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THE 1895 ELECTION
A WATERSHED IN KENTUCKY POLITICS

BY JOHN EDWARD WILTZ
Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana

On November 5, 1895 — election day — Kentucky politics entered a new era; the conservative so-called Bourbon Democratic dynasty which had reigned virtually unchallenged in the Commonwealth since the end of the Civil War fell before the Republicans. From this debacle the old dynasty never recovered. This is not to say that conservative Democrats were forever silenced by the defeat of November 5; but from that day forward a new and more progressive spirit inspired the majority party in Kentucky. For Kentucky this meant a pronounced weakening of the long-time alliance between corporate interests and the Frankfort government, an alliance which for thirty years had kept Kentucky free of liberal programs and had made her a haven for predatory interests and for incompetent and corrupt politicians. Weakening of the alliance eventually meant tax reform, greater state control over corporations, labor and prison reform, school and highway improvements.

The year 1895 was politically important in other respects. It marked the beginning of the cycle which has periodically seen the Republican Party of Kentucky capitalize on Democratic disunity and win control of the state government. From 1895 onward the two-party system had meaning in the Commonwealth. Further, the year 1895 set the stage in Kentucky for the Presidential election campaign of 1896. Out of the rubble of the 1895 defeat the free silver Democrats arose and secured control of Kentucky's delegation to the 1896 Democratic National Convention. That delegation helped free silver and William Jennings Bryan storm the Chicago convention. Through the summer and fall of 1896 the dissension of 1895 continued to plague Kentucky Democrats. And Democratic disunity, coupled with a well-organized, well-financed Republican campaign, enabled the Republicans to repeat

their triumph of 1895 and deliver Kentucky to William McKinley by the narrowest of margins. Finally, the collapse of the conservative Democratic organization in 1895 opened the way for the controversial William Goebel, called many years later "the first New Dealer,"[1] to become the dominant figure in Kentucky's Democratic Party.

I

Eighteen-ninety-five was a year of depression and violence in Kentucky. Like the rest of the country, Kentucky was still suffering from the Panic of 1893. Violence was common in the state. Between July 1 and August 17, 1895, a period of forty-eight days, forty-eight murders were reported in the Commonwealth.[2] Editorialized the *Louisville Critic*:

> Poor old Kentucky! What a riot of bloodshed is staining her fair name! The dispatches are winged messengers that carry the story of our shame into every intelligent home this wide world over . . . No section of the Commonwealth is free from these tragedies.[3]

The American Protective Association (a latter-day Know Nothing organization) was spreading its doctrines of nativism and anti-Catholicism with much success in Kentucky, although only two and one-half per cent of the state's population was foreign born and five per cent was Roman Catholic.[4] At Lexington an APA speaker asserted that for a fee of one hundred dollars to his bishop a priest could keep a concubine. The speaker continued:

> Oh, my God, what a shame, that in the closing days of the nineteenth century such a state of affairs should be tolerated in our fair city and country—that a priest of the Roman Church should be authorized and permitted by said church, upon the payment of $100, to debauch the nuns and live in luxury and licentiousness with them![5]

Adding to Kentucky's difficulties was one of the most severe droughts in the state's history, which struck in the summer and fall of 1895.[6]

But the most publicized question of the day was the demand for the free and unlimited coinage of silver bullion at the ratio of sixteen to one with gold. Thousands of Kentuckians, especially those living in the state's western regions, believed that free silver would solve most of their problems. Just as many, perhaps more, citizens of the Commonwealth opposed this Populist panacea, although many of them sympathized with other aspects of Populism.

Especially was silver an issue within the dominant Democratic Party. Since 1892 Kentucky Democrats had differed on interpretation of the currency plank of the national platform. These differences reached a climax in 1895 and Kentucky Democrats divided on the issue. Con-

trolling elements of the party generally favored gold. True, a vociferous minority within the Democratic hierarchy stood for free silver — Senator Joseph C. S. Blackburn, former state Attorney General P. Wat Hardin, Ollie M. James, Urey Woodson of the *Owensboro Messenger,* and at least outwardly, Governor John Young Brown. Supporting the single gold standard were Senator William Lindsay, John G. Carlisle (Secretary of the Treasury in the Grover Cleveland Administration), Cassius M. Clay, Jr., former Governor Simon Bolivar Buckner, James B. McCreary, Richard Knott of the *Louisville Evening Post,* W. N. and W. B. Haldeman and Henry Watterson of the *Courier-Journal,* and the nominal leader of the old Democratic organization, Auditor L. C. "Luke" Norman.

Not only were the Democrats divided over currency; they also disagreed on the issues of corporation control and prison reform. From its beginning in 1891 Governor Brown's administration had wrangled over the latter questions. Brown, who took the side of the reformers, was soon leading the minority group of his own administration. Accordingly, Brown achieved little, except through use of his veto power. Brown incurred for himself and his followers, for the time at least, the enmity of the two most powerful special interests in the state, the L&N Railroad and the long-time lessee of the state penitentiary, the Mason & Foard Company.

Suspicions and charges that corruption flourished in high places further weakened the Democrats. These were accentuated by the memory of Treasurer James W. Tate's 1888 defalcation with a reputed $250,000 of the state's funds. Tate had been an honored member of the Democratic organization. Kentuckians recalled with irony that they had referred to him affectionately as "Honest Dick."

The People's Party was a natural source of discomfort and concern for Kentucky Democratic leaders. The Populists had never made an impressive showing at the polls in Kentucky, but every politician recognized Populism as a large force in the Commonwealth. In western Kentucky many Democrats were also members of the People's Party. And most western Kentucky Democrats, if not Populists, openly sympathized with Populism. Only loyalty to tradition and local organizations prevented the People's Party from registering a large vote at the polls.

Kentuckians might concern themselves with violence, depression, the APA, silver, and Populism; but they devoted much more attention in 1895 to the fall election. Most of their political thoughts centered around the question of Governor Brown's successor.

When 1895 dawned it appeared reasonably certain that at the gubernatorial inauguration of the following December one of three men

would take the oath of the state's highest office: P. Wat Hardin of Harrodsburg, Democrat; Cassius M. Clay, Jr., of Paris, Democrat; or William O'Connell Bradley of Lancaster, Republican.

Bradley, known as Colonel Bradley although his military career had comprised only a few months of enlisted service with the U. S. Army during the Civil War, had advanced rapidly in the Republican Party, thanks to his eloquence and staunch party loyalty. In 1887 he ran a strong race for governor against one of the most popular members of the Democratic organization, "The Grey Eagle of Glen Lily," Simon B. Buckner. In 1888 he polled 257 votes for Vice President at the Republican National Convention. He did not seek the Republican gubernatorial nomination in 1891, but by January 1, 1895 he was a declared candidate who had virtually no opposition.[7] Kentucky Republicans already were scenting victory. But they realized that victory would not come easily, so they were standing united behind their strongest personality.

Since no opposition developed to Bradley prior to the state convention in June, no discussion of his pre-convention activities is necessary.

Kentucky Democrats faced a different situation. Hardin and Clay, both of whom had opposed Brown in 1891, began to make plans for 1895 as soon as the 1891 campaign ended. Running with the support of Norman's conservative organization, Hardin was clearly the front-runner by January 1895. True, his stand on currency was giving many of the so-called Bourbons uneasy moments. They generally favored the gold standard, and Hardin was expending much energy upon an appeal for the free and unlimited coinage of silver. In truth his speeches overflowed with Populism, but the conservatives believed that Hardin, despite his utterances, would not disturb the privileged position of corporate interests within the state. This was their primary concern.

Hardin had sufficient eloquences and personal magnetism to appeal to Kentucky voters of that day. But perhaps unjustly, he suffered from past association with "Honest Dick" Tate. Hardin was attorney general (for which service he was still known as "General" Hardin) at the time of Tate's defalcation. Tate and Hardin had been friends, which inspired many Kentuckians to suspect Hardin's integrity.

As the pre-convention campaign progressed many conservative Democrats grew more uneasy over Hardin's persistence in speaking out for silver. They knew that the emotionally charged currency question could divide the Democratic Party and bring it to disaster. They wished that Hardin would follow Clay's example and forget the currency question. Clay contended that the governor of Kentucky was in no way officially concerned with the national monetary system.

Hardin refused to ignore the question. Had he done otherwise it probably would have made little difference. In 1896 the legislature would elect a new U. S. Senator and in 1895 all of the senatorial candidates were campaigning. It was proper for these men to discuss currency, and this made it difficult to keep the issue out of the governor's campaign, especially since Hardin was a friend of Kentucky's most outspoken supporter of silver, Senator Blackburn, who was campaigning for re-election.

Hardin stumped the state from the mountains to the Mississippi campaigning for silver and other planks of the Populist platform, but he was silent on issues facing the state government. He seldom attacked Clay although he defended himself against Clay's thrusts. What Hardin failed to say on the platform, however, some of his supporters whispered about — that Clay was an aristocrat who would not let a poor man in his home, that the Clay who was running for governor was the Clay of abolitionist infamy, that Clay had cut down a woods on his land to keep a poor man from getting the timber.[8] There was no evidence for any of these charges.

Cassius Clay had earned a well-deserved reputation as an advocate of greater control over corporate interests. He also sought an end to the alliance between the Frankfort government and those interests. During his tenure in the state legislature and during his term as presiding officer over the 1890 constitutional convention he had sought control of corporations in Kentucky. As a result he had secured the enmity of the conservative organization of "Luke" Norman, a serious handicap for any candidate. Still, Clay figured that it was not an impossible one. By focusing attention on Hardin's association with Tate and pressing for corporation control he believed that he could win enough popular support to overwhelm the Norman organization at the state convention. Further, he believed that Hardin's free silver views would alienate many Hardin supporters.

Clay had other handicaps. He was the nephew of the famous Kentucky abolitionist of the same name, which made him all the more abominable in the view of the conservatives, many of whom were ex-Confederates. Then Clay was receiving unsolicited support from Governor Brown, who had become an object of the Norman organization's wrath. Brown was aiming for the U. S. Senate and saw his only hope of success in a Clay victory. Should Hardin and the Norman organization emerge triumphant in the 1895 election the chances were nil that the legislature would send Brown to the Senate. The governor was a heavy burden for Clay. Fortunately for Clay, Brown eliminated himself as a senatorial candidate in the wake of the scandal created

when on April 30 his son, Archibald Dixon Brown, was murdered by the husband of his mistress.[9] Brown wrote to Clay that

> I shall not be a candidate for the Senate . . . The calamities—in the lap of my children, which have recently befallen me, have utterly unfitted me for the contest. My grief is so severe that, like a black vampire of the night, it seems to have sucked dry the very arteries & veins of my hope and ambition.[10]

Clay's views on the currency issue proved a further handicap. Although his advocacy of strict regulation of corporations placed him in the progressive wing of the Democratic Party, Clay supported Grover Cleveland and the national administration on currency matters. In truth Clay refused to make currency an issue of his campaign. But supporters of free silver, who warmly endorsed Clay's position on the corporations, were unwilling to exclude currency from the gubernatorial debate. When they learned that Clay unalterably opposed free silver they ignored his stand on other issues and supported Hardin. Thus Clay lost the support of many liberal Democrats. Clay warned them of the dangers of corporate dominance of the state. He reminded them of Hardin's association with Tate. He charged that Hardin was "in cahoot" with the L&N Railroad and the Mason & Foard Company.[11] But liberal supporters of silver would have no traffic with a goldbug.

A final Clay handicap was his weakness as a practical politician and his lack of personal appeal. Hardin was a colorful and eloquent stump speaker, and with Norman directing his campaign for the nomination he had one of Kentucky's abler politicians working in his behalf. Clay was a poor speaker, lacked magnetism, and according to a friend, was "the poorest politician that ever lived."[12]

During the pre-convention period the names of possible dark horse candidates appeared intermittently. Most such conjecture focused upon the popular Simon B. Buckner. However, no movement was organized for Buckner or any other possible compromise candidate. Hardin and Clay commanded the stage up to the time of the convention.

Most Democratic newspapers in the state remained neutral in the Hardin-Clay campaign. The influential *Courier-Journal* favored Clay, but refused to attack Hardin. Like many other Democratic newspapers, the *Courier-Journal* disliked Clay's position on corporation regulation and Hardin's position on currency. It favored Clay's view on currency and believed that Hardin was "safe" with respect to corporate interests. Probably the *Courier-Journal* and other Democratic newspapers preferred Buckner for the gubernatorial nomination, but Buckner was never in the running.

As the Hardin-Clay campaign entered its final month, Hardin was clearly the front runner. Free silver seemed to be losing ground, however, and this seemed to be a bad omen for Hardin, who had linked himself closely with the white metal. Clay supporters began to entertain new hope. Then on June 3 at Frankfort, Hardin with dramatic suddenness announced that he would follow or lead the Democratic Party in the forthcoming campaign against the Republicans, even if the Democratic state convention declared itself in favor of the single gold standard.[13]

Clay supporters were stunned. Their strategy had rested on the assumption that the convention would adopt a platform favoring gold. They concluded that the convention, to be consistent, would refuse to nominate any man (meaning Hardin) who had pitched his campaign on free silver.

Not only were Clay supporters stunned; so too were the more fervent advocates of silver. They had hoped that Hardin would storm the convention for free silver. Now Hardin had upset their strategy by announcing his willingness to sacrifice his silver views in return for the gubernatorial nomination.

Supporters of the single gold standard rejoiced at the Harrodsburg candidate's revised stand. They concluded that his action enhanced the chances of the Louisville convention adopting a gold platform. Further, they believed that his new position presented hope for achieving some sort of unity among Democrats. If Hardin received the nomination and the convention adopted a gold platform, according to their calculations, the Democrats could win the November election with goldbugs voting Democratic because of the platform and silverites voting Democratic because of Wat Hardin.

When the Democratic convention convened in Louisville on June 25 the forces of Hardin and the gold standard (the conservative organization, in short) were in command. Daniel O'Sullivan wrote in the *Louisville Critic* (intellectually, one of Kentucky's most respectable newspapers) that "The Auditor's office was in full force at the convention. Nobody was left at home but the janitor, and he had instructions to take a special train to Louisville in case his influence was needed. Auditor Norman is the most powerful politician in the State, shrewd and deliberate, a very general in handling his forces."[14] Both the committee on resolutions and the committee on credentials were dominated by men favoring Hardin and gold.[15] Accordingly Hardin received the nomination on the first ballot. The platform opposed the protective tariff, lauded President Cleveland and Secretary of the Treasury Carlisle, praised Democratic stewardship of Kentucky (it omitted the name of Governor Brown, however), and

reaffirmed the national Democratic platform of 1892.[16] The convention refrained from making an unequivocal declaration on currency, although the platform of 1892 had a currency plank. Most Democrats construed that plank to favor gold. Ollie M. James and others, however, contended that it favored silver.[17] Still, the endorsement of Cleveland and Carlisle proved that the convention favored gold, even though it had written this sentiment into the platform in a surprisingly inoffensive manner.

After nominating Hardin the delegates observed Clay walking across the rear of the stage, and with a round of cheers they forced him to come forward. The hall became so quiet that the ticking of the telegraph instrument in an adjoining room was audible. Barely able to suppress his emotions, Clay told the convention that

> We cannot afford to have Republican rule in Kentucky. The administration can be no better than the party. Look at the two parties in Kentucky. Nearly one-half of the Republican vote in this State is the Negro vote. The white votes, I will allow, are equal of their Democratic brethren in Kentucky. As a matter of course, the Republican party cannot give Kentucky a better government than the Democrats. Every Democrat who means to do his duty, to prevent Republican rule, to prevent Negro domination, should rally to the support of the Democratic ticket, headed by Gen. P. Wat Hardin.[18]

Clay supporters nonetheless were disgruntled. They contended that the L&N Railroad and the Mason & Foard Company had engineered Hardin's nomination. Sam C. Molloy of Kuttawa wrote to Clay:

> You made a manly fight against the Mason-Foard Co. and the L. & N. R. R. . . . You simply had the determined effort of the "rings" of the state with the two corporations to fight, and I am free to admit that such a fight at any time must mean defeat. Though in making this admission it makes me feel less proud that I am a Kentuckian.[19]

Supporters of Clay failed to provide evidence for their views.

Referring to the convention in general, the *Critic* contended that the Democrats should build a wigwam in which to settle their future quarrels. This, the *Critic* believed, would prevent distinguished Democrats from running the risk of being prostrated by the heat or asphyxiated by tobacco smoke. It continued:

> No more noisy, turbulent, or boisterous a body ever gathered on the face of the earth than the Democratic convention. The hoodlums that could not get in on the ground floor climbed into the galleries and from the opening to the closing hour there was a shameful disregard of all the amenities of life. It was an exhibition of black-guardism, pure and simple, that for the honor of the State should never be repeated. It was either

> bad blood or bad liquor, that got into the minds of these delegates, and we will never know which it was until the votes are counted in November.[20]

The Republicans had met at Louisville three weeks before the Democrats. As expected, they nominated Bradley and adopted an anti-silver platform. Harmony prevailed. The delegates sensed the possibility of a November victory and were unwilling to gamble with the party's chances by instigating an internal squabble. Bradley made a long acceptance speech, which he concluded by lamenting:

> Oh, Kentucky! Dear old Kentucky! How you have fallen from your former high estate. Where are the glories that clustered about you when the names of Crittenden and Clay blazed upon your fair escutcheon? We love your mountains, your forests, your plains, your rivers, your waving bluegrass. We love you for you are our mother. We have drawn sustenance from your breast, we have knelt in love and adoration at your feet. We rally around your prostrate form to-day. We would lift you from the dust, we would entwine beautiful garlands about your brow, and place you on the exalted throne you occupied in the days of old.[21]

The 1895 Republican state convention, after some controversy, selected a new emblem to be printed on the ballot. This was the Log Cabin, used by the Whigs in the campaign of 1840. The *Mt. Sterling Advocate,* a Democratic organ, wrote that

> Never was a more appropriate device adopted by a party as its emblem than was pre-empted by the Republicans of Kentucky at their late convention in Louisville. Their voters come largely from the negro cabins and the leaders are giving them the recognition they deserve. But the Democratic rooster will crow out his note of victory from the top of the "nigger cabin" in November just as sure as the day of election comes.[22]

Republicans viewed their emblem differently. A verse which found its way into the Republican press under the title of *The Old Log Cabin* reflected their attitude:

The log cabin is our emblem,
  The poor man's humble home,
And you love that old log cabin,
  No matter where you roam.

It was in the old log cabins
  That our mothers wove and spun,
When we gathered 'round the log fires
  After a hard day's work was done.

Then stand up for the cabin boys,
  The home we love so well,
And you are sure to rid Kentucky
  Of that moss-back Bourbon smell.

CHORUS

So rally 'round the cabin boys,
And vote for it to win,
So we may sweep the old State gang,
And cleanse Frankfort from her sin.[23]

The People's Party met the first week in July and adopted a typical Populist platform. For governor the Populists nominated Thomas S. Pettit, a well-to-do Owensboro banker.[24] The Prohibitionist Party, which was not a large factor in the election, nominated T. B. Demaree.

II

Formal campaigning by the two major candidates would not begin until mid-August. In the meantime neither side was idle. Especially active were the Republicans. Their campaign was under direction of one of the more astute politicians in Kentucky's history, W. Godfrey Hunter of Burkesville. Hunter effected an organization, distributed literature, and solicited funds from outside Kentucky.[25] In return he expected Bradley's support in his quest for the U. S. Senate in 1896. Hunter helped to elect Bradley in 1895, but shortly after the election Bradley deserted Hunter, leaving the latter unrewarded.

The main problem facing the Democrats at this time was disunity. Would friends of Clay and disgruntled advocates of silver support Hardin and the Democratic ticket? Despite Clay's plea for Hardin's election, some of his supporters had displayed rebellious tendencies. Colonel J. C. Bryant, for example, predicted that Clay supporters would vote for Bradley, that they would refuse to "remain under the rule of the Mason-Foard-Norman ring." He added that if Hardin won the election his first act of governor would be to pardon "Dick" Tate.[26]

Of greater importance were the friends of silver. Would they support the platform and the candidate? Ollie M. James, whose star was rising among progressive Democrats, provided the answer. Supporters of silver, he said, would stand by Hardin and the Louisville platform. In his view there was no problem. According to him, the Louisville platform was not a gold platform at all. It stood for free silver! Explained James: "The convention indorsed the currency plank of the national platform of 1892. That plank is for free silver and this talk about it being for the single gold standard is all bosh."[27] Other spokesmen for silver expressed similar views.

This interpretation of the Democratic platform displeased advocates of gold, but for the sake of unity they were willing to permit silverites to interpret the platform as they pleased — that is, until Senator

Joseph C. S. Blackburn began to proclaim the silver interpretation throughout the state. The gold standard press responded by assailing Blackburn and the silver interpretation. Blackburn knew how to strike back. Referring to the *Courier-Journal,* the *Louisville Times,* and the *Louisville Evening Post,* he said:

> I hope that I will never see the Ten Commandments in print in any of these 3 papers. If they are, it will destroy my faith in religion. . . . If I was running hell and had the Courier-Journal, Times, and Post managers, editors, and reporters sent to me, I would turn the other inmates out, lest they be contaminated.[28]

What about Hardin? He was the man about whom friends of gold were most concerned. Would he remain faithful to his commitments and support the gold interpretation of the platform? Through July and until his opening campaign speech on August 19, Wat Hardin was silent.

Soon after the convention the campaign chairmen of the two major parties arranged for a series of twelve joint debates between Hardin and Bradley. They scheduled the first debate for the Louisville Auditorium on the evening of August 19. As that day approached Democrats of all types grew uneasy. What, if anything, would Hardin say about currency?

In the Louisville debate Hardin was the first speaker. He addressed the gathering for an hour and fifteen minutes, and denounced the Republicans for military reconstruction of the South, praised Democratic rule in Kentucky, and asserted that it was cheaper to live in Kentucky than in any Republican-controlled state. Few of his listeners took note of these remarks. They seemed to remember only that Hardin said: "I am a Democrat, and with both feet I stand squarely on the Democratic platform of 1892, that platform which says there shall be no discrimination between gold and silver and that the coinage of each shall be free."[29] These words reopened pre-convention wounds and made certain that the Democrats would be divided throughout the campaign.

In his equally long speech Bradley concentrated upon alleged Democratic misrule in Kentucky. He cited "Dick" Tate as proof of his charges. Bradley called for higher tariff duties, assailed free silver, and blamed the national depression upon the Cleveland Administration.[30] His remarks were free of surprises; he said what everyone expected.

The big story of the debate, of course, was Hardin's renewed stand for free silver. Silverites were naturally jubilant, goldbugs disappointed. The *Louisville Evening Post,* edited by Richard Knott, led

the attack of the Democratic gold standard press upon Hardin and continued to assail him during the remainder of the campaign. The *Evening Post* editorialized that

> now Hardin . . . lowers the flag his party placed in his hands. In the face of the enemy he denies the faith. . . . In view of this situation The Evening Post holds that its highest duty is to aid in the defeat of Hardin and Blackburn. The authority of the party must be maintained. Its platform pledges must be respected.[31]

The *Courier-Journal* said that it would stand behind Hardin,[32] but during the next two and one-half months it virtually ignored the campaign editorially. It did not attack Hardin, but it did not support him.

In the second debate at Mayfield, in the heart of the silver country, Hardin spoke even more vigorously for silver.[33] He was in serious trouble, however, since it appeared that many gold Democrats were withdrawing their support. To cope with this situation Hardin employed a new tactic which turned Bradley from the offensive to the defensive and nearly saved the Democrats from defeat. In the third debate at Hopkinsville, Hardin charged that a Republican victory would bring Negro domination to Kentucky.[34] This statement was ridiculous, but effective. Many faltering Democrats were willing to forget Hardin's currency views in the face of Negro supremacy in the Commonwealth.

Bradley was caught in a dilemma. Whatever stand he took with respect to the racial question would cost him votes. If he denied that Negroes had influence in the Republican Party he stood to lose Negro votes. If he acknowledged Negro influence he was sure to lose white votes. And he needed support from both races if he hoped to win. Bradley's only chance was to ignore Hardin's racial barbs and attack Hardin's silver convictions and past associations with Tate with increased vigor. He adopted this strategy in the next two debates at Bowling Green and Leitchfield.[35]

Hardin continued his assault upon Negro Republicans, and when the candidates reached Eminence on August 30 for the sixth debate Bradley appeared to be in trouble. What happened at Eminence can be described briefly. Bradley was the opening speaker and when he began his address a disturbance broke out in the audience. Members of the audience began to heckle Bradley, who was hoarse from previous debates. The Republican candidate sat down. He made four more attempts to speak, each time with the same result. Bradley departed from the platform and the following day the Republicans terminated the joint debates.[36] Reports as to the nature and extent of the disturbance varied, depending upon the political persuasion

of the reporting newspaper. But it seems certain that Bradley was looking for an excuse to get off the joint platform and the Eminence disturbance provided it. Campaigning alone he could and did ignore Hardin's racist appeal.

While the Eminence controversy was at its peak the Republican press, led by the *Louisville Commercial,* intensified its campaign against alleged Democratic corruption. The charges were many. For example, the *Commercial* contended that convicts of the Frankfort penitentiary were living outside the prisons walls and serving as gardeners, wagon-builders, and houseboys for Democratic officials. Auditor Norman's hostler and barber, Robert Farrell, who was serving a life sentence, allegedly enjoyed enough freedom to permit him to go into the horse trading business in Frankfort. On September 4 the *Commercial* printed the names of 250 convicts who, the newspaper asserted, had escaped from the state prison while working for the Mason & Foard Company.[37]

Although Norman and other Democrats sought to silence the *Commercial,* they only goaded the newspaper. The *Commercial* was documenting many of its charges with the minutes of the Sinking Fund Commission meetings. In desperation Norman on September 24 invoked his authority as auditor and locked up the minutes with the declaration that *Commercial* reporters no longer would have free access to them.[38] The law required that they be exhibited freely only to the governor and legislative committees. Yet Norman's action only dramatized and lent credence to the *Commercial's* accusations.

Charges and countercharges of corruption and falsification continued until the day of the election. One cannot ascertain precisely their effect. But judging from the way in which they were repeated throughout the state, even by Democrats, one can be sure that Republican charges of Democratic malfeasance were a crucial factor in the outcome of the election.

The Democrats made virtually no effort to link Bradley with corruption. The *Louisville Times* attempted to show that Bradley had acted unethically in his law practice.[39] These charges fell with such a crash that Bradley's character was free from abuse for the remainder of the campaign.

Attacks upon the honesty and integrity of ranking Democrats, disunity over currency, the Populist revolt, and the depression were not the only obstacles in the way of a Democratic victory in 1895. There was also the American Protective Association. One is hard pressed to determine the influence of the APA in Kentucky, but the order reputedly had 14,000 members in Louisville alone.[40] It was strong in Paducah, Lexington, Ashland, Covington, and Frankfort.

In Kentucky, as in most parts of the country, the APA supported the Republican Party.

The APA was especially active in Louisville, where it succeeded in securing control of the local Republican organization. The *Courier-Journal* and the *Louisville Anzeiger* spearheaded an attack upon the Louisville APA, but with little success. During the campaign in Louisville the order distributed a circular addressed to "American Citizens." Above the emblem of the Democratic Party was the warning that "before casting your ballot and putting your schools and institutions in the hands of the Roman Catholic Church, we point out how you should vote and save your daughters from the inner walls of the convent." Following was a list of the Democratic candidates, beside each of which was printed in red ink "American citizen," "Roman Catholic," "Roman Catholic sympathizer," or "strong Roman Catholic sympathizer."[41]

On November 3 the *Courier-Journal,* under a headline of "SHALL LOUISVILLE BE BROUGHT TO THIS?," reprinted the front page of the *Omaha Bee* of October 31, 1895, which carried facsimiles of documents indicating the relationship between the APA and the Omaha government. The documents disclosed that all applications for political preferment in Omaha were made to the executive committee of the APA, which, if it approved, sent them to the mayor or city council for rubber stamp approval.

Yet not even the *Courier-Journal* intimated that Bradley was associated with the APA. Not until April 1896, during an internal struggle of the APA, was it disclosed that on the afternoon of September 28, 1895, Bradley had secretly accepted initiation into the order at the Victoria Hotel in Louisville. Hitherto the APA had wavered in its support of Bradley because some members of his family were reputed to be Catholics. Rumors had circulated that the APA might support all of the Republican ticket except Bradley. The Populist, Thomas Pettit, presumably would receive the APA's endorsement for governor. Bradley apparently believed that APA support was important enough for him to become a member. Evidence indicates that Bradley never was a strong believer in APA ideals. Indeed, disgruntled APA members in 1896 charged that Bradley had never attended an APA meeting and had failed to fraternize with brother members.[42]

The pattern of the campaign remained unchanged during its final two months. Hardin continued to campaign for free silver and against "Negro domination." Bradley spoke just as strongly for gold and high tariffs and against Democratic malfeasance. A Republican verse which circulated at this time portrayed Democratic leaders singing in "Grand Chorus" as follows:

When Bradley denounces a Treasury thief,
Cry, "Nigger Equality!" and bring them to grief;
When he argues on money, honest ballots and schools,
Keep shouting "The Niggers!"—the people are fools;
When he talks about crime and a murder each day,
Yell loudly, "Shall d---d filthy niggers have sway?"
Should he press us too hotly, we patriots vow,
To break up discussion by making a row;
Four years we rebelled when Abe Lincoln came in,
And if Bradley defeats us we'll do it again,
For we'd lynch the blessed Savior of Glory himself
Should his advent deprive us of office and pelf.[43]

Hardin gained some goldbug support late in the campaign when Simon B. Buckner belatedly rendered his support. Buckner resented Republican charges of corruption, which reflected upon his gubernatorial administration of 1887-1891. Another addition, of dubious value, was W. C. P. Breckinridge. Breckinridge was a gifted orator, but his name had been linked with scandal. The effect of the support of Buckner and Breckinridge was more than offset when on October 22 Cassius Clay formally repudiated Hardin. He explained his action by citing Hardin's views on currency and his association with Democratic scandal.[44]

Newspaper accounts of the final days of the campaign indicate that Bradley was generating much more enthusiasm among the electorate than was Hardin. His charm and eloquence stirred nearly every crowd to feverish displays of enthusiasm. Hardin attracted crowds, but seemed confused and hurt by the reflections upon his character and integrity. One observer wrote to Senator Lindsay that Hardin's speeches sounded as though his powder were damp.[45]

Bradley experienced a bit of difficulty with Negro Republicans. They were disappointed by the way in which he straddled the question of Negro equality. The *Louisville New South,* largest Negro newspaper in the South, denounced Bradley and said that no Negro should vote for him. It urged that Kentucky's 65,000 Negro voters cast their ballots for Thomas Pettit, the Populist.[46] In the last analysis, however, it seems that most Negro voters marked their ballots for the Republican candidate. At least Bradley and the Republicans were not insulting and ridiculing them as were the Democrats. And they could hope that under the Republicans they would receive limited political recognition. A Democratic victory held out no such hope.

III

On November 5 the Kentucky electorate went to the polls and registered a resounding defeat for the Democrats. No Democratic

candidate for major office emerged victorious. In round numbers Bradley polled 172,000 votes, Hardin 163,000, Pettit 17,000, and Demaree 4,000. Bradley won by a plurality of 8,912.[47] The tally for other candidates did not vary much from that of the heads of the respective tickets. In the legislature each major party had sixty-eight members. Two Populists were elected to the legislature, one of whom declared his intention of supporting a Republican for the U. S. Senate in 1896. The other Populist said that he would vote for a Democrat.[48]

Kentuckians went to the polls in 1895 as never before. More than eighty-five per cent of the potential vote was cast, which indicates much enthusiasm and probably not a little cheating.

Throughout the state the trend was the same; the Democrats showed slight gains or slight losses in comparison with other years, while the Republicans enjoyed large increases. Hardin gained only four counties that had voted Republican in 1891, whereas Bradley carried seventeen counties that had favored the Democrats in 1891. In Democratic strongholds Hardin's victory margin was less than for previous Democratic candidates. For example, in the past Trimble County had consistently returned a Democratic vote of ninety per cent, but it gave only seventy-eight per cent of its votes to Hardin. Republican counties experienced a reverse trend. Jackson County, for instance, gave the Republicans seventy-one per cent of its vote in 1891; in 1895 it returned eighty-eight per cent of its votes for Bradley.

The most striking shift in voting occurred in Jefferson County, where the APA was strongest. In Jefferson County the Democrats gained 2,500 votes over their 1891 total, from 13,000 to 15,500. The Republicans gained 12,200 — from 7,300 in 1891 to 19,500 in 1895! The Republican upsurge in Jefferson County is difficult to explain. Democratic boss John Whallen later boasted that he was responsible.[49] If so, he probably remained inactive and permitted the Republicans to organize the independents and floaters. Whallen, much of whose strength rested upon the support of Catholic and foreign born voters, would not have accepted the risks of consorting with the APA-Republicans of Louisville.

Fraudulent voting doubtless was a factor in the election. Eighteen counties counted more votes than they had potential voters. Nine of these went Republican, nine Democratic. Apparently both sides resorted to fraud, but neither censured the other for so doing.

Why did the Republicans win in 1895? There were several reasons. First, the Populist campaign lured many Democrats away from Hardin. Had the Populists not been in the field in 1895 the Democrats probably would have won. Yet the Democrats had successfully overcome a greater defection to the Populists in 1891. The Populist vote dropped

from 25,000 in 1891 to 17,000 in 1895. Thus one must look beyond the Populist campaign for an explanation of the Democratic defeat.

A second factor was the double split within the Democratic Party. The divisions which had brought the Brown Administration to disaster and the divisions over currency still existed on November 5. History has shown that Democratic disunity is a requisite for Republican success in Kentucky. The year 1895 was no exception. Despite many advantages, the Republicans could not have beaten a united Democratic Party in 1895.

Then there was the APA. In the absence of reliable figures on the strength of the order in Kentucky one cannot say that Bradley would have lost without APA support. Yet if the order numbered 14,000 in Louisville and if it had a proportionate number of members elsewhere, it is conceivable that Bradley could not have won without the APA. A shift of fewer than 5,000 votes would have given the election to Hardin.

Godfrey Hunter's splendid organization was a large factor in Bradley's victory. It is difficult to imagine how Bradley could have won without Hunter. How much of Hunter's success depended upon imported funds is an interesting question.

Of no small importance was the popular appeal of William O. Bradley, known affectionately among Republicans as "Billy O. B." Bradley was eloquent, entertaining, and witty. His character apparently was beyond reproach, and he campaigned in an aggressive yet dignified manner. He had the ability (as do all successful Kentucky Republicans) to convince voters that he was a Kentuckian first and a Republican second. An ordinary Kentucky Republican could not have won in 1895, despite the many factors working in the party's favor.

Further, 1895 was the first year in which the secret ballot was used on a state-wide basis in Kentucky. Conservative Democrats had opposed the secret ballot clause in the 1890 constitution. They feared a break-up of their organization if the coercive power provided by the open ballot were lost. But conservatives could not overcome the sentiment in favor of the reform.[50] Probably many voters who because of social or economic pressure would have supported the Democratic Party turned to the Republicans in this election.

Republican charges of corruption, ineffective refutations by Democrats, and memory of the Tate defalcation were not without effect. Many Kentuckians had not failed to notice that Governor Brown had opposed alleged Democratic malpractice during his administration. Independent voters and many Democrats were convinced that corruption flourished at Frankfort.

Of all the factors which joined in 1895 to sweep Bradley into the

governor's mansion, the crowning one was the depression which had engulfed Kentucky and the nation. Such things as Populism, the silver crusade, and the APA were largely results of depression and hard times. It was natural that people would react against the party in power. Not only in Kentucky but throughout the country people generally voted against the majority party, the Democratic.

The victorious Bradley immediately faced the problem of studying applications for political appointments. As governor he could make approximately twenty-two official appointments, but on November 26 he reportedly had received 5,000 applications.[51] During this period Mrs. Eva. P. Brown of Newport presented the governor-elect with a song which she had written in his honor. "Marching through Georgia" provided the melody.

> Praise God, from whom all blessings flow, Republicans so true,
> We have been victorious; we've shown what we can do;
> Fling to the air our colors three, the red, the white, the blue,
> While we are marching to Frankfort.
>
> Sing a song of jubilee and wave our banners bright,
> Sing a song of victory, we've won a glorious fight;
> Sing a song of welcome to our "Noble Blue Grass Knight,"
> While we are marching to Frankfort.
>
> Shout "Hurrah for Bradley!" boys, our leader brave and strong;
> Let the echoes catch our voices and our shouts prolong;
> Greet our well-beloved chief with music and with song,
> While we are marching to Frankfort.
>
> CHORUS
>
> Hurrah! Hurrah! The night of gloom is past;
> Hurrah! Hurrah! Kentucky's safe at last;
> Strike the cymbals, beat the drums, and blow the trumpet's blast,
> While we are marching to Frankfort.

Bradley thanked Mrs. Brown for the "compliment." He said that it was like an oasis on the barren desert of 5,000 applications for office.[52]

On December 10 at 1:30 p.m., "in the presence of the largest crowd ever assembled in Frankfort to witness an inauguration," William O. Bradley became Kentucky's first Republican governor. The *Courier-Journal* reported that

> Cheers for the retiring Democrat mingled with cheers for the incoming Republican, the inspiring strings of "Dixie" blended with the patriotic strains of the "Star Spangled Banner," while above all rose the dear old air of "My Old Kentucky Home," floating out about and above the stars and stripes that flaunted triumphantly from every housetop.

In a brief inaugural address (the Rev. W. C. Taylor's invocation was almost as long as Bradley's speech) the new governor pledged himself to honest and efficient government, the support of sound money and tariff protection, improved education, a just system of taxation, a "purification" of the ballot, and strict enforcement of the constitution.[58]

The old conservative Democratic organization of Kentucky lay beaten. The Republican Party stood triumphant. But already clouds were gathering which would bring trouble to the Bradley administration. Out of the wreckage of the old Democracy was emerging a new and more progressive Democratic Party, the party of Ollie M. James and Alben W. Barkley. There was emerging, too, a controversial figure, William Goebel, who would become for four turbulent years the fighting leader of progressive Democrats. But that is another story.

NOTES

[1] Urey Woodson, *The First New Dealer* (Louisville: The Standard Press, 1939).
[2] *Louisville Courier-Journal,* August 18, 1895.
[3] Quoted in the *Lexington Kentucky Leader,* August 19, 1895.
[4] *Abstract of the Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), p. 42 and *Report on Statistics of Churches in the United States at the Eleventh Census, 1890* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1896), p. 239.
[5] *Kentucky Leader,* November 12, 1895.
[6] *Courier-Journal,* October 19, 1895 and November 9, 1895; *Kentucky Leader,* October 28, 1895; *Louisville Herald-Post,* October 24, 1895, October 29, 1895, and November 3, 1895.
[7] *Kentucky Leader,* June 6, 1895.
[8] J. M. Benton to Cassius M. Clay, Jr., June 28, 1895, in the Cassius M. Clay, Jr., papers, Margaret I. King Library, University of Kentucky.
[9] *Courier-Journal,* May 1, 1895.
[10] John Young Brown to Cassius M. Clay, Jr., July 1, 1895, in Cassius M. Clay, Jr., papers.
[11] *Kentucky Leader,* April 24, 1895.
[12] L. H. Blantoon to William Lindsay, June 19, 1895, in the William Lindsay papers, Margaret I. King Library, University of Kentucky; *Louisville Critic,* March 13, 1895; *Hopkinsville Kentuckian,* May 28, 1895.
[13] *Frankfort Daily Capital,* June 4, 1895.
[14] *Critic,* June 30, 1895.
[15] *Courier-Journal,* June 26, 1895; *Kentucky Leader,* June 26, 1895; *Daily Capital,* June 25, 1895.
[16] *Courier-Journal,* June 27, 1895.
[17] *Ibid.,* July 6, 1895.
[18] *Kentucky Leader,* June 27, 1895.
[19] Sam C. Molloy to Cassius M. Clay, Jr., June 28, 1895, in Cassius M. Clay, Jr., papers.

[20] *Critic,* June 30, 1895.
[21] *Pikeville News,* June 19, 1895.
[22] *Mt. Sterling Advocate,* June 25, 1895.
[23] *Kentucky Leader,* September 21, 1895.
[24] *Courier-Journal,* July 5 and 6, 1895; *Covington Kentucky Post,* July 8, 1895; *Daily Capital,* July 9, 1895.
[25] *Courier-Journal,* August 22, 1895 and November 11, 1895; *Kentucky Leader,* November 7, 1895.
[26] *Louisville Commercial,* June 28, 1895.
[27] *Courier-Journal,* July 6, 1895.
[28] *Commercial,* July 12, 1895.
[29] *Courier-Journal,* August 20, 1895.
[30] *Ibid.*
[31] *Louisville Evening Post,* August 21, 1895.
[32] *Courier-Journal,* August 20, 1895.
[33] *Ibid.,* August 22, 1895.
[34] *Ibid.,* August 24, 1895.
[35] *Ibid.,* August 27, 1895 and August 29, 1895.
[36] *Kentucky Post,* August 31, 1895; *Commercial,* August 31, 1895 and September 1, 1895; *Daily Capital,* August 31, 1895; *Courier-Journal,* September 1, 1895; *Kentucky Leader,* September 5, 1895.
[37] *Commercial,* August 4, 1895, August 23, 1895, September 4, 1895, and September 23, 1895.
[38] *Ibid.,* September 24, 1895.
[39] *Louisville Times,* October 24, 1895.
[40] *Kentucky Post,* October 31, 1895.
[41] *Courier-Journal,* October 31, 1895.
[42] *Courier-Journal,* April 5 and 6, 1896; *Kentucky Leader,* April 11, 1896.
[43] Undated, unidentified clipping in William O. Bradley scrapbooks, Margaret I. King Library, University of Kentucky.
[44] *Commercial,* October 23, 1895.
[45] Jerry O'Meary to William Lindsay, September 23, 1895, in Lindsay papers.
[46] *Hopkinsville Kentuckian,* September 3, 1895 and October 18, 1895; *Courier-Journal,* October 21, 1895.
[47] All statistics on election returns in this paper are from an unpublished study of Kentucky gubernatorial election returns from 1867 to 1899 by the Department of Political Science, University of Kentucky. The 1891 returns are from the *Tribune Almanac, 1892,* pp. 268-269, and the *Official Manual of Kentucky, 1896,* pp. 122-125. The 1895 potential vote was computed from "Legal Voters" in the *Biennial Report of the Auditor of Public Accounts, 1894-1895,* pp. 354-357. The returns for 1895 were taken from the *Official Manual of Kentucky, 1896,* pp. 122-125.
[48] *Courier-Journal,* November 9, 1895.
[49] *Glasgow Times,* July 1, 1899.
[50] *Kentucky Leader,* May 26, 1895.
[51] *Louisville Herald-Post,* November 26, 1895.
[52] Undated, unidentified clipping in Bradley scrapbooks.
[53] *Courier-Journal,* December 11, 1895.