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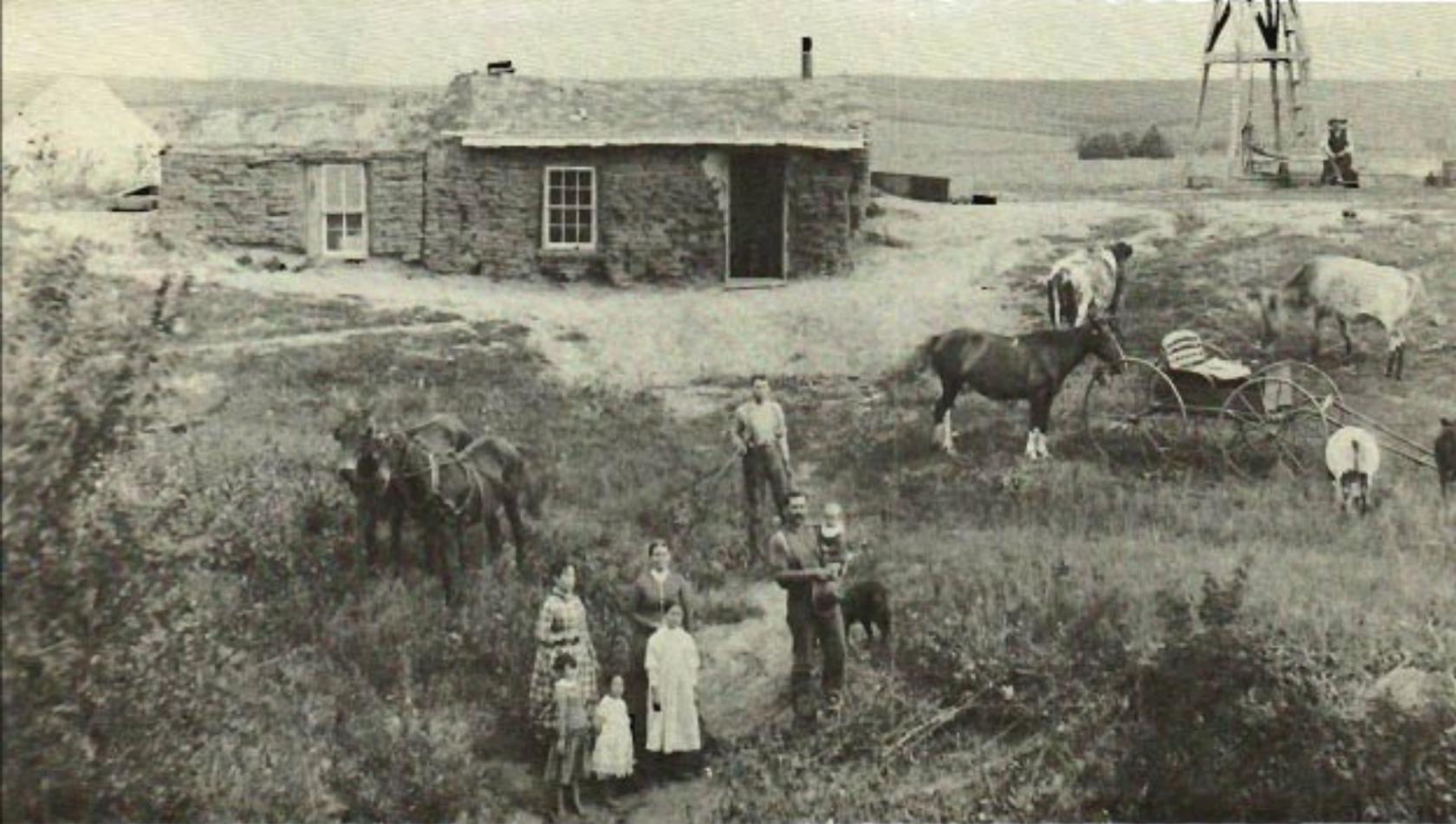
Article Summary: After 1890, a fundamental change in frontier "individualism" and minimized governmental intervention in the affairs of the settlers changed with the disappearance of free land.

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Photographs / Images: Zimmerman homestead near Broken Bow, circa 1888; Algernon S Paddock circa 1870



Zimmerman homestead near Broken Bow circa 1888.



Algernon S. Paddock circa 1870.

A NOTE ON GOVERNMENT AND AGRICULTURE: A NINETEENTH CENTURY NEBRASKA VIEW

ROBERT N. MANLEY

HISTORIANS agree that the Populist determination to utilize government to implement economic and political reforms constituted a singular feature of the agrarian protest movement of the 'nineties. According to Frederick Jackson Turner, the western agrarian prior to the 1890's lived in a society which emphasized "individualism" and minimized governmental "intervention" in the affairs of the settlers. A fundamental change in frontier attitude came, however, with the disappearance of free land. After 1890, Turner declared, "the defences of the pioneer democrat began to shift from free land to legislation, from the ideal of individualism to the ideal of social control through regulation by law."¹ John D. Hicks even more explicitly developed the theme which Turner had popularized. In *The Populist Revolt* he wrote:

In an earlier age the hard-pressed farmers and laborers might have fled to free farms in the seemingly limitless lands of the West, but now the era of free lands had passed. Where . . . might they look for help? Where, if not to the government, which alone had the power to

¹ Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York, 1920), pp. 30, 305.

Dr. Robert N. Manley, assistant professor of history at the University of Nebraska, is a frequent contributor to NEBRASKA HISTORY.

bring the mighty oppressors of the people to bay. So to the government the Populists turned.² Both Turner and Hicks, then, assumed that the Populist demand for an enlarged area of government responsibility marked a striking deviation from traditional frontier attitudes.³

It is the purpose of this brief study to suggest that in Nebraska, an important center of agrarian unrest in the 1890's, Populist demands for governmental action on behalf of the down-trodden farmers did not constitute a break with the past. Frontier "individualism" as defined by Turner had never existed in Nebraska. From the formation of the Territory in 1854 until the end of the nineteenth century, prominent Nebraskans purporting to speak for the agricultural segment of the state's population consistently demanded government assistance and government regulation of various facets of the economy. The Nebraska experience demonstrates, as Professor Billington has asserted, that the frontiersman was essentially a pragmatist—he would utilize any means which promised to expedite his exploitation of the resources of the virgin West.⁴

Nor is it correct to assume that the demands of Nebraska Populists for governmental assistance, when they did reach their peak of intensity in the 1890's, represented exclusively the views of a radical element in the state. On

² John D. Hicks, *The Populist Revolt* (Minneapolis, 1931), p. 405. Note the platform of the Populist party adopted at Omaha, Nebraska, on July 4, 1892: "We believe that the powers of government—in other words, of the people—should be expanded (as in the case of the postal service) as rapidly and as far as the good sense of an intelligent people and the teachings of experience shall justify, to the end that oppression, injustice, and poverty shall eventually cease in the land." *Ibid.*, p. 41.

³ For a succinct analysis of the Turner-Hicks point of view see Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform* (New York, 1955), p. 48-49.

⁴ Ray A. Billington, *Westward Expansion* (New York, 1949), p. 747. For a discussion of the role of the government in the development of American agriculture to 1860 see Paul W. Gates, *The Farmers Age: Agriculture 1815-1860* (New York, 1960), pp. 312-37. The period after 1860 is discussed in Fred A. Shannon, *The Farmer's Last Frontier: Agriculture 1860-1897* (New York, 1945). Both volumes emphasize the impact of government upon agriculture in the nineteenth century.

the contrary, a close examination of the platforms of the Republican party in Nebraska reveals that demands for governmental assistance and regulation emanated from the councils of that party. And it was the Republican party which dominated Nebraska politics through the last half of the century. In this, of course, Nebraska Republicans deviated not in the least from the pattern of the party's national leadership. In the post-Civil War years eastern businessmen-politicians maintained that government existed to encourage the economic development of the nation. While their western compatriots agreed, differences of opinion inevitably arose when eastern leaders and western leaders sought to determine which sector of the economy deserved prior consideration. Naturally eastern Republicans tended to emphasize industry and business, while western spokesmen vigorously stumped for increased assistance to agriculture. When the eastern wing of the party proved reluctant to accede to the demands of those who professed to speak for the western farmer, apprehension mounted among the agricultural element. Prospects of a break in the Republican party along sectional lines were slight; but the western clamor could not be stilled. Men elected to Congress from agricultural regions continued to agitate for a larger slice of the governmental largess.

The East-West dichotomy in the Republican party appeared most dramatically when Congress debated the annual Federal budget. In the course of these arguments Western representatives stoutly sought to fight off eastern attempts to curtail agricultural appropriations. Heated arguments and furious exchanges generally marked these sessions, the voices of western Republicans and Democrats alike rising repeatedly to demand justice for agriculture. In the Forty-fifth Congress, where the controversy reached an impassioned intensity, responsibility for enunciating the Western position devolved upon Senator Algernon S. Paddock of Nebraska, chairman of the Senate Committee on Agriculture.

Paddock, who had grown up politically and financially with Nebraska, was admirably suited for the task. A cou-

sin, Major J. W. Paddock, encouraged him to emigrate to Nebraska in 1857 from the family home in New York. From the first A. S. Paddock possessed two interests, real estate and politics. Astute investments in land eventually paid off handsomely, and his allegiance to the new Republican party brought him valuable political plums. This is not to say that Paddock was strictly a political conformist. On the contrary, he showed maverick tendencies when, for example, he endorsed the political policies of President Johnson. His election by the state legislature in 1875 to the United States Senate resulted in part as a result of support given him by Independents and Democrats in the legislature. Although he continued to represent reform programs, Paddock gradually returned to the good graces of the Republican party and became a "regular." Defeated for reelection to the Senate in 1881, he returned for his second term in 1887. The *Nebraska State Journal*, the state's leading Republican newspaper, hailed his re-election in 1887: "Probably no man in the party could have been selected by the Republican caucus that can do more to heal the breaches of factionalism than Senator Paddock."⁵

Paddock was more than an astute politician; on occasion he exhibited a surprising perspicuity derived from close attention to the demands and requirements of his constituents. In 1878 he accepted invitations to speak before the highly influential Nebraska State Agricultural Society and the Jefferson County Agricultural Association. On both occasions he emphasized the plight of the western farmer and called for government programs to assist agriculture. He also called upon farmers to take a renewed

⁵ *Nebraska State Journal* (Lincoln), January 23, 1887. For Paddock's life and career see *Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Nebraska* (Lincoln, 1941), I, 223; A. C. Edmunds, *Pen Sketches of Nebraskans* (Lincoln, 1871), pp. 428-35; Morton and Watkins, *Illustrated History of Nebraska* (Lincoln, 1905), III, 148-49; A. E. Sheldon, *Nebraska: The Land and the People* (Chicago, 1931), I, 492, 643-44; and W. E. Annin, "Algernon S. Paddock," *Proceedings and Collections of the Nebraska State Historical Society*, X, 186-98.

interest in national affairs.⁶ His remarks on the whole were well received.⁷ It is not at all surprising that the Senator, when called upon during the budget debates in February, 1879, to defend the agricultural interests, used essentially the same arguments which his constituents had heard, and apparently approved, in the preceding year.⁸

Senator Henry G. Davis, a Democrat from West Virginia, launched the debate in the Senate by asking Congress to create a joint committee to investigate the needs of agriculture.⁹ Paddock enthusiastically endorsed the resolution. A full scale investigation into the means by which Congress might better "advance, encourage and foster agricultural interests" would undoubtedly bring into perspective the importance of agriculture to the nation. Agriculture employed one-half the nation's population, Paddock declared. Furthermore, the economy of the nation rested upon the productive power of the farmers, a contention which he buttressed with an imposing array of agricultural statistics. Congress must at once assist the industry which more than any other single interest represented

⁶ A. S. Paddock, *Address to the State Agricultural Society, September 25, 1878*; and *Annual Address, Jefferson County Agricultural Association, September 13th, 1878*. Both pamphlets are in the archives of the Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln, Nebraska. The basis of Paddock's concern is best stated in his *Address to the State Agricultural Society, 7*. "A reasonable degree of material prosperity is essential to improvement in morals, in intelligence, in social refinement; that proportionately as the foundations of our agriculture have broadened and deepened, the influences of morality and intelligence have strengthened and come to operate more successfully upon our social and political conditions for the general advancement of our civilization."

⁷ See the *Nebraska State Journal* (Lincoln), October 15, 1878.

⁸ This speech is in the *Congressional Record*, 45th Congress, 3rd session, part 2 (February 10, 1879), pp. 1155-60. All quotations and references in the text, except where otherwise noted, are from this source.

⁹ Davis served in the Senate from 1871 to 1883. Raised on a farm, he entered the railroad business and ultimately emerged as a highly successful business executive. In 1904 he ran unsuccessfully for vice-president on the Democratic ticket with Alton B. Parker. *Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1949* (Washington, 1950), p. 1060.

the economic back-bone of the nation—this was the essence of Paddock's introductory remarks.¹⁰

Not content to dwell upon platitudes, Paddock hastened to offer specific recommendations. Of first importance was the need for Congress to encourage all phases of "scientific agriculture." Scientific knowledge and methods must be summoned to assist the farmers and stockmen in their constant conflict with stock diseases, blights and insect pests. Scientists of the highest ability must immediately be hired by the government and placed in first-rate laboratories. "Our government can engage in no work more laudable or more useful to the whole country than by well-directed investigations and researches to reduce the annual losses from such causes [as stock diseases and insects]," he told the Senate. Paddock realized that some senators would find Constitutional objections for such a scheme, but the Nebraska Senator dismissed such opposition as groundless. Agriculture was a national interest. Recent events, such as the decision of European nations to ban American meat imports because of the alleged danger of transmitted disease, injured the total national economy. To be sure, state governments and local authorities had labored diligently to eradicate stock diseases, but their efforts consistently fell short. "The government must deal with these scourges, because it is be-

¹⁰ As he had told the State Agricultural Society, Nebraska, although the youngest of the states, paid more Federal taxes in the fiscal year 1877-1878 than "the entire aggregate contributed by Vermont, Alabama, Delaware and Arkansas." This fact demonstrated for Paddock the immense wealth of the agricultural state. *Address to the State Agricultural Society*, p. 9.

yond the power of individual effort to arrest them," Paddock insisted.¹¹

According to Paddock a false—and dangerous—sense of economy militated against efforts to eradicate the natural enemies of farmers. In the past, Congressmen had attentively listened to speeches about the pre-eminence of agriculture and quickly voted down measures designed to aid that interest. Paddock waxed indignant upon this point: "We have a Department of Agriculture to which these and kindred matters are assigned for consideration and investigation, but we so hamper it and hedge it about with our parsimony that very little can be accomplished through it for the great interest it has in charge." Instead of launching a concerted offensive against agricultural problems, Congress responded only to separate disasters. Under strong pressure—such as the recent grasshopper invasions of the plains—relief legislation was hastily enacted. But such measures, taken in response to specific situations, proved at best temporary and piece-meal. A report might be published and circulated, but then the matter dropped out of sight until another catastrophe. This approach, Paddock declared, would prove disastrous for both the farmer and the nation. Therefore Paddock urged Congress to put the Department of Agriculture "on a war footing, with an abundance of means always at its command to enable it to employ every instrumentality that science may approve to break the force if not to entirely prevent these destructive attacks upon our greatest industrial interest."

¹¹ Paddock assured his audience that his concern for the welfare of the livestock industry did not result from local, selfish motives. He said that Nebraska had not been affected by cattle disease: "In the great grazing fields of the extreme West such diseases [as pleuro-pneumonia] are wholly unknown as yet; and with proper national and state sanitary regulations they will never reach them; besides if by any means they should be accidentally transported thither, they could not spread, because in that rare, dry atmosphere where the ranges are extensive, the conditions are most unfavorable to the epizootic spread of pestilential disorders." Paddock's confidence in the salubrious climate of Nebraska notwithstanding, in a few years Nebraska cattlemen were in fact desperately engaged in a costly struggle with Texas fever and pleuro-pneumonia.

To accomplish these enlarged objectives, of course, the Department of Agriculture must be expanded. As was true of other Nebraska Congressmen, Paddock consistently argued for a strengthened and augmented Department. Common sense, he said, dictated that activities such as the geological survey, meteorological study, and railroad legislation—labors in which the farmer had a vital interest—be placed under the supervision of a revamped Department of Agriculture. As a necessary first step, Paddock asked that the Department be awarded cabinet status. Then the Secretary of Agriculture, together with agricultural experts employed by the Department of Agriculture, could constitute "a form of national tribunal to which the country could look with confidence for the solution of any trouble threatening the interests under its charge."¹²

To give the Department of Agriculture increased statutory status, however, Paddock viewed as only a partial solution to the problem, for farmers as a rule had little confidence in the Department. The reaction of practical farmers to the Department as constituted did not surprise Paddock in the least.¹³ The most important function of the agency seemed to be the annual distribution of seed packets. Even then, political considerations, not agricultural

¹² In 1879 Paddock introduced a resolution calling for the reorganization of the Department of Agriculture "with the view of extending its jurisdiction and increasing its efficiency," but no action was taken. *Congressional Record*, 46th Congress, 1st session (April 3, 1879), p. 189. Another Nebraska Republican, Representative E. K. Valentine, led the fight in the Forty-seventh Congress to elevate the Department of Agriculture to a cabinet post. For Valentine's arguments see *ibid.*, 47th Congress, 1st session (May 9, 1882), pp. 3760-62. According to the first secretary of the Department, Jeremiah M. Rusk, the intense interest in the Department "resulted from a demand on the part of a large majority of the farmers of the country that that Department at the seat of government which was organized to represent their interests should be clothed with the same dignity and power that other Executive Departments had, and that it should have its influence in national affairs and be recognized in the councils of the nation." *Annual Report*, 1889, p. 7, as quoted in Leonard D. White, *The Republican Era: 1869-1901* (New York, 1958), p. 234.

¹³ According to the *Nebraska State Journal*, March 9, 1872, farmers criticized the Department not because it exercised too much authority, but because its efforts were inadequate to meet the needs of agriculture.

requirements, dictated the distribution of the packets to persons selected by Congressmen with their eye out for future votes. Paddock vigorously denounced a system which permitted the expenditure of funds for politically-inspired projects but which denied adequate support for scientific investigations.¹⁴

Given the vacillating and miserly policies of Congress, Paddock considered it amazing that the Department of Agriculture accomplished anything. Yet he quickly pointed out that a handful of dedicated men, employed by the Department as research chemists, continually demonstrated the value of agricultural experimentation. In particular, Paddock cited the work of Professor Collier who had recently found new industrial uses for agricultural products which promised to increase further the wealth derived from this important industry. Ironically Collier received a salary which, according to Paddock, was

no more than ordinarily given to a book-keeper in a retail store, and the laboratory in which he conducts his experiments and investigations in its general appointments is inferior to that of the smallest institution of learning in any section of the country, in which this science is taught. And so it is throughout [the Department] . . . their salaries are beggarly and their opportunities for usefulness are poor indeed. This is all wrong and must be corrected if the Government means to accomplish anything for agriculture through this instrumentality.¹⁵

To stimulate interest in scientific agriculture, Paddock suggested that Congress establish a national academy of

¹⁴ Congressional seed distribution enjoyed a stormy history. J. Sterling Morton of Nebraska, Secretary of Agriculture during Cleveland's second administration, attempted to end the practice. As a Bourbon Democrat Morton opposed any extension of governmental authority. In 1894 he declared: "It is difficult to see how any practical statesman can advocate an annual disbursement of \$160,000 for such a purpose. . . . If, in a sort of paternal way, it is the duty of this Government to distribute anything gratuitously, are not new ideas of more permanent value than old seeds?" White, *The Republican Era*, p. 238. Consult on this point James C. Olson, *J. Sterling Morton* (Lincoln, 1942), p. 359 ff.

¹⁵ The *Nebraska State Journal*, January 31, 1880, applauded Collier's achievements, but neglected to discuss the financial handicap under which the Department labored. For Collier's detailed report on the sugar yield of sorghums, see the *Yearbook of the Department of Agriculture 1880*, pp. 37-185.

agriculture similar in structure to West Point. In this academy students selected from every state would receive intensive courses in practical and scientific agriculture. Graduates of the academy would be encouraged to join the staff of the Department of Agriculture or accept appointments in the agricultural colleges of the nation. He also asked Congress to assist the states in establishing agricultural experiment stations to promote scientific agriculture and provide further employment opportunities for the graduates of the academy. Such stations, Paddock added, should be supervised by the Department of Agriculture to insure coordinated programs.¹⁶ Immense benefits would result from this plan, which, "if energetically inaugurated and carried out," promised to do more for the country in the next generation than West Point and "half of the other educational institutions in the country combined have done during all the years of their existence." In the final analysis, Paddock asked Congress to create "a small army of educated men to direct, to conserve, to defend our chief interest through the instrumentality of applied science."

Leaving the subject of scientific agriculture, Paddock cogently commented upon problems which, while affecting the farmer directly, indirectly involved the well-being of the entire nation. For example, he desired a campaign to stop the destruction of the forests. In one of the earliest pleas heard in Congress for forest conservation, Paddock declared that to denude the land of its natural forest cover constituted a crime of immense proportion. Consistent with the widely-held belief that trees encouraged rainfall, Paddock lamented the destruction of forests at a time when extensive stands of timber were needed to "amelior-

¹⁶ This proposal, certainly not original with Paddock, crystallized in 1887 with the enactment of the Hatch Act, which provided \$15,000 annually to states which would undertake scientific research into agricultural problems. No federal control over the projects was written into the law, the Act merely encouraging establishment of stations and envisioning a voluntary coordination of endeavors. A. C. True, *A History of Agricultural Education in the United States 1785-1925* (Washington, 1929), pp. 208-10.

ate" the climate of the plains.¹⁷ Furthermore, deforestation led to soil erosion and the loss of underground moisture. Destruction of forests diminished the productivity of the soil—and this, of course, would ultimately prove disastrous for the nation.

But the most urgent problem confronting the American farmer, Paddock declared, was the need for expanded markets. He rejected the belief that "cheap money" represented the true panacea for agricultural ills. As he saw the problem, the decline of agriculture would be halted, not by new methods of increased production or by inflated currency, but by finding new outlets for American products.¹⁸ In this connection he urged Congress to appropriate funds for a promotional campaign in Europe to educate the people of that continent to the wide uses of corn. Paddock also asked the Senate to investigate the possibility of reciprocal trade arrangements with Latin American nations. An enlarged American merchant marine and reciprocal trade would bring immense benefits to the national economy, for foreign nations, especially Britain, monopolized the overseas carrying trade and protective tariffs excluded Latin American products from our markets. The result was that American shipping interests languished and Latin American nations, deprived of an outlet for their national products, were unable to purchase American agricultural products. As was true of many western Republicans, Pad-

¹⁷ From the first years of settlement, Nebraska's leaders encouraged tree-planting. Practical problems—the need for fuel, fenceposts and building material—were overshadowed by the contention that trees induced rainfall. Nebraska's Senator P. W. Hitchcock urged Congress to pass the Timber Culture Act in 1873 "not merely for the value of the timber itself, but for its influence upon the climate." *Congressional Globe*, 42nd Congress, 2nd session (June 10, 1872), pp. 4464-67. See also James C. Olson, *History of Nebraska* (Lincoln, 1955), p. 165.

¹⁸ "I cannot see how it can fail to be apparent to every man in our state that the closer we keep to the coin standard the less will be the expense attendant upon the interchange of our commodities and the greater will be the resulting price for the farmer's products." Agricultural depressions came "not because there are or have been too few greenbacks; it is the want of customers for the products of the country since the war demand ceased." *Annual Address, Jefferson County Agricultural Association*, pp. 6, 8.

dock dissented from the high protective tariff policy of the party. According to Senator Paddock,

In some cases and under some circumstances protection through high revenue tariffs may answer a good purpose, [but] I am forced to believe that for the states that are exclusively agricultural it may be on the whole an injurious policy. I speak now only of and to those states. Undoubtedly we would be immensely benefited if all raw materials used by the skilled labor of the country in the manufacture of articles . . . could be admitted free of duty.¹⁹

One may well imagine that Paddock's suggestions to this point had brought frowns to the brows of conservative Senators; but his most surprising suggestion was yet to come. For this Republican Senator, elected by a state which to a surprising degree had been made by the railroad, now echoed the farmers' demands for regulation of the railroad corporations. Although it is usually assumed that the concept of a "yardstick" government-owned railroad was a Populist innovation, it is apparent that the idea originated in an earlier period and under different political circumstances. The Nebraska Republican platform in 1874, for example, demanded the construction of a government railroad from the Missouri River to the Atlantic

¹⁹ Paddock told the State Agricultural Society: "I think it is susceptible of proof that protection, through unnecessarily heavy import duties, and the tax paid in the way of premiums on a depreciated currency, together, have cost the farmers of this state, since 1862, a larger sum in actual cash paid than the gross value aggregated of the entire crops of all kinds and varieties, of the best three years we have ever known. . . ." *Address to State Agricultural Society*, pp. 13-14. That Paddock retreated from this position is indicated in a later speech in which he "called upon his democratic friends to explain why . . . depressions had been as heavy in countries under free trade as they had been in our own." *Nebraska State Journal*, September 2, 1888.

seaboard.²⁰ Paddock, who had little confidence in the efficacy of legislation to regulate rates, endorsed the scheme and asked Congress to appropriate funds to construct the desired railroad. Acting under its power to regulate interstate commerce, Congress could authorize the construction of this "yard-stick" railroad. Then, in anticipation of a scheme advanced by William Jennings Bryan years later, Paddock said states could be encouraged to construct "lateral tributaries" to the government trunk line.²¹ This federal-state network of railroads would effectively regulate rates charged by the private carriers, Paddock argued.

That Constitutional strictures could be raised to oppose the scheme of federal railroad construction Paddock denied. The government possessed abundant authority to engage in projects for promoting the general welfare. In this instance he maintained that farmers, forced to burn their crops because railroads rates, unregulated and completely unreasonable, precluded the possibility of realizing a profit after the expenses of marketing had been borne, must be

²⁰ The railroad plank in the Republican platform for 1874 said: ". . . while we recognize and appreciate the advantages derived by the people from a well-regulated system of railways we demand that these public highways should be rendered subservient to the public good. . . . we favor the proper exercise of the powers conferred upon the national government by the constitution to regulate commerce between the States, and to this end we recommend that the government establish and operate a double track railway from the Missouri River to the Atlantic seaboard." *Nebraska Party Platforms* (Lincoln, 1940), p. 56. The *Nebraska State Journal*, September 18, 1874, called "the attention of the farmers of Nebraska to this platform, and ask them if it is not much more tangible and sensible than the vague vaporings put forth by the other platforms in this State, about 'corporate monopolies' and 'State' intervention to reduce the rates of railroad fares and freights?" Quite obviously Nebraska Republicans, anxious to avoid offending the railroad interests in their own state, assumed that the real problem of railroad rate regulation lay in the eastern half of the country. Note again the comment of the *Nebraska State Journal*, August 21, 1874: "The East has as much hold on us now as we can afford to let her have." The culmination of the movement came with a memorial to Congress passed by a Republican-dominated state legislature requesting the construction of the proposed railroad. The *Nebraska House Journal*, 16th session (1881), p. 800.

²¹ For Bryan's plan see *The Commoner*, March 3, 1905, and September 21, 1906.

provided relief or the entire nation would suffer. Furthermore, Paddock did not believe that the burden of constructing the projected line would fall upon the taxpayers, for bonds would finance construction and "light tolls upon the traffic" would meet maintenance and "sinking fund" requirements. At some future time Congress might consider the construction of inter-state canals to provide cheap transportation, but the immediate need was to reduce railroad rates. In any event, Paddock concluded, "it would have been infinitely better for the Government and country if the Pacific railroads had been built by the Government itself on some such plan as I have indicated." Confident that Congress would acquiesce in his assessment of the railroad situation, Paddock believed that a project such as he had outlined would "settle the question as to the absolute and permanent agricultural and commercial supremacy of this country for all time."²²

These, then, were the specific programs set forth by Senator Paddock. As a man of the agrarian West, however, he could not resist a final emotional plea consistent with prevailingly sentimentality. He played lustily in conclusion upon the theme of the sturdy farmer and his role in preserving the democratic republic. But while he might extoll the virtues of the "sturdy yeoman," Paddock realistically saw that the farmer was partly responsible for his current predicament. Farmers, who once showed a deep interest in politics, had abdicated their leadership in the councils of the nation. Paddock hoped that "members of

²² Paddock's interest in railroad regulation remained strong throughout his career. In 1887 he said: "I am confident that legislation can be devised that will secure more prudent, conservative and conscientious railroad management. The Government supervision of railroads should begin with their construction. No project to build a railroad from one State into another should be permitted to be undertaken until authorized by a commission or by an official agency of some character to be constituted by congress. . . ." *New York Tribune*, November 18, 1887, clipping in Paddock scrapbook, Nebraska Historical Society. Albert Watkins, *Illustrated History of Nebraska*, III, 248, criticized Paddock's position on railroad regulation: "[Paddock] seemed convinced of the need for an aggressive and stern stand for western interests, and for some public control of railroads, but fell measurably short of the courage of his convictions."

the agricultural classes" could be persuaded to reassert themselves. The interests of the nation demanded the participation of the agricultural classes in government and politics, for

the farmers of our contry who own and cultivate farms are of all others most patriotic, for ownership, occupation, and use of the soil induce the growth of patriotism everywhere . . . [No people are] more conservative, more steadfast in their opposition to tyranny, to communism, to revolutionary movements of any kind against law and order, against the rights of life and property. . . .

The explanation for the political decline of the farmer Paddock found to be a simple one:

It is because farmers are satisfied with giving to their children only inferior education when it is apparent that of all the youths of the land they should receive the most careful training, the most thorough, the most general instruction. The practical agriculturist requires a knowledge of economical chemistry, of botany, of physiology, of entomology, of physics, or engineering, for all these may be brought into requisition in the farm management. He should be learned in political economy . . . he should give attention to literature and to philosophy; finally, he should be conspicuously cultured, mentally disciplined, enlightened, and refined, because our civilization demands it; because his class, being the largest, the most interested in the prosperity of the country, therefore the safest of all, should lead in affairs. . . .²³

Paddock's speech is of interest to the historian for several reasons. That a Senator from Nebraska could present to the Senate in 1878 a program which envisioned a considerable extension of Federal authority in the areas of scientific agriculture, services to the farmer, and regulation of the railroads, indicates that ideas formerly equated with the Populists more appropriately reflect sentiments which existed for a considerable length of time in the West. Furthermore, Paddock's lengthy address proves that many

²³ The Senator said much the same thing in his earlier speeches. "You give your children a fair average common school education, but when you have done this you stop . . . you give too little time to study, to literature, to philosophy, to political economy, to that cultivation and discipline of the mind in the higher degrees that qualify men everywhere for leaders." *Annual Address, Jefferson County Agricultural Association*, pp. 11-12. Paddock's concluding remarks are best considered within the context of the "agrarian myth" as discussed by Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land* (New York, 1957).

ideas, again viewed as Populistic in origin, were articulated in the period prior to the 1890's and under entirely different political circumstances. Indeed the continuing strength of the Republican party in Nebraska through the 1870's and 1880's derived in large measure from the willingness of that party to ask for governmental assistance to agriculture. Hence the Nebraska Populist who advocated more governmental "intervention" in the economy did not represent an ideological aberration. The Nebraska farmer reacted in the nineties as he had in the past. Confronted by adversity he called upon the government. The reaction emphasizes a basic conservatism in Populism; it proves as well that "radical" Populism, while perhaps indicative of a more vigorous, concerted demand for enlarged governmental responsibility, evolved in part from programs endorsed by the Nebraska Republican party and its leaders, such as Senator A. S. Paddock, in preceding years.