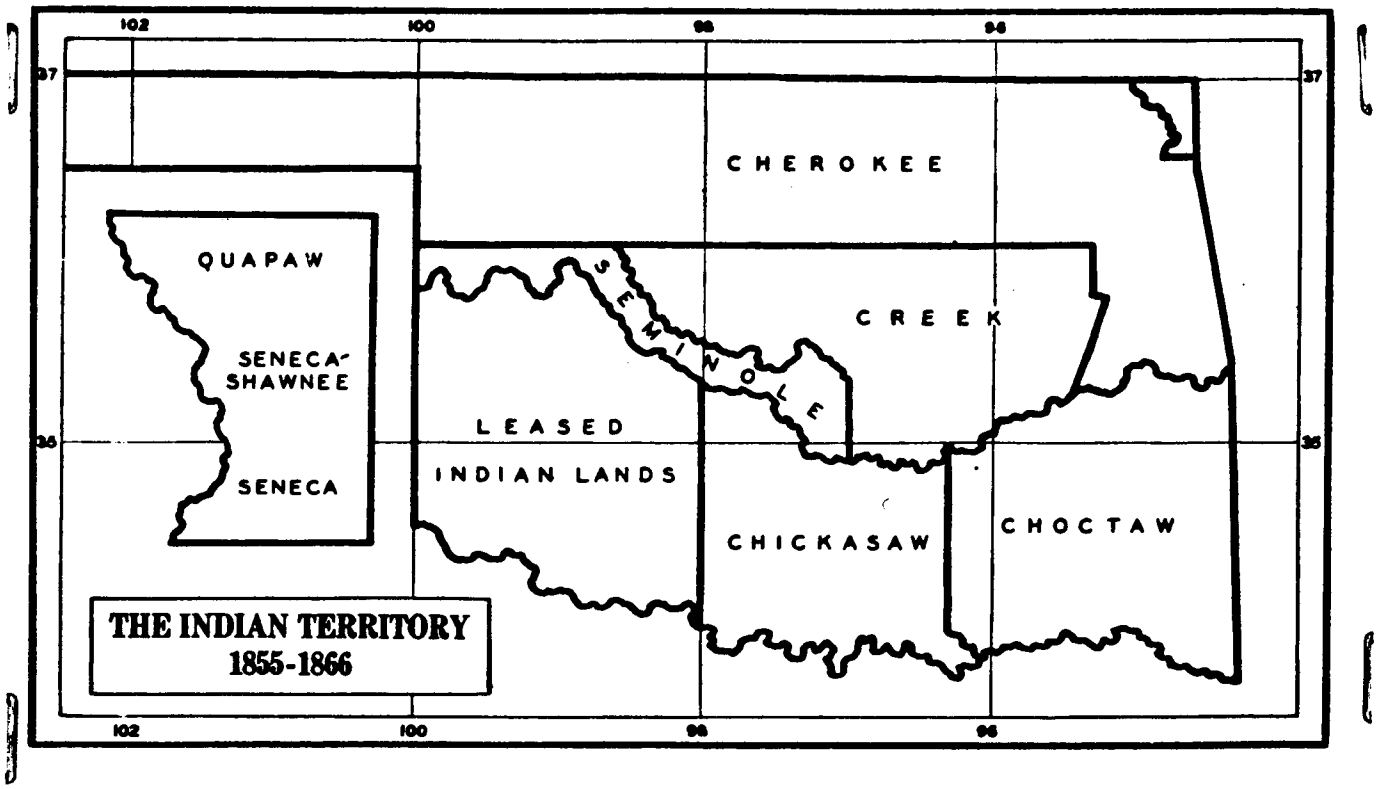
Pittman Colbert had 300-400 acres of cotton and 150 slaves. Ibid.

[10]Eugene Genovese, Roll Jordan Roll: The World the Slaves Made (New York: Random House-Pantheon, 1974).

[11]Abel, p. 20.

[12]Roy Gittinger, The Formation of the State of Oklahoma (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1939), p. 25.

Figure 2



Source: Roy Tettinger, The Formation of The State of Oklahoma, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1939.

In 1854, as a result of the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the decision to build the transcontinental railroad through Kansas, the Indian country was reduced to the 37th parallel which became the southern border of Kansas (see Figure 2).[13] North of the 37th parallel was opened to white settlement as the process of slowly whittling away parts of the Indian domain began again.

Southern Indians and the Irrepressible Conflict

The decade prior to the Civil War was an era full of political conflict in the Indian country. There were political schisms both within and between the tribes on the question of whether to ally with the North or the South. The Choctaws and Chickasaws whose territory lay in the southern portion of the Indian country were firmly committed to a slaveholding society, while the Cherokees, Creeks and Seminoles whose territory lay to the north were divided among themselves on this issue. Despite the internal differences, there were strong pressures for all the tribes to ally with the Confederacy eventually, pressures which were exacerbated during the 1850's.

Firstly, there was the hostility to the Federal government. As a result of all its past dealings with the Indians, it was (perhaps justly) perceived as anxious to dispossess the Indian of his land (witness the Kansas-Nebraska Act which had contracted the size of the Indian domain in 1854). After 1854 the Indian country became a dumping ground for the remnants of various decimated Indian tribes illegitimately

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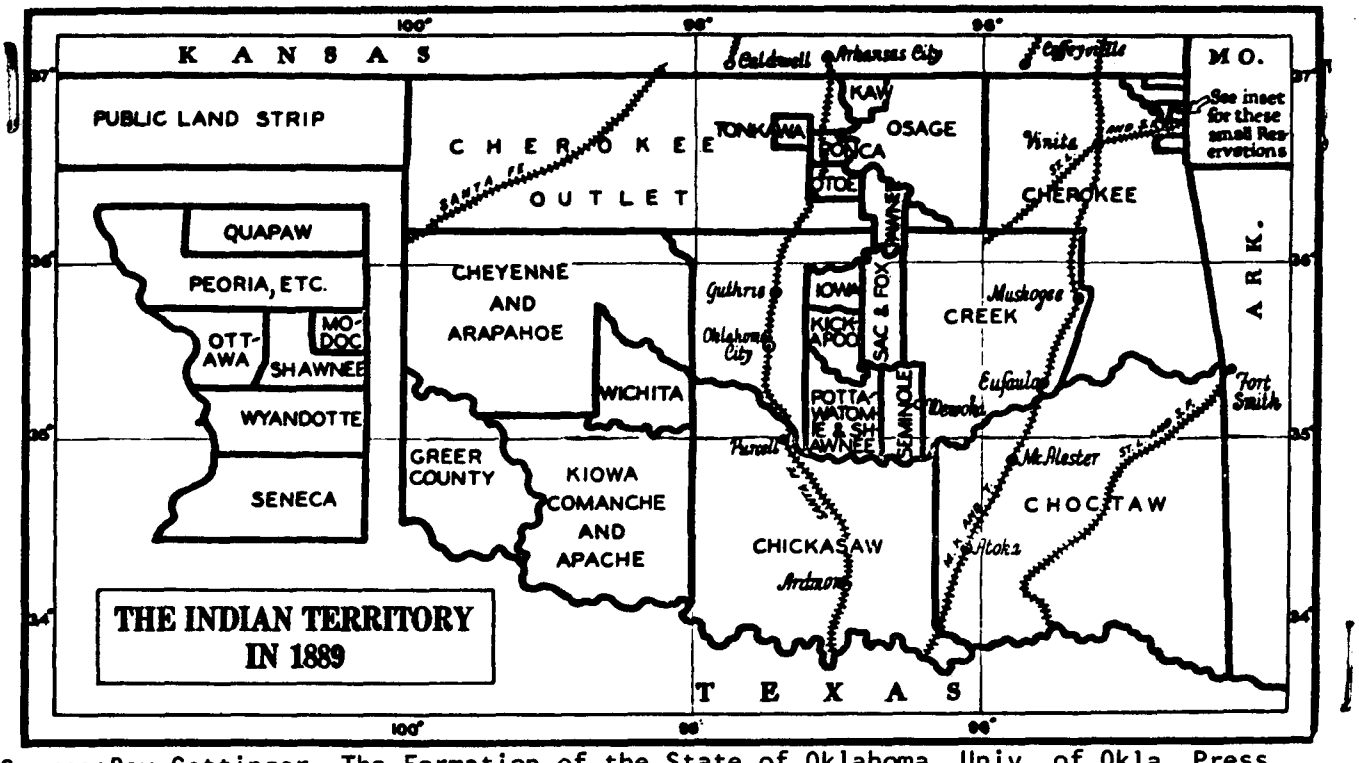
[13] Ibid., pp. 30, 55.

Figure 3

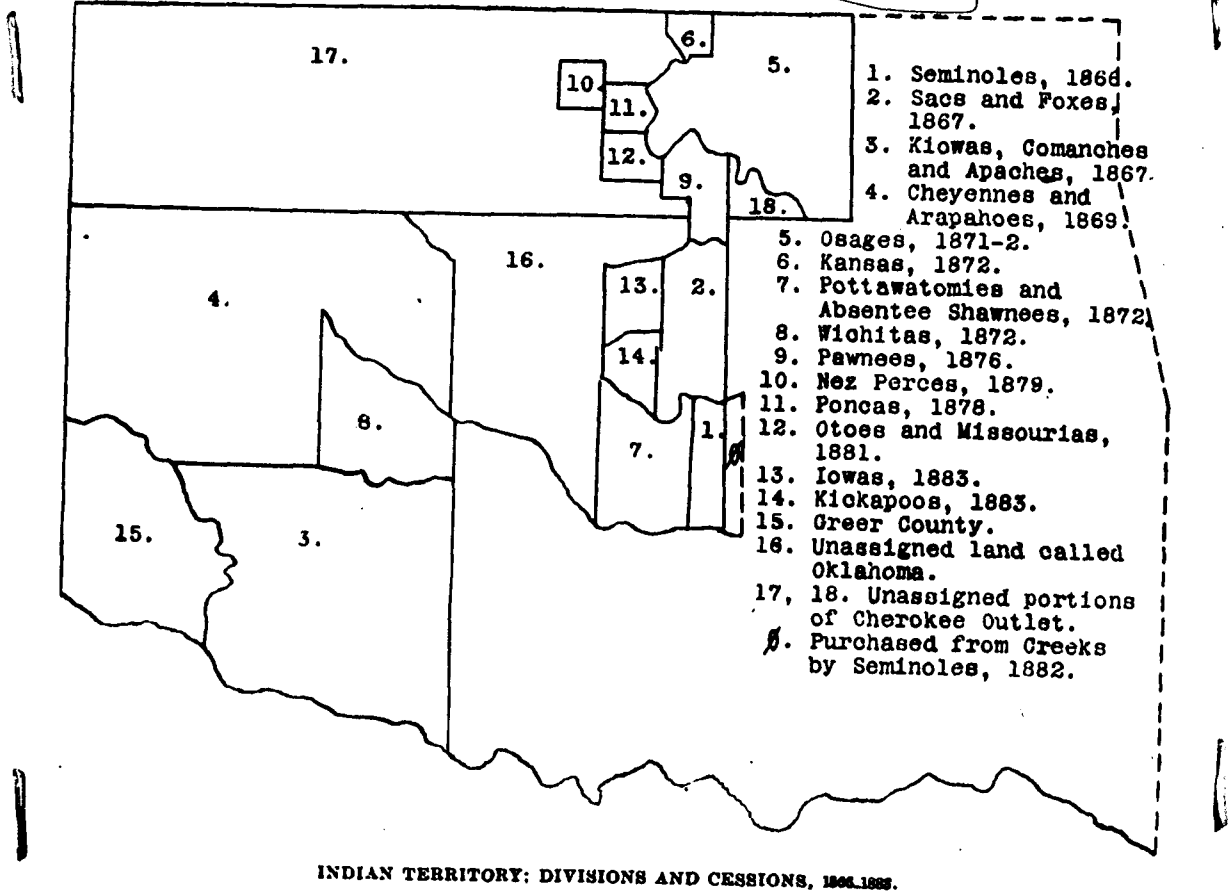


Source: Roy Gettinger, The Formation of the State of Oklahoma, Univ. of Okla. Press, Norman, 1939.

Trans. Wis. Acad., Vol. XV.

Figure 4

Plate XII.



INDIAN TERRITORY: DIVISIONS AND CESSIONS, 1866-1882.

pushed out of Kansas by white settlement. This migration had the support of the Federal Army.[14] The Secretary of State was widely quoted as having made a speech declaring that the Indian Territory should be "vacated by the Indians."[15] The Indians, both slaveholder and yeoman alike, were probably justified in their suspicion that the "abolitionists" and the Radical Republicans wanted their land.[16] To the east lay Arkansas, Missouri and Louisiana. By 1857 federal troops were withdrawn from Indian Territory. Even among those who favoared the North, many began to fear that should they ally with the North the Union was not committed to afford them protection against the South.[17]

The Indian country was also socially and economically linked with the South. The tradition of freely intermarrying with whites both before and after removal to Oklahoma, had resulted in the solidification of relationships through kinship with Southern society and culture. Indian Planters had many white friends and relatives in the Southern states to the east. Southerners became the chief defenders of Indian political prerogatives. They were concerned not with opening the Indian land to white settlement, but with keeping the territory "safe" for a future extension of slavery. Monetary indemnities to the Indians for loss of their original lands, held in

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[14] Abel, p. 55.

[15] Ibid., p. 58.

[16] Ibid., p. 76.

[17] Dale & Wardell, p. 157.

trust for them, were invested in Southern securities.[18] The patronage of the Indian office was granted to Southern traders and merchants, who were given franchises to engage in trade and commerce with the Indians.[19] By the close of 1861 all of the five tribes had signed alliances with the Confederacy.

The Five Tribes paid heavily for their alliance with the South. In 1866 each was forced to sign a treaty with the victorious Federal government which was an agreement to cede to the U.S. the western half of their domain, ostensibly "for the purpose of settling Indians and freedmen thereon."[20] The Indians who were eventually settled on this land were the remnants of other tribes from all over the U.S. which had been decimated by the coming of white settlement. They included among others,

> . . . the Shawnees and Munsees from Ohio, the Delawares, Kickapoos, Potawatomies and Miamis from Indiana and the Ottawas and Chipewas from Michigan, the Wyandots from Ohio and Michigan, the Weas, Peorias, Kaskaskias and Piankeshaws from Illinois and a few New York Indians from Wisconsin.[21]

By 1883 after an infinitely complicated series of treaties, the geopolitical divisions of what later became the state of Oklahoma were carved up into 18 "reservations" and five Indian "Nations." (See Figures 3 and 4.) If we look at Figure 3, the regions which are

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[18] Ibid., pp. 156-57; Abel, p. 67.

[19] Abel, Ibid., pp. 59-60.

[20] Buck, p. 331.

[21] Abel, pp. 19-20.

designated as Creek, Cherokee, Seminole, Choctaw, and Chickasaw, was what remained to the Five Tribes. These five "nations" will hereafter be referred to as Eastern Oklahoma or Indian Territory. The numbered geopolitical divisions in Figure 4 were set aside for the remains of the other Indian tribes. These were not "nations" but "reservations;" they had no political institutions and were in no way self-governing societies. The "Nations" of the Five Tribes retained their tribal governments and could politically regulate the lives of their citizens. Thus, the Five Tribes were relegated to the eastern half of the state and the "blanket Indians" to the west. By the year 1879 the population of the Five Tribes was estimated at about 81,000,[22] and the "blanket" Indians in the west by 1884 were estimated to number about 17,000.[23]

History of Eastern Oklahoma (Indian Territory)

Here the history of the Indian Territory begins to diverge from that of Western Oklahoma. At this point we will focus on the development of the Five Tribes in the eastern domain, and at the conclusion of their story we will then examine the development of the western part of the state. This will allow us to understand the specifics of the process of modernization in the Indian Territory.

Tribal hegemony before the Civil War, as we have seen, was undisturbed by the white man as the frontier was extended to the north and south of Oklahoma. After the Civil War Indian needs for labor and the whites' land hunger both contributed to the infiltration of whites

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[22] Gittinger, pp. 114-115.

[23] Buck, p. 334.

into the Territory. Soon the whites vastly outnumbered their Indian hosts. Although a small Indian elite retained political and economic control of the Indian Territory until the 1890's, the pressure of small businessmen and traders ultimately led to the destruction of tribal control.

Indian society, even after the Civil War, was a unique mixture of ante-bellum class structure and a pre-capitalist quasi-feudal agricultural economy. It was only upon the destruction of tribal hegemony, however, (encouraged of course by the massive influx of whites) that modernization began in earnest. With the destruction of the Indians' communal form of land tenure, eastern Oklahoma became a vast piece of real estate; land became a commodity. The subsistence oriented diversified agriculture that white tenants enjoyed under Indian control was elliminated. Rapidly rising land prices and southern traditions combined to foster a form of agriculture geared to the production of a single cash crop--cotton. Eastern Oklahoma became "Little Dixie" and the social and economic position of white tenant farmers began to deteriorate rapidly.

The Coming of the White Man

In the 20 years after the Civil War the states surrounding Oklahoma experienced a rapid population growth as a result of the continuing migrations westward. These migrations were swelled after the Civil War largely by the demobilization of soldiers[24] as well as by

[24] Dale & Wardell, pp. 276-73.

a severe economic depression in the post-bellum South.[25] Oklahoma, as we will remember, was officially closed to settlement. As long as available land remained for the westward migrants it was not difficult to keep the Indian lands closed to whites,[26] but after the Civil War this changed.

As a part of the post-War treaties with the Indians, all of the Five Tribes gave "explicit consent for the construction of railway lines across their respective tribal reservations."[27] The 1870's and 1880's saw an extraordinarily rapid extension of railroad development so that by 1890 there were 925 miles of railroad in Oklahoma.[28] In 1872 coal was discovered in the Choctaw Nation, the southeast corner of Indian Territory, at McAlester, Krebs and Lehigh.[29] In 1889, 600,000 tons of coal were mined.[30] With railroads and coal mines the need for laborers developed and whites were permitted to enter the Indian Territory with the stipulation that they pay a small, non-prohibitive yearly fee for a work permit.[31] Individual Chocktaw citizens "owned" the coal mines. Choctaw law permitted individuals to stake out mining claims with a radius of one mile. These claims were then leased

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[25]Woodward C. Vann, Origins of the New South, 1866-1913 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951), pp. 108-109.

[26]Gittinger, p. 30.

[27]J. F. Holden, "The B.I.T., The Story of an Adventure in Railroad Building," Chronicles of Oklahoma 11 (March 1933): 637-66.

[28]Gittinger, p. 216.

[29]Buchanan & Dale, p. 261.

[30]Ibid.

[31]Ibid.

to outside operators who developed them, and the royalties were divided between the citizen owner and the Nation.[32]

Although the introduction of whites into the Indian Territory was eventually to be the undoing of Indian autonomy, the enormous growth of what turned out to be a sort of Trojan Horse was accomplished and even fostered by the Indian planter elite. As in the South the Civil War had decimated the Indian population as the Union army had seized Indian property as contraband.[33] Many formerly prosperous Indians spent the later years of the War in what amounted to refugee camps on the borders of Texas and Kansas.[34] The emancipation of the slaves meant that the former planters needed to seek other sources of labor when the War ended. The yeoman Indian, entitled to his own plot to till as a tribal citizen, could not be induced to work in the coal mines or as an agricultural laborer for the more prosperous Indians.[35]

> With the freeing of the slaves . . . [the need] for farm labor immediately became acute, and the number of permits issued to whites to enter the Indian country was vastly increased. In every tribe the leasing of land to whites was forbidden by law and in every tribe this law, in time, came to be persistently evaded.[36]

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[32] Debo, p. 17.

[33] Abel, Under Reconstruction, p. 77.

[34] Dale & Wardell, pp. 273-74.

[35] Inevitably the whites later perceived this unwillingness to work as "laziness."

[36] Ibid., p. 279.

Thus, with the labor of poor white migrants (whose interest in working for the Indians will be discussed later), the Planter Indians were enabled to rebuild their prewar plantations on an even larger scale after the Civil War.

Post Bellum Social Structure in the Indian Territory

Before we describe in detail the consequences of this arrangement, it is necessary to locate the original Indian social structure within a theoretical framework. As has been discussed before, the Indian society resembled an early form of southern society, although differing somewhat from tribe to tribe. As we have seen, the southern frontiersmen who first settled the inland regions of the south were originally herdsmen. The abundance of land in the hill country provided excellent pasturage, and the absence of many people made grazing on the public domain an inevitability. With the increase of population which caused land values to rise, the public domain soon became agricultural land and the herdsmen were displaced. As we have also seen Indian society in Oklahoma reproduced souther class divisions; it had both planter and yeoman types. However, all tribal land was held communally. Communal tenure did not represent whooly a primitive communism as one historian[37] has suggested, but at least in part a pre-capitalist, pre-market form of private property through which the individual accumulation of personal wealth could take place.

> The land was held in common as a tribal domain. Any citizen of the tribe had the right to chose a farm and improve it by building a house, barn and outbuildings, to plow and plant fields, and to put out orchards and vineyards. So long as he lived upon the farm it was

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[37] Baum, p. 1.

> his to use , though he did not actually own the land, which belonged to the tribe as a whole. He did own the improvements, however, and these, together with the use of the land, he could sell to another citizen or could leave by will to his heirs. If he abandoned the farm, however, for a period fixed by law, which was usually three years, it reverted to the public domain and any other tribal citizen might occupy it.[38]
>
> Land not included in farms formed the major part of this public domain, in which all members of the tribe held equal rights. They could hunt there or fish in the streams; they could cut timber from it for firewood or for improvements on their farms, but not for sale outside the limits of the Nation. They could pasture their livestock on the public domain but were prohibited from enclosing it with fences to prevent its being used for grazing by other citizens.[39]

Each tribe was similar to a feudal Gemeinschaft. Membership in the tribe, although it was referred to as "citizenship," was based on the particularistic criteria--kinship (through descent or intermarriage). It was membership in the community which guaranteed one access to rights of land use. The land was not a commodity; it could never be acquired through the universalistic criterion of possession of cash-capital. However, unlike the traditional feudal systems of the past, wealth or surplus was accumulated by the Indian Planter not through the exploitation of members of the community, but by the ability to mobilize the labor of the non-member. Before the Civil War this was represented by slave labor, and afterwards by the availability of white laborers, who were, under tribal regulations, unable to acquire the prerogatives of land use accorded to citizens. The communally held tribal land

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[38] Dale & Wardell, p. 138.

[39] *Ibid.*, pp. 138-39.

monopoly within the context of abundant land (relative to the Indian population it had to support), made the encouragement of white immigration economically lucrative for the Indian elite.

Whites came into the Indian territory as "laborers." However, they were less laborers than tenants (although technically they were not called "tenants").

> This was done by an Indian citizen making a contract with a white man who had received a permit to enter the Indian country as an agricultural laborer to work on the citizen's farm. The contract specified that the person receiving the permit should open up a farm for the Indian, and plow, plant and cultivate a tract of land. In addition he might be required to build a house, dig a well and plant an orchard. For this labor he was to receive instead of a money wage, a share of the crops grown and harvested.[40]

The white laborers could never hope to gain outright or permanent access to land, or to the improvements and livestock their labor generated. If they left the Territory they could sell these latter items, but only to Indian citizens who could use their prerogatives to buy improvements at less than their worth. Whites could gain access to land only to work it, and could not hire additional laborers to expand their production.

As the years passed a diversified commercial agriculture developed in which the Indian Planter elite sold the surplus agricultural produce and invested the return in increasing herds of cattle and a plush lifestyle. The Indian economy was not economically expansive:

> the accumulation of private wealth rather than economic growth was the main economic goal. Nor was Indian society primarily a

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[40] Ibid., p. 280.

money economy. The Indian exchanged his land for white labor. Since there was no private property to tax, money came into the tribal treasuries primarily as revenues from work permits and royalties from coal and cattle leases.

As for the yeoman Indian who chose not to play an acquisitive role, the public domain allowed him to remain within the Gemeinschaft with an assured source of income. He enjoyed the same privileges as the feudal peasant in Europe in the free utilization of the public domain or the "commons." Yet like the ante-bellum white yeoman, he was better off than the serf or peasant; he was entitled to an economic subsistence without any responsibility to provide labor or goods for an overlord. In this particular case the "free peasant" was made possible only by the existence of black slaves, and later by white labor which could be commanded to generate a surplus for the small Indian elite.

The White Majority--Its Stake in the Indian Territory

By the 1880's the agriculture practiced by the Indian elite became much more extensive, as a result of a vast influx of whites. At this point whites began to enter the Indian Territory in enormous numbers. One author[41] estimates that by 1879 there were 8,700 whites in Indian Territory. By 1884 there were 35,000.[42] Census figures for 1890 and 1900 show that the white population had increased to 111,254 and 302,680 respectively.[43]

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[41] Gittinger, p. 114.

[42] Baum, p. 78.

[43] Thirteenth Census, Vol. I, Part 1, p. 553 (Population, General Report and Analysis).

(Table 1) Population of Indian Territory

	1879[a]	1884[b]	1890[c]	1900[d]
Indians	59,300	70,000	51,279	52,500
Blacks	13,000		18,636	36,853
Whites	8,700	35,000	110,254	302,680
Total	81,000	105,000	180,164	392,680

As we can see, while the Indian population actually decreased slightly from 1879 to 1900, the white population had increased to the point where it greatly outnumbered the Indian population to a ratio of 6 to 1.

This influx of white settlers was most likely responsible for the vast increase of acreage under cultivation in the last twenty years of the 19th century. Although census figures are not available for Indian Territory before 1900 the Indian Commissioner's Reports provide some estimate of the increase. In 1879, 273,000 acres were cultivated in Indian Territory. Only four years later this figure had jumped to 400,000 acres. By 1900 a full 3,000,000 acres were under cultivation.[44]

The sociologists now must ask why so many whites were induced to enter Indian Territory only to become permanent tenants under an Indian

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(a) Estimated by Roy Gettenger, The Formation of the State of Oklahoma (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1939), p. 114.

(b) Estimated by Laura Edna Baum, "Agriculture Among the Five Civilized Tribes," (M.A. thesis, Department of History, University of Oklahoma, 1940).

(c) & (d) Thirteenth Census (1910), Vol. 1, Population, Part 1, p. 553.

[44] Baum, pps. 41-42.

landlord. We can only conjecture that the lure of unoccupied land must have been very strong. Many squatters or "intruders" came illegally to the Indian Territory, ultimately daring the federal authorities to remove them by force. Although they were frequently removed by Federal troops, they often proved very difficult to dislodge. Firstly, these tenants probably had hopes that possession would ultimately give them rights of ownership when and if the Indians' hegemony was lifted. Agitation by railroads, businessmen and farmers in the 1870's and 80's[45] for abrogation of U.S. treaties with the Five Tribes in order to throw Oklahoma open to white settlement was pervasive, both in Washington and locally, and thus made these hopes realistic.

Since the demand for labor was greater than the supply, "wages" or the terms of tenantry were probably good in comparison to other available opportunities. Although this author knows of no information as to the standard of living of white tenants in Indian Territory during this period, we do know that long term leases (five to ten years) were available,[46] while the pattern in both the West and the South was a one year lease. Some cash rentals at ten cents an acre could be had[47] during

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[45] Baum, p. ; Gittinger, p. 123, Dale & Wardell, Buchanan & Dale, pp. 226-27.

[46] Baum, p. 71.

[47] William H. Murray, Memoirs of Governor Murray and True History of Oklahoma (Boston: Meador Publishing Co., 1945), Vol. I, p. 220.

this period. At this cost a 160 acre tract could be rented for as little as $16.00 a year or just $2.00 less than the cost of the homesteading fee in Kansas.[48] We know that the Indian elite which controlled the large plantations were anxious for white labor. A long term political struggle between the Indian majority, who were subsistence minded, and the Planters developed over the regulation of entering white labor. The Planters wanted low fees and the others wanted high fees.[49]

Ultimately, the judgment of what constitutes conditions which are attractive is relative to the individual's past experiences and hence his expectations. If we assume that under the conditions of the day men would rather be owners than tenants it seems plausible to infer that those who came to Indian Territory did not have the capital to buy farm homes. We know that in Kansas the 1880's saw an agricultural depression in which many thousands lost their homes and as a result left the state.[50] Poor white southerners migrated west to Louisiana, Arkansas and Texas[51] as a result of the post-bellum agricultural impoverishment in the late 1870's. To these people, the availability of fertile new land in Indian Territory, without

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[48]Everett Dick, The Sod-House Frontier (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1937), p. 118.

[49]Baum, p. 71.

[50]R. C. Miller, "The Background of Populism in Kansas," Mississippi Valley Historical Review 11 (1925): 477; Hallie Farmer, "The Economic Background of Frontier Populism," Mississippi Valley Historical Review 10 (1924): 418, 419, 421.

[51]Woodward, p. 109.

the risks of the deepening cycle of indebtedness brought about by the crop lien laws (which prevailed among both black and white sharecroppers in the South at that time[52]), may have appeared promising and lucrative indeed. Finally, the western half of Oklahoma was opened up to homesteading in 1889 (see below). Heavily advertised by railroads, and newspapers, the number of potential settlers who participated in the land runs far exceeded the number who could be accommodated on the available acreage.[53] Many who failed to stake out claims probably became tenants in Indian Territory instead.[54] The enormous growth of the white population during the last decade of the 19th century in the Indian Territory, lends support to this hypothesis (See Table 1).

The White Majority as Trojan Horse

The railroads, the coal mines, but mostly the overwhelming number of white settlers within the borders of Indian Territory ultimately became a Trojan horse which led to the final extinguishing of tribal hegemony. Although the Indian planters sought short time economic benefit by encouraging the immigration of laborers, in the long run it was a policy which was not in harmony with the long range interests of tribal autonomy. The Indian governments had no civil or penal jurisdiction over whites in the Territory, while the U.S. government had virtually no control over whites either. Lawlessness and anarchy prevailed.

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[52] Ibid., pp. 180-82; Rupert Vance, Human Factors in Cotton Culture: A Study of the Social Geography of the American South (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1929), p. 155.

[53] Buck, pp. 345-47, 365.

[54] Murray, p. 220.

> Outlawry was rampant, and the revolver and the bowie knife the arbiters of disputes.[55]

Another historian writes,

> Trains were robbed almost in sight of thriving towns and nothing done about it; murders were committed and the murderers never brought to justice.[56]

Although the proportion of outlaws brought to justice may have been small,

> It was reported that the Federal Judge at Fort Smith [who was given jurisdiction over penal offenses in Indian Territory as of 1875] had imposed 153 death penalties between 1875 and 1895; . . .[57]

The white settlers, with no government of their own,had no taxes to pay, but also no schools and other public facilities (sewers, sidewalks, roads, etc.). Only an Indian agent existed with authority to provide for any of these things. More importantly, however, the white businessmen and traders,permitted into the Indian Territory by paying a license fee, were excluded from lucrative opportunities by the Indian trade monopoly which prevailed.[58] "Free competition" was the inevitable demand, but most significantly businessmen as well as potential settlers wanted the Indians' land.

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[55]Henry S. Brown, "The Indians of Oklahoma," Outlook 85 (Jan. 19, 1907): 115.

[56]Loren N. Brown, "The Dawes Commission," Chronicles of Oklahoma 9 (March 1931): 75.

[57]Ibid., p. 86.

[58]Murray, p. 203.

The Termination of Indian Hegemony

Many rationalizations were offered for the termination of Indian control of the land that had been given to them "in perpetuity." It was argued that the land monopolization of a few Indians was denying the majority of citizens access to their birthright. Yet at the same time the uncultivated areas of the Indian public domain was seen as going to waste in the hands of the Indians, since the "lazy" Indians lacked the "incentive" under the "socialistic" form of land tenure that prevailed, to develop it. The system of land tenure as practiced by whites was seen as "progressive" while the Indians were seen as "conservative," i.e., they were not motivated by the Protestant Ethic. The Indians were seen as "noble savages" living in a pastoral haven of untapped natural resources which awaited only the "initiative" of free enterprise to tap. No doubt aspects of racism supported the whites in conceiving of the Indians as an "inferior" people and not worthy to receive the benefits of their domain.

In 1887 the U.S. Congress passed the Dawes Severalty Act. It provided that Oklahoma's Indian reservations be abolished and that allotments of 160 acres be made to all heads of Indian families, 80 acres to unmarried adults, and 40 acres to children and freedmen. The remainder was to be purchased by the government and thrown open to entry under the terms of the Homestead Act.[59] This act paved the way for the settlement of

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[59]The exact details of the Act are numerous and too complicated to be dealt with in full here. For a detailed description of the political negotiations between the Dawes Commission and the Five Tribes see Loren N. Brown, p. 86).

western Oklahoma. The small number of Indians on the reservations were given allotments and the remainder of the land, the vast majority of it, was opened up to white settlement.

Later, in 1887 the Five Tribes were exempted from the provisions of the Dawes Act and for six years more their hegemony remained intact. By 1893 the exemption was reversed. The Dawes Commission was appointed and sent to the Indian Territory to "negotiate" a treaty with the Five Tribes to extinguish their tribal rights to the Indian country, and to allot the land in severalty. Not surprisingly the Indians were reluctant to voluntarily give up their rights and for five years they procrastinated and delayed.[60] Finally in 1898 Congress passed the Curtis Act which terminated the tribal tenure without the Indians' consent.[61] The tribal governments were to pass out of existence by 1906.

> The terms under which the Indian was to hold his allotment differed in the various agreements, but all of them contained provisions to protect the inexperienced allottee in his new title. It was recognized that the Indian under communal tenure had developed no familiarity with written contracts, deeds, mortgages, taxes and other methods of alienating his holdings. A limited portion of the allotment, designated the 'homestead' was accordingly guarded by restrictions against alienation, while the remainder, which came to be known as the 'surplus,' would soon pass freely into the Indians' control. It was expected that the Indian would immediately sell his surplus, and that living on his homestead he would be surrounded with white neighbors. This would satisfy the land hunger of the white men, would open the country to development of its resources, and would distribute the Indian population among the general citizenship of the community.[62]

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[60] Ibid.

[61] Debo, pp. 32-33.

[62] Ibid., p. 36.

Allotment and the Coming of the Grafter

Certainly as a result of allotment the former Indian land monopoly and system of land tenure was destroyed. Yet it was definitely not the small subsistence oriented Indian farmer or the white tenant farmer who ultimately benefited from the change in land tenure. The white businessman, the land speculator or the "grafter" as he was called, was the major beneficiary of this "progress."

The more traditional Indians, "fullbloods" as they were called,[63] although they were of course opposed to the allotment process, were both uninvolved and powerless with regard to the process. Allotment was to put each in possession of a parcel of land which was rapidly becoming a valuable commodity. Yet most of the Indians were,by one means or another, fraudulently done out of their patrimony. Angie Debo[64] has painstakingly documented how ways were found, more frequently than not illegal ways, to encourage the ignorant Indians (ignorant of "written contracts, deeds, mortgages, taxes" and other forms of modern contractual arrangements) to part with their land. They were easy prey for speculators who found ways to acquire de facto if not de jure possession of land which they were legally entitled to sell, as well as land which was "restricted" (non-salable for 25 years). One other author describes this process.

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[63]This nomenclature was not based on actual "blood" but upon traditional as opposed to market oriented economic behavior.

[64]Debo, p. 36.

> Land hawks, working with Indian agents, leased large sections of Indian lands and, in turn, subleased them to settlers. . . . [There was] a firm of speculators who controlled 30,000 acres of land in the Indian Territory and leased it to over 1,500 tenants.[65]

The process by which this occurred is described by Debo as follows.

> The Indians were too poor to travel the long distance to the land office and maintain themselves there for several days awaiting their turn. In selecting their allotments they had, of course, no conception of the surveyors numbered descriptions and could not identify their own holdings. The ubiquitous grafter who furnished them transportation, board and lodging and assistance in selecting their allotment, performed a real service.
>
> Enterprising scouts went into the fullblood settlements, gathered up the Indians, loaded them on trains and brought them in, andsold them to the highest bidder among the real estate dealers, at ten, twenty-five, or even $30 a head. The purchaser then coached his Indian to choose as their surplus the land to which he claimed some sort of possessory title, and secured a lease that was a virtual gift.[66]

Corruption was rife in the Federal land office which was charged with administrating the process of allotment.

> The term "grafter" was applied as a matter of course to dealers in Indian land, and was frankly accepted by them. The speculative fever also affected Government employees so that it was almost impossible to prevent them from making personal investments.[67]

Some of the more business oriented Indians, those who had acquired large holdings before allotment, found ways to hold on to them.[68] Robert L. Owen was one of these.

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[65] Carey McWilliams, Ill Fares the Land (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1942), p. 189.

[66] Debo, p. 95.

[67] Ibid., p. 92.

[68] Murray, pp. 248-53.

> He had established and improved this property in 1887, . . . Then the Curtis act had "confiscated" his land by forcing the division of the Cherokees estate with no compensation for the investments of excess holders. He accordingly instructed his agents to allot the lands inside his old fences to Cherokee citizens who in most cases lived nearly a hundred miles away and had no land that they cared to take as surplus. The agents made rental contracts with the allottees, which guaranteed the delivery of warranty deeds as soon as the land should become alienable, and which carried "every security which they could devise to ensure good faith in carrying out the contract."[69]

Thus as the decade 1900-1910 wore on the majority of the land in Indian Territory passed into the hands of both white and Indian grafters. Yet, given the extensive intermarriage these Indians practiced by this time the line between white and Indian was blurred indeed.

The Grafter and the Tenant--The Transition to a Capitalistic Agriculture

The process of land transfer is significant mostly from the point of view of the white tenant who, before allotment, had been the tenant of an Indian landlord. The Curtis Bill of 1898 had "declared all leases of Indian land illegal."[70] Thus the tenure arrangements the whites had with their landlords were to be abruptly brought to an end. In cases where the Indian landlord had had holdings in excess of his legal allotment share, the confiscation of the additional acreage (in cases where the Indian could not find some technicality),in order to put the new allottee in possession, meant the Indian's former tenant would have to leave.[71]

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[69] Debo, pp. 98-99.

[70] Murray, p. 248.

[71] Debo, pp. 51-52.

William Murray was a white man who came to Indian Territory in the 1890's. He "read law" for several months and became a lawyer for the Chickasaw Indian Planter elite and acted as legal counsel to the Chickasaws in their legal battles to oust white leaseholders after the Curtis Act. Murray writes of these tenants,

> I realized there wasn't one out of 100 that had any equity in their (sic) holdings at all, and that sooner or later they had to give up . . . and that the Indian would take possession; . . .[72]

Murray reports a case in which 35 leaseholders were to be served with notices to vacate their farms. After serving them with notices, fearful for his very life, he sent an emissary to a meeting with these tenants. The emissary reported that he had indeed been met--by 75 men with guns.[73] Murray reports cases of deputy marshalls who were killed by tenants who were outraged at their loss of tenure. The principled hostilities must have shaded off into the unprincipled ones during this era as "hired guns" attempted to make their fortunes on the proliferation of this type of feud.[74] Murray offers evidence that those tenants who were not forced to leave may have experienced an increase in their rents. Murray claims he made improvements for some of the tenant farms he was managing for the Chickasaws so that, as he claims, they were willing to pay increased rents.[75]

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[72] Murray, p. 243.

[73] Ibid., pp. 248-53.

[74] Ibid., pp. 252-53.

[75] Ibid., p. 249.

We do know that the period roughly between 1900 and 1915, the same period in which the Indian allotments were in the process of being distributed, was a period of rising prices for all agricultural commodities after the low prices of the nineties.[76] Yet the white tenants in Oklahoma became increasingly impoverished,[77] as the population of that region increased by about 100%. (1900--392,033; 1910--823,979.)[78]

One historian argues that the process of impoverishment of the Indian Territory tenant farmers was a result of the difficulty of individuals to acquire land in large enough tracts to provide enough produce for a family living. McWilliams writes,

> The lands in the eastern part of the state were broken up into small sized fragments and the region was soon dotted with tiny holdings of ten, fifteen and twenty acres.[79]

Yet, if we look at the percent of farms in 1910 in the region that had been Indian Territory prior to statehood we find that the number of farms under 20 acres is relatively small, certainly not significant enough to account for the widespread poverty which presumably was generated.

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[76] L. F. Cox, p. 100; Richard Hofstadter, The Age of Reform (New York: Knopf-Vintage, 1955), p. 168.

[77] U.S. Senate, Commission on Industrial Relations, "Land Question in the Southwest," Final Report, 64th Congress, First Session, Document #415, 1916, X, (see Testimony of Nagle, Giddings, Thurman).

[78] Calculated from Thirteenth Census (1910), Population, Vol. I, General Report & Analysis, pp. 361-409.

[79] McWilliams, p. 189.

(Table 2) % of Farms Under Twenty Acres

% under 3 acres	0
% 3 to 9 acres	1.3
% 10 to 19 acres	6.1

Source: Calculated from Thirteenth Census (1910), Statistics of Agriculture, Supplement for Oklahoma, pp. 634-41.

Furthermore if we look at the statewide correlations between size of farm and ethnicity of population we find that it was not the white tenants who were associated with the small farms but primarily the Indian population.

(Table 3) Ethnicity and Size of Farm

	under 3 acres	3-9 acres	10-19 acres
% Native White of Native Parents	-.1676	-.3601	-.3408
% Negroes	+.1851	+.2387	+.2781
% Non-white (excluding Negroes) (this represents Indians)	+.1092	+.3158	+.3879

(.302 significant at the 1% level)

It also appears that the impoverization of farmers in Indian Territory was not a result of a rapid increase of tenantry during the years 1900 to 1910. Tenantry rates were calculated to be about 75% in Indian Territory in 1900, just two years after the Curtis Act was passed.[80] At this point the tribal lands were just beginning to undergo allotment

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[80] Shannon, p. 418.

and the high tenancy rate most likely reflected the effects of tenantry under Indian hegemony. By 1910 the percent of tenantry, after the effects of allotment had changed the landscape of the country, was 72%.[81] What seems to have happened was that the amount of tenancy, tenancy in itself,was not responsible for the impoverishment, but the type of tenancy which emerged, as we will see below. By 1910 most of the Indian lands had already passed into the hands of white "grafters,"[82] as the restrictions on the sale of Indian allotments were removed first in 1904 and then again in 1908.

Rising Land Values and the Development of a One-Crop Economy

When the Indian tenure was lifted and the land first became a salable commodity, as in other states where land was suddenly opened for sale,[83] land values began to rise. Although the census figures for what was Indian Territory in 1900 and the eastern portion of Oklahoma which was constructed at statehood in 1907 from the Indian Territory, are not strictly comparable, we can compare land values for each Indian Nation in 1900 with like figures for the counties which were eventually created from these Nations in 1907. Although the political boundaries are not always completely congruent we can arbitrarily include a county as a part of a former Indian Nation if it falls approximately within its former boundaries. Thus, the increase in land values between 1900 and 1910 can be compared. This can be seen in Table 4.

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[81] Calculated from Thirteenth Census, Agriculture, (Reports by State), Volume 7, Part II, Table 2, pp. 372-79.

[82] Debo, pp. 138-39, 179-80.

[83] Gates, Miller, Farmer.

(Table 4) Land Values in Indian Territory

	1900 (Average value of land & improvements--except buildings)	1910 (Average value of farm land per acre)
Cherokee	$ 5.19	$19.31
Chickasaw	5.58	18.41
Choctaw	6.10	12.83
Creek	4.25	19.51
Seminole	13.61	11.42

1900 figures calcualted from 12th Census (1900), Agriculture, Vol. 5, Part 1, p. 276 & p. 78.

1910 figures calculated from 13th Census (1910), Statistics of Agriculture, Supplement for Oklahoma, pp. 634-41.

(Note) 1900 figures include improvements made to land but excludes the value of bldgs. 1910 figures only include the value of the land. Thus, the 1900 figures are probably on the high side. The 1910 figures are probably on the low side since Census figures reflect values for tax assessment purposes. These are usually lower than the actual sale price. We must also keep in mind that it is difficult to estimate dollar value in 1900 before the land was fully marketable.

These rises in land values, although they would at first appear enormous, doubling and quadrupling in a period of ten years, were not, however, atypical. If we bear in mind that the decade from 1900 to 1910 was a period of high agricultural prices, rising land values makes sense. We can see from Table 5 that in states neighboring Oklahoma both in the South and the prairie states, farm land prices rose comparably to those of Oklahoma, both Indian Territory as well as the western part of the state which was then Oklahoma Territory.

(Table 5) Average Value of Farm Land (per acre)

	1900	1910
Kansas	$12.77	$35.45
Nebraska	16.27	41.80
Oklahoma Terr.	8.11	24.03
Indian Terr.	6.90	16.30
Louisiana	9.74	17.99
Arkansas	6.32	14.13

Source: Thirteenth Census of the U.S., Vol. 5, Agriculture, Reports by State, Vols. 6 & 7.

(Note) Land values are based on tax assessment criteria. They are usually significantly lower than the actual market value of the land. They are useful here, however, because they provide information on the comparative value of farm land as it varies between states and between 1900 and 1910.

This rapid rise in land values was accompanied, as we have seen, by a doubling of the population. In addition, the average size of farm decreased from 154.7 acres to 113 acres, while the number of farms had doubled from 45,505 to 83,024.[84] This was accompanied by a basic change in the nature of agriculture as white landlords, "grafters," took over from the Indian Planters. The dispossessed farmers were, as we have seen, frequently forced to leave their farms or rent from the real estate dealers who had recently acquired the acreage. This led to a change in the nature of agriculture practiced. The grafters, of course, wanted quick returns. What had originally been a rather diversified commercial farm

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[84] Calculated from Thirteenth Census (1910), Agriculture, Volume 7, Table 1, pp. 364-371.

(Table 6)

Agricultural Products Grown in the Indian Territory

	No. Cattle	No. Swine	No. Acres in Wheat	No. Acres in Corn	No. Acres in Cotton
Cherokee					
1884	250,000	X	X	X	X
1900	304,100	192,689	185,238	411,067	58,627
1910	92,155	487,652	33,645	625,440	99,684
Chickasaw					
1884	100,000	X	X	X	X
1900	692,000	242,086	42,097	457,583	263,140
1910	159,528	474,973	2,839	924,096	334,476
Choctaw					
1884	170,000	X	X	X	X
1900	183,550	130,745	6,584	155,776	90,366
1910	86,257	515,575	415	410,935	207,425
Creek					
1884	150,000	X	X	X	X
1900	306,548	70,056	5,045	118,340	27,454
1910	72,796	231,723	2,418	408,282	171,275
Seminole					
1884	40,000	X	X	X	X
1900	6,945	6,170	22	6,245	2,441
1910	7,453	50,891	22	45,758	44,812

(Table 6 continued)

	No. Cattle	No. Swine	No. Acres in Wheat	No. Acres in Corn	No. Acres in Cotton
Total					
1880	X	X	X	X	35,000
1884	710,000	X	X	X	X
1890	X	X	X	X	70,078
1900	1,492,693	641,746	238,986	1,149,011	142,065
1910	418,189	2,260,814	39,339	2,414,511	857,672

Sources: 1910 figures calculated from Thirteenth Census (1910)
1880, 1890 and 1900 figures calculated from Twelfth Census (1900), Agriculture, Vol. 5, Part 1, pp. 434-35: and Vol. 6, Part 2, pp. 238, 423.
1884 figures estimated by Laura Edna Baum, "Agriculture Among the Five Civilized Tribes, 1865-1906," (M.A. thesis, Dept. of History, University of Oklahoma, 1940), p. 55.

economy based on cattle ranching and wheat, (see Table 6), both capital intensive forms of agriculture, was transformed into a labor intensive, traditional Southern form of agricutlure. This was reflected in smaller holdings which were cultivated by sharecroppers rather than tenants (a distinction which will be explained later). As in the South these sharecroppers grew corn and cotton and raised hogs. The transformation in the agricultural economy can be seen in the following table.

As can be seen from Table 6 cotton culture became significant in Indian Territory in the 1890's, before the Curtis Act. It was not first introduced with the allotment process, but had played a part in a diversified commercial agriculture until it became primary. This change was not brought about solely by the loss of Indian hegemony but was also encouraged by the increased demand for cotton and the concomitant higher prices this commodity commanded during the decade 1900-1910.[85] It was also precipitated by the decline in the cattle ranching industry which had played a large part, as Table 6 indicates, in the Indians' agricultural economy.

While we have no data on rents paid by tenants before the allotments or after the process began, what appears to have happened was a change from a commercial form of market agriculture to one which was labor repressive. What seems to have happened is that the white tenant population of Indian Territory, with little capital, was forced to change their Indian landlords for a form of land tenure which was more economically exploitative; they experienced a deterioration of

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[85] Vance, p. 125.

economic and social status in the process, the results of which will be documented further on.

Modernization in Western Oklahoma (Oklahoma Territory)

As we have mentioned above western Oklahoma experienced a different process of modernization from that of the eastern part of the state. To reiterate, it was set aside as a reservation, a dumping ground for the remnants of the Indian tribes who had been dispossessed by white settlement. Yet, with few Indians, the empty grasslands were soon semi-legally overrun by cattle ranchers who used the region to pasture their herds. Soon land hungry farmers began clamoring for the ouster of the cattle men and the opening of the territory to settlement. Finally, Oklahoma Territory, in 1889, was opened to farming under the terms of the Homestead Act.

Western Oklahoma's development originated in attempt to fulfill the promise of the Homestead Act on the American frontier. In Oklahoma the policy of providing free land to farmers, unlike their experience in many other states, was actualized. Yet the failure of the Act in other states seems to have been propitious for the development of bourgeois democracy, and, as we will see, an agrarian protest movement which accepted the major assumptions of such a system. In western Oklahoma, however, the Homestead Act actually provided free land to settlers. Yet, here the result was a socialist form of agrarian radicalism.

In this section I will try to show how the availability of free land, and consequently, the rapidity with which the region was settled, created a set of circumstances which led to rapid economic

immizeration for the agrarian population like in eastern Oklahoma. By comparing the settlement of Kansas and western Oklahoma we can highlight and suggest the ways in which western Oklahoma's development differed from that of other western states.

Western Oklahoma--Indians and Cowboys

The cession by the Five Tribes of their western domain to the U.S. after the Civil War, confined the hegemony, as we have seen, of these Five Tribes to the eastern part of what later became Oklahoma. As mentioned above, the western lands were ostensibly given to the U.S. as a home (a dumping ground?) for less than 17,000 Indians.

By 1875 buffalo hunters on the plains had almost exterminated the buffalo herds.[86]

> With this source of living gone, the Indian tribes were soon impoverished, cowed and driven onto the reservations as soon as the U.S. army really got serious about the matter.[87]

Given the history of U.S. government policy towards the Indians, it seems likely that 24,774,400 acres of territory[88] would not have been given to 17,000 Indians without the expectation that when the political circumstances would warrant it, the Indians would be made to forfeit their domain once again.

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[86]James S. Buchanan & E. E. Dale, A History of Oklahoma (Evanston: Row, Peterson & Co., 1939), p. 177.

[87]Fred Shannon, The Farmer's Last Frontier (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, Inc., 1945), p. 201.

[88]Buck, p. 334.

The growth of the range cattle industry after the Civil War over the Great Plains was the initial wedge that ultimately lost the 17,000 Indians their reservations. To Texas and Kansas cattle ranchers, western Oklahoma, which had just been given to the "uncivilized" Indians, appeared to be an available sea of empty pasture going to waste. In the 1870's, when the establishment of cattle shipping centers in Dodge City, and Abilene, Kansas made the eastern marketing of cattle profitable, cattlemen from Texas began driving their herds north to Kansas over what became known in Oklahoma as the Chisholm Trail. From these Kansas depots they were shipped by rail to slaughter houses in Kansas City and Chicago. By the 1870's the cattle ranchers had taken de facto possession of most of the acreage of western Oklahoma.[89] Cattle were pastured in western Oklahoma sometimes for months at a time, and line camps were built for cowboys.[90]

Although at first the Indians stole their cattle and made life difficult for the drovers, they later learned that tribute could be extracted in the form of beef and rental fees.[91] The legal right of the Indians to grant leases was ill defined, although most of the tribes made them with the cattlemen. The Secretary of the Interior refused to either recognize the leases or to drive off the cattle.[92]

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[89]Dale & Wardell, p. 215; Gittinger, p. 145; Buchannan & Dale, p. 179.

[90]Buchanan & Dale, p. 190.

[91]Dale & Wardell, p. 215; Gittinger, pp. 144-45; Buck, p. 334.

[92]Gittinger, pp. 144-45.

The years from 1870 to 1890 saw the rapid settlement of both Kansas and Texas.[93] In Kansas the boom years of the late 70's and early 80's gave way to severe agricultural depression in which hundreds of thousands of farmers lost their homes.[94] Inevitably these impoverished and potentially homeless farmers began to resent the cattlemen's monopoly of the vast Indian domain. Boomers and railroad interests[95] coincided in their desire to see Oklahoma opened to farmers, while cattlemen, the Five Tribes, and professional friends of the Indians (missionary societies and church groups), were opposed to this eventuality.[96] In the 1880's, a group which called themselves Boomers, under the leadership of David L. Payne, formed a colony to settle Oklahoma, which they argued had been ceded to the U.S. as a result of the treaties with the Five Tribes in 1866. The Federal government repelled the repeated attempts of the Boomer colonizers to "squat" on the Indian lands; the government claimed that the territory had been ceded to the government for the settlement of Indians and Indian Freedmen and was not part of the public domain.

The Homestead Act in Oklahoma

It was only a matter of time until the Dawes Act was passed in 1887 signifying the victory of the "nesters" (farmers) and railroads.

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[93] Thirteenth census (1910), Vol. I, Population, General Report & Analysis, pp. 361-409.

[94] R. M. Miller, p

[95] Buck, pp. 335-37; Dale & Wardell, pp. 225-26.

[96] Dale & Wardell, p. 230.

The few Indians were given allotments while the remainder of the land, the vast majority of it, was surveyed and divided up into quarter sections (1/4 of a square mile or 160 acres). At noon on April 22, 1889 the first parcel of territory in western Oklahoma was opened for settlement to homesteaders. In the 18 years that followed (until 1907 when Oklahoma achieved statehood) strip after strip was opened for settlement by land rushes (see Figure 7).[97]

It is apparent that the settlement of eastern and western Oklahoma occurred under very different kinds of conditions. Western Oklahoma, at the time of the land runs, was virtually an empty space. The cattlemen had been virtually removed and the few Indians given allotments. The successive land rushes populated a virtually uninhabited land with farmers in a little more than a decade. Unlike the Indian Territory, no agrarian population existed on the land which was forced to accomodate newcomers. Here the veritable actualization of the Homestead Act which came close to fulfilling the agrarian myth made living the yeoman ideal appear possible. For the sociologist this provides a social laboratory in which the social differences between Kansas, which was not populated primarily by homesteading, and Oklahoma can be compared.

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[97]Greer County, Fig. 7, #7, the Kiowa, Comanche and Wichita lands, #8 and the Osage Reservation, "unopened 1904" were not opened up by land rushes. Greer County had been claimed by Texas and was awarded to Oklahoma in 1897. The Kiowa, Comanche and Wichita lands were distributed by a lottery. The Osage reservation was allotted to tribal members and the remainder sold to the highest bidder.

Kansas & Oklahoma: A Comparison

Comparison of the settlement of Kansas and Oklahoma will bring to light some of the significant differences which have a bearing on the support which was forthcoming for the Socialist Party in Oklahoma but not in Kansas. Kansas was opened to settlement originally in 1854. This was eight years before the Homestead Act was passed. Nevertheless, in the 1850's settlers could stake out a claim, "squat" on the land, and five years later purchase 160 acres at open auction at a minimum of $1.25 under the terms of the Pre-Emption Act. By 1860 the population of Kansas was 107,206.[98] Many of the settlers came west not individually, but in colonies. Land companies, church groups, voluntary organizations, and frequently colonies comprised of immigrants or members of a particular ethnic group, organized these colonies, and brought people to Kansas.[99] Membership in a colony required the payment of a fee. Thus, those who joined and came to Kansas as members of a colony were not likely to have been indigent. Nor were they entirely on their own; they had the protection and expertise of a guide who knew the "ropes," and the fellowship of a community of potential neighbors on the frequently hostile frontier.[100] In the early period of settlement, until 1860 when the Civil War slowed immigration to a trickle, in the absence of local government and legal mechanisms for adjusting land disputes, "claim jumping" was a frequent threat to the new settlers as no one yet owned a deed to the land.

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[98] Thirteenth Census, (1910), Vol. I, Population, General Report & Analysis, pp. 361-409.

[99] Dick, p. 201.

[100] Ibid., p. 27.

Local community organizations or "claims clubs," as they were called, were formed of the settlers. These brought various kinds of pressure to bear (frequently at gunpoint) on individuals the community felt had violated the legitimate rights of the settlers.[101] The claims club acted as a community which shared norms of social justice on the frontier.

> In due time the land sale came. . . . . Theoretically the land was to go to the highest bidder; but actually each quarter section was sold to its occupant at the appraised value. The squatters respected each others' rights and the first man to bid against one of them was shot clean, thus concluding any further opposition. . . . The man who could not furnish satisfactory proof of his good intentions had his claim sold to the highest bidder. This was an extremely rare occurrence. A witness attending one of these sales for four weeks saw this happen once.[102]

Although speculators appeared at land auctions they did not usually bid against the squatters, preferring to lend money to those who did not have the cash--of course, at exorbitant interest rates.[103] Later in the 1870's or 80's new homesteaders sought the services of some local person in helping him select a claim. Professional "locaters" advertised in the local papers and charged a fee for their services. Frequently, a farmer would "reserve" a homestead for a friend or relative.[104]

The critical reader may argue that the picture presented here suggests an unrealistic degree of community solidarity on the Kansas

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[101] Ibid., p. 28.

[102] Ibid., pp. 37-38; Gates' The Farmer's Age, confirms this pattern.

[103] Gates, pp. 72-74.

[104] Dick, p. 122.

frontier which eased the immigrants' difficulties. Certainly, there was no lack of violence and lawlessness here. Claim jumpers, horse thieves, murderers and their counterparts in law and order gangs and vigilantees flourished. The "war" between the "farmers" and the "cowboys" celebrated in the Broadway musical "Oklahoma" was probably more of a fact in Kansas where the 1870's and 80's saw a real conflict between these constituencies. There were only remnants of this battle in the Oklahoma of 20 years later.[105] Yet, when we compare these reports with the accounts of those who were present at the land rushes which populated Oklahoma the differences become apparent.

The settlers coming to Kansas in the 1870's and 80's, the period of the states' most rapid population growth (see Table 7), were coming in to a settled community, a community which had some interest in welcoming them.

(Table 7) Population of Kansas 1860-1910

1860 --	107,206
1870 --	364,399
1880 --	996,096
1890 --	1,427,096
1900 --	1,470,495
1910 --	1,690,949

Source: Thirteenth Census (1910), Population, Vol. 1, General Report & Analysis.

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[105] Dick, pp. 144-45.

> The settlers were usually glad to aid strangers . . . for every new inhabitant increased the value of the country and brought neighbors, and, with settlement, churches and schools were certain to be established.[106]

The very reverse was true in the settlement of Oklahoma. Every other settler was another competitor struggling for the same homestead. The land rushes which populated Oklahoma have been described in terms of their excitement,[107] yet for the actual settlers the experience was likely to be filled with anxiety and discomfort and even fear for one's very life. Although there are no accurate or systematic data recounting the number of potential homesteaders to quarter section, we do know that by the end of the day of April 22, 1889 when the first strip of western Oklahoma was opened to settlement by land rush every available homestead had been taken.[108] More than likely there were not enough quarter sections to go around. One newpaperman describes the borders of the Oklahoma Territory in the hours preceding the first rush.

> The streets were thronged. Tents were pitched in every open space. There was no place to sleep, and around the extemporized eating places it became a veritable "struggle for existence." The congestion of people was greatest about the depot, and especially was this the case on the following morning--the notable twenty-second--when I left the corner of a tent that a good Samaritan had offered me. I found five trains were made up on the adjacent tracks, and were in readiness to start southward into the Indian Territory. Hundreds and hundreds of people from Arkansas City and neighboring towns

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[106] Ibid., p. 122.

[107] Edna Ferber, Cimmarron (New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co. Inc., 1930); Hamilton S. Wicks, "The Opening of Oklahoma," Chronicles of Oklahoma 4 (June 1926): 229-42.

[108] Buck, pp. 345-56.

> and thousands from every part of the United States, surged in wildest confusion about the depot. Every man was armed like a walking arsenal, and many also constituted themselves walking commisaries.[109]

Another observer describes the same scene similarly;

> But so great was the crowd that those were lucky who got a place on any of the trains. The platforms were overflowing, some clambered up on top of the coaches, and a few even rode on the car tracks in their anxiety to get there . . .[110]

Thus, an entire region as large as a New England state was, in effect, settled in a day.[111]

> Frequently it would happen that several would locate on different parts of the same quarter section. Each would claim priority, and each would make improvements, and thus, the way was prepared for much litigation and bad feelings, <u>often leading to family feuds and twilight shootings</u>.[112] (emphasis mine)

The ethos which upheld free competition as a supreme virtue had fostered the settlement by the system of land rushes. One historian called the pattern of social relations which ensued "mobocracy--every man according to his speed."[113] As everywhere else there was speculation and corruption; speculators who never intended to farm their claims took part in the run while government marshalls and their friends and "sooners" (those who had entered the territory before noon on April 22) registered claims illegally.[114]

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[109] Wicks, p. 130.

[110] Buck, p. 345.

[111] Dale & Wardell, pp. 9-10.

[112] Buck, p. 346.

[113] Dale & Wardell, pp. 9-10.

[114] Buck, pp. 351-52.

Witnesses of the runs also attest to the poverty of the men and women who participated in them.

> Large numbers of them had already failed in western Kansas or northwestern Texas on account of drought or had been waiting on the borders of the country until their resources had been exhausted.[115]

Most likely it was only the poor who would suffer the privations that making the rush required. In 1893 when the Cherokee Outlet (see Figure 4, #17) was opened to homesteading about 115,000 people took part. Thousands of people crowded the registration booths (registration, it was hoped, would prevent illegal claimants). The heat and dust caused considerable suffering when the water supply ran short.[116] Finally, the first two years of settlement on the Oklahoma frontier were accompanied by drought and low prices for crops in the early 1890's.[117]

While many expectant homeseekers were probably unable to acquire farm homes in Oklahoma Territory, new agricultural opportunities were provided for some. The census of 1890 reveals that 62,300 white[118] settlers had peopled what was referred to as "Old Oklahoma" (see Figure 3, #16) in 1889. By 1900 the white population had increased about six times to 367,524,[119] as the remainder of the land was opened.

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[115] Ibid., p. 354.

[116] Ibid., p. 359.

[117] Ibid.

[118] Eleventh Census (1890), Population, Part I, Vol. I, pp. 9-46.

[119] Ibid.

By 1910 the farmsteads, which presumably originated as a result of claims by homesteaders, were to a large extent no longer in the hands of the original claimants. Although we have no data which could show the extent to which farms had changed hands or quarter sections had changed their shapes in the period from 1890 to 1910, of the 113,514 farms in the region in 1910, 38% were operated by tenants and 42.2% of the owned farms reported mortgages.[120] When we compare these figures with those of Kansas for the same year we find that the figures are, surprisingly, similar. In Kansas the tenancy rate in 1910 was 36.8%[121] while the mortgage rate of all reporting farms was 44.3%.[122] The mortgage and tenancy rates for both Kansas and Oklahoma in 1910 are almost identical.

Two related conclusions may be drawn from this. Firstly, even though most of the farm land in Kansas was probably purchased,[123] while western Oklahoma provided farms to settlers at no cost, this difference seems to have had no bearing on the extent to which farmers, by 1910, had become tenants or acquired mortgages on their property. But, perhaps, most importantly, the same extent of both mortgages and tenancy had been achieved in Oklahoma in less than half the time it had taken in Kansas (see Table 8).

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[120]Calculated from Thirteenth Census (1910), Agriculture Reports by State, Vol. 7, pp. 372-79.

[121]Spillman & Goldenweiser, p. 329.

[122]Calculated from Thirteenth Census (1910), Agriculture, Reports by States, Vol. 6, p. 578.

[123]Miller and Farmer.

(Table 8) Rates of Tenantry

	Kansas[a]	Western Oklahoma
1880	16.3%	+
1890	28.2%	.7%[b]
1900	35.2%	+
1910	36.8%	38%[c]

+ Figures not available
a W. J. Spilman & E. A. Goldenweiser, "Farm Tenantry in the U.S.," U.S. Dept. of Agriculture Yearbook, 1916 Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1916, p. 329.
b Ibid.
c Calculated from Thirteenth Census (1910), Supplement for Oklahoma, Statistics on Agriculture, pp. 642-49.

When we extend this comparison of Kansas and western Oklahoma to other western and midwestern states we find that no state can duplicate such a rapid growth of tenantry over a period of 20 years, a rate which in western Oklahoma went from almost 0% in 1890 to 38% in 1910. If we look at Table 9 this becomes apparent.

(Table 9) Rates of Tenantry

	1880	1890	1900	1910
Kansas	16.3%	28.2%	35.2%	36.8%
Nebraska	18.0%	24.7%	36.9%	38.1%
N. Dakota	---	6.9%	8.5%	14.3%
S. Dakota	---	13.2%	21.8%	24.8%
Iowa	23.8%	28.1%	34.9%	37.8%
Minnesota	9.1%	12.9%	17.3%	21.0%
Wisconsin	9.1%	11.4%	13.5%	13.9%
Michigan	10.0%	14.0%	15.8%	15.8%
Oklahoma[a]	---	.7%	---	38.0%

Source: W. J. Spillman & E. A. Goldenweiser, "Farm Tenantry in the U.S.," U.S. Dept. of Agriculture Yearbook, 1916 Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1916, p. 329.
a Thirteenth Census, Supplement for Oklahoma, Statistics on Agriculture, pp. 642-49.
(Note: The U.S. Census Reports have no figures on farm tenantry before the Tenth Census (1880).

The explanation suggested by this data is that the intense competition introduced when so many desperately poor farmers tried to till the land at a profit on this "last frontier" led to a rapid deterioration of their economic condition.

Eastern and Western Oklahoma: A Comparison

Clearly the processes through which agricultural development took place were different in the eastern and western parts of Oklahoma. In the east (Indian Territory) the translation from Indian to white land tenure transformed a diversified agriculture into one in which tenants were required to produce a single cash crop--cotton. In the west (Oklahoma Territory) where farmers were originally provided with free land, the growth of mortgages and tenantry proceeded at an astounding rate. Yet, even given the largely different historical and social experiences of the two regions what appears to have occurred in both was a situation in which agricultural producers were becoming increasingly impoverished and vulnerable to the loss of their land. The specifics of these processes and the ways in which they contributed to support for the Socialist Party will be explored in the following chapter.

Chapter IV

THE RELATIONSHIP OF AGRICULTURAL STRUCTURE IN OKLAHOMA TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIALIST STRENGTH

In the last chapter we attempted to describe the historical development of eastern and western Oklahoma in order to explain the roots of the different processes of modernization in the two separate regions of the state. It was suggested that modernization, or economic development (the introduction of market forms of agriculture) was ultimately responsible for a process of impoverishment of the agricultural producers in both regions. At this point we will try to demonstrate, in more detail, the relationship between the process of modernization in Oklahoma and the growth of support for the Socialist Party in this state.

This chapter will be devoted to the following:

1. A description of the different forms of market agriculture which developed in Oklahoma at the time of its greatest support for the Socialist Party--from 1910 to 1914.

2. An exploration of the relationship of these forms of agriculture to support for the Socialist Party. We will attempt to determine the specific variables (on a statewide basis as well as regionally) which were related to Socialist electoral support. We will also try to see if the historical divergence between the eastern

and western part of the state has any bearing on the factors which are most salient in accounting for the Socialist vote.

3. We will try to argue that although different indicators of agricultural structure in east and west are responsible for the variance in the Socialist vote, these indicators are reflections of similar social processes. Hence, we will test the first part of Moore's hypothesis, that labor repressive forms of market agriculture were necessary conditions in Oklahoma for the emergence of agrarian radicalism. (A discussion of the social and political factors which, according to Moore, must accompany a labor repressive form of market agriculture in order to precipitate agrarian radicalism will be postponed to later chapters.)

The Socialist Party in Oklahoma began its growth in the state as early as 1900.[1] During the first decade of the twentieth century the Party consistently increased its percentage of the total popular vote.[2] This growth culminated with the peak years of 1912 and 1914. In the 1912 Presidential election, Eugene Debs, running on the Socialist ticket garnered 16.7% of the popular vote in the state. In the 1914 gubernatorial and U.S. congressional elections in the state the Socialist Party in Oklahoma garnered 21.9% and 22.7% of the popular vote respectively. After that point Socialist voting strength declined.

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[1] Howard L. Meredith, "The Socialist Party in Oklahoma," (Ph.D. dissertation, Department of History, University of Oklahoma, 1949), p. 26.

[2] Ibid., pp. 28, 45, 67, 78-81.

By the end of World War I the Party had been destroyed as a significant political force in the state.[3]

In order to analyze the patternsof Socialist voting in Oklahoma and ultimately to understand why certain constituencies, as opposed to others, were most likely to vote Socialist I will focus on the elections for the years 1910, 1912 and 1914. As we will see later on, the regions which gave the most electoral support to the Party changed from 1910 to 1914. This change, however, is a reflection of the fact that Oklahoma did not achieve statehood until 1907. Until that year there were no statewide elections, but only Territorial elections in Oklahoma Territory. Furthermore, as we will remember, until the tribal hegemony of Indian Territory was abolished in 1906, only tribal governments held elections; the Socialist Party was most likely not represented in these, but at any rate, no records remain of them. Thus, no statewide elections took place in Oklahoma until 1907. It was only in 1910 that Socialist returns produced a large enough percentage for statistical techniques to reveal significant patterns.[4] Thus I will focus on the elections of the three peak years of Socialist success.

The 1910, 1912 and 1914 elections in Oklahoma gave the Democratic, Republican and Socialist parties the following percentages of the popular vote. (See Table 1.)

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[3]The development and decline of the Socialist Party in the U.S. as well as in Oklahoma will be discussed in a later chapter.

[4]W. Phillips Shively, The Craft of Political Research (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1974).

(Table 1) Election Returns in Oklahoma[5]

1910	1912	1914
Dem	Dem	Dem
Congress 51.2%	Pres 47.0%	Congress 45.5%
Governor 49.3%		Governor 40.2%
Rep	Rep	Rep
Congress 38.3%	Pres 34.5%	Congress 29.8%
Governor 38.9%		Governor 36.1%
Soc	Soc	Soc
Congress 10.5%	Pres 16.7%	Congress 22.7%
Governor 10.6%		Governor 21.9%

Source: Inter University Consortium for Political Research.

Given our hypothesis that Socialist voting was a form of agrarian protest we would expect that most of the vote came from the countryside, the agricultural population, as opposed to the towns. According to the 1910 Census[6] the population of the state in that year was 1,657,155; 86% of this population was classified as rural, the remainder, of course, being urban (living in towns of 2500 or more). The correlation between the percent of urban population per county and the percent of the Socialist vote in 1910, 1912, and 1914 shows that this is, in fact, the case. Only the Socialist vote seems to be negatively related to the percentage of urban population per county, suggesting that the Socialist voters were likely to be from the rural areas. (See Table 2.)

[5]Results of the senatorial elections were not included in this study. A decision was made to use the results of congressional elections because candidates running for this office provide a better indicator of grass roots voting patterns than senatorial candidates. (See V. O. Key, Southern Politics.) The voting results for gubernatorial candidates were chosen because this is a state office.

[6]Thirteenth Census (1910), Vol. I, Population, Report by States, Vol. 3, pp. 434-36.

(Table 2) Correlation Matrix

Percent Urban Population

Percent Vote	1910 Gov	1910 Cong	1912 Pres	1914 Gov	1914 Cong
Democrat	+.2881	+.3687	+.2901	+.0350	+.3004
Republican	+.0156	-.0717	+.0667	+.3141	+.1520
Socialist	-.3361	-.3363	-.3551	-.3574	-.3562

It appears that the Republican vote is not related to either the percent of urban or rural populations per county. However, the Democratic vote seems to be somewhat positively related to a preponderance of urban rather than rural life. Another historian of the Socialist Party in Oklahoma has come to the same conclusion.[7]

Types of Agriculture in Oklahoma

Before we look at the distribution of the voting data it is necessary to have some picture of the main thrust of agricultural practice in Oklahoma during the period under study. In 1910, 65% of all the agricultural land in the state was in farms.[8] The chief crops grown in the state in terms of acreage planted as well as of cash value (factors which seem to be directly related to each other) were corn, cotton, wheat and hay and forage. We can see from Table 3 that during the years 1899 to 1909 corn and cotton were the crops which most significantly increased their acreage in the state, increasing 136% and 190% respectively and having the largest acreage in cultivation.

[7] James R. Green, "Socialism and the Southwestern Class Struggle: A Study of Radical Movements in Oklahoma, Texas, Louisiana and Arkansas," (Ph.D. dissertation, Department of History, Yale University, 1972), pp. 236-48.

[8] Ranches are counted as farm units according to the U.S. Census for 1910.

(Table 3) Acres of Crops Harvested

	Corn	Wheat	Oats	Hay & Forage	Potatoes	Cotton
1899	2,501,945	1,527,073	317,076	1,095,706	15,360	682,743
1909	5,914,069	1,169,420	609,373	1,347,598	32,295	1,976,935
% increase	136%	-23%	92%	22%	110%	190%

(see Table 4)

If we look at the distribution of these four most important crops, corn, cotton, wheat and hay and forage, we can see that they are not distributed evenly throughout the state but are concentrated in specific regions (see Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4). Cotton, as we can see from Figure 1, in 1909 was concentrated in the southern tier of counties of the state. Wheat (Figure 3) was concentrated in the northwestern counties (primarily Texas, Beaver, Harper, Woods, Alfalfa, Grant, Kay, Ellis, Major, Garfield, Blaine, Noble and Kingfisher).[9]

(Table 4) Agricultural Products in Oklahoma--1910

	Farms Reporting	Acres Harvested	Amt/Unit		Value
Cereals, total		8,248,653	129,816,483	Bushels	$71,798,662
Corn	148,590	5,914,069	94,283,407	"	48,080,554
Oats	33,002	609,373	16,606,154	"	7,172,267
Wheat	23,003	1,169,420	14,008,334	"	13,854,322
Emmer & Spelt	509	8,659	94,580	"	54,690
Barley	834	10,283	127,641	"	75,059
Buckwheat	12	43	375	"	370
Rye	396	4,291	37,240	"	30,364
Kafir Corn & Milo Maize	29,660	532,515	4,658,752	"	2,531,036
Hay & Forage	64,487	1,347,598	1,417,533	tons	9,638,648
Cotton	88,140	1,976,935	555,742	bales	35,399,356
Cotton seed			277,871	tons	5,778,052
Broom Corn	10,151	216,350	42,741,725	lbs.	2,559,235

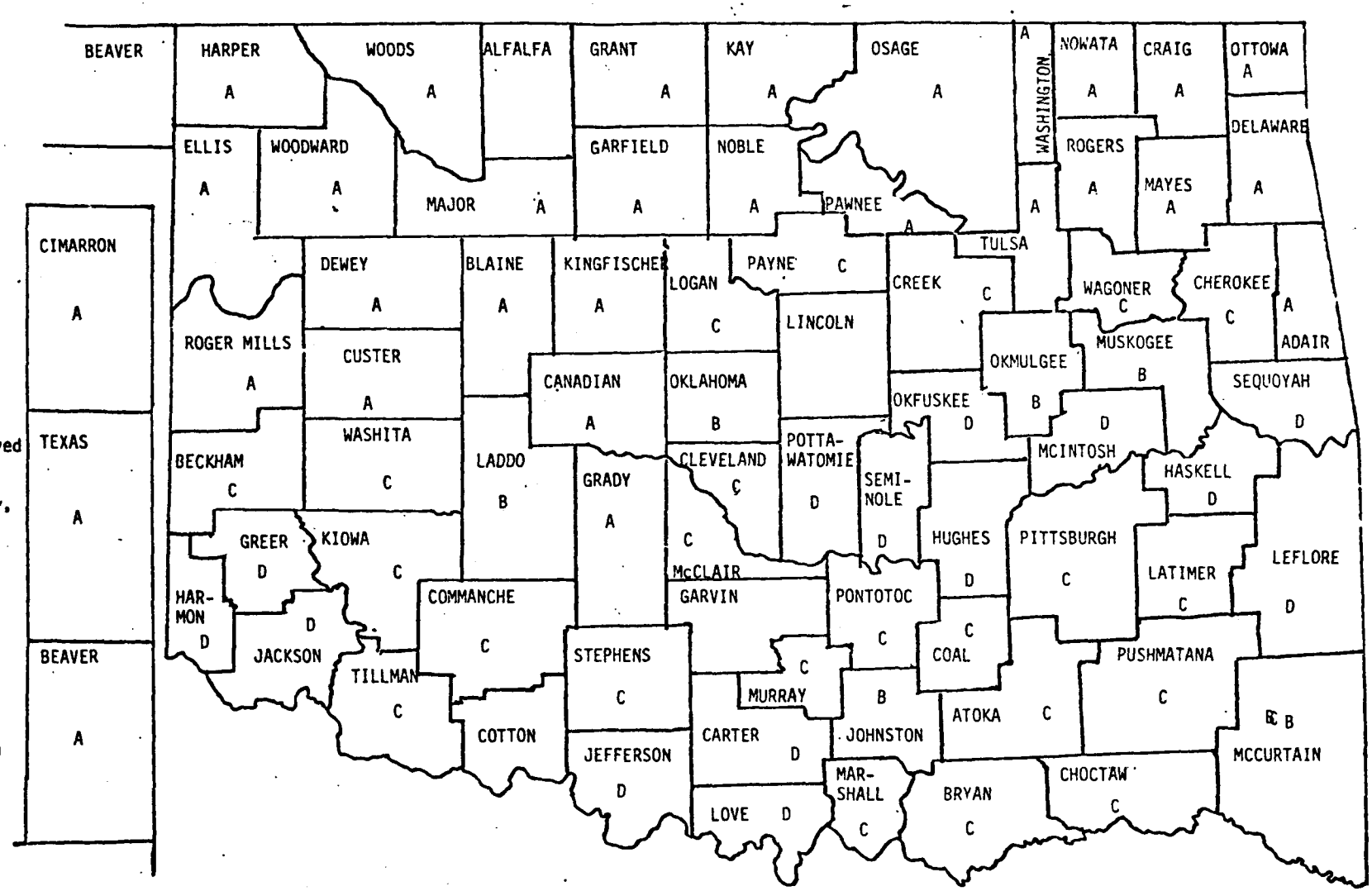
Source: Thirteenth Census (1910) Supplement for Oklahoma, Statistics on Agriculture, p. 631.

[9]Only two counties outside of the northwest, Washita in the southwest and Delaware in the northeast, had more than 10% of their improved acreage in wheat in 1909.

Figure 1

% of Acres in Cotton

(% of improved acres)



Percent of Improved Acres Planted To Cotton Per County, 1909

A = 0 - 9%

B = 10 - 14%

C = 15 - 24%

D = 25% or more

Source: Thirteenth Census (1910)

Chapter IV

Figure 2

% of Acres of Corn

Source: Thirteenth Census (1910)

Percent of Improved Acres Planted to Corn Per County

A = 0-25%

B = 26-35%

C = 36-50%

D = 50% and over

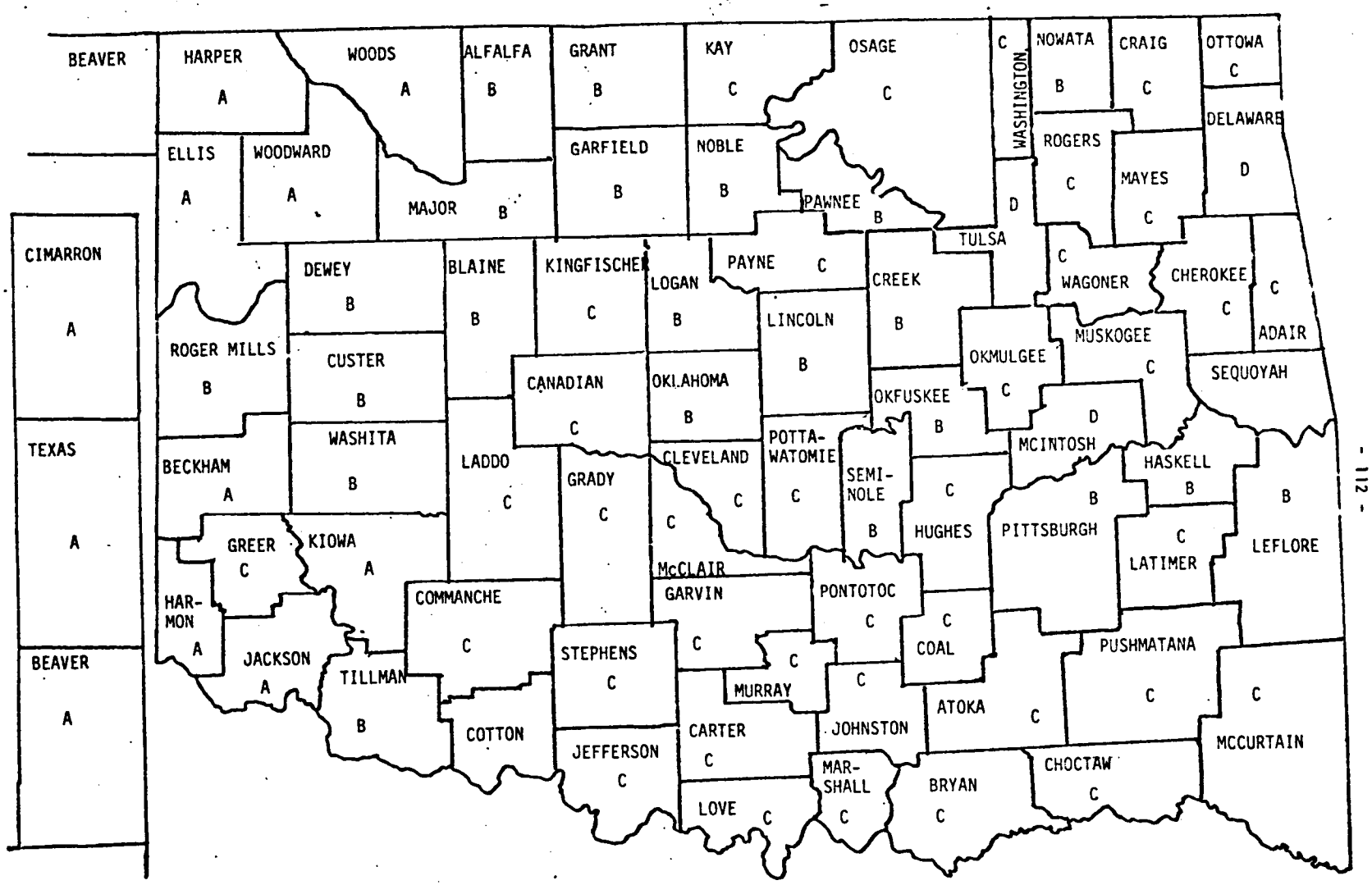
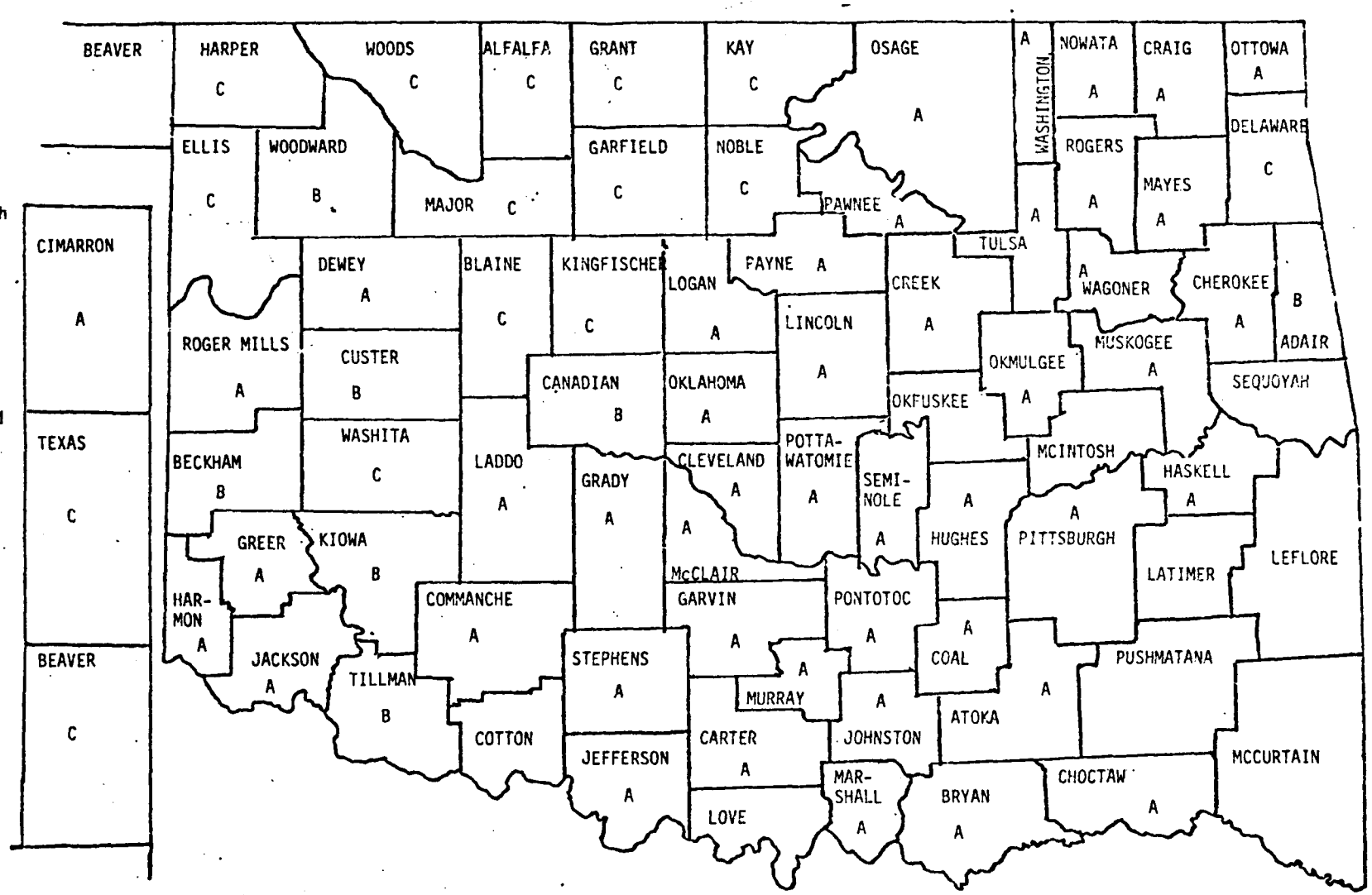


Figure 3

% of Acres

in Wheat

Source: Thirteenth Census (1910)



Percent of Improved Acres Planted to Wheat Per County, 1909

A = 0-4%

B = 5-9%

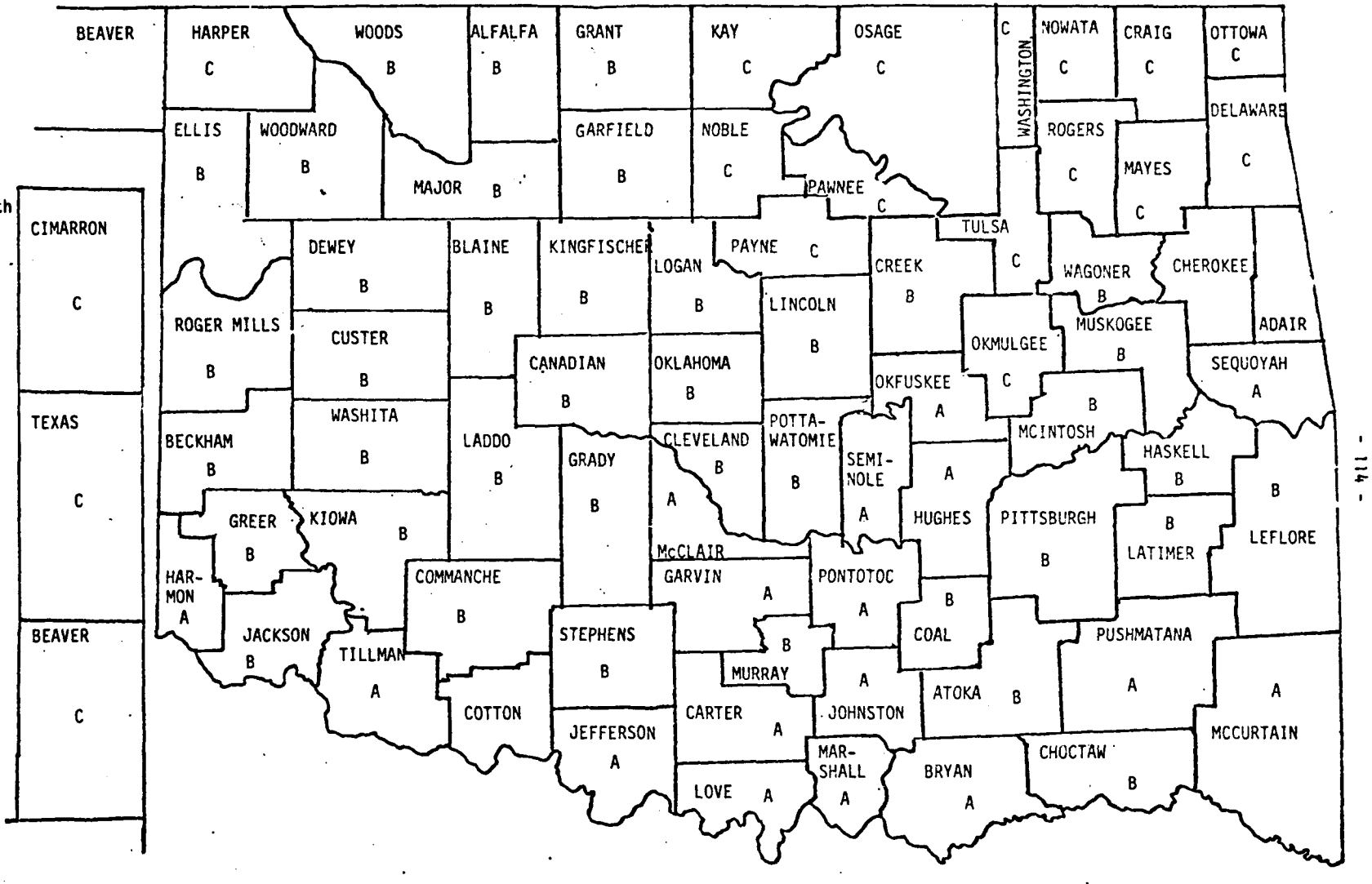
C = 10% and over

Chapter IV

Figure 4

%of Acres in Hay and Forage

Source: Thirteenth Census (1910)



Percent of Improved Acres Planted to Hay and Forage Per County, 1909

A = 0-4%

B = 5-9%

C = 10% and over

While the production of hay and forage (Figure 4) was generally concentrated in the northeast quadrant of the state, corn was grown throughout Oklahoma. Corn, unlike both wheat and cotton, was not grown as a cash crop but usually to supplement either cotton or wheat. Like hay and forage it was usually grown to feed livestock (hogs or cattle) or work animals which were used on the farm.[10] Vance[11] estimated that only 17% of the corn grown in the cotton belt ever reached the market in this era.

Types of Agriculture & Support for the Socialist Party

If we now look at the distribution of the Socialist vote by county for the elections under study (see Figures 5-9) it becomes apparent that the highest percentage of this vote is concentrated in the southern tier of counties, especially in the southeast and southwest corners of the state. The 1910 elections (Figures 5 & 6) do not show as consistent a Socialist vote in a group of contiguous counties as do the 1912 (Figure 7) and 1914 (Figures 8 & 9) elections. The 1912 and 1914 Socialist vote (see Table 1) was distributed over very distinct geographical regions.

If we arbitrarily delineate counties with twenty percent or more Socialist vote as "high Socialist voting counties," it becomes clear

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[10] Theodore Saloutos and John D. Hicks, Twentieth Century Populism: Agricultural Discontent in the Middle West 1900-1909 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1951), pp. 8-9.

[11] Rupert Vance, Human Factors in Cotton Culture: A Study of the Social Geography of the American South (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1929), pp. 110.

Figure 5

% Socialist Vote

1910, Congress

A = 0 - 4%

B = 5 - 9%

C = 10 - 14%

D = 15 - 20%

E = 20% or over

Source: Inter-University Consortium for Political Research, Ann Arbor, Mich.

Figure 6

% Socialist Vote

1910, Governor

A = 0 - 4%

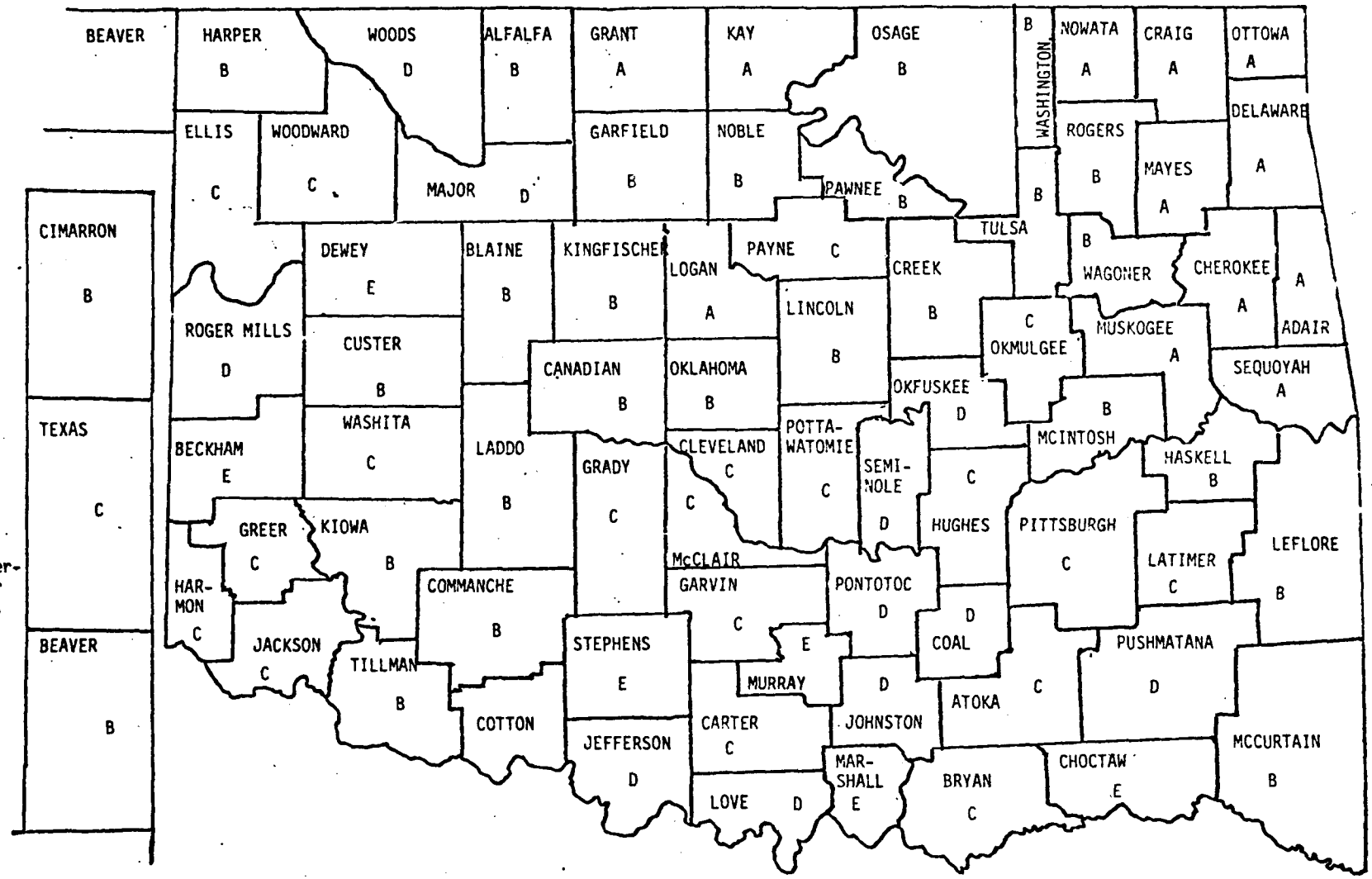
B = 5 - 9%

C = 10 - 14%

D = 15 - 20%

E = 20% or more

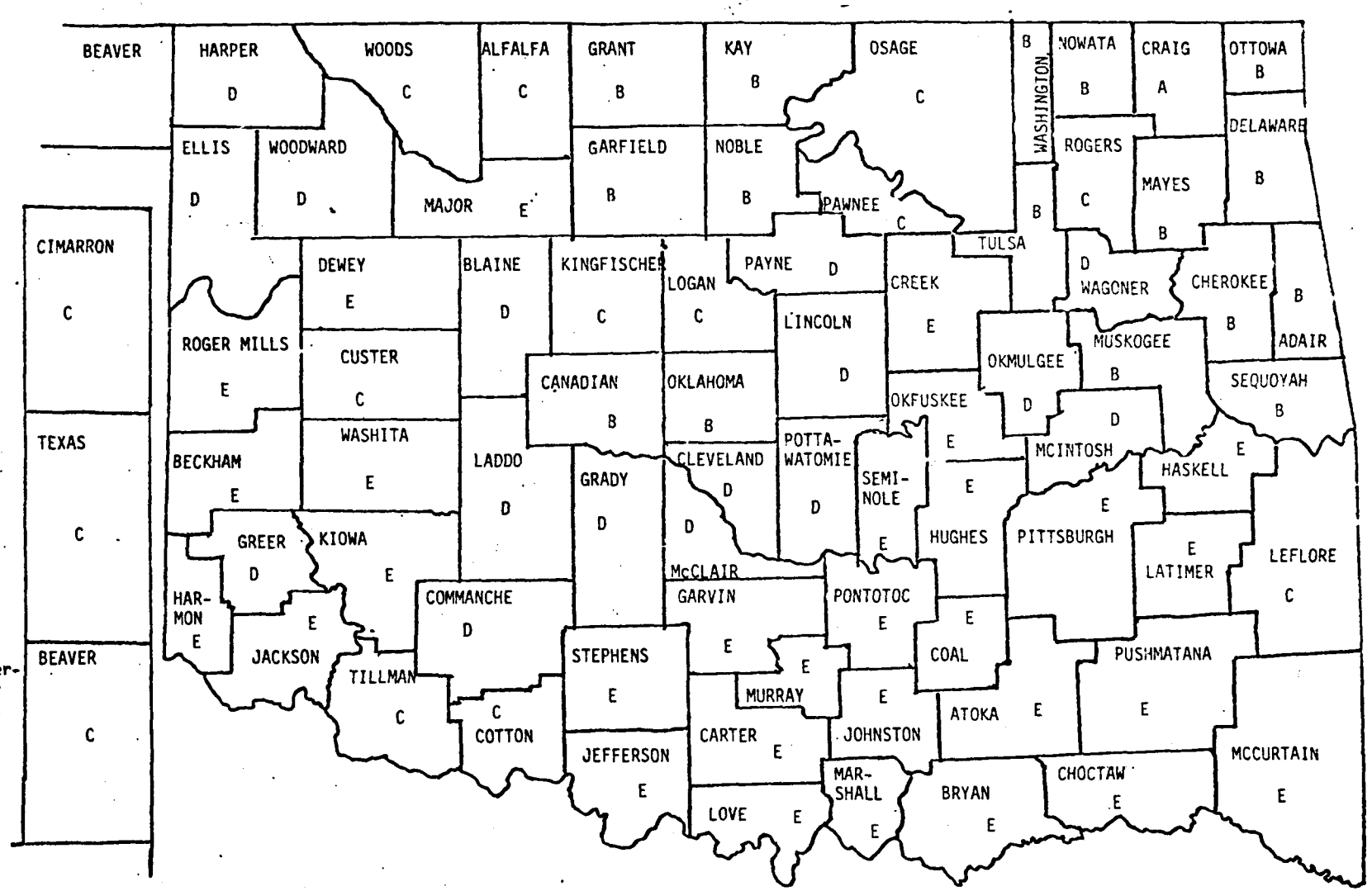
Source: Inter-University Consortium for Political Research, Ann Arbor, Mich.



Chapter IV

Figure 7

% of Popular Vote For Socialist Candidate for U.S. President (Debs)



A = 0 - 4%

B = 5 - 9%

C = 10 - 14%

D = 15 - 19%

E = 20% or more

Source: Inter-University Consortium for Political Research, Ann Arbor, Mich.

Figure 8

% of Socialist Vote

1914, Congress

A = 0 - 4%

B = 5 - 9%

C = 10 - 14%

D = 15 - 19%

E = 20% or more

Source: Inter-University Consortium for Political Research, Ann Arbor, Mich.

Chapter IV

Figure 9

% Socialist Vote

1914 - Governor

A = 0 - 4%

B = 5 - 9%

C = 10 - 14%

D = 15 - 19%

E = 20% or over

Source: Inter-University Consortium for Political Research, Ann Arbor, Mich.

that the Socialist vote was strongest in the greater part of Oklahoma's southern counties in 1912 and 1914 (see Figures 7, 8 and 9). If we can compare these returns with crop distributions in the state we can see that the Socialist vote was heaviest in the cotton producing areas of the state (see Figure 1).

If we look more closely at the Socialist vote distribution in 1912 and 1914 (Figures 7, 8, and 9) and compare them to Figure 1 (the distribution of acreage in cotton in 1910) we can see that in the northwest (specifically Roger Mills, Ellis, Harper, Blaine, Dewey and Major counties) where virtually no cotton is grown, there is nevertheless a high Socialist vote in 1912 and especially in 1914. Counties such as Texas, Beaver, Alfalfa, Woods and Woodward are not cotton growing counties either. Since in these counties the Socialist vote in 1912 does not quite reach 20% they cannot be classified as high Socialist voting counties. Nevertheless, the Socialist vote is fairly significant in this region and can hardly be ignored. Wheat is the most important agricultural product here (see Figure 3).

In the northeast corner of the state, from Osage county eastward and Adair county northward, there is a relatively small percentage of Socialist vote (generally under 10% with the exception of occasional counties where the vote in 1912 and 1914 climbs somewhat above that figure). This region was, in 1910, primarily devoted to feed crops, mostly the cultivation of corn, but also hay and forage (see Figures 2 and 4). As we can see from Figures 1 and 3 virtually no cotton or wheat was grown in this region.

From the above it appears that in Oklahoma in 1910 there were two separate agricultural regions, a cotton region in the south and a wheat belt in the northwest. Both of these regions made significant contributions to the Socialist vote from 1910-1914. In the northeast neither wheat nor cotton are produced. Here, where there is an absence of cash crops produced for sale on national and international commodity markets, we see a relatively small proportion of Socialist vote. This accords with our hypotheses formulated earlier about the salience of market forms of agriculture for the generation of agrarian radicalism. Feed crops, as opposed to wheat and cotton, are generally produced for local use;[12] they are not produced for major commodity markets.[13]

If we examine the structure of cotton culture in Oklahoma more carefully we find that within the high cotton producing area in the southern portion of the state, the southeast and southwest represent two distinctly different types of cotton cultivation. The fact that these are two separate regions, which we will examine presently, is largely a consequence of the separate historical development of east and west Oklahoma. We will remember that western Oklahoma

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[12] J. O. Ellsworth, "Types of Farming in Oklahoma," Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College, Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 181 (June 1929).

[13] Lipset writes in Agrarian Socialism,

> Ecological studies of agrarian voting behavior in the U.S. indicate that the most important factor differentiating rural districts supporting protest movements from those opposing them has been the type of crop: there has often been a significant difference between the vote in wheat areas and in corn and mixed farming regions. (213)

was settled by homesteaders, each farmer claiming a 160 acre homestead. The east, however, was allotted to the Indians on an individual basis and rapidly subdivided into small plots as a result of sale or leasing to real estate speculators who then sublet to tenants.

This is reflected in the different average size of farms on both sides of the state. When we compare the counties in 1910 which were originally part of eastern Oklahoma with those which were originally part of Oklahoma Territory we discover that the average size farm in the eastern counties was 113 acres while the average size farm in the counties generated from Western Oklahoma was 195 acres. If we then compare only the cotton producing regions of east and west we find that the farms in the eastern cotton counties are also significantly smaller than those of the west, having an average size of 98 acres in the east and 153 acres in the west.[14,15] We can see from Table 5 that farms in the cotton belt are smaller than agricultural units in non-cotton producing regions. Farms in the southeastern cotton producing region are also smaller than units in the southwestern cotton region.

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[14]The cotton producing region is defined as all counties with 15% or more of their improved acreage in cotton.

[15]The western cotton region includes Beckman (19.8% improved acreage in cotton), Greer (39.7%), Harmon (40.9%), Jackson (31.9%), Tillman (21.3%), Comanche (18.9%), Kiowa (24.0%), Washita (16.5%), Cleveland (19.8%), Pottawatomie (28.9%), Lincoln (30.9%), Payne (18.7%), Logan (16.1%). The eastern cotton region includes Stephens (20.5%), Jefferson (24.2%), Garvin (21.4%), Carter (28.7%), Murray (19.9%), Love (28.5%), Pontotoc (20.5%), Bryan (19.6%), Marshall (15.2%), Choctaw (19.9%), Atoka (17.9%) Coal (15.8%), Hughes (28.5%), Seminole (32.9%), Okfuskee (31.9%), Creek (21.0%), McIntosh (27.5%), Haskell (27.8%), Latimer (16.8%), LeFlore (30.2%), Pittsburg (17.3%), Cherokee (18.7%), Sequoyal (34.5%).

(Table 5) Average Size of Farms

	Eastern Oklahoma	Western Oklahoma
South cotton counties	98 acres	153 acres
All Counties	113 acres	195 acres

Source: Calculated from Thirteenth Census (1910) Supplement for Oklahoma, Statistics on Agricluture, pp. 634-41.

The difference between the two cotton producing regions of southern Oklahoma can be further represented by three factors: a) the percentage of tenantry in each area, b) the average size of tenant farm as compared to owned farm in each area, and c) the average value of farm property in each region.

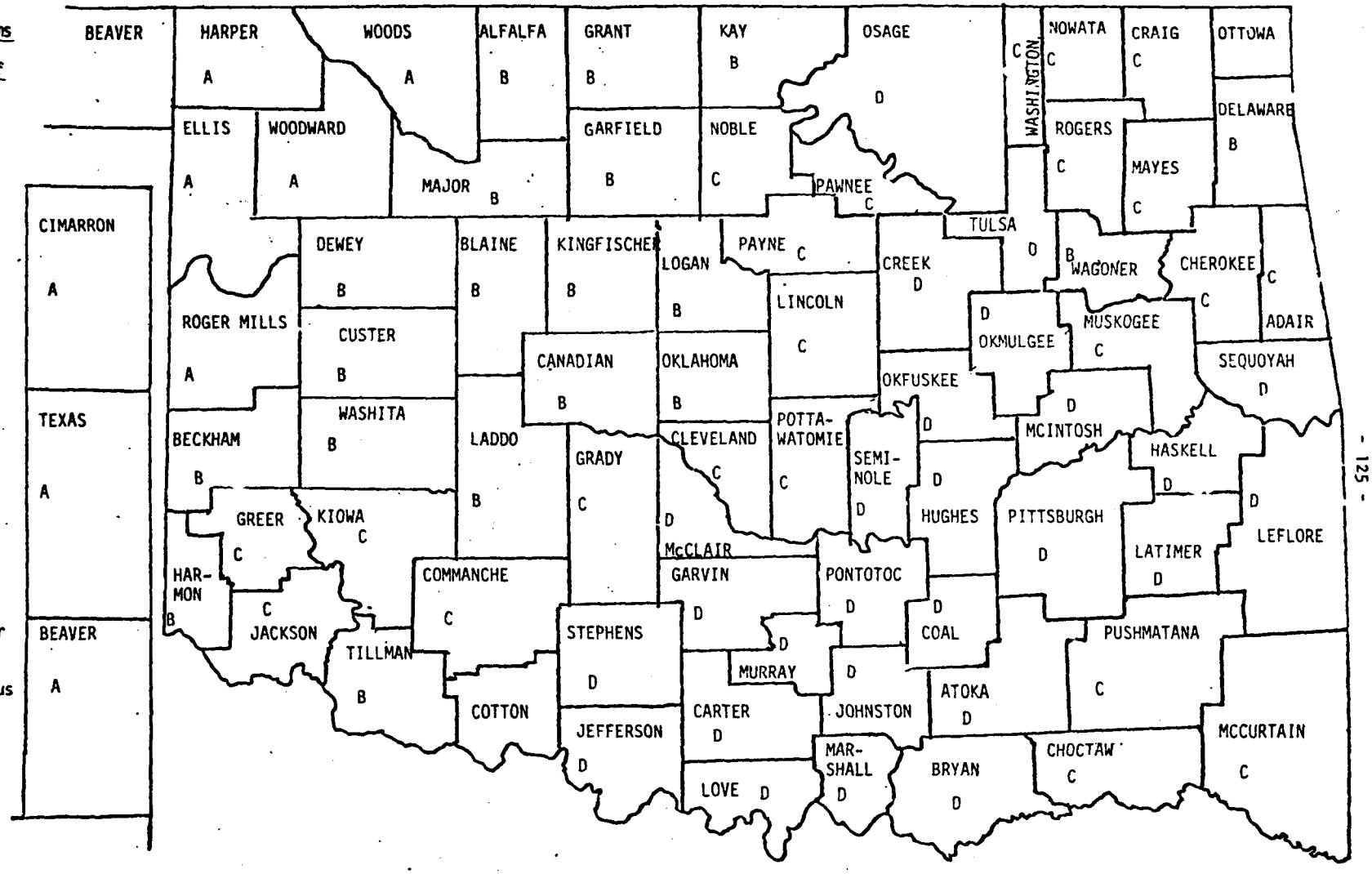
a) The percentage of tenantry--If we scrutinize Figure 10, the percentage of tenantry in each county, it becomes apparent that tenantry rates are higher in the eastern high-cotton counties than in the western ones, reaching as high as 70-80% (an average of 77%) in the southeast but only 40-50% (an average of 48%) in the southwest. This difference in the percentage of tenantry, as will be seen, represents not only a quantitative difference between the two forms of cotton culture, but more importantly, a qualitative one.

b) The average size of owned and tenant farms--If we compare the average size of tenant farm with average size owned farm first in the southeastern cotton belt and then in the southwestern cotton belt of Oklahoma we discover the following differences.

Chapter IV

Figure 10

% of Tenant Farms As Proportion Of All Farms, 1910



A = 0-24%

B = 25-49%

C = 50-69%

D = 70% and over

Source:
Thirteenth Census (1910)

(Table 6) Average Size of Owned and Tenant Farms in Cotton Regions

	Owned	Tenant
East	156.3 acres	79.6 acres
West	169.7 acres	143.3 acres

Source: Calculated from Thirteenth Census (1910), Supplement for Oklahoma, Statistics on Agriculture, pp. 634-41.

We can see from Table 6 that in the eastern cotton belt the tenant farms are approximately half the size of the average size of owned farms. This suggests that here the type of agricultural economy changes with the different type of tenure. If we examine the 40 counties in the part of Oklahoma which was Indian Territory the correlation between the percent of improved acreage in cotton and the percent of tenant farms is +.6958 (significant at the .01 level). Thus it appears that within the eastern region of small tenant farms the greater the percent of tenantry the greater the acreage devoted to cotton culture. The small cotton unit worked by tenants in southeastern Oklahoma resembled to a large extent the cotton sharecropping system which developed in the South after the Civil War.[16] Southeast Oklahoma, with its southern historical antecedents, has traditionally been known as "Little Dixie."[17] One author writes,

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[16] The ways in which this system was different than that of the South and the salience of these differences for the emergence of support for the Socialist Party will be explored in the following chapter.

[17] Oliver Benson, Oklahoma Votes, 1907-1962 (Norman: Oklahoma University Bureau of Government Research, 1964).

> In the southeastern part of the state, farm practices with cotton are similar to those east of the Mississippi river, i.e. one man with one mule units in the hill country and one man with two mules in the better area.[18]

This is not to say that the minority of owners in this region (as we have seen less than one-fourth the total number of farms, or 23%) produced no cotton at all; most farmers who raised crops raised at least some cotton. However, much of this region which was not planted to crops was given over to cattle ranching.[19] A large number of owned farms were likely to be cattle ranches.

As we can see from Table 6 the same size ratio of owned to tenant farms does not hold in the southwestern cotton belt of Oklahoma. There, tenant farms are only slightly smaller than owned farms. Yet, in the western part of the state there is also a strong positive correlation between the percent of acreage in cotton and the percent of tenantry per county (+.5463), significant at the .01% level of confidence). Thus, in the western cotton producing region the counties with these larger tenant farms were most likely to produce cotton. These larger tenant farms, however, were not comparable to the tenant farms of the eastern half of the state. They represented the accomodation of the homesteader to the adaptability of soil and weather to cotton cultivation, as well as his response to the demand for cotton. The high rate of tenantry in this region is indicative of the extent to which original homesteaders either rented their land or became tenants on land they had lost to foreclosure. As we have seen in chapter 3

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[18] "Types of Farming in Oklahoma," p. 6.

[19] Ibid., p. 13.

the growth in the tenantry rate seems to have occurred more rapidly in Western Oklahoma than elsewhere in comparable states of the Midwest. In Western Oklahoma the homesteader in the cotton region as opposed to the homesteader in the remainder of this region was more likely to lose his homestead and become a tenant. As we have seen the tenantry rate in the entire western region in 1910 was 38% while the same figure for the high cotton counties was 48%

c) Average value of property--The differences between the two cotton growing regions is also reflected in the value of farm property. The average value of property per farm per county in the southeast cotton belt was $2371 while the same figure for the southwest cotton belt was $5338, over twice as high (calculated from the Thirteenth Census). These figures partially reflect the larger acreages per farm in the southwest as well as the higher land values (see Figures 11 and 12). However they also reflect a type of cotton culture which was somewhat more capital intensive as compared to the labor intensive sharecropping of the southeast. In the southwest larger acreages per farm were planted to cotton; mechanization reduced the cost of production.

> Two row planters attached to two-row "ridge-busters" or listers, are used with eight mules. . . . Competition with such practices will continue to be more difficult in the southeast where large scale methods are less practical because of topography and the size of fields.[20]

Thus far we have seen that there were three regions in Oklahoma which provided significant support for the Socialist Party in 1910,[21] and

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[20] Ibid., p. 6.

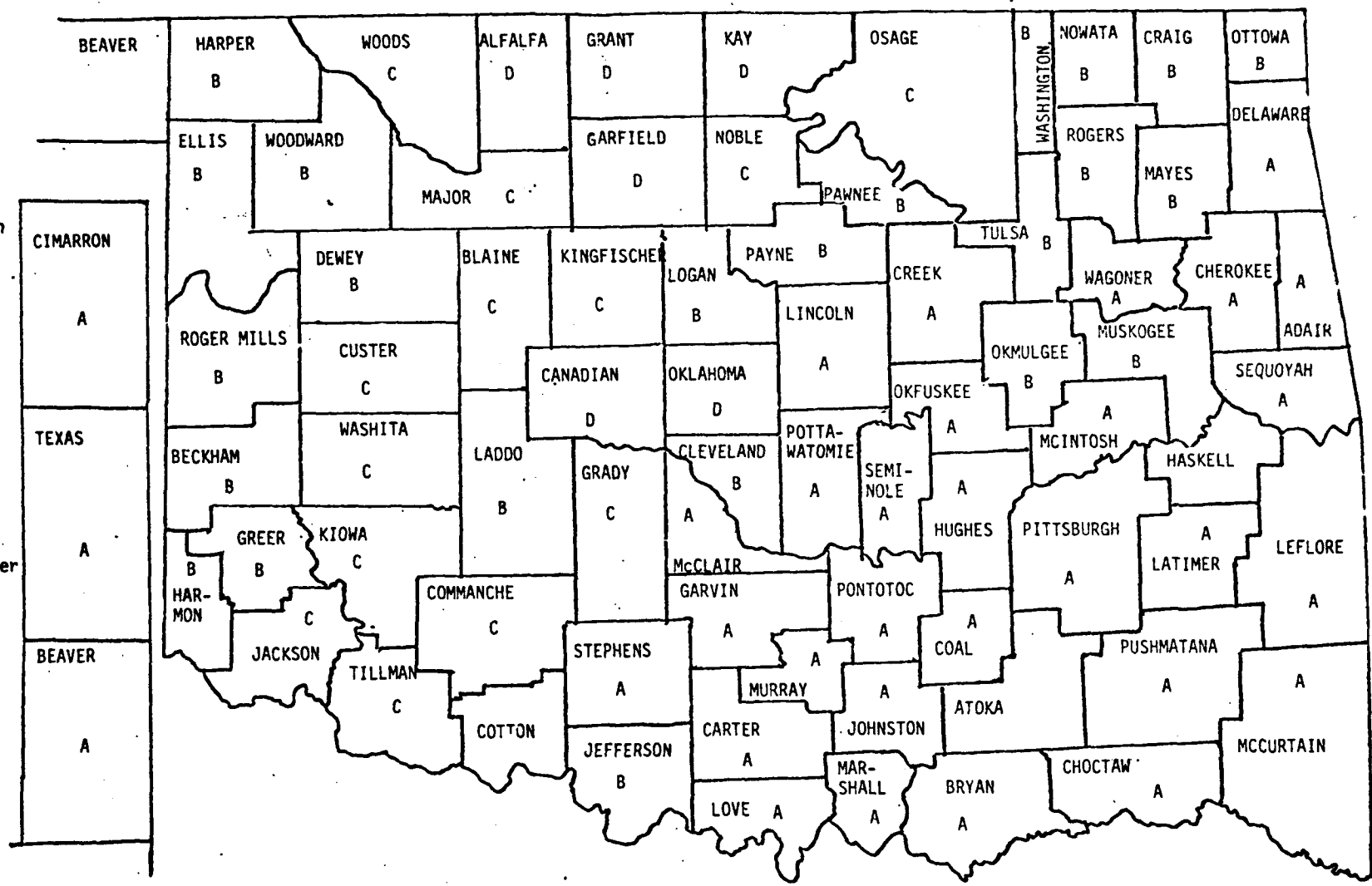
[21] Elma S. Moulton, "Cotton Production and Distribution in the Gulf Southwest," U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Domestic Commerce Series, No. 49, 1931.

Figure 11

Average Value Of Property Per Acre 1910

Source: Thirteenth Census (1910)

A = $0 - 3,999
B = 4,000 - 5,999
C = 6,000 - 9,999
D = 10,000 and over



Chapter IV

Figure 12

Average Value of Land Per Acre 1910

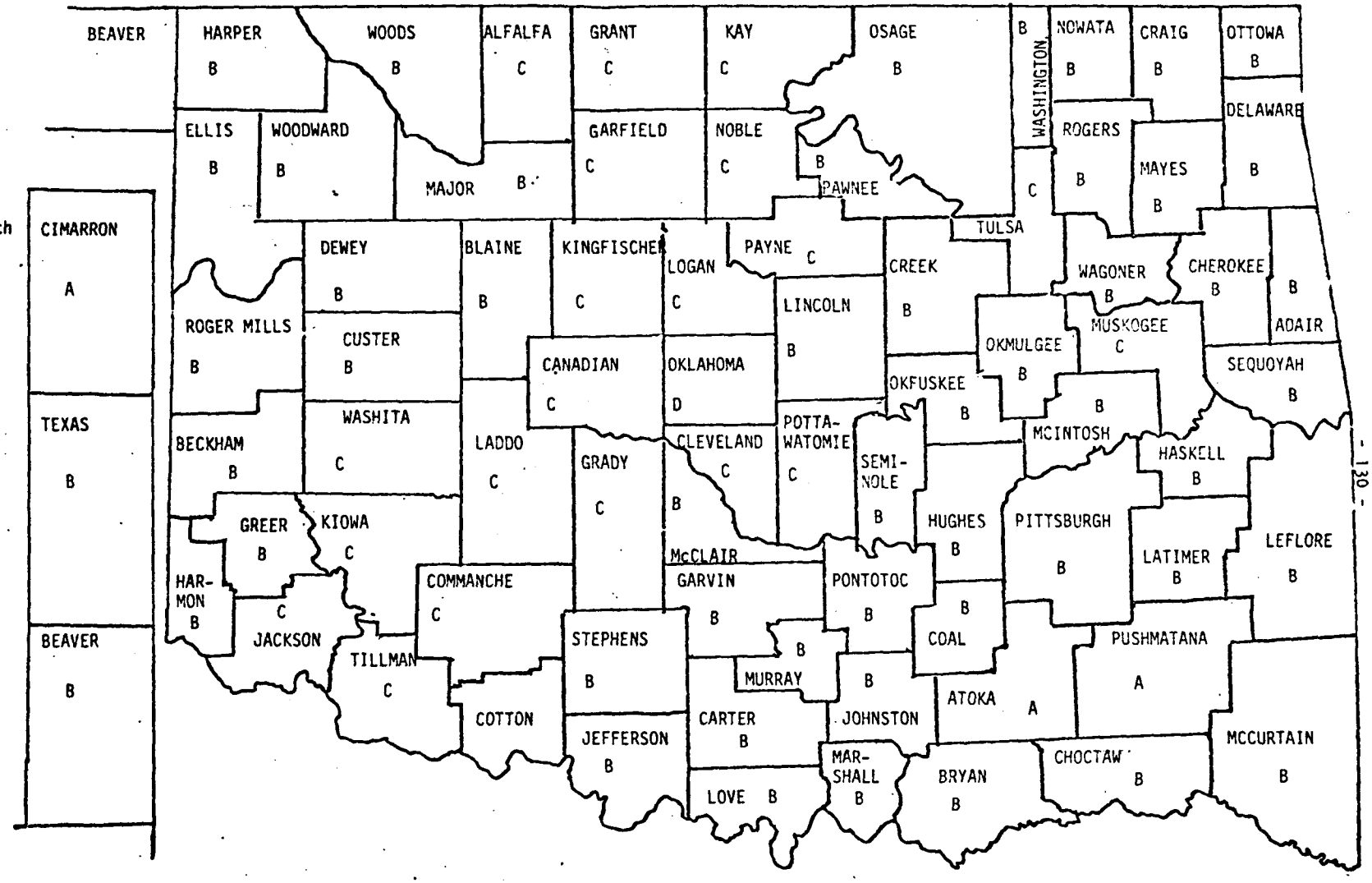
Source: Thirteenth Census (1910)

A = $0 - 9.99

B = $10 - 24.99

C = $25 - 49.99

D = $50 - 74.99



and[22] 14. Two of these were primarily cotton producing areas in the southern part of the state while the other was the wheat belt in the northwest. Only the northeast part of the state, a "mixed farming" region which produced agricultural products for local use, had a relatively small percentage of Socialist vote during the years under study. As we have mentioned already the three high Socialist voting regions produced staple crops which were for sale in the context of national and international commodity markets. Being "tied in" to these markets, as our theory predicted, did seem to be associated with the generation of agrarian radicalism despite the differences among them in terms of their agricultural structure.

The presence of support for the Socialist Party in each of the three regions under discussion suggests that similar processes were at work in each area, hypothetically the social processes described by the theoretical formulations of Hobsbawm, Wolf and Moore (the intensive introduction of market forms of agriculture--see Chapter 1). However, we would also expect that each of the three regions should be likely to exhibit empirically different intervening variables which create these processes, and ultimately lead to electoral support for the Socialist Party. At this point what these variables are must be explored.

In the last chapter we discussed the process of impoverisation which occurred in both east and west Oklahoma as a result of their anomalous historical development. We argued that this process occurred in both east and west Oklahoma; that it affected the tenant population of the east as well as the homesteader population of the west. Yet,

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[22] Ibid.

impoverisation of an agrarian population is not synonymous with a labor repressive agricultural system. What we need to do is to discover what variable or variables are most responsible for the Socialist vote in the state in order to discover if such variables can be understood as indicators of labor repressive systems--in both the east and the west.

The use of multiple regression analysis allows us to test all potentially salient variables which are indicators of agricultural structure. This can enable us to determine which factor or factors are most related to our dependent variables, the percentages of Socialist vote in the specified elections of 1910, 1912, and 1914. In doing this we can introduce one variable at a time and control for the effects of all the others in the equation. We can thereby eliminate the problem of spurious relationships (at least between the variables we have included) which may exist with a simple correlation analysis.

Indicators

The variables used in the multiple regression analysis were chosen to represent different structural elements of systems of agriculture. The decision to use each of them was based on their potential for testing hypotheses concerning agricultural structure.
The following variables were selected:

1. The % of farms operated by tenants per county (214).[23]

2. The % of farms operated by share-tenants per county (215).

The form of land tenure determines to a large extent the agricultural

[23]The numbers to the right of each variable is an arbitrary number with which the computer indicated each factor. The number will be used to indicate the particular factor in Table 7a, 8a and 9a.

producer's economic relationships. Tenants and owners of farms are frequently subject to different economic opportunities and exegencies. Since the percentage of tenantry varies inversely to the percentage of owned farms the latter variable was not included in the equation. In choosing these two particular variables we attempted to discern two things--a) if the rate of tenantry was indeed related to the Socialist vote, b) if different types of tenantry could account for the variance in the Socialist vote.[24]

3. The percent of owned farms reporting mortgages per county (286). This variable was chosen in order to see if the extent of a farmer's indebtedness and/or the potential of foreclosure or loss of the farm home, had any bearing on the dependent variables.[25] We have no county data which could directly measure the extent of indebtedness of tenant farmers. However, indirect measures of this phenomenon will be provided.

4. The average value of crops per farm per county (281).

5. The average value of farm land per farm per county (294).

6. The average value of farm property per county (293).

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[24]The category "tenantry" is an umbrella term for several different types of contract between landlord and actual producer. According to the 13th Census (1910) definitions there are "share tenants," "cash tenants" and "share-cash tenants." Share tenants pay a fixed proportion of their crop as rent while cash tenants generally pay a fixed sum. Share-cash tenants pay a share of part of the land they rent and cash for the remainder.

[25]The category "owned farms" according to Census definitions represents farms which are either entirely owned by their operators or partly owned and partly rented. The partly owned farms represented operators who, in addition to working the land they owned, would also rent additional land to work either on a cash or share basis. Doing this meant enlarging their acreage under cultivation when additional land was not purchasable or their funds were not sufficient to purchase available land.

7. The average combined value from the sale of dairy and poultry products per county (291).

These last four variables are all different measures of the average economic prosperity of farms in a county. They are all highly related to one another.[26] It was decided to utilize variables 4, 5, 6 and 7 in the regression in order to see which produced the statistically most important effect.

8. The average size of farm per county (295). Although this variable was strongly related to the average value of farm property per county (+.6543) as well as to woned farms (+.6289) it was included in the regression equation to test for the possibility that size of acreage might have an independent effect.

9. The percent of improved acreage in cotton per county (306). This variable is related to the percent of tenantry (+.5242). It was hypothesized that although there is some relationship between the extent of cotton production, the percentage of tenantry but none between the percent of tenantry and the Socialist vote, the extent of cotton culture might have an independent effect on the Socialist vote.

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[26]

Statewide Correlations (Pearson's r)

	281 4	294 5	293 6	291 7
281_4	---	---	---	---
294_5	+.7752	---	---	---
293_6	+.8026	+.8213	---	---
291_7	.6792	.7689	+.8646	---

10. The percent of urban population per county (261). This variable was chosen to test Green's hypothesis[27] that the extent of rural population in a region is responsible for the proportion of Socialist vote. He contends that where there is a greater percent of rural population, specifically tenant farmers, the class conflict between them and local urban landlords and creditors is sharper and thus, the Socialist vote is stronger.[28,29]

Findings of the Multiple Regression Analysis

The results of the multiple regression analysis for all counties in Oklahoma for the 1910,[30] 1912, and[31] 1914 elections can be seen in Table 7.

Initially these results appear puzzling. As we can see from the table below (Table 7) the factors which account for the greatest variance in the Socialist vote seem to change from election to election. In essence, we can find no consistent pattern of independent variables which can explain the variance in the dependent variable, i.e. the Socialist vote in the subsequent elections under study.

However, given the regional differences in Oklahoma it might be expected that a statewide multiple regression analysis might distort

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[27] Green, pp. 236-48.

[28] These variables were calculated from the 1910 Census of Agriculure--13th Census, Vol, 5, Agriculture, Part II, Statistics for Oklahoma.

[29] There were 77 counties in Oklahoma in 1910. The voting data was obtained from the Inter University Consortium for Political Research, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[30] Moulton.

[31] Ibid.

(Table 7)

Findings of Multiple Regression
(Statewide--All Oklahoma Counties) (78 counties)

Percent of Total Variance Accounted for by:

	% Cotton	% Urban	% Dairy & Poultry	% Slave Tenantry	% Mortgages	Value of Land	Total Variance	% Remaining Variances
1910 Gov	1%	1%	2%	6%	12%	10%	40%	8%
1910 Cong	2%	1%	9%	5%	9%	4%	38%	8%
1912 Pres	2%	1%	29%	5%	9%	4%	53%	3%
1914 Gov	2%	2%	32%	1%	17%	.4%	60%	5.6%
1914 Cong	30%	10%	3%	1%	11%	.6%	60%	4.4%

(Table 7a)

Correlation Matrix--All Oklahoma Counties

	214	215	286	281	294	293	291	295	306	261
214	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
215	+.9002	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
286	-.2405	-.2163	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
281	-.0472	-.1273	+.6076	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
294	-.1839	-.1972	+.5631	+.7752	---	---	---	---	---	---
293	-.4411	-.5257	+.5401	+.8026	+.8213	---	---	---	---	---
291	-.4332	-.5309	+.5250	+.6792	+.7689	+.8646	---	---	---	---
295	-.6292	-.7303	+.2473	+.3143	+.1650	+.6545	+.4717	---	---	---
306	+.5664	+.6649	+.0629	-.0207	-.1759	-.4742	-.5072	-.6187	---	---
261	+.1227	+.0722	+.2304	+.3231	+.5612	+.3811	+.4516	+.0234	-.0561	---

in some way, the separate processes which might have been occurring in each region. Thus, if we subject the potentially salient variables to multiple regression analysis within different historical and agricultural regions, it may be that we will obtain different results. Although we have isolated three separate agricultural regions with high Socialist voting patterns, each of these regions includes twenty or fewer counties. Since we are attempting to vary 10 different factors it makes little sense to do a multiple regression analysis with all 10 of them in each region.[32] It is necessary to limit our regressions to regions which comprise larger numbers of counties for there to be sufficient variation to justify use of so powerful a statistical technique.

As we have already see, east and west Oklahoma had a very different historical development. We have also seen how this partially accounted for differences in the types of farming which developed. Of course, the appropriateness of the soil and weather to cotton culture in the south and wheat in the northwest must also be seen as important factors in explaining these differences. Finally, we have seen that in three of the four different agricultural structures which developed there was a high Socialist vote. Yet given the historical differences between east and west Oklahoma we would expect that empirically different

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[32]When the number of variables approximates the number of cases, then an aritficially strong relationship among them may occur simply because of the use of a number of variables almost equal to the number of cases. John Sullivan, "A Note on Redistributive Politics," American Political Science Review 66 (1972).

variables in each region were likely to be responsible for the same effect, which, as we have already stated, the statewide regression analysis may have obscured.

Such a hypothesis is borne out by our data. If we separate the counties which were originally Indian Territory from those which were originally Oklahoma Territory and subject each set of counties separately to multiple regression analysis, more significant results are obtained. Firstly, a greater percent of the variance in the Socialist vote in each region is explained. Secondly the factors most significant for explaining Socialist voting patterns in both regions become apparent.

By looking at the counties of the former Indian Territory (eastern Oklahoma) separately from the state as a whole we find that there was indeed a distorting effect produced in the statewide multiple regression most likely as a result of grouping two structurally different regions together. The regression which includes only eastern Oklahoma remedies this distortion. If we compare Table 7 and Table 8 it becomes apparent that the percentage of share tenantry (in the 1910 elections) and the percentage of tenantry (in the 1912 and 1914 elections) are most significant in accounting for the variance of the Socialist vote in eastern Oklahoma. The change in the most significant variable from 1910 to 1912 at first appears odd. However, the variable "percentage of share tenantry" per county is only slightly less than the variable "percentage of tenantry," since share tenantry comprised the bulk of all the tenantry in this region in 1910. Since in the 1910 case the computer ran the "Share Tenantry" variable first, its percentage came out higher, and the

(Table 8)

Findings of Multiple Regression
Eastern Oklahoma (Indian Territory) (40 counties)

Percentage of Total Variance Accounted for by:

	% Tenantry	Value of Land	Dairy & Poultry	% Slave Tenantry	Total Variance (1 of 10 variables)	% Remaining Variance*
1910 Gov	7%	3%	.1%	37%	60%	12.9%
1910 Cong	5%	8%	0%	39%	58%	6%
1912 Pres	43%	13%	2%	3%	69%	8%
1914 Gov	47%	.7%	13%	2%	77%	7.3%
1914 Cong	49%	1%	13%	1%	76%	8%

*Accounted for by 6 remaining variables in the equation.

(Table 8a)

Correlation Matrix, Eastern Counties

	214	215	286	281	294	293	291	295	306	261
214	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
215	+.6835	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
286	+.2684	+.1638	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
281	+.2993	+.1458	+.7577	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
294	-.1522	-.1044	+.5375	+.6661	--	--	--	--	--	--
293	-.2281	-.3125	+.6342	+.6214	+.7949	--	--	--	--	--
291	-.3895	-.5198	+.3667	+.4063	+.6064	+.8323	--	--	--	--
295	-.1682	-.2821	+.5678	+.4440	+.4052	+.8581	+.7497	--	--	--
306	+.6958	+.6529	-.0217	+.0568	-.4317	-.6158	-.7486	-.5456	--	--
261	-.0136	-.1436	+.3090	+.3106	+.5277	+.5616	+.6346	+.4448	-.3193	--

addition of the "tenantry" variable could not add much to the variance explained since it only included a few additional farmers. For the 1912 and 1914 cases the computer ran the variables in the reverse order, so the "tenantry" variable explained more of the Socialist vote. Thus, the total variance explained by tenantry is close to that gotten by adding the two columns for "tenantry" and "share tenantry" together, and we get the rather uniform result that tenantry accounted for from 44% of the Socialist vote in 1910 to 49% or 50% in 1914.

The importance of tenantry as an explanatory factor in this region is supplemented by two additional variables in 1912 and 1914, low land values in 1912 and the low average value of dairy and poultry products sold per county in 1914. In 1910, a single factor, the percentage of share tenantry in eastern Oklahoma accounted for almost 40% of the variance in the Socialist vote in the two elections under study for that year. In 1912 the percentage of tenantry and low land values accounted for 56% of the Presidential Socialist vote. Finally, in 1914 the percentage of tenantry and the value of dairy and poultry products sold accounted for 60% and 62% of this variance in the Gubernatorial and U.S. Congressional elections.

If we look at the results of the regression analysis for the western part of the state we find the following results. In the western part of the state (Oklahoma Territory) we see again that the inclusion of two highly related variables in the equation appears to be responsible for a shift, between 1910 and 1912, in the factor most salient for understanding the variance in the Socialist vote. But again, this shift is caused by the order in which the variables entered the

Table 9

Findings of Multiple Regression

Western Oklahoma (Oklahoma Territory) 37 counties

Percentage of Total Variance Accounted For By:

	Sale of Dairy and Poultry	Percent Mortgages	Value of Crops	Value of Farm Property	Percent Tenantry	Total Variance	Percent Of Remaining Variances*
1910 Gov	.2%	6%	8%	25%	8%	58%	10.8%
Cong	.4%	5%	8%	22%	8%	55%	11.6%
1912 Pres	38%	11%	11%	1%	4%	71%	6%
1914 Gov	40%	21%	2%	1%	3%	75%	8%
Cong	40%	23%	1%	.1%	5%	79%	9.9%

*Percent of remaining variance accounted for by five remaining variables in the equation.

Table 9a

Correlation Matrix Western Counties

	214	215	286	281	294	293	291	295	306	261
214										
215	+.9116									
286	+.7502	+.6762								
281	+.5738	+.5231	+.5174							
294	+.5157	+.4674	+.4540	+.9489						
293	+.1455	+.0752	+.2226	+.8108	+.8681					
291	+.1593	-.0031	+.2500	+.6623	+.6953	+.7720				
295	-.8013	-.7895	-.5649	-.3663	-.3289	+.1605	-.0095			
306	+.5884	+.7418	+.5154	+.1932	+.1010	-.2932	-.3271	-.7441		
261	+.4818	+.5224	+.3366	+.5258	+.5513	+.3942	+.4162	-.3342	+.2378	

regression analysis. In 1910 the most important factor (which accounts for 25% and 22% of the variance in the Socialist vote) is the value of farm property. In 1912 and 1914 the low value of dairy and poultry products sold per farm is most responsible (38% and 40% respectively) for this variance. But these variables stand for the same thing since the correlation between them is +.7720. They are both indicators of agricultural prosperity. As we can see from Table 9 in 1912 and 1914 the percentage of owned farms which are mortgaged takes on increasing significance in explaining the variance in the Socialist vote. In 1912 and 1914 the two variables, value of dairy and poultry products sold and the percent of mortgages, account for 49%, 62% and 63% of the variance in the Socialist vote.

As we can see from our statistical results the variance in the Socialist vote seems to be accounted for by totally different variables in the eastern and western portions of the state. These findings confirm our hypotheses about the importance of considering historical antecedents for an understanding of the development of social structure. Yet, the fact that two separate sets of variables seem to account for the high Socialist vote in each region seems to require that separate explanations be offered for each regional entity. Firstly, we must ask what the salient indicators represent theoretically, other words, how are the two sets of factors theoretically significant in each region? Secondly, we must ask if these separate regions share a common element or process which could account for the high degree of Socialist vote in both regions, and thus unify the explanations.

In order to do this we must again look at eastern and western Oklahoma separately. Once it becomes clear what specific processes were operating in each region we will be able to generalize on a higher level as to whether or not the more specific social processes of each region can be seen as different forms of labor repressive agriculture.

Eastern Oklahoma

The question we must now answer is what do the three salient indicators reflect in terms of the social processes of eastern Oklahoma; what does their statistical importance tell us theoretically?

a) The percent of tenantry--As we have already seen the percent of tenantry was highest in the southeast cotton belt of Oklahoma. As mentioned before the high rate of tenantry (averaging 77%) and the small size of tenant farms represented not only a quantitative difference between this region and others in Oklahoma, but a qualitative one as well. These factors represent an agricultural economy similar to the share-cropping system of the American south rather than merely a situation of much tenant farming. The "sharecropper"[33] is not like other tenant farmers. He does not merely rent the land he works, making economic

[33] He can be a sharecropper or a share renter. The distinction between these two depends on the extent to which the agricultural producer owns what can be called the "means of production." The share renter traditionally owns his own work animals, provides the feed for these animals, owns his own work tools and provides his own seed. The landlord furnishes land, buildings and fuel. The renter usually pays one-fourth of the cotton produced and one third of the corn or other crops. Usually corn and cotton are the primary crops gorwn. Share-croppers, on the other hand, typically own no work animals or tools. The landlord furnishes these in addition to land, buildings and fuel. The cropper is usually required to pay a half instead of a third and a quarter of the crops produced to the landlord. The 1910 Census makes no distinction between sharecroppers and share renters. Here we will refer to both as "sharecroppers."

decisions based on rational calculation of input and output. He does not make decisions as to what and/or how much he will produce. These decisions are left to the landlord. The sharecropper is merely an agrarian wage laborer, whose wages, paid once a year at harvest time, are determined by the amount of cotton and corn he produces and the selling price of cotton.

The sharecropping arrangement is most beneficial to the landlord. In the study of the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta cotton belt in 1916[34] it was found that the return on the landlord's investment was higher when they rented their land according to a system of shares rather than for a flat cash charge. When the landlord pays his workers a proportion of what they produce as wages, there is a greater incentive for the laborers to produce more. Thus the economic risks of cotton cultivation are transfered to the producer.[35]

b) Value of land--Our data show that in the cotton sharecropping region of eastern Oklahoma where the land is poorest the Socialist vote is strongest. Yet typically, a high degree of tenantry and high (rather than low) land values are found to be positively related.[36]

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[34]William B. Bizzell, "Farm Tenantry in the United States," Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas, Bulletin #278 (April 1921), p. 133.

[35]Lawanda F. Cox, "Tenancy in the United States, 1865-1900," Agricultural History 19 (July 1944), pp. 97-105, 100.

[36]Benjamin H. Hibbard, "Tenancy in the Southern States," Quarterly Journal of Economics 27 (May 1913), p. 524; Donald Zagoria, "The Ecology of Peasant Communism in India," American Political Science Quarterly LXV (March 1971); Bizzell.

cotton belt of southeast Oklahoma where the average value of land was only $14.73, the yield of cotton was only .29 bales.

It appears that, on the average, the land in Oklahoma was less fertile than the rich bottom lands of the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta. On the land of less than average fertility in southeast Oklahoma the yields were likely to have been smaller still. Where yields are exceptionally small we would expect that the acreage required to support a tenant family would, of necessity, be larger. In 1913 the average size acreage of cotton tenant farms in the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta was 23.4 acres. In the 1910 Census no figures were available to calculate the comparable figure for the cotton belt of Oklahoma. However, we can get such figures for 1925.[41] (See Table 10)

Although these acreages are given from ten to fifteen years later than the period under study the average acreages of cropland harvested are roughly similar to Boegar and Goldenweiser's study made in 1916, thus reassuring us of their usefulness. We can see from Table 10 that the average size of cropland harvested in Oklahoma is about twice the size of that in the more easterly deep southern states. This size differential may be accounted for by the difference in the quality of the soil. On the better soil of Mississippi (we have no data for soil quality in Louisiana and Arkansas) it appears that half the acreage that it took in southeast Oklahoma could provide a subsistence living to a sharecropper and his family.

Therefore, it can be argued that the Oklahoma sharecropper on the less fertile soil was required to plant more acres to cotton. He

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[41] Elma S. Moulton, "Cotton Production and Distribution in the Gulf Southwest," U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Domestic Commerce Series 49 (1931).

and his family were therefore required to work harder to cultivate and harvest the cotton in order to produce enough of the cash crop to support himself, his family and his landlord. Where his farm was smaller than average or his soil was poorer than average and could not produce enough cotton he probably suffered more privation. The reader will remember that the results of the multiple regression analysis for Eastern Oklahoma showed that in 1912 the low value of land (an index of poor soil) accounted for 13% of the variance in the Socialist vote. This is consistent with the fact that sharecroppers on the poorer soils, because they were themselves poorer and worked harder, were more likely to vote Socialist than sharecroppers on the better land.

Cotton sharecropping was a labor intensive type of agriculture. The capital investment required by the landlord was very low. He need only provide a few buildings, a cabin for the tenant family and a shed for the work animals; maybe some mules and a plow. No capital intensive mechanization as in the wheat belt was required. The cotton was planted, tended and picked by human labor. Vance writes,

> The amount of the farmer's time required to pick an acre of cotton would produce three acres of corn in Iowa or four acres of wheat in Kansas.[42]

According to the same author even where yields are low it takes at least thirty hours to pick an acre of cotton. In the upcountry South planting requires 14-18 hours of man labor per acre.[43]

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[42] Vance, p. 166.

[43] Ibid., pp. 160-166.

(Table 10) Average Acreage of Cropland Harvested on Cotton Tenant Farms 1925

	Southeast Oklahoma	Mississippi	Louisiana	Arkansas
Share renter	50.9 acres	22.7	26.0	29.7
Share cropper	40.5	18.4	19.3	20.0

Source: Calculated from Elma Moulton, Cotton Production and Distribution in the Gulf Southwest, U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Domestic Commerce Series, no. 49,1931.

Thus, Oklahoma sharecroppers appear to have had a harder time of it than their counterparts in Mississippi. Cotton culture itself requires a great amount of hard physical labor. On poorer soils, however, yields are inevitably lower. In Oklahoma the larger acreages of cotton croppers were necessary to compensate for the lower yields per acre. Yet, this meant the cotton tenant had to work harder to produce the same amount of cotton.

Price Fluctuations and Marginal Profitability

Cotton is subject to enormous price fluctuations. As we can see from Table 11 the 1890's was a period of extremely low cotton prices. By 1900 prices began to rise again. The years 1900 to 1914 saw significant fluctuations in the price of this commodity. However, only with the First World War did cotton prices rise precipitously (a phenomenon which was due to the increased demand of the war years). Until the First World War the continually increasing acreage in cotton (see Table 12) kept cotton prices close to the level of marginal profitability. Austin[44] estimated that under optimum conditions, cotton could be produced at 12 cents a pound in 1915. Thus, when the price of cotton dipped below

[44] U.S. Senate Commission on Industrial Relations, "Land Question in the Southwest," Final Report, 64th Session, Document No. 415, 1916, X, testimony of C. L. Austin.

Table 11

Average Return to Producer Per Acre of Cotton in United States--1878-1927

Year	Average Yield Per Acre in Pounds of Lint	Average Farm Price Cents Per Pound	Average Return to Producer Per Acre of Cotton
1927	152.3	19.6	$31.21
1926	182.6	10.2	20.87
1925	167.2	18.2	31.79
1924	157.6	22.6	37.26
1923	130.6	31.0	42.34
1922	141.3	23.8	35.14
1921	124.5	16.2	21.11
1920	178.4	13.9	20.02
1919	161.3	35.6	60.62
1918	159.6	27.6	46.20
1917	159.7	27.7	46.28
1916	156.6	19.6	32.08
1915	170.3	11.3	20.10
1914	209.2	6.8	14.91
1913	182.0	12.2	23.26
1912	190.9	11.9	23.83
1911	207.7	8.8	19.08
1910	170.7	14.1	25.32
1909	154.3	13.9	22.55

Table 11 (continued):

Year	Average Yield Per Acre in Pounds of Lint	Average Farm Price Cents Per Pound	Average Return to Producer Per Acre of Cotton
1908	206.0	9.45	19.27
1907	177.	11.42	20.21
1906	211.	9.56	20.17
1905	209.	11.07	23.04
1904	216.	8.98	20.51
1903	172.	12.15	20.90
1902	190.	8.82	16.76
1901	192.	8.06	15.48
1900	193.	9.33	18.01
1899	185.	7.65	14.99
1898	221.	4.88	10.78
1897	222.	5.64	12.42
1896	172.	7.32	12.71
1895	169.	8.18	13.93
1894	202.	5.92	11.96
1893	183.	7.50	13.72
1892	176.	8.40	14.78
1891	206.	7.30	14.48
1890	177.	8.60	15.22
1889	173.	11.07	19.15
1888	173.	10.65	18.42

Source: Rupert Vance, Human Factors in Cotton Culture: A Study in the Social Geography of the American South, University of North Carolina Press, 1929, p. 125 .

Table 12

Year	Crop Million Bales	Value Million Dollars
1894-95	10.0	$295.0
1898-99	11.4	282.8
1904-05	13.4	561.1
1908-98	13.2	588.8
1911-12	15.7	750.0
1914-15	16.1	591.1
1926-27	17.9	982.7
	97.7	$4,051.5
1895-96	7.1	$291.1
1899-1900	9.5	363.8
1905-06	10.6	556.8
1909-10	10.0	688.4
1912-13	13.7	786.8
1915-16	11.2	627.9
1927-28	12.7	1,253.5
	74.8	$4,568.3

Source: Rupert Vance, Human Factors in Cotton Culture: A Study in the Social Geography of the American South, University of North Carolina Press, 1929, p. 123.

or close to the cost of its production, it was the producer upon whom the greatest part of the burden would fall.

> The question is frequently asked, if cotton sells for less than cost, how does the producer continue to live? The cost as is given the public is based upon $1 per day for the producer's time on the crop. His cotton is his wages. If he sells it for less than cost he simply works for less than $1 per day. One dollar per day, of course, will not support his family, but his work is supplemented by free labor of his women and children . . .[45]

There is evidence that in Oklahoma landlords discriminated against tenants with small families as tenants with large families would provide more labor at less cost.[46] Qualitative evidence concerning the intense poverty of southeastern Oklahoma sharecroppers, unlike their crops, is abundant.[47]

Lack of Crop Diversification and Debt

The cotton tenant was continually warned in the local and national agricultural bulletins of the day[48] that his total reliance on cotton culture was ultimately deleterious to his economic well being. He was told that crop diversification, which could be accomplished by increasing his thrift and efficiency was the most valuable way to limit his dependency on pitfalls of cotton production. He was told to plant a vegetable garden

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[45] Ibid., testimony of Yeary.

[46] Ibid., testimony of Nagle.

[47] Carey McWilliams, Ill Fares the Land (Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1942) p. 192.

[48] Oklahoma A & M College, Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 181 (June 1929),"Types of Farming in Oklahoma" by J. O. Ellsworth; U.S Dept. of Agriculture, Dept. Bulletin 409, (August 26), 1916, "Factors Affecting Interest Rates and Other Charges on Short-Time Farm Loans,", by C. W. Thompson.

and/or buy a few hogs, cows and chickens to provide supplies for his own consumption as well as for intermittent sale.[49] In this way his need for cash to purchase supplies would be reduced. He could increase the frequency as well as the amount of cash inflow and decrease the need for cash outflow. This, he was told, would upgrade his economic status so that he could purchase the farm he rented, acquire property and wealth and climb the "agricultural ladder."[50]

The actual impossibility of doing this, given the exigencies of cotton tenantry[51] along with high and rising land prices has been well documented.[52] Instead of becoming upwardly mobile the tendency was for these tenant farmers to fall into greater and greater depths of economic dependency through continuously increasing indebtedness.

In a study entitled, Credit Problems of Oklahoma Cotton Farmers,[53] the authors concluded the following,

> The uncertainty of the income from cotton production has an important bearing on the need for credit, the amount supplied, and the rate of interest. The steadier and more evenly distributed one's income, the easier it is to adjust expenditures so as to reduce the need for credit. Irregularity and uncertainty of income not only increase the farmer's need of credit, but they increase the risk, reduce the local supply of loanable funds at certain times, and tend to raise the interest rate.

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[49] Harvey Jordan in an address to the Southern Cotton Association, 1906, quoted in Vance, p. 181.

[50] W. J. Spillman & E. A. Goldenweiser, pp. 321-46.

[51] Michael Schwartz, The Southern Farmers' Alliance: The Organizational Forms of Radical Protest (New York: Academic Press forthcoming).

[52] Hibbard; U.S. Commission on Industrial Relations, Nagle testimony.

[53] Oklahoma A & M College, Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 198 (Oct. 1930), "Credit Problems of Oklahoma Cotton Farmers" by J. T. Sanders, p. 13.

This same study shows that more short-term credit[54] was used by southeast Oklahoma cotton tenants than anywhere else in the cotton producing regions of the state. Although this study was made in 1930, an earlier study (1916)[55] shows that in the years under study here Oklahoma had the highest cost of credit of any state in the nation for short term loans (see Table 13). Furthermore the cost of credit in Southeast Oklahoma for short term loans was higher than anywhere else in the entire state.

The risks involved in making loans tends to be one factor which increases their cost. We must therefore suspect that these risks, engendered by unfavorable soil conditions, market fluctuations in the price of cotton, and lack of economic diversification, must have been unusually high in Oklahoma, and in southeast Oklahoma in particular. Thus it appears that the extremely high cost of credit in Oklahoma was the vehicle through which an unusually high degree of surplus was extracted from the sharecroppers as opposed to the unusually high rents demanded in Texas.

Extent of Dependence on the Market

We will notice from Table 11 that in 1914 cotton prices plummetted to 6.8 cents a pound. Prices had not been so low since 1898 when cotton

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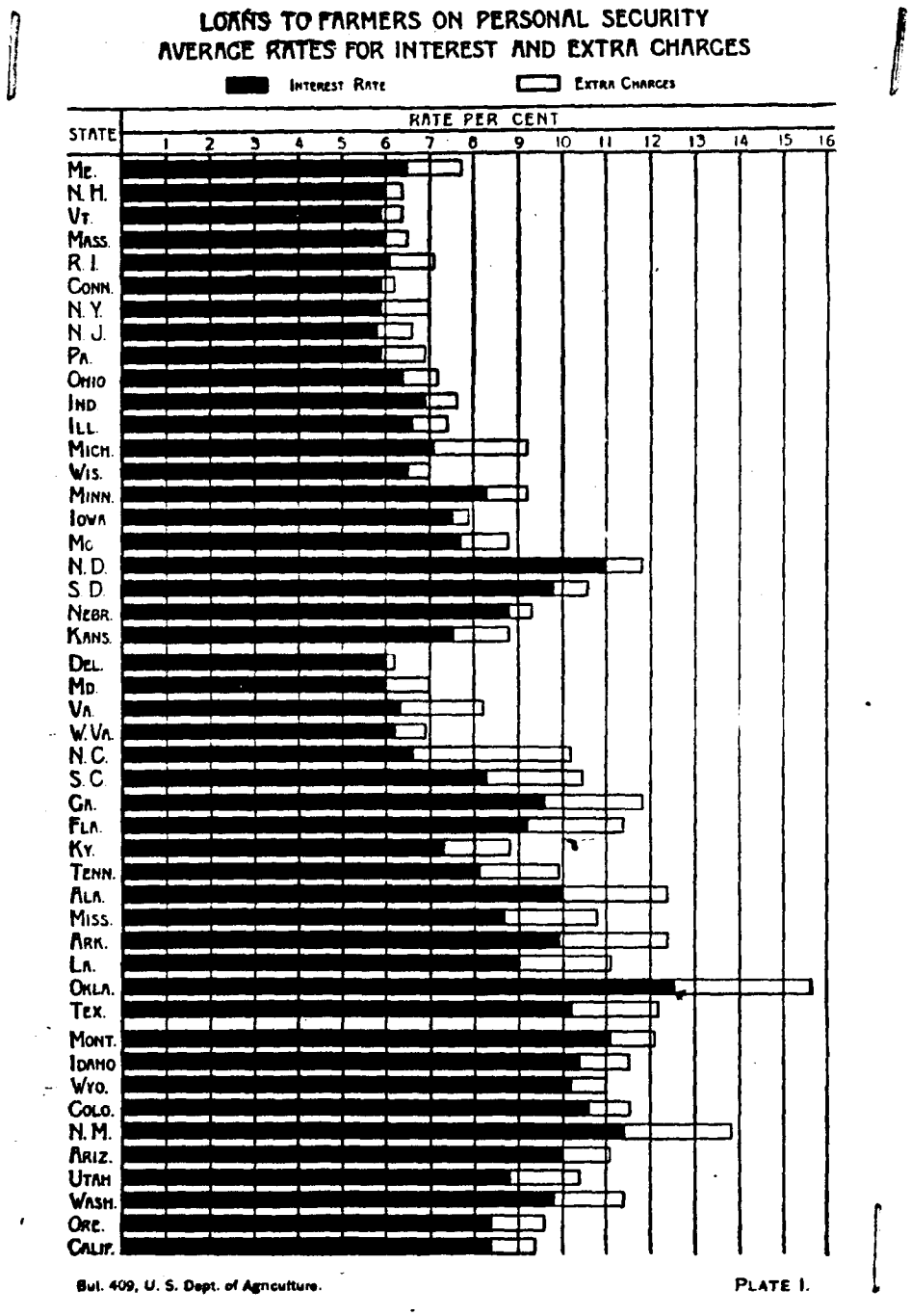
[54]Short-term or seasonal credit refers to credit extended on personal or collateral security running for periods of a year or less. Short term credit is frequently associated with merchant credit (being "carried" by the local "company store") rather than with bank loans; it also means higher rates of interest than bank credit. It is to be differentiated from mortgage credit which has real estate as collateral, is typically extended for several or more years and usually carries lower interest rates.

[55]U.S.D.A. Bulletin #409.

Table 13



Source: United States Department of Agriculture, Bulletin No. 409, "Factors Affecting Interest Rates and other Charges on Short-Term Farm Loans," August 26, 1916, Plate I.

sold for 4.9 cents a pound. Inevitably many indebted cotton producers, as a result of this precipitous price decline, were unable to repay loans they had taken out earlier in the year in order to "make a crop." It stands to reason that those producers who were the most dependent on the sale of cotton for their income were most vulnerable to the low cotton prices. On the other hand, those who could supplement their cash inflow from the sale of dairy and poultry products were likely to be less vulnerable. This most likely explains a portion of the results of the multiple regression analysis for eastern Oklahoma in the 1914 elections. In this year the factor "average value of dairy and poultry products sold per farm" accounts for 13% of the variance in the Socialist vote. In those counties where the least income was obtained from the sale of dairy and poultry products, the Socialist vote was likely to be highest. Thus, in a year of crisis the financial exigencies of cotton sharecroppers were probably magnified beyond the expectations of even the impoverished tenants. It seems likely that as a result they may have been predisposed to vote the Socialist ticket, in protest against the system which generated this seeming catastrophe.

This is not to argue that the drop in cotton prices was the cause of the extraordinarily high Socialist vote in 1914. The Socialist party, as we will see, had a firm base of organizational strength throughout the state many years before 1914 and the Socialist vote had been strong in the same regions before the 1914 cotton debacle.[56] Yet, neither can we

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[56]Meredith, p. 157.

conclude that the drop in the price of cotton was irrelevant to the extraordinarily high Socialist vote of this year.[57] While we cannot see low cotton prices as a fundamental cause of the high Socialist vote in 1914 we must see it as a precipitating factor which operated within the larger context of structural causation. If we compare the percent of increase of Socialist vote from 1912 to 1914 in the cotton and wheat belts we find that the increase was slightly higher in the cotton belt (32% to 35% in the cotton belt and 27% in the wheat belt). This suggests that the low cotton prices of that year had some influence on the increased Socialist vote.[58]

Eastern Oklahoma--Conclusions

We can safely conclude that the cotton sharecroppers of southeastern Oklahoma were the victims of a labor repressive form of market agriculture. The high labor intensive and low capital intensive requirements of cotton culture, the price fluctuations, and marginal profitability of this commodity on the less productive land, the inability of the economically dependent cotton tenant to diversify, were all factors which made them a poor credit risk. Increased vulnerability to indebtedness drained their surplus and increased their impoverishment. In this situation landlords and credit merchants could, as Moore says, "sit back" and demand a lucrative return on land that was too poor to support their tenants with any degree of stability. Landlords were either

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[57] Green, p. 234.

[58] The average vote in the 1912 Presidential election was compared with the average vote in the 1914 Congressional and Gubernatorial elections in both cotton and wheat belts, to obtain these figures.

unwilling or unable to make any economic investment in the soil which would increase or perpetuate its fertility, preferring to "mine" the soil in order to maximize profits on the most short term basis.[59]

Western Oklahoma

As we have seen from our multiple regression analysis for western Oklahoma (see Table 9 as well as the observations of the distribution of the Socialist vote by county in the elections of 1910, 1912 and 1914 in Tables 5-9) the electoral strength of the Socialist Party was most heavily distributed in portions of both the wheat and the cotton belts. In the western half of the state, the two variables which most account for the variance in the vote were primarily indicators of the economic prosperity of farms per county. In 1910 the variable "average value of farm property per county" accounted for 22-25% of the variance in the Socialist votes, while in 1912 and 1914 the most significant variable becomes "value of dairy and poultry products sold per county." This latter variable accounts for between 38 and 40% of the variance of the Socialist vote in these two years. As we have seen the two variables, "average value of farm property per county" and "value of dairy and poultry products sold per county" were very strongly related to each other on a statewide basis (+.8713). In western Oklahoma that relationship remains strong (+.7720). Thus, it seems plausible to conclude that both do indeed represent the same theoretical phenomenon--agricultural prosperity.

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[59]U.S. Commission on Industrial Relations, p. 9153.

In the elections under study the percent of farms reporting mortgages is the second most significant factor in explaining the Socialist vote. In the 1910 Gubernatorial election this factor only accounts for 6% of the variance; in Congressional elections for 5% of the variance. In 1912, however, as the Socialist vote increased, this jumped to 11%. In 1914, as the Socialist vote increased once again, this variable accounted for 21 and 23% of the variance in the Socialist vote in the Gubernatorial and Congressional elections. The increase in the importance of this factor for explaining the variance in the Socialist vote from 1910 to 1914 may be accounted for by a rapid increase of mortgage foreclosures during this period. However, we have no data to either confirm or disconfirm such a hypothesis. Again we must ask, as we did for eastern Oklahoma, what do our results reflect in terms of social process?

Land Tenure

It appears that in the western half of Oklahoma a high degree of tenantry does not appear to be responsible for explaining the variance in the Socialist vote. Furthermore, the failure of the percent of tenantry to statistically account for the Socialist vote is not a function of a distorting effect produced by treating the two separate agricultural regions, the cotton and wheat belt, as one. If we look separately at the correlation between the percent of tenantry and the Socialist vote in the wheat and the cotton belt we can see that there is no relationship between the two factors in the cotton belt. There is a slightly negative relationship between them in the wheat belt.

(Table 14) Percent of Tenantry

Socialist Vote	Southwest Cotton Belt	Northwest Wheat Belt
1910 Gov	-.0973	-.2728
Cong	-.0945	-.2391
1912 Pres	-.1703	-.3212
1914 Gov	-.0618	-.2074
Cong	-.0987	-.1982

(Significant at the 5% level .468
at the 1% level .590)

We saw in Chapter III that the increase in tenantry from 1889 to 1910 had been much more rapid in western Oklahoma than increases in other comparable states for the same period. Yet, it is not in counties where the rate of tenantry is highest that there is the largest Socialist electoral strength.

In western Oklahoma, as opposed to the eastern part, the majority of farms in 1910 were owned (62%). (The comparable figure for eastern Oklahoma was 28%.) Furthermore, as we will remember, the tenantry rate did not represent a sharecropping agricultural economy as it did in eastern Oklahoma, even in the cotton producing region. In western Oklahoma the settlement of the land had been through the process of homesteading. Thus, a tenant farmer most likely represented a homesteader who had "proved up" and was now renting his land to another operator or one who had lost his land by defaulting on his mortgage and had become a tenant himself. In addition to the tenantry rate of 38%, the percent of owned farms in western Oklahoma reporting mortgages was 47%. Thus, we see that almost half of all the owned farms were mortgaged; about 70% of

all the farms in western Oklahoma in 1910 were either operated by tenants, or had liens against them. When we consider that almost all the farmsteads in what was formerly Oklahoma Territory only twenty years before that were presumably destined to be owned free and clear, the rate at which these "farm homes" were being lost or falling into the control of financiers seems enormous. These figures accord with the testimony of W. L. Thurman, a Socialist "circuit rider," who testified to the Walsh Commission in 1915 that approximately 75% of the farm operators in Oklahoma had either lost their homes and become tenants, or were in the process of losing them through mortgage foreclosures.[60]

It appears from the results of our statistical analysis that in the counties where the farms were poorest, the counties which had the lowest average value of farm property (or the lowest value sold in dairy and poultry products), and the counties where the largest percent of farms were mortgaged, the greatest support for the Socialist Party was forthcoming. The question we must now ask is what was the theoretical significance of these results. Since mortgages and poor farmers seems to "go together" intuitively, the explanation which suggests itself is that the poor farmers who were losing their homes were most likely to vote Socialist.[61] Although this argument seems plausible it is only partially correct. It is both historically and structurally incomplete.

We will remember from the last chapter that the homesteaders who entered Oklahoma were likely to be poor. We also argued in Chapter 3 that

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[60] U.S. Commission on Industrial Relations, Thurman testimony, p. 9159.

[61] Meredith, p. 110.

that farming on the western frontier was an enterprise that required capital. Thus, those without much capital were less likely to be economically successful, even when the land was presumably free. We have also seen that one of the inevitable risks that the pioneers who settled the West were subjected to was the scarcity of cash and the potential of mortgage indebtedness and foreclosure. It seems plausible that farmers who started with little or no cash would be forced to incur indebtedness, via the mortgage. On the Western Oklahoma frontier, as elsewhere, the need for cash was intense. Angie Debo, writes of a "typical" western Oklahoma wheat belt township,

> . . . as soon as the settlers received title to their land they had a new basis for credit. All but six of the 136 homesteaders in Prairie township proved up . . . ; of this number 73 mortgaged their farms almost immediately.[62]

Debo says that 53% of the farmers who "proved up" mortaged their farms. This figure, 53%, is relatively consistent with the rate of mortgages in 1910 throughout the northwestern wheat belt (about 50%).

If, however, we compare the percent of mortgaged farms in western Oklahoma with the same figures for Kansas and Nebraska we find only small differences among them.

(Table 15) Percent of Farms Reporting Mortgages

Kansas--44%
Nebraska--39%
W. Oklahoma--47%

Source: Thirteenth Census (1910) Agriculture, Vols. 6 & 7, Reports by State.

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[62]Angie Debo, Prairie City: History of an American Community (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1944), p. 63.

In addition, if we calculate the proportion of farms in the three states which are either operated by tenants or report mortgages we do not find inordinate differences among them.

(Table 15) Percent of Farms not Owned Free & Clear

	% Tenantry	% of Owned Farms	Total Percent Tenant or Mortgaged Farms
Western Oklahoma	38%	47%	67%
Kansas	37%	44%	65%
Nebraska	38%	39%	62%

Source: Calculated from Thirteenth Census (1910), Supplement for Oklahoma Statistics on Agriculture, pp. 642-49.

It does not seem likely that the differences between these states in terms of the percent of farms which were not owned free and clear is significant enough to account for the differences in the Socialist vote in the states under study. In the 1912 Presidential election the Socialist vote for Debs was 7.33% in Kansas, 4.08% in Nebraska,[63] while in Western Oklahoma it was 15.54%. Yet, we must still account for the statistical significance of the percent of mortgages per county in explaining such a large degree of the variance of the Socialist vote in western Oklahoma. Were the western Oklahoma farmers more economically vulnerable than their counterparts in Kansas and Nebraska? If so, what could have created this special vulnerability and how might it have been responsible for the high degree of Socialist vote?

The reasons for the increased vulnerability of Oklahoma farmers begins to become apparent when we compare the average value of farm

[63] Svend Petersen, A Statistical History of the American Presidential Elections (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1963), p. 79.

property of western Oklahoma with the same figures for Kansas and Nebraska.

(Table 16) Average Value of All Farm Property

Kansas	$11,467
Nebraska	16,038
Western Oklahoma	6,385
Wheat Belt	7,057
Cotton Belt	5,700

Source: Calculated from Thirteenth Census (1910) Agriculture, Vols. 6 & 7.

As we see from Table 16 the average value of property in western Oklahoma is only slightly more than half (56%) of the value of farm property in Kansas, and significantly less (39.8%) than the value of farm property in Nebraska. In the wheat belt the average value of property is slightly greater than in western Oklahoma as a whole, yet it is not as large as in Kansas or Nebraska. In the cotton belt the average value of property is slightly smaller than in western Oklahoma as a whole.

Although these large differences between western Oklahoma and the other states can be accounted for to some extent by the differences in the average size of farm (smaller farms on land of less value makes for a smaller average value of land per farm) the value of the improvements and thus the capital investment on western Oklahoma farms was smaller as well. This we can see from the following table.

(Table 17)

	Average Acreage per Farm	Average Value Farm Land Per Acre	Aver. Value Land Per Farm	Aver. Capital Investment per Farm
Kansas	244	$35.45	$ 8,650	$2,817
Nebraska	298	41.80	12,456	3,582
W. Oklahoma	195	24.96	4,227	2,158
Wheat Belt	219	25.81	5,652	1,405
Cotton Belt	160	27.52	4,403	1,297

Source: Calculated from Thirteenth Census (1910), Agriculture, Vols. 6 & 7

We can see that farms in Western Oklahoma, both in the cotton and the wheat belt, are smaller than farms in Kansas and Nebraska.[64] Farms in Western Oklahoma are also situated on what is, on the whole, less valuable soil than in the other two states. In addition, the value of the property (aside from the value of the land) is lower in Western Oklahoma than in the other two states. When we compare Western Oklahoma to Kansas and Nebraska, we can see that from several indications the farms in the two northerly states were more prosperous. In Kansas and Nebraska larger farms were on better soil and on the average had improvements which represented a higher capital investment. This is especially true when we compare Kansas and Nebraska to the counties of the Western Oklahoma cotton belt. More significantly, however, it was also true for the wheat belt, a region which was more similar than the cotton belt of western Oklahoma to the type of agriculture that was practiced in Kansas and Nebraska.

It seems that not only were Oklahoma farmers likely to have started out less affluent than their counterparts in Kansas and Nebraska, but the agricultural situation under which they labored, the productivity of the soil, seems to have been less promising. On the poorer soils of Oklahoma farmers could not achieve the wealth to buy as much

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[64]The wheat belt and cotton belt do not comprise all of western Oklahoma. Thus, the average capital investment per farm in both of these regions is lower than in western Oklahoma as a whole. This indicates that the average capital investment per farm in the more diversified regions is higher than in western Oklahoma as a whole. The value of the land in the cash crop commodity belts is higher than in Oklahoma as a whole indicating that these are areas of high exploitability but low returns.

land or improve the value of their buildings and/or equipment to the same extent that Kansas and Nebraska farmers could.

Mortgages

A farm mortgage, we must remember, is different from short-term or seasonal credit. It is taken out over several years with real estate as collateral and usually requires a much lower interest rate per annum.[65] Furthermore, a mortgage on a farm does not always represent credit which is financially unsound. In fact, the correlation between the percent of owned farms which reported mortgages and the average value of farm property in western Oklahoma in 1910 is relatively weak (+.2016). Thus, many prosperous as well as poor farmers probably had mortgages to expand their operations and to increase their profits in the long run. A study of mortgage credit in the Oklahoma cotton belt indicated that 92% of all mortgage loans in the cotton growing regions were used to buy land.[66] Short term credit, on the other hand, was most frequently spent on living expenses.

As we have seen, the original Oklahoma farmers who came to the new Territory as homesteaders to settle on the free land were likely to be poor. Those who had little cash could, in Oklahoma, as opposed to states like Kansas and Nebraska, hope to become farm owners because the land was free. Because it was obtainable to those without cash two results emerged.

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[65] "Credit Problems of Oklahoma Cotton Farmers," p. 13.

[66] Ibid., p. 15.

1. More "cashless" families settled the land than elsewhere.

2. More non-productive land was settled which would not have been had a purchase price been necessitated.

It may be that the average value of farm land in western Oklahoma was lower than in Kansas and Nebraska not only because the land was inherently less productive, but also, because more unproductive land was likely to have been settled. Only by about 1902 was most of western Oklahoma brought under the plow. As can be seen from a comparison of Figure 13 with Figure 14 and 15, the successive land openings from 1889 to 1902 proceeded more or less from north to south with territories numbers 13 and 14 opened after the more northerly ones. Settlement did not directly follow the land openings but proceeded more or less from east to west (see Figures 8 and 9). If we than compare figures 8 and 9 with Figure 12 we can see that the more valuable land was settled first while the dryer, less valuable northwest was settled only when the better land was already occupied.

Although the least fertile counties were not opened to settlement at a later date they were only homesteaded after the land further to the east (with sufficient rainfall to grow crops) was already taken. Given the poverty and the land hunger of those who homesteaded in the Oklahoma Territory, it seems plausible to assume that the impoverished families would accept the economic risks necessitated by attempting to farm the poorer land rather than move on; they probably had little alternative. It was in the westernmost region where rainfall was lowest, as Meredith argues,[67] that the Socialist vote in western Oklahoma was highest.

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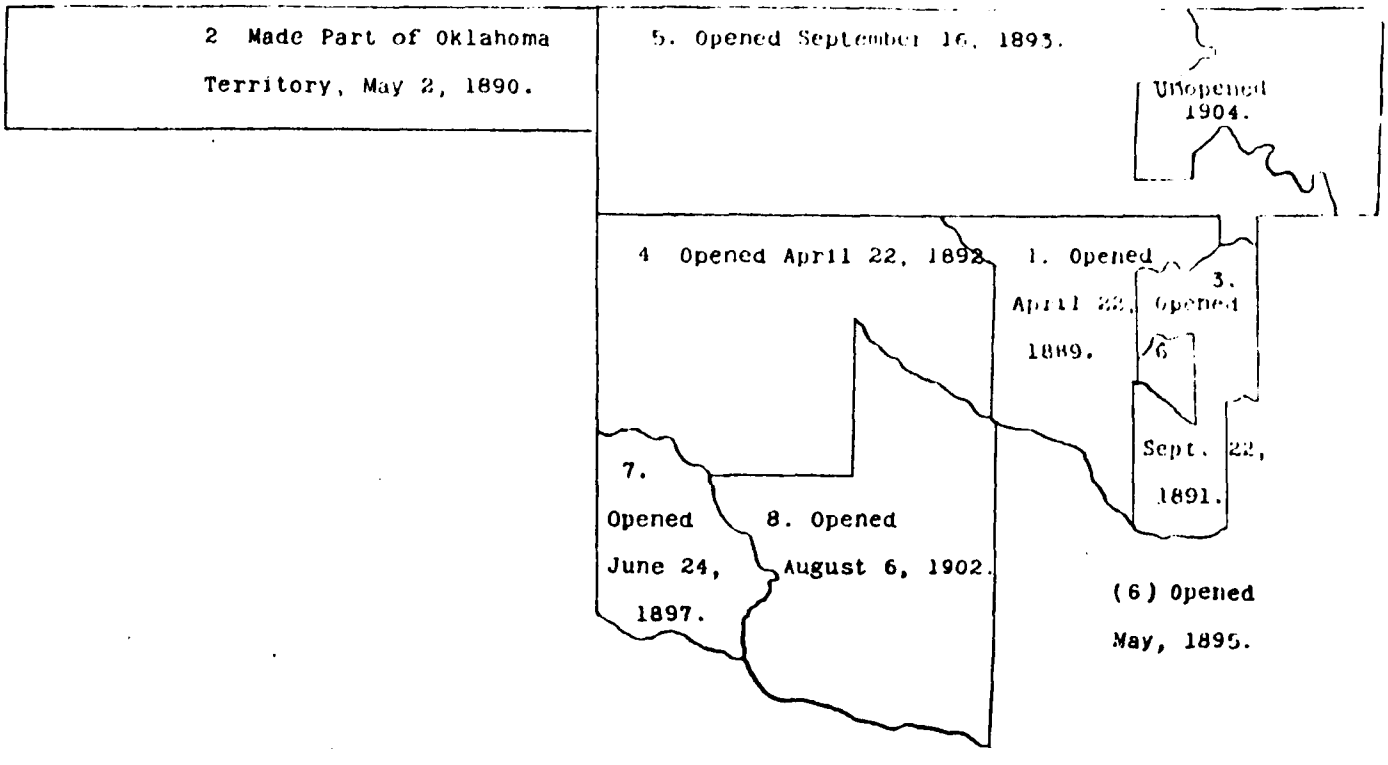
[67]Meredith, pp. 46-47, 59-60.

Chapter IV

Figure 13

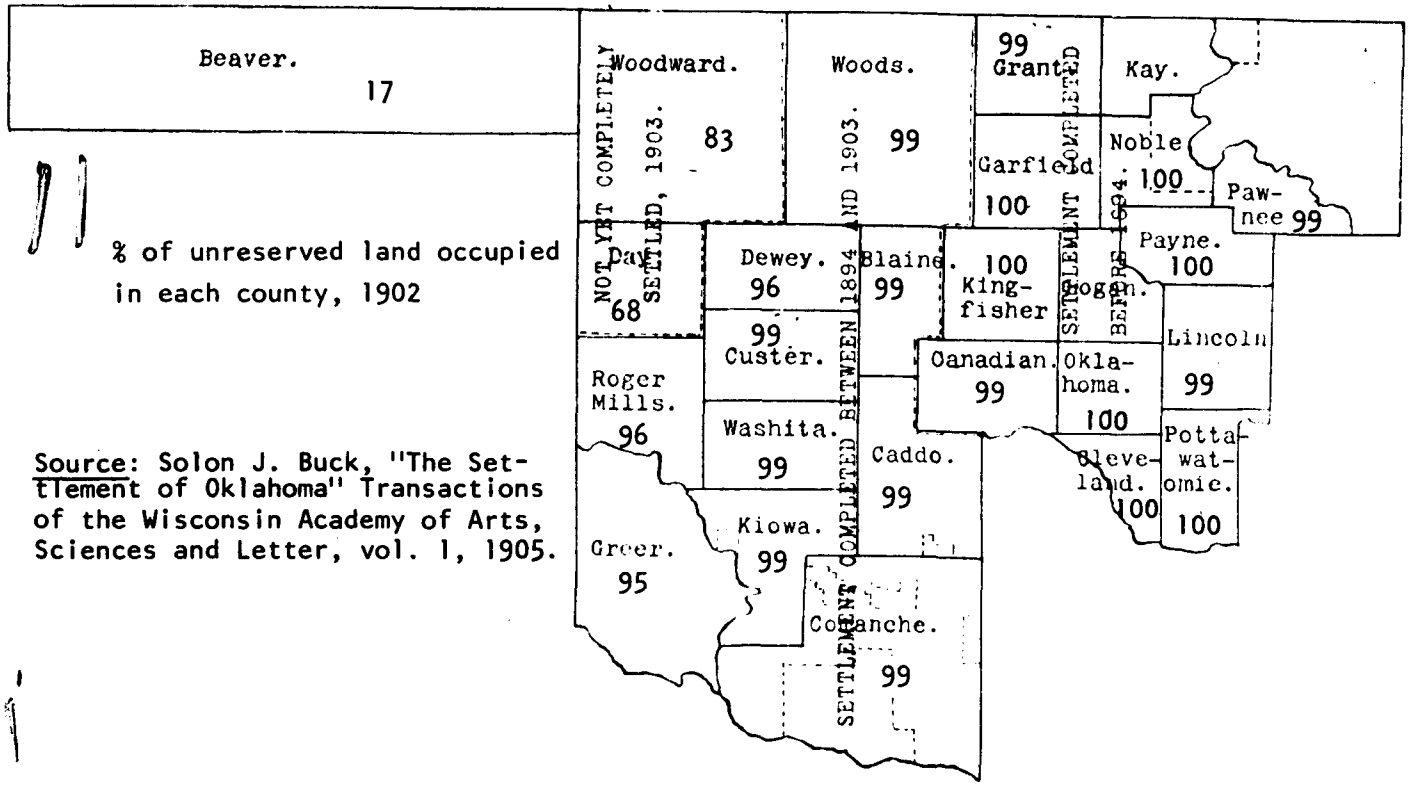


OKLAHOMA TERRITORY: THE OPENINGS.

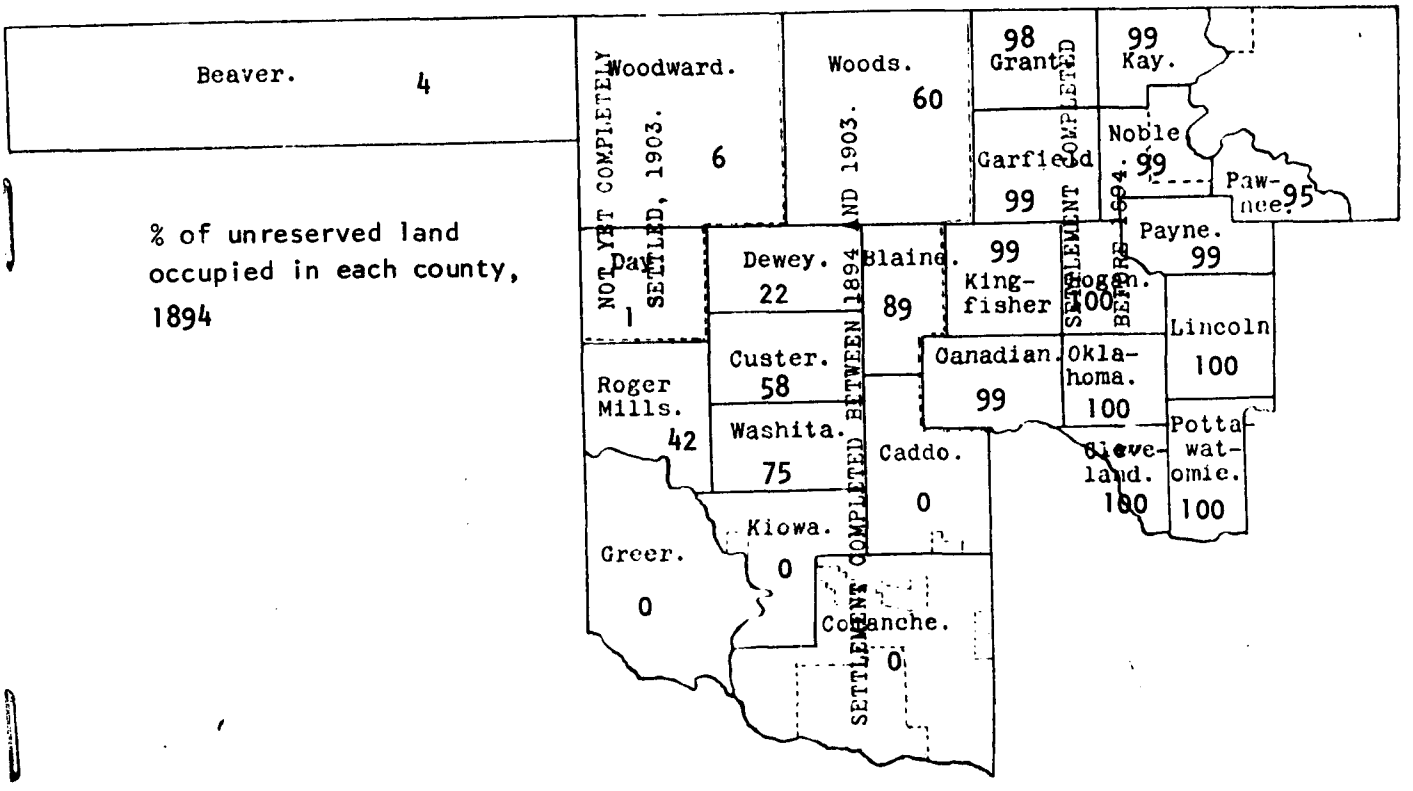
Source: Solon J. Buck, "The Settlement of Oklahoma," Transactions of the Wisconsin Academy of Arts, Science and Letters, vol. I (1905), plate xiii.

Chapter IV

Figure 14



OKLAHOMA TERRITORY: THE ADVANCE OF SETTLEMENT.



OKLAHOMA TERRITORY: THE ADVANCE OF SETTLEMENT.

Credit in Western Oklahoma

Where the land is least productive, where rainfall fluctuates, where the farmers are therefore less economically competitive, interest rates are likely to be higher than where these risks are not as great.[68] While we have no county data on the rate of interest on mortgages we do have information on the rate of interest for short term, seasonal loans. First, as we have seen, in 1916, the cost of interest on short term credit in Oklahoma was the highest of any state in the nation.[69] Secondly, even if we look at the state internally this relationship between economic risk and cost of credit seems to be confirmed. As we can see from Figure 13 the districts which have the highest average cost of short term credit, districts 6 (19.2%), 8 (16.6%) and 9 (18.2%) are in the sharecropping regions of eastern Oklahoma. The regions which have the lowest average cost of short term credit in the state are districts 2 (11.4%) and 3 (11.5%). These regions include the prosperous wheat counties of Grant, Garfield, Kay, and Noble, and the diversified farming region of northeast Oklahoma. Both of these regions have the smallest percentage of Socialist vote in the state (see Figures 5-9).

Thus, in regions in which the soil was unproductive and agricultural conditions were less conducive to economic success, economic problems were probably compounded. Farmers with mortgages, long term

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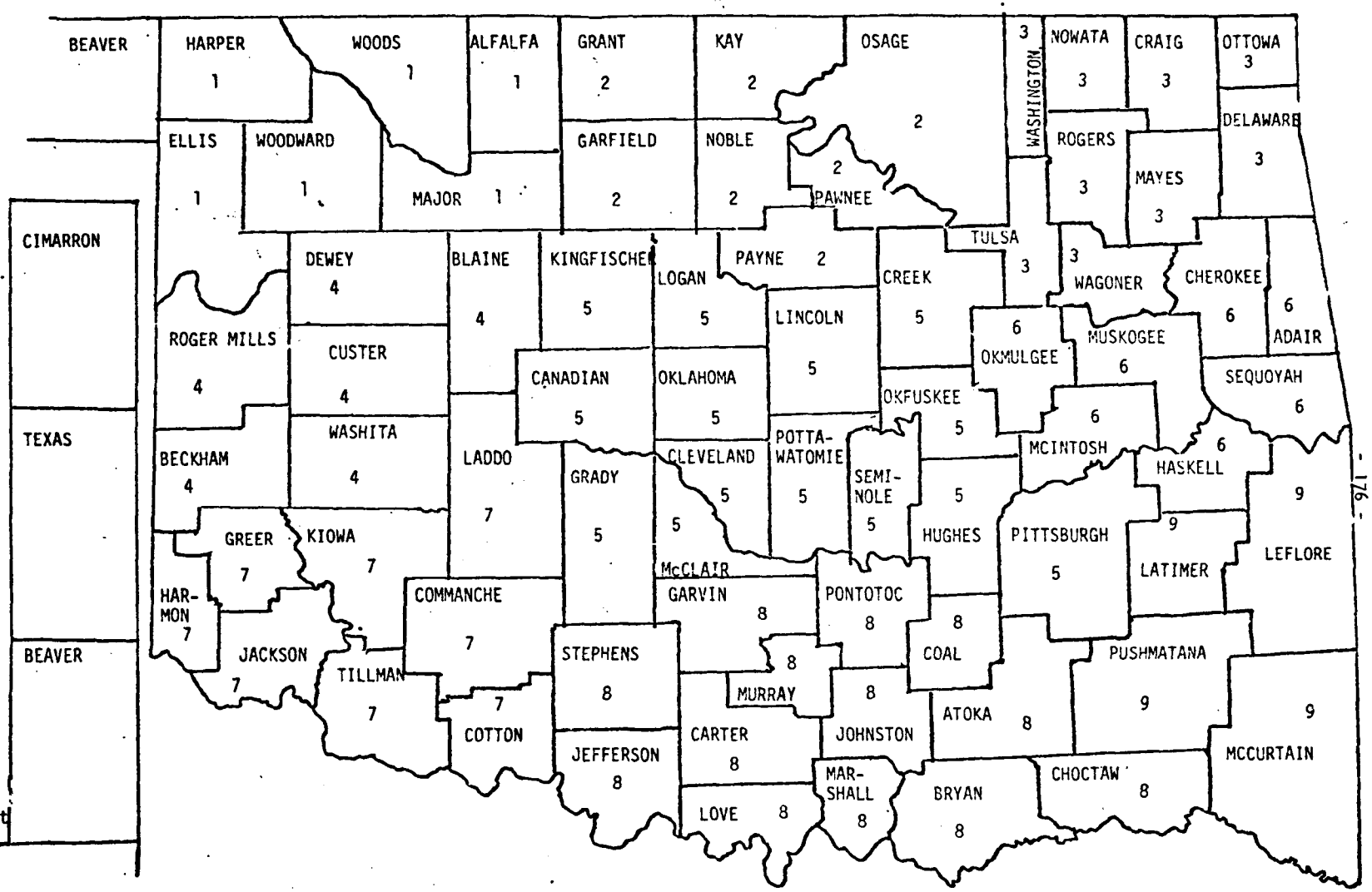
[68] United States Department of Agriculture, Bulletin #409, "Factors Affecting Interest Rates and Other Charges on Short-Time Farm Loans," August 26, 1916, by C. W. Thompson.

[69] Although short term credit was used most extensively by tenants it was also used to a considerable extent by farm owners within the Oklahoma cotton belt. "Credit Problems of Oklahoma Cotton Farmers," pp. 13, 15.

Figure 15

Average Total Cost of Loans (includes interest and additional costs)

1 = 14.6%
2 = 11.4%
3 = 11.5%
4 = 16.5%
5 = 16.0%
6 = 19.2%
7 = 15.4%
8 = 16.6%
9 = 18.2%



Source: United States Dept. of Agriculture, Bulletin, No. 409, "Factors Affecting Interest Rates and Other Charges on Short Term Farm Loans," C. W. Thompson, Aug. 26, 1916, Plate II, p. 5.

loans, were likely in periods of economic distress, to take out short term loans to make the yearly mortgage payment. Failure to do so meant foreclosure and loss of the farm. Higher interest charges on the short term credit is likely to increase the farmer's debt, forcing him into more serious economic straits the following year. Such farmers probably lived in constant fear of losing their farms, and of course, their source of livelihood, from year to year.

To reiterate, the original Oklahoma homesteaders who settled on the free land of the new territory were cash poor. They were quick to mortgage their newly acquired property for the operating capital required to make their farms economically profitable. For those farmers situated in strategic positions, on good land, with sufficient rainfall, the use of mortgage credit was likely to have been used to their economic advantage. For those less fortunate the opposite was likely to have been the case. For those whose property was less valuable (who therefore were less prosperous and sold less dairy and poultry products) and who were in a less competitive economic position, the farm mortgage was their undoing.

Western Oklahoma--Conclusions

The poor mortgaged farmers of western Oklahoma do not appear to be victims of a labor repressive system of agriculture. Here, we are dealing with a constituency of yeoman farmers, agricultural producers who, being freeholders, had little or no economic relationship with a functional equivalent of a gentry, a class of landlords. The extraction of the farmer's "surplus" occurred at two major points of exchange; the local grain and cotton merchant to whom he sold his cash crop, and his

creditors. His economic victimization was partly the result of his being in a less competitive position than the freeholders on the more productive soils of Western Oklahoma, Kansas, and Nebraska; a result of his original poverty and the way in which western Oklahoma was settled.

East & West--Theoretical Convergences

We have found that the Socialist Party of Oklahoma made a significant electoral appeal to the western yeoman farmers, as well as to the sharecroppers of southeastern Oklahoma; two seemingly different constituencies. These results are both surprising and significant in the light of current theoretical debates in the literature on peasant and agrarian radicalism. Wolf and Lipset have argued that it is the agrarians of middling economic and social status which are most likely to espouse agrarian protest movements. Lipset in his Agrarian Socialism has argued that three interrelated factors in Saskatchewan were responsible for the farmers' electoral support for the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation. These farmers:

1. were likely to be more "tied into" the cash crop commodity market, were less diversified and thus, less "sheltered" from the economic pitfalls (natural disaster, price fluctuations) of intense agricultural specialization.
2. were likely to have more extensive acreages cultivated in wheat.
3. were likely to be the more prosperous farmers.

Simple correlation analysis suggests that the last two of Lipset's hypotheses were not confirmed in western Oklahoma. If we look

at the wheat belt and cotton belt separately we find that in neither region is the extent of Socialist voting positively related to the percent of the major cash crop commodity in cultivation.

(Table 18) Percent Acreage in Cotton (Southwest Cotton Belt)

	Socialist	Republican	Democratic
1910 Gov	.1803	-.5459	.5361
Cong	.2215	-.5720	.5956
1912 Pres	.3518	-.5799	.4918
1914 Gov	.4113	-.5371	.4529
Cong	.3649	-.4287	.2808

The reader will notice that Democratic voting is more highly related to the extent of cotton in cultivation than is Socialist voting. Loyalty to the Democratic Party is traditionally associated with cotton culture in the South. As we can see from Table 19 it is the Republican vote in the northwest wheat belt which is most strongly associated with extensive wheat farming. The Kansas wheat belt, on which these counties border, has traditionally had strong Republican loyalties. This loyalty seems to be duplicated in these contiguous Oklahoma wheat counties.

(Table 19) Percent Acreage in Wheat (Northwest Wheat Belt)

	Socialist	Republican	Democratic
1910 Gov	-.3288	.6156	-.4176
Cong	-.3187	.5518	-.2822
1912 Pres	-.4522	.7402	-.3937
1914 Gov	-.4060	.4963	-.2455
Cong	-.4299	.6383	-.2020

If we look at these two cash crop commodity regions separately again we also find that Socialist voting patterns are also negatively related to the extent of agricultural prosperity. The Democratic and Republican voting patterns show no relationship at all to the average value of farm property.

(Table 20) Average Value Farm Property (Southwest Cotton Belt)

	Sociaist	Republican	Democratic
1910 Gov	-.4681	.0297	.1609
Cong	-.4653	.1041	.0624
1912 Pres	-.4525	.0858	.1563
1914 Gov	-.3056	.2047	.0263
Cong	-.2250	.0604	.1673

(Table 21) Average Value Farm Property (Northwest Wheat Belt)

	Socialist	Republican	Democratic
1910 Gov	-5771	+4597	-0397
Cong	-5346	+3996	+0692
1912 Pres	-7089	+4490	+1586
1914 Gov	-5831	+4580	+0935
Cong	-5690	+2789	+3162

In the northwestern wheat belt there is a definitive positive relationship between the agricultural prosperity and Republican voting. As already demonstrated by our multiple regression analysis, it appears that the least prosperous farmers are voting Socialist.

Even though it appears that it was the least prosperous farmers, who had the least extensive acreage planted in cash crops, who voted Socialist in western Oklahoma, Lipset's first hypothesis seems to be confirmed here. These farmers do seem to have been extensively "tied into" agricultural production for commodity markets. If we take the indicator,

"value of dairy and poultry products sold" as representing the extent to which farmers diversified in order to have supplementary access to sources of cash, we see that the regions in which the least income is derived from the sale of dairy and poultry products provides the largest proportion of Socialist vote. Thus, in Western Oklahoma, agricultural diversification seems to be related to extensive and prosperous cash crop farming rather than the reverse, as Lipset found in Saskatchewan.

East & West Oklahoma--The Socialist Voting Constituencies

The agricultural producers who voted Socialist in western Oklahoma were comparable to the "middling peasants" that Eric Wolf describes.[70] They were small property holders who were most vulnerable to the exigencies of the market economy. These farmers were in a position in which they had a great deal to lose, including their land and their homes. This constituency differed from the Socialist voting population in eastern Oklahoma, which was, as we have seen, the poorest stratum of sharecroppers. This poorer stratum, according to other scholars,[71] is most likely to provide the base of agrarian protest movements. It is argued that the structural arrangements under which they labor, rather than the exigencies of intense poverty, create the social and political motivation for class conflict and collective action.[72]

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[70] Eric Wolf, Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century, pp. 13, 15.

[71] Jeffrey Paige, "A Theory of Rural Class Relations," a paper presented at the annual meetings of the ASA, New Orleans, Aug. 1972; Arthur L. Stinchcombe, "Agricultural Enterprise and Rural Class Relations," AJS 67 (1961-62), pp. 165-76; Mao Tse-Tung, Analysis of the Classes in Chinese Society (Peking: Peking Foreign Language Press, 1967); Zagoria.

[72] These phenomena will be explored in the next chapter.

The Socialist voting sharecroppers in the cotton belt of southeast Oklahoma are certainly on a different rung of the "agricultural ladder" than the yeoman farmers of Western Oklahoma. They also seem to have experienced very different levels of poverty. Vinita Thurman,[73] the daughter of a Socialist "circuit rider",remembers homesteading as a child in Beckham county some time in the first decade of the century. She recalls the intense poverty of the cotton farmer. Her father had claimed a 160 acre tract on which the family grew ninety acres of cotton. Yet, when I asked her if she ever remembered being hungry she replied, "Lord no, we were cash poor." Another observer of western Oklahoma Socialist homesteaders[74] corroborates this impression. He writes that despite the fact that they lived in dugouts, sod houses or the regulation fourteen by fourteen homesteader shacks these farmers at least ate well. He writes,

> Poor as these people were, they had at least a quarter section of dirt under their feet. Virtually all of them had cows, chickens, hogs, sheep, a vegetable garden, and had planted some fruit trees. All this meant a better balanced diet, explaining the greater energy and higher degree of health and education of the population as compared with that of the tenant population of Indian Territory, . . .

The sharecroppers Ameringer describes in the following way. He writes,

> I found toothless old women with sucking infants on their withered breasts. I found a hospitable old hostess, around thirty or less, her hands covered with rangs and ecszema, offering me a biscuit with those hands, apologizing that her biscuits were not as good as she used to make because with her sore

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[73]Personal interview with Vinita Thurman, Putney, Vermont, Summer 1974.

[74]Oscar Ameringer, If You Don't Weaken, pp. 261-62.

> hand she no longer could knead the dough as it ought to be. I saw youngsters emaciated by hookworms, malnutrition and pellagra, who had lost their second teeth before they were twenty years old.

Ameringer describes the poverty even further.

> This thing was too terrible to be tolerated. . . . these people, so much lower in the scale of life than New Orleans dock wallopers, black and white, at the end of their nine-week strike. They were worse fed, worse clothed, worse housed, more illiterate than the Chicago packing house wops (sic) and bohuns (sic) Upton Sinclair described in his The Jungle. . . . The Oklahoma farmers' living standard was so far below that of the sweatshop workers of the New York east side . . . that comparison could not be thought of.[75]

This abject poverty is confirmed by others.[76]

It was not a common denominator of poverty, a uniformly low standard of living, which drove the different strata of Oklahoma agrarians to vote the Socialist ticket. What, then, was the commonality in the situation of both Western farmers and Southeastern sharecroppers which motivated both constituencies to abandon the traditional parties in favor of Socialism?

It appears that the sharecroppers as well as the farmers were threatened with a loss of economic status. They too, lived in fear of losing even the pitiable homes they had. In 1909, 33% of all Oklahoma farmers, the highest percentage of any state in the nation, moved to different farms.[77] Although no other more detailed data is

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[75] Ibid., pp. 232, 233.

[76] McWilliams, pp. 190-191.

[77] Oklahoma A & M Station Bulletin, "The Economic and Social Aspects of Mobility of Oklahoma Farmers," by J. T. Sanders, p. 5.

available for that year, a study of the extent of geographic mobility was made in 1924.[78] In 1924 it was found that Oklahoma had gone from first to fourth place in terms of the extent of geographic mobility of its farm population. The author of this study estimated that 29% of all the cropland in the state changed hands in 1924. He wrote that,

> If every farmer in the whole state of Florida could have moved off the farm he operated, about the same amount of land would have changed caretakers as was the case in Oklahoma.[79]

Many of the conclusions reached by this study point to the fact that the sharecroppers of southeastern Oklahoma did the major proportion of the moving from farm to farm. The characteristics most associated with short term farm tenure and frequent moving were sharecropping, tenantry, small farms, low property values, low crop diversification, low degrees of property accumulation, and extensive use of credit. The author of the study asserts that in 1924,

> Roughly speaking, two-thirds of all tenants in the whole souteast corner of the state lying southeast of Stephens, Garvin, Seminole, McIntosh and Muskogee Counties, moved, . . .[80]

Moving among Oklahoma sharecroppers represents economic failure.[81]

Frequent moving was, in fact, built into the sharecropping system. The landlord, in order to maintain control of his labor force,

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[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid., p. 23.

[80] Ibid., p. 11.

[81] Thernstrom also found geographic mobility among New England laborers in the 19th century to be associated with economic failure and downward mobility. Stephen Thernstrom, Poverty & Progress (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964).

traditionally granted his tenant a lease on a year to year basis, with no guarantees of renewal. Thus, a tenant who proved unsatisfactory to the landlord could be easily made to leave the following year. Certainly we do not know the personal reasons which motivated sharecroppers to leave one plot of land for another; whether they were forced to leave by greedy unsympathetic landlords, or whether they left willingly in the hope of finding greener pastures elsewhere. We do know that the rate of moving increased during the years of economic depression.[82] This suggests that in lean years (when cotton prices were low or the weather was bad and yields were poor) the omnipresent indebtedness and instability of tenure led downward on the "agricultural ladder."

Convergences Between East & West Oklahoma

When we ask what predisposed agricultural producers in Oklahoma before the First World War to reject the traditional political parties and espouse the cause of Socialism[83] one conclusion can be offered. Both the poor yeomen farmers of western Oklahoma and the sharecroppers of the southeastern part of the state appear to have been undergoing a deterioration in their economic status. This situation appears to have been brought about both by the anomalous historical development of Oklahoma (the result of its being reserved for the Indian until 1890 and thus segregated from the effects of the American westward trek until that year), and the rapid introduction of modernization, i.e. the rapid economic development.

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[82] "The Economic and Social Aspects of Mobility of Oklahoma Farmers," p. 9.

[83] What the meaning of Socialism was for the two constituencies under discussion in terms of political action and ideology will be dealth with in later chapters.

If we look at the ten states which, in 1912, gave the highest proportions of their popular vote to the Socialist Party, we discover that these were not the states which had provided the greatest support for Populism more than a decade earlier. However, during the decade 1900 to 1910 these states had, by and large, experienced the most rapid population growth, a certain index of economic development.

(Table 22) Socialist Vote (1912) and Population Growth

States in order of % of Socialist vote	% increase in population 1900-1910 (a)	States with 10 highest percentages of Socialist vote (b)
1. Washington	120.4%	12.43
2. Oklahoma	109.7%	16.61
3. Idaho	101.3%	11.31
4. Nevada	93.4%	16.47
5. N. Dakota	80.8%	
6. N. Mexico	67.6%	
7. Arizona	66.2%	13.33
8. Oregon	62.2%	9.74
9. California	60.1%	11.76
10. Wyoming	57.7%	
11. Montana	54.5%	13.64
12. Colorado	48.0%	
13. S. Dakota	45.5%	
14. Florida	42.4%	9.26
15. Utah	34.9%	
34. Ohio	14.7%	8.69

Source: (a) Thirteenth Census (1910) Vol. 1, Population (b) Svend Petersen. A Statistical History of the American Presidential Elections (N.Y.: Ungar Publishing Co., 1963, p. 79)

This finding demonstrates that the potential for social dislocation generated by rapid economic development, modernization, the "irruption of modern capitalism" in Hobsbawm's terms, may be responsible for the development of radical protest. In Oklahoma, what appears to be important for

understanding the agrarian protest was not the particular status location of the agrarian population. As we have seen two very different agricultural constituencies seem to have been most heavily involved. What seems to be crucial is the process, a process which created the potential for an almost indefinite downward mobility.

Conclusions

Thus far I have located the agricultural indices of Socialist voting during the peak years of Socialist strength in Oklahoma. I have tried to show that different combinations of factors were responsible for the variance in the Socialist vote during these years. Yet even with the divergent histories and consequently the different forms of agriculture practiced in east and west Oklahoma, the explanations offered for the relatively high Socialist vote in each region seem to represent a singular social process--the deterioration of the agricultural producers' economic status and the increased likelihood of their losing the use and occupancy of the land.

Eastern Oklahoma (Indian Territory) appears to have developed a labor repressive agricultural system. In the western part of the state, the old Oklahoma Territory, which had been settled by homesteaders, the same conditions were not present. In both regions poor soil in combination with the other exigencies of a non-diversified cash-crop agriculture drove up the cost of credit. Thus, Oklahoma farmers and tenants found themselves on the "last frontier," on a land and in a society which could not fulfill its promise, but led only to a downward spiral of ever increasing indebtedness.

Chapter V

THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL PREREQUISITES FOR THE GENERATION OF SOCIALIST SUPPORT IN OKLAHOMA

In the last chapter we tried to demonstrate that despite historical and structural differences between eastern and western Oklahoma, Socialist voting constituencies--both western yeomen and eastern sharecroppers--were being victimized by a similar economic process. The effects of modernization in the rapidly developing state seem to have created a situation in which both strata of agricultural producers were becoming increasingly impoverished. Furthermore, the decline in their economic condition threatened to destroy even the tenuous bonds they had to the land in a seemingly continuous downward spiralling of economic loss and indebtedness. Yet the process of impoverishment is by itself not sufficient to fully explain their predisposition to espouse a radical political solution, i.e. abandon the two traditional political parties to vote Socialist.

In this chapter we will look at the social and political conditions which accompanied the economic immizeration of these people in order that we may generate an understanding of the forces which could account for the strength of the Socialist Party in Oklahoma during this period. Our position is that economic immizeration is a necessary condition for the development of agrarian radicalism.

However, in addition certain types of political and social relations must develop in the countryside before sufficient conditions are present for the emergence and support of a socialist alternative. Here we will again focus on the hypotheses of Barrington Moore.

We will remember from Chapter I that Moore posited three conditions for the generation of peasant radicalism. These are, to reiterate briefly:

1) The introduction of labor repressive forms of market agriculture,

2) The disruption of traditional social bonds between the peasantry and the gentry, and

3) Radical solidarity among the peasantry.

In Chapter IV we saw that the first condition was met only among the sharecroppers of southeast Oklahoma. The yeomen farmers of the Western Oklahoma Territory who voted for the Socialist Party, although it appears that they were in a significantly less competitive position then some of their more prosperous yeomen counterparts, were not the victims of exploiting landlords. As farm owners they had a somewhat greater control over the economic operation of their farms. They were not quite reduced to the status of agricultural wage laborers as were the sharecroppers of eastern Oklahoma, nor did they experience the same grinding poverty.

In this chapter we will examine the relevance of Moore's second and third hypotheses for the two Socialist voting groups under study. Firstly we will argue that functional equivalents of a more traditional

form of gentry developed in both Socialist voting regions of Oklahoma. These were the landlords in the southeast sharecropping region and the bankers and small scale entrepreneurs in the local towns of western Oklahoma. Both of these two types of petty capitalist were local elites rather than representatives of national large scale capitalism. Their relationship to the agricultural producers of eastern and western Oklahoma was one of direct exploitation, i.e. they were directly and visibly responsible for the extraction of the producers' surplus. Yet as modern capitalists, their legitimating ideology, as we will see, did not require that they fulfill any of the functions for the farmers of local elites in stable traditional societies. Thus, we will argue, class conflicts between agricultural producers and local elites were generated, in Oklahoma, which were similar to those of peasants and gentry in modernizing but traditional peasant societies, conflicts which led to the producers' support for the Socialist Party.

Secondly we will try to show how radical solidarity was generated among the agricultural producers themselves. We will argue that the ideology and the social institutions of the rural communities in Oklahoma led to a situation in which the poor agricultural producers were excluded from participation in the social life of the farm communities in which they lived. Thus, class tensions generated by economic and political forces were reinforced in the daily lives of the poor farmers. The failure of these people to carve out a place for themselves in their communities increased their predisposition to repudiate the political and economic hegemony of their exploiters. In order to examine these relationships it is again necessary to explore

the situations of eastern and western Oklahoma separately.

"Peasant and Gentry" in Oklahoma -- The Failure of Political Legitimacy

Eastern Oklahoma--Sharecroppers and Landlords

The first question that comes to mind in trying to understand the susceptibility of Oklahoma cotton sharecroppers to Socialism is the reason or reasons for Socialism's relative absence among the share cropping farmers of the Old South. If we look at the percentage of the popular vote for the Socialist Party in the 1912 Presidential election we find that in none of these states did the Socialist vote come anywhere near that of Oklahoma.

Table 1. Percent of Socialist Vote in Southern States--1912

State	% of Popular Vote
Alabama	2.57%
Arkansas	6.57
Georgia	.85
Kentucky	2.57
Louisiana	6.61
Maryland	1.72
Mississippi	3.19
Missouri	4.07
North Carolina	.05
South Carolina	.33
Tennessee	1.38
Texas	8.44
Virginia	.60
West Virginia	5.70
Oklahoma	16.61

Source: Svend Petersen, A Statistical History of the American Presidential Elections (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Company, 1963), p. 79.

Certainly this data gives a very poor indication of the strength of the

Socialist Party in the sharecropping regions of these states. Yet we know from other studies that the sharecropping Black belts of the deep South have traditionally provided little support for agrarian radicalism.[1] These regions were largely populated by black sharecroppers. Southern blacks were politically disfranchised and in addition subject to numerous forms of social and political oppression, which, it is argued, kept them politically quiescent. The poor whites in these regions, frequently outnumbered by blacks, were induced to vote the Democratic ticket by the planter elites who propagandized that "black rule" would inevitably follow if they did not. Thus white voters made their political alliances across racial rather than class lines.[2] Agrarian radicalism, especially Populism, in the South was strongest among the "hill farmers" (many of whom were also sharecroppers) where the black population was thinnest. As we can see from Table 1, Texas, Louisiana and Arkansas, all states outside the "Old South" outside of Oklahoma (in the then newly developing Gulf Southwest where there were also fewer blacks), gave the largest proportion of their electoral support to the Socialist Party in 1912. It was also in these three states that the Farmers' Alliance, in the 1880's and 1890's originated.[3]

Thus, historians of the South[4] have concluded that agrarian

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[1] V. O. Key, Southern Politics, p. 8; C. Vann Woodward, Origins of the New South, 1866-1913, p. 185.

[2] Key, p. 8.

[3] Woodward, p. 188. Later the Farmer's Alliance spread to the Old South states like Georgia, Mississippi and Alabama.

[4] Key, p. 8; Woodward, p. 188.

radicalism was stymied in the Deep South among whites as a result of racial divisions. It was stymied among blacks by the overwhelming racial oppression they were forced to endure. In states like Oklahoma, Texas, Louisiana and Arkansas, as in the hill country of the Deep South, where the proportion of blacks to whites was much smaller than in the Black belt (and the fear of black rule not so strong among whites), agrarian radicalism was more likely to be strongest.

Yet racism and radicalism may not be negatively related in so simple a way. In 1910 in Oklahoma, the Democrats introduced an initiative petition and referendum which was designed to disfranchise black voters.[5] It became known as the Grandfather Clause. The counties which rejected the Grandfather Clause, as can be seen from Figure 1 were primarily in the Republican wheat belt of northwestern Oklahoma. Very few counties in the high Socialist voting southeast sharecropping region rejected the Clause. Although these results may only indicate that the Socialist voters of the southeast could not muster enough electoral support to defeat the referendum there is qualitative evidence which suggests that the local Socialist leadership was not very concerned with opposing the measure.[6]

Just as agrarian radicalism may not necessarily be inconsistent

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[5]William S. Harmon, "Oklahoma's Constitutional Amendments: A Study in the Use of the Initiative and Referendum" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis), University of Oklahoma, Department of History, 1951, pp. 4-11.

[6]Howard L. Meredith, "The Socialist Party in Oklahoma," (unpublished Ph.D. thesis) University of Oklahoma, Department of History, 1970, p. 97. Howard L. Meredith, "Agrarian Socialism and the Negro in Oklahoma, 1900-1918," Labor History (1970), pp. 281-2.

Figure 1

Counties that Rejected the Grandfather Clause In Referendum, 1910

Source:

William S. Harmon, Oklahoma's Constitutional Amendments: A Study in the Use of the Initiative and Referendum, unpublished Ph.D thesis, Dept. of History, University of Oklahoma, 1951, pp. 9-10.

with racism, racial divisions may not have been the only or most salient factor in generating political apathy among sharecroppers in the Southern Black belts. Paige[7] argues that a structural explanation may be more important than a racial one. In a cross cultural study of sharecropping systems he notes that in regions without racial divisions,

> In Egypt, Syria and Turkey cotton cultivation is also organized in sharecropping systems and workers show similar patterns of political apathy [to the American South.][8]

He proceeds to argue that,

> . . . it must be some feature of cotton sharecropping generally rather than the peculiar cultural circumstances of the southern United States which accounts for the passivity of southern plantation workers.[9]

In the American South, Paige says, the organization of sharecropping in the Black belt is in centralized estates. The post-bellum American South did not see the end of the plantation system, but merely its continuation in another form.[10] Instead of producing cotton with slaves in a single agricultural unit, the post-bellum plantation was divided up into small plots and rented to individual black and white families who were paid a wage in the form of a proportion of the cotton they produced. However, the plantation owner or his agent would provide

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[7]Jeffrey Paige, "A Theory of Rural Class Relations," a paper presented at the annual meetings of the American Sociological Association, New Orleans, 1972.

[8]Paige, pp. 100-101.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Rupert Vance, Human Factors in Cotton Culture: A Study of the Social Geography of the American South (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1929). Hortense Powdermaker, After Freedom (New York:

centralized control of a) work organization, b) credit and the sale of cotton (the company store and plantation cotton gin), as well as c) surveillance of labor and other forms of social control. Paige is arguing that the centralized post-bellum southern plantation is like similar sharecropper plantations in Egypt, Syria and Turkey. He argues that this agricultural system generates political conditions similar to those of the landed estate worked by serfs.[11] The centralization and social control made possible by this arrangement creates the political apathy rather than rebelliousness among the oppressed agricultural laborers.

In southeastern Oklahoma, however, as we have seen, the creation of a sharecropping economy was not in response to the same conditions as in the Deep South. Therefore, the form of sharecropping which developed here was inevitably different from those in the former region. The clearest indication of the difference between southeast Oklahoma and the southern Black belt is the absence, in Oklahoma, of plantations. In the 1910 Census Report, Plantations in the South[12] no plantations were reported as existing in Oklahoma. Although eleven southern states were included as having plantations (Virginia, North and South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, Arkansas and Tennessee) Oklahoma was not one of them. A "plantation" is defined by

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Atheneum, 1968). United States Department of Agriculture, Relation of Land Tenure to Plantation Organization, Dept. Bulletin No. 1269, October 1924. United States Department of Agriculture, The Ownership of Tenant Farms in the United States, Dept. Bulletin No. 1432, September 1926.

[11] Paige, p. 103.

[12] Thirteenth Census (1910), "Plantations in the South," vol. V, Chapter XII.

the Department of Agriculture as,

> a unified agricultural organization of considerable size under one management, of practically a continuous tract of land, operated as a single unit with respect to methods of control of labor and products, all of which may be worked by wage hands, or all or a part of which may be subdivided and let to tenants.[13] (emphasis added)

Thus, according to the criteria of the Department of Agriculture operational centralization is a specific condition which defines a plantation. The fact that no such agricultural units are recorded in Oklahoma in 1910 suggests that this type of centralization was actually absent in that state.

Southeastern Oklahoma was also different from other sharecropping cotton producing regions in southern states not only in terms of the absence of plantations, but also in terms of the concentration of land ownership as well as the extent of absentee ownership. A study made by the Department of Agriculture[14] allows us to compare groups of cotton producing counties in other southern states with some typical cotton counties in southeast Oklahoma in terms of these two factors.

Table 2. The southeastern Oklahoma cotton belt, as represented by the major cotton growing counties, appears to have had the least concentration of ownership of any cotton region. This phenomenon appears to be consistently the case even if we look at other measures of concentration given in this study.[15]

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[13] U.S.D.A. Bulletin No. 1269, p. 9. (Emphasis mine.)

[14] U.S.D.A. Bulletin No. 1432, p. 13.

[15] Ibid., pp. 9, 12.

Table 2. Concentration of Ownership in Cotton Producing Regions of the South

State	(% of Rented Farms Held by Owners With:) 3 or more farms	5 or more farms	10 or more farms	20 or more farms
North and South Carolina	59.3	40.7	21.3	8.5
Georgia	59.7	36.5	16.1	5.3
Alabama	82.5	72.9	57.1	36.5
Mississippi	88.8	82.0	71.5	56.8
Louisiana	44.5	22.4	8.3	2.7
Oklahoma (SE)	36.3	19.4	6.4	.9
Texas	38.5	19.9	7.1	1.1

The counties in the above states are as follows:

North Carolina - Anson, Richmond, Scotland and Union
South Carolina - Chesterfield and Marlboro
Georgia - Barrow, Clark, Jackson, Morgan, Oconee and Taliaferro
Alabama - Dallas, Lowndes and Wilcox
Mississippi - Bolivar, Coahoma, LeFlore, Sunflower, Washington
Louisiana - Acadia, Allen, Evangeline, Jefferson Davis
Oklahoma - (Southeast) Bryan, Johnston, Marshall, Murray
Texas - Bell, Ellis, Hill, McLennan

Source: U.S.D.A Department Bulletin No. 1432, September 1926.

Table 3. Absentee Ownership in Cotton Producing Regions of the South

State	(% of Rented Farms Owned by Landlords Who Live:) Out of County	Out of State	Out of County and Adjoining Counties
North and South Carolina	12.1	5.9	2.4
Georgia	19.0	.6	3.5
Alabama	17.8	1.6	6.2
Mississippi	12.6	3.0	5.7
Louisiana	17.0	1.2	1.8
Oklahoma (SE)	20.3	6.8	8.1
Texas	13.1	.8	5.4

Source: U.S.D.A., Department Bulletin No. 1432, p. 23.

In southeast Oklahoma we also find the greatest amount of absentee ownership (Table 3).

In southeastern Oklahoma the absence of plantations, the smaller concentration of ownership and the greater degree of absente ownership as opposed to the older states of the South all point to a relative absence of organizational centralization. Yet, we must now ask the question of why centralization in sharecropping systems is related to political apathy and presumably the lack of it to a tendency for political radicalism.

Paige argues that <u>decentralized</u> sharecropping systems tend to generate the potential for agrarian radicalism because they create,

1) peasants with weak ties to the land--instability of tenure;

2) working class homogeneity among the peasants--a) because peasants are reduced to the same low level of wages and b) upward mobility or the accumulation of property among some of the peasantry leading to economic stratification among the peasantry is virtually impossible;

3) work group interdependence--the need for peasants to cooperate among themselves to ensure successful agricultural production.

He argues that centralized sharecropping systems, like that of the American South, creates the opposite conditions.

1) peasants with strong ties to the land--stability of tenure

2) work group interdependence which is dominated by the plantation owner such that the estate management has significant powers of surveillance and social control.

However, if we compare the conditions of Deep South plantations with those of southeast Oklahoma sharecroppers, it is not clear that Paige's

conditions for decentralized sharecropping systems are fully met in Oklahoma; nor are his criteria for centralized sharecropping met in the American South.

Firstly, there seems to have been little work group interdependence in Oklahoma. Sharecroppers worked their land in family units; there is little evidence that the structural needs of cotton farming required mutual cooperation among the tenant farmers. Secondly, in the American South it is dubious whether Paige's assertion that sharecroppers had relatively strong ties to the land is correct. There is evidence that moving among southern sharecroppers was frequent,[16] and there is no data to support Paige's contention that sharecropper plots were "inherited much in the way usufruct plots are passed down from father to son."[17,18]

What is significant about Paige's discussion of centralization and decentralization of sharecropping agriucltural systems is the way in which this dimension of social structure was likely to effect the relationship between landlord and tenant (gentry and peasant). For, the relationship between landlord and tenant was likely to have led either to political apathy or radicalization among the tenants (peasants).

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[16] Vance, p. 153.

[17] Paige, p. 101.

[18] Schwartz writes that in the last quarter of the 19th century Southern states passed laws which restricted the movement of tenant farmers. He writes that they "were enforced with great fervor and dedication." However, he provides no systematic evidence of the extent to which they actually impeded the movement of sharecroppers from farm to farm. Michael Schwartz, The Southern Farmers' Alliance: The Organizational Forms of Radical Protest (Academic Press, forthcoming), p. 2.

According to Moore, when the gentry (landlord) is able to provide some social or economic function for the peasantry despite its extraction or surplus, a basis for the continuing moral authority of the gentry will be maintained. When such functions cease to be provided (or fail to exist) as a result of the introduction of market forces into the agricultural system, the gentry will tend to lose its legitimacy. The rationale behind its existence as a political authority to whom social and political deference is owed will tend to be undermined. In a centralized share-cropping agricultural economy (which like the decentralized version is also a labor repressive system of market agriculture) such as the plantation system of the Old South, the organizational centralization tended to maintain the social links between landlord and tenant. On the plantation the landlord or his agent was likely to supervise, as Paige argues, the structure of the work organization. He provided credit facilities (the company store) and the institutional outlets for the sale of cotton. He even frequently provided mules and work tools for his tenants. As Paige says, even though the sharecropper's income ultimately depended on the produce of his own individual plot, in many cotton plantations of the South the croppers were organized in work gangs and functioned, "much like workers under an industrial plantation system."[19] The plantation manager, in this system, or the owner, was invovled in the operation of the plantation.

Certainly this type of agricultural organization was likely to have been experienced by the tenants and laborers as economically, politically

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[19]Paige, p. 101.

and socially oppressive. Paige argues that it is the surveillance and control which is responsible for the political apathy to be found in this type of system. However, within such an agricultural set up the potential for paternalism as well as oppression is likely to be found. It was potentially this paternalism based on the traditionalism of southern mores with which class rule was maintained in the Deep South.

In the more decentralized sharecropping economy of southeastern Oklahoma where no plantations existed the cotton tenant was more likely to be "on his own" than in the South. Only 19.4% of the rented farms in the four counties represented in the U.S.D.A. study (see Table 2) owned five or more farms in this region. Whereas in the Old South states of Alabama and Mississippi 36.5% and 56.8% owned twenty or more farms. (Also see Table 2.) In southeast Oklahoma the relationship between landlord and tenant was primarily regulated by the cash nexus. The landlord was likely to be a middle class speculator (grafter as they were referred to) who lived in the local town on the income not only from his farms but also from the income from various other forms of small scale local business investments.[20] The landlord of the Old South Plantations was more likely to be a "gentleman farmer" who lived on his plantation.[21]

In order to more fully understand the differences between tenant-landlord relations in the Blackbelt south and southeastern Oklahoma in the

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[20]Garin Burbank, "The Political and Social Attitudes of Some Early Oklahoma Democrats," Chronicles of Oklahoma (Winter 1974-75).

[21]U.S.D.A. Bulletin No. 1432, p. 35.

period under study some important issues must be kept in mind. One thing which was most salient was the recent origin of economic development in Oklahoma in the period under study. Unlike the South, except for a small Indian planter elite which developed in the pre-statehood period, Oklahoma never had the quasi-feudal tradition of a Planter aristocracy that had, as we will remember from our discussion in Chapter II, existed in the South for decades. Thus, in the sharecropping cotton regions of Oklahoma, no aristocratic and/or paternalistic traditions had developed to regulate and legitimize relationships between landlords and tenants. Furthermore, the Indian elite had been replaced by the grafter at the time of this study. The owners of the tenant farms as well as the creditors and the cotton factors, to whom the tenant sold his crops, were by and large men of relatively modest means, men who had recently come to Oklahoma to seek their fortunes in a region which had recently begun to provide both small scale agricultural and business opportunities. They were petty bourgeois parvenus, self-made men. These people were Southern Progressives, who believed in repudiating Wall Street and the monopolies in favor of small scale entrepreneurs.[22] They were not quasi-aristocratic Southern Planters.

Thus, the historical and social forms that developed in southeast Oklahoma took, as compared to the development in the Old South, created the structural conditions for class conflicts between tenants and landlords. The absence of plantations in which the landowner was likely to fulfill

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[22]James Green, "Socialism and the Southwestern Class Struggle: A Study of Radical Movements in Oklahoma, Texas, Louisiana and Arkansas," (Ph.D. thesis, Dept. of History, Yale University, 1972), pp. 72-73.

certain social functions, and the development of a landlord-tenant relationship in which the landlord class could make no claim to moral authority seem to have predisposed the victims of this labor repressive agricultural system to question the legitimacy of the forms of local class domination that prevailed.

Certainly the rural-urban conflict, in which the sharecroppers focused their hostility against the local exploiters in the "electric light towns" was, as Green[23] has argued, class conflict. However, to argue that class conflict was generated here does not provide us with an explanation of it. Green suggests that this class conflict developed as a result of extreme poverty and exploitation. Yet, as we have seen, poverty and exploitation alone are not sufficient conditions for overt manifestations of radical opposition to the status quo.

Hobsbawn, Wolf, and Moore have found in peasant societies that agrarian radicalism is a response to conditions which the peasant experiences on a local level; the peasant does not focus his hostility on the national or international situation. One of the reasons why the class conflict which developed in southeast Oklahoma was structurally analogous to the class conflict between peasants and gentry in traditional societies is the fact that the targets of exploitation were identified by the sharecroppers as local.

Western Oklahoma--The Yeomen and the Interlocked Parasites

The kinds of class conflict that existed in western Oklahoma between agricultural producers and the "parasites in the electric light

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[23] Ibid., pp. 236-48.

towns" (as the Socialists called them) was somewhat different from that of the eastern part of the state. Here, as we will remember, the great majority of farmers were owners rather than tenants; here the landlord was not the most significant extractor of the farmer's surplus (although he did figure as one among several). Here, it is argued,[24] the town-country conflict was not so intense. In the small trading centers comprised mostly of merchants and professionals who serviced the farmers in the surrounding community, Socialist support was stronger than in sharecropping communities further to the east. In the larger county seat towns, however (the electric light towns) Socialist support declined significantly.

Who were these "parasites" and what was their relationship to the agricultural producers in the countryside? Although our data concerning this is somewhat fragmentary, qualitative reports from Socialists[25] and non-Socialists[26] alike seem to agree that the bankers were the most significant, though certainly not the exclusive, victimizers of the farmers. Other exploiters were middlemen of one sort or another, " . . . mill, gin, grain, elevator and lumber men."[27] That the bankers were most clearly identified as victimizers by the agricultural producers

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[24] Ibid., p. 242.

[25] U.S. Senate, Commission on Industrial Relations, "Land Question in the Southwest," Final Report, 64th Congress, First Session, Document No. 415, 1916, X, Testimony of Patrick Nagle, p. 9074.

[26] Angie Debo, Prairie City: History of An American Community (New York: Knopf, 1944), pp. 63-65.

[27] U.S. Senate, Commission on Industrial Relations, Testimony of Nagle.

accords with our earlier explanation that mortgaged farmers on the poorest land were likely to vote Socialist in protest against this form of the extraction of their surplus.

However, these bankers were "interlocked" with local businessmen who provided goods and services to the farmers. All of these petty capitalists depended on the financial solvency of the agricultural population for their own economic well being. Debo[28] demonstrates how the small businessmen of Oklahoma towns could only survive because of the mortgage money that farmers obtained. Thus, the economic well being of local entrepreneurs ultimately depended on their ability to control the agricultural economy in the surrounding countryside to some extent. This was partly accomplished by controlling the county governments.

The county government had direct control over two important political mechanisms. They were the county budget, derived primarily from real estate taxes, and the county courts. Political control over these two things could be exercised by the small entrepreneurs of the "electric light towns." This hegemony was established and maintained most frequently through the local Democratic Party, which, as can be seen from Figure 1, controlled the vast majority of Oklahoma's county governments in 1910.[29] Democratic control of the county governments was not unique to 1910. Starting with statehood in 1907 the Democrats captured control of county governments, a pattern which was consistently

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[28]Debo, pp. 63-65.

[29]Thus the political relationships which will be described below explain the situation in Eastern Oklahoma also.

Chapter V

Figure 2

Control of County Govt., 1910

D = by Democrats

R = by Republicans

T = tied

Source:

Oklahoma Red Book, Oklahoma 1912, Oklahoma City, compiled by W.B.Richard, under the supervision of B.Harrison, Secy. of State.

maintained until about 1920 when Republicans began making some inroads on this level of government.[30]

Although the offices of county governments were uniform throughout the state, being specified by the state government, each of the 14 or so offices was filled by direct local election. Yet, instead of vesting control of these offices in the people of the county, this procedure made it possible for the political machine of the party in control of each county to determine the outcome of the election.[31] Nomination for offices to county government by the party in control was therefore tantamount to a patronage appointment.

The local county political machines had direct control of tax assessment and the spending of county revenues, as this was a power directly vested in the office of county assessor by the state constitution.[32] In a study of the socio-economic status of county assessors, of the 29 sampled, 19 were either professionals or small businessmen. Only ten were farmers. These men usually had past histories of activity in local or state politics for 10 or more years prior to their election to this office.[33] There is evidence which suggests that business property in the

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[30]James R. Scales, "The Political History of Oklahoma, 1907-1949," (Ph.D. thesis, Dept. of History, University of Oklahoma, 1949), p. 70.

[31]M. H. Merrill, "County Government in Oklahoma," Studies in Government and Administration, No. 2, University of Oklahoma Bulletin, New Series No. 195, Univ. Studies, No. 12 (March 15, 1920), p. 9.

[32]Robert K. Carr, State Control of Local Finances in Oklahoma (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1937), pp. 37-38.

[33]Ibid., pp. 64-65.

towns was usually assessed at lower rates than farm property.[34] Furthermore, we know that the rural members of the community frequently complained at the excessive amount of money spent on the towns in comparison to the countryside.[35]

Perhaps most importantly, however, the local political machine had de facto jurisdiction over the county courts. They could therefore control decisions concerning indebtedness and mortgage foreclosrues.[36] Since judges were "elected" they were likely to be Democratic Party functionaries. Since jury members were chosen from the tax rolls and were required to have a minimum property value to qualify, the poorest farmers were effectively excluded from participating in hearings concerning mortgage foreclosures.[37]

The businessmen in the towns thus had a political means of exercising economic control over the farmers just as did the gentry in more traditional societies with respect to their peasants. Although these businessmen were not necessarily landowners themselves, they could exercise a form of control analogous to that of landowners in southeast Oklahoma over the mortgaged and poor agricultural producers within their communities. As bankers they could regulate agricultural production by stipulating the conditions under which credit was to be extended. As Democrats they could control the tenure of farm owners. As merchants they could

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[34] Ibid.

[35] Meredith, "The Socialist Party in Oklahoma," p. 46.

[36] U.S. Commission on Industrial Relations, hearings, Nagle testimony, p. 9066.

[37] Ibid.

regulate the supply of goods and services to be made available to the often indebted farmers.

Here, as in peasant societies and as in the sharecropping regions of southeastern Oklahoma, the locus of economic and political control was identified by the farmers as emanating from local sources.[38] Furthermore, those who exercised this control were perceived by the farmers as lacking moral authority.[39] The farmers "felt themselves roughly equal to their creditors in the country towns."[40] They were "proud yeomen" who had, as their perhaps more economically successful creditors, come to Oklahoma as pioneers. Thus, the bankers and politicians could be perceived only as "interlocked parasites," illegitimately "robbing" the "honest members of the producing classes."[41] Even the terminology "parasites," used by the Socialist Party in its attempt to turn the agrarian discontent against the economic and political status quo, suggests that these businessmen were perceived as fulfilling no useful social functions.

In the context of an egalitarian society which upheld an ideology of economic and moral reward for those whose "brows were wet with honest sweat," the exactions of these townspeople could only be perceived as somehow illegitimate. Without a traditional ideology which could justify such exactions class resentments were born.

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[38] Green, p. 82.

[39] Ibid., pp. 243-44.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid.

Contrast With Populism

The questions we must now ask are twofold. Firstly, why was support for the Socialist Party not forthcoming in Kansas and Nebraska, two states which we have already compared with western Oklahoma? Secondly,was there a continuity between the Populism of the 1890's in Kansas and Nebraska and the Socialism of western Oklahoma of about 15 years later? In other words, was the Socialist strength of the pre-World War I Oklahoma merely a later form of "populistic" agrarian protest?

In answer to the first question it appears that in Kansas and Nebraska before the First World War the economic distress that afflicted Oklahoma farmers did not exist. As we have seen in Chapter IV, agricultural prosperity, as measured by size of farm and average value of farm property, was significantly higher than in western Oklahoma in 1910. Interest rates were lower as well. In addition, the boom period, as indexed by rapid population growth, had passed. The less competitive farmers had already been "weeded out," leaving the field to the more successful; economic stability rather than the opposite prevailed. Kansas and Nebraska represented Moore's model of successful democratic capitalist development. The agrarian population that remained on the land had become, by and large, successful businessmen farmers.

In answer to the second question, whether Oklahoma Socialism in western Oklahoma was merely a later manifestation of Populism, we must explore some aspects of the nature of the economic development of Kansas and Nebraska in the 1880's and compare them with the economic development of western Oklahoma two decades later. A salient difference between

the Populist and the Socialist strongholds was the source of the capital that financed the two regions' economic growth. In Kansas and Nebraska the source was exogenous. Farmer writes that in the 1870's and 80's in these two states,

> Eastern capitalists, seeking greater returns on their investments found a fertile field in the west, where there was a crying need for money. Every new farmer required money to stock his farm and put in his crops. Every new county must have a courthouse and a jail. Every new school district must have a new schoolhouse and the old districts must have larger schools to accomodate the increased population. Cities must have sewers, paved streets, water plants and electric plants. There must be roads and bridges and, above all, there must be railroads over which the ever-increasing harvests might find their way to the eastern markets. It was to meet these needs that eastern capital turned to the three most productive lines of investment--mortgages, municipal bonds, and railroad securities.[42] (Emphasis mine)

There followed a great speculative boom in which property values in both town and countryside skyrocketed. A continuing and stable prosperity was to be built on a base of high prices for agricultural commodities. When the boom was ended in the late 1880's by crop failure throughout the state and declining commodity prices, both urban speculators as well as rural wheat farmers suffered from indebtedness and bankruptcy. The farmers suffered as mortgages were foreclosed, while urban real estate speculators and town and railroad promoters were ruined; the impoverished rural population failed to provide both loan repayments and the tax base for the repayment of extensive loans.[43]

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[42]Hallie Farmer, "The Economic Background of Frontier Populism," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, 10 (1924): 410-411.

[43]R. C. Miller, "The Background of Populism in Kansas," Mississippi Valley Historical Review 11 (1925): 477; Farmer.

In Kansas and Nebraska those perceived as ultimately responsible for the economic victimization of the population were exogenous to the state; their locus was Wall Street. They were the trusts, corporations and investment houses of the "wicked" East. The Populist Party could therefore mobilize the impoverished farmers against an external enemy. Midwestern Populism, as it expressed itself in Kansas and Nebraska, exhibited none of the localistic town-country conflict that later appeared in Oklahoma. Both townspeople and farmers saw themselves as suffering from the financial demands of eastern investors.

Convergences Between East & West Oklahoma

Although we have no direct evidence concerning the sources of capital which contributed to the economic growth of Oklahoma there is some indirect evidence that it was generated internal to the state, at least until the end of the first decade of the century. Until about 1911 or 1912 the Progressive wing of the Democratic Party, a coalition of prosperous farmers and small businessmen, dominated the Oklahoma state government in the state legislature as well as on the local level.[44] This coalition distrusted investment in the newly developing state by national monopolies, especially Standard Oil and railroad interests. Progressives throughout the nation during this era, not unlike the Populists a decade earlier, were in opposition to the trusts, monopolies and Wall Street financiers. Progressive Democracy in Oklahoma, as well as in the South, was based primarily on the support of farmers, merchants, professionals,

[44] Green, pp. 73-74.

and landlords.[45] In Oklahoma these Southern Progressives were the "interlocked parasites in the electric light towns."[46]

On the statewide level it was this faction of the Democratic in Oklahoma which had written a progressive constitution which firmly regulated the corporations.[47] The first legislature of the newly formed state government passed bills increasing the taxes of railroads, gas and oil companies, pipe lines, coal mines, telegraph lines, telephone companies and electric utilities. It also passed extensive labor legislation.[48] On the local level it placed restrictions on the ability of the county governments to borrow money,[49] thus attempting to prevent the financial fiascoes that had accompanied the booms of small towns in the earlier settled midwestern states.

In attempting to suppress large scale industrial development the progressive Democrats, until they lost their influence, played an essentially reactionary rather than a progressive role, however. According to Moore's argument, in peasant societies the gentry may attempt to suppress industrialization and the growth of a national bourgeoisie. One of the

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[45] Green, p. 72.

[46] Progressive Democrats in Oklahoma alleged that it was the Republican Party which supported the trusts, monopolies and Wall Street financiers. Here the Republicans were depicted in the election campaigns as representing "The Carpetbagger, the Corporation, and the Coon;" racism was mixed with opposition to large scale capitalism. Scales, p. 67.

[47] William H. Murray, Memoirs of Governor Murray & True History of Oklahoma (Boston: Meador Publishing Co., 1945), pp. 40-44.

[48] Scales, pp. 87-88.

[49] Merrill, p. 12.

consequences of doing this is to keep the peasantry on the land since no industrial outlets are made available to absorb them. The gentry may then attempt to generate its own capital accumulation in order to control the process of industrialization itself. This is frequently accomplished by making excessive demands on the surplus that is produced by the peasantry; these demands are then enforced by political means.

As we have seen local elites in Oklahoma, landlords in the east and small businessmen in the west, attempted to do just these things. The Progressive Democrats who represented landlords, bankers and small businessmen originally tried to prevent the influx of exogenous large scale capitalism. Thus, they had no source of capital accumulation but their own relatively small resources and/or their ability to exact wealth from the agricultural producers in their local communities. This small scale capital accumulation was accomplished not directly through land rents either in the east or the western part of the state, but primarily through the system of credit, the mortgage in the west, and the chattel mortgage in the east. The extraction ofthe agricultural producer's surplus was enforced politically through the control of the Democratic Party on the county level. Through the Progressive Democrats' control of the state legislature in the early years of statehood, the petty bourgeoisie attempted to stave off the growth of exogenous financial and industrial control, i.e. large scale capitalist development.

According to Moore this set of conditions should generate a radical right wing rather than a radical left wing outcome. The "gentry" should be able to mobilize support among a politically quiescent peasantry against the incipient bourgeoisie. However, as we have seen, the agricultural

producers of Oklahoma had no respect for the moral authority of the bankers and small businessmen. The latter were seen as performing no necessary social functions as well as having no bases upon which to demand political deference. In Oklahoma the traditional bond between the functional equivalents of the gentry and the peasantry had never existed. Furthermore, the ideology of pioneering egalitarianism on the frontier was a context in which such a bond could not be generated. As a result both farmers and sharecroppers were motivated to espouse the Socialist alternative rather than support their exploiters by continuing to vote the Democratic ticket.

Progressive Democrats in Oklahoma were ultimately unable to maintain their political hegemony and as a result make Oklahoma a haven for small businessmen. The advent of World War I brought about a vastly increased demand for cotton and wheat, and especially oil. The War created opportunities for those with greater resources than the local elites. Local merchants and bankers began to find that they could no longer compete with the national mail order houses and new banks financed by oil money in Tulsa and Oklahoma City.[50,51] Thus, the local relationships between the agricultural producers and the small businessmen were destroyed. After 1914 the Socialist vote in Oklahoma began to decline. At the same time the small businessmen represented by the Progressive faction of the Democratic Party were forced to yield their

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[50] C. B. Glasscock, Then Came Oil: the Story of the Last Frontier, pp. 216, 236.; Oklahoma A & M College Experiment Station Bulletin 194, "Relation of Town and Country Interests."

[51] It was only at this point that the oil and gas resources were monopolized by Standard Oil, Texaco, and Gulf as the smaller producers were driven out of business. Glasscock, p. 155; Arthur M. Johnson, Petroleum Pipelines and Public Policy, 1906-1959 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), pp. 19-39.

political control of the state government to the more conservative wing of the party, the wing which represented the national corporate giants.

The Generation of Radical Solidarity Among the Impoverished Agricultural Producers in Oklahoma

Moore's third prerequisite for the generation of peasant radicalism is the development of what he calls "radical solidarity" among the rural masses. What he means by this, as we have seen in Chapter I, is the social and ideological exclusion of the economically and politically disfranchised from a socially stable and respectable (however lowly and oppressed) position within the local community. As a consequence of this exclusion the peasant is deprived of the traditional benefits of social reciprocity which exist between gentry and peasant, as well as between peasant and peasant, within the context of established hierarchy and paternalism. The social institutions which formerly incorporated the peasant into the social matrix are destroyed and replaced by the "cash nexus." The security of social relationships that custom once guaranteed become abrogated. As a result the peasant experiences a sense of social fragmentation, anomie, and alienation. This predisposes him to seek an alternative form of social cohesion from modern, secular, radical political organizations when and if such a group is introduced or introduces itself into the countryside.

Clearly Oklahoma never had any of the social features of a traditional peasant society. As we have seen, the population, both the agricultural producers as well as the townspeople, had only moved into the state in response to opportunities made possible by the economic development of the region. Petty bourgeois social relations and ideology rather than an

aristocratic traditionalism, the virtue of achieved rather than ascribed status, dominated social life from the start. At the debut of Oklahoma's growth the model of moral excellence was the self-made man. The rewards of hard work and thrift were glorified. Economic success was used as the justification for social and political dominance.[52]

The successful townspeople, in conformity with the Prostestant Ethic, comprised a community of the "elect." They developed a series of social institutions with extensive ideological supports, membership in which inevitably excluded the rural poor. The modern ideological context of these organizations justified the pre-eminence and virtue of the local urban elite, while denigrating the worth of the rural poor. Thus, a situation was created at the outset in which the rural poor were effectively denied access to membership in the community. They were thus deprived of the social and psychological benefits which such membership ususally confers on the lower strata of traditional peasant societies. There were basically two social institutions which appear to have been the focus of the social life of the successful townspeople. These were the church and the school.

The Church

In Oklahoma the middle class churches served to ideologically legitimate the dominance of the local elites. Burbank writes,

> The religious experience of townspeople confirmed their belief in their own moral superiority and increased the social and cultural distance separating them from the tenants in the countryside. In the towns, the Baptists, Methodists and Disciples of Christ attracted

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[52]Burbank, p. 441.

> the bulk of worshippers. The educated ministers of these churches delivered a message which flattered their audiences, emphasizing the middle class virtues of thrift, sobriety and personal responsibility for one's standing in this world. . . . 'Booster' religion consecrated the 'success' of its participants, encouraged scorn for country people, and thus intensified conflicting class perceptions.[53]

Other studies[54] confirm that,among farm operators, the more prosperous were more likely to be church members as well as to attend church more regularly than the less prosperous farmers. Thus, the well to do farmers shared with the prosperous townspeople, a belief in their moral superiority and the moral inferiority of the impoverished farmers.

The rural poor of Oklahoma, however, were not "Godless" as the townspeople frequently accused them of being. Green writes,

> The decreasing importance of established denominations in rural districts did not necessarily mean that the poor whites were becoming less religious. Many still attended services in the country school houses, visited by circuit riding preachers of many faiths. Most still read the Bible at home, sang spirituals and flocked to the summer revivals.[55]

Excluded from middle class religion which not only did not meet their needs, but from which they were also ideologically ostracized, the rural poor had their own forms of religious experience. This religion was basically fundamentalist, evangelical, and revivalistic. The primitive

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[53] Ibid., p. 449.

[54] Oklahoma A & M College Experiment Station Bulletin No. 211, "A Study of Certian Economic Factors in Relation to Social Life Among Oklahoma Cotton Farmers," p. 21, by O. D. Duncan and J. T. Sanders, 1933; Oklahoma A & M College Experiment Station Bulletin No. 185, " The Relations of Economic, Social and Education Advancement of Farmers to their Membership in Organizations," p. 10, by L. D. Howell, 1929.

[55] Green, p. 254.

Wesleyans, the Campbellites, and the Pentecostals were among the sects favored by these people.[56]

E. P. Thompson describes a similar phenomenon in his work on English peasants who were being victimized by the process of modernization in that country. These peasants turned to Primitive Methodism, also a fundamentalist, evangelical form of religion, as a way of expressing not only their religious zeal, but also their religious opposition to the established church, a church which was dominated by the local middle classes and the gentry. Their religion addressed itself to the social and psychological needs of the lower classes by emphasizing that all souls, especially those of the poor, could be saved. Thus, this lower-class based religion encouraged a class consciousness among these people by enhancing their sense of respectability, righteousness, and moral self-worth--qualities which the upper class church denied to them. Thompson argues that as a result these churches were the seedbeds for the development of class consciousness and political radicalism in the countryside.[57] We will see in the following chapter how the Socialist Party in Oklahoma utilized the religious institutions of the rural poor to "preach the Socialist gospel."

The School

Another important social institution in the community from which the rural poor were excluded were the schools. Given the fiscal prerogatives of the town controlled county governments we would expect that rural

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[56] Ibid., pp. 57, 240.

[57] E. P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class, p. 306.

schools would suffer in comparison to schools found in the towns. In a study made in 1918 it certainly appears that the rural schools were underfunded. It was reported that,

> The total value of the 5,951 school buildings and lots in rural districts (was) approximately one third that of the 960 buildings and lots in city and village districts.[58]

The same study found that of the money raised by the school districts,

> Of the $9,564,342 spent for common schools in 1916, only 40.4% was spent for rural schools although they have 56.1% of the total enrollment.[59]

According to this report, during the period under study, Oklahoma schools got their financial support from three sources, the state, the county, and the local school district. As we might expect the county provided very little support for the rural schools. The county was entitled to levy up to one mill on every dollar of taxable property value for common school purposes, while the local school district could levy up to five mills for this purpose. The consequence of this was that each local district was responsible for raising the bulk of the funds required for its schools. "The raising of 62 percent of the money used for rural school purposes (was) in the hands of the boards of rural districts and the electors of those districts!"[60] In the poor rural school districts this must have been a heavy burden. Although proposals for centralizing the responsibility for funding rural schools by taxing the corporations and by a graduated land tax were

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[58]Charles E. Gibson, "Farm Children in Oklahoma," Child Labor Bulletin VII (1918), p. 48.

[59]Ibid., pp. 49-50.

[60]Ibid.

introduced into the state legislature very early in statehood, they continued to fail until the 1920's.[61]

Yet most rural children frequently did not attend school; they were usually needed on the family farm.[62] When they did attend it was less frequently than their counterparts in the town schools. Furthermore, the rural schools did not meet the needs of the rural children for a relevant education. Located in the midst of agricultural communities the rural schools of Oklahoma were supposed to provide "vocational agricultural training" for their students. However the middle class teachers who staffed these schools were either unwilling or unable to provide this.[63] They were more likely to gear their curricula to the more academic desires of the townspeople who wished to prepare their children for high school and more advanced education. Thus, when the author of the study just mentioned, accepting the class prejudices of his day, writes that the rural constituencies who failed to vote for more school appropriations were "ignorant" and did not "know the value" of schools, one is forced to challenge this conclusion. Many of the rural people, being poor, and seeing no benefits to be derived from an education oriented to the middle class townspeople, most likely behaved in a rational way by failing to support the rural school system with their hard earned money.

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[61] Harmon, p. 82.

[62] Gibson, pp. 50-51.

[63] Ibid., p. 48.

Local Institutions

The school and the church in a rural community are two very important institutions through which legitimating ideologies are expressed and transmitted to the young. The ideologies expressed in the middle class schools and churches in Oklahoma not only bore no relation to the lives of the rural poor, but also denigrated their moral worth and their sense of respectability. The local press frequently transmitted the same message.[64] The moral value of economic success and the individual failure of those who failed to achieve it was even reinforced by the boys' and girls' clubs initiated by the county agent of the state agricultural extension service.[65]

The rural poor were without the social or financial resources required to participate in the institutions generated and dominated by the more affluent townspeople. They were isolated in single family units on their individual farms in the countryside. They had little or no leisure. The exigencies of the continuous hard work necessary to provide even minimal subsistence must have created disillusion with an ideology which purported to reward hard work and thrift with economic and social success. For the institutions which supported this ideology were peopled with individuals of leisure, who did not appear to work hard, but who were seen as living off the farmers' labor. These exploiters could easily be perceived as very directly responsible for the farmers' poverty.

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[64] Burbank, pp. 447, 448.

[65] Gibson, pp. 46-47.

In the absence of traditional forms for legitimating political authority, i.e. forms built on notions of aristocratic, divinely ordained, and biologically inherited superiority, the ruling elite had a weak basis for justifying its own dominance. Furthermore, the claims this elite made to its social usefulness were not perceived as fulfilling important social functions by the oppressed. In the local press entrepreneurial initiative, rather than the struggles of the farm population, was lauded as primarily responsible for the development of what had only recently been a wilderness. Finally, the ideological justifications for the local hegemony of the townspeople, based as they were on personal responsibility for one's own success or failure, must have appeared untenable to the farmers and tenants whose constant and arduous labor seemed to lead only to further impoverishment and social ostracism.

Thus, much like peasants who were ousted from the protective paternalism of the traditional Gemeinschaft, the rural poor developed what Moore calls "radical solidarity." The ways in which the Socialist Party in Oklahoma utilized these conditions to generate support for an ideology, which externalized the hostility which the "interlocked parasites" in the towns attempted to make the rural poor internalize, will be explored in the next chapter.

Chapter VI

SOCIALISM IN OKLAHOMA--THE POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION OF AGRARIAN DISCONTENT

In this final chapter we will discuss the impact of the Socialist Party on the Oklahoma of the end of the first decade of the twentieth century. We will first briefly discuss the Socialist Party in America during that period, its structure, ideology, and its relation to the international socialist movement. Secondly, and most importantly, we will attempt to clarify the ways in which the Oklahoma Socialist Party, through its methods of organization and proselytization, was able to translate a modern secular radical political movement, firmly grounded in currents of European and Marxist thought, into a structural and cultural idiom which was ideologically palatable to a rural, American, and peasant-like population.

As we have seen in previous chapters, the state of Oklahoma had a unique set of historical, economic, and social antecedents, which, we have argued, led to conditions which fulfilled Moore's three pre-requisites for the development of agrarian radicalism. To reiterate briefly, these were:

1) a labor repressive form of market agriculture,
2) conflicts between the functional equivalents of peasants and gentry, and

3) a local social structure which excluded the poorest agricultural producers in the countryside from participation in the social institutions within the local community.

Yet, the conjunction of all these conditions need not necessarily have led to the overt expression of discontent in the form of political radicalism. An institutional force was needed to transform the discontent into political action. This force was the Socialist Party of America. The Socialist Party was a mass based socialist party whose strategic thrust was not one of revolutionary violence, but of electoral politics. This party was instrumental in shaping the direction that agrarian discontent took in the state of Oklahoma.

The Socialist Party of America--The Structure and Content of American Socialism, 1901 to the First World War

The Socialist Party of America, from its founding in 1901 to the First World War, cannot merely be understood as an instance of an oppositional third party movement in America which was born in the context of an era of political and social reform, i.e. the Progressive Era.[1] Certainly, however, the Party's success may be attributed to the liberal climate of opinion during these years. As an organization engaged in electoral politics as part of its overall strategy, it indeed made demands for various types of reform. Yet, on the other hand, it was

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[1]We will only deal with the Party from its founding in 1901 until the First World War. With the advent of this war, and the Russian Revolution, the Socialist Party underwent profound changes which fundamentally altered its nature. David Shannon, The Socialist Party of America (New York: Macmillan, 1955), Chapter VII; James Weinstein, The Decline of Socialism in America (New York: Random House, 1967), Chapter IV.

also a political movement committed to the transformation of the capitlist society into a socialist one. As such, the Socialist Party of America must be partly understood as one branch of an international and revolutionary movement.

Here two qualifications are required. Firstly, the Socialist Party, during the period under study, had no formal organizational connections with any larger international socialist body. Thus, to see the Socialist Party of America as part of a larger movement is in no way to suggest that the Party or the Party leadership was acting as "an agent of a foreign power." Secondly, to call the Socialist Party as a revolutionary organization in no way implies that its leadership was committed to armed struggle, or that the Party had as its goal the overthrow by force of the existing political and economic institutions of American society. Certainly the Party's membership included groups and individuals who espoused the entire spectrum of socialist thought and opnion that was current at the time. Political perspectives shading into reformism could be found on the "right," while a particularly American form of anarcho-syndicalism was represented on the extreme "left."

The Socialist Party of America in the period under study was a unique type of socialist organization in American history. Unlike the Socialist Labor Party which preceded its development, it was not a sectarian

organization whose leadership demanded doctrinal orthodoxy or whose membership was effectively limited to immigrant and ethnic working class enclaves in a few large industrial cities.[3] Nor, like the Communist Party which developed later in response to the Russian Revolution and the formation of the Third International, was the Socialist Party a cadre organization.

The Party was basically a coalition of numerous types of socialists and socialist organizations.[4] The loose federated structure of the Party, which permitted a high degree of local autonomy on the statewide level,permitted the development of an organization which was able to incorporate a high degree of diversity. The Party had the structural flexibility to be able to incorporate ethnics and native Americans, workers and farmers, middle class and working class members, Christian socialists and Marxist atheists. It also represented a broad spectrum of the American population geographically. Socialist Party members and locals could be found from Vermont to California. Because of its policy of fostering local autonomy, each state organization could formulate a program and set of immediate demands which were based on the specific needs and problems of its own constituency.

Inevitably, as a result of its diversity, factionalism and internecine warfare was the rule rather than the exception on the national as well as on the state level.[5] Yet, what united the Party was a basic

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[3] Ibid., Chapters I & V.

[4] Weinstein, Chapter I.

[5] Ira Kipnis, The American Socialist Movement, 1897-1912 (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968).

consensus as to the unacceptability of the present capitalist society and the commitment to work towards the transformation of that society into a "cooperative commonwealth."

The Concept of the Cooperative Commonwealth

The term "cooperative commonwealth" was used extensively by the turn of the century Socialists. It had its origins in the book by the same title written by Lawrence Gronlund in 1884. Gronlund's book,

> . . . was the first attempt by an American socialist to write in English a comprehensive yet simplified analysis of Marxism for the man in the street.[6]

However, while Gronlund accepted Marx's theories of the historical development of capitalism he did not accept the thesis of transformation to socialism by class struggle. Although Gronlund's book itself was not widely accepted upon its publication, his ideas were widely popularized three years later upon the appearance of Ballamy's Looking Backward. This latter book, which in the form of a novel outlined in relative detail a vision of a cooperative rather than a competitive society, was intellectually grounded in the American utopian socialistic tradition. Yet, like Gronlund, Bellamy Americanized and transformed Marx's notions of the inevitability of historical change from capitalism to socialism. While Marx believed that change was inevitably generated out of the contradictions inherent in capitalism and manifested in class conflict,[7] Bellamy saw socialism as potentially arising out of a peaceful evolutionism in which rational human beings would come to see

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[6]Quint, p. 28.

[7]Karl Marx, The Communist Manifesto, (New York: International Publishers, 1954).

that cooperation was a more progressive principle. They would then proceed to alter society in conformity with this principle.

Both the European Marxian emphasis on class struggle, as well as the more American evolutionary vision of social change, were incorporated into the Socialist Party ideology. These different perspectives were grounded in the social and ideological experiences of the various Party constituencies and articulated by the different types of Party intellectuals who represented these groups.[8] The unique brand of socialism of the American Socialist Party was basically hewn out of these two traditions.

Goals and Strategy

Although it is difficult, we will try to articulate the shared consensus which can in some sense be said to have overlaid the multiplicity of perspective and position among constituencies within the Socialist Party. The goals of the Socialists in ushering in the cooperative society were based on a statist conception of the future socialist commonwealth. The state, in Marxist parlance, was the political arm of the bourgeoisie. The industrial violence which formed a large part of the history of American life in the last two decades of the 19th century, and the use of the Federal government to quell this violence, gave particular credence to such a formulation at this time. If the state was the tool of large monopolies, trusts, and corporations, the capture of this state by the Socialists was a prerequisite to the

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[8] Paul Buhle, "Intellectuals in the Debsian Socialist Party," Radical America IV (April 1970).

elimination of class rule. The eventual capture of the capitalist state would turn it into an instrument of popular government. Unlike Populists, Progressives, and other social reformers of the time, the Socialists did not want the existing government to merely regulate the trusts and monopolies in order to return to an earlier form of competitive, small scale capitalist entrepreneurship, either agrarian or industrial. If the Socialists were to control the state they would not destroy the industrial giants but nationalize them. They would eliminate production for profit and substitute an economic system which would return in full to the workers the fruits of their labor.

The pragmatic belief in rationality and progress which characterized the reforming era was incorporated into Socialist ideology. Socialists were optimistic that the achievement of the cooperative commonwealth was within the realm of the possible, perhaps within the lifetime of party members. It was to be brought about by the practice of three basic strategies. These were:

1. Education and proselytization--Americans, it was felt, needed to be made aware of both the morality and practicality of socialism as an economic and political system. Therefore, ideological conversion was to be brought about by the printed as well as the spoken word. The Party prided itself on the proliferation of its press and the distribution of its pamphlets. In the days before the mass media became an instrument of the political message the word was spread by a host of national, state, and local Socialist lecturers, speakers, and even Socialist sunday schools.

2. Industrial unionism--Socialists were opposed to the "bread and butter" craft unionism with which Gompers dominated the labor movement in America. At the risk of oversimplifying the position of the Socialist Party vis-a-vis the unions, suffice it to say that it supported the policy of "boring from within." This meant in essence that Socialists urged workers to join extant unions in order to influence them to support Socialist goals and programs. Ultimately, it was hoped they would convince workers to support socialism, and turn the unions into bases from which the class struggle could be successfully waged. Although this policy finally proved unsuccessful, the Party was officially opposed to the policy of "dual unionism" in which Socialists attempted to build socialist unions which were parallel to the already existing ones.

3. The ballot box--Socialists were to run candidates in all types of elections, local, municipal, state and national. Although there were some elements within the Party which can be said to have disagreed with this basic principle, the belief was widely held in the power of the ballot box to generate the "cooperative commonwealth."

> Thus the immediate, and indeed sole, goal of the Socialist Party was to organize the slaves of capital to vote their own emancipation.[9]

In its commitment to parliamentary democracy the Socialist Party of America was akin to the German Social Democratic Party. Its gradualism, its "step-at-a-time" socialism, was very reminiscent of Bernsteinian revisionism. Yet, to draw too close a parallel between

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[9]Kipnis, p. 114.

the two parties would be misleading. Firstly, while the German SPD was fairly well represented in the Reichstag, this was not so for the American Socialist Party in the halls of Congress. One reason for this may be that the two party system in America, by that era so firmly entrenched in political life, effectively prevented meaningful representation by additional parties. However, as Weinstein[10] has shown, this was not the case on the local, municipal, and state levels of government where socialist officials were occasionally elected during this era. Secondly, unlike its German counterpart, the American Socialist Party had relatively little influence in the councils of trade unionism. By that era Gomperism in America was firmly in the control of the American Federation of Labor and its policy of "bread and butter" unionism. Finally, the American Socialist Party, unlike the German SDP, had the task of trying to incorporate an ethnically heterogeneous working class into the movement.

Ethnicity, Socialist Strength, and Factionalism

Certainly much of the impetus for organizing the Socialist Party came from two European immigrants, Victor Berger of Milwaukee and Morris Hillquit of New York. Both were trade union leaders and intellectuals who emerged from working class ethnic enclaves of their respective cities. Both were steeped in the literature of the contemporary European socialist movement. However, this is not to say that the leadership of the Party was dominated by European intellectuals. Both Eugene V. Debs and William D. "Big Bill" Haywood came out of a midwestern,

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[10]Weinstein, pp. 116-18.

native American tradition. Debs was the charismatic Socialist Party candidate for the U.S. presidency in four consecutive Presidential elections, while Haywood who hailed from Indiana, was the organizer of the Western Federation of Miners and later of the anarcho-syndicalist I.W.W., which had its strength in the West and Midwest.

Neither was the leadership on the local level dominated by Europeans. Instead four-fifths of the delegates to the founding convention of the Socialist Party were American born.[11] Furthermore, the membership and electoral strength of the Socialist Party was by no means limited to the ethnic urban proletariat. One author writes,

> Until 1918 the greatest relative voting strength of the movement lay west of the Mississippi River, in the states where mining, lumbering and tenant farming prevailed.[12]

Although we have no documentation of the ethnic origins of this western constituency (the farmers of Missouri, Kansas, Arkansas, Texas and Oklahoma, and the miners and timber workers of the Rocky Mountains and Pacific Northwest) that voted Socialist, we know that they had a culture and a leadership which was in the grass roots American tradition.[13]

Certainly the ethnic working class of European origins espoused a more classical socialist ideology than their native American peers. Shannon writes,

> The New Yorkers' knowledge of Marxist theory and their pride in that knowledge sometimes led them to adopt a condescending attitude to their untutored comrades from

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[11]Kipnis, p. 104.

[12]Weinstein, p. 23.

[13]Shannon, pp. 25-26, 37-39.

> from the western plains, who generally did not know surplus value from long division or Capital from the Eighteenth Brumaire and did not care to know.[14]

However, this fact alone should not lead us to the conclusion that ethnic working class Socialists were more "radical" than their native American counterparts. Nor should we immediately assume that because the western agrarians and miners were not intellectually steeped in the Socialist classics they were merely "reformists." In fact, the New York and Milwaukee Socialists have been identified as the more conservative wing of the Party. The farmers, miners, and timber workers, with their distinctive grass roots American traditions have been identified as the Left wing and more truly revolutionary wing of the Party.[15]

Yet, perhaps the characterization of party factions as representing either left wing revolutionists or right wing reformists needs reformulation. One scholar questions this notion of a unilinear continuum. He argues that although Socialists thought of themselves in terms of Left, Right and Center, and some scholars[16] have accepted this conceptualization, " . . . [s]uch a view serves better to obscure than to clarify the American socialist past; . . ."[17] This scholar attempts to show that

> In the Socialist Party of America the categories of Left, Right and Center were more useful in defining attitudes towards others than as guides to how a group would line up on any given issue; . . .[18]

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[14] Ibid., p. 12.

[15] Ibid., pp. 13-17, 25-39.

[16] Ibid.; Kipnis.

[17] Weinstein, p. 3.

[18] Ibid., p. 3.

Although the question cannot be treated here, the issue of whether to characterize political positions as "reformist" or "revolutionary" is always a thorny one. A politics which has as its goal not particular issues, but social transformation, must always make a trade off between the desire to gain popular support (and be a mass based party) and the dilution of its principles to that end. Such a politics is invariably faced with a need to choose between working within the context of the existing political system and attempting to undermine and transform it through various forms of civil or armed struggle.

The Socialist Party of America attempted to develop a mass based party. The leadership created an organization with a flexible structure so that local and regional groups could adopt a Socialist program which came out of their own specific economic and political needs. Although the National Office required that certain fiscal obligations and adherence to its "revolutionary principles" be met by the state organizations, it permitted each state organization to formulate its own programs and "immediate demands."[19] Thus the urban parties were free to espouse municipal reform, and the rural parties could support agrarian reform. We must now explore the way in which the Socialist Party of Oklahoma utilized this freedom in mobilizing the support of the discontented farmers and tenants of the state.

The Socialist Party in Oklahoma--The Transformation of Agrarian Discontent into Agrarian Socialism

In preceding chapters we have argued that the state of Oklahoma had a unique and anomalous historical and social development. We have

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[19]Quint, pp. 380-84.

argued that as a result, the farmers and tenants of this state, at the turn of the century, experienced a set of social and economic relations which were in many ways similar to those experienced by peasant populations in European and Third World countries. We have tried to show how economic development in Oklahoma generated an unusual configuration of circumstances that were analogous to the ones Barrington Moore, Jr. suggests as leading to the development of left-wing agrarian radicalism in peasant societies.

Yet to posit the fulfillment of the "objective conditions" necessary for the generation of modern agrarian radicalism does not explain how these conditions influence the subjective social experience of individuals affected by these processes. What we will address ourselves to at this point is the question of how the discontent among Oklahoma farmers and tenants was transformed into agrarian socialism, i.e. the high degree of electoral support for the Socialist Party in Oklahoma.

Social theorists argue that this process does not occur without the intervention of agents of modern social movements, typically led by urban intellectuals, i.e. socialists, communists, and anarchists.[20] These intellectuals do two things to focus peasant discontent. They provide leadership for peasant movements and channel diffuse peasant hostilities into a coherent, rational political ideology with a theory, goals and strategies for social transformation. Hobsbawm writes,

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[20]Barrington Moore, The Social Origins of Dictatorship & Democracy (Baltimore: Penguin, 1966), p. 480; E. J. Hobsbawm, Primitive Rebels (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1959), p. 6; and Eric Wolf, Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century.

> Modern revolutionary movements have--implicitly or explicitly--certain fairly definite ideas on how the old society is to be replaced by the new, the most crucial of which concerns what we may call the "transfer of power." The old rulers must be toppled from their positions. The "people" (or the revolutionary class or group) must "take over" and then carry out certain measures--the redistribution of the land, the nationalization of the means of production, or whatever it may be. In all this the organized effort of the revolutionaries is decisive, and doctrines of organization, strategy and tactics, etc., sometimes very elaborate, are evolved to aid them in their task.[21]

The goal of the intellectuals is not to generate a belief among the peasants in the existence of class exploitation. Peasants confront class exploitation on a daily basis. The point is to motivate peasants to understand that the illegitimate forms of class rule are, indeed, changeable, and to make them see themselves, their own class, as a force for social change.[22]

A word of caution is required here. The theoretical framework upon which this analysis is based explicitly warns us against drawing the conclusion that peasant radicalism is, for the most part, a function of the presence of "outside agitators;" the objective conditions of peasant life must produce the discontent. Barrington Moore writes,

> The intellectuals as such can do little politically unless they attach themselves to a massive form of discontent. . . . It is a particularly misleading trick to deny that a revolution stems from peasant grievances because its leaders happen to be professional men or intellectuals.[23]

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[21] Hobsbawm, p. 58.

[22] Marx's discussion of class an sich and class für sich describes this transformation most appropriately.

[23] Moore, p. 480.

Yet, although Moore argues that outside intellectuals are required for the eruption of peasant radicalism, he does not provide a framework for understanding the ways in which the radicalizing process works. For this we must look to the work of Eric Hobsbawm.

Millenarianism and Peasant Radicalism

In his work[24] Hobsbawm argues that there are three types of "pre-political primitive rebels." While the first two, Mafia and social banditry, are reformist in nature, the third, millinerian movements, are essentially revolutionary. Thus, traditions of religious millinerianism in peasant culture can provide the foundations upon which modern forms of peasant radicalism are built. Hobsbawm argues that millinerianism is inherently revolutionary in the sense that it:

1. involves a "profound and total rejection of the present, evil world, and a passionate longing for another and better one; . . ."[25]
2. has an ideology which is grounded in Judeo-Christian messianism,
3. involves the expectation that the coming of the millenium involves faith and ritual.

> . . . by divine revelation, by an announcement from on high, by a miracle. . . . The part of the people before the change is to gather together, to prepare itself, to watch the signs of the coming doom, to listen to the prophets who predict the coming of the great day . . .[26]

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[24]Hobsbawm,

[25]Ibid., p. 57.

[26]Ibid., pp. 58-59.

He argues that where peasant discontent exists in a context of religious millenarianism it can most easily be transformed by a secular modern radical political movement. He writes,

> When a millenarian movement turns into, or is absorbed by, a modern revolutionary movement, it therefore retains the first of its characteristics. It normally abandons the second at least to some extent, substituting a modern, that is in general a secular, theory of history and revolution: nationalist, socialist, communist, anarchist or of some othertype. Lastly it adds a superstructure of modern revolutionary politics to its basic revolutionary spirit: a programme, a doctrine concerning the transfer of power, and above all a system of organization.[27]

Hobsbawm warns us against the interpretation that all such revolutionary movements are "merely" millenial and therefore "primitive." Secondly, what is important is not the consciousness of the participants in this kind of movement, but the nature of the movement itself. Peasants need not be steeped in the intellectual roots of the movement in order to be part of the modern secular cause itself. The notions of "modern" and "primitive" for Hobsbawm, make reference to the structure of the movement, not to the educated or intellectual quality of mind (or absence of these) the peasants bring to it.

At this juncture we must distinguish between reform and revolutionary movements. The differentiation between the two types must not be understood as based on strategies for change, i.e. armed insurgency (violence) vs. "working within the system" (demonstrations, civil disobedience, the electoral process), but on the ultimate goals of a social movement. Here again Hobsbawm's words are instructive. He writes,

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[27] Ibid., p. 59.

> Reformists accept the general framework of an institution or social arrangement, but consider it capable of improvement or, where abuses have crept in, reform; revolutionaries insist that it must be fundamentally transformed, or replaced."[28]

With special reference to peasant societies he writes,

> Reformists wish to create a society in which policemen will not be arbitrary and judges at the mercy of landlords and merchants; revolutionaries, though also in sympathy with these aims, a society in which there will be no policemen and judges in the present sense, let alone landlords and merchants,[29]

Oklahoma Socialism--The Emergence of a Modern Revolutionary Movement

We will argue that the inordinate Socialist electoral strength that manifested itself in Oklahoma in the period under study was generated not only by the fulfillment of Moore's three conditions, but also by the success with which urban intellectuals who represented the American Socialist Party were able to mobilize the discontent of farmers and tenants of the state. We will try to show how these socialist intellectuals successfully utilized the class conscious agrarian traditions and essentially millenarian Protestant Fundamentalism of this agrarian constituency, in order to build a modern, secular radical political social movement.

Agricultural protest in Oklahoma did not originate with the growth of the Socialist Party. Both the Farmers' Alliance and the People's Party had spread their roots into the Twin Territories in the

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[28] Ibid., pp. 10-11.

[29] Ibid., p. 11

1890's.[30] Thus, some scholars[31] have argued that the success of the Socialist Party in Oklahoma was werely another expression of the economic difficulties that agricultural producers suffered on the frontier rather than a manifestation of an orthodox socialist movement. While historians have found some continuities between the personnel and programs of the two movements,[32] the social scientist must look for structural differences and similarities.

Here we will argue that Populism and Socialism in Oklahoma were structurally different kinds of agrarian social movements. We will try to show first that the Populists and Socialists represented different constitutencies on the local level. Secondly, we will try to demonstrate that both the goals and organizational forms of Populism and Socialism were largely different. Populism, we will argue, was basically reformist, while the Socialist Party was essentially a revolutionary movement.

The National & International Context

The Socialist Party of America, as we have seen, was not primarily an agrarian organization, as was the People's Party. Much of its organizational strength and leadership was located in the cities among workers and intellectuals. As a national movement it was dedicated

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[30] James Green, "Socialism and the Southwestern Class Struggle: A Study of Radical Movements in Oklahoma, Texas, Louisiana and Arkansas," (Ph.D. thesis, Dept. of History, Yale, New Haven), p. 1; and Howard L. Meredith, "The Farmers' Alliance in Indian Territory," Chronicles of Oklahoma XLVII (Winter 1969-70).

[31] Robert F. Hoxie, "The Rising Tide of Socialism: A Study," Journal of Political Economy XIX (Oct. 1911); Howard L. Meredith, "The Socialist Party in Oklahoma," (Ph.D. thesis, University of Oklahoma, Norman, 1970); and Seymour M. Lipset, Agrarian Socialism (New York: Doubleday (Anchor), 1968), Chapter I.

[32] Green, p. 1.

to the implementation of the principles of international socialism in American society. As such its ideological thrust was geared primarily towards the recognition of the urban proletariat, not the farmer, as the agency through which such social change was to be brought about.

Nevertheless, certain segments of the agrarian population in America generated an indigenous response to the currents of socialist thought and organization that developed during this era. Party ideologists, A. M. Simons and Julius Wayland in turn responded to the interest shown by certain agrarian constituencies by attempting to develop a socialist analysis of the agrarian situation. (Green[33] documents the debate that took place at the national level of the Party on the agrarian situation and the place of farmers in the Socialist Party.) These intellectuals attempted to find a place for the rural proletariat in a movement which was directed to the concerns primarily of urban workers. On a structural level the Party found ways to accomodate the inclusion of small farmers and tenants in the larger movement.

We must keep in mind, however, that agrarian socialism in America developed at a time when European socialists were finding their own agrarian constituencies unresponsive to socialist agitation.[34] The continental socialist movement operated on the assumption that peasants were a reactionary rather than a revolutionary force.[35] This was at a time before the Russian Revolution as well as before the era of peasant revolutionary insurgency in the Third World. In the light

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[33]Green, pp. 84-86.

[34]David Mitrany, Marx Against the Peasant (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1951).

[35]Karl Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon.

of these events the attempts of the Socialist Party to incorporate agrarian elements in this country into the socialist movement, and especially the development of Socialist strength in Oklahoma, must be seen as a highly extraordinary and forward looking effort.

Socialism & Populism in Oklahoma--Empirical Continuities and Discontinuities

In understanding the significance of the People's Party in Oklahoma it is important to remember the fact of the state's relatively late economic and social development. Perhaps as a result, Oklahoma was not one of the states which was a leading Populist stronghold, although the Party did exist there. In 1892, the year in which the Populists held their first national election, much of western Oklahoma had not even been settled yet. Eastern Oklahoma was still under tribal control. In the Indian Territory the Farmer's Alliance rather than the People's Party was responsible for mobilizing the discontent of the white agrarian population in the 1890's.[36] The Alliance which was geared towards the organization of various forms of agricultural cooperatives, was perhaps more influential than the Populists because there tribal hegemony prevented whites from participating in elections. By 1896, when Populist fusion with the Democrats marked the debut of the demise of Populism, the situation in the state as a whole was much the same as it was in 1892. Thus, the Populist movement in Oklahoma appears to have been limited to the northwest portion of the state, the region which had been settled earliest by homesteaders.

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[36]Meredith, "The Farmers' Alliance in Indian Territory."

Limited to only a corner of the territory which was later to become the state of Oklahoma the fusionist Populists not only elected their candidate for Territorial Representative in 1896, but also won 20 out of 26 seats in the Territorial House of Representatives in that election year.[37] Only one anti-fusionist Populist candidate was elected to the Territorial House. We can safely say that during the heyday of Populism in Oklahoma it was the fusionist Populists who dominated the movement. Yet Green[38] argues that there are some continuities between Populism and Socialism on the evidence that the anti-fusionist Populists later provided leadership for the Socialist Party in its early stages of development. Clearly this indicates not a continuity between the two movements but a discontinuity. It was only the left wing Populists (middle of the road Populists, as they were called) who opposed Silver and Fusion who later became Socialists rather than the more conservative Populists who, in 1896, dominated the Oklahoma Peoples Party.

Secondly, the region in Oklahoma in which fusion Populists dominated was a region of very low Socialist vote in the 1910-1914 elections. These counties were Payne, Lincoln, Canadian, Kay, Noble, Greer, Wood, Pottawatomie and Pawnee.[39] Green argues that the relationship between Populists and Socialists is due to the fact that while Populists appealed to small farm owners, Socialists later concentrated their organizational efforts on the sharecroppers of southeastern Oklahoma. Thus, he argues

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[37]Terry Paul Wilson, "The Demise of Populism in Oklahoma Territory," Chronicles of Oklahoma XLIII (Autumn 1965): 272-73.

[38]Green, Chapter I.

[39]Wilson, p. 273.

that Populism and Socialism appealed to different types of agricultural producers. Yet, as we have seen, during the years 1910-1914 there was a strong Socialist vote among the mortgaged owners of the western part of the state. Yet the region of high Socialist vote in the western part of the state was in the most south and westerly counties, not the counties which had supported the fusionist Populists in 1896. Perhaps a more suitable explanation for the discontinuity between Populist and Socialist regions is the absence of electoral machinery in Indian Territory during the Populist era and the absence of settlement in the southwest. What later became the high Socialist voting regions of Oklahoma were thus without a Populist past.

Socialism & Populism--Goals

At this point we will address ourselves to a comparison of the goals of Populism as an agrarian protest movement and Socialism as it was manifested in Oklahoma in the period between World War I. Our treatment of Populism will, of necessity, be cursory as it is not the purpose of this study to provide a comparative analysis of the two movements. However, it is theoretically necessary to make some comparisons in order to demonstrate that the agrarian socialism which manifested itself in Oklahoma upon the demise of Populism was not merely another form of agrarian reform movement, which manifested itself later only because Populism was defunct by the time Oklahoma experienced agrarian discontent.

Populism, as an agrarian protest movement, was a response by agricultural constituencies in the South and West to economic exigencies generated by the impact of market forms of agriculture. In both

regions it was a class conscious movement in the sense that farmers, tillers of the soil, saw themselves as a group which was exploited by a burgeoning, monopolistic capitalism represented by railroads, corporate trusts, and financiers on Wall Street. However, as one historian (even one who sees Populism and Socialism as closely related movements) writes, "Populism was certainly not Marxism."[40]

It is not this author's intention to contribute to the debate in the historical literature as to whether Populism was a progressive movement or whether it contained elements which were primarily reactionary and nostalgically harked back to a glorification of a bygone era of rural American life.[41] Suffice it to say here that Populism probably contained both forward looking as well as socially regressive elements. Yet one thing seems apparent. Unlike socialism, Populist rhetoric and ideology did not include a new and alternative vision of social transformation; its goals were not revolutionary but reformist. Populists felt that farmers suffered from "unfair competition," felt they were being victimized by the "manipulation" of corporate giants over which they had not control. Thus, they wanted the existing government to regulate the monopolies and destroy the overwhelming economic power of the trusts so that the market mechanisms would operate more to the advantage of the small agricultural entrepreneur. Populists were therefore not opposed to the existence of market mechanisms as a

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[40]Norman Pollack, The Populist Response to Industrial America (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), p. 10.

[41]Richard Hofstadter, The Age of Reform; Pollack.

way of regulating social relations among people. They saw the market as having been abused by the money power. To restore free competition was to insure the image the Populists had of "the good life," the small scale, competitive individualism upon which the family farm was built.

Perhaps it was just this strong ethos of individualism, which in America has always been equated with personal freedom and independence, that traditionally made Americans so reluctant to accept the collectivist message of socialist thought. In the early years of Socialist growth, agrarian socialist ideologues such as Julius Wayland and A. M. Simons debated Populist leader Tom Watson in the pages of Appeal to Reason concerning the ramifications of the Socialist's agrarian goals. Watson claimed that socialism would lead to the confiscation of the farmer's land and huge collective farms which would destroy the freedom that was assumed to come from the individual's title to the land. The Socialists responded that the inevitable historical trend in capitalism was already leading to agricultural concentrations such that farmers were losing their land.[42] The Socialists argued that it was not large scale farming itself that lead to agrarian impoverization but only large scale farming under capitalism. Socialists wanted to utilize the economics of scale that large scale farms could yield in order to return to the producers the full fruits of their labor.

In Oklahoma, as we have seen, agricultural concentration was not the main problem. Economic development had created two agricultural constituencies, small farm owners and tenants, both of whose ties to

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[42]A. M. Simons was led to reformulate some of his theories of agricultural concentration in the light of census figures which disproved this. The effects of capitalist growth on agriculture during that period appeared to be leading not to increased concentration but to increased tenantry.

the land were becoming increasingly precarious. As theorists of peasant radicalism have shown, modernization tends to whittle away at the bond peasants have with the land. Thus, not surprisingly, for peasants as well as for Oklahoma farmers and tenants, the spectre of losing their rights to an individual parcel of land is perceived as threatening. Peasants, as Oklahoma farmers and tenants, are not always sure that collectivization is the solution to their problems. It was in this context that the Oklahoma Socialist Party, in its 1910 State Platform, offered its Farmers Program. An analysis of this program sheds light on the goals of agrarian socialism in Oklahoma as well as showing us how the Party attempted to deal with the individualist ethos not only found among Americans, but among peasants as well.

This program was offered as,

> . . . calculated to bring into collective property the land, and enable every farmer to have the use and occupancy of the land sufficient for a home and the support of his family[43]

Thus, an attempt was made to ideologically reconcile the principle of land collectivization with the cherished values of the family farm. In order to implement this goal various concrete proposals were made for the state of Oklahoma to acquire agricultural land. (See Farmers' Program, Articles I, VIII and XII.) Farmers were to be able to rent land directly from the state, either individually or collectively--the farmer would have a choice. They payment of rent for this land would cease,

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[43] Oklahoma Red Book, Compiled by W. B. Richards, Oklahoma City, 1912, Vol. II, p. 379.

> as soon as the total amount of rent is equal to the value of the land and the tenant thereby acquires for himself and his children the right to occupancy. The title to all such lands remaining with the commonwealth. (See Farmers Program.)

Despite the urgings of some of the more orthodox Marxists in the National Party, the Oklahoma Socialists refused to demand the immediate collectivization of land. In its essentials the Oklahoma Farmers Program was not concerned with the issue of collective vs. individual agriculture, but with the elimination of a situation in which land was a commodity. Whereas the Populists had always wanted to regulate the market mechanisms so that "unfair" competition would not prevail this program represented an attempt to eliminate the market mechanism as it effected land tenure altogether. Land was no longer to be bought and sold, to increase or decrease in value, to be rented, or to serve as a basis upon which credit was to be extended or refused; land was no longer to be private property. Although the potential consequences of the implementation of this program or the desirability will not be addressed here, it seems clear that the goal of the program was to take the land out of the control of the "parasites in the electric light towns" and to place it in the hands of the producers, on an indivdual or collective basis.[44]

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[44] Jan Myrdal in Report from a Chinese Village, chronicles the impact of the Chinese Revolution on a small agricultural village. At first the revolutionary government divided the expropriated land among the peasants on an individual basis. Later, when the peasants became aware of economics of scale they voted to combine their land and work it collectively. The Socialists in Oklahoma hoped a similar process would take place when and if socialism came to Oklahoma. In a Party pamphlet entitled "Socialism for the Farmer who Farms the Farm," Oscar Ameringer argued "that once the Socialist Party took power small farmers would see the superiority of cooperative production and abandon their back-breaking routine on isolated patches." Cited in Green, pp. 83-84.

In its expressed project of eliminating private property and the market mechanisms which regulated the exchange of land as a commodity, the Oklahoma Socialists Farmers Program offered a transformational and revolutionary politics. Its concrete proposals catered to peasant-like aspirations for a perfect society, a world "shorn of all its present deficiencies" as Hobsbawm writes. The Socialists wanted not only a world in which merchants, landlords and creditors were to be more just, but one in which they would not exist at all, i.e. the Cooperative Commonwealth.

Millenarianism and the Message of Socialism

We now need to understand how the Socialist Party of Oklahoma was able to utilize the millenarian elements inherent in the cultural traditions of Oklahoma agrarians in order to generate electoral as well as organizational support in the state. As we will recall, the secular aspects of agrarian culture were rooted in Southern values, and Jeffersonian notions of a "free yeomanry." These traditions were accompanied by a religious culture of Protestant Fundamentalism. One historian writes,

> Oklahoma farmers believed in white supremacy, the natural right to use and occupancy of the land and the truths revealed in the Bible.[45]

What is known as Protestant Fundamentalism included a number of rural, lower class religious sects. These sects were most likely to be found in the rural South and Midwest at the turn of the present century,

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[45]Ibid., p. 133.

> . . . in those isolated communities in which the traditions of pioneer society had been most effectively preserved and which were least subject to the influence of modern science and industrial civilization.[46]

American Fundamentalism had connections with the "primitive Methodism" of the British rural proletariat in the 19th century,[47] which as Thompson[48] has tried to show, was a millenarian type of religion whose traditions ultimately led to a militant class consciousness among many of its adherents. Sandeen[49] writes of American Fundamentalism that it was "millenarianism which gave life and shape to the . . . movement." Protestant Fundamentalists, Campbellites, Holiness and Pentecostals had been preaching and proselytizing in Oklahoma in the years before statehood.[50] It was in this religio-cultural context that Socialist organizers preached the Socialist Gospel. Socialist "circuit riders" and organizers clearly and consciously saw themselves as secular preachers of a new religion.[51] The rhetoric they used was borrowed from fundamentalist revivalism while the institutions used to purvey the message were deeply embedded in rural culture and folk religion.

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[46] H. Richard Niebuhr, quoted in Ernest Sandeen, The Roots of Fundamentalism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. xi.

[47] Hobsbawm, p. 135.

[48] E. P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class.

[49] Sandeen, p. xv.

[50] Green, p. 57.

[51] Oscar Ameringer, If You Don't Weaken (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1940), see Book 6; and Green, p. 145.

Histories of the Socialist Party in Oklahoma[52] suggest that there were basically two periods of socialist proselytization, in which different types of organizing techniques were used. During the first period in which an indigenous leadership first began to build the Party in the state, the Socialist "circuit rider" and the "soldier-salesmen" of the "Appeal Army" were responsible for the inculcation of Socialist principles in the minds and hearts of Oklahoma agrarians, and for telling them of the promise of the Cooperative Commonwealth.

The Socialist circuit rider was modeled on the itinerant country preacher who roamed the backwoods and held Sunday services in the country schoolhouses for a people who were too poor to build or support a church. In the same way, sellers of the Appeal to Reason, the famous Socialist weekly newspaper, published by Julius Wayland, would scour the countryside engaging farmers in conversation about their economic problems, preaching socialist principles and urging them to take out subscriptions. The conception of these "traveling salesmen" as "soldiers" in an "army" parallels the religious conception of Christian soldier crusaders fighting for the cause of their savior. In the later period of Socialist organization, the Party planned large Socialist encampments modelled on religious revival meetings. These would sometimes bring ten thousand people who would camp for a week at a time in a clearing in the woods to hear secular evangelists like Kate Richards O'Hare, Mother Jones, and Eugene V. Debs.[53]

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[52]Green, p. 145; Meredith, "The Socialist Party in Oklahoma."

[53]Ameringer, pp. 267-268.

The goal was to convert farmers to a belief in Socialism in somewhat the same way that the religious convert is asked to believe in Jesus. Socialist organizers saw their audiences as a congregation. Oscar Ameringer, perhaps the most well known organizer of the later period describes his mission in the following way.

> One method for garnering the socialist sheaves was protracted meetings patterned after those of religious congregations. They were held in country schoolhouses, village churches, and more rarely in the courtrooms of county courthouses, and usually lasted a week or two, according to the attendance and the results obtained.
>
> Having selected a promising school district or village, I secured the permission of the proper wardens or directors to use their church or school. Then gathering my little flock together, I started preaching Marxism. As the meeting proceeded, attendance grew so that toward the end there was usually only standing room left, and quite often not even that. In the latter instances, the more faithful would do the standing, or listen to the speaker through the windows from outside. This was done in order to give new converts, or the not yet converted, a chance to hear the message with the least degree of discomfort.[54]

Yet, what distinguished Socialism from religion, what distinguishes millenarianism from modern political secular organizations, was that it was not by individual faith that one would be "saved," but by collective action that the poor "exploited classes" would someday being about the Cooperative Commonwealth.

Organizational Strategies

One of the elements which, as Hobsbawn has stressed (see this chapter), is crucial to the growth and success of modern secular

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[54]Ameringer, pp. 267-268. [Emphasis mine.]

radical political organizations if they are to capture the imagination and support of the rural poor, is to establish a "system of organization." Such organization is usually rational and efficient; it is frequently bureaucratic. It is necessary for both converting the masses and for the implementation of the strategy which is to bring about the desired social change. Finally, these organizational forms must be built on the culture and consciousness of the people whom they are intended to mobilize.

There were basically two periods of Socialist organization in the state.[55] The first period, from about 1900 - 1907, was geared to proselytization and popularization of Socialist ideas, and the second, from about 1907 - 1913, to the building of a local grass roots organization on which Socialist electoral strength was to be built. In both of these periods most of the leadership came from "outside intellectuals."

In the first period of organization, Party organizers were primarily indigenous agrarian radicals, many of whom had been anti-fusionist Populists who became Socialists. Although these men were "popular on the hustings," Party leaders came to feel that they did not have an adequate understanding of Socialist principles.[56] However, their efforts were supplemented by those of the Appeal Army whose task it was not only to sell newspapers but to organize locals on the

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[55] Green, p. 145; Meredith, "The Socialist Party in Oklahoma."

[56] Green, pp. 36-37.

side.[57] A study made of this Appeal Army[58] shows that they were not typically from Oklahoma but from other states in the South and Midwest. They were mainly small farmers and craftsmen.

> Half of the workers in the sample were skilled craftsmen, mainly smiths, carpenters and the like, who matured in the highly literate artisan culture that thrived during the late 19th century in native Middletowns as well in immigrant cities like Milwaukee. These articulate workers were self-educated, well-read trade unionists and self-reliant craftsmen who inherited a critical view of industrial capitalism first expressed by their forbearers in the ante-bellum America.

During this period, then, it was the men who brought the Appeal, rather than Oklahoma farmers and tenants, who introduced Socialist ideas into the region and began to organize Socialist locals.[59]

Here a word must be said about the Appeal to Reason. Julius Wayland, in 1895, started this Socialist weekly in Girard, Kansas. In 1913 it had a circulation of 761,747[60], a number it claimed was greater than the comparable figure for the Saturday Evening Post. By 1907 Oklahoma had 22,276 paid subscribers[61] and by 1914 this number had increased to 38,000[62]. As has already been amply documented[63], the

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[57] Green, p. 116.

[58] Ibid., pp. 118-121.

[59] Shannon, p. 28.

[60] Weinstein, p. 90.

[61] Green, p. 38.

[62] Weinstein, p. 24.

[63] Quint, chapter 6; Shannon, pp. 28-34.

Appeal transmitted a version of the Marxiam class struggle in a simple prose "cracker barrel" style. It was

> simple and direct in style, sensational muckracking in approach, with a subscription price of 25 cents a year.[64]

Thus, the Appeal to Reason made it possible for the homogeneous, native American population of Oklahoma, which was barely literate, to read and identify with Socialist thought.

The writers of the Appeal tried to show that the farmer, like the urban worker, was a rural proletarian. He was, like the worker, exploited by the "tentacles of corporate wealth."[65] The class struggle was therefore as real in the countryside as in the mines and factories of America.[66]

In the second period of growth, 1907-13, the national Socialist Party sent its own leadership to Oklahoma in response to the initial upsurge of interest. This period,in which the "professionals" took over the leadership of the Oklahoma Party, saw a massive increase of Socialist organizing and propaganda. It was this activity which was responsible for the creation of a base of Socialist support which produced the impressive Socialist electoral victories of 1910, 1912, and 1914. Socialist leaders such as Oscar Ameringer, Otto Branstetter, John Hagel, and Kate and Frank O'Hare were educated in the urban and

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[64] Kipnis, p. 248.

[65] Quint, p. 202.

[66] The home grown version of the class struggle expressed by the Appeal was essentially non-dialectical. The "struggle" was what was currently taking place in the strife torn capitalist society; the need to struggle would be eliminated with the advent of socialism.

intellectually orthodox Socialist circles of Milwaukee and St. Louis. Organizationally sophisticated, they rapidly gained leadership in the Oklahoma Party. Under the aegis of these leaders the number of organizers in the state was vastly increased, and a separate encampment organization was started to plan these functions. Most importantly perhaps, at this point the Party began to build Socialist locals in earnest.

The Task of Socialist Locals

The Socialist locals which organizers worked so hard to establish had both latent and manifest functions.[67] Officially these locals provided the base upon which the implementation of the Oklahoma Party's strategy for a Socialist takeover was built. Party strategy was primarily geared to eventually building a Socialist organization which would garner electoral support. Oklahomans were to ultimately vote in the Cooperative Commonwealth. The ever increasing electoral success in Oklahoma since the onset of the Party's organizational efforts had, by 1910, created a general sense of optimism concerning the actual fulfillment of this goal in the not too distant future. With this in mind, Socialist organizers in 1912,

> went into each precinct and organized a party local, seeing to it that every precinct had a responsible chairman who would distribute literature and assign watchers and counters at the polls. This system

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[67]Robert Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure (The Free Press, 1957, chapter 1). In 1914 Oklahoma had 961 party locals with a membership of 12,000; see Weinstein, p. 24.

> brought socialist voting non-members into the Party in all but 200 of the state's 2,565 precincts. . . .[68]

Yet the latent functions of the Socialist locals were perhaps more immediately important to the lives of the rural poor to which the Socialist Party in Oklahoma appealed. As we have seen, these poor farmers and tenants were excluded from the social life of their communities and isolated in the countryside. They were subjected to the scorn of the more affluent townspeople who felt their poverty was the just recompense for being "lazy and thriftless." To be identified as a Socialist as well was to be twice damned. For the Socialists were seen by the local middle classes as troublemakers; un-American and totally beyond the pale.[69] Thus, for an individual to make a decision even to vote Socialist,let alone become a Party member, was in essence to undergo conversion. To adopt a personal political stance that was in such complete and irreconcilable opposition to the ideological framework of the community was truly to set oneself apart from it. Such a decision was likely to require a high degree of commitment to socialism, a commitment much greater than being a Republican in a Democratic stronghold.[70]

Thus, as the Socialist Party provided an alternative vision of a new and more just society with its conception of a Cooperative Commonwealth, the Socialist local provided an alternative community in

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[68]Shannon, p. 35.

[69]Garin Burbank, "The Political and Social Attitudes of Some Early Oklahoma Democrats," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Winter 1974-75, pp. 446-7.

[70]Ibid.

the here and now. Among one's neighbors and Socialist comrades the excluded poor could find social confirmation of both the injustice of their oppressors and their own value and righteousness as human beings. Ethnically homogeneous, the rural poor would gather at the local schoolhouse or Socialist encampment not only to hear the Socialist speakers, but to meet each other, and to talk of crops, the weather, or the market. They could discuss what they had read in the Appeal to Reason (or in any number of local socialist newspapers that proliferated in Oklahoma at that time),[71] and have their perceptions confirmed by outside experts who presumably knew whereof they spoke. In the Socialist locals the hopes shared by the rural poor for a Cooperative Commonwealth could be reaffirmed and reactivated in commitment to further organizing or planning electoral strategy for the next campaign.

The Socialist Party in Oklahoma--An Evaluation

It is an almost impossible task to try to evaluate the success or the achievements of the Socialist Party in Oklahoma before the First World War. In 1914 the Party garnered over 50,000 votes, about 21% of the electorate, but by the end of World War I Socialism had been all but destroyed as a viable political force in the state. Although the task of generating a sociological explanation for the Party's failure as opposed to its success will have to wait upon further research, various answers have been offered. Some historians[72]

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[71]Weinstein, pp. 94-102.

[72]Ibid., pp. 109-173.

suggest that political repression contributed to the demise of the Socialist Party in Oklahoma. The opposition of the Party to the First World War, it is argued, created an excuse for local entrepreneurial and national political elements to destroy a political force that threatened the free enterprise system. Another potential explanation may be that conflicts within the Oklahoma Socialist Party itself led to the breakdown of the sophistocated organizational machinery which was responsible for so many Red Card holders, and so much Socialist electoral strength.[73]

Perhaps the failure of the advent of the Cooperative Commonwealth in Oklahoma was due to the gradualism inherent in electoral politics. We can look at the electoral returns of 1914 as only 21%, nowhere near the majority that was needed for the Socialists to control the state government so that it could even begin to implement its proposed goals. The Party elected very few officials beyond the county level. Thus, in essence the Party never had any control over the forces which made the lives of its constitutents so economically untenable. At no time were they in a position to ease the problems of their supporters.

By 1915-16 the more "radical" direct action wing of the Party, whose base of support was among southeastern sharecroppers, channeled its energies into organizations like the Working Class Union and the Renters Union. These groups became more involved in Luddite barn burnings and assassination; they were responsible for the Green Corn

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[73]Green, pp. 105-108; Meredith, "The Socialist Party in Oklahoma." Conflicts developed between the indigenous leadership whose base of support was the sharecroppers of eastern Oklahoma, and the more conservative exogenous leadership of the "professionals," who presumably became the spokesmen for the small farmers in the western portion of the state.

Rebellion in 1917, a small scale armed uprising which was a protest against conscription in the First World War.[74]

Perhaps the significance of the Socialist Party in Oklahoma must be sought in its unique existence rather than in its success or failure. We must see the agrarian socialism which manifested itself here not only as a response to the economic difficulties of farmers on the "last frontier." The distinctively socialist orientation of the movement was in evidence even before 1901 and the founding, on a national level, of the Socialist Party of America. Oklahoma farmers and tenants did not turn to the panacaeas of agrarian reformism. Nor can we see the Party's exceptional growth as a response merely to the efforts of outside agitators. As social scientists we must look to the atypical and anomalous conditions which existed as a result of the unique history of the state. That Socialists sought to transform this discontent into a modern radical political social movement is only a necessary not a sufficient condition for the growth and development of Oklahoma Socialism. For only in Oklahoma can the historian find peasant socialism on such a large scale in America.

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[74]Charles C. Bush, "The Green Corn Rebellion," unpublished Masters essay, 1932, library of the University of Oklahoma.

Chapter VII

CONCLUSIONS

In the preceding pages I have tried to provide an explanation for the unusual growth and development of the Socialist movement in Oklahoma in the period before World War I. In doing so I have the utilized the theoretical models of Eric Wolf, E. J. Hobsbawn, and Barrington Moore, Jr. These scholars have attempted to generate, through their comparative historical studies, an understanding of the conditions which lead to peasant radicalism and rebellion. They have argued that when peasants, whose traditional forms of social relations are based on custom and ascribed status, are introduced to modern, market oriented economic relationships, the consequences for them are frequently a decline not only in their economic status or their standard of living, but in the destruction of a whole network of habitual social relations. This may include the rupture of their political ties to the gentry, as well as their exclusion from the network of social reciprocity which has tied them to the community.

While Hobsbawm and Wolf have discussed the potential impact of modernization on peasant life, only Moore has clearly shown that this process almost inevitably portends victimization for traditional peasantries. Yet, Moore has also shown us that such victimization may take several forms. He specifies the conditions under which the transformation of peasant life will tend to lead to left-wing peasant

revolution. Certainly all overt manifestations of left-wing political protest among such victimized peasantries do not eventuate in successful revolutions. Hobsbawm has shown that peasant discontent may take pre-political forms and express itself as Luddism, social banditry, or millenarianism. He argues that among peasantries with traditions of religious millenarianism (traditions which he believes are inherently revolutionary), urban intellectuals, (i.e. socialists, anarchists, communists) are most likely to transform these indigenous cultural elements into a modern, political social movement, which has as its ultimate goal the transformation of capitalistic social relationships.

In this thesis I have argued that Oklahoma Socialism could be understood as a case of peasant radicalism. I have tried to demonstrate first that Oklahoma farmers and tenants in the period under study, had their historical roots in the traditions of southern yeomanry, which were in many ways similar to peasant society. Secondly, I have tried to show that the anomalous historical and economic development of the state of Oklahoma created a system of social relations which was similar to that experienced by peasants who are undergoing the process of modernization. Finally, I have tried to argue that the specific conditions,that Moore argues have led to left-wing peasant revolutions in Third World countries, were duplicated in the microcosm of Oklahoma. These conditions certainly did not lead to revolution in Oklahoma, but instead to a left-wing agrarian radicalism which expressed itself in electoral support for and membership in the Socialist Party.

I have posited, along with Barrington Moore, that westward migration in America can be seen as this country's own unique historical form of agricultural modernization. I have compared this process in the South with that of the Western prairie in order to discern the structural differences which resulted from the two different forms of development. I have argued that Oklahoma, as a result of its having been relegated to the Indians, had two separate forms of modernization. Eastern Oklahoma (Indian Territory) generated a social structure similar to the South while western Oklahoma (Oklahoma Territory) more closely resembled the western prairie. Yet, in comparing each region of Oklahoma to its sectional counterpart, what became apparent was the similarity of both regions in Oklahoma to each other and their uniqueness vis a vis other states. What became clear was that it was a combination of anomalous historical circumstances which led to the development of similar social processes in <u>both</u> regions of the state, i.e. the rapid economic immizeration of the agricultural producers.

Through the use of multiple regression analysis I was able to isolate the parameters of agricultural structure which were most likely to lead to the creation of agrarian radicalism, a radicalism expressed by Socialist voting. We saw that sharecroppers in the eastern part of the state and poor, mortgaged farm owners in the west were most likely to vote for the Socialist Party. Despite the differences in social status and economic well-being between these two constitutencies, we saw that both groups of agricultural producers were victimized by the labor repressive agricultural systems which were generated in each region

In Oklahoma, in both the eastern and western parts of the state, a functional equivalent of the gentry in traditional peasant society was created. Local elites, rather than exogenous, large scale monopolists and Wall Street financiers, were the agents who extracted the surplus of sharecroppers and farmers. These local bankers, merchants, and landlords, through their control of the local and statewide Democratic Party, found a political means to ensure their economic hegemony over market relationship in the countryside. The power of these elites could not be legitimated, however, by any traditional ideology which justified the inherent superiority of politically dominant groups. Their failure to perform any necessary social functions made them appear as "parasites" to the impoverished farmers and sharecroppers. Furthermore, it was these very same parasites who controlled the major social and cultural institutions of the local communities. In an ideological context which justified the success of the self-made man, the failure and poverty of many farmers and tenants led to their being socially ostracized and excluded from any of the institutions which provided opportunities for human fellowship.

Finally, as we have seen, in Oklahoma outside intellectuals, Socialists, succeeded in transforming the discontent of many of Oklahoma's impoverished agricultural producers into support for the Socialist Party. They did this by developing propaganda techniques and institutional forms which were consistent with the grass roots cultural repertoire of the agrarian population, especially those elements rooted inthe lower class Protestant Fundamentalism of many of the Oklahoma

farmers and tenants.

As we have seen, at the peak of its strength, in 1914, the Socialist Pary garnered only about 20% of the popular vote. Four years later, with the close of World War I, the Party was all but defunct in Oklahoma. Yet the most essential aspect of this study has not been to highlight a relatively obscure phenomenon in the American past. As a social scientist I have been primarily concerned with the relevance of Oklahoma Socialism for making generalizations about the conditions which lead to a certain type of protest among agricultural producers. Thus, here the existence of a comparatively high degree of Socialist strength suggests an atypical social structure, the study of which has been fruitful for clarifying not only Oklahoma's unusual development, but the more predominant patterns of agricultural development found in some of the states of the American West. As Barrington Moore has shown, the process of the modernization of agriculture in America ultimately led to the bourgeois democratic route of development in the country as a whole. Agrarian protest generally expressed itself in Populism, and reforism, not agrarian socialism. Yet, Oklahoma produced, if only briefly, an agrarian protest movement which was distinctively Socialist as well as distinctively American.

The conceptualization of Oklahoma sharecroppers and farmers similar to a peasantry has enabled me to argue that Oklahoma Socialism represented a form of peasant radicalism. By approaching the subject in this way not only have I been able to shed light on an obscure historical phenomenon, but I have attempted to clarify some of the reasons which may predispose certain agrarian populations to forsake their commitment to

traditional social perspectives and ideologies, and to work towards a goals which sought to extensively transform the social order.

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