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Contemporary Populism In Montana Alive and Well?

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CONTEMPORARY POPULISM IN MONTANA
ALIVE AND WELL?

Submitted in partial fulfillment for graduation
with honors from the
Department of Political Science

Carroll College

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Helena, Montana
March 30, 1987
This thesis for honors recognition has been approved by the Department of Political Science.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. THE PHILOSOPHY OF POPULISM</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. THEMES AND ISSUES IN U. S. POPULISM</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. MAJOR ISSUES IN MONTANA POPULISM</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. THE 1972 MONTANA CONSTITUTION AS A POPULIST DOCUMENT</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. POPULISM IN PRACTICE IN MONTANA: INITIATIVE AND REFERENDUM</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. POPULISM IN MONTANA: ALIVE TODAY</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX: Research Survey</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOURCES CONSULTED</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

The research undertaken in this thesis investigates the possibility of the existence of Populism in Montana. Arriving at this topic was no profound discovery. After reading about Populism in Montana history books and listening to lectures and discussions in history and political science classes, I became enthralled with the movement known as Populism. I had always found Populism interesting and desired to learn more about the movement. Because my family is in the ranching business, I was very intrigued by the accounts I read about concerning attempts made by Populist agriculturalists to unite farmers and ranchers in an organization that could combat economic hardships they were facing. My own rural background has taught me that unification of agriculturalists is a difficult task. Nevertheless, the Populists attempted to do just that. In fact, they moved beyond just that mammoth chore to uniting farmers, ranchers, miners, and small businessmen!

To me, there seemed to be many unanswered questions about Montana's associations with Populism. After hearing several remarks about the Populist nature of Montana's constitution, I decided to pursue this topic in a more intensive study, hoping to satisfy some of my curiosities.
I hypothesized that Populism still existed in Montana, though in much different forms than those of the early Populist movement that touched Montana in the 1890's. Populism in Montana no longer is a party as it was in the 1890's, but instead is a set of ideas. Collecting these ideas together and trying to form patterns among them was the intent of this thesis. Before I began this study, foresight told me that I would not be able to study Populism as a third-party in Montana, instead that I must work with the ideas and goals that the party formulated, hoping to find these ideas, aspirations, and goals alive in Montana government today.

The focus of this research was a contemporary study, an examination of Montana state government since 1972, since this is when major governmental changes occurred due to the revision of Montana's constitution in 1972. I speculated that Montana's government had renewed Populist tendencies because of the revision done at the 1972 Constitutional Convention.

Populism is belief in the common man and is a faith in the common man's abilities to participate meaningfully in society and to assume a decision-making role. It emphasizes a society in which the people are given more discretion in making decisions and prescriptions for society than elected representatives or appointed officials. I centered my study around this definition.
I read and studied books written by Populist historians and critics and analyzed Populist party platforms in order to gain the necessary background to investigate their applications in Montana state government today. Many works were consulted, among the most helpful included John D. Hicks' *The Populist Revolt* and Thomas Clinch's *Urban Populism and Free Silver in Montana*. Based on my reading, I established criteria for determining whether ideas and characteristics of Montana state government since 1972 would be Populist or not. These criteria included:

1) The elevation of the rights of the common man
2) Governmental accountability
3) Increased citizen participation in the political process
4) The betterment of relationships between business and the consumer
5) More recognition of individual rights for a broader spectrum of society, namely the young and women
6) Regulation of utilities, communication lines, and transportation lines
7) Greater efficiency and more sound management in government
8) A more equal distribution of power and wealth in United States society
With these criteria in mind, I then set out to discover if these ideas were evidenced in Montana government today, particularly if they were expressed through the 1972 Montana constitution. I also wanted to find out if those citizens most actively involved in Montana state government, such as interest groups and state legislators, perceived their state government as Populist. In order to obtain these expressions and perceptions, I constructed a survey which was given to several state legislators. In addition, I interviewed Constitutional Convention delegates, interest group spokespersons, historians, state legislators, and Constitutional Convention commissioners.

The first two chapters of this thesis were dedicated to summarizing the philosophy and history of Populism in the United States. These summaries were included in order to outline Populist ideas that this study will be focusing on. Not only do these chapters provide background for the reader, but also emphasize the inability of the Populist to form an effective third party. Because Populism was never a potent third party movement, we are left with only the attitudes and ideas advocated by those involved in the strive for a third party. These two chapters established the ideals I searched for in my contemporary study of Populism in Montana.

The third chapter was a summary of the Populist movement in Montana, focusing on the Montana experience
with Populism, again revealing the lack of strong party organization. It, too, highlighted the ideals advocated by Populists. The third chapter was the application of those ideals to the 1972 constitution. Throughout this chapter, I attempted to demonstrate the use of Populist ideals in the Montana constitution, also investigating the nature of the convention that produced the 1972 constitution. Finally, one chapter was a specific examination of one Populist ideal, initiative and referendum. This examination studied the application of one Populist ideal as it is used in Montana state government. By examining initiative and referendum, I hoped to better understand how Populist ideals are implemented and whether or not Populist ideals have truly been utilized to achieve reform in Montana. The intent of the Populists was to achieve governmental reform, and I wondered whether this reform had actually been achieved. I hoped that by studying one Populist ideal, initiative and referendum, I could see whether or not one ideal functions as a reform measure.

The synthesis of all of these chapters provided me with the necessary insight to answer the question that aroused my curiosity—Is Populism in Montana alive and well?
CHAPTER I

THE PHILOSOPHY OF POPULISM

The philosophy of Populism resembles ideas similar to those of the Enlightenment era. It was during that era that basic principles emerged: the deification of nature, which holds that the natural is superior to the artificial; an optimistic view of human nature as all men are seen as equipped with equal capabilities to make decisions; and the contract theory, which stresses that a social agreement exists between man and society.

Firstly, let's consider the deification of nature by Populists. During the Enlightenment era, many people saw the world from a spiritual perspective, believing that its natural beauty should be worshipped. Anything that threatened this beauty was corrupt. They further believed that man and nature should be one, acting in harmony. Populists, too, held close ties to nature.

Secondly, an optimistic view of human nature characterized the Enlightenment era. Philosophers of the Enlightenment scrutinized the decision-making process and the power structure involved in decision making. Humankind was seen as having nearly limitless bounds. According to these philosophers, the ability of humankind to reach common decisions was afforded to a broad base of
citizens. The patterns later undertaken by Populists centered around the obligation of citizens to society and, in return, the rights of all citizens to assume roles in decision making. These ideas resembled those held by Thomas Paine, Thomas Jefferson, and Andrew Jackson. Thomas Paine in *Common Sense* preached rights of the common man and the ability of all men to form simple arguments on the basis of individual rationality. Later Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Jackson promoted individual rationality with the theme of "equal rights to all and special privileges to none."¹ Andrew Jackson remarked,

> It is to be regretted that the rich and powerful too often bend the acts of government to their selfish purposes. Inequality is inevitable but when the laws undertake to add to these natural and just advantages artificial distinctions to grant titles, gratitudes, and exclusive privileges, to make the rich richer and the potent more powerful, the humbler members of society, the farmers, mechanics, and laborers—who have neither the time nor the means of securing like favors to themselves—have a right to complain of the injustice of their government.

Jackson's ideals stressed equality. According to Jackson, equality between classes was not being achieved since not all citizens were actively engaged in decision-making. However, Populist thought moved beyond a laissez-faire approach to equality towards government intervention to achieve this equality.³ Subsequent leaders such as George Norris, Robert LaFollette, Estes Kefauver, Martin Luther King, Robert Kennedy, and Ralph
Nader endorsed this servant role of government in the distribution of power. The principles of Populism further provided for the strive for equity, honesty, and fairness for all men. It was centered around determining equality of power. These goals, it was felt by some, were traditional democratic ideals. According to David W. Minar, author of Ideas and Politics,

The symbol of democracy has probably never been taken so liberally nor pushed to its logical extreme so firmly in American politics as it was in the ideology of Populism.

Also, the decision making process in democracy involved experimentation for the Populists. For it was through this experimentation that existing society was challenged, and Populist structures were submitted to scrutiny by the people. Without this experimentation, American values would become homogeneous, and society would identify with a norm that may be dissatisfying to its people. This experimentation was a key aspect of American Populism because it explained the actions taken by dissatisfied citizens in an effort to place hope in man's abilities to affect change that the Populists desired. Experimentation moved beyond economic considerations in affecting change in power structures. According to Jack Newfield and Jeff Greenfield, authors of A Populist Manifesto,

The core of the manifesto lies in this perception—There are people, classes, and institutions that today possess an illegitimate amount of wealth and power;
they use the power for their own benefit and for the common loss. This power, which is at root economic, corrupts the political process and insulates itself from effective challenge.

Thirdly, social contract theory is a foundation of Populism. It was largely advocated by Rousseau. Rousseau argued that

...no matter by what way we return to our general principle, the conclusion must always be the same, to wit, that the social compact establishes between all the citizens of a state a degree of equality such that all undertake to observe the same obligations and claim the same rights.'

The social contract theory that Rousseau speaks of is utilized by Populist thinkers. The theory rests on the assumption that it is in an individual's self interest to undertake activities beneficial to the whole of society. Based on this assumption, Populists believed that citizens could maximize their own benefits by being active in society and undertaking endeavors to profit society.

Because the philosophical foundations of Populism are often difficult to assess and contain so many avenues of insight, there exists a wide range of views on the validity of Populist thought. Some observers feel that Populism has no philosophical base. Others feel that the Populist movement in America had many faults, such as subscribing to provincialism, conspiracy and paranoia. Others label the movement a class revolt. Still others see the movement as instigating necessary reform at the
onset of the 20th century, an era of unscrupulous, greedy monopolies and dirty politics according to the Populists.

Though many ideas surface beyond those of the Enlightenment era, it is important to maintain a perspective that for many citizens meeting the needs and desires of a group of people composed of farmers, laborers, small businessmen, women, and a few political leaders was of primary importance. These people were concerned with coping with conditions at hand in the 1880's and 1890's. Their vision of equality, fairness, and economic relief was fundamental to all of their concerns.
ENDNOTES


4Ibid., pp. 345-346.

5Pollack, "Fear of Man," p. 60.

6Newfield and Greenfield, A Populist Manifesto, p. 5.


9Newfield and Greenfield, A Populist Manifesto, p. 17.
CHAPTER II

THEMES AND ISSUES IN POPULISM
OF THE UNITED STATES

The history of Populism in the United States is diverse. Few historians understand its complexities. However, by tracing its development, we may better see how the movement promotes ideals that may be pieced together to apply to Montana government in contemporary times to determine if Populism still exists. Furthermore, we will see the ideas that brought the party together and the ideas that lived on after the short life of the party. Throughout this discussion we will see a great diversity of people, places, and events all united with common ideas that the Populists advocated. These ideas are important, for they will later be applied to the research I did in analyzing existing state government in Montana.

The Populist movement achieved status as a party in February 1892 at a gathering in St. Louis to draw a party platform. At this convention the activities of the Populists were deemed significant enough to seek party status. According to Felice A. Bonadio, who has analyzed political parties, the Populist movement had reasonably satisfied the four functions of a party: settlement of domestic quarrels, the bringing of harmony into a group of
people, the adjustment of policies and programs to social and economic changes in society, and the election of candidates to public office.¹

This convention was important because it represented the culmination of a host of previous group activities that had not been formally organized into party status. Earlier unification of those involved in the creation of a new party had been achieved through smaller groups of citizens with similar ideals resembling those of the Populist party. The Populist party was largely comprised of farmers and laborers. First, let's consider the agricultural aspect of Populism. The Grange, which reached its height of membership at 1,500,000 by Spring 1874, was originally an alliance for catching horse thieves, recovering estrays, and buying supplies.² Largely a social organization, the Grange gave to farmers opportunities to express doubts, fears, and apprehensions, as well as opportunities to share farming technique suggestions and business concerns. Because the Grange involved local meetings and gatherings, it gave to the farmers and land owners the experience of group participation and grass-roots organization which was later supported by Populists. The Grange helped stimulate the ideals of belief in participation by all classes of people.

Such organizations as the Agricultural Wheel, formed in Arkansas in 1882, and the Farmers Alliance, commonly
called the Northwestern Alliance, also provided a network of support for the agricultural sector of America that later became involved in Populist activities. The Northwestern or Northern Alliance and Southern Alliance (formed a few years prior to the Northern Alliance) attempted consolidation. However, unable to agree on the issues of secret meetings and the exclusion of blacks, the attempt was a failure. Powerful and effective leaders within each alliance helped both groups become prominent within their own regions.

In Minnesota, Ignatius Donnelly, who had been a lawyer, farmer, editor, lecturer, author, and politician, distinguished himself as an orator for Alliance activities and later Populist ideas. Involved in Greenbackism, the Union Labor Movement, Republicanism, the Grange, and the Alliance, Donnelly was experienced in third-party formation and thus was instrumental at the Cincinnati Convention of the Populist thinkers in 1891 in ardently supporting the formation of a third-party.

Although a gifted orator, Donnelly did not receive the overwhelming support of the delegates at the 1892 platform drafting convention. Many delegates felt he was an extremist. This extremism was evident when Donnelly remarked in Montana,

Where the ballot box stands open, and the majority governs, if the bulk of the people of the United States with the ballot box in their hands are robbed of their liberties and reduced to serfdom, no
one is to blame but themselves.... When the majority acting through the ballot box cannot preserve their liberties, then it will be time to talk about armed revolution.

Leader of the Alliance effort in Georgia, Thomas E. Watson similarly played a dominant role in Alliance organization and the dissemination of Populist ideas. A successful criminal lawyer, Watson chose to undertake the causes of eliminating national banks and revising the currency system, both goals later supported by the Populist party. Highly charismatic, Watson was nominated for the governorship under the Populist ticket, but chose instead to remain in State congress where he felt he could be more effective. Watson extended his influence further when he was elected to the United States Senate in 1918 under the Democratic ticket. In the Senate he was influential in the initiation of many reforms earlier proposed by Populists.6

Faced with the economic crisis of the late 1880's, agricultural organizations were forced to direct their activities in the political arena, instead of focusing on social and fraternal activities. These agriculturalists realized that dreams they had of the West as an agricultural land of milk and honey were displaced. Unlike advertising of unlimited resources of the West bolstered by railroad companies and investment firms, the reality was that the frontier of the American West was facing consequences of resource exploitation and a
population boom. The rangeland was being overgrazed, mortgages were in excess, and credit was overextended.

An acute mania for railroads in towns and cities further caused displaced hopes among farmers. Citizens of small Western towns beamed at the visions of grandeur, wealth, and prestige that these railroads could stimulate should railroad line be constructed through their towns. These visions were clouded during the process of deflation in 1887. The lack of rainfall during 1887 and subsequent dry years, coupled with the severe winter of 1886-87 and continued railroad monopolization, left many farmers desperate.

In the rural portions of the central regions where farmers stayed and struggled with failing crops and low prices, with unyielding debts and relentless taxes, where they fought a battle, now successful, now unavailing, to retain the land they had bought and to redeem the high hopes with which they had come to the West- in this region unrest and discontent prevailed, and the grievances that later found statement in the Populist creed smouldered for a season, finally to break forth in a program of open revolt.

This open revolt surfaced in the personality of Jacob Coxey, a quarry operator in Missillon, Ohio, who had earlier supported the Greenbackers but had since joined the Populist party with hopes of passing two bills, the "Good Roads Bill" and the "Noninterest Bearing Bonds Bill." Both measures were designed to improve the nation economically while at the same time help to ease the problem of unemployment for discouraged citizens he knew.
Upon failure of passage of both bills, Coxey and his army of unemployed men departed Ohio on March 25, 1894, with ambitions of demonstrating at Washington D.C. to show their discouragement and to call for reform. Although the uprising was quickly suppressed, it did show the increasing organizational move being undertaken by agitated citizens in the Populist party.

Railroads agitated citizens. For many farmers, railroads were the enemy. Many agriculturalists expressed the view that railroads were in fact against the small shipper and in favor of the larger. A conviction was held that the railroads existed not to promote and modernize Western development, but rather to exploit its human and natural resources. Not only were railroad lobbyists powerful throughout state legislatures, but the power of money unduly influenced legislators. Public officials and railroad commissioners were often given railroad passes and invited to use them with little discretion. These anti-monopoly expressions run fluidly throughout Populist histories and platforms.

The farmers thus felt they had little control over their disparaging conditions due to outside forces such as Eastern markets, investors, and railroads. The growing appreciation of the dollar since the Civil War and the apparent inelasticity of the currency created further agitation. Those citizens disturbed by the present monetary system searched for relief and reform.
By the 1890's, farmer groups, though somewhat plagued by lack of compromise and organization, had formed in response to the economic crisis at hand. By 1886 farmer discontent was openly voiced through *The Progressive Farmer*, organized by Leonidas K. Polk of North Carolina. Polk had entered politics at the early age of 23 when he was elected to the North Carolina Congress. Polk, long interested in agriculture, helped establish a state department of agriculture. He later became secretary of the North Carolina Alliance. The organization of North Carolina farmers was a major contribution of Polk. In 1889 Polk was elevated to the presidency of the Southern Alliance. This position spurred his interest in the Populist party. Not only was Polk now advocating better farming techniques, but he was also promoting political reform. He later gained even more prominence as chairman of the St. Louis convention of the Populists in 1892.\(^{13}\)

Like Polk, other alliancemen promoted a fourfold role of alliance activity: social, educational, financial, and political.\(^{14}\) Activities were nonpartisan at first. The formation of a third party was not foreseen. However, when dismayed, displaced farmers found their attempts at affecting change ineffective through nonpartisanship, they turned to partisan politics. The farmers brought together their ideals at reform stimulated by hardship into a party situation that they themselves did not entirely support. However, it was their common belief in ideas such as
regulation of railroads, direct election of senators, and governmental accountability that bound them together.

Besides farmers, many laborers were involved in the Populist movement, especially those in states that mined silver. Populists hoped to convince the nation that currency should be backed by silver as well as gold. Because the Populist ideas stressed workers' rights and free silver, laborers became involved in the movement. The laborer-farmer coalition was not always a strong one as voiced by Samuel Gompers who remarked,

......as a matter of fact, however, to support the People's Party [Populists] under the belief that it is a labor party is to act under misapprehension. It is not and cannot, in the nature of its make-up be a labor party, or even one in which the wage workers find their haven. 13

Thus, tensions did exist between the labor and farm sectors. These tensions did not overwhelm all attempts at unification, though. The Knights of Labor agreed to the platform drawn by the Southern Alliance at St. Louis in 1889. In Montana a major thrust of the Populist movement was achieving goals set forth by laborers. Butte, Anaconda, and Great Falls were urban centers of active Populists in Montana. 16 Because farmers and laborers expressed similar ideas toward reform, they could become allies in the Populist party.

The efforts of both farmers and laborers were consolidated in 1890 at Topeka, Kansas. It was at this gathering that the People's Party was organized. 41
Alliancemen, 28 Knights of Labor, 10 members of the Farmers Mutual Benefit Association, 7 Patrons of Husbandry, and 4 single-taxers were present. The focus of the convention was the encouragement given to those supporting Populist ideals, downplaying efforts at securing executive department positions. Following the convention, success at influencing legislatures was achieved in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Missouri, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. Less significant achievements were made in the Northwest.

The formation of a party platform was not a step readily encouraged or supported by those who had attended the convention. Nearly all Alliancemen looked down upon the idea of a third party as they held ties to the traditional two-party system. There existed, however, a large enough group of citizens who felt that the existing political parties did not satisfy their needs. They also firmly believed in Populist ideas. These citizens helped coordinate a third party movement. A draft of a party platform was finalized at a convention in Ocala, Florida, in December 1890. At this drafting, delegates were invited from the Independent Party, the People's Party, the Union Labor Party, organizations of former union and confederate soldiers, the Farmers Alliance of the North and of the South, the Farmers' Mutual Benefit Association, Citizens Alliance, Knights of Labor, the Colored Farmers' Alliance,
and others. The convention further defined six principles fundamental to beliefs felt by those groups who gathered:

1) free silver
2) abolition of national banks and substitution therefore of direct issues of legal tender notes
3) government ownership of all railroads and telegraphs
4) prohibition of alien land ownership and of gambling in stocks, options, and futures
5) constitutional amendment requiring the election of president, vice-president, and senators by direct vote of the people
6) Australian ballot system

Issues varied from state to state. The "silver states", according to John D. Hicks, author of *The Populist Revolt*, were primarily interested in the issue of free silver. Those supporters at the 1890 convention believed in the quantity theory of money, insisting that currency be made elastic, possessing capabilities of expansion or contraction as needs demanded. The idea was also asserted that the issue of free silver might unite the West and South, both debtor regions.

In North Dakota interest lay in promotion of state owned terminal elevators. In Indiana and Nebraska, prohibition was a major Populist issue. In Colorado, silver and irrigation canals were prominent Populist
concerns. Tying campaign efforts together among all states was Mrs. Mary Lease, a Populist who had managed to combine motherhood and her career as a lawyer. Her strength and determination led the Populists to greater prominence. She is reported to have remarked,

"What you farmers need to do is raise less corn and more hell."25

Although many people welcomed her presence during the campaigns of the Populist party of 1890, 1892, 1894, and 1896, Mrs. Lease was unpopular in the South because of her feminist views. Mrs. Lease, unavailed, continued to journey throughout the Mid-West and West advocating Populist doctrines. Years later she looked fondly upon her achievements and Populist party achievements,

In these later years I have seen, with gratification, that my work in the good old Populist days was not in vain. The Progressive party has adopted our platform, clause by clause, plank by plank. Note the list of reforms which we advocated which are coming into reality. Direct election of senators is assured. Public utilities are gradually being removed from the hands of the few and placed under the control of the people who use them. Woman suffrage is now almost a national issue.....The seed we sowed out in Kansas did not fall on barren ground.20

On July 2, 1892, 1300-1400 delegates to a Populist platform convention met in Omaha, Nebraska, to formalize a party platform and to nominate a candidate for the presidency. The Omaha platform combined principles
initiated at earlier conventions held by Populist thinkers throughout the United States including the St. Louis convention of 1889, The Ocala convention in 1890, and the Cincinnati and Indianapolis conventions of 1891. General James B. Weaver of Iowa was selected as party candidate for the upcoming presidential race. At the close of the 1892 convention, the Populist leaders realized that a great task confronted them - persuading citizens to join in the Populist party. Not only must the Populist party be composed of farmers, laborers, and disgruntled settlers, but also of politically experienced leaders and lobbyists who must join in order for the Populists to be effective in politics. In retrospect, it has been difficult for historians to assess just who abandoned former party ties to join the newly created Populist party. However, certain characteristics have emerged:

1) Wheat farmers were more apt to remain in the Republican party than were corn-hog producers who switched party lines.

2) Populists appear to have mortgaged out of necessity. Unlike the Democrats or Republicans who used mortgages for business ventures, the Populists mortgaged necessary items such as homesteads.

3) Populists were more often than not older citizens. Younger men were reluctant to turn their backs on traditional party identification.

4) Populists were more adversely affected by economic
conditions of the 1880's and 1890's than Democrats or Republicans.27

Other citizens were convinced through party rhetoric. The Populists played heavily upon emotions, and Populist orators tended to excite audiences through emotion-laden speeches. One observer remarked,

The upheaval that took place.....can hardly be diagnosed as a political campaign. It was a religious revival, a crusade, a pentecost of politics in which a tongue of flame sat upon every man, and each spoke as the spirit gave him utterance. For Mary E. Lease, Jerry Simpson.....and a half hundred others who lectured up and down the land, were not the only people who could talk on the issues of the day. The farmers, the country merchants, the cattle herders, they of the long chin-whiskers, and they of the broad-brimmed hats and heavy boots, had also heard the word and could preach the gospel of Populism. The dragon's teeth were sprouting in every nook and corner of the State. Women with skins tanned to parchment by the hot winds, with bony hands of toil and clad in faded calico, could talk in meeting, and could talk right straight to the point.28

The success of the 1892 election was modest. Perhaps the greatest success was achieved in Kansas where the entire Populist ticket was elected; five out of seven seats in Congress were won. Gains were also made in North Dakota, Idaho, Nevada, Colorado, and Kansas. The campaigns of the Populists continued with the same fire that had guided the Populists earlier. The campaigns of 1894 resulted in only four senatorial and four representative positions taken by Populists, although there was a 42% increase in Populist votes cast.29
The Populists, especially those in the West, had continually looked toward the Democratic party for support. Many silverites in the West hoped to capture the Democratic party, while other Populist party members hoped for fusion by 1895. The southern Populists urged the maintenance of third-party status, but their pleas were not sufficient enough to overcome those of the fusionists. The Populists were increasingly bargaining with the Democratic party to thrust forth the issue of silver in hopes of achieving a victory based on issues, setting aside party lines. Also, the change in weather for the better subsided the earlier frustrations felt by farmers. Gold production was also on the upswing, thus making Populist monetary doctrines less convincing. These events tended to pacify Populist demands.

By the elections of 1896, Populist party fusion with the Democratic party was at the forefront of Populist concern. When the Populists convened in St. Louis to nominate a candidate for the Populist ticket, William Jennings Bryan was chosen. Bryan, a young Democrat, was a gifted orator who had openly offered his support for the silver issue. Populist leaders felt that he was more of a Populist than a Democrat as evidenced by his support of Populist ideals. In 1896 he was also nominated by the Democrats to be a presidential candidate. Thus, the road to fusion was soon to be travelled. Members "conceded freely that the Populist party as a great and independent
organization was a thing of the past. Although the party was dying, its ideas sustained life. It was these ideas that had initially tied the diversified aspects of Populism together. These ideas were the lifeblood of Populism and would survive.

The concerns of the Populist party later became revitalized and proposed by the Progressive party after the turn of the century. These proposals included the Australian ballot system of voting, improved registration laws, women suffrage, direct election of senators, presidential primaries, initiative and referendum, and recall of elected officials.

Another consequence of Populist third party action was an increasing tendency throughout the United States, particularly in the West to focus on candidates and issues instead of party, thus leading to the decline of parties in the American political process. Populists tended to appeal to principles, rather than party. This aspect of the Populist movement also caused problems within the Populist party itself as leaders experienced frustration in unifying the organizations who made up the Populist party initially.

The gains made by the Populists in increasing participation of the people in a national movement were significant. The grass-roots movement was in its hey-dey during the peak of the Populist party life.

The history of Populist movement in America
demonstrates the vitality and life that the Populist party once possessed, but could not sustain. The frustrations and obstacles the party had to confront illustrate the difficulty that third party movements have in gaining support and political power. The leaders, conventions, and citizens that made up the Populist party made a mark on American history. However, the real value of the party is assessing the reforms that the Populist party helped to instill and the coalition of citizens it helped to unite. Although the Populist party was never considered a strong third party movement, the ideas advocated by the party temporarily united members from a wide variety of backgrounds. These ideas did not die. Many were incorporated into the Democratic party platforms. Also, these ideas were particularly useful to the Progressives, who similarly sought reform of government and business after the turn of the century.


3 Ibid.


6 Ibid., p. 412.

7 Ibid., p. 35.


9 Ibid.

10 Hicks, *The Populist Revolt*, p. 70.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid., p. 86.
13 Ibid., pp. 116, 126, 226.


17 Hicks, *The Populist Revolt*, p. 156.

18 Ibid., p. 178.


21 Ibid., p. 316.

22 Ibid., p. 287.


24 Ibid.


26 Ibid., p. 420 quoting *Kansas City Star* 29 March 1931.


29 Hicks, The Populist Revolt, p. 336.

30 Ibid., p. 378.
CHAPTER III

MAJOR ISSUES IN MONTANA POPULISM

Tracing the history of Montana Populism presents many obstacles. Historians and political scientists do not understand all facets of the movement in Montana, nor do records present a consistent pattern of Populist activity. It has only been in recent years that historians have tried to piece together what little information is available on the Populists. This research has led to conflicting opinions about the nature of Populism in Montana. Some writers like John D. Hicks who has studied Populism of the Mid-West and South believes that Populism did not exist in Montana and other Western states in a traditional manner, rather Populism in Montana was based almost entirely on the issue of silver. Hicks calls states like Montana the "silver states" and makes a clear distinction between the silver states and the Populist states. Lawrence Goodwyn, too, supports this distinction and further classifies the Southern states as "Populist" and the Western states' involvement with Populism as a one issue phenomenon involving the question of silver. According to Goodwyn, author of The Democratic Promise: The Populist Movement in America, there exists a separation between true Populism and shadow movements, such as those happenings in
the Western states that may have had Populist tones, but were not really built upon Populist foundations. Both Goodwyn and Hicks have largely dismissed the similarity of Populism in the Western states to the Populist movement in the South and Mid-West. Thomas Clinch, author of *Urban Populism and Free Silver in Montana*, also supports the notion that Montana's Populist history was almost, if not entirely, based on the issue of silver. Clinch states,

> A notable curiosity in the genesis of Montana Populism was its foundation in a labor-dominated convention. Elsewhere the Populist party was usually a direct outgrowth of the Farmer's Alliance. Montana was an exception.¹

Was Montana an exception among Populist states? Some critics say no. Robert W. Larson who has studied Populism in the Western states seriously challenges the idea of Western states being single issue oriented. Larson says,

> But the main shortcoming of both Hicks and Goodwyn is their failure to take full measure of mountain Populism. This aspect of the movement still has not been adequately synthesized or correctly interpreted.²

Larson reinforced his hypothesis by referring to the long platform adopted by Montana Populists as evidence of its multi-issue oriented nature. Larson acknowledged that Populism in the Mountain West had "a remarkable urban coloring and labor orientation for a Western commonwealth."³ However he believed that this was only one aspect of a larger picture of Populism.

Richard Roeder, Montana historian, voiced the opinion
that a general anti-monopoly attitude united Populist efforts throughout the West, Mid-West, and South, thus believing that Montana's Populist tendencies stretched beyond silver.  

By tracing the history of Montana Populism, a greater understanding of Montana Populism may unfold, leading us to believe that Montana Populism extended beyond silver into the political and social arenas.

Some of the earliest traces of Populism are found through agricultural organizations whose concerns later resembled those of the Populists. The first Grange in Montana was organized near White Sulphur Springs in 1873 by R. N. Sutherlin, who also originated the Rocky Mountain Husbandman, an agriculturally based newspaper. The Montana Grange, like other Granges throughout the United States, was a fraternal society not founded on the basis of political concerns. The birth of other major agricultural organizations came about with the formation of the first state Alliance in 1892. The Alliance published its own newspaper, the Montana Alliance. Records illustrate that at first the activities undertaken by the Alliance in Montana were mainly local affairs and had little relevance to political reform. However, this characteristic changed as some Alliance members became more involved in political activities when economic conditions of the 1880's and 1890's necessitated action by farmers. Because limited information is available on the role of agriculture in
Montana Populism, it is difficult to assess its impact on third-party development. However, this research remains to be unfolded. Its discoveries could shed light on a somewhat vague story of Montana agricultural tendencies of Montana Populism.

The organization of labor, the other key aspect in Montana Populist history, emerged after the formation of the Grange. The Knights of Labor in Montana became an organized, unified force in Pioneer Assembly at Butte in 1882. This group advocated workers' rights, namely the eight-hour day. The Knights of Labor of Montana, like other state organizations of the Knights of Labor became a more powerful force when the Knights of Labor of United States won a major regional rail strike against the Union Pacific. The Knights of Labor continued to dominate Western laborite action until the Western Federation of Miners was formed in 1893 in Butte and took the lead in labor action throughout Montana, Idaho, Utah, Colorado, and South Dakota. It was also at this time that the Independent Labor party was formed in Montana, the forerunner of Montana Populism.

The Montana laborites looked toward the 1889 Constitutional Convention with high expectations. Labor hoped to secure reform through the creation of an eight-hour day, the prohibition of child labor, and the creation of a labor department within the state. Other early Populist oriented concerns voiced by citizens at the
convention pertained to regulation of railways. James E. Callaway of Madison County, who was chairman of the Apportionment Committee during the 1889 convention, introduced a resolution to prohibit issuance of free railway passes to state and local officials. This resolution demonstrated the marked resemblance of concerns of Montanans to Populist concerns throughout the United States at this time. W. Y. Pemberton, a delegate from Silver Bow County and chairman of the Judiciary Article Committee, supported Callaway's resolution declaring,

> Has it come to this, that the patriotism, the intelligence, the public morality, the stronghold and liberty of the people can be purchased, purchased in the market for a pass on a railroad?

Another chief concern to labor in the convention was Section 4 of the article on revenue and taxation. This section would place exemptions on buildings used for religious and charitable purposes, cemeteries not managed for profit, growing crops, livestock under six months old, and all mines and mining claims, both placer and in rock, containing gold, silver, copper, coal, or other valuable mineral deposits. Many men at the convention argued against mining exemption. However, their arguments could not suffice, and the mining exemption remained in the clause. Other men in favor of the mining exemption demanded that it be included because of the importance of "fostering care" to such a leading industry of the state.10 Thus, labor had scored a victory, though modest
in comparison with what it had expected to gain from the 1889 convention. Another victory was achieved at this time by Montana labor at the First National Silver Convention held in St. Louis, Missouri. Although most delegates at the convention were from the Mid-West and Southern states, Montana delegates were a potent force. At the convention, gains were made in the urging of free coinage, an issue important to Montana labor. 11

The results of the 1889 convention spelled out the frustration and anger felt by Montana leaders towards railroads, monopolies, and the economic conditions of the times. It was not long before this frustration would be unleashed and stimulate the rise of the Populist party in Montana. The party was organized in Anaconda in January 1892. The unification of the various groups who supported Populist ideology was achieved by 150 delegates including the Farmers' Alliance and some labor groups although "some of the labor leaders were not in sympathy with the movement." 12

The Populists held their first nominating convention in Butte on June 14, 1892. The meeting of 35 delegates was called to order by Caldwell Edwards, a Bozeman agriculturalist. Chief concerns at the convention involved setting up a state Populist newspaper (later named the Butte Bystander), the forming of a party platform, and the nominating of candidates. The platform drawn by the Montana Populist party at the convention included the
demand for free coinage, direct presidential, vice-presidential, and senatorial elections, socialization of railroad, telephone, and telegraph lines, the demand for an eight-hour work day, and federal establishment of reservoirs for irrigation. The platform adopted signified the multi-issue orientation of Montana Populism.

The next task, that of nominating candidates, challenged the Populists to set forth a ticket that would not only reflect Populist reforms, but strive for success at gaining state governmental positions as well. The Populist ticket included:

Caldwell Edwards, running for U. S. Representative
William Kennedy, Governor
Harvey H. Cullum, Lt. Governor
Joseph Allen, Secretary of State
Ella Knowles, Attorney general
William Lear, Treasurer
James McKay, Auditor
Compton Coates, Clerk of Supreme Court

Although many candidates on the ticket were not particularly experienced politicians, they were eager for reform and ready to instill change in an economically depressed Montana.

Following the convention, delegates faced the task of urging others to join the Populist party and to support Populist candidates in the upcoming election. According to Thomas Clinch, two of the candidates, Will Kennedy and
Ella Knowles, undertook the task with vigor, offering their experience to a newly formed party.

Will Kennedy, originally from Maryland, moved to Missoula, Montana, in 1881 and served on the territorial council. He was a single-tax promoter and tried to organize a single-tax party in Montana. Upon failure to achieve this, he directed his energy toward the Populist party. "What brought him to Populism and defined his use of Populism was his commitment to popular democracy and the fundamental reform of political institutions." He later moved to Boulder and became editor of the Boulder Age, at first a Republican newspaper. There he became influential through his newspaper, writing of reformist objectives. He rarely addressed economic issues, instead he focused on political reform, especially election reform. His pet issue became the Australian ballot system, which was eventually adopted. The passage of the bill to instigate the use of the Australian ballot in 1889 represented Montana's leadership in Populist reform as Montana became the first state to adopt such a ballot system. The ballot system was later adopted by other states. Other reforms Will Kennedy endorsed were tighter election laws and initiative and referendum. "Although he appeared to shift from one proposed measure to another, the common denominator of the causes he espoused was the democratization of American life."

Ella Knowles, having native roots in New Hampshire,
came to Montana as a school teacher. She later studied law, an interest she had begun to pursue in New Hampshire. However, she was not permitted to join the bar because of a statute which denied women such an opportunity. Seeking to change such a statute, Ella Knowles convinced councilman Walter M. Bickford to introduce a bill, Council Bill No. 4, at the 1889 legislative session to afford women the opportunity to join the bar. This legislation allowed her to take the bar exam. According to one observer, she had the opportunity to take the bar exam because "Montana as a young western state was progressive and in the front rank." The bill passed and Ella Knowles completed her studies, became a partner in the Kinsley and Knowles law firm, and assumed an active role in politics. In 1892 she was the Populist candidate for attorney general in Montana. Her candidacy "was an explicit reaffirmation of the Montana Populist endorsement of women's rights." After joining the Populist party, she championed its causes and was nicknamed "Portia of the People's Party" in 1896 she was a delegate to the Populist party county, state, and national conventions.

Besides the efforts of local supporters like Will Kennedy and Ella Knowles, Montana Populism received support from General James B. Weaver and Mrs. Mary E. Lease, Kansas Populists. The two Populist leaders visited Montana August 16 and 17, 1892, on a campaign tour. Montana Populists welcomed the event as they had been keeping
 abreast of Populist happenings throughout the West, Mid-West, and South. An article in the July 6, 1892, issue of the Anaconda Standard reported on the first convention of the Populists at Omaha, Nebraska, where Montana had placed 12 votes behind Senator Kyle of South Dakota as Populist candidate for the presidency.22 With the visits of Weaver and Knowles, the Montana Populists were promised an even greater opportunity of gaining support and of keeping in contact with similar Populists who envisioned the same hopes of political, economic, and social reform necessary for survival of the common man.

Weaver spoke of free silver and agrarian dissatisfaction in Helena on August 16, and the following day, Mrs. Lease joined Weaver in speaking at Butte. Following the Butte address, it was evident that citizens held mixed feelings toward the third party movement,

...at the same time the voters of that city [Butte] cannot go the Weaver movement because it stands for too many monstrosities in point of government policy.

Mrs. Lease attracted her share of attention yesterday. She may be helpful to Candidate Weaver, although we don't believe it. There may be communities where her harangue wins votes, but Butte is not one of those communities because it is too intelligent in respect to its third party element.

We judge from all that is going on that some of the Silver Bow Democrats are generously attentive to the local third party movement and something may come of that.23

The outcome of the election revealed that although the Populist campaign received some support it was not
sufficient enough to make large gains. Three Populists were elected to the House of Representatives and one became Speaker of the House. During the election, some people had branded the Populists as Socialists which had hurt their campaign to some extent.

William J. Pemberton, a Democrat who had exhibited Populist tendencies, was elected Chief Justice. Montanans cast 7,334 votes for General Weaver compared to 18,851 cast for Benjamin Harrison, Republican, and 17,581 for Grover Cleveland, Democrat. The Populist candidate for Governor, Will Kennedy, received 18.87% of the vote. The counties with the highest percentage of Populist votes cast were Silver Bow, Jefferson, Deer Lodge, and Lewis and Clark.24

The Panic of 1893 further intensified the Populist reform spirit. The gold reserve had fallen below the $100,000,000 mark. President Cleveland called together a special session of Congress to repeal the Sherman Silver Purchase Act which had provided for the monthly purchase of 4,500,000 ounces of silver to be paid for by legal tender treasury notes redeemable in gold or silver. The repealing of this act frustrated Montana silverites.

The repeal of the act angered Populist laborers. One such laborer, General William Hogan, under the direction of Jacob S. Coxey, was a supporter of the radical wing of Populism. He began to organize his army of agitated workers with the help of the Butte Industrial Legion. The workers supported free coinage, a graduated income tax,
postal savings banks, prohibition of alien land ownership, and the control of some railroads.  

Hogan, an unemployed teamster, organized efforts in Butte to pattern the demonstration on Capitol Hill that Coxey was organizing. Capturing a Northern Pacific engine and box-car, Hogan and his followers set for Washington D.C. to voice their concerns as unemployed miners. Their journey was halted at Fort Keough near Miles City, Montana, by federal troops who had been called to stop the radicals and return the Northern Pacific engine and box-car. Support to Hogan and his army was given by many Montanans, especially those who were Populists as reflected by the Butte Bystander. 

The belligerent actions toward Northern Pacific and officials by Hogan's Army were consequences of the despair they felt by the severe economic conditions of the times. The election of 1894 proved to be the climax of Populism in Montana. In that election, results showed that 31.99% of Montanans supported the Populist ticket, while 46.97% favored Republicans and 21.05% favored Democrats. It was evident that many Democrats were being persuaded to join the forces of the Populists, who continued to advocate reform in government and business. Gains were made by the Populists in the legislative positions as three Populists won in Deer Lodge County, two won in Flathead County, and six won in Lewis and Clark County.

By 1895 the Populist party in Montana was experiencing
difficulty in maintaining support within its own ranks. Certain labor members had decided to form their own labor organization, the Butte Industrial Conference. Nationally, a silver party had been created which further created dissension among Populists. Nonetheless, efforts at reform continued with many Populist leaders more sure than ever of achieving their goals. Newspapers condemned the prospect of Populist fusion with the Democratic party.

When, in 1896, reality of free silver became more evident through the Democratic party who adopted the issue under the leadership of William Jennings Bryan, Montana Populists gradually began to accept the notion of fusion. Populist Governor Burns had encouraged the Fifth Session of the Montana Legislature to adopt the establishment of a railroad commission, regulation of business, and the initiative and referendum. These proposals were also espoused by Democrats, hoping to gain the support of Populists. It was evident that a Populist-Democratic fusion would take place soon.

The election of 1896 found Montana Populists in support of William Jennings Bryan. Marcus Daly of Butte, one of the "Copper Kings", was reported to have been the largest contributor to Bryan's campaign fund.

By 1898 fusion was a reality. Many labor supporters joined the United Labor party and Social Democratic party while farmers found solace in the Democratic party. The Populist party, experiencing a short-lived vibrant life,
had disbanded by 1900 due to the betterment of weather conditions by the 1900's and the frustration felt by some Populist party members toward the inability of the Populist party to achieve major political advances. In addition, the Populist party failed to become a lasting political force because many of the party's proposals were incorporated into the Democratic party platform. The Democratic party captured the Populist vote. The enveloping of Populist party concerns into the Democratic platform stimulated the decline of the Populist party.

Although Montana had seen the passing of the Populist party by 1900, the effects of the party on Montana lived on. Thomas Clinch stated that the Populist party "could have been the most effective third party yet to make its appearance in Montana's troubled political and economic history." 32

The causes advocated by the Populists were later fundamental to the Progressive party's plan of reform which included: direct primaries, initiative and referendum, women suffrage, regulation of railroads and public utilities, and worker protection laws. On November 6, 1986, Montana voters approved an amendment to the Montana Constitution allowing initiative and referendum to be incorporated into the political process. This amendment had been supported by the 1906 Convention of the Montana Federation of Labor; Joseph K. Toole, Montana governor in 1903; William Eggelston, a journalist who
arrived in Montana in 1896; and E. C. Day, a Livingston lawyer. 33

Montanans continued to support principles espoused by the Farmers' Alliance, a component of the earlier Populist party, through the Montana Society of Equity organized in 1914. By 1917 the organization had 15,000 members. 34 In similar fashion, Montana laborers and farmers pledged their support behind Burton K. Wheeler, Montana Senator during the New Deal years. Wheeler, a Progressive, was influential in instigating reform of government and business. Joseph M. Dixon, elected Montana governor in 1920, too, led many reforms, particularly in the areas of taxation and election laws. Dixon has been called "the first governor since statehood to champion fundamental political and economic reforms." 35

Thus, the spirit of Populism did not die after the decline of the party. The ideas that were instigated by the Populist leaders were later supported by the Progressives who desired to clean up government and increase citizen participation in the political process. The foundations upon which Populism was built are still strong. The next chapter examines in detail how this foundation has supported Populist ideas in Montana today as reflected in the Montana Constitution (1972).
ENDNOTES


3 Ibid., p. 156.

4 Richard B. Roeder, lecture in "History of Trans-Mississippi West" class at Carroll College, Helena, MT, 12 November 1986.

5 Clinch, Urban Populism, p. 16.

6 Ibid., p. 16.

7 Ibid., p. 6.

8 Larson, "Populism in the Mountain West," p. 150.

9 Ibid., p. 156.


11 Clinch, Urban Populism, p. 38.

12 Anaconda Standard, 18 January 1892.


15 Ibid., p. 84.

16 Clinch, Urban Populism, pp. 53-54.

17 Lang, "One Path to Populism," p. 77.

18 Richard B. Roeder, "Crossing the Gender Line, Ella L. Knowles, Montana's First Women Lawyer," Montana, the Magazine of Western History 32 (Summer 1982), p. 73.

19 Ibid., p. 70.

20 Clinch, Urban Populism, pp. 53-54.

21 Roeder, "Crossing the Gender Line," p. 73.

22 Anaconda Standard, 6 July 1892.

23 Anaconda Standard, 18 August 1892.


27 Butte Bystander, 28 April 1894.


30 *Butte Bystander*, 9 March 1895.


CHAPTER IV

THE 1972 MONTANA CONSTITUTION AS A POPULIST DOCUMENT

The 1970's ushered in a decade of change for Montana government. This change had been forthcoming for the State as leaders and citizens of the 1950's and 1960's had been continually discussing the inadequacies of the Montana Constitution of 1889. They felt revision was necessary. The document was viewed as "sharing the characteristics of the era in which it was written. It displays a distrust of public officials characteristic of the period."¹ The document exhibited the concern of citizens during the late 1880's to limit government. By 1967, members of the Montana Legislature openly voiced their opinions about the inadequacies of the 1889 constitution. Deficiencies of the Constitution as viewed by one researcher included:

1) Inability to adjust to changing times due to statutory detail.

2) Provisions are vague and confusing, leading to constant litigation.

3) Archaic provisions exist for only historic value.

4) Obsolescent provisions are common, outdated by the increasing growth and complexity of government.

5) Lacks readability important to the people's charter.²
Furthermore, the Montana Constitution of 1889 with 28,000 words was three times the length of the U. S. Constitution.³

The Legislative Council studied the Constitution following the 1967 Legislative Session and concluded that, 

.....there is need for substantial revision and improvement in the Montana Constitution. Provisions which invite subterfuge, provisions which are ambiguous, provisions which are statutory, and provisions which place serious limitations on effective state government were found throughout the Montana Constitution.⁴

Because amendments to update the Constitution had failed to pass voter approval in the November 1968 election, the 1969 Legislative Assembly created the Montana Constitution Revision Commission, composed of 16 members who would conduct a study of the Constitution. The Commission recommended that a constitutional convention be called to revise thoroughly the Montana Constitution. Referendum 67, the official call for such a convention, was placed on the ballot with broad support from lobbying groups, Democrats, and Republicans. The referendum was later approved by the citizens of Montana with a vote of 133,482 to 71,643.⁵

The Constitutional Convention displayed marked tendencies toward earlier reforms undertaken by the Populists. The Convention proved to be a gathering of leaders throughout Montana who were concerned with the promotion of individual rights and citizen participation,
ideals previously initiated by Populists and implemented by Progressives. Dale Harris, executive director of the Revision Commission, voiced the importance of the nature of the Constitution in reflecting citizen freedoms,

The right of the people to elect and reject their representatives is not a sufficient control over government. A written Constitution promulgated by and acceptable to a majority of a state's people is a basic premise of a free society.

The atmosphere of the Convention was Populistic. The attempts made by Populists of the 1890's to insure direct democracy were revitalized at the 1972 Constitutional Convention. The frustration expressed by Montana Populists decades earlier toward governmental and business autonomy were not in vain. Determining whether the resulting document produced by those delegates at the Convention was a product of the times, a result of intentional efforts made by the delegates, or a re-birth of smouldering attitudes developed earlier in Montana Populist history is a search that involves tracing the activities of the Convention, examining who the delegates were, gaining a perspective on the attitudes held by citizens of Montana at the time, and reflecting on the culture of the 1970's. One writer remarked,

Throughout the 1972 document were echoes of high-plains Populism. Provision after provision made the point that state government existed for the benefit of the people.

Populist characteristics of this document may be
attributed to the delegates who formed it. The delegates who comprised the Convention represented their communities and were "ordinary citizens sent by their fellow residents to redesign the state Constitution."³

The delegates were selected from House of Representative districts after a 1970 census to draw new apportionment lines. The qualifications required each delegate to be at least 24 years old, a citizen of the United States, and a resident for one year in the county or district from which elected. The Supreme Court further ruled that all state and local officials who were presently prohibited from holding another public office could not serve as Convention delegates. This ruling eliminated the governor, lieutenant governor, secretary of state, state legislators, the attorney general, treasurer, auditor, and superintendent of public instruction. Further eliminated were members of the Montana Constitutional Convention Commission.⁹ According to Dale Harris,

>The convention can be expected to attract highly competent delegates. The experience of other states shows that most delegates are public spirited citizens interested in the state's welfare, usually civic leaders who are well-known and respected in their communities. Since delegates would not have to worry about reelection, the possibility of pressure from party politics or special interest groups would be greatly diminished. Well informed persons will be willing to run.¹⁰

Also offering unique attributes to the Convention was the attempt made to minimize partisanship. Nonpartisanship, it was hoped, would lead to the production of a document
responsive to all citizens, regardless of party affiliations. The work of the convention would be much more constructive and efficient if approached in a nonpartisan fashion. The subsequent delegation was comprised of 24 lawyers, 19 agriculturalists, 17 business people, 14 teachers, 11 housewives, 8 miscellaneous, 4 clergy, 4 media/communication specialists, 3 professionals, and 2 bankers. The delegation boasted 19 women among its ranks.

The background of the delegates suggested that this gathering would be different from other traditional governmental bodies. The Convention did not reflect established political elites or experienced legislators. Rather, the make up of the Convention included citizens who had established themselves as leaders, but were not necessarily political elites. This composition was seen as extreme by some onlookers. After all, an established group of legislators and state employees had stimulated the calling for a revised Constitution. That reality was being lived out by a group of delegates who were ordinary citizens! This aspect of the Convention could have contributed to the Populist oriented outcome of the Convention. Those legislators who had initiated the calling of a Constitutional Convention were faced with not being able to participate in the revision of the Constitution. One delegate to the Convention called it "amateur night" and expressed the view that a frenzy of
activity took place at the Convention that violated traditional patterns of politics. Senator Dorothy Eck expressed the view that "the people of Montana for the most part had elected delegates who did not represent the corporate interests or the established politicians." 

Thus, the nature of those delegates who attended the Convention influenced its outcome. Just as earlier Montana Populists had espoused the importance of citizen participation and faith in the common man, so too were delegates at the Convention calling for similar action. Although some observers have labeled the Convention as a gathering of inexperienced "ordinary" citizens, it must be noted that the delegates at the convention for the most part were concerned with representing their communities. The research done by the Legislative Council, the League of Women Voters, and others also contributed toward revising the Constitution into a viable and soundly constructed document representative of the common man. Those involved in revision were aware of the task to be done and had goals toward satisfying the people of Montana. Governor Forrest Anderson reinforced these goals,

I believe revision of the Montana Constitution must accomplish four essential objectives. It must establish the structures and responsibilities of state and local government. It must guarantee the rights of the individual in this state. It must free state government from the structures that shackle us to the past, and it must allow us to move freely into the future.

With these objectives in mind, the delegates examined
their work. Some realized that a document had been created that was highly Populistic. Geoffrey Brazier, delegate to the Convention, voiced the view that the Constitution contained Populist tendencies, although Populism is no longer an organized force in Montana. Mr. Brazier further elaborated on this characteristic by saying that he felt that perhaps too much reform had taken place and the Constitution had been rewritten, instead of revised.14

This reform was deemed by some analysts as necessary. These analysts felt that indeed Populist sentiments echoed in the Convention halls as "condemnation of corporate usurpation, personal greed, and defective political systems was expressed."15 Jerome Loendorf, also a delegate to the Convention, voiced the view that the 1972 Constitution was an expression of Populist ideals, although Populist ideals in Montana were understood principles, not openly advocated as "Populist." Senator Chet Blaylock concurred that Populism is still a vital force in Montana politics, although it is relevant to only particular issues. Senator Blaylock remarked that since the 1972 Constitutional Convention, Montana government has become much more open to citizen participation.16 Citizen participation has become a key aspect of Montana government. The 1972 Constitution not only insures this participation but encourages it. This movement to encourage citizen participation in the political process was revitalized at the 1972 Convention. Senator Dorothy Eck remarked that
"the Convention took great pains to listen to the people." 17

The revitalization of Populism in Montana is an occurrence that is present, although many observers are hesitant to call the undercurrents in Montana government of direct democracy and freedom for all citizens "Populist." They fear attaching such a label to our political processes in Montana. However, this resurgence of Jeffersonian grass-roots democracy is a phenomenon that is not unique only to Montana. A movement that advocates direct democracy and increased citizen participation, known as "New Populism", has been gaining support throughout the United States. This movement emphasizes the ideals set forth by earlier Populists and offers insights into contemporary problems. A proponent of New Populism wrote,

Since participation is a vital part of the social contract, it is imperative that we recognize that making our society work is going to depend upon freer choices and more actual participation whether they're inspired by liberal elitists or founded upon conservative protectionism. 18

This New Populism, presenting a modern day approach to political and social frustrations experienced in earlier decades and continuing through the present, has attempted to call attention to Populist solutions. The notion of social contract, fundamental to Populist philosophy, is a cornerstone of new Populist thought. The changes advocated by "old Populists" and "new Populists" alike were adopted to some degree by the 1972 Constitutional Convention delegates. The reality of these changes and the acceptance
of these changes by the voters of Montana were assisted by the efforts of the press during the 1960's and 1970's. The press helped educate Montana voters about political issues and the processes of government. It also laid the framework toward the acceptance of change in Constitutional revision. Through the style and ingenuity of reporters and journalists throughout Montana, particularly those employed by the University of Montana and the Great Falls Tribune, Montana citizens were able to gain insight into the revision process and understand their roles as participants in society. By developing political awareness in Montana voters, journalists and reporters helped citizens to reach a deeper level of understanding of the 1972 Constitutional Convention and its finished product, the 1972 Constitution.

The 1972 Constitution is seen by some analysts as a product of the times. The 1970's, a decade which saw the climax of the civil rights movement and the Vietnam War, was characterized by social unrest and an upswing in liberalism. Jerome Loendorf expressed the view that many of the revisions made in the Constitution, particularly those which afford to the young more rights, may be directly related to the Vietnam War era. Other delegates have made similar remarks about liberalism at the time of constitutional revision. This liberalism may have led to the adoption of a Populist-oriented document. Voters were prepared for change and were more willing to accept
this change, just as earlier Populists had been when faced with political, economic, or social crisis.

The outcome of the 1972 Constitutional Convention proved that Montana Populism in some respects had not died. As some delegates suggested, Populism as an organized force was not present in Montana politics, but many of the underlying principles of Populism were very much alive. This result may have been attributed to the nature of the delegates who shaped the document, an intentional effort by Populist thinkers, a resurgence of a faith that had never died, or merely a product of the turbulent 70's. It is likely that the result was comprised of all of these factors. In order better to demonstrate that indeed the 1972 Constitution is Populist-oriented, a discussion of the document will follow. The 1972 Constitution contains Populist orientation in nearly all of its articles as evidenced by an exploration through its provisions.

**ARTICLE II: THE DECLARATION OF RIGHTS**

The Declaration of Rights of the 1972 Constitution is a part of the Constitution that continually emphasizes individual rights. Earlier Populists in Montana had always been concerned with rights of the individual. They felt these rights were the cornerstone of a greater society which should exist for the benefit of all individuals. The earlier Populists had found fault with society of the 1800's which seemed to disregard the rights of all,
creating a society beneficial to only certain individuals. The 1972 Constitution was a reassessment of the rights due all individuals. New provisions included in the document not previously included in the 1889 document were the right to a clean and healthful environment, the right to pursue basic necessities, the right to know, the right of privacy, the right to sue the state and its subdivisions for injury to person or property, a lowering of the age of majority and constitutional protection for those under that age, the right of participation, and the right against discrimination in the exercise of civil and political rights. Each of these new provisions opened up the governmental process, incorporating opportunities to individuals to participate in that process. These changes may be seen as Populist in nature because they reaffirm faith in individuals, previously espoused by Jefferson and Jackson. The Populist party as a "people's party" sought to establish a strong link between the people and government, promoting rights of the people. Section 3 refers to the right to a clean and healthful environment. This statement is particularly noteworthy because it represents an attitude held by many citizens in Montana toward the preservation of Montana's environment. Earlier Populists, too, respected the environment and held close bondage with nature. Their respect for environment led them to believe that the natural was superior to the
artificial. Later, writers voiced the opinion that "the language of the 1972 Constitution placed Montana in the forefront of states concerned with preservation and environmental protection."  

The right to participate was adopted by the Bill of Rights Committee in response to increased public concern and literature about citizen participation in the decision-making process. The section was especially directed at agencies. The committee referred to the section as a "constitutional sermon" in an effort to emphasize to government agencies the importance of responding to citizen concerns.

The right to know provision similarly stresses an openness in government. The proposal, introduced by Delegate Eck, underscores Populist ideals of opening up the governmental process to citizens.

Eliminating sovereign immunity is also patterned after governmental responsibility to citizens.

The Declaration of Rights article clearly establishes individual rights in a manner that may be seen as Populist, resembling earlier proposals by the Populist for power to the common man.

**ARTICLE III: GENERAL GOVERNMENT**

The article on general government reemphasizes the importance of the right of individuals to become active in law-making. This article, which became part of the
Constitution in 1906, was revised during the 1972 Convention to require a petition for initiative to be signed by 5% of the electors in 1/3 of the legislative districts instead of the previous 8% in 2/5 of the counties. This change made the initiative process more accessible. This article directly incorporated Populist ideals since the Populists were initial proponents of the initiative process as evidenced in Resolution 7 of the Omaha Platform of 1892. The process of initiative is one that demonstrates the desire of Montana citizens to directly control governmental action. This process allows Montanans to make laws on issues that otherwise may not be deemed as "important" by legislators or would otherwise not be placed on the legislative agenda due to lack of time during legislative sessions.

Article III represents the ideals of direct democracy supported by Populists. Critics have viewed the articles as reflecting values held by Montanans.

"Overall the resurgence of direct democracy in Montana points to the attitude of the people that government is principally their perogative and not the concern solely of their representatives."25

The initiative process is controversial. Many people believe that it is not a viable way to pass laws. Delegate Habedank remarked at the Convention,

Initiated measures are an unusual way of passing legislation. Preferably legislation should be passed by the
Legislature, where it can be discussed, debated, and all the changes that are made that are being made by this convention, to make good legislation. Initiative measures, by and large, in my opinion, are the result of a small group who get together, they come up with an idea, they don't discuss the thing properly, but they, as far as wording is concerned—but they decide they want something done, so they put the measure on the ballot and away they go.²⁶

This initiative process, though, has been supported by some citizens in Montana as early as 1888. The principle argument in favor of the process is that it may serve as a "popular weapon to combat domination of legislative bodies by economic, rural, and other interests who are reluctant to propose basic alternations or to disturb the status quo."²⁷

This debate over initiative and referendum is one that continually resurfaces. While some citizens feel the measures are sound and necessary ones, others feel they are inefficient and unnecessary. Senator Dorothy Eck feels that the process could be improved by requiring at least one public hearing on the initiative proposal along with better legal review.²⁸

As the article appears in the 1972 constitution, initiative supports the precepts set forth by early Populist leaders. It is clear that the article seeks to support the notions set forth by Populists concerning direct democracy and the power of the common man to play roles in law-making.
As equally important as Section 4 on initiative is Section 5 on referendum. This concept was firmly supported by Populist thinkers. This section modified the 1889 Constitution by allowing the people to vote on any act of the legislature except appropriation and made the process easier to use by requiring referendum petitions to be signed by 5% of the electors in 1/3 of the legislative districts instead of by 8% in 2/5 of the counties.

Both the initiative and referendum sections are designed so that the percentage of voter approval is "high enough to prevent frivolous legislative efforts yet low enough to allow serious popular measures to be initiated by the people." 29

ARTICLE IV: SUFFRAGE AND ELECTIONS

This article, although brief in the 1972 Constitution, created important revisions in the 1889 document, particularly in the lowering of voting age to 18 and reassurance of the right to secret ballot. Each of the measures reinstated Populist belief in individual participation in voting. Supporters of New Populism, such as Jack Newfield and Jeff Greenfield, support the ideas of opening up the political process and lowering the voting age to include younger adults. 30 These reforms would instigate wider participation and place faith in the opinions of younger members of society. Through these
reforms, democracy would contain more pluralism. This pluralism would be highly beneficial to society according to Newfield and Greenfield. At the 1972 Constitutional Convention, delegates hoped to pass the age provision in order to ratify the newly added 26th amendment to the United States Constitution which lowered the voting age to 18.

Montana followed the example established by the United States government by ratifying the 26th amendment, supporting the progressive nature of the amendment.

ARTICLE V: THE LEGISLATURE

The Legislative article of the 1889 Constitution was a part of the Constitution that drastically needed revision. Reformers felt that the article was outdated and not responsive to the needs of the legislators and citizens. The 1889 Constitution reflected the distrust of legislators characteristic of that era. Although concerns still persisted pertaining to efficiency and competency of the legislature at the 1972 Convention, these concerns, it was felt by the delegates, could be better addressed in a revision of the 1889 Constitution. The 1889 Constitution weakened the powers of the legislature, particularly by placing limitations on what the legislature can and cannot do, containing excessive statutory detail, and failing to make the legislature representative of the people. Jerome Loendorf expressed
similar sentiment by stating that the legislature must be more accountable.\(^32\)

The 1972 Constitution added seven new provisions: voters were given the opportunity to adopt a unicameral or bicameral legislative system, legislators were to be elected from single-member districts, the legislature would be reapportioned, annual sessions of 60 days were proposed (revised in 1974), the option of special sessions to be called by the governor or a majority of the legislators was provided, sessions of the legislature and of its committees were made public as well as a determination that votes on substantial matters would be recorded, and the qualifications for legislative office were revised.

Many of the provisions added were designed to open the governmental process to citizens.\(^33\) The attitudes held by delegates toward opening up the processes of government were similar to those attitudes held by earlier Populists. Efforts made at accountability were for the most part Progressive efforts striving for "good government" principles advocated by earlier Montana leaders such as Will Kennedy and Ella Knowles. Other Populist leaders had targeted the problems of representative-citizen relations as needing revision. The Omaha Platform of the People's Party of July 1892 stated that "the power of government—in other words of the people—should be expanded."\(^34\) Through this statement it
is possible to see that the Populists felt government was the people. This view was also integrated into the 1972 Constitution article on legislature. The Legislative Committee at the convention felt that it was necessary to create a responsible bureaucracy, responsive to the citizens. The Committee concluded,

"Today government is so complicated that the average citizen does not know where to go for help or where to place responsibilities." It was concurred by members of the Committee that government and the people become synonymous.

Section 14, which dealt with reapportionment, was directed at decreasing accountability problems. The system prior to the 1972 Constitution permitted legislators to be elected out of single member and multi-member districts. In multi-member districts, some legislators were elected at large. Under this system, voters had difficulty in making intelligent electoral decisions and assessing qualities and issues characteristic of so many candidates. In an effort to solve the problem, a Montana Districting and Apportionment Commission was created to draw up legislative districts in a nonpartisan fashion. The reapportionment section was instrumental in designing a more efficient method of reinforcing the direct ties between citizens and government.

This relationship was further emphasized by Sections
10 and 11 which mandated that "the sessions of the legislature and of the committee of the whole, all committee meetings, and all hearings shall be open to the public." This provision clearly dictated that the public had a right to know business of the legislature. The 1889 Constitution, in contrast, allowed for secret deliberations as determined by necessity. Earlier, Populists at the St. Louis Convention of February 1892 expressed similar desires to know activities of government through the platform adopted stating that they felt public opinion had been silenced. It was the desire of those who helped formulate the document that the public play a more active role in the governmental process. In response to similar concerns during the 1972 Constitutional revision process, a legislative article was fashioned to satisfy concerns of the public to participate in legislative affairs.

The efforts of the 1972 Constitutional Convention delegates in a large part may be symbolic. Many citizens do not utilize their rights to participation to the fullest. In fact, studies show that only 7% of Montanans visited the Capitol while the legislature was in session during the 1977 session. This participation was less than the delegates hoped for. However, this study fully resembles similar responses felt by Populist leaders. The Populist leaders expressed the same disappointment when they found that citizen involvement declined during
favorable conditions in society, while they experienced increased participation during times of political, economic, or social distress. 41

The Legislative article of the Constitution combined progressive thought into a portion of the Constitution that seeks to solidify the relationship between citizens and the legislators they elect. It sought to establish an efficient, accountable branch of government, highly attuned to citizen expression.

ARTICLE VI: THE EXECUTIVE

Article VI of the Montana Constitution deals with the Executive Branch of government, a branch that was composed of approximately 200 officials and agencies prior to the revision of 1972. These agencies often acted independently. This independence, or autonomy, was seen by some analysts as "the greatest weakness in the Montana Constitution." 42 Before and after the Constitutional revision process, the executive branch was aimed toward a reduction to 20 departments. This structure, it was felt by the Executive Committee, would provide for a more efficient, organized bureaucracy. Besides an emphasis on efficiency, the article provided for Montana citizens wider access to agencies and greater opportunity to voice concerns of the early 1900's toward checks on executive control. Because of the control that the governor as chief executive possesses, he may oversee departments,
frequently checking duties and obligations of the various department heads. He may also appoint a committee to investigate certain matters in the various departments. Another more visible form of checks and balances is offered through the executive budget mandated in Article VI, Section 9. This system of checks and balances is Populist in nature, for it was Populists who long supported restraints on authority of certain individuals. Fundamental to Populist thought was determining power structures and the questioning of why certain individuals had more power than others. Similarly, New Populism, advocated by Fred Harris, addresses the problems of government administration. The Constitution of 1972 has targetted that concern.

Another aspect of the Executive Article that must be analyzed is the age requirement set for holding the office of governor. This age was set at 18 by the Convention delegates. Progressive in nature, this qualification sheds new light on citizen participation. Contemporary Populist literature focuses on achieving more rights for all ages. In many contemporary Populist writers' views, age barriers are artificial and violate the precepts of true democracy. Delegates at the Convention shared this view toward age barriers to attain the governorship. Delegate Campbell remarked,

I think now that putting back in these artificial age barriers which really do not guarantee any particular
quality in the Constitution would be highly unfair. I think we should have faith in the electorate that they will elect by the majority the person they feel best qualified.  

Delegate Harper expressed a similar opinion by emphasizing the need to trust the electorate to make wise decisions.  

Still another outreach toward Populist thought by executive action was directed toward the creation of an office of citizen's advocate. The office was designed to handle complaints, questions, and problems expressed by citizens. The office, created in 1973 under the Tom Judge administration, handles topics such as unemployment, labor standards, welfare, natural resources, state government, and consumer affairs. The creation of this office has stimulated an increasing awareness among the Montana political climate to listen to citizen concerns. Earlier Populists had long advocated such a climate. Their notions of responsiveness by government toward citizens were reflected throughout their documents including platforms of the Northern Alliance, Southern Alliance and Knights of Labor, the Ocala Demands of December 1890, the Cincinnati Platform of May 1891, the St. Louis Platform of July 1892, and the Omaha Platform of July 1892. These ideas of direct democracy and administration of government were underlying concerns expressed through the Executive Article of the 1972 Montana Constitution.
ARTICLE VIII: REVENUE AND FINANCE

The Revenue and Finance article was a Progressive article instigating change in several areas: a responsibility for a system of tax appraisal, assessment, and equalization was placed at the state level with details left to the legislature, local debt was left to legislative determination and the elimination of prohibition against state financial aid to local government units was initiated, the legislature was given increased latitude in determining what property should or should not be granted tax-exempt status, state debt may be authorized by either a two-thirds vote of each house of the legislature or by majority vote of the people, the legislature was charged with strict accountability and proper investment of state funds, and an independent tax appeals board was established.

Article VIII on Revenue and Finance was recognized as being progressive by the committee who formed it. The article attempted to more clearly define state and local powers in the area of revenue and finance as well as recognize the concerns of the Montana taxpayer. Geoffrey Brazier, Dorothy Eck, and Chet Blaylock, delegates to the Convention, recognized the Populist tendencies of the article. They further emphasized the importance of tax reform in future years.

Populist platforms during the 19th century showed that Populists favored a graduated income tax in order to
achieve what they perceived was justice and equality. Later Populists, particularly those of the latter 20th century, have promoted the closing of tax loopholes and tax revision. They feel that "our tax system as it now stands encourages—intentionally or not—a plethora of policies that directly promote the concentration of economic power." 49

Section 5 of the Revenue and Finance Article was aimed at closing loopholes. Specifically, the committee focused on permitting taxation of private interests in government owned property.50 The article further dictated to the Legislature power to exempt certain classes of property from taxation, allowing the legislators to use discretion in such a manner to regulate exemption. This discretion hopefully will be utilized with taxpayer input. Although the section is broad, it is a Progressive attempt to reform the tax system, a goal that has long been supported by Populist thinkers.

Section 12, requiring strict accountability of all revenues and money spent by the state and subdivisions and districts thereof, reinforces the notion of checks and balances also advocated by earlier Populist leaders. These leaders believed that government must respond to the people in financial matters, thus making accountability a responsibility.

Section 7 also reinforced the accountability idea. This portion of the article created a tax appeals board
called the State Board of Tax Audit and Appeals composed of five members appointed by the governor with the advice and consent of the Senate. The Revenue and Finance Committee devised the board as a "guarantee never [before] provided for Montana taxpayers." The committee further declared that "Montana taxpayers need some avenue of recourse, besides the tax administrators or the courts, to evaluate his tax treatment." Delegate Rygg, a member of the committee, further emphasized that a body was needed outside of the County Boards of Equalization and the State Boards of Equalization, which establish revenue policies and procedures to judge taxpayer grievances and address the problems encountered by that taxpayer.

The significance of the creation of this board was the implications that surrounded it that indicated Montana taxpayers felt discouragement toward the old two-tiered system. This system did not meet the needs of many citizens and did not provide an unbiased approach to problems that plagued many citizens.

Tax reform, a measure that secured a position on Populist platforms during the 19th century, has since occupied many taxpayer's minds. Constitutional Initiative 27 and Initiative 105, which were placed on the ballot at the November 1986 election, demonstrated the need for reform Montanans truly demand. The 1972 Constitution was a step at Progressive reform. Further attempts at reform are necessary according to many Montanans.
ARTICLE XI: LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Recognized as being the most progressive section of the Constitution, Article XI on local government follows patterns of other states towards granting more local government flexibility and establishes precedence of its own by incorporating a unique voter review process. Prior to the convention, it was recognized that a revision of the local government article was necessary to "insure responsible home rule."53

The local government article, recognized as progressive by members of the convention and by those who drew up proposals, included several new provisions: consolidation of counties, the designation of forms of government for local governments (self-government charters), increased flexibility for units which declare self-government charters, authority to cooperate and share services and functions for local government units, and the development of a local review process. These new provisions were ideals patterned after similar constitutions in other states, except for the voter review provision, which was an innovative section. The progressive nature of the local government article is evident in several sections.

Firstly, Section 3 of the Constitution provided that local governments may determine their own forms of government. The intent of this section was to designate more power to local communities in determining the form
of government most responsive to their needs. The convention delegates recognized the diversity of Montana communities and hoped to grant authority to these communities to determine their own forms of government. In part, this diverse representation of delegates from many Montana communities may have contributed to the progressive orientation of the article. The Montana legislature made available to citizens a choice of local government options that was the widest choice offered of any state in the United States.\textsuperscript{54}

While the committee on local government hoped to instill flexibility into the local government option system, it also hoped that citizens might become more involved in the governmental process through local action. Delegate Speer reflected this hope,

"I feel that local government is the training ground for our citizens in government participation."\textsuperscript{55}

Secondly, the local government article conforms to progressive thought through Sections 4 and 6. Section 4 allowed the legislature the power to grant legislative, administrative, and other powers to local government units. This section in effect buried the "Dillon Rule" which had established precedence by mandating that state authorization was necessary for local units to create ordinances and regulations. Members of the convention, representing unique localities, recognized that their localities could better operate with more power and
discretion, loosening the bonds with state government. Section 6 further emphasized the need for local powers by stating that a local government unit adopting a self-government charter may exercise any power not prohibited by the constitution, law, or charter. This section enabled local government units powers beyond those just specifically stated. This is not to say that local governments were free from all ties to state government. There were some powers which were specifically denied to self-government units, including those powers which concern both the state and self-government units and strictly state matters.

Thirdly, Section 8, also progressive, granted initiative and referendum to local ordinance making. This section acknowledged the importance of citizen organization and trust in those citizens to pursue law-making in a well defined, orderly fashion. Progressives and Populists alike continually sought to develop trust in citizens and directed that trust through the initiative and referendum process at all levels of government.

Finally, Section 9 was created at the convention to address a voter review process. Section 9 stated that the legislature shall require a review procedure once every ten years after the first election. This clause of the Constitution was unprecedented because of its concentrated local government reform activity. The intent of the
review process was to involve citizens in the local government process with an added stimulus created through the Constitution to require such a process. Delegate Blend offered a focus of intent,

"Although the proposal would not force Montanans to change their local governments, it would force them to examine the local units."57 This mandated review process was unprecedented because other states allowed for the option of local government review, but did not require it.

Following the creation of the article, implementation revealed less than satisfactory results. The convention delegates, concerned with citizen participation in local government, were faced with the reality that the voter review process did not increase citizen participation to a significant degree. In fact, studies revealed that those citizens who comprised study commissions to review local government processes were on the whole, male, older, better educated, and much more economically independent than the Montana population. Study commissions, with guidelines provided for by the Montana legislature, were composed of 3 to 9 members. It was apparent during subsequent voter review processes that the membership was usually comprised of upper middle class citizens. Furthermore, a study completed in 1977, known as the Governor's Futures Study, indicated that 19% of citizens surveyed felt the voter review process was useful, while 21% felt the process was not important and 35% of those
surveyed were unaware of the process. 59

The acts of the Constitutional Convention, though bold in the progressive attempts made to involve the citizenry, have tended to yield less than anticipated responses. The progressivism of the article requires incremental change. Thus, its effectiveness is continually being challenged. Challenges to the voter review process have not been successful, however. During the 1987 Legislative Session, one such challenge to this process called for deleting the section of the Constitution dealing with voter review of local governments (HB 124). Proponents of the measure argued that the process was not receiving sufficient response from the citizenry and was costing in excess of the benefits received. However, the measure was defeated during the House of Representatives’ floor vote. This defeat signaled the importance still placed on the process, even if only a symbolic reminder of grass-roots democracy and Jeffersonian ideals of reform. Like earlier Populist measures for reform, the local government article receives wide support from those people who consider participation in the political process an ongoing activity, continually seeking out progressive change. The article recognizes the importance of local government reform. This call for reform has been an incremental process.
ARTICLE XIII: GENERAL PROVISIONS

The General Provision Article of the Constitution retained several clauses of the 1889 Constitution and added four new ones. Two of these sections, Section 2 and Section 4, must be focused on because they signify the progressive nature of the Constitution and represent early Populist concerns that have evolved into Constitutional material.

Section 2 calls for the creation by the legislature of an office of consumer counsel. The office, directed toward representing the public before the Public Service Commission (PSC), would be funded by a special tax on the regulated companies. The PSC, created in 1913, was established to "supervise, control, and regulate public utilities in the public interest." The predecessor to the PSC was the Board of Railroad Commissioners. Throughout the life of the PSC, records indicated that the PSC showed a preference for utility interests over consumer interests. In fact, in 1942, 91% of cases decided were for companies. By 1971, the PSC was burdened with regulating over 600 transportation carriers and 200 utilities with 3 commissioners and a staff of 20. The workload was clearly a signal of inefficiency and incompetence. At the 1972 convention, delegates, aware of the inherent problems with the PSC, revised the organization of the PSC and established the consumer counsel office in an effort to alleviate considerable
inefficiency. (In 1974, the PSC was further modified from 3 members to 5 members.)

The reforms undertaken by the 1972 convention were an indication of a heightened awareness of the necessity to provide consumer protection as voiced by Delegate Van Buskirk during floor debate on the measure,

"Consumer protection against unreasonable unjust exactions of privately owned monopoly utility corporations is inadequate, and where the Legislature has historically displayed no disposition to improve it."62

The discussion of convention delegates toward utilities and monopolistic market conditions resembled those earlier undertaken by Populists. Alliance platforms prior to the Populist party formation favored drastic government control of communication lines and railroads. The earliest grievances by Populists were toward railroads, telephones, telegraphs, pipe lines, radio, and electricity. The Populists favored more stringent control than that control exhibited today. Populists advanced government ownership, though they believed that regulation would suffice as an alternative until ownership of electricity, railroads, and communication lines could be realized. John D. Hicks in The Populist Revolt credits the Populists with accomplishing regulation that benefited society. He advocates the credit due Populists for striving for efficient and fair management of public utilities. Such fairness was desired by Populists who
felt that they were being exploited by monopolies such as railroad companies, telephone companies, and utilities.

Thomas A. Clinch in Urban Populism and Free Silver in Montana failed to see how the same exploitation was felt by Montanans. Clinch says "both [sheepmen and cattlemen] enjoyed the advantage of favorable treatment of railroads." However, I submit that evidence supports the notion that Montanans did experience the same grievances as other Populists. Three references indicate these grievances. The convention of 1889 records indicated that attention was focused on the free passes being given out to public officials by railroad companies. The platform drawn up by Montana Populists in June 1892 called for socialization of railroads, telephone, and telegraph lines. Furthermore, freight rate charts reveal varying rates charged to farmers depending on locality:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>1892</th>
<th>1896</th>
<th>1900</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EAST OF CHICAGO</td>
<td>.48-.60</td>
<td>.43-.55</td>
<td>.34-.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEST OF MISSOURI RIVER</td>
<td>1.24-1.36</td>
<td>.74-1.03</td>
<td>.97-1.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data offers partial explanation for the hostility and frustration expressed by Populists toward eastern markets and railroads, even in Montana. The considerations and attention given by the Populists toward relaxing consumer-market tensions indicated the continual need for reform. This reform was underscored in
Article XIII of the 1972 Constitution through the creation of a consumer counsel office.

Section 4, providing for a code of ethics, further symbolizes the need for public protection. The section was included to alleviate conflicts of interest between state and local officers and employees. The addition of such a statement in the Constitution reflects the progressive nature of the document and the importance of accountability placed upon public officials.

ARTICLE XIV: CONSTITUTIONAL REVISION

The final article of the Constitution on revision reflects the delegates' concern with the flexibility and adaptability of the Constitution. The delegates expressed a desire to incorporate into the article methods for change for future political, economic, and social climates of Montana. It was the desire of the delegates to insure that the Constitution was a document of the people. Five new sections in particular highlight the power of the people in instigating necessary or desired change.

Section 2 of the article enabled people to petition for a constitutional convention. The committee in designing the section felt that such an act was a "basic political right under a government like Montana's." Further debate on the floor revealed the attitudes held by some delegates towards the necessity of offering citizens such a right. Such foundations of the article
echoed ideals of Jeffersonian grass-roots democracy, highly Populistic in nature.

Section 3, the consideration of a call for a constitutional convention every 20 years, was a controversial aspect of the article as some delegates felt that such a consideration was not essential, while others deemed the measure a method of strengthening the Constitution. This strength would be gained in involving the people more completely in Constitutional matters and serving as a "further guarantee that the people would retain a firm hold on the power of constituting government." In addition to the checks on government such a provision would allow, it was hoped that the process would further curb voter apathy and prevent "dangerous stagnation."

Sections 8 and 9 are similar attempts to embody possibilities for change into the Constitution. Section 8 revised the 1889 Constitution by changing the ratification of referendums to $\frac{2}{3}$ of the total legislative assembly, instead of the previous $\frac{2}{3}$ ratification by legislators of each house. Section 9 granted the power to petition for constitutional initiatives to the people. Considerable discussion at the convention focused on the ability of citizens to perform such a feat. Dale Harris, prior to the convention, expressed his concern toward the awareness and responsibility of voters toward the amendment process of
the Constitution by citing that in Montana 28% of the people who vote in elections do not vote on proposed amendments. This concern typifies senses of political efficacy among the electorate. The sense of apathy among citizens is acute and must be considered, even though attempts at involving the citizens in the political process through Article XIV and other articles of the 1972 Constitution were made. The Populistic measures to involve the citizenry must be approached realistically with attention given to the actual utilization of these measures by citizens. However, the measures by delegates toward offering opportunities to the citizenry were well-intentioned.

REFLECTIONS ON THE 1972 CONSTITUTION

The focus of this chapter has revolved around eight articles of the Montana Constitution. Through this study, evidence has revealed the Populistic nature of the Montana Constitution. Although other articles of the Constitution mirror earlier Populistic concerns, they have not been dealt with in this research because their Populist tones are faint and would require a more in-depth study. The stronger tones and direct references to Populism are clearer and more validly discussed in the eight articles of focus.

There were many factors that may have contributed to the Populistic nature of the Constitution: the delegates, the decade in which it was formed, the nonpartisan attempt
during the convention, a historic undercurrent of Populism in Montana, the role of the press, and the role of interest groups. These factors influenced the outcome of the convention and produced the document as we know it today, mirroring earlier Populist party concerns.

While some citizens delight in the outcome of the convention, others voice dissatisfaction with the document created at that convention. One citizen, a Senator prior to the calling of the convention, Ben Stein (Park County), expressed dissatisfaction with many of the Populist tones of the Constitution. He felt that much of the openness of Montana government was displaced and has been detrimental to government efficiency in Montana.

While the Constitution reveals Populist tones, these tones are perhaps more symbolic than the delegates would have intended. Involving citizens in the political process, a measure long advocated by Populists, has proven to be difficult and challenging task. However, what concerns many proponents of Populist oriented ideals toward power to the common man and increased citizen involvement is not always security of this power, but rather opportunities to seek this power. The 1972 Constitution reveals this search for opportunities.
ENDNOTES

1 Lucile Speer, *We the People: An Introduction to the Montana Constitutional Convention* (Issued in furtherance of cooperative extension work in agriculture and home economics, Montana State University, Bozeman, Montana), p. 23.

2 Ibid., p. 24.


5 Speer, *We the People*, p. 2.

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27 Speer, *We the People*, p. 98.


31 Speer, *We the People*, p. 41.


39 Hicks, *The Populist Revolt*, p. 394.


42 Speer, We the People, p. 50.

43 Lopach, ed., We the People of Montana, p. 117.

44 Fred Harris, The New Populism, p. 17.


47 Lopach, ed., We the People of Montana, p. 136.


49 Newfield and Greenfield, A Populist Manifesto, p. 97.


51 Ibid., p. 593.


59 Ibid., p. 250.

60 Lopach, ed., *We the People of Montana*, p. 174.

61 Ibid.


65 Ibid., p. 463.

66 Ibid.


68 Interview with Ben Stein, former Park County Senator, Helena, Montana, 21 January 1987.
CHAPTER V

POPULISM IN PRACTICE IN MONTANA:
INITIATIVE AND REFERENDUM

The efforts of Populists toward the redistribution of power, direct democracy, and success of the common man were many. The measure of their success toward achieving these goals must be discussed in order to more fully comprehend the impact of the Populists. Did Populist measures really achieve reform or was the Populist party merely a third party movement that was only acknowledgable in its day? One Montana historian, K. Ross Toole, voiced the opinion that the ideals undertaken by the Populists and Progressives alike were not effective in achieving reform. He further stated that their concerns did not really touch Montana. In his view, "a reform is a reform only when it works."\(^1\) The implications of this statement suggested that proposals set forth by the Populists and later Progressives did not work in Montana.

It is the purpose of this chapter to explore the effectiveness of Populists by closely examining one of their proposals, initiative and referendum. Through this examination, we may better understand what the Populists stood for, how a Populist strategy may be implemented, and if this implementation was done successfully. The research done in the previous chapter on Populism in
Montana State government indicated that a level of Populism does exist in Montana. However, we have not yet identified the implications of Populism. By analyzing just one of the Populist issues, we may gain a better depth of understanding of the practicality of Populist ideals and whether reform has truly been achieved.

Initiative and referendum were key reform measures to the Populists. In fact, according to John D. Hicks, initiative and referendum were "obsessions" with many Populists. The proposals received strong support from many states with South Dakota the first to fulfill adoption. Initiative and referendum were officially endorsed in the Omaha Platform of July 1892. Through this endorsement, initiative and referendum became strongly linked to the Populist cause.

In 1905 the 9th Legislative Assembly of Montana submitted to the voters at the next general election an amendment to the Montana Constitution to enact initiative and referendum. The voters approved the amendment 36,374 votes to 6,616. The voters were afforded a new right through the power of initiative, a proposal by petition to enact new law by a vote of the people on any matter except appropriation. Referendum afforded citizens the chance to approve or reject previously enacted statute except in appropriation of money. The referendum could be originated by the legislature or by the people.

The Constitutional Convention of 1972 further
expanded direct democracy by granting citizens the right to petition for amendments to the Constitution. Secretary of State Jim Waltermire has called the initiative and referendum process "a part of the Montana way of life." He also has pointed out that only 23 states have adopted the citizen initiated ballot measures with Montana ranking among the top four in initiative and referendum usage in law-making.⁶

The process of initiative involves a series of steps that are provided by the Secretary of State. The process begins with the idea for a new law or change in existing law or constitution. After a proposal for this idea is outlined by the proponents, a text is submitted to the Legislative Council for review. The next review is performed by the Secretary of State and the Attorney General. The Attorney General's response contains implications of the idea and other comments on the idea. This response is directed back to the Secretary of State who considers the Attorney General's perspective and also reviews the proposal. Upon approval, the proponents are notified and the work of securing signatures is begun. Verifications of signatures on the petitions are undertaken by the county clerks and recorders, who then forward the petitions to the Secretary of State who keeps a tabulation on the petition. If ample signatures are collected by the proponents, the petition is placed on the general election ballot. Pros and cons on the petition are written in the general information booklet distributed
prior to the election by the Secretary of State. Finally, if the petition passes the vote of the citizens of Montana, it becomes law or a constitutional amendment.7

The process involves a set of steps offering structure. The maintenance of this structure enables ideas to become law that are being undertaken seriously and without frivolousness. Also key to the structure is the requirement of securing 5% of the votes in one-third of the legislative districts, or approximately 18,949 signatures for an initiated measure. A referendum requires 15% approval of the electors in a majority of the legislative representative districts or 51 districts. Similarly, a constitutional initiative for amendment or call of a constitutional convention requires the signatures of 10% of the qualified electors of two-fifths of the legislative districts or 37,897 signatures.8 The revisions secured by the 1972 Constitutional Convention made the initiative process easier by decreasing the number of signatures needed in proportion to the number of districts. The intent by those delegates at the convention and the historic background of the initiative process is designed toward offering Montana citizens opportunities to enact law or change the Constitution in a structured manner, challenging enough to prevent frivolous attempts at such changes yet relaxed enough to make the process a reality.

The Secretary of State's Office has provided the
essential information for those citizens interested in the initiative and referendum process through a pamphlet such as "Guidelines for 1986 Ballot Issues." The booklet contains background information on the process as well as sample petitions, steps in the process, number of signatures needed in each district, and references to guidelines contained in Montana Code and the Constitution. The intent by the Secretary of State is to help citizens who utilize initiatives and referendums to become thoroughly acquainted with regulations and to understand how to pursue the goal of enacting law or amending the Constitution.

The opportunity to seek goals by citizens through direct involvement in making legislation was strongly supported by earlier Populists. This involvement has been characterized as grass-roots movement in action and faith in the common man. Montana's adoption of initiative and referendum has earned Montana the notoriety of being progressive and reform-oriented. According to one Montana citizen commenting on Constitutional Initiative 27 placed before the Montana voters in the 1986 general election,

"The initiative process was designed to insure that government never got out of hand as it is now."9

The citizen seemed to suggest that initiative serves as a checking mechanism on government.

The process of initiative also calls for citizen concern and commitment to a cause. This commitment was
desired by delegates at the 1972 Constitutional Convention. Proponents of initiative and referendum have recognized the commitment required to secure a position for a cause on the general election ballot, but have deemed this a right as utilized by the founders of CI-27. CI-27 represented the foundations of grass-roots democracy and its consequences. It symbolized the call for tax reform in a direct method that stirred the anger, delight, hostility, and encouragement of a variety of Montana citizens. The reaction toward the initiative process during the election was mixed. Some citizens were fearful of the attempt made by proponents of CI-27 to amend the Constitution. Others applauded the power the process could grant citizens in seeking reform. Still others resented the use of initiative in fulfilling what they saw as special interest goals, while others voiced no opinions on direct democracy as exemplified through CI-27.

CI-27 came to the forefront in election concerns because of the reform it sought and also because of the use of initiative by a grass-roots movement of Montana citizens. CI-27 symbolized the success of prompting reform by common citizens. News stories characterized the "four sisters" who initiated the measure as ordinary citizens seeking reform by "loading up in an old stationwagon, chipping in on gas, and embarking on a mission that tested their resolve." Furthermore, the motives of the proponents were characterized as being
"simple, old fashioned, and heartfelt." For many citizens, CI-27 offered hope for realizing citizen initiated change. The proponents of CI-27 received letters and calls from Florida, Michigan, Tennessee, and Washington D.C. by people who wanted to know how to start such a movement.

Other citizens were not as confident in the process of initiative as exemplified through CI-27 and other initiatives. They doubted the integrity and ability of citizens to make amendments to the Constitution. Initiative 105 also raised concern among citizens. This initiative was similar to CI-27 because it targeted property tax relief. However, it was more moderate since it called only for a freeze of property tax levels. One citizen viewed the process as demonstrated through I-105 as harmful and expressed her apprehension toward "using the thoroughly democratic process to damage other cornerstones of democracy."

Throughout the history of initiative and referendum measures in Montana, issues have spanned a broad perspective. There seems to be no pattern to who has used initiated measures and what topics initiatives are utilized for in the law-making process. The first referendum passed in the general election of November 3, 1908, was born to encourage a state bond for higher education. The first initiative was proposed on the ballot of the November 5, 1912, election concerning party nomination by direct vote. Since the enactment
of initiative and referendum, there have been 107 initiative and referendum measures and 26 constitutional initiatives. Of the initiative and referendum proposals, only 84 have actually been voted on because of insufficient signatures or rejection by the Supreme Court. Of the constitutional initiatives, only five have been voted on and only one of these has been adopted. Of the initiative and referendum issues, 53 have passed or about 50%. The proposals have included limiting the campaign expenses of public candidates, establishing an athletic commission, creating a gasoline tax, legalizing gambling, recalling public officials, authorizing grocery stores and drug stores to sell table wine, providing lobbyist disclosure, and freezing property tax levels.

The initiative and referendum process has led to both successes and failures. It has been highly commended as being an efficient method of voicing citizen concern and has also been criticized for its logistical problems. The Populist concept of citizen initiated law-making appears to gain approval from the majority of Montana citizens. However, the implementation of this idea has proven to be a challenging task with details yet to be ironed out. It is evident that initiative and referendum is viewed with pleasure and displeasure.

Among the successes include increased citizen participation, effects on voter turnout, and a stimulation of awareness among citizens. A majority of state
legislators, former state leaders, and citizens interviewed in my research believed in initiative and referendum as fundamental political rights. Constitutional Convention delegate George Harper said that initiative and referendum were strongly supported at the Convention. The opportunity given to citizens to participate more directly in law-making has been applauded.

A relationship between initiative and referendum issues stimulating voter turnout has not been previously examined. The news accounts of the 1986 general election in Montana indicated that voters at the polls were especially concerned about initiative and referendum proposals. Prior to the election, several editorials and other articles throughout the state's leading newspapers encouraged voter participation. One such article echoed this encouragement,

"This is citizen law-making in action, and you won't be able to blame your legislator if one of the initiatives passes and you don't like it."  

In contrast, some leaders felt that even though the initiatives in the 1986 general election had gained considerable publicity, there still existed substantial voter ignorance throughout Montana. Helena County Commissioner Linda Stoll-Anderson expressed her amazement toward the controversies surrounding the initiative and referendum issues and further stated that "its like
pulling teeth to get people to our annual budget meetings, where we're giving them a voice in the budget, and then they have no trouble getting excited about this."\textsuperscript{18} A subsequent poll conducted nearly a month before the general election by Lee Newspapers of Montana indicated that 44\% of those polled expressed unfamiliarity with one of the constitutional initiatives, CI-27. It further indicated that this undecided 44\% held the key to the election.\textsuperscript{19}

The two competing opinions held toward voter awareness of initiative and referendum, those of the effect of stimulating voter interest and the view of voter apathy toward initiated measures were tested the day of the election. A headline in Helena's \textit{Independent Record}, "Individuals Play Second Fiddle to Ballot Initiatives" indicated the importance of initiative and referendum issues of the election. Further evidence indicated that voter turnout throughout Montana was high. Helena polling places demonstrated that "controversial ballot initiatives seem to be bringing a higher than normal number of voters to the polls."\textsuperscript{20} A similar broadcast on KTVM (Helena) interviewed citizens at the polls who indicated that they felt it was important to vote because of the initiated measures.\textsuperscript{21}

Montana has historically ranked among the top states for voter turnout.\textsuperscript{22} The following table illustrates this high percentage:
1972-84% of registered voters actually voted.
1974-69.6%
1976-74.7%
1978-72.3%
1980-75%
1982-74%
1984-75% 23

These percentages are considerably higher than the national averages during these years. In fact in 1986, when Montana boasted one of its highest voter turnout percentages, the national average stood at 37.3%. 24 One critic has suggested that Montana's high percentages may be attributed to the lack of minorities present in Montana and the existence of a middle class majority in Montana. 24 However, I suggest that initiative and referendum issues do play a role in that turnout, although I am relying on speculation based on citizen testimonies and media coverage of recent elections to make that judgement. The correlation between increased voter turnout and the use of initiative and referendum proposals remains to be tested.

The problems that have surfaced during the initiative and referendum process deal primarily with court challenges, the controversy over whether initiative measures should be extended to constitutional changes or additions, and the possibility for abuse of the right to
initiative and referendum. In recent years, there has been more concern by citizens, elected officials, and the judiciary toward the role of the court in the initiative process. In the current law, initiated measures must be challenged within 10 days after certification from the governor. However, this law has not been strictly adhered to. In the 1986 general election three initiatives were challenged in the Supreme Court. The Secretary of State, Jim Waltermire, voiced concern toward such action and felt that a limit should be placed on the time to contest such initiatives.26

One such initiative, CI-27, was challenged in the Supreme Court. Supporters of CI-27 said,

"The Supreme Court should come down hard on people who challenge initiatives and let it be known that they should raise their objections to the people's initiatives early in the process."27

Others expressed similar sentiment believing that initiatives should be challenged only as allowed for in current law.

The 1986 election was only one example of difficulties encountered in the initiative process. Ballot issues have been found unconstitutional at virtually the last minute in previous cases.28 Because of the difficulties arising out of the initiative process and court challenges to initiatives, many citizens and state leaders have called for a review process. Senator
Dorothy Eck felt that such a review process would be beneficial as well as veteran Representative Francis Bardanouve, who has voiced his interest in making the initiative process as efficient, timely, and manageable as possible in order to preserve the integrity of the process.29

Secondly, difficulties in initiative and referendum issues have arisen concerning whether constitutional changes should be accessible through the initiative process. Senator Dorothy Eck remarked that her constituents were concerned about the feasibility of such citizen originated constitutional amendments. The right was adopted during the 1972 Constitutional Convention when constitutional changes or additions were included in the initiative process. Some citizens feel that allowing such changes or additions is not credible because of the court challenges that occur and because of the danger in constitutional revision by the people. They feel that the honor and integrity of the constitution could be damaged.

Thirdly, there exist some logistical difficulties in the initiative and referendum process. Some state leaders feel that citizens are not adequately informed about the proposals, and adequate review of these proposals is not afforded. Helena attorney Charles Erdmann has written,

Pre-election review of an invalid initiative is particularly appropriate where, as here (CI-27), the challenge to the initiative proposal goes directly to the power of the voters to adopt the
proposal. To allow an initiative measure to remain on the ballot only to be struck down later as beyond the voter's power to act; does damage to the integrity of the initiative process itself.31

There seems to be a consensus among some citizens and leaders that a review process must be undertaken prior to the circulation of a petition to iron out difficulties and more thoroughly evaluate a petition's viability. Representative Bardanouve, among others, has suggested that public hearings also be held to better educate voters on initiative and referendum proposals. Senator Dorothy Eck has supported the idea of public hearings.32

Another abuse that has surfaced concerns the availability given to view signed petitions in the Secretary of State's Office. An article in the Helena Independent Record titled "Petition Use Can be Abused" implied that petitions should not be made available for scrutiny by other organizations forming separate groups in order to compose mailing lists. The article stated,

We agree that they [petitions] are public documents, but we think a line has to be drawn and that names on initiative petitions should not be made available as mailing or solicitation lists. Many people who sign initiative petitions aren't necessarily in favor of the issue but they affix their signatures because they think that particular issue should be put to a vote of the people. Others, of course, are very much in favor of the position. But there's a good chance that if people knew that by signing a petition they were opening themselves up to being
solicited for this or that cause by phone and/or mail, they'd be much more reluctant to get involved in the process.

Thus there exist some difficulties in the initiative process that have been publicly recognized. Cloudy areas of the process involving implementation need to be addressed. Reluctance to address legal review, public hearings, and possible voter unawareness surface because of the fear of restricting a process intended to give Montana citizens greater freedom and opportunities to participate in law-making. It is recognized by those proposing to clarify and revise the initiative and referendum processes that these freedoms may be abused.

The Populist ideal of initiative and referendum, in concept, is strongly supported and has proven to be a popular reform measure. The implementation of the ideal has proven to be challenging and at times frustrating. What the Populists strove for and have succeeded in gaining in Montana is the opportunity for greater citizen involvement. The 1972 Constitutional Convention opened up the possibilities for citizens to pursue direct democracy in operational form with initiative and referendum. While many people of Montana cherish initiative and referendum, they also realize that implementation must be more keenly addressed and fine-tuned in order to make the process a truly democratic, efficient mechanism for enacting law.
Although initiative and referendum is only one ideal advanced by earlier Populists, it represented the power for the common man the Populists sought. It was a reform measure they felt would create opportunities to realize this power. The ideal has become reality in Montana. It may be correctly deemed reform because it has created opportunities for the common man to become more actively engaged in the political process. While not all Populist measures may be as significant as initiative and referendum nor as successful in achieving reform, they have made a substantial impact on Montana. Initiative and referendum are two modes Populists created to insure direct democracy.
ENDNOTES

1 K. Ross Toole, "Rebuttal: When is a Reform a Reform?" Montana the Magazine of Western History, 20 (October 1970), p. 27.


3 Ibid.

4 Ibid., p. 439.


6 Ibid.

7 Ibid., p. i-ii.

8 Ibid., pp. 5-6.

9 Independent Record (Helena), 2 October 1986.

10 Independent Record (Helena), 8 September 1986.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

13 Independent Record (Helena), 3 November 1986.

14 Montana, Office of the Secretary of State, Initiative and Referendum Issues Since Adoption of Constitutional Amendment, p. 1.
15 Ibid., pp. 1-9.


17 Independent Record (Helena), 2 November 1986.

18 Independent Record (Helena), 9 September 1986.

19 Independent Record (Helena), 8 October 1986.

20 Independent Record (Helena), 4 November 1986.

21 KTVH (Helena), 4 November 1986.


24 Independent Record (Helena), 7 November 1986.


26 Montana, House, State Administration Committee, HB 584, Introduced by Baradanouve and Eck, 50th Session, 2 February 1987.

27 Independent Record (Helena), 4 September 1986.

28 Independent Record (Helena), 9 October 1986.

30 Survey from Dorothy Eck, Montana Senate, Helena, Montana, 18 October 1986.

31 Independent Record (Helena), 4 October 1986.

32 Montana House, State Administration Committee, HB 584, Introduced by Bardanouve and Eck, 50th Session, 2 February 1987.

33 Independent Record (Helena), 17 October 1986.
CHAPTER VI

POPULISM IN MONTANA: ALIVE TODAY

The search undertaken in this thesis to discover Populist tendencies in Montana in contemporary times has relied upon the careful examination of the history of Populism throughout the United States and more specifically, Montana, in order to better understand what Populists believed in, what they stood for, and what impact they had in politics. Although Populism is a vast topic and contains many intricacies, the primary focus of this study has taken a constitutional approach relying heavily on events from the 1972 Constitutional Convention, since this event signified the resurgence of Populism in Montana at least to some degree. It was following this convention that the avenues of citizen participation were opened wider and people-oriented politics resurfaced. The tracings of the final chapter through one Populist ideal, initiative and referendum, demonstrated one reform measure that was later adopted by Montanans. This reform measure has resulted in both successes and failures. The research that I did has led me to conclude that Populism exists in Montana today, not as a party, but as a set of ideas.

There is much additional research that must be
covered in order to assess Populism in Montana more fully. Because the Populist party no longer exists in its original form as a coalition of people united with a platform of ideals and reform measures, there are many connections that must be made between the ideals advanced by Populists and legislation and constitutional material that exists today that supports similar ideas. These connections are often indirect references to Populist advocated concepts of citizen participation and people power.

Does Populism still exist in Montana? While it is difficult to determine the strength of Populist thought in Montana, the evidence suggests that Populism does exist in a sometimes prominent form and other times in a latent form in Montana. It follows a cyclical pattern, smouldering at times, only to erupt later. However, it must be realized that many of the connections made between the Populist party of the 1890's and the contemporary forms of Populism that I have outlined in this research have been difficult to ascertain. Some critics could argue that the connections are vague and weak, while others could argue that they are strong. Nonetheless, the connections have been worth investigating and have led me to believe that Populist thought is alive in Montana. It remains for future to reveal whether or not these ties will remain alive and well.

What does the future hold for Populist thought in
Montana? According to one writer, "There are signs that the winds of political change are sweeping across Montana." ¹

These winds, the author believes, could carry Populism. A gathering in Missoula, in September 1986, of members of the Farmers Union, the AFL-CIO, the National Farm Organization, and rural electric and telephone associations suggested an attempt at securing a farm-labor coalition similar to that earlier attempted by the Populist party. The author has further classified the gathering of individuals into organizations that work towards the good of the common people, basically "farmers, ranchers, and workers." ² He assesses this gathering as a cornerstone of Populism, "a movement that bears watching on the state and national level." ³

Montana has incorporated some Populist ideals into its political, social, and economic spheres. These have spanned a broad spectrum including greater opportunities for citizen participation, the strive for greater governmental accountability, the formation of a liaison between consumers and the business sector through the consumer counsel, the stimulation of more sound executive management, and many others. It is without doubt that these measures will be challenged by those who are unsupportive of Populist ideals. The consequences of an undying faith in the common man, a Constitutional Convention in 1972, and an unstable economy that draws
people together in an effort to address problems and frustrations has created a degree of Populism in Montana that is alive. The resurgence of Populism in Montana occurs in a cyclical fashion, waxing during times of economic hardship, tax revolt, and frustration toward bureaucracy felt by Montana citizens and waning when citizens feel satisfied with the economy and government. The 1972 Constitutional Convention occurred during one of these waxing peaks. These waxing times in Montana history have allowed Populism as a set of ideas to survive. Like earlier Populism in the 1890's, Montana Populism today struggles to reach a condition that is alive and well.
ENDNOTES

1 Independent Record (Helena), 21 September 1986.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.
Dear Mr. Anderson,

My name is Kara Stermitz. I am currently a senior at Carroll College completing a thesis titled "Contemporary Populism in Montana: Alive and Well?" for the Department of Political Science. I am tracing the development of Populism and trying to determine if Populism still exists in Montana and if it does, what forms it takes. Populism, a political movement of the 1890's left its mark with such ideas as initiative and referendum, direct election of senators, as well as an overall concern for the common man.

Part of my research has involved interviewing leaders in Montana in order to gain opinions on the topic. Would you help me out? I have enclosed a survey that I would like you to answer. Note that the last question asks if I may quote opinions that you have provided. I understand that you may not want your opinions disclosed.

Please send this back to me in the self-addressed envelope. I appreciate any help you can give me.

Sincerely,

Kara Stermitz
1. Do you think Populism exists in Montana? If so, how strong a movement is it?

2. Do you consider yourself Populist? Why or why not?

3. What were your experiences in the 1972 Constitutional Convention with Populism or your experiences with its results? Was Populism exemplified at all?

4. Who are Populist leaders in Montana, if any?

5. Who were strong lobby organizations or interest groups at the 1972 Convention?

6. How has Montana government changed in the last ten to fifteen years?
7. Do you foresee any issues in the upcoming legislative session that may have Populist tendencies?

8. What are your feelings toward initiative and referendum? Are they effective?

9. Can you think of any other persons or groups that would be valuable for me to interview in order to complete this thesis?

10. May I quote opinions that you have provided in this survey?

Please call me at (406) 449-2943 if you have questions. Thank you for your help.
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