"IT CAN'T HAPPEN HERE" IN OREGON: THE JACKSON COUNTY
REBELLION, 1932-1933, AND ITS
1890s-1920s BACKGROUND

by

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A DISSERTATION

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During the Great Depression, economic distress and social unrest gave rise to various populist political movements in the United States. In Jackson County, Oregon, discontented citizens, many of them from rural areas, joined an insurgent movement known as the "Good Government Congress." Under the charismatic leadership of a wealthy orchardist and newspaper publisher named Llewellyn Banks, who intended the Congress eventually to spread to state and national levels, the movement challenged the local urban elite for control of county government.

The Good Government Congress used demagogic and inflammatory newspaper rhetoric, mass demonstrations, and economic boycott to
mobilize support and to effect political change. The resulting turmoil during 1932-33, dubbed the "Jackson County Rebellion" by the besieged elite's most prominent spokesman, Pulitzer Prize-winning editor Robert Ruhl, included electoral fraud, personal intimidation, and violence. The rebellion, which gained pointed state, regional, and national attention, ended with the defeat of the insurgents. The outbreak may have helped inspire Sinclair Lewis's 1935 novel, *It Can't Happen Here*.

During the height of the episode, opponents stressed the movement's "radical, 'Bolshevik'" nature; after its defeat, they emphasized its allegedly fascistic character. This study traces the Jackson County Rebellion by examining newspaper accounts, personal interviews, papers of major participants, official correspondence, criminal investigatory files, and trial transcripts. It demonstrates that the rebellion's roots actually lay in a forty-year-long local tradition of agrarian insurgency, which began with the People's party of the 1890s. The local Populists' powerful rural-based movement helped establish an enduring endemic tradition of "backcountry" resentment and political action directed at the local urban elite. Jackson County's powerful Ku Klux Klan movement of the early 1920s, which thrived on very similar populist and localist sentiments, was another major outbreak in this long-term tradition. The tumultuous Jackson County Rebellion of the 1930s was the insurgency's final and most dramatic episode.
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DEDICATION

To

Judy and Dan
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CHAPTER I

"JACKSON COUNTY REBELLION": A VIEW FROM NEW YORK CITY

In March 1933, writer Sinclair Lewis--then residing in New York City--was at the height of his fame. Lewis, whose novels of the 1920s brilliantly portrayed the complacency and philistinism of small-town America, had received the Nobel Prize for literature in 1930, the first American so honored. His often caustic comments on the absurdities of the national scene still found wide play in the press.

By 1933, a rising sense of panic had replaced the smugness of the previous decade. News of social and political upheavals growing out of the Great Depression filled the pages of New York papers in mid-March. In a much publicized nationwide radio address on March 17, Senator Huey Long warned of revolution unless America's wealth was redistributed.1 Sinclair Lewis may well have listened to the popular Louisianan's admonition that Friday, perhaps thinking that if anyone would lead the charge it might be Long himself. It is just as likely that Lewis, as an alert

observer of American politics, would have read an article in the front section of the New York Herald Tribune for that same day. Headlined "'Law and Order' Champion Held in Slaying of Oregon Constable," the brief piece described turmoil and tragedy in distant Jackson County, Oregon, where one Llewellyn A. Banks, the embattled leader of a local insurgent political movement, fatally shot a law officer sent to arrest him. The New York Times also carried the story, referring to the Oregon State Police as having to "storm the barricaded house" of Banks.\(^2\) Senator Long's prophecy may have gained added credibility by this echo from the provinces.

Sinclair Lewis left New York in April 1933 for a tour of Europe, where the rising tide of fascism showed him the dark new direction that revolutionary change could take. Back in New York the following spring, Lewis no doubt read with interest the Times' May 8, 1934, front-page story about that year's Pulitzer Prize awards; eight years before, already enjoying renown as a novelist, Lewis had created a sensation by publicly refusing the Pulitzer committee's prestigious award. His first item of interest probably would have been the 1934 award for the "best novel," which went to Georgia author Caroline Miller's Lamb in his Bosom, the story of a nineteenth-century backwoods family and a work

that was not destined to endure as a classic.

However, a special sidebar article in the *Times*, featuring the Pulitzer's journalism award for "meritorious public service," told a story possibly of more interest to Lewis. Titled "Newspaper Fought Rise of 'Dictator','" it described the 1933 events in Jackson County, Oregon, wherein Medford newspaper editor Robert W. Ruhl crusaded against a takeover of local government by armed supporters of would-be "dictator" Llewellyn Banks.\(^3\) Ruhl, who had described the episode as "the Jackson County Rebellion," was lauded by the Pulitzer committee as the voice of reason, a brave editor who withstood boycott and personal threats in his fight against political extremism.

Political extremism, particularly the potential for an American fascism, was much on the minds of liberal intellectuals like Sinclair Lewis that year. Huey Long continued his rise as a populist messiah; Father Charles Coughlin, the "radio priest" who soon voiced support of a fascist solution to the nation's economic woes, enjoyed immense popularity. Across the country, there proliferated "dozens of fanatical political groups, each giving fealty to its own crackpot leader."\(^4\) After Lewis's wife, journalist


\(^4\)Mark Schorer, *Sinclair Lewis: An American Life* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961), 608. Lewis's whereabouts and interests during the 1933-35 period are documented in Schorer's biography, pages 446-454, 573-574, 593-599, 608-
Dorothy Thompson, returned from her 1934 visit to Nazi Germany filled with foreboding, the novelist sat down in May 1935 and began to write *It Can't Happen Here*, a novel about the rise of a fascist dictatorship in America.

It is likely that the Jackson County affair and the crusading Oregon editor's resulting Pulitzer award, as reported in the New York newspapers, was known to Lewis, and that it helped—at least in a small way—Lewis's conceptualization of an incipient American fascism in his best-selling 1935 novel. The hero of *It Can't Happen Here*, after all, is—like Jackson County's Robert Ruhl—a small-town newspaper editor who refuses to be intimidated by totalitarian bullies. The book remained popular all during the 1930s, and it made the phrase "it can't happen here" an enduring American touchstone for any extremist, authoritarian threat to American democracy.

Whether Sinclair Lewis actually read the two brief

614, and 623-625.

5Lewis's papers, held in the Beinecke Library at Yale University, were reviewed for items (e.g., newspaper clippings about the 1933 shooting or the 1934 Pulitzer award) which might indicate the novelist's familiarity with the Jackson County episode. No newspaper clippings, other than reviews of Lewis's own works, are in the collection for the late 1920s-1930s, however, and the 1933-34 correspondence does not allude to the affair. Although Lewis's knowledge of the Oregon occurrence may remain problematic, given his presence in New York City during the times of the news coverage, it seems most likely that he did read about the events.
newspaper accounts of the "Jackson County Rebellion" is not an important question when turning to the history of the episode itself. Aside from its probable role as at least one of a number of events that inspired Lewis's novel, the tumult in the southern Oregon county is a significant case study of the general notion of "it can't happen here." It is also an important example of political insurgency and social turmoil in the Depression-era United States, and the West Coast/Pacific Northwest region in particular.

Many historians have described the 1932-33 period—the "winter of despair" when the Republicans' New Era lay in tatters and the New Deal was still just a campaign promise—as a time of unprecedented economic crisis in America. Southern Oregon was one locale where much of the citizenry became galvanized into a force that advocated direct action. Demagogic leaders encouraged and channelled popular discontent into a grass-roots movement of political extremism.

The Jackson County Rebellion took shape with the formation of a movement called the Good Government Congress. Led by Llewellyn Banks and a fellow newspaperman, Earl Fehl, the Good Government Congress coalesced around populist resentments; its growth was fueled by repeated charges of corruption and conspiracy against the local political
establishment. This insurgent crusade pitted "have-nots" against "haves," the rural hinterland against the urban elite. The movement's leaders—Banks foremost among them—used mass meetings, inflammatory newspaper rhetoric, and economic boycott to mobilize support among rural and working-class citizens. They employed electoral fraud and the threat of violence to effect political change. The Good Government Congress movement resulted not only from the Depression's severe economic distress, however. Jackson County's rebellion grew directly out of the area's forty-year heritage of agrarian, populist revolt. Examination of previous episodes of revolt in southern Oregon, in particular the People's party movement of the 1890s and important local aspects of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s, illuminates an ongoing struggle of rural-based insurgency versus the towns' commercial and political establishments. This struggle, marked by continuance of specific traits of political rhetoric and behavior over the course of four decades, culminated in the events of 1932–33.

The southern Oregon legacy of insurgent politics owed much—in terms of broad patterns of social and economic 6

6 The terms "Populist" and "populist," which are used often in this study, are not interchangeable. The former, upper-case term refers to the Populist or Peoples' party of the 1890s; the latter term (following the American Heritage Dictionary, Third Edition), is more broadly used to describe the political beliefs or rhetoric that support the rights and power of the "common people" in their struggle against the privileged elite. Lower-case populism, then, subsumes the historic movement known as Populism.
conflict—to the nation's much longer tradition of backcountry rebellion. Backcountry rebellions, characterized by rural uprising against the perceived wrongs of near or distant elites, marked American history from the colonial period on through the early twentieth century. The Jackson County Rebellion, when viewed as a forty-year local struggle with its final manifestation in the Good Government Congress, was one of the final chapters in this tradition of backcountry protest.

Trading the spatial distance of a contemporary observer like Sinclair Lewis for the temporal distance of the historian, then, the view of the Jackson County Rebellion as a direct outgrowth of the Great Depression still holds. But the peculiarities of the episode must be accounted for in part by first examining its historical taproot, by following the pattern of political conflict from a time long before names like Huey Long or Sinclair Lewis had become common currency.
CHAPTER II

INSURGENT DECADE, 1890-1900: JACKSON COUNTY'S POPULIST REVOLT

The local tradition of political insurgency and turmoil that culminated in the Jackson County Rebellion first took root in southern Oregon's fertile soil of nineteenth-century factionalism, localism, and agrarian discontent.

The Physical and Historical Setting

Since its founding in 1852, Jackson County has remained the wealthiest and most populous portion of southern Oregon. "Southern" Oregon, the traditional term for what is actually the southwestern quarter of the state, is largely an area of rugged mountains, dense forests, and turbulent rivers, the Rogue River being the most noteworthy of the region's streams. In a few locales, particularly the central portion of Jackson County, the mountainous terrain gives way to extensive valleyland. The fertile Rogue River Valley, which is bounded on the west by the Siskiyou Mountains—-with their gold and other mineral deposits—-and on the east by the volcanic Cascade Range, has guaranteed economic and
FIGURE 1. Map of Jackson County
political primacy to Jackson County in the region. Siskiyou Pass, in the southern part of the county, is the highest point along the main overland route between California and the Pacific Northwest; the Rogue River Valley's location along this travel route likewise has contributed to Jackson County's regional dominance. With its southern border formed by the Oregon-California boundary, Delaware-sized Jackson County forms the core of a four-county area, with Josephine County on the west, Douglas County to the north, and Klamath County on the east.

Jackson County, named for the nation's seventh president, was established in 1852, following the discovery of gold at Rich Gulch. First settled by miners and farmers, the county was the scene of numerous raids and skirmishes during the "Rogue River Indian Wars" of the mid-1850s. Subsequent to their military defeat in 1856, most of southern Oregon's surviving native peoples were removed to a distant reservation. Due to its comparative geographic isolation, the region then passed through a thirty-year-long "pioneer phase" of relatively slow economic growth. Cereal crops characterized the large valley farms that early Jackson County settlers had obtained under the generous terms of the 1850 Oregon Land Donation Act. In addition to grain farming, the county's other primary industries were livestock ranching, placer gold mining (including several sizeable hydraulic mine operations during the 1870s-1880s),
and small-scale lumbering for the local market.

Two settlements grew into thriving towns by the close of this period: Jacksonville, the county seat (and former Rich Gulch mining camp) located on the western margin of the Rogue River Valley, and Ashland, in the southern section of the valley at the foot of the Siskiyous and strategically situated on the main wagon road to California. The region's economic isolation ended in the mid-1880s, when the railroad completed construction through Jackson County. Linking southern Oregon with Portland, San Francisco, and the rest of the nation, the tracks bypassed Jacksonville in favor of Ashland, where the Southern Pacific Railroad built a major depot and a roundhouse to service the engines that steamed daily over Siskiyou Pass. In 1885, about ten miles east of Jacksonville on Bear Creek, near the center of the valley, the Southern Pacific established a new town, Medford.¹

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Jackson County on the Eve of the Populist Revolt

The coming of the railroad brought rapid growth to Jackson County. Ashland more than doubled its population to 1,784 between 1880 and 1890; formerly trailing the county seat in population, it had grown twice as large as Jacksonville. The county's population expanded by over forty percent during this period, and although "urban" growth accounted for a significant portion, many newcomers belonged to farm families that settled in the Rogue River Valley. During the decade preceding 1890, the county established a dozen new electoral precincts due to increased rural population; in that year, rural residents composed about three-quarters of Jackson County's 11,455 people.

Dating from the first visits by fur trappers and explorers in the 1820s and continuing through the initial

aera is: Southern Oregon Historical Society, Land in Common: An Illustrated History of Jackson County, Oregon (Medford: Southern Oregon Historical Society, forthcoming). I use the term "main Rogue River Valley" when referring to what present-day geographers commonly term the "Bear Creek Valley"; Bear Creek flows northwestward to the Rogue, passing through Ashland, Talent, Phoenix, Medford, and Central Point, and forming the main population axis of the valley.

American settlers' accounts of grass growing "belly high to a horse," the agricultural potential of the valley has evoked favorable comment. Complementing the railroad's publicity efforts during the 1880s and early 1890s, major West Coast newspapers such as the San Francisco Examiner and the Portland Oregonian promoted the valley in near-Utopian terms to prospective settlers as an "Oregon Paradise" and the "Italy of Oregon."³

The boosters' call reached east to the Great Plains, luring farmers and would-be farmers to southern Oregon. Jackson County newspapers for the 1890-91 period commonly mentioned the arrival of newcomers from Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, and Minnesota, and they included articles encouraging more to immigrate. Ashland boasted of its "Iowa Colony" of solid merchants and farmers recently arrived from that state, and the nearby agricultural community of Talent called for "more good citizens" from Nebraska.⁴ By the mid-1890s, the county's rural folk were cultivating more than 66,000 acres of prime cropland. Cereal farming remained the

³"An Oregon Paradise," (from Examiner), Ashland Tidings (hereinafter cited as AT), 6 June 1890, 1; "The Italy of Oregon (from Oregonian), DT, 28 Aug. 1891, 3. For the positive impressions of Hudson's Bay Company explorer Peter Skene Ogden, see: Jeff LaLande, First Over The Siskivous: Peter Skene Ogden's 1826-1827 Journey Through the Oregon-California Borderlands (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1987), 57-64.

norm; wheat dominated the annual harvest of between one-third and one-half million bushels of grain.\textsuperscript{5}

Although a few of Jackson County's rural citizens lived in the surrounding forested highlands, most of them resided in the Rogue River Valley. The main valley and smaller tributary valleys, such as the Applegate Valley to the west, formed an extensive agricultural hinterland that traded with the merchants of Jacksonville, Ashland, and, increasingly, Medford. A number of communities, ranging from small towns to tiny hamlets, served the farming population's immediate needs. Among the most important of these were: Phoenix and Talent, located between Medford and Ashland in the southern part of the valley; Eagle Point in the northeast; Gold Hill and Woodville (later renamed Rogue River) in the northwest; and Central Point, located on Bear Creek a few miles north of Medford. These communities became focal points of Populist organizing efforts during the early 1890s.\textsuperscript{6}

\textsuperscript{5}Acreage and production figures from county assessor's report, as given in: "Jackson County Census," DT, 10 Oct. 1895, 2; "Wealth of the State," DT, 17 Jan. 1895, 2.

\textsuperscript{6}Both Phoenix and Talent were situated on the railroad, as were Central Point, Gold Hill, and Woodville. Phoenix served the "Eden Precinct," a farming neighborhood located between Phoenix and Medford; Talent served the Wagner Creek Valley area; Eagle Point was the hub of the Little Butte Creek area; Gold Hill, on the north side of the Rogue River, was one of the main trading centers of the large "Table Rock" or "Sam's Valley" district; Woodville (later renamed Rogue River), also on the north bank of the river, served the scattered hinterland population of the Evans Creek Valley, near the Josephine County line; Central Point's rural population extended from Medford north to the Rogue River and Table Rock. The Applegate Valley, located in the
The long-term rivalry of Jacksonville and Ashland, expressed regularly by mild insults and sarcasm in the towns' newspapers, was both commercial and political. Under the dominance of Jacksonville, Jackson County had a strong Democratic tradition dating from earliest settlement by Border State emigrants. In the 1860 presidential election, the county voted overwhelmingly for the pro-slavery Democratic ticket of John Breckenridge and southern Oregon "native son" Joseph Lane; pro-Union Democrat Stephen A. Douglas garnered another quarter of the vote and Abraham Lincoln came in third. After the Civil War, Jackson County consistently gave solid majorities to Democratic presidential, congressional, and gubernatorial candidates through the 1880s. In contrast, many other Oregon counties steadily transformed from Democratic to Republican majorities during these years.

Charles Nickell, owner and editor of Jacksonville's Siskiyous west of the Rogue River Valley, contained about 500-600 people in 1890, most of them farmers and miners ("Population," DT, 8 Jan. 1892, 2).

For an example, see: "Jacksonville items," AT, 15 Feb. 1894, 2, wherein the Ashland editor portrays Jacksonville as a "staid old town," putting on intellectual airs while hosting a county school-teachers' meeting.

 Unless otherwise indicated, national and state election results are from: Burton W. Onstine, Oregon Votes: 1858-1972 (Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1973). Precinct tallies are from the "Official Vote of Jackson County" tables that appear in post-election issues of the Jacksonville, Ashland, or Medford newspapers.
Democratic Times, dominated the local Democracy. Among other prominent party leaders were Jacksonville merchants Henry Klippel, Jeremiah Nunan, and T. G. Reames. Representing the interests of Jacksonville's old-line commercial and professional elite, and supported by the predominantly Democratic farmers who had settled the valley in the 1850s-60s, the party of Andrew Jackson controlled the courthouse for a generation. By the late 1880s, however, Ashland's growth translated into a direct political challenge to Jacksonville. Prosperous Ashland grew into a firmly Republican town during the 1880s. William Leeds, owner/editor of the Ashland Tidings, promoted the Republican party's fortunes at every opportunity; he and other affluent Ashlanders such as George Dunn and James McCall dominated the ranks of the county's Republican organization. Editor Nickell, hoping to bestir Democratic loyalists to the polls in 1890, quoted the Republicans of an adjacent county as gloating that "the old Democratic stronghold of Jackson County, just across the line," would soon become one more county "redeemed from the grip of Bourbonism since the advent of the railroad."

By the early 1890s, Jackson County government evolved

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9Ashland's overwhelming dominance of county Republican ranks is revealed by voting returns as well as by the geographic apportionment of delegates to the county conventions; for example, see: "County Convention Call," AT, 19 Feb. 1892, 2.

10"Democrats of Jackson...," DT, 30 May 1890, 2.
into a political stalemate between competing factions in Ashland and Jacksonville. Despite constant Republican warning about the power of the wicked "Jacksonville Ring," the county experienced a divided government—one which split the county commission and other local offices between the parties, with the Democrats retaining a slim majority of the important elective positions. Election returns indicated that political loyalty and competition clearly had a geographic basis. William Leeds, who regularly traded vitriolic personal insults with Charles Nickell, admitted that "section and personal matters played an important part" in electoral results. National party principles no doubt functioned in the contests between the competing town elites (both the Jacksonville and Ashland newspapers carried numerous partisan statements on the tariff and other great national issues of the day), but local questions—patronage, individual tax assessments, potential transfer of the county seat and other "sectional" issues—certainly were central.

The massive influx of people following completion of

11 "Jackson County Official Vote," AT, 13 June 1890, 3.

12 "The Election," AT, 10 June 1892, 2. The strongly "geo-political" nature of Jackson County's division must be qualified; some prominent Republicans (county clerk Max Muller among them) were Jacksonville residents and a few Democratic leaders (such as county judge James Neil) lived in or near Ashland. Prominently diverging from Jacksonville's strong allegiance to the Democratic party was its pioneer banker and leading citizen Cornelius C. Beekman (originally from New York State). As a Republican, Beekman ran for Governor of Oregon in 1878, losing to his Democratic opponent by only 48 votes.
the railroad in 1887 was a potentially unsettling element in the county's political balance. Few of these newcomers had any allegiance to existing rival factions, and the experience back east of various third-party campaigns during the Gilded Age may have loosened their partisan attachments. Consequently, the loyalty of new rural voters, dispersed throughout the county, proved difficult for either party to capture. A more ominous development, for Jacksonville and Ashland merchants in particular, was the explosive growth of Medford. The railroad town, where in 1885 there had been only a scattering of farms, by 1890 supported a sprawling community of just under one-thousand. Five years later, at 1,414 people, Medford was twice the size of Jacksonville and rapidly gaining on Ashland.\footnote{"Jackson County Census," DT, 10 Oct. 1895, 2. By the time of the early-1930s "Jackson County Rebellion," Medford had long since become the metropolis of the county.} Although in 1895 Charles Nickell tartly dismissed a proposal to remove the county seat to Medford as "entirely ridiculous," leaders of both Jacksonville and Ashland probably realized their towns were threatened with economic and political eclipse. The Medford Mail flatly stated, rather than prophesied, the situation in 1893:
That Medford is truly the business center of this great Rogue river valley cannot be made more apparent than by... the great number of teams seen tied to the several hitching places about town. Last Saturday... Eighth Street was lined with teams on either side... [the main streets] wore the appearance of Wall street, only ours were peopled with silver advocates instead of gold bugs.

The Rise of the People's Party

During 1891-92, the newly founded Farmers' Alliance organization of Jackson County rapidly transformed itself into the People's party, challenging the two old parties for control of the courthouse. The Jackson County campaign was one small part of a widespread Populist insurgency then sweeping the South and the West. Despite widely differing historical interpretations of the "Populist Revolt" of the 1890s, there is substantial agreement as to its origins and aims. The last quarter of the nineteenth century witnessed tremendous acceleration in the transformation of America from an agricultural to an industrial nation. A time of economic prosperity for some segments of American society, the period also brought severe economic distress to others, particularly to the farmers of the South and Great Plains. The former, composed of both white and black sharecroppers, were prisoners of the pernicious "crop-lien" system; the grain farmers of the Plains States likewise found themselves

""That Medford...," Medford Mail (hereinafter cited as MM), 15 Sept. 1893, 2.
caught in a web of mortgage debt, high railroad rates, and low prices for their harvest. In many areas, neither of the two major parties seemed capable of, or seriously interested in, addressing the farmers' situation. Forming self-help organizations during the late 1870s and early 1880s that grew into the powerful Farmers' Alliances of the late 1880s, farmers forged fragile links with restive industrial wageworkers and urban reformers that, by 1891, took shape as the People's, or Populist, party.¹⁵ The movement spread

rapidly to the Far Western states, including the mining and
wheat farming areas of the Pacific Northwest.

Southern Oregon, with Jackson County in the lead,
became one hotbed of agrarian discontent during the 1890s.
Three major factors spurred the third party's rise among
southern Oregon farmers: financial distress due to poor
harvests and low prices, resentment of monopoly as
represented by local flour mills and especially the
absentee-owned railroad, and frustration with high taxes and
perceived corruption in local government.16

16Two standard works on Western Populism are: Karel D.
Bischa, Western Populism: Studies in an Ambivalent
Conservatism (Lawrence, KA: Coronado Press, 1976) and Robert
W. Larson, Populism in the Mountain West (Albuquerque:
University of New Mexico Press, 1986). Bicha, although
rejecting Hofstadter's interpretation, holds an essentially
negative view of the Populists as narrow, fiscal
conservatives who hid behind a smokescreen of reform
rhetoric. Larson rescues Western Populism from the
"silverite" label given it by Hicks and others; he
demonstrates that Populism in the Far West was indeed within
the mainstream of the agrarian movement. Although dealing
with a silver state, the following work also shows that the
Idaho People's party was far more than simply a silver
"shadow movement": William J. Gaboury, Dissension in the
Rockies: A History of Idaho Populism (New York: Garland
Publishing, 1988). The only comprehensive treatments of the
People's party in Oregon are: Marion Harrington, "The
Populist Movement in Oregon, 1890-1896" (M.A. thesis,
University of Oregon, 1935) and David B. Griffiths,
"Populism in the Far West, 1890-1900" (Ph.D. dissertation,
University of Washington, 1967). Both works, however,
concentrate on the state's Portland-area Populist
intelligentsia and give little discussion on southern
Oregon. In addition, both Harrington and Griffiths
erroneously attribute Jackson County's strong Populist
sympathies to its mining industry; however, southern
Oregon's modest mining economy was based on gold, not
silver, and the region's Populist strength clearly derived
from agrarian discontent.
During the late 1880s and early 1890s, Jackson County farmers, like those elsewhere in the United States, suffered from the worldwide depression in crop prices. Due to poor growing seasons, the harvests of 1889 and 1890 were "exceptionally trying ones" in the Rogue River Valley, but low market prices and high railroad shipping rates occasioned the most grumbling from local farmers. As the county's grainfields ripened during the summer of 1891, newspapers spoke of the valley's "enormous" wheat crop and predicted "dollar a bushel" prices. By the late August harvest time, and despite continuing newspaper promises of a "wheat boom," the actual price for southern Oregon wheat, including more than fifteen carloads already shipped to San Francisco, brought disappointingly low prices of sixty to sixty-five cents a bushel. The following year brought further gloom. The very lean 1892 wheat crop (due in part to a widespread infestation of wild oats), received only a fifty-cent price, deepening the farmers' financial distress.¹⁷

Anti-monopolistic sentiment increased during this period. By 1891, less than half a dozen commercial flouring


Much of the discussion in this chapter relies on: Jeff LaLande, "Populism in Southern Oregon: The 'Little Kansas' of Jackson County," Pacific Historical Review, forthcoming.
mills operated in Jackson County. Fearing a milling trust, farmers labelled them "the mill combination in this little valley," and many wheatgrowers preferred to ship their produce out of the region for processing.18 Railroad charges, however, put the farmer in a nearly impossible position. During the 1891 harvest, the Southern Pacific Railroad charged twenty-two cents a bushel for valley grain shipped to San Francisco warehouses. For its part, the "S.P." refused to cooperate with the state railroad commission's 1891 freight rate investigation; the commission enacted a ten percent reduction in grain shipment rates, which the railroad delayed with court action.19

Southern Oregon's great winter storm and flood of 1890 underscored the dependence of the isolated Rogue River Valley on the railroad. The storm also left financial havoc in its wake which inflamed local political divisions. Deep snows in the passes blocked rail connections to the north and south and disrupted telegraph communication for much of

18"Some of our farmers...," DT, 15 May 1891, 2; "Eagle Point News," MM, 28 Jan. 1892, 2. The Farnham, or Eagle, Flouring Mill of Ashland quoted a 1892 contract milling charge of ten cents per bushel ("To the Farmers of the Rogue River Valley," DT, 4 Mar. 1892, 3); other mills were in Jacksonville, Medford, Central Point, and Eagle Point. The county's flouring mills were separate, locally owned operations, not part of a syndicate; the accusation of a "milling trust" may have reflected more fear than reality, although informal collusion between mill owners can not be discounted.

19"Fred Fradenburg reports...," AT, 27 Nov. 1891, 3; "Transportation rates over the S.P....," DT, 4 Mar. 1892, 3; "Cutting the S.P.R.R. Freight Rates," AT, 17 Aug. 1891, 3.
January. Subsequent flooding brought on by warming "chinook" winds and heavy rains weakened railroad trestles and carried away at least ten county bridges, including one expensive new span across Bear Creek at Medford. By the spring election, the "bridge question" embroiled southern Oregon's political factions in arguments over alleged high costs and incompetence involved in the pre-flood bridges' construction, as well as the question of their replacement. The controversy continued through the June election of 1892, when what the Tidings dubbed the Democratic "bridge building epoch" formed one part of a larger political issue: Jackson County's deepening debt (reportedly $175,000 in that year) and rising taxes. Democrat Nickell defended the county government from Republican Leeds' incessant editorial attacks, but the issue took hold in the electorate amidst charges of mismanagement, unfair taxation, and outright graft. Valley farmers from Woodville to Eagle Point, some of them threatened with mortgage foreclosure, expressed outrage at local "cliques," in particular the Democratic "Jacksonville Ring."20

20 Oregon's state and local elections were held on the first Monday in June until after 1900, when Progressive-era legislation resulted in conformity with the date of national elections in November. "County Finances," DT, 25 Mar. 1892, 1; "The County Debt," AT, 1 Apr. 1892, 2; "A Sketch," Southern Oregon Mail (hereinafter cited as SOM), 26 Aug. 1892, 2; "The Ring Is Not Dead Yet," SOM, 13 May 1892, 2.
During the early months of 1890, the front pages of the Democratic Times and the Tidings increasingly included news from the South and the Great Plains about the activities of the Farmers' Alliance. The Alliance movement's "St. Louis Platform," its "Ocala Demands," and other political developments counted as newsworthy if distant events that year. By mid-year, however, Farmers' Alliance "lecturers" had begun to arrive in the Far West to spread the gospel of grass-roots organization, economic cooperation, and political reform. In March 1891, southern Oregon's first Farmers' Alliance chapter formed in Jackson County under the leadership of Phoenix resident Samuel Holt. Although Holt, Talent farmer William Breese, and Holt's Phoenix neighbor the Reverend Ira Wakefield were among the primary organizers, female "lecturers" Jessie Beeson and Stella Duclose encouraged participation by women in Alliance activities as well. As in the Great Plains, southern Oregon farm women were highly important in the grass-roots development of the Alliance movement.  


Both Holt and Breese had been active in the local branch of Oregon's short-lived Union Party. The Union Party formed in 1889 as an alliance of the state's Prohibitionist, Knights of Labor, Grange, and women's suffrage organizations. In 1890, the party platform had a strong prohibition plank, and it called for a "Greenback"-like monetary system, anti-trust regulation, the Australian ballot, "equal pay for equal work for both sexes," and other reforms. None of the Union Party's candidates received more
Six "sub-alliances" or local chapters formed in Jackson County before June 1891, and by the end of the summer, the county contained more than twenty separate chapters, scattered from Evans Creek in the northwest to the farmlands south of Ashland. Alliance spokesmen and spokeswomen focused on a wide range of issues, the "monopoly mill

than five percent of the total in the Jackson County election; it drew the most votes in Ashland, a prohibitionist stronghold where churches were dominated by members of the Women's Christian Temperance Union. See: Harrington, "The Populist Movement in Oregon," 19-24; "Union Party Convention," DT, 24 Apr. 1890, 2; "Democrats who feel kindly...," DT, 23 May 1890, 2; "Official Vote of Jackson County-1890," DT, 6 June 1890, 2.

Jessie Beeson, seventeen years old in 1891, belonged to a prominent pioneer family of the Wagner Creek/Talent area. John Beeson, her grandfather, had been forced to flee the region during the Indian War of 1855-56 because of his open support for the Indians' cause. The Beesons remained important in local political and educational endeavors into the twentieth century. Jessie Beeson, who married in 1894, died at the age of twenty-four from complications of childbirth. Stella Duclose (or Duclos), a Nebraska emigrant, was twenty-two years old in 1891; the 1900 census lists her as a single woman, working as a servant in a Medford household.

For a detailed treatment of the important public role of women in the Alliance and early Populist movements of the Great Plains, see: MaryJo Wagner, "Farms, Families, and Reform: Women in the Farmers' Alliance and Populist Party" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Oregon, 1986). The Populists' attention to farm women as a key political (albeit unfranchised) component in the agrarian movement had solid precedent in southern Oregon. The region's rural women had been subordinate yet active participants in local political endeavors as members of the Patrons of Husbandry, or Grange, since the 1870s-80s. The Grange sponsored education and self-improvement efforts on behalf of farm wives and daughters, it gave women equal membership status within the organization, and it often publicly supported greater political rights for women in the larger society. See: D. Sven Nordin, Rich Harvest: A History of the Grange, 1867-1900 (Jackson: University of Mississippi, 1974); Donald Marti, Women of the Grange: Mutuality and Sisterhood in Rural America, 1866-1920 (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991).
combination" prominent among them. In mid-September 1891, a large number of Alliance members "from different portions of southern Oregon" met at Jackson County's Central Point fairgrounds for a "Grand Rally." The Alliance rally began with a parade and ended with an "old-fashioned basket picnic" with musical accompaniment. It featured state lecturer Martin V. York speaking on "social, economical, and commercial questions...from an Alliance standpoint."\(^2\)

In January 1892, County Alliance secretary William Breese presented a list of "Alliance Demands" to the local press. These included a call for a far more aggressive railroad commission, one composed of "fearless, honest and capable men." The document also called for state relief from mortgage foreclosure, particularly from the "heartless Shylocks" who dispossessed "wives and children of the unfortunate...[from] the sacred spot which they called 'home,'" and it proposed a ten-month stay on all such debt executions. At the local level, the Alliance demanded tax reduction, an "economy" program by the profligate county government, and an end to corrupt rule by "wire-pullers and

\(^2\)"Alliance Lecture at Ashland," AT, 11 Sept. 1891, 3; "Some Alliance Argument," AT, 10 July 1891, 2; "Grand Alliance Rally," DT, 4 Sept. 1891, 3; "County Alliance Meeting," DT, 11 Sept. 1891. One of the most active chapters was Talent's "Progress Alliance." Meeting every fourth Saturday of the month at the United Men of Liberty Hall (a venerable community gathering place erected by local freethinkers), the Progress Alliance claimed about seventy active members during its first year. See: "Talent Items," AT, 1 July 1892, 3.
rings." The Demands, admitting the "tremendous influence" of the local press, invited fair criticism of Alliance positions but threatened boycott of "any newspaper that opposes [the Alliance] with abuse, misrepresentation or ridicule."²³

Mimicking but accelerating a process of political evolution that had occurred in the Plains States in 1889-1890, the Farmers' Alliance in southern Oregon served as something of an organizational stalking horse for the new People's party. A national "People's party," springing directly from Alliance membership, began to take shape in Kansas, Nebraska, and South Dakota during the summer of 1890. Consciously based on the Plains model of party formation, Jackson County's transition from Alliance to People's party occurred rapidly during 1891. As one Talent member admitted, "the Alliance seems to be the school for the People's party. Some are born in the party."²⁴ By December, Alliance leaders Holt, Breese, Wakefield, and James Marksbury of Gold Hill emerged as the main officers of the local People's party. The party's initial public statement unfurled the banner of reform; the Reverend Wakefield wrote in a style that typified Populist rhetoric

²³"Local Alliance Demands," DT, 15 Jan. 1892, 2. In regard to the possibly anti-Semitic overtone of the term "heartless Shylocks," see the discussion below on the issue of anti-Jewish sentiment in Jackson County of the 1890s.

²⁴"Talent Items," AT, 1 July 1892, 2.
elsewhere in the nation:

Believing that for thirty years the legislation of our country has been in favor of monopolies...destructive of a republican form of government....further that the Democratic and Republican parties are so hopelessly under the dominant power and control of organized capital as to render them ineffectual....Now, therefore, we...ask the aid and co-operation of all who believe in a reform from the evils herein set forth...This is a struggle of the people against the plutocracy, and being fully aware of our enemies' strength...let all our friends help.25

People's Party Clubs proliferated throughout the county's rural communities during the winter of 1891-92, their membership generally coinciding with that of the local Alliances. Both Charles Nickell and William Leeds published a steady stream of pleas to rural voters during the spring. Nickell, claiming that "the real People's party is still the democratic party," counseled wayward Democrats to "return home to the old fold" and not to be duped by the Republicans who stood to gain from Populist strength. Leeds, sensing profit from the local Populist movement, softened his rhetoric while pointing out the dreamy impracticability of many Populist proposals. Both men obviously were troubled by the insurgent challenge.26


Who were Jackson County's leading Populists? And how did they weld the support of widely scattered farmers into a coherent local political movement? Profiles of fourteen 1892 Populist leaders or candidates indicate that most were farmers, but with two schoolteachers and one merchant among them. Only one of these men was a native Oregonian; all but one of the immigrants had arrived in the region after 1880. Most had grown up in New England or the Middle West; two were from Kentucky, one from Tennessee, and one from Texas. Although former Republicans (several of them Union Army veterans) outnumbered Democrats, the Jackson County People's party stressed the bipartisan nature of its leaders' backgrounds. Indeed, the party's rank-and-file supporters tended to be former Democratic voters.  

Populist leaders ranged from full-time farmers such as Stephen Nealon of Sam's Valley and William Bradshaw of Eagle Point (each of whom filled a symbolic "Cincinnatus" role by leaving a home in the valley foothills to serve the cause as state representative and county commissioner respectively) to committed reformers such as William Breese, a former Greenbacker, and Samuel Holt. Holt, an ex-Republican from east Tennessee, had come to southern Oregon in 1881. One of Oregon's delegates to the 1892 national convention in Omaha, Holt went on to become president of the state Alliance. Even the Tidings admitted that Holt, the local party's

mover-and-shaker, was a "clear, forceful speaker" who effectively made the Populist case to voters.28 The local two-party press was far less respectful of Ira Wakefield, whom Charles Nickell scorned as a "calamity" and a "political preacher" who was "pregnant with theories."29 A Civil War veteran and ardent prohibitionist from Massachusetts, the Reverend Wakefield brought an old Yankee style of moralistic fervor to the Rogue River Valley. He seemed drawn to the campaign of reform like a moth to the flame. The Populist Southern Oregon Mail carried Wakefield's weekly letters, full of rhetorical trumpet calls to the troops.30 Like Holt and Nealon, Wakefield remained one of the party's "middle-roader" faithful until the end.

People's party leaders in southern Oregon made effective use of the ready-made public symbols and political tools--the grass-roots "movement culture"--first developed by Populist organizers in the Great Plains. The movement culture imparted a sense of independence and self-respect to downtrodden farmers through a variety of ways. Symbolic language that stressed solidarity, particularly the use of "Brother" and "Brethren" in addressing their fellows, was

29"It has become evident...," DT, 7 May 1896, 2; "Rev. Ira Wakefield," DT, 11 May 1896, 2; "The Populist bosses...," DT, 14 May 1896, 2.
30SOM, Aug.-Nov. 1892, passim. Wakefield, who did not serve as a full-time minister, was associated with the Methodist Episcopal church.
very common among local Alliance members. The tone of numerous editorial letters displayed a sense of religious fervor and confidence in the power of unity to effect change. In an effort to make the organization "more interesting and attractive," particularly to "the young women," literary discussions supplemented the usual political lectures at county Alliance meetings. Periodically, large Alliance picnics and Populist rallies took place at different locations in the valley. These events helped to cement the bonds of political association among distant rural residents. One May 1892 picnic, hosted by Brother Nealon's Table Rock Alliance on the north bank of the Rogue River in Sam's Valley, brought a large crowd of self-proclaimed "Old Hay Seeds" to listen to Populist candidates. The following year a similar "grand picnic," followed by dancing, took place at Beeson's Grove near Talent.31

In addition to the use of symbolic language, frequent and diversified chapter meetings, and mass rallies held in a pastoral setting, Jackson County Populists attempted to forge self-reliance through cooperative economic ventures. In November 1891, Talent's "Progress" Alliance, "tired of

being robbed by the monopoly mill association," endeavored to form a joint-stock company to start an Alliance flouring mill and general store. Despite several months of planning and promotional efforts, the project never materialized, nor did other cooperative Alliance mills planned for Sam's Valley and Central Point. If Populists' did not succeed at commercial cooperation in southern Oregon, they did manage to establish a viable "reform press" as an alternative to the old-party newspapers. The Medford Mail, founded in 1889, took a generally non-partisan stand until after its 1891 purchase by Felix G. Kertson, who turned it into a Populist organ in 1892. Renamed the Southern Oregon Mail to broaden its rural appeal, and with a masthead proclaiming it "A Paper Of, By and For the People!," Kertson's newspaper served as a lively reform journal from April through the November election. During the 1894 and 1896 elections, the normally Democratic Valley Record of Ashland took on a marked Populist hue prior to the two parties' fusion. Although not as vociferously pro-reform as the Mail, the Valley Record provided thorough coverage of

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32"A move is on foot...," DT, 11 Dec. 1891, 3; "Talent Items," AT, 27 Nov. 1891, 2; "Talent items," AT, 11 Dec. 1891, 2; "Rogue River Items," AT, 26 Feb. 1892, 3; "Alliance Mill," SOM, 22 Apr. 1892, 2; "A Talk on Flour and Wheat," MM, 15 Dec. 1893, 2. The cooperative proposals seem to have been victims of internal disputes, inter-community rivalries, and defensive price-cutting by the commercial mills; an announcement for dramatically better terms from Ashland's Eagle Mill occurs on the same page as news of one of the Alliance proposals.
local People's party activities and positions without the sometimes biting sarcasm of editorial opponents Leeds and Nickell. And throughout the period, the Populists' regional weekly, the *Northwest Reform Journal*, circulated widely in Jackson County.33

**1892-1896: The Populists' Electoral Challenge and Success**

Bitterly opposed by the local elites and isolated from the People's party's main geographic wellsprings, Jackson County's Populist leaders nevertheless built a grass-roots organization and mounted an aggressive challenge to the local political order.**

The Alliance's original 1892 "Demands"—railroad regulation, mortgage relief, and the electoral reforms of the national party's "Omaha Platform"—held strong appeal for the valley's hard-pressed farmers. But local resentments dominated their communications with the press. In a typical example, one *Mail* letter-writer, signing himself "A Kicker from Woodville," complained that, despite exorbitant county taxes and inflated salaries, the

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33In addition to local news and farming tips, the *Mail* informed readers about the merits of free silver, the sub-treasury plan, and other national reform issues. Kertson sold the *Mail* to Republican A. S. Bliton in early 1893; Bliton, wishing to cast off the Populist mantle, quickly returned the paper to its original name and changed its motto to the more fitting "Man Was Born To Hustle."
"Jacksonville Ring's road department" failed to maintain rural roads. Citing "sumps" and "stumps" that threatened physical injury to farmers on their way to market, he admonished that "it is a long lane that has no turn and justice will yet prevail."34 In early 1892, with editor Kertson urging the "large farming element of this county to take hold of the forthcoming election to build good government from the ground up," an Applegate Valley Populist simply stated, "We have had thirty years of [local misrule]...It has driven us to starvation. Give us a change."35 Ira Wakefield, the tireless, ubiquitous party organizer, called upon his fellow Populists to "gird up your loins...fight, we will--conquer, we must....to save our country from the power of 'enthroned capital.'"36

With local issues such as taxes and "corruption" giving strong emotional appeal to the People's party in 1892, visits of nationally known Populists added further excitement to the forthcoming elections. Ironically, it was the detested Southern Pacific Railroad's train that brought General James B. Weaver to the Rogue River Valley on May 10. Weaver stepped off the train at Medford and proceeded to the county fairgrounds where the crowd awaited him. "Wagon load

34"The Ring is Not Dead Yet," SOM, 26 Aug., 1892, 2.

35"Why Not The Sub-Treasury...?," SOM, 29 Apr. 1892, 2.
J. F. Wisner, the Applegate Valley resident, expended much of his letter's space in castigating "Shylock."

36"Our Constituency," SOM, 17 June 1892, 2.
after wagon load" of expectant people had come to hear the "grand and gentlemanly" speaker, soon to become the Populists' man in the 1892 presidential race.\textsuperscript{37} Less than two weeks later the "Kansas Cyclone" arrived in the valley. The dynamic Populist orator Mary Elizabeth Lease spoke at Ashland, Medford, Jacksonville, and Gold Hill. The Mail claimed that "never before had there been such an uprising" in the county as the crowds that turned out to hear Lease. Famous for allegedly advising Kansas farmers to "raise less corn and more hell," Lease delighted her Jackson County listeners by debunking the Republicans' blame of over-production for farm ills with the quip, "the only over production that Kansas...ever had, was an over production of fools."\textsuperscript{38}

Jackson County's June 1892 local election was, as Republican editor Leeds had predicted, a tight "three-cornered fight," and one that the fledgling Populist organization, by a very slim margin, failed to win. No People's party candidates were victorious. However, the November presidential election, after a campaign marked by enthusiastic "Weaver Rallies" throughout the valley, redeemed the insurgents' hopes. The astounding Jackson County vote for General Weaver, fifty percent of the three-

\textsuperscript{37}"Gen. Weaver Picnic," SOM, 13 May 1892, 2.

\textsuperscript{38}"There was a big crowd...," AT, 10 June 1892, 3; "The Kansas Cyclone," SOM, 20 May 1892, 2; "Something Out of Joint," MM, 10 Jan. 1896, 7.
way race, showed the Populists' solid gains among farmers and Medford residents.

Flushed with the scent of victory, the Mail predicted the local People's party would "certainly carry everything" in 1894; this confidence proved well founded. The party's momentum continued to grow during 1893 and 1894, thanks in part to a financial scandal that implicated members of the "Jacksonville Ring." Both Populists and Republicans joined in howls of outrage. At the opening of the spring 1894 campaign, a local People's party leader exhorted delegates to the county convention with a vision of sweeping political change achieved through solidarity: "We are on the eve of a revolution in Jackson County and in Oregon....Our victory is in unity." Another leader echoed the theme, urging all who wanted the "political affairs of our state, particularly of our county, bettered" to join in the "noble work of reform"; he predicted that with a Populist victory, the "corruption

39"In another column...," SOM, 17 June 1892, 2.

40 "The unfortunate situation...," AT, 22 Jan. 1894, 2; "Captured a White Elephant," AT, 8 Mar. 1894, 3; "The Populist Convention," AT, 12 Mar. 1894, 3; "Was Benson Responsible?" MM, 25 May 1894, 2. Whereas Populists condemned the "fraud, deceit, and robbery" of the Ring, Republican leaders also indicted Populist voters, as former Democrats, for their part in having elected the "good old Jeffersonian democratic county court until they became alarmed at the result" and then blindly running "into the arms" of a new party; "Jacksonville Ring," AT, 15 Mar. 1894, 2.
at Jacksonville will be exposed to view."\(^{41}\)

One wider concern weighing on local voters' minds was the deepening national depression—the ongoing effects of the "Panic of 1893." Farm mortgage foreclosures in the Rogue River Valley gained increased press coverage, and by 1894 talk of an impending nationwide railway strike further heightened farmers' fears.\(^{42}\) During the spring, the Southern Pacific Railroad carried growing numbers of unemployed men, riding the rails to points north and south. The 1894 "tramp nuisance" brought an unusually large influx of jobless men to the valley, some of them notably aggressive. Perhaps not unmindful that his party called for sympathy for the plight of such men, Populist leader James Marksbury, armed with a double-barreled shotgun, drove off a "band of tramps" that tried to break in to his Gold Hill store late one night in March.\(^{43}\) In mid-April, about "50 hobos...a pretty hard set" arrived in Ashland on an evening freight train from the south. The town's marshal, telling the men to move on, was met with curses and demands for food. Only a few days earlier, about forty jobless men

\(^{41}\)"The People's Party," Valley Record, 8 Mar. 1894, 2; hereinafter cited as VR. "Notice to People's Party clubs," VR, 8 Mar. 1894, 2.

\(^{42}\)An Eagle Point correspondent (AT, 12 Feb. 1894, 2) wrote of one ranch's foreclosure sale that brought out "about 100 men and boys...representing all the cash on Butte creek."

\(^{43}\)"The Tramp Nuisance," DT, 5 Apr. 1894, 3.
under the leadership of "Captain" Charles E. Kain had clambered down from a Southern Pacific freight on their way to Portland. An "orderly set" that called itself "Company A, Second Regiment," the group soon left Jackson County to join the swelling "Industrial Army" of unemployed men, Jacob S. Coxey's "petition in boots," that was on its way towards the nation's capital.44

The 1894 campaign thus got underway amid an atmosphere of local and national crisis. Jackson County Populists trumpeted the state party's call for a reformist mortgage tax law.45 The growing party attracted to its ranks some aggressive new members who rapidly came to the fore. Prominent among them was former Democrat John A. Jeffrey, Populist candidate for state representative. Although Jackson County Populists had the first of their many internal squabbles during the campaign (due largely to the actions of Jeffrey and other newcomers), they swept the June election. Voters opened the doors of the "Ring"-infested


courthouse to a number of Populist officeholders, and they sent Samuel Holt, John Jeffrey, and Stephen Nealon to Salem as freshmen legislators.46

Continuing their electoral juggernaut two years later, in 1896 local Populists geared up for local and state elections as well as the epic presidential race. Likened by the Medford Mail to "a swarm of bees," numerous rural people arrived in town for the Populists' April convention.47 The Tidings' William Leeds, who dourly reported the June local election results as "almost a clean sweep" for the People's party, joined other Republican voices in denouncing the "Popocrats" after the national Democrats' and Populists' fusion under William Jennings Bryan. Hoping to paint local Populists as reckless insurgents and wild-eyed vigilantes, Leeds gave prominent space to reports of "White Caps in Sam's Valley," where a large band of masked men purportedly threatened to lynch, for reasons not stated, a resident of Stephen Nealon's Populist stronghold.48 Despite the Republican's entreaties, southern Oregon--like many other rural areas in the West--bucked McKinley's national tide. Jackson County gave Bryan over sixty percent of its vote;


47"Last Saturday," MM, 17 Apr. 1896, 2.

statewide, McKinley won with just over half of the vote. Leeds reported with equal parts pride and shock that Ashland was "the only town along the railroad in Southern Oregon" that gave a majority to McKinley. Precinct returns show consistent Populist dominance in almost all of the county's hinterland. Rural voters, whether their communities had formerly tended to vote Democratic or Republican, formed the new Populist majority. Jacksonville and Ashland remained bastions of the Democracy and Republicanism respectively, but Medford was a political battleground throughout the period. Medford voters held the key to the county's political future.

In the Courthouse: Populist Performance and Failure

Outsiders in 1892, members of southern Oregon's People's party mounted a successful insurgency through the ballot box. Despite local Populists' ringing campaign rhetoric, however, their achievements in office, whether at the Salem capitol or the county courthouse, proved quite

49"A Good Advertisement," AT, 12 Nov. 1896, 3. The notable exception to Ashland's stalwart Republicanism occurred with the 1892 presidential race, when the North Ashland precinct gave a plurality to Populist Weaver. This precinct included the town's lower economic class neighborhoods, including the new "Railroad Addition" where many Southern Pacific employees lived. In 1896, however, North Ashland returned a narrow majority for McKinley, while the town's more affluent neighborhoods gave the Republican solid support.
limited and contradictory. When, in 1894, Jackson County's Populist bandwagon rolled first across the electoral finishline, it was filled with promises of clean government and tax relief. By 1898, following four years of "insurgent government," the Populists--embittered by internal divisions and spurned by rural voters--were swept out of the courthouse, never to return.

Samuel Holt arrived in Salem as one of three Populists in the new state senate; John Jeffrey and Stephen Nealon joined five other Populists in the house of representatives. Nealon served quietly but Jeffrey and Holt were active legislators. Jeffrey's first action, a proposed resolution in support of "free silver at 16 to 1," was tabled by the Republican majority. Holt, aiming at the power of courthouse cliques, introduced a measure to prohibit county commissioners from appointing election clerks or judges. Holt and Jeffrey co-sponsored several other bills that would have struck at the power (and reduced the salaries) of particular county offices statewide. With the exception of the "Holt judges-of-election" bill, which finally passed in 1899, none of their reforms emerged as law.50

At the county level, the People's party had freer rein.

Although contending with holdover officeholders of both old parties, Populists entered the courthouse with a mandate to clean out corruption and institute true democracy. Their agenda soon boiled down to a simple program of retrenchment not reform, and their unity rapidly gave way to personal squabbles and feuds. Populists were portrayed by the Democratic Times as acting from "spite and pique" in various matters. Ongoing charges of Populist nepotism, personal favoritism in tax assessments, and failure to deliver on promises of economy rang out in both the Times and the Tidings.51 Regarding the Southern Pacific Railroad, the vow to tame the great "Octopus" through county taxes was severely tarnished when the Populist county clerk joined the Democratic county judge in rescinding the assessment. "Let us weed all traitors from our party," responded one outraged Phoenix Populist, but the incident simply led to increasing division within the party.52

Stalled from implementing their retrenchment program during 1895, the Populists lost their main issue of salary-slashing when the state legislature fixed by law the salary


52"Farmer Talks Again," DT, 24 Oct. 1895, 2. Following the lead of California farmers angered by its regional railroad monopoly, Jackson County Populists commonly used the epithet "Octopus" for the Southern Pacific.
rates for most county positions. And, as the 1896 local election approached, Populist politicians suffered further division over a proposal for party-enforced term limits. Instead of the promised "love feast," chortled the Tidings, the party's April nominating convention in Medford resounded with the chairman's repeated and vigorous gavel-pounding and calls for order. The meeting, "rent by internal feuds" and "distracted by the insane scramble for office," resulted in much rancor among the former brethren.\(^5\)

After four years in the courthouse, Jackson County Populists could claim few tangible accomplishments. Furthermore, when the issue of free silver—as elsewhere in the West—came to dominate all three parties in 1896, the Populists began to lose their identity as an alternative political movement. In the politically crucial city of Medford, where the thriving "Free Coinage saloon" attracted thirsty customers from the nearby railroad depot, silverites formed a league dominated by Democrats and Republicans. Finally, the looming national decision over "fusion" with the Democratic party exacerbated the split in local Populist ranks. Nickell and other Democrats urged it upon the Populists in time for the June 1896 election, but the

\(^{53}\)"After The Offices," AT, 20 Apr. 1896, 3; "Populists Dissatisfied," AT, 23 Apr. 1896, 2; "The Populists are having a merry time...," DT, 16 Apr. 1896, 2; "Nobody but a Populist...," DT, 18 May 1896, 2.
People's party, still dominated by anti-fusionist "middle of the road" leaders at this time, proved to be a reluctant bride. Hesitantly accepting the proposal in April, the Populists pulled out of the arrangement in May.  

The presidential campaign later that year led to a formal Democratic-Populist alliance throughout Oregon. But although Jackson County's huge Bryan vote indicated continuing agrarian discontent, fusion further weakened the Populists' identity and lessened the party's hold on rural voters.

Another aspect which blurred the local People's party identity and divided its ranks was the emergence during the mid-1890s of a new kind of Populist candidate. Begun by dedicated reformers such as Samuel Holt, the party leadership changed in composition throughout the Pacific Northwest when the party attracted office-seekers who previously had "enjoyed little influence in the major parties." Opportunists, stymied by factions within the old parties, now came to the fore of the People's party in southern Oregon. Young Kaspar K. Kubli, a University of Oregon graduate and member of a prominent Jacksonville and Applegate Valley family, announced his conversion to 

54"Notes and News," AT, 7 May 1896, 2.  

Populism in 1894. Not obtaining a candidacy, he later left the valley to attend law school. William E. Phipps, a former Democrat who joined the Populists in about 1895, became prominent in the fusionist or "union" wing of the party. He and John Jeffrey led the fatal split from the middle-roaders in 1898.56

John Jeffrey was one of Jackson County's more charismatic Populist politicians. An Arkansan who had arrived in the Rogue River Valley as a boy, Jeffrey attended the state agricultural college in Corvallis and became active in the Democratic party. Enjoying name recognition throughout the county, Jeffrey switched to the Populists. Successful as a candidate for state representative in 1894, he won the district attorney race in 1896. Perhaps inspired by the example of Kansas Populist "Sockless Jerry" Simpson, Charles Nickell coined the sobriquet "Little Johnny" for the diminutive young attorney. Nickell made fun of the former Democrat as a "sprig of a boy" and a rabble-rouser who continually "bamboozled the people...with that little speech of his." William Leeds similarly portrayed Jeffrey as a cynical demagogue who played to the rubes. The Tidings reported at length one rural speech wherein Jeffrey lambasted a host of conspiracies, from the Jacksonville Ring

to Wall Street and the Rothschilds. Jeffrey's campaign rhetoric brings up the well-worn historical question of Populist anti-Semitism as well as the related one of ethnic and religious nativism. Jackson County Populists certainly sprinkled their communications with plentiful references to "shylocks," but so, too, if far less often, did editors of the local two-party press. Similarly, Populists' occasionally expressed disdain for Oregon's East Asian immigrants seems to have been no more extreme than that of the community in general. However, some local Populists, including John Jeffrey, apparently harbored anti-Catholic attitudes that became a matter of public controversy during the 1896 election. Predominantly rural and Protestant, southern Oregon would seem to have had little reason to fear Papist political or educational conspiracies, but a local chapter of the American Protective

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57 "Little Johnny Jeffrey...," DT, 7 May 1896, 2; "A Note from the Meadows," AT, 14 May 1894, 2.

58 For the classic charge of Populist anti-Semitism, see: Hostadter, The Age of Reform, 70-93. Focusing on Western Populists, Larson finds the accusation to be weak; see: Populism in the Mountain West, 156. The Populists' anti-Jewish remarks were not without important precedent in rural America. The Grangers 1874 "Ten Commandments" featured one forbidding members from having "Jewish middlemen between thy farm and [the great wheat market of] Liverpool to fatten on thy honest toil"; see: Nordin, Rich Harvest, 240.

59 For example, one Medford laundry, advertising in Republican Blinton's Mail, urged customers to "beat the Chinaman...get your laundry work done by white people"; "We are doing more...," MM, 2 Mar. 1894, 3.
Association, a national anti-Catholic organization, formed by 1895. The anti-A.P.A. Democratic Times reported in early 1896 that the region contained nearly a dozen branches of the organization and that more were planned. In May, editor Nickell noted that A.P.A. organizers were working the hustings preparatory to the June election and claimed that "nearly all members...are Republicans and Populists."

During the course of the month Nickell "exposed" a number of county Populist candidates as A.P.A. members, among them Ira Wakefield and John Jeffrey. The Times customarily provided space for opponents to respond to Nickell's various statements. Neither Jeffrey, who was a member of A.P.A.-leader the Reverend Eli Fisher's congregation, nor any other Populists rebutted the charges. Although anti-Catholicism may not have been an overt part of southern Oregon Populists' 1896 campaign, the nativist sentiments of some candidates may well have been understood and shared by many

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60 The A.P.A. had spread from the Middle West to Oregon by 1894, creating much controversy during Portland's school board election that year; see: "The A.P.A.," AT, 2 Apr. 1894, 2. For an overview, see: John Higham, Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925 (New York: Atheneum, 1963) 74-84. Many historians have followed Higham's lead in emphasizing the A.P.A. membership's generally Republican allegiance and anti-Populist stance. Griffiths ("Populism in the Far West," 406-411) is an exception; he cites evidence that links a few prominent Populists with the A.P.A., and he admits it had some influence among the party ranks in certain areas of the West.

61 Mention of A.P.A. activities and candidates are found in numerous articles, DT, Dec. 1895 through May 1896, passim.
Jackson County residents.

On July 10, 1897, Williams Jennings Bryan stopped at Ashland during his Pacific Coast tour. Hundreds of farm families arrived in town to greet the defeated hero. Speaking to a large audience of faithful, Bryan commented cheerfully on their "firm Western handshakes."\(^{62}\) The response to Bryan's brief visit might have caused local Republicans some concern for their political future, but by 1898 it was plain that insurgent rule was coming to an end. Long-simmering resentments erupted at the People's party nominating convention that year, with disastrous consequences. The "secret midnight caucus" of Holt, Wakefield, Nealon, and other "middle-of-the-roaders" led to a walk-out by Jeffrey's and Phipp's fusion-minded faction. The split resulted in two Populist parties: the mid-roader "Regular People's party," which remained faithful to the old Alliance principles, and Jeffrey's "Union People's party," which soon joined the local Democrats. Charles Nickell promptly changed his description of the once-wayward politician from "little Johnny" to "the Honorable J. A. Jeffrey."\(^{63}\)

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\(^{63}\)"The Middle of the Roaders Bolt," \textit{DT}, 2 May 1898, 2; "The Union," \textit{DT}, 14 Mar. 1898, 2. In the Populists' lexicon, the term "middle-of-the-road" had none of the connotation of moderation or compromise it possesses today;
With the Regular Populists fielding candidates for all county offices in 1898, and with agricultural depression now a fading memory and war news commanding the headlines, the fusion forces failed to stave off a Republican sweep. The Regular People's party polled an average of only twelve percent. Their best showing came in the remote hinterland precincts farthest from the railroad; Medford residents and farmers in the main valley had abandoned the party. A final effort in 1900, minus the presence of prominent leaders such as Holt and Wakefield, again proved just sufficient to give pluralities to most of the Republican candidates. This last slate of candidates consisted of the party's remnant old believers, little-known residents of the county's most remote rural districts. Jackson County's insurgent decade was over.

Stephen Nealon returned to his Sam's Valley farm. Ira Wakefield's name rapidly faded from the pages of local newspapers. Samuel Holt, the local Populists' "warhorse of reform," became a leader of Jackson County's tiny but vocal Socialist Party after 1900. Kaspar Kubli, following his graduation from Harvard Law School, moved to Portland; he rose to prominence in the ranks of Multnomah County.

the term actually implied the opposite. "Middle-of-the-road" referred to hard-core Populists' determination to avoid being deflected from their path by political deals with either of the two major parties, i.e., to stay "in the middle of the road" and proceed toward the People's party's goal of radical reform.
Republicans. John Jeffrey likewise moved to Portland, where he practiced law and obtained a local judgeship as a Democrat. William Phipps remained in Medford as a perennially unsuccessful Democratic candidate for local office. Although Jackson County's Populist-dominated decade had loosened the previous log-jam of political stalemate, it was succeeded by a period of local Republican hegemony that, except for a break in 1912-16, lasted until the Great Depression.

Legacy of the Populist Revolt: An Insurgent Tradition

Frustration with local politics—including perceived corruption—had brought southern Oregon Populism many of its original supporters. The "Ring"-led government in the courthouse heightened rural voters' sense of anger. Jackson County's rival elites, based in the competing towns of Jacksonville and Ashland, failed to capture the allegiance of newcomers. The weak or absent party bonds of many recent immigrants, combined with disappointment as the "Eden-seeking" visions soured into economic reality, created a

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64 Aside from the four years after Woodrow Wilson's 1912 presidential victory, Republicans held most county and state elective positions in Jackson County throughout the 1900s-1920s. By the mid-1920s, registered Republicans outnumbered Democrats in the former "Bourbon stronghold" by more than two to one; see: Secretary of State, State of Oregon Blue Book and Official Directory, 1927-1928 (Salem: State Printing Dept., 1927), 101.
volatile situation that reached a flash-point during the hard times of the 1890s.\textsuperscript{65}

The public experience of Populism in Jackson County entailed certain elements which came together as a potent political force in the 1890s. Among these was, of course, the distress farmers felt during a period of intense economic hardship. In addition, the sense of outrage when confronted with the town-based elite's political "corruption" during the time of struggle enabled rural solidarity to overcome rural localism while it focused attention on an identifiable enemy. Local and regional newspapers, using the traditional rhetoric of American republicanism, reinforced these feelings effectively. Grass-roots activities such as monthly meetings and mass rallies further deepened the sense of a righteous crusade. In Jackson County, this crusade attracted opportunistic demagogues who also appealed to nativism and fears of conspiracy to build support. These particular elements formed a distinctive pattern of protest in southern Oregon, one which persisted as a tradition of political insurgency into the twentieth century.

\textsuperscript{65}On a much grander scale than a single county, the failure of the old parties in Kansas and Nebraska to adequately address farmers' concerns has been demonstrated to be a major reason for Populism's strength in those states as opposed to its political weakness in Iowa; see: Ostler, "Why the Populist Party Was Strong," 473-474.
CHAPTER III

1900-1925: BOOM, BUST, AND THE KU KLUX KLAN

Following the turn of the century, southern Oregon underwent a great transformation. Begun by the railroad's link to San Francisco and Portland fifteen years before, the region's integration into national and international markets accelerated after 1900. Much of the area's economic and social change was concentrated within the main Rogue River Valley, particularly in and around Medford. Political transformation occurred as well, particularly in terms of the number and power of new players. However, much of Jackson County's earlier political pattern, including a penchant for localist and factional rivalries, as well as insurgent-led turmoil, persisted. This pattern of conflict contributed directly to the local manifestation of the Ku Klux Klan following World War One.

Medford's Rise and the Orchard Boom

Southern Oregon's natural resources and the Rogue River Valley's agricultural potential saw rapid development during the first decade of the twentieth century. The valley's
dependence on wheat cultivation began to change in the mid-1890s, after the first large-scale fruit-tree plantings of Joseph H. Stewart proved successful. Orchards of apples, pears, peaches, and other fruit steadily replaced grainfields in the valley's richest lands. By 1900, with Rogue River Valley apples selling in London, the Southern Pacific began successfully promoting immigration to Medford as capital of one of the West's premier fruit-growing regions.¹

Speculative oil exploration and coal mining schemes in the foothills east of Medford during the first few years of the century were followed in 1907 by expensive development of the Blue Ledge copper mine, located in the rugged headwaters of the Applegate River. Renewed hope for mineral wealth from the Siskiyou Mountains complemented promoters' expectations from the forests of the Cascade Range. During 1908-1910, the Pacific and Eastern Railroad laid track east

from Medford to Butte Falls and the extensive stands of sugar pine and other timber on National Forest land. Newly established Crater Lake National Park, in neighboring Klamath County, brought railroad tourists through Jackson County, and construction of an improved auto road from Medford up the Rogue River to the lake's rim—long a goal of local boosters—began in 1909. The Rogue River's irrigation and electric-generating potential likewise attracted development. In 1902, the Condor Water and Power Company completed a hydroelectric dam on the river near Table Rock, promising to furnish light and power "to every town in the valley." The Condor operation soon became part of the California-Oregon Power Company, a Medford-based but largely absentee-owned corporation which also controlled the irrigation developments of the Rogue River Valley Canal Company.²

Medford acted as the economic and social dynamo of the region during the new century's first decade. The town's population went from under 1,800 in 1900 to almost 9,000 ten

years later. Boasting sixteen fraternal lodges in 1901, Medford formed its own, very active Commercial Club three years later. Its commercial activists also dominated the region's "Good Roads" organization, ensuring that highway improvements would continue Medford's dominance. The city grew with centripetal force as southern Oregon's "central place," outpacing all rivals and causing displeasure among the region's old-town elites.\(^3\)

Spurring Medford's rise was the pear orchard boom that began in about 1905. Apple crops had declined soon after 1900 due to problems with blight, and orchardists turned to slow-ripening varieties of "winter pears" which brought high prices as a luxury-food item on the East Coast and in Europe. In 1907, Comice pears from the Rogue River Valley brought a "world's record" $9.20 a box in New York, and a new orchard on the southern edge of Medford sold in 1908 for a local record of $825 per acre. In that year, the "Greater Medford Ladies Club" succeeded in its campaign to rename the city's old alphabet-lettered streets, given by the railroad, after varieties of orchard fruit. "Colonist" corporations further subdivided the old farm properties of the valley.

pioneers into small tracts for sale to would-be orchardists.  

Although many boom-era immigrants were of modest means, affluent Easterners made up a highly visible element of the valley's newcomers. The Potter Palmer family of Chicago bought extensive orchardland near Table Rock. Other Midwesterners, many of them upper-middle-class graduates of Ivy League colleges, purchased orchard properties and built comfortable homes in and around Medford. The "orchard barons," along with the professionals and merchants attracted to Medford during the boom years, formed a new, cosmopolitan elite. Symbolizing this social stratum were the Rogue Valley University Club, founded in 1910 with almost fifty charter members, and the exclusive, orchardist-dominated Colony Club. Sunday afternoons during harvest season customarily brought socially prominent families to dine at the new Medford Hotel, where the lobby telegraph provided the latest fruit prices from New York. The sophisticated character of Medford's gentry distinguished it from the commercial elites of most other small cities in the Pacific Northwest.  


5Most of the University Club's members were alumni of private Eastern schools, particularly Harvard, Yale, and Williams. For personal recollections of the pear boom, see:
By 1915, Jackson County exhibited some of its social and economic divisions in a new geographic pattern. Replacing the bipolar competition of Jacksonville and Ashland—surrounded by an expanse of grain and livestock ranches—this new arrangement featured three roughly concentric, circular zones: "urban," "small-town/orchard," and "hinterland." The three zones centered at Medford, the new urban hub with its Main Street commercial center and its "packing house row" along the railroad. Included with Medford in the core zone were the numerous orchard holdings adjacent to town, many of them owned by the wealthier class of grower.

A second zone, surrounding Medford and comprising the bulk of the most fertile and densely settled agricultural lands in the main Rogue River Valley, contained most of the county's orchards and dairy farms. This intermediate zone also included the county's older towns—Ashland (now the county's second-largest municipality), Jacksonville, Gold Hill, Central Point, Phoenix, and Talent. With ready access to the railroad, and linked to Medford and to each other by the newly built Pacific Highway, residents of this zone were not isolated. However, some, particularly merchants in the towns fast being eclipsed by Medford, expressed resentment

Atwood, Blossoms and Branches, 30-77 (the boom's "Chicago connection" is discussed on pages 53-54). Otto Frohnmayer, personal interview with author, 21 Feb. 1991.
at the new city. And others, particularly orchardists, found themselves in economic trouble as the pear boom turned to "bust" after 1912.

The outermost zone, the hinterland, consisted of foothill areas and smaller valleys tributary to the Rogue River Valley. Hamlets such as Ruch, Wimer, Antioch, Eagle Point, Butte Falls, and Prospect served the scattered inhabitants. Ranching, small-scale farming, and seasonal work (mining, logging, Forest Service work, state and county road crews) were the main occupations. Distance and poor roads meant isolation. Most people of the hinterland only occasionally traveled to Medford. In contrast to the other two zones, where by far the largest portion of the county's post-1900 arrivals lived, the hinterland was populated chiefly by families that had resided in southern Oregon since the Populist revolt or before.

Throughout all of Jackson County's agricultural districts, small-acreage properties—whether orchards, dairies, or ranches—were the norm. Their productivity and value tended to lessen with increased distance from Medford.\^6

The region's boom ended in about 1912. Over-speculation in farmland, homelots, and commercial property

led to a sudden drop in values. Medford boosters, who had formed a "25,000 Club" in 1908 with the aim of increasing the population to that number within five years, instead saw their town lose residents after 1910, declining from 8,900 to 5,700 by 1920. Orchardists faced lower European pear prices after 1913 even as they battled the codling moth and drought that shriveled harvests. Special pest control treatments, large-scale new irrigation projects, and other expensive survival measures characterized the valley's fruit industry during the second decade of the twentieth century. After 1913, formerly individualistic orchardists joined the Fruit Growers League, the Rogue River Fruit and Produce Association, and other cooperative ventures. Like Medford, Ashland grappled with the economic downturn, seeking to lure more tourists off the Pacific Highway during this period. Home of the region's Chautauqua festival since the 1890s, the ambitious city piped mineral-springs water several miles to the heart of town, where it developed a large park at the site of the Chautauqua Grove.

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7"25,000 Population Club," MDT, 24 Apr. 1908, 1.
8Cordy, "The History of...Fruit," 9-12; Backes, "The Ashland Area," 33-34.
Progressive-Era Politics in Jackson County

Politics reflected the new geographic reality of power. Coming from the hearth of local Republicanism, Ashland's well-established stalwarts dominated the county's courthouse and its Salem delegation from 1900 through 1910; they became known, of course, as the "Ashland Ring." Subsequently, Medford politicians, both Republican and Democratic, took the lead as officeholders, resulting in use of a new epithet, "the Medford Gang," by 1912. Although it belatedly built a spur railroad to Medford, Jacksonville continued its decline after 1900. Ambitious members of Jacksonville's Democratic party, including merchant Henry Klippel and young attorney Evan A. Reames, moved to Medford. Some who did so, such as H. K. Hanna and William Colvig, even switched parties and joined the G.O.P. Party labels, albeit far from meaningless in Jackson County during this period, barely masked the presence of numerous factions and personal cliques. The valley's growth coincided with the rapid spread of non-partisan politics in the West, and Jackson County's apparent Republican "hegemony" of the period did not result from the presence of legions of strong party adherents. Various burning issues--from prohibition to relocating the county-seat--were up for grabs among
competing political groups, and party affiliations of both office seekers and voters were relatively fluid.\textsuperscript{10}

Newspapers continued to take strong partisan stands on national issues, but their local crusades defied neat, party-line categorization. Southern Oregon newspapermen, a lively set since Jacksonville editor William T'Vault's Table Rock Sentinel had helped create the notoriously aggressive "Oregon Style" of journalism in the early 1850s, remained on the front lines of factional battles. After 1907, the morning-daily Mail's Bliton competed with the evening Medford Tribune's George Putnam. Putnam replaced the now stilled-voice of Charles Nickell as the county's main Democratic editor. One dramatic example of local journalistic controversy occurred during Putnam's first year

\textsuperscript{10}"The Merry...Minstrels" (editorial cartoon), MDT, 22 May 1908, 1; "Ashland Political Ring," MDT, 10 Apr. 1912, 1; "Editor Greer Of Tidings Held For Libel," MMT, 25 Oct. 1912, 1; "E.A. Reames...," MM, 1 June 1900, 2; "Tribute to...Klippel," MM, 15 Nov. 1901, 2 (Klippel was one of Oregon's controverted Democratic electors in the 1876 Tilden/Hayes presidential election; he and his fellow electors were summoned before a Senate investigating committee in Washington during the national political crisis over the election's final outcome); "Chas. Nickell has seen fit...," MM, 13 May 1904, 2. Jackson County during the 1890s-1930s exhibited the factional, volatile electoral character described as distinctively "Western" by Paul Kleppner, "Politics Without Parties: The Western States, 1900-1984," in: The Twentieth Century West, Gerald D. Nash and Richard W. Etulain, eds. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1989): 295-338. For a brief but comprehensive discussion of the West's "distinctive pattern" of state and local politics during the Progressive Era, see: Richard White, "It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own": A History of the American West (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 377-384.
in Medford, when he found himself briefly jailed for libel by the Republican county court. Reporting an incident that had occurred on Main Street—the elderly president of the Jacksonville railroad, angered by official safety regulations, had hurled an axe at Medford's mayor—Putnam criticized the court's slowness to take action. Putnam's midnight arrest by the Jackson County sheriff while on the train in Douglas County and his incarceration overnight in the Roseburg city jail drew strong public criticism from fellow editors throughout the West Coast. A few days after returning to Medford, Putnam was himself assaulted on Main Street by the sheriff's son, a county deputy; a few months later, the editor suffered a second public attack, this time by a mayoral candidate.11 Later joining the Tribune's editorial staff was young Robert Ruhl, a nominal Republican and self-proclaimed "independent," who steered the paper toward a progressive, but less personally confrontive, stand on local matters.12

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11The axe-throwing incident and the resulting controversy are discussed in numerous articles, MM and MDT, for the period between 11 Dec. 1907 and 15 Jan. 1908.

12George S. Turnbull, History of Oregon Newspapers (Portland: Binfords and Mort, 1939), 252. The date of Ruhl's first employment with the Mail Tribune is uncertain; available records are incomplete and contradictory. By Ruhl's own accounts, written in the 1930s and 1940s, he joined the Tribune in 1911; other records and personal sources suggest that he may have been referring to his association with the Medford Sun at that date, and that he did not join the Tribune until immediately after World War I.
Jackson County voters focused on several outstanding local issues during the Progressive Era. Anglo-Saxon nativism served to keep southern Oregon a "whiteman's country" during this time. A rumored clandestine, land-buying "invasion" of the Rogue River Valley by Japanese farmers, such as was then reported in northern Oregon and central California, awakened much concern in 1908. Public pressure on land-holding companies to sell only to white citizens stemmed the alleged yellow peril, and the valley's few Japanese orchard workers apparently were not invited to return the following harvest season. In 1915, Ashland's Commercial Club could crow that the town's population was "almost wholly American, no negroes or Japanese." Religious prejudice erupted periodically, as in February 1914, when "A.P.A. supporters" vandalized the Sisters of the Holy Name convent in Jacksonville while supposedly searching for secret underground tunnels. The next month, one Ashlander wrote to the Tribune defending local anti-Papists from its charges of bigotry; he stated that there were many

13"Are Japs Planning...?", MDT, 17 Jan. 1908, 1. The valley's short-lived colony of Greek immigrants, most of them single railroad workers, also caused concern during this period; see: "Corroborates Spanos' Confession," MMT, 28 Oct. 1912, 1. During the 1850s-1880s, Jackson County contained a sizable and often-harrassed minority of Chinese laborers, many of them employed in the mines or on railroad construction; by 1900 most of the very few Chinese remaining in the area were scattered laundry and store owners.

14Ashland Commercial Club publicity flier, printed on reverse side of A.C.C. official stationery (Ashland, 1915 [author's personal collection]).
"more good, whole-souled people right here in Ashland and Medford" who regularly read "The Menace" (a national anti-Catholic publication) than who subscribed to the "cowardly, pope-ruled" Tribune. 

Moral issues dominated many elections. Although gambling and prostitution had been permitted in Medford so long as these activities remained well screened from public view, city officials sent streetwalkers packing when they became too numerous and brazen. Battles over alcoholic prohibition punctuated the county's Progressive-Era political discourse. Following the county's decision to remain "wet" in 1904, the city of Ashland, home to a powerful contingent of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, went dry in 1907. Ashland and most other small towns of the main valley had voted consistently for prohibition. Hinterland voters, however, largely rejected it. Medford residents split over the "local option" issue the following year, and the city's prohibitionist ministers organized a large parade of Sunday-schoolers down Main Street shortly before election day. Despite the voters' decision to reject the dry measure, Medford temperance leaders threatened recall (a new electoral tool) of one wet city councilman. The local conflict over liquor became moot a few years later. Women's suffrage, passed by Oregon in 1912, gave

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added strength to anti-alcohol forces, and statewide prohibition came with the next biennial election.  

The exciting presidential election of 1912 brought victory for both national and local Democrats in the Jackson County vote. Although Ashland gave Theodore Roosevelt a slim plurality, Woodrow Wilson garnered the largest share of the county's votes. Socialist candidate Eugene Debs made a very strong showing in a handful of the old Populist hinterland precincts, such as the Evans Creek and Applegate valleys. Jacksonville/Medford Democratic attorneys Frank TouVelle, Evan Reames, and E. E. Kelly each won important local offices. Ashland found itself without representation on the county court for the first time in many years--and, claimed the Tribune, had only its own anti-Medford stubbornness to blame. By World War One, however, Republicans again held most important local positions.

After 1900, Medford's few Socialist spokesmen had enjoyed regular access to the pages of the Mail and Tribune. And local "anti-monopoly" feelings still remained strong


17"Jackson County Still Progressive," MMT, 7 Nov. 1912, 2.
despite the Commercial Club's endorsement of Southern Pacific's position in lawsuits; the county's major private electric utility came in for a symbolic drubbing at the polls in 1908.\textsuperscript{18} By 1912, however, the Medford press condemned "radical socialist agitators" on the city's Central Labor Council as men who would "destroy the prosperity of the Rogue river valley," and suggested that they might be members of the Industrial Workers of the World.\textsuperscript{19} As with prospective non-Caucasian immigrants to the valley, labor radicals were given little opportunity to flourish in Jackson County. When the United States entered the World War, local citizens of German ancestry suffered social snubs and other indignities. The Medford City Council proposed fencing and guarding a municipal reservoir, long a popular valley viewpoint for autoists, to forestall poisoning or other sabotage by enemy saboteurs.\textsuperscript{20}

Rural and localist grievances persisted, transformed, and probably deepened during the Progressive Era. News from hinterland correspondents, once a regular feature in the main valley newspapers, faded from their pages--replaced by occasional (and often patronizing) "local color" stories. Despite hopeful personal reports by University of Oregon


\textsuperscript{20}"War Hysteria," \textit{MMT}, 13 May 1918, 4.
history professor Joseph Schafer on remote Evans Creek Valley's intention to start a "country life" school, Jackson County hinterland residents held a reputation among other state officials for distinctly un-Progressive behavior, especially as reflected in numerous violations of the prohibition and game laws. And within the county's densely populated core, Medford's repeated attempts to capture the county seat met repeated failure at the polls, due largely to the anti-Medford alliance of former bitter enemies Jacksonville and Ashland. Medford's internal feuds deepened in 1917, when the city almost defaulted on its bonds and had narrowly avoided bankruptcy. A blue-ribbon "Citizens Committee" steered the city to fiscal solvency by 1920 but left much ill will in its wake.\textsuperscript{21}

The Klan Comes to Jackson County

By the summer of 1921, Robert W. Ruhl, now owner and editor of the Medford \textit{Mail Tribune}, was an influential voice in Jackson County affairs. Having arrived in southern Oregon ten years before, at the height of the orchard boom, he had witnessed tremendous economic growth followed by

\textsuperscript{21}"Country Life School," \textit{MMT}, 12 Mar. 1914, 2; "They Are Not Worthless Loafers," \textit{MM}, 21 June 1901, 2; "Election Table...Court House," \textit{MMT}, 5 Nov. 1920, 3; "Pipes For Mayor" (advt.), \textit{MMT}, 30 Oct. 1922, 3.
slump. Now he looked confidently toward a return of boom
times in a July 27 editorial:

As the "biggest little city" on the Pacific
Coast... Medford [has]... no idle millionaires, no
civic rivalries, no problems, no militarism,
nothing but trout fishing, fruit picking, and a
general Twentieth Century Paradise.... Welcome
gentlemen. The city of Destiny awaits you!²²

A progressive Republican who stressed his paper's
independence, Ruhl could not resist taking an editorial jab
a few lines later at Portland, "the Rose City, a
transplanted Back Bay, the mecca of bond clippers and moss
covered conservatives." Two weeks prior, he had commented
on the appearance of the Ku Klux Klan there. Medford, in
happy contrast, was a place where "those finer human
feelings, which aspire to peace on earth, good will to man,
flourish."²³ The 41-year-old Harvard graduate from
Rockford, Illinois, was proud of his adopted hometown.
After serving on the staff of the Harvard Crimson with
fellow 1903 class member Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Ruhl had
worked for the New York Globe and the Spokane Spokesman-
Review before coming to Medford.²⁴

²³ "The Ku Klux Klan," MMT, 14 July 1921, 4.
²⁴ Ruhl attended Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, before entering Harvard; although a member of
the class of 1903, he officially graduated in 1904. Ruhl
and Roosevelt do not seem to have been close personal
friends during college, but Ruhl's later strong support of
the New Deal later caused him to chastise some fellow alumni
as hidebound reactionaries. Biographical material on Ruhl
comes from a variety of sources, including the collection of
Coming from the pen of a close observer of local politics for a decade, Ruhl's paean to Medford's civic qualities can be taken as normal booster hyperbole. Apparently genuinely unaware that Medford had in fact just become the first Oregon outpost of the Invisible Empire of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, Ruhl shortly became the spearhead of opposition to the group when its presence became public. Within a few months, the Klan would dominate the politics of Jackson County. State and local elections in 1922 set off, in Ruhl's words, the "bitterest political campaign" in the county's history.  

By the early 1920s, Jackson County sensed an imminent return of prosperity. The war was over. The international


25 "A. E. Reames To Speak," MMT, 6 Nov. 1922, 6. There remains some question about when the Medford Klan was established. January 1921 is the date given by C. Easton Rothwell, "The Ku Klux Klan in the State of Oregon," (B.A. thesis, Reed College, 1924), 117; indirect evidence in the Tribune strongly suggests that date. In any case, the Medford Klan, organized by a "Kleagle" (recruiter) traveling from California to Portland, seems to have been the first in Oregon, owing to the city's position on the main railroad and highway route from California.

The following sections of this chapter are based on this account: Jeff LaLande, "Beneath the Hooded Robe: Newspapermen, Local Politics, and the Ku Klux Klan in Jackson County, Oregon, 1921-1923," Pacific Northwest Quarterly 83 (April 1992): 42-52.
market for winter pears seemed to be regaining strength. Newcomers, some of them working-class families attracted to jobs in Medford's new large-capacity sawmill, again began streaming into the Rogue River Valley. Between the end of the war and the onset of the Great Depression, the county experienced a 64 percent surge in population, most of it concentrated in and around Medford, which grew during this period to more than 11,000 people. Despite the optimism, however, serious economic and social problems remained. The postwar economic slump, particularly the nationwide agricultural depression, slowed the hoped-for recovery. Jacksonville's main bank failed in 1921, which led to a controversial grand jury probe and much blame all around. Prohibition, in force for the past half-dozen years, had broken down into open war between law enforcement agents and moonshiners in the thinly settled fringes of the valley by 1920-1921; newspapers reported a rising number of raids, drunken brawls, and shootings in the context of a "crime wave" in the county.26 Budgetary controversies--ranging from prospective street-paving costs to the salaries of

26"Sheriff Grilled In Grand Jury Final Report," Medford Sun (hereinafter cited as Sun), 26 Feb. 1922, 1. The "bootlegger war" is covered in the MMT between mid-August 1921 and March 1922; particularly articles for August 18-22, February 24, and March 13. The Jackson County prohibition raids must be viewed in a regional context (i.e., such episodes were on the rise throughout the Pacific Northwest during this time); see: Keith Murray, "Issues and Personalities of Pacific Northwest Politics, 1889-1950," Pacific Northwest Quarterly 41 (July 1950): 213-233 (esp. p.228).
civil servants--burgeoned in Medford and county government during 1921-22. One political and economic issue became paramount, however: water.

The Rogue River Valley is the most arid section of Oregon west of the Cascade Range. Medford's reputation as a wide-awake, prosperous city depended on a secure and abundant source of domestic water. By 1921, the existing water source at Fish Lake, high in the Cascades, was taxed to the limit. Unflattering comments in the Portland press about the taste and appearance of Medford's drinking water (adversely affected by the slow decay of fallen trees in the reservoir) unsettled the community's self-image. In addition, the city shared water rights to Fish Lake with the Rogue River Valley Canal Company and the Medford Irrigation District, both of which competed for water in order to serve thirsty orchards outside of town. Severe drought and water rationing during the summer of 1921 drove angry orchardists and city residents to hold mass meetings to protest water policy. Yet proposals for development of a new city water source, Big Butte Springs, created additional divisiveness; major capital investments were required, and water rights there also were in legal dispute. South of town, the newly established Talent Irrigation District, though not competing with Medford area water users, likewise grappled with water-
rights problems of equal concern.\(^{27}\) During the long, hot summer of 1921, Jackson County encountered serious limits to its growth.

Sometime that year the Ku Klux Klan appeared in Jackson County and began an initially quiet recruitment effort. Actual membership by 1922 is unknown. It may have been less than 1,000 actual "Knights," but with its non-member supporters, the local Klan's political numbers were certainly much greater. A mid-1922 charter-granting ceremony in Roseburg (seat of Douglas County) drew approximately 2,000 masked klansmen "from throughout southern Oregon."\(^{28}\) Although many Jackson County members may have fit the profile of lower-middle-class men who apparently joined the klans of midwestern and western cities in large numbers, some of them were among the wealthier urban residents. Orchardist Raymond Reter (who soon quit the organization and denounced it publicly) was one of a "score of reputable business and professional men" who were

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\(^{27}\) The 1921 water crisis is reported in numerous editions of the \textit{MMT} between mid-July and mid-September; in particular, see various articles of July 20-29; political reaction to the shut-off of water to Medford's orchards is featured in articles for August 11-24 and September 8. The T.I.D.'s water-rights dispute involved the Sterling Mine, a large hydraulic gold mine near Jacksonville that dated to the 1870s; see: "Talent...Directors Answer," \textit{MMT}, 24 Oct. 1922, 8.

\(^{28}\) "KKK Meeting At Roseburg," \textit{Sun}, 16 July 1922, 8.
inducted at the first meeting.29 A contemporary scholarly study of the Oregon Klan counted an assistant district attorney and officials of the telephone company, Standard Oil, and the Southern Pacific on the rolls in Jackson County.30

 Although their economic background may have varied widely, apparently common to many local klansmen were religious nativism, moralistic concern, and economic resentment. Ashland-area orchardist D. M. Lowe, the Klan-backed candidate for sheriff in 1922, gave a post-election analysis that expressed all three of these sentiments:

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30Rothwell, "The KKK in Oregon," 120. Here cite in full and briefly discuss conclusions of the "Women of the Klan" volume.
I was opposed by the Mail Tribune...the Medford banks were against me, the two largest corporations in the valley were against me; I refer to the California-Oregon Power Company and the Rogue River Valley Canal Company, all the ex-saloon keepers...all the bootleggers...and last but not least, every Roman Catholic...fought me to a finish....If this sweet-scented bunch imagine[s] for a moment that they can impose any humiliating terms of surrender on the people...they are just kidding themselves.  

Nativism had its most overt expression in the pages of the Medford Clarion, founded in 1921. Owner and editor William E. Phipps, Medford attorney and one of the "Popocrat" fusionists of the late 1890s, had run unsuccessfully for the Oregon legislature in 1920. The 54-year-old former North Carolinian denied membership in the organization; nevertheless, he filled his weekly with pugnacious pro-Klan commentaries and featured anti-Semitic articles from Henry Ford's Dearborn Independent, anti-Catholic columns by the nationally known Reverend Robert Shuler of Los Angeles, and pieces from the Klan-published Searchlight and Western American. While Robert Ruhl and the Mail Tribune rallied anti-Klan forces, Phipps made the Clarion into Jackson County's "Klan mouthpiece."  

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31"Are We To Have Peace In Jackson County," MMT, 4 Aug. 1922, 3.  

32Interestingly, according to county records, Phipps' marriage to Clara Rader, member of an Eagle Point farming family, in 1909 had been officiated by a priest. (Biographical data on W. E. Phipps compiled from various official records by Sue Waldron.)
the stage was set for a rigorous newspaper war between the two publications.

Although he regularly denounced Jewish "conspiracies," Phipps's main target was Roman Catholicism. He assured readers that he was not against individual Catholics, but like most Protestant nativists of the period he portrayed the Catholic church as an alien, corrupt power attempting to gain control over American politics through the votes of its misguided adherents. In an editorial entitled "The Arrogance of Absolutism," Phipps asked if his neighbors realized that the "effort of the ages" was being made to "stamp the blight of Roman hierarchy on this great country? Look at Spain, at Ireland, at Mexico and ask yourself if you want this." He accused Ruhl, a Unitarian, of publishing a "most flagrant pro-Catholic sheet," dismissed the anti-Klan editor of a Klamath County newspaper as a "K.C." (Knights of Columbus member), and complained of a Catholic-led boycott of the Clarion. This anti-Papist crusade appealed to many local readers, and the paper's circulation increased significantly during 1922-1923.

Phipps and local Klan officials were in the vanguard of the county's fight over Oregon's proposed "compulsory school

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initiative" during the 1922 political campaign. This measure would have required all parents to send their children to public schools and would have eliminated Catholic and other parochial school systems. Although introduced that spring by a branch of the Scottish Rite Masons and originally promoted as an anti-elitist "Americanizing" measure, the school bill became an important test of the Oregon Klan's political power. In May, Medford mayor Charles E. Gates accepted honorary membership in the local Klavern. The affable "Pop" Gates, owner of southern Oregon's largest Ford sales agency and an announced "possible candidate" for the Republican gubernatorial nomination, provided a glowing account of the ceremony as "one no Christian man could take exception to." The following week, a large and appreciative Ashland audience heard the pro-school bill speech of the Reverend Reuben H. Sawyer, Klan lecturer from Portland. A sizable contingent of hooded klansmen marched in Ashland's Fourth of July parade.35

Women had played an important if subservient role in the local Alliance and People's party movement of the 1890s.

Although rarely mentioned in the local press, the Klan's auxiliary "Ladies of the Invisible Empire" (the "LOTIES") and the subsequent, more independent "Women of the Ku Klux Klan," also were active in southern Oregon. Women of the Klan, as they did elsewhere in the nation during the 1920s, probably spearheaded economic boycotts of Catholic businesses and applied social pressure to Protestant church members who did not seem sufficiently militant. Ashland's potent W.C.T.U. forces may well have supplied many of the female Klan members and supporters. With political suffrage attained nationwide, many middle-class Protestant women flocked to the Klan movement not merely as an auxiliary to their husbands' organization but as a means to consolidate and to further their own political and moral reform agenda. Many Jackson County Klanswomen no doubt held these same goals.  

Klan attempts at moral regulation attracted unwanted attention to Jackson County in 1922 with three separate incidents of "night-riding"--the abduction and near lynching of individuals by masked vigilantes. One of the victims, an African-American railroad porter who just had been released

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36 For a thorough examination of women's roles and goals in the Klan movement, see: Kathleen M. Blee, Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991). Blee's study focuses on Indiana, but generalizes on the Klanswoman phenomenon nationwide. She demonstrates that the "poison squad of whispering women" were "key actors"; they gave the Klan movement much of its grass-roots political and economic effectiveness, particularly in small towns.
from the county jail for Prohibition violations, was
kidnapped at dusk and driven south to the place where the
Pacific Highway crossed the crest of Siskiyou Pass. After
being hoisted off the ground three times by a rope around
his neck and admonished about his past bootlegging, the man
fled south to the California border to the taunt "Can you
run, nigger?" as the group fired "revolver shots about his
feet." The night-riding incidents earned the region wide
notoriety when a national magazine article, exposing the
"Ku-Kluxing" of Oregon, christened them the "Southern Oregon
Outrages." In one statement to the press, former southern
Oregon Populist John Jeffrey—who served as legal counsel
during the grand jury probe for the Jackson County night-
riding defendants—cast them as solid citizens who were being
made into scapegoats by anti-Klan politicians. Another one-
time Jackson County Populist, the fortuitously initialed
Kaspar K. Kubli, was a very prominent pro-Klan voice in
Salem. Representing the Portland area in the legislature,
he held a key position of power and Speaker of the House.38

37 "Negro Porter in Necktie Party on Siskiyous," Sun, 2
April 1922, 1.

38 Waldo Roberts, "The Ku-Kluxing of Oregon," Outlook,
Clarion, 1 Sept. 1922, 6. For discussions of Kubli's role
during the Klan period, see: Malcolm Clark, Jr., "The Bigot
Disclosed: 90 Years of Nativism," Oregon Historical
Quarterly 75 (June 1974), 180; and Eckard V. Toy, Jr., "The
Ku Klux Klan in Oregon," in: Experiences in a Promised Land:
Essays in Pacific Northwest History, G. Thomas Edwards and
Carlos A. Schwantes, eds. (Seattle: University of Washington
The county experienced further negative statewide publicity over a bitter Klan-backed recall campaign against sheriff and long-time Eagle Point hinterland resident Charles Terrill. Terrill, whom Phipps and other moralists accused of "open...collusion with moonshiners," had additionally earned the Klan's ire by responding to Governor Ben Olcott's investigation of the vigilante episodes with a denunciation of the Klan as "a dangerous organization and a menace to public welfare." 39

William Phipps also fueled public outrage during the recall campaign with charges that Sheriff Terrill was nepotistic, deficient in moral courage, and drew a salary that smacked of graft. 40 Phipps similarly charged other officials and institutions with corruption and greed. The Clarion's editor revived the rhetoric of southern Oregon's Populist insurgency by stoking both social and economic resentments. Phipps editorialized in a populist vein during 1922 about the unfair practices of a host of local villains, including fruit associations, commission men, creameries, and consignment houses. 41 He flayed Wall Street and federal tax inequalities that favored the rich. He also called

39"Recall of...Terrill," Clarion, 23 June 1922, 1; Sheriff C. E. Terrill, letter to Gov. B. Olcott (14 May 1922), TS, Vol. 5, Ben Olcott Papers, Special Collections, University of Oregon Library, Eugene, n.p.


readers' attention to disparities in wealth in the Rogue River Valley in 1922. Writing that "a decade ago Jackson County...was one of the most properous sections in the United States," Phipps described the successful boomtime arrivals as men who "had nothing but a superb nerve" but who were "now living on the fat of the land and clothed in purple and fine linen..."

This prosperous element are [sic] the office holders, contractors of public works, commission fruit and produce dealers, lawyers who get frequent digs in county or city treasuries...To these may be added an occasional merchant who profiteered during and after the war, but tradesmen, generally speaking, have been barely able to meet expenses and avoid bankruptcy...there are numerous good and productive farms and orchards in southern Oregon that are...covered by bonded indebtedness, [but] have...little or no sale value....These conditions must be changed.42

Attempting to discredit Robert Ruhl's steadfast anti-Klan crusade as the "Wail of the Gang," Phipps pointed out that what "the Tribune in its nightmare calls hatred and discord is only the deterrent voice of the people." When the Mail Tribune's printing plant was broken into (by what Ruhl termed a "band of hooded vandals") and crucial linotype bands were stolen, the Clarion's owner sarcastically blamed the theft on a "tramp printer looking for work"; he went on to dismiss the Clarion's opponents as "enemies of our democratic form of government...grafters, lawbreakers, and

the ultra-mountain [sic] elements."43 Phipps' gloves-off style of populist journalism earned much praise from readers; his words apparently resonated with many small businessmen and orchardists.44

The Klan Election of 1922 and Its Aftermath


44Until the 1960s, most historians of the 1920s' Klan emphasized the organization's nativist philosophy as its core appeal; for Oregon, Saalfeld's Forces of Prejudice is an example of this interpretation. Following Jackson's The Ku Klux Klan in the City, a number of historians stressed the Klan's strength as due to its self-proclaimed position as an agent of "moral reform"; essays which employ this approach for the Oregon Klan include: Eckard V. Toy, Jr., "The Ku Klux Klan in Oregon,"; William Toll, "Progress and Piety: The Ku Klux and Social Change in Tillamook, Oregon," Pacific Northwest Quarterly 69 (Apr. 1978): 75-85; and David A. Horowitz, "Social Mobility and Personal Revitalization: Oregon's Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s," Oregon Historical Quarterly 90 (Winter 1989): 365-384. Most recently, a "populist interpretation" of the Klan has come to the fore. Focusing on the West, an excellent exposition of this approach (which includes broad interpretive essays by Leonard J. Moore and Shawn Lay as well as new pieces on the Oregon Klan by Toy and Horowitz) is: Shawn Lay, ed., The Invisible Empire in the West.
the local Ku Klux Klan. Among the prominent men involved in this protest was Medford Democratic attorney Edward E. Kelly, a Protestant who had come from the Chicago area during the boom. The tall, lantern-jawed "Colonel" Kelly, veteran of both the Spanish-American War and World War One, was an imposing figure who dominated Medford's Elks Club and other organizations; he called the Klan the "gravest menace to internal peace...since the Civil War" and demanded that the state commander come out against religious prejudice in legion affairs. The local legion's acrimonious Klan fight "parted friends...some of whom had fought side by side overseas." 

Although Klan backers included some prominent local Democrats, a faction of Republican lawyers tapped the discontent of orchardists and small town residents by running on what the Tribune called the "Klan ticket." Candidates of this group, who received Democrat Phipps' open support, included Charles M. Thomas, Ralph Cowgill, and county Republican chairman Bert Anderson. Thomas, an Iowan who had come to Jackson County in 1913, was the current president of the county bar association, of which William

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46"Codding Beaten...," Sun, 30 July 1922, 1. George Codding, Medford Democratic attorney and an apparent Klan supporter, was up for election as state commander that year; the Jackson County controversy evidently contributed to his defeat.
Phipps, Evan Reames, and E. E. Kelly were all members, and he also served as attorney for the night-rider defendants. He was running for the judgeship that would hear the night-riding cases soon after the election. In response to the "Klan" slate, Kelly, Reames, and other opponents of the Thomas group established the non-partisan "Independent American Voters League" in August. The I.A.V.L. put up candidates for most local offices. Hoping to attract the votes of women, the league ran Alice Hanley; daughter of well-known pioneer settlers, for state representative. Phipps scoffed at the league as "an aggregation of antiquated political has-beens" and renamed it the Bootleggers' Protective Association.47

During the closing weeks of the campaign, Charles Thomas and Ralph Cowgill disrupted an I.A.V.L. candidates' meeting with Talent orchardists. This episode highlights the connection between "Klan politics" and "water politics" during the county's election. Thomas and Cowgill were accompanied by about fifty supporters, whom league spokesman Evan Reames branded "a mob of...the Ku Klux Klan, their sympathizers, and laborers from the Medford Irrigation

47"Klan Is Still The Big Issue...," MMT, 26 Oct. 1922; "Statement of C.M. Thomas," MMT, 24 Oct. 1922, 3; "Political Has-Beens Have Formed Non-partisan League," Clarion, 18 Aug. 1922, 1 (Phipps' headline for the I.A.V.L. story may have been a cunning double entendre, intended to tar the group by association with the Non-Partisan League of the northern Great Plains, the agrarian radical organization that many had considered as unpatriotic and disloyal during the war.); "Some Knockout," Clarion, 1 Sept. 1922, 6.
District." Thomas, who served as counsel for the Talent Irrigation District, hotly disputed Reames' accusations of legal improprieties; he and his men heckled and shouted until the meeting abruptly ended. Reames, attorney for the power company and its irrigation subsidiary, and Thomas were not the only men on opposite sides of irrigation questions in the Klan/league fight. Klan-backed Cowgill, running for state representative, served as engineer for the Medford Irrigation District, which was currently locked in legal battles with Reames' client. Cowgill formerly had been employed by the Rogue River Valley Canal Company, and personal grudges may have played an important part in the conflict. Phipps, too, had a personal stake in the local water situation; he had represented disgruntled Medford property owners during the 1921 drought, and had made "water graft" a major issue in his 1922 editorial columns.48

48"Thomas Scored By League," MMT, 25 Oct. 1922, 3; "Talent 'Go'," MMT 25 Oct. 1922, 3; "Cowgill Brands Charges...False," MMT 28 Oct. 1922, 6. A few days after the Talent incident, when asked why he and his supporters had been less confrontive during the I.A.V.L.'s Eagle Point speeches, Cowgill replied: "Well, you [league] fellows laid off the irrigation business tonight, so there was no need for rough stuff"; see: "Communications," MMT, 27 Oct. 1922, 4. Cowgill, who had formerly been an engineer for the Rogue River Valley Canal Company, battled the R.R.V.C.C. after joining M.I.D. He called the private company's allegedly slipshod construction work at Fish Lake dam "criminal," and was run out of the company's work camp in 1923. With Thomas, Cowgill, and Phipps political allies in 1922, the M.I.D. began using the Clarion for all official notices in preference to the Tribune; see: Medford Irrigation District, Board of Directors' "Minute Book #4 (1 Feb. 1922-2 Sept. 1924), M.I.D. offices, Medford.
The I.A.V.L. lost badly to the "Klan ticket" in the election. Ashland and most other communities in the main valley supported Thomas and his colleagues. A similar geographic alliance of Ashland and small-town/orchard zone votes, arrayed against those of many Medford and hinterland residents, nearly recalled Sheriff Terrill and just narrowly missed giving the school bill a county victory (the initiative won statewide). Other Klan-associated contests, including the gubernatorial race, showed a similar pattern.49

Threatened by drought and anxious about clouded water rights, many of the valley's orchardists probably saw the "Klan candidates" as their champions in 1922. Thomas and his fellows painted the I.A.V.L. as part of Medford's

Opponents' military records, or the absence thereof, became an issue during the campaign when E. E. Kelly criticized Thomas's and Cowgill's lack of service overseas. Supporting Kelly, the Tribune's social section featured a large 1918 photograph, taken in the trenches of the Western Front, of a helmeted, grim-faced Colonel Kelly; see: "Col. E. E. Kelly in the Front Line Trenches, MMT, 27 Oct. 1922, 2 (2nd sect.). Thomas had not been in the military, but Cowgill served stateside in the National Guard during the war; in 1942-43, Col. Cowgill commanded the para-military State Guard, composed of volunteer units of "coastal guerrillas" that patrolled Oregon beaches; see: "Prepared," Eugene Register-Guard, 23 Ja. 1992, 4A.

Republican Ashland voted overwhelmingly for Klan-backed Democratic gubernatorial candidate Walter Pierce (whose Republican opponent was anti-Klan); the only precinct to give Pierce less than a 67 percent majority was the working-class Railroad District, location of Holy Rosary Roman Catholic Church. Before going into effect, the Oregon school bill was declared unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court.
elitist "Gang" (E. E. Kelly, for example, was known for owning "Kelly Island," a personal fishing retreat on the Rogue River). Added to the populist sentiments aroused by Phipps' editorials, combined with the nativist or moralist leanings of many residents, both "water politics" and anti-Medford localism contributed to the Invisible Empire's 1922 electoral power in the small towns and farming districts of the main valley.

In the hinterland, where the Klan did not play well, other concerns deflected the hooded order. Unaffected by the valley's irrigation imbroglio, not sharing the "joiner"/lodge-member mentality of many small-town residents, and feeling strong antipathy for the Klan's law-and-order Prohibition campaign, remote hinterland voters did not follow the "populist"-sounding piper of the Clarion in 1922. The Klan's moralist position actually may have been the main element dividing the county's most rural voters, those of the hinterland, from their fellow farming citizens of the main valley.

Following the 1922 general election, the forthcoming night-rider trials kept the community's attention focused on the Klan for several more months. In March 1923, newly elected judge Charles M. Thomas (who would rule in favor of the Talent Irrigation District's water rights later in the year) presided over the first trial, held in Jacksonville's
venerable courthouse.50 Assistant state attorney general L. A. Liljeqvist headed the prosecution; the three well-known defendants (a former Medford chief of police, chiropractor-Methodist minister Jouette P. Bray, and young orchardist Howard Hill) had been charged with riot. Newspaper reporters, including a representative of the Hearst press, added to the sensationalistic atmosphere by publishing rumors that some witnesses had come to the courtroom armed with handguns. The defense attorneys, who spent much effort discrediting the morals of the night riders' victims, prevailed. Following nearly two weeks of testimony, the jury deliberated for just forty minutes before finding the defendants innocent. According to the Medford Sun, the courtroom audience, packed with the accused men's supporters, erupted into shrieks and applause. Liljeqvist departed immediately for Salem, and within a few days the state dropped the remaining cases.51

The acquittal caused Robert Ruhl to shake his head and call on readers to move on to more positive concerns. William Phipps, portraying the trial as the end-result of "opulent Jews and the hierarchy of Rome...attacking an

50"Talent Water...Legal," AT, 21 Nov. 1923, 3.
51"Love Affairs of Hale Aired...," AT, 7 Mar. 1923, 1; "Not Guilty Verdicts," Sun, 11 Mar. 1923, 1. Bray's first name is spelled variously in the press as Jewett and Jouette.
American order," declared the case closed.\textsuperscript{52} Although the Klan steadily faded from the front pages of the Medford press thereafter, it remained influential in southern Oregon for some time. In June 1923, nearly 300 klansmen gathered in Grants Pass, the seat of Josephine County; they marched to support candidates in the upcoming school board election.\textsuperscript{53}

Ashland was one of the organization's last outposts in the region. In the fall of 1924, the socially conservative "cultural capital" of southern Oregon, Chautauqua center and home of the region's state normal school, witnessed a "tremendous" Klan parade down its main boulevard, followed by a "naturalization" ceremony on the grounds of the city hospital. An airplane bearing an electrically illuminated cross circled the town during the evening event, and afterwards participants enjoyed an "ice cream feed" prepared by the Ladies of the Invisible Empire.\textsuperscript{54}

That seems to have been the Klan's swan song in southern Oregon. Increasingly implicated in murderous violence in other states, and tarred with financial scandal in Oregon, the Invisible Empire rapidly lost ground. William Phipps soon moderated the tone of his editorials.

\textsuperscript{52}"A Closed Incident," Clarion, 23 Mar. 1923, 8.

\textsuperscript{53}"Ku Klux Klan...," Clarion, 23 June 1923, 1.

\textsuperscript{54}"Large Crowd Attends Klan Ceremonial," AT, 10 Sept. 1924, 3.
After attempting to boost declining circulation with a highly publicized giveaway contest, he sold the Clarion in 1924. Phipps ran unsuccessfully for county commissioner and other offices during the late 1920s and early 1930s. Robert Ruhl, because he had worked tirelessly against the Klan when many other Oregon editors had equivocated, received the thanks of Oregon's outgoing governor and Medford's Roman Catholic priest; anti-Klan newspapermen in other parts of the state sought his advice.\(^5\)

Jackson County moralists were in full retreat when E. E. Kelly's son, Edward C. Kelly, wrote to his fiance of the American Legion's state convention--held in Medford in 1928--as an openly "intoxicated" affair that showed "the hypocrisy of Volsteadism...in this little city." Kelly, a young attorney and rising Democratic star in Jackson County, gloated that "the beauty" of the three-day public spree was that the "W.C.T.U., the preachers, the Prohi's, and [Klan-associated Republican chairman] Bert Anderson...have uttered no words of protest." He surmised that "their cries for

\(^5\)Turnbull, History of Oregon Newspapers, 253-254. The Robert W. Ruhl papers (privately held; Medford, Oregon) contain the following supportive correspondence to Ruhl: Letter from L. R. Wheeler (V.P., Portland Telegram), 13 Mar. 1923; letter from Harry L. Kuck, (Publisher, Pendleton Tribune), 9 Feb. 1923; letters from Gov. Ben W. Olcott, 16 May and 18 Nov. 1922; letter from Reginald Parsons (Seattle-based Jackson County orchardist), 5 May 1922; letter from Rev. John Powers, 13 Nov. 1922.
strict enforcement...will, in all probability, henceforth fall on deaf ears around here."\textsuperscript{56}

In the mid-1920s, an issue that had bred anxiety and contention in the urban and small-town/orchard zones was resolved: the Talent and Medford irrigation districts settled their water-supply problems by purchasing water rights and constructing additional water storage facilities. The city of Medford also undertook the expensive development of Big Butte Springs, resulting in the boosters' new motto, "A Mountain Spring in Every Home." In 1926, Medford finally triumphed in its long battle to wrest the county seat from Jacksonville; within two years the city's commercial elite was busily promoting development of a large airport and modern terminal.\textsuperscript{57}

The old courthouse in Jacksonville saw its last trial in 1927. In the autumn of 1923, the three young DeAutremont brothers, one of them a former member of the Industrial

\textsuperscript{56}Edward C. Kelly, letters to Mary Greiner (3 and 6 Aug. 1928), in: Edward E. Kelly Family papers, MSS 1434 and 1434-1, Oregon Historical Society Manuscript Collections, Portland.

\textsuperscript{57}"For Medford's Future" (adv.), MMT, 28 Oct. 1928, 5. The county-seat transfer vote passed in 1926, with Ashland's crucial support, after Medford officials had agreed to support the reestablishment of southern Oregon's state normal school in Ashland that year. The only communities that had sizable majorities against the courthouse removal measure were, of course, Jacksonville and Rogue River, the "orphan" town near the Josephine County line. Jacksonville officials tried to have the vote nullified by court action, but the suit met defeat before the state supreme court in 1927; see: "Jacksonville Case...," MMT, 16 May 1927, 1.
Workers of the World, had drifted into Jackson County with plans to rob a train. The brothers' daring but bungled hold-up of the Southern Pacific train at the Siskiyou Pass tunnel on October 11, during which they murdered four men, had again focused national attention on a violent episode in Jackson County. Sheriff Terrill's tracking hounds lost the trail of the DeAutremonts in the rugged Siskiyous. The three men had remained at large until identified in 1927 and escorted back to the county by new sheriff Ralph Jennings for trial. Judge Charles Thomas sentenced them to life imprisonment in the state penitentiary at Salem.  

Public rancor from the election of 1922 diminished, but personal political feuds exacerbated by the episode persisted. In his private correspondence, young Edward Kelly bragged that, while visiting state supreme court justices in Salem, he "got in as much subtle poison against Judge Thomas" and other opponents "as was safe." Kelly promised that the judge's forthcoming re-election campaign would be met with "some of the hottest and bitterest invective ever hurled against one in a judicial position."  

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59 E. C. Kelly to Mary Greiner, 2 and 12 July 1928; Kelly papers, OHS.
And out in Jackson County's hinterland, the tradition of agrarian protest lived on. Progressive party candidate Robert LaFollette's 1924 insurgent presidential campaign did extremely well with southern Oregon's rural voters. Easily outpolling the Democratic candidate in the countywide vote, the aging "voice of the common people" won resoundingly in the old Populist strongholds such as Applegate Valley, Butte Creek, Rogue River (Woodville), Trail, and Evans Creek Valley.  

"Total Vote In Election Breaks Record," MMT, 6 Nov. 1924, 6.
CHAPTER IV

THE DEPRESSION AND NEW VOICES OF PROTEST: BANKS AND FEHL

On October 7, 1929, Llewellyn A. Banks arrived at the Main Street offices of the Medford Daily News to put the finishing touches on his first editorial column. As new owner of the paper, Banks composed an upbeat salutatory address to greet readers the following morning. As a prominent orchardist, the piece also reflected his personal hopes:

The harvest season for the year 1929 is fast drawing to a close. The most bountiful harvest within the history of Southern Oregon has now become a reality. The weeks and months of anxiety have passed and visions realized have taken their place. Many mortgages will be lifted, burdensome debts will be paid, many hearts are being made glad....[A]ll share in this era of prosperity.¹

Llewellyn Banks was a risk taker, a distinctive type that characterized the "prosperity decade" of the 1920s. His entry into the newspaper business at age fifty-eight was the latest in a series of expensive gambles. In 1926, the Ohio-born Banks, owner of extensive citrus groves in southern California since 1916, had come to the Rogue River

¹"Once In A While" (title of regular column, hereinafter cited as "O.I.A.W."), Medford Daily News (hereinafter cited as News), 8 Oct. 1929, 1.
Valley. Simultaneously maintaining his California properties for several years, Banks broke into Jackson County's pear-orchard industry with verve. Banks purchased Suncrest Orchards, one of the valley's larger tracts. Finding himself in conflict with local fruit-packers' pricing policies, he opened his own packing house on the railroad south of Medford. Banks and wife Edith bought an imposing, new Tudor-style home on Medford's West Main Street. The aggressive newcomer soon challenged the leadership of the Fruit Growers League, and entered battle against the packers' association.

Banks's 1929 purchase of the News probably evoked considerable comment among the city's business leaders, some of whom had benefitted from his presence. Over the previous year, for example, Banks's expenditures on wide-ranging legal work by E. E. Kelly's law firm had earned young Edward C. Kelly's enthusiastic welcome. He commented in a June letter that, "L. A. Banks arrived from Riverside this week, and has a lot of work for us to do...my bank account is beginning to look pretty good." Banks, whose many property dealings in 1928 brought the Kellys "real good fees," regularly hosted E. E. Kelly and family with evening games of cards. One evening the younger Kelly, given the use of Banks' automobile while his parents played bridge with the Banks couple, found that driving the "new Cadillac around town...sure was a thrill," and he anticipated the chance for
"good trip...[in the] aeroplane" that the orchardist was planning to buy later that year.²

Others, such as competitor Robert Ruhl, probably looked on Banks' newspaper proposition with concern. Since its inception in 1924 as a direct successor to William Phipps' Clarion, the News had struggled to compete with the long-established afternoon daily, the Mail Tribune. Before printing the first edition of the News under his ownership, Banks moved it into a larger plant on West Main Street, installed a new typograph and twelve-ton press, and hired a designer for an expensive remodeling of the front office. Banks intended the News, complete with redesigned masthead, to be his sounding board. He meant to offer his editorial voice to southern Oregon as an alternative to that of Robert Ruhl.³

The "New Era" Fades

Using the 1929 pear harvest as a metaphor for the region's economy, and borrowing the confident slogan of the

²E. C. Kelly, letters to Mary Greiner (8, 13, 19, and 21 June 1928), Kelly Family Papers.

country's Republican administration, Banks wrote in his October 8 column of a "'New Era' for Southern Oregon." Optimism seemed justified that year. More than three-thousand pickers labored in local orchards that season, and the Medford Chamber of Commerce reported a half-million dollar increase over the city's previous total annual payroll. Medford, having completed its new water system and become the county seat two years before, now planned construction of a new county courthouse—to be built entirely with funds generated from federal timber sales in the surrounding mountains. From the steps of the courthouse one would be able to hear the work-hour whistle of the Owen-Oregon Lumber Company's modern, all-electric sawmill, which had opened in 1927 on the north end of town as the county's largest single employer. Owen-Oregon's train brought logs down from the forests near Butte Falls, daily halting traffic on the Pacific Highway as the locomotive pulled log cars to the millpond. Medford's mayor, describing southern Oregon's 1925-29 growth as "steady and sure," foresaw "no cloud upon the horizon of this great empire to give us any alarm for the future." The bright mood prevailed in private correspondence as well. Agnes (Mrs. E. E.) Kelly

"First used during Calvin Coolidge's administration as a promise of prosperity, the pro-"big business" slogan persisted into Herbert Hoover's presidency.

wrote to her prospective daughter-in-law in Washington, D.C. in early 1928:

Business is picking up. The sawmill will no doubt run double-shift beginning Monday. Tourist traffic is increasing too. The merchants are optimistic.\(^6\)

Robert Ruhl's newspaper had supported Herbert Hoover in the 1928 election because, wrote E. C. Kelly, Ruhl felt that Hoover, a former Oregonian, "understood" and consequently would "do big things for the West." However, Democrat Kelly noted that Ruhl did not take the Republican campaign promises "too seriously." To Kelly's surprise, however, the Republican candidate's mid-summer visit to southern Oregon had provoked only mild interest: "Hoover is here today, fishing on the Rogue River. Strange, but people here aren't much excited about it." Nevertheless, the region's voters gave Hoover an overwhelming majority over his Democratic opponent (and New York City Catholic) Al Smith.\(^7\)

The onset of the Great Depression, despite the late 1920s optimism of affluent residents like the Kellys, did not involve a sudden reversal of fortune for Jackson County.

\(^6\)Agnes C. Kelly, letter to Mary Greiner (16 June 1928), Kelly Family Papers.

\(^7\)E. C. Kelly, letters to Mary Greiner (6 and 30 July 1928, 11 and 12 [Aug.?] 1928), Kelly Family Papers. Kelly considered Ruhl to be a moderate "Hamiltonian": he admired Ruhl's "sincerity," although Kelly stated that he did "not agree with him on most of his editorials or views," (30 July 1928).
Economic problems had been building for several years. In 1926, Southern Pacific completed its "Natron Cut-off" route from Klamath Falls to the Willamette Valley, avoiding the steep grades over Siskiyou Pass. As a result, much freight traffic bypassed the Rogue River Valley and the number of railroad employees in Jackson County declined.8

In addition to its reliance on railroad service, Jackson County's economic health depended on strong markets for lumber and fruit. Owen-Oregon had completed its new, large-capacity mill in 1927 just as the nation's residential building boom came to an end. By mid-1929, as overproduction by West Coast and Southern lumber mills caused disastrous price declines even before the Wall Street stock market crash in October, stacks of unsold lumber began to accumulate in the company's yard. During 1930 and 1931, Owen-Oregon, like most West Coast lumber manufacturers, resorted to severe pay-cuts, layoffs, and temporary shut-downs in a struggle to stay solvent. Blue-collar mill workers in Medford, as well as the company's logging crews in the hinterland town of Butte Falls, bore the brunt of these economy measures.9

8Backes, "The Ashland Area," 36.

9Jeffrey M. LaLande, Medford Corporation: A History of an Oregon Logging and Lumber Company (Medford: Klocker Printers, 1979), 71-75. For discussion of important structural changes occurring in the American lumber market during the period, changes that deepened the already severe lumber depression, see: Michael A. Bernstein, The Great Depression: Delayed Recovery and Economic Change in America.
Valley orchardists faced a similar crisis. One Medford packer complained in 1931 that "overproduction" was the local fruit industry's biggest problem. Urging that no more government funds go toward "the reclamation [irrigation development] of more land," he instead pleaded that federal assistance go to stabilize the existing irrigation districts of Medford and Talent—which had recently defaulted on their bond interest payments. The Fruit Growers League, which in 1930 represented the interests of about half of the valley's 400 commercial orchardists, hoped that increased advertising and aggressive marketing would improve their situation. New fruit and dairy cooperatives, shakily financed, struggled to protect the interests of smaller owners. However, fruit growers grappled not only with the


nationwide agricultural price slump during the 1920s; they faced higher production and shipping costs as well as the loss of international markets. In 1926, the U. S. Department of Agriculture, reacting to European demands, imposed a quarantine on valley pears due to the presence of lead-arsenate spray residues. Some of the smaller growers, particularly around Talent, organized to resist the government's new health requirements.\(^{12}\)

Most growers, who depended on arsenate-of-lead spray to combat infestations of codling moth, were able to meet the new regulations after successful experiments in soaking and washing the fruit, but some orchardists suffered serious losses that season. Among them was Llewellyn Banks, whose forty-one railcars of "Glen Rosa"-brand pears were seized by federal agents in Chicago. Deepening the orchardists' distress, the Southern Pacific Railroad, in what local growers called a "death blow," instituted a substantial freight-rate increase after 1930. In addition, that year's highly protective Smoot-Hawley Tariff sparked a retaliatory French embargo on American fruit, closing off an important market for local pears. Ironically, Republican congressman Willis C. Hawley, co-sponsor of the tariff measure, was

\(^{12}\)Cordy, "History of...Fruit Industry," 20-21.
Jackson County's long-time representative in Washington.\(^{13}\)

Throughout 1930, some growers cut expenses by letting their trees go uncultivated and unsprayed; the resulting pests and diseases spread to neighboring orchards. And with demand sharply curtailed, tons of unharvested fruit simply dropped to the ground and rotted. Local apple growers found at least one new outlet for their fruit in 1930, when Medford's city council approved the street-corner sale of apples by indigent families.\(^{14}\)

Unemployment emerged as a major public issue in Jackson County by 1930-31. The county's Unemployed Relief Association first became active then, working with local governments and employers to provide part-time jobs and other assistance. Members of the association cut and sold firewood, gleaned the orchards, and performed other self-help tasks. Most of the county's relief effort involved voluntary programs such as canning of surplus fruit and repair of winter clothing by churchwomen. To provide dietary diversity to the unemployed, relief officials bartered excess canned fruit from the valley for canned salmon and mutton from southern Oregon's coastal


\(^{14}\)Cordy, "A History of...Fruit," 21; "Apple Selling Plan...," MMT, 19 Nov. 1930, 1.
communities. As the depression deepened, the inadequacy of these projects grew apparent. Jackson County's poor farm was filled to capacity by the end of 1931, and the Unemployed Relief Association was moribund. The main form of relief in 1931-32 involved work on state-funded road reconstruction. Because of the mild climate and previous availability of seasonal work, indigent people flocked to the Rogue River Valley from outside the area. In response, "Hire Local" became the slogan, and localism indeed flourished. County residents not only expressed resentment at the use of Californians in the orchards; they also criticized the hiring of workers from adjacent Oregon counties on Jackson County sections of roads that served the entire region.¹⁵

Robert Ruhl wrote to his fellow Harvard alumni in 1932 of receiving Tribune subscription payments in the form of chickens, garden produce, venison, and so on; he briefly considered selling the paper if its situation became untenable. Increasing numbers of small businessmen, homeowners, and farmers suffered mortgage foreclosures. In

mid-July of 1931, the Medford *Pacific Record Herald*, a weekly owned and edited by building contractor Earl Fehl, listed three "sheriff's sales" of such properties for the week; by the end of the year, Fehl's legal-notices page carried twice that number. Although the county's total tax valuations decreased more than one million dollars between 1931 and 1932, payments remained a serious burden for many residents. As a result, local governments made highly publicized cuts in salaries and purchases, but taxpayer-revolt groups began to form, particularly in the rural districts of the county.16

During the hard times of 1929-32, people in the hinterland had recourse to subsistence activities on nearby National Forest land. In the western part of the county, along the streams of the Siskiyou Mountains, small-scale mining revived as scores of unemployed men prospected and sluiced for gold. As beef cattle and milk prices plummeted, bounty hunting of coyotes and trapping of fur-bearers brought small amounts of cash to some families. Rural people typically supplemented these legal activities with poaching deer and snagging salmon. Prohibition continued to provide another source of illicit income to some hinterland

residents. The "bootlegger war" which had flared on and off between law officers and moonshiners in the remote sections of the county during the 1920s renewed its intensity during 1930-31, when a series of raids in the foothills east of Medford caused anger among many rural people.\(^7\)

*Banks and Fehl, Vox Populi*

Social and economic discontents in southern Oregon, never far from the political surface, deepened after 1929. The Depression crystallized existing frustrations and renewed the willingness of many inhabitants to follow an insurgent path. Two local newspaper publishers did much to articulate and amplify citizens' resentments through their sustained editorial crusade.

Llewellyn Banks and Earl Fehl shared several things in common. For one, both men had been born in Ohio and had moved to southern Oregon as adults after business ventures elsewhere in the West. In addition, they were inexperienced

newspaperman when beginning their respective journalistic careers in the 1920s. However, Banks and Fehl found themselves reviving the hoary "Oregon Style" of editorial writing, with its almost joyous use of personal invective and inflammatory rhetoric. Both men employed their papers to polarize local political sentiment. Their personalities, ideas, and methods demand some examination.

Llewellyn Banks stood about medium height; with graying hair and the rimless spectacles then fashionable, he struck many Jackson County people as a "distinguished looking" gentleman. Banks invariably appeared in public impeccably dressed; some Medford residents claimed that his closet contained at least forty suits, all of them tailor-made. Banks' West Main Street home was carpeted with Oriental rugs; his two Cadillacs, one a touring car and the other a coupe, added to the impression of wealth.¹⁸

Llewellyn Banks was born in 1870, in Catawba Island, Ohio. Located in the "Western Reserve" country along the shore of Lake Erie, the farming community had been the Banks family home since before the Civil War. Banks was proud of his New England ancestry, which dated to early seventeenth-century colonists. He recalled his orchardist father, who

served as Catawba Island's justice-of-the-peace, as both a "rigid disciplinarian" and a good father who struggled to provide for his nine children in the face of unscrupulous Cleveland fruit-consignment houses. After his father died when Banks was seventeen, Banks supposedly vowed, if he "ever grew to manhood," to establish a "cash market" for fruit "at the source of supply, at the grower's home."  

In 1888, at age eighteen, Banks became a salesman for a Cleveland fruit-distributor. He travelled throughout the fruit-producing regions of the United States for twenty years, learning many aspects of growing and selling. Moving to Los Angeles in 1909, Banks opened his own office to promote "cash marketing" of southern California fruit as an alternative to the prevailing consignment method. In 1916, Banks began buying orange and lemon groves in Riverside, acquiring approximately 1,000 acres of citrus trees and a "palatial" home by 1920. He operated five "cash-basis" packing plants, and as a result Banks evidently provoked stiff opposition from the established, consignment-based packing associations. In 1921, Banks came to the Rogue River Valley, which he had visited briefly in 1910, to investigate the circumstances of a local orchardist who owed the Riverside packer a large sum of money. The grower,

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19 Except where otherwise cited, all biographical and autobiographical material on Banks taken from: L. A. Banks testimony, "State v. Banks," 660-788, SOA.
mired in other debts, signed his orchard over to Banks in return for some cash profit.

The cash-basis system of fruit marketing favored by Banks involved the buyer's direct payment to the grower, at a mutually agreed dollars-per-ton amount, immediately upon delivery of the fruit. The grower therefore received a guaranteed (although often relatively low) cash price for his produce, and the buyer took all the risks of further marketing. If fruit prices in major centers such as Chicago or New York proved high, however, the original buyer could reap extremely high profits under this system. The consignment system, in contrast, involved the grower in a delayed and dependent payment system with the buyer. The consignment-based packing-house would accept a grower's fruit for shipment and marketing in return for an often substantial percentage of the market price; the grower and consignment-buyer together shared the marketing risk. During strong market periods, both benefitted. Consignment buyers often served as creditors for small growers, and the former therefore tended to grow in economic power and acreage control relative to the latter during times of agricultural depression.²⁰

Although still maintaining his Riverside residence throughout the 1920s, Banks purchased more than 600 acres of

pear and apple orchardland in the Rogue River Valley, and he travelled regularly between California and Oregon. He found Medford's "packing house row," all the establishments of which paid by consignment, dominated by some of the same associations he fought in Riverside. In 1925, Medford's eighteen largest consignment houses formed what was termed the "Traffic Association," an organization which to Banks represented unfair collusion against his and other growers' interests. He opened his own cash-basis packing house near Voorhies Crossing, on the south edge of Medford. The following year, with local packers such as David Rosenberg complaining that the combative newcomer "was raising hell in the Rogue River Valley," Banks moved to Medford with second wife Edith (his former secretary) and their young daughter Ruth.21

Banks' arrival coincided with the valley's lead-arsenate crisis. He attributed his troubles with the Department of Agriculture that year to a conspiracy of the Traffic Association and its battery of Medford attorneys. His stand against the packers and against the spray-residue health regulations during what he called "the battle of 1926" won him backing among many of the valley's smaller orchardists. His "cash-for-pears" arrangement earned Banks their loyalty; one Central Point orchardist's son later

21Banks testimony, "State v. Banks," 667, SOA. Information on Banks' wife and daughter is included in several pieces of correspondence, Ruhl Papers.
recalled, "He was a good fellow, we always thought; he did everything he could to get the money for everybody." After purchasing the News in 1929, Banks further cemented his alliance with small growers when he attacked the "chattel mortgage" arrangements whereby packers, who foreclosed on the property of indebted orchardists, accumulated large acreages throughout the valley.

Llewellyn Banks seems to have been a relatively well-read man. Many of his editorials contained allusions to classical literature. He began his "Once In A While" column in the News as an occasional feature, at first writing in a lucid manner and moderate tone. Banks concentrated on orchardists' problems, and severely criticized the Department of Agriculture for its methods during the 1926 quarantine. During 1930, Banks' columns increased in frequency and political distemper; by 1931, "Once In A While" had become a daily, page-one feature. A number of related themes recurred regularly in Banks' writings after 1930: an anti-government and anti-corporate individualism, a blend of Western populism that focused on conspiracy theory,

22Glenn Higinbotham, oral history interview with Janet Werren, June 15, 1990; adding additional first-person evidence of pro-Banks attitudes among small orchardist is: George Obenchain testimony, "State v. Banks," 975, SOA. Banks' apparent wealth and generosity led to the legend among supporters that he regularly carried on his person "a large sum of money in a money-belt"; see: "Ex. 4," Affidavit of prejudice, "State v. Banks, SOA.
a political stance that can be seen in some respects as semi-fascist, and a visionary--almost apocalyptic--approach to the Depression as America's moment of truth.

During 1930 and 1931, Banks expanded his attacks on the U. S. Department of Agriculture to include the agency's Mediterranean fruit-fly quarantine of Florida citrus growers, drawing parallels to the "illegal" quarantine of southern Oregon pears a few years before. Banks wrote a scathing indictment of Agriculture Secretary William Jardine's "dastardly policies," and suggested the need for solidarity among all fruit growers against governmental interference. He also expressed support for Iowa dairymen who were fighting the "Cow War" over the forced tuberculin testing of their herds by state health inspectors. (Before the 1931 Iowa episode had ended, many dairy cattle were destroyed, groups of angry farmers had besieged health officials; the governor declared martial law and sent the National Guard to restore order to Cedar County.)

Banks's main agricultural crusade during 1929-30 concerned the Hoover administration's Agricultural Marketing Act of 1929, which encouraged the formation of large

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farmers' marketing cooperatives in an effort to "rationalize" the marketplace. Banks, who had experienced conflict with the powerful cooperative California Fruit Growers' Exchange, considered the legislation a seductive siren's song. He warned fellow valley orchardists that the spread of large cooperatives in southern Oregon would spell the end of independent marketing and would ultimately drive many growers into bankruptcy. Banks detailed an elaborate conspiracy that linked the Agricultural Marketing Act with the efforts of "World Communism" through the agency of longtime California cooperative agent David Lubin. He further warned of bloodshed if the cooperative movement took control in Oregon. Banks's conspiratorial view of agricultural cooperatives dovetailed with the recent national controversy between industrialist Henry Ford and California cooperative promoter Aaron Sapiro, during which Ford's publications charged Sapiro with master-minding a

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"World Jewish conspiracy" to gain control of all aspects of agricultural marketing.25

Blaming Herbert Hoover for the spread of cooperatives, Banks also identified the president as the former "Supreme Dictator of Food Supplies" (referring to Hoover's position as the wartime director of the U. S. Food Administration and head of international famine relief in post-war Europe); he cast Hoover as a would-be dictator, suppressing individual freedom. In mid-summer 1931, Banks called for Hoover's impeachment on the grounds of his "criminal" agricultural policies and his collusion with English bankers. Treasury Secretary Andrew Mellon also came under strong personal attack in the News as an unfeeling plutocrat, and Banks described the Federal Reserve Banking System as "the most diabolical machine ever originated in the deranged mind of greed and selfishness." He incorporated popular anti-government resentments into his personal political declarations, bitterly criticizing the eviction of homeless men from Seattle's waterfront "Hooverville" in 1931.26


It is probable that, as a young salesman travelling in the West during the 1890s, Llewellyn Banks became familiar with the rhetoric of Populist tracts. His newspaper often featured pro-silver syndicated articles, and it promoted the 1932 Medford visit of silverite speaker William Jennings Bryan, Jr. Banks capitalized on traditional Western resentments with statements reminiscent of the Populist Revolt:

For the past several years the Pacific coast states have been content to permit eastern industrialists to outline our principles and policies of government; to control the streams of news which flow into our press rooms...to name our presidents....the...west coast states are living under a government...by a group of eastern industrialists....Has the time not come WHEN THE VOICE FROM THE WEST MUST BE HEARD IN OUR HALLS OF CONGRESS?28

In another editorial titled "Betrayal of the West," Banks castigated eastern bankers as living in luxury with "no...concern as to the frightful privations and the sacrifices of the...people living west of the Mississippi." His anti-Wall Street columns--which expressed sympathy for the Nicaraguan rebels under Augusto Sandino then fighting the U. S. Marines--described New York financiers as holding a "Feast of the Beasts," while "millions of America's unemployed were destitute of food and raiment." Banks also


28"O.I.A.W. To The Newspaper Editors...," News, 21 May 1931, 1 (unless indicated otherwise, all emphasis as given in the original quotations).
targeted another Populist bete-noire, the Bank of England; he linked Hoover to the English banking interests in a conspiracy to plunder America's wealth.\(^{29}\)

The orchardist-publisher not only incorporated the "Shylock banker" anti-Jewish views of some earlier Populists (as well as the more recent views of Henry Ford) into his editorials, he also espoused a deeper racial, moralistic, and religious form of anti-Semitism. Asking "who, among the Caucasians...will rise to challenge the [Jewish] Goliath who proposes to stalk through 'the land of the free'?," Banks labeled the Jews a "menace to our free American institutions," blamed them for "the slime that appears on our [motion picture] screens," and stated that "the Jew" belonged to a "race without a faith...[except] in his own cleverness, in his ability to outwit his neighbor." Banks's powerful anti-Semitic editorials actually were few in number, however, and he refrained from overtly criticizing Jackson County's few prominent Jews--as Jews--in his columns.\(^{30}\)


\(^{30}\)See following News "O.I.A.W." columns: "A Jew For President," 9 Sept. 1931, 1; "The Jews," 5 Oct. 1932; "When a Jew...," 10 Apr. 1932, 1. The brothers Harry and David Rosenberg were major Rogue River Valley packers and growers, whose support of cooperative marketing and other ventures was anathema to Banks; nevertheless, he did not personally target them, as Jews, in his newspaper. (The brothers changed their surname to Holmes in about 1940, supposedly to
Like many commentators during the early Depression, Llewellyn Banks called for a "man on horseback" to lead America back to social and economic order. Although he often expressed equal contempt for Bolshevism and Italian fascism, the remedy that Banks proposed for the United States seems to have been essentially fascist in character. Claiming to abhor dictatorship, Banks nevertheless voiced enthusiasm for retired General of the Army John J. Pershing as a "dictator" who "might bring order out of chaos" in the 1932 election. A few weeks later, he proposed a national third-party ticket headed by Pershing and feisty Marine Corps general Smedley D. Butler to establish "law and order throughout the United States." Banks' clearest expression of support for an American fascism came in late 1932 when he welcomed the formation of the "Khaki Shirt" movement, a violently anti-Semitic, paramilitary movement which gained brief fame in the aftermath of the Bonus Army debacle:

What is the meaning of this "Khaki Shirt" movement?...It means that a slumbering nation is awakening. It means that the millions of American citizens who for the past fifteen years have permitted politicians to invade and destroy their circumvent a boycott of their fruit label by German purchasers.) Oregon elected Portland department-store owner Julius Meier as governor in 1930. Banks supported Meier's independent candidacy; curiously, even in 1932-3, when Banks had become highly critical of Meier's policies, he did not use anti-Semitism in his attacks.

31See following News "O.I.A.W." columns: untitled, 24 June 1932, 4; "Pershing and Butler," 21 July 1932, 4. Butler was familiar to Oregonians for having helped to establish Governor Meier's new Oregon State Police.
country, are now about to assert their citizenship, to marshal their forces...it is a sign that young America has not lost its manhood and its honor.  

Throughout 1931 and early 1932, Banks repeatedly referred to the nation's need for "A NEW ORDER." He saw the beginnings of the new order in Louisiana. As Senator Huey Long began to draw wide attention, Banks joined some other journalists in touting the Louisiana "Kingfish" as a national saviour. He described Long as "the prophet" who would lead Americans "out of their trials and tribulations" and into "peace and tranquility." "Senator Huey Long," stated Banks, "lifts up the great depression...of the American people; he GIVES THEM HOPE...He is our ideal statesman."  

A final aspect of Banks' editorial approach was his visionary, professedly Christian emphasis. Many of Banks' columns, including his first and last, espoused a "Christian patriotism" that he contrasted with the allegedly "Pagan" beliefs of his enemies. In one editorial he pledged himself to God to fight "in the cause of Democracy, in the cause of

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our free America, in defense of our Flag...until Liberty and Justice" were reestablished in the United States. Sending a "Once In A While" commentary back to Medford while visiting New York City, Banks' called forth dreamy visions of an America awaiting the new order:

Then [on the streets of the skyscraper-filled city, come] the great PLEBIAN MASSES, colored with the hues of the violet rays of the...groups which rule over them...willing to be wicked, but hardly knowing how--worshippers at the feet of the giant Molloch which is about to consume them....An atmosphere of WAITING--WAITING--WAITING for something to happen....The farmers in the Plains languish under...the ultra-rich manipulators of government who dwell in MODERN SODOM....The pomp, the splendor, the silence...seemed to cast a pall over the setting.

Some of the politically prominent people who later opposed Llewellyn Banks may have read his early editorials with a mixture of bemusement and disdain. Robert Ruhl, who confided to his wife, Mabel, in 1931 that he, too, now held a low opinion of Herbert Hoover, began to express concern over the divisive tone of his competitor's editorials. Although Banks' more obscure literary allusions may have left some readers puzzled, his writings attracted a loyal following. The News also had a logistical advantage over Ruhl's evening Tribune in rural areas: U.S. mail carriers

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delivered the morning paper to hinterland subscribers by the same afternoon.37

Earl Fehl's Pacific Record Herald had been repeating essentially the same message to its readers nearly every week throughout the 1920s: Local government was in the hands of grafters who conspired against the interests of the taxpayer.

Fehl, a perennial candidate who ran unsuccessfully for Medford mayor four times during the decade and launched fifteen lawsuits against the city in the course of twelve years, was an object of ridicule for much of the period. William Phipps dubbed his competitor's paper the "Fail Weakly." Although Fehl had attached his faction to anti-Klan forces in 1922, Robert Ruhl made caustic references to "Fehlism" in his editorials of the 1920s; Ruhl seems to have considered him an unpleasant crank. However, Fehl's opinions--usually stated forcefully and in very personal terms just short of libel--began to be read with more seriousness after 1929.38

Fehl's straightforward writing style contrasted with the occasional murkiness of Banks' prose. Using a term he

38"Pipes For Mayor" (adv.), MMT, 30 Oct. 1928, 3.
had hurled at Medford elite since the early 1920s, Fehl identified the enemy of the people as "The Gang":

Jackson County is controlled by the "gang." The "gang" rules. Not the...Purple Gang, of Detroit, the Al Capone Gang, of Chicago. But we have a "gang" in Jackson County, cold and forbidding, that is alert, crafty, and sinister, seeking whom they may devour--not in the open, but thru and by the influence they occupy--representatives of the people--who they do not represent, but whose confidence they betray. That is the "Gang."  

Earl H. Fehl was a rawboned man with reddish brown hair. Born in 1885 on a farm in Wyandot County, near Marseilles, Ohio, Fehl had moved with his family to the Pacific Northwest in about 1900. He lived in Tacoma, Washington for about five years, working as a shipping clerk for a furniture manufacturer. Fehl and his older brother Delbert came to Medford in 1907, where they entered the construction trade during the height of the boom. Earl Fehl became a general contractor (building Medford's large Holly Theater cinema in 1930), real estate broker, and commercial developer. He married Electa Stailey and moved into a comfortable home on the edge of Medford's exclusive Oakdale Avenue neighborhood. Fehl began publishing his weekly newspaper soon after World War One.  

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The Pacific Record Herald was Fehl's political voice. During the 1920s, Fehl had used it to challenge other Medford factions in every city election when he or one of his associates ran for mayor. In 1922, opponents decried Fehl's "campaign of slander and abuse"; in 1924, they called voters' attention to Fehl's numerous expensive lawsuits against the city, including one wherein he claimed water rights to Big Butte Springs.\(^4\) Fehl, making the Medford "Gang" his campaign issue in 1924, responded that he regretted that he "had to expose things," but "as the champion of the people's rights...he was forced to do so." Fehl lost the 1924 mayoral race by a four-to-one margin. In the 1926 campaign, declaring that he would run "again, again, and again" and "keep on running until...elected," Fehl accused city officials of nepotism and corruption. He lost election that year by a two-to-one margin. In 1928, however, Fehl's dogged campaign to become mayor resulted in a his narrowest defeat yet.\(^4\) Formerly competing factions united behind single candidates during these years in order to forestall Fehl's bids for power. What Fehl lacked in the

\(^4\) "Attention: Citizens...," MMT, 27 Oct. 1927, 2; "Questions for Mr. Fehl...," MMT, 3 Nov. 1924; see also: Fehl's unsigned/undated typescripts of draft editorials or letters to R.W. Ruhl, Fehl Papers.

\(^4\) "Fehl launches bitter attack...," MMT, 1 Nov. 1924, 6; "Mr. Fehl Flails This Paper," MMT, 2 Nov. 1926, 3; "Pipes, Wilson...," MMT, 7 Nov. 1928, 1.
way of Llewellyn Banks' flare and personal magnetism, he made up for in tenacity.

Fehl was a long-time foe of the Medford Water Commission, which he labeled a tool of the Mail Tribune and other representatives of the "Gang." Robert Ruhl's patrician demeanor earned particular scorn. Unforgiving of political opponents, who were legion, Fehl may have astounded some readers with his churlish unwillingness to silence personal rancor even upon the death of one enemy:

On Monday, prior to [Bert Anderson's] death, we spoke to him, his poise was that of the arrogant politician, an unlit cigar firmly held at an angle, Bert was the type of politician that has ruled Medford and Jackson County for many a day....Are there any politicians in Heaven? We rather doubt it....Credit was given Mr. Anderson as a great community builder. The Bible says: "By their works ye shall know them."...and where are his works? Where are the meek and lowly who he aided?...Friends, there is a lesson in each death in our community, if you will only study its meaning. The world rolls on and on."

Like Llewellyn Banks, Earl Fehl filled his editorials with references to the United States as a Christian nation. (The Record Herald regularly carried pieces contributed by local Protestant ministers. It also featured Bruce Barton's syndicated column, "The Way of Life"; Barton, a New York advertising executive, authored the mid-1920s best-seller, The Man Nobody Knows, wherein the author portrays Jesus

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43"Record Herald Finally Breaks Silence...," PRH, 25 Sept. 1930, 1.

44"Too, Two Men Now Dead," PRH, 10 Dec. 1931, 4.
Christ as the forerunner of the modern American businessman.) However, Fehl concentrated on issues of immediate, local interest to his readers. A supporter of Oregon's Old Age Pension League (a forerunner of the Townsend movement that urged replacement of the state's outmoded "poor farm" system with pension payments), Fehl lent credence in his paper to one of the league's 1930 rumors: state officials planned to gather up all aged paupers and force them onto two huge "poor farms." 

With the Iowa "Cow War" in the headlines, Fehl voiced the fears of small dairy farmers when he censured Medford's new milk ordinance (aimed at combatting tuberculosis). Stating that although he believed in "sanitary milk...pure milk," he refused to lend "our support to such a damnable piece of legislation...nor can we countenance the operation of shame." Fehl wrote of once-prosperous small dairies now impoverished or abandoned as a result of Medford's pasteurization and inspection requirements. Fehl, still a building contractor, claimed to speak on behalf of the local unemployed when he suggested that the city "GIVE--not-sell--to bonafide citizens, a CITY LOT," provided that recipients erected an approved dwelling within six months. Citing

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45"Old Age Pension...," PRH, 11 Dec. 1930, 1.

46"Medford Milk Ordinance Causing Want...," PRH, 30 July 1931, 4. In addition to new legal controls, the county's dairymen were hard hit by the "distastrous" effects of their own 1932-33 milk war; see: Jackson County Commissioners' Journal, vol. 23, p. 313, JCA.
rampant corruption, Fehl often criticized Prohibition, and its enforcement agents in particular.47

Earl Fehl possessed a canny knowledge of what resentments were deepest and most current among his readers. The Record Herald printed a number of letters from hinterland subscribers who echoed Fehl's editorial opinions after 1929. The paper wisely provided relatively thorough news coverage of Jackson County's rural districts: who visited Medford recently, who attended the school board meeting, who went huckleberry picking in the mountains, and similar items. Once the mainstay of Medford's other papers, such detailed information had not appeared in their pages for years. As an inexpensive weekly (one dollar for a two-year subscription) that catered to rural tastes, the Record Herald, like Banks' News, grew popular in the county's outlying sections.

The 1930 Election and Its Aftermath

At first simply complimenting each other in editorials, by early 1930 Llewellyn Banks and Earl Fehl forged an open political alliance. With one man publishing a daily, and the other a weekly, they were not in serious competition for subscribers. They praised each other as crusaders against

"A Real Solution...," PRH, 12 Mar. 1931, 1. For an example of Fehl's anti-Prohibition sentiments, see: "The Eighteenth Amendment," PRH, 9 July 1931, 4.
the "Gang," and urged readers to support the two newspapers' "fearless" policies.

The year 1930 was an important election year in Oregon and Jackson County. Among other races (including governor), two-term U. S. Senator Charles L. McNary was up for re-election, and the Medford mayoral office would also be contested. Fehl filed for his fifth try at the mayor's seat. Banks entered the senatorial race in early July as an Independent. Fehl's campaign concentrated on the Medford "Gang," denouncing the local bar association, the Mail Tribune, and the current city administration as a band of plutocratic thieves.

After a Medford "nomination rally" at which "five hundred farmers and townspeople" gathered to show support, candidate Banks toured the state by train and in his Cadillac. He met with civic clubs and farmers' groups. Described by those who heard him as a dignified but almost "hypnotic" speaker, Banks may have seemed like possible senatorial material to some voters. Although he called for the repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment and "restoration of constitutional government" by disbanding Prohibition enforcement agencies, Banks's main themes were the Agricultural Marketing Act and McNary's "sell-out" of farmers by supporting the bill. Senator McNary, a progressive on agricultural issues, remained a messiah-like figure to many farmers, however, for his persistent
sponsorship of "parity" (in the form of the McNary-Haugen bills) during the 1920s. Outside of southern Oregon, Banks made little headway against the popular Salem Republican. After an initial publicity splash, Banks's campaign became farcical during the closing days. Having failed to provide the Secretary of State with the needed information to have his statement appear in the Oregon "Voter's Pamphlet," Banks accused Salem politicians of conspiring against him. When the Medford publisher claimed that McNary had bolted the Republican party, the Senator's spokesman curtly replied to reporters that the charge was "too ridiculous to discuss." The Oregonian and other major newspapers in the state had few kind words to say about Llewellyn Banks as a prospective U. S. Senator. A final bit of campaign ignominy occurred during Banks' late October visit to Roseburg, where he was taunted by a McNary supporter for still having California license plates on his automobile. Banks, flustered by the attack, became visibly angered and bystanders intervened before the two men could come to blows. Robert Ruhl wrote privately that Banks's financial situation, both in the pear market and at the News, must have placed the candidate "in hot water," although he expected Banks to "hang on until after the election."^48

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Election day proved disappointing to Banks. McNary won by a landslide, defeating his Democratic opponent Elton Watkins by greater than two-to-one. Statewide, independent Banks received 17,500 votes, a little more than seven percent of the total. In southern Oregon, however, Banks did remarkably well for a newcomer to the region and to politics. He garnered over twelve percent of the Josephine County vote, and in Jackson County Banks polled almost forty percent (3,286 votes to 3,944 votes for McNary). The Tribune described it as a "flatteringly complimentary vote."

Countywide precinct returns were not reported in the press that year, but the Medford results showed Banks's strongest support in the working-class area around the Owen-Oregon sawmill and other blue-collar neighborhoods. Outside of the city, reported Earl Fehl, Banks's rural support was considerable.49

Republican senatorial incumbents returned to office that year, another indication of his popularity among Oregonians; see: Steve Neal, McNary of Oregon: A Political Biography (Portland: Western Imprints, The Press of the Oregon Historical Society, 1987), 126-127 (Neal's book does not mention Banks' candidacy). McNary's endorsement of the Agricultural Marketing Act, which proved to be unpopular in the Pacific Northwest due to perceived discrimination against the region's produce by the act's resulting stabilization corporation, had come after his seven-year, unsuccessful battle for parity; see: Roger Taylor Johnson, "Charles L. McNary and the Republican Party During Prosperity and Depression" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1967), 138-140.

49"County for McNary," MMT, 5 Nov. 1930, 8; Mr. Banks...Arouses Rural Voters," PHR, 25 Sept. 1930, 4. Although all Republican candidates were at great risk in 1930, McNary's poor showing in Jackson County is surprising,
Earl Fehl very nearly won the race for mayor. He lost to his "Gang" opponent, E. M. Wilson, by a mere fourteen votes out of a total 3,240 cast. Fehl's strongest showing came from the same working-class and lower-middle-class precincts that supported Banks's bid for the Senate. And as with the Banks-McNary contest, the city's "silk stocking" Oakdale and East Side neighborhoods gave Fehl his lowest returns. Fehl lost no time in demanding a recount. He and his supporters had helped to organize the "Better Government League" shortly before election day, and the League became his stalking horse during the November recount. Asking readers to contribute to the organization, the Record Herald described it as an organization "the object of which is to promote the interests of better government for all classes of citizens...The need is urgent. Will you help?" Some Jackson County citizens soon proved willing to do so.

The 1930 campaign had important consequences. The speeches and writings of Banks and Fehl defined political

given his strong victory in the rest of Oregon. Jackson County had been McNary's weakest county in 1918, but by 1924 it had become his fifth strongest. McNary, who detested speech-making, did not campaign hard in southern Oregon during 1930; this may have contributed to the senator's vulnerability to an aggressive "hometown" rival. See: Howard A. DeWitt, "Charles L. McNary: An Appraisal of his Early Political Career" (M.A. thesis: University of Oregon, 1967), 85.

"Will You Help...?," PRH, 6 Nov. 1930, 1; "Better Government...," PRH, 13 Nov. 1930, 1.
issues in terms that an increasing number of county residents understood and appreciated. The local election results confirmed that both men had a solid basis of political support. Although neither Banks nor Fehl gained office in 1930, their campaigns certainly forged links with potential volunteers, financial contributors, and voters throughout Jackson County. The "Better Government League" took shape briefly as a purportedly populist movement to wrest control of local government back from the "Gang." Although it faded as a formal organization soon after the 1930 recount failed to alter the mayoral race's outcome, the League concept would revive under a similar name two years later.

Following the 1930 election Llewellyn Banks wrote fewer columns about the great national questions. Instead he joined Earl Fehl in aiming his editorial fire at local issues. Calling attention to farmers' protest movements elsewhere in the nation, particularly in Iowa and Wisconsin, Banks urged all Jackson County orchardists to demand "CASH for Pears" or withhold their fruit from market. He recommended that farmers resist mortgage foreclosures by force if necessary, and he called for a taxpayers' revolt against county government. By 1932, he echoed Fehl's
warning of a Bar Association conspiracy and targeted the California-Oregon Power Company for a similar portrayal.\(^{51}\)

Earl Fehl maintained his local focus. A few days after the 1930 election, a tragedy in the brushy foothills near Eagle Point provided him with material for many inflammatory editorials over the next two years. On November 14, a team of Prohibition agents and sheriff's deputies surprised four young men at a moonshine still on Reese Creek. One of the men, Everett Dahack, was shot dead during the raid, apparently without having attempted to flee or resist. A coroner's inquest failed to identify who had fired the fatal bullet and the investigation was dropped, although the shooting was later attributed to officer Joe Cave. One of the deputies accompanying Cave, Louis Jennings, was the son of county sheriff Ralph Jennings. The Dahacks were long-time "mountain ranchers" in the vicinity of Eagle Point, and Everett Dahack's death aroused considerable bitterness in the county's eastern hinterland. Personal anger at county officials joined existing anti-Prohibition sentiments, creating a perception that the corrupt "cossacks" of the sheriff's office threatened citizens' property and lives.\(^{52}\)

Charging county authorities with conspiracy to "cover up

\(^{51}\)For examples, see following News "O.I.A.W." columns: 31 Aug. 1932, 1; 11 Sept. 1932, 1; 12 May 1931, 1; 16 Dec. 1932, 1; 4 Nov. 1931, 1.

cold-blooded murder," Fehl took up the Dahack shooting and made it into a local cause celebre.  

In early 1932, Fehl's Dahack Case accusations resulted in a libel suit brought by officer Cave; Fehl simultaneously faced serious financial problems because of past real estate investments. Banks had paralleled Fehl's hinterland crusade with a similar effort on behalf of F. A. Bates, an aged miner living on a remote section of Foots Creek, near Gold Hill. Banks published the man's account of being harassed by claim-jumpers who threatened to blow up his sluice boxes. He printed the names of the men allegedly involved in the episode, including D. H. Ferry, manager of the Rogue River Gold Company's mining dredge operation. Outraged at Banks' printing of the "sawdust martyr" Bates' story, Ferry and others filed libel suits.  

The News' owner was beset with other problems: tax delinquency, unpaid debts to the paper's former owner, and a suit brought by union employees for back wages. The mid-1929 $45,000 purchase price for the News hobbled Banks

53"Raid Story...," MMT, 15 Nov. 1930; "Blame Not Fixed...," MMT, 16 Nov. 1930, 1; "Delay Hearing on Still Raid," PRH, 17 Nov. 1930, 1; "Dahack Jurors," PRH, 28 Nov. 1930, 1; Mrs. Dahack In Need...," PRH, 28 Oct. 1932, 3. Fehl returned to the Dahack case regularly throughout 1931-32.

financially by 1931. He inflated the paper's circulation figures, probably in hopes of attracting potential buyers, and he allegedly threatened to "write up gossip" about Medford merchants if they did not advertise in the News. Calling the United Press syndicate an example of "Wall Street Propaganda," Banks announced in March 1932 that he would no longer carry the news agency's national stories; unpaid bills had caused United Press to pressure Banks for payment.55 The Depression became a trap from which Earl Fehl and Llewellyn Banks struggled to free themselves.

In January 1932, Banks warned his ally that Fehl's "enemies are laying a trap...with a full expectation of eliminating you for years to come." Banks counseled Fehl to stand firm as the orchardist threw down the gauntlet to their opponents:

I am in closer touch with what is transpiring than ever before. You will recall, Earl, my statement made to you in the utmost sincerity many, many times, that L. A. Banks will never bargain with...the former gang which has controlled

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The following sources indicate that Banks used the threat of blackmail to gain advertisers: Ray Erwin, "Crusades of the Past: For Good Goverment," Editor & Publisher, 14 Dec. 1957, 54; Latham interview; George M. Payne (wire service agent, Cincinnati, OH), letter to R. W. Ruhl, 19 May 1932, Ruhl Papers.
Medford's affairs for many years. Either I will whip them to a standstill or will take a licking of the first magnitude....If necessary, I propose to invoke the ballot box for an adjustment of differences which can never be settled amicably. I paid the price for admission in this battle to a finish.  

The year 1932 was the nadir of the depression in southern Oregon. The Jackson County Bank, the county's second largest financial institution, failed in March. At least 60,000 heads of households were out of work that year in Oregon, and more jobless men kept arriving in the Rogue River Valley during the summer. Some of them belonged to the self-described "Sunset Division" of the Bonus Expeditionary Force, composed of over fifty unemployed World War veterans on their way from California to join the main B. E. F. force in Washington, D.C. The men and their families camped conspicuously in downtown Ashland's Lithia Park for several days before moving on to Medford. Banks and Fehl praised the Bonus Army contingent, while some local American Legionnaires denounced it as a "racket." Perhaps the only tangible sign of confidence in the region was the new, $270,000 Jackson County Courthouse, nearing completion on Medford's West Main Street. The large concrete structure, faced with Indiana limestone, had an imposing front entrance reached by granite steps. Shortly after the

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courthouse's formal dedication in August, its steps served as site of the county's largest single sheriff's sale: the Owen-Oregon sawmill was sold to the Chicago investment bankers who had financed the mill's construction. A few months later the new courthouse steps became the speaker's rostrum for rallies of Banks's and Fehl's supporters, organized as the Good Government Congress.  

CHAPTER V

THE "NEW ORDER" COMES TO THE COURTHOUSE

Historians have remarked that, as the United States headed into its first presidential election year of the Great Depression, the nation's mood seemed to be more one of stunned bewilderment than of anger at the effects of economic collapse. However, in some areas of the country--including heretofore placid farming regions such as the Corn Belt of western Iowa--political turbulence, with an explicit threat of violence, began to build that year.¹ Jackson County, Oregon became one such area in 1932.

Insurgents Advance: The 1932 Election Fight

In 1932, the spring season brought a primary election campaign to Jackson County. With grassy foothills turning

¹The country's "dazed" reaction, for example, is stressed by: William E. Leuchtenburg, Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, 1932-1940 (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 18-27. For a history of the farmers' revolt in Iowa, which included several episodes of mass violence, see: John L. Shover, Cornbelt Rebellion: The Farmers' Holiday Association (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1965).; FHA leader Milo Reno, a fiery former preacher and Populist, shared many of Llewellyn Banks' opinions on farmers' marketing solidarity, currency inflation, the Federal reserve bank "conspiracy," and the Jews.
green and orchard blooms coloring the valley floor, April and May were a time of year that seemed almost to fulfill the most outlandish promises of the old Commercial Club brochures. However, as readers of the Mail Tribune became aware that spring, restlessness among farmers was not confined to faraway regions. Earl Fehl and his fellow insurgent candidates were driving the back roads of the county to politick and to persuade rural listeners gathered at schoolhouses and Grange halls.

Llewellyn Banks and Earl Fehl, both of them increasingly beset with creditors and libel lawsuits, began their move for political power by attempting to appropriate Jackson County's badly fragmented Republican party. Fehl, with full public backing from the Daily News, entered the Republican primary race for county judge. He shared the field with four other contestants, including incumbent judge Charles Lamkin of Ashland. Functioning as the chairman of the board of county commissioners, the judgeship possessed executive and judicial functions that made it the most powerful political office in Jackson County. Running for the Republican district attorney nomination was one of Llewellyn Banks's legal associates, Thomas J. Enright. Enright, a young attorney with a law degree from Georgetown, was a newcomer to the county. Although he joined Fehl on stump-speech tours of the hinterland throughout May, Enright lacked name familiarity, particularly in comparison to his
opponent William Briggs, former city attorney of Ashland. For the Republicans' sheriff nomination, Banks and Fehl put up a young Medford service-station owner from the county's eastern hinterland, Phil Lowd. Lowd faced stiff competition from eight other candidates. Ensuring a strong connection with the other party, Banks and Fehl also supported Gordon Schermerhorn, an independent building contractor in Medford since the 1890s, for the Democratic nomination against Sheriff Ralph Jennings.²

Referring to his platform as "the Fourteen Points," Fehl presented himself as a statesman who would end "Gang rule" and revive "good government." Hammering constantly at local Prohibition corruption and the Dahack case, Fehl spoke before numerous "mass meetings" in the county's agricultural districts. A resident of the Elk Creek Valley, near Trail, later recalled Fehl's evening speech before a "big crowd" at the schoolhouse: "Everybody on the creek was there to hear him...he stood up front, reading off his notes and pounding on the desk."³ Speaking at the Shady Cove school, on the upper Rogue River, candidate Fehl alleged egregious instances of graft with the county's Prohibition fund and he warned, "watch your step, folks, or they will have you all


³E. Zimmerlee interview.
up in [the penitentiary at] Salem if you can't account for every ten minutes of your life." To a Central Point audience, Fehl made similar points, condemning incumbent district attorney George Codding for malfeasance regarding Prohibition enforcement and related matters. According to Fehl, Codding, "sitting in the Liberty Building with...a couple of stenographers and an expensive mahogany desk," coldly covered up the murder of Everett Dahack.¹ (The district attorney's offices were located in the Liberty Building until completion of the courthouse; the four-story office building on Main Street served as regional headquarters of Standard Oil and it housed many of Medford's prominent attorneys, earning it Banks's and Fehl's opprobrium as headquarters of the "Gang.")

Over the course of the campaign, Earl Fehl gave speeches at other outlying communities. The News, under the headline of "Farmers For Fehl," reported that "opinion as expressed on street corners and by ranchers who make it in to town about once a week gives Fehl the Republican nomination."⁵

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¹"Excerpts" from Mar. 1932 speeches by E. Fehl, "G.G.C., etc." file, DA/RG8/#79A40 [7/14], JCA.

Earl Fehl's political fortunes ascended with the results of the primary election. He won the judgeship race with a solid majority. Although losing their respective contests, political unknowns Enright and Lowd did quite well. Lowd came in a close second in the sheriff race's crowded free-for-all. The Mail Tribune noted with surprise that Enright had "polled a strong vote in the country"; the precinct returns show the same rural support for other "Banks-Fehl" insurgent candidates. Schermerhorn edged out incumbent Jennings in the Democratic sheriff's contest. Excluding Ashland, which voted overwhelmingly for its hometown candidates in the 1932 primary, the insurgents' strongest support lay in the small-town/orchard zone and in the hinterland. In some rural precincts Fehl actually received an absolute majority in the field of five candidates. In Medford's lower-income neighborhoods, Fehl won the same strong backing that almost had given him the 1930 mayoral race. His opposition was strongest in Medford's and Ashland's more affluent precincts. Jackson County voters were splitting along both sectional and class lines, a combination which created a potential majority arrayed against small urban elites.

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6Long-time representative Willis Hawley, thought by many to be Oregon's "permanent fixture" in Congress, lost his 1932 primary race to a much younger man who emphasized the ruinous impact of "Hawley's tariff."
Robert Ruhl, alarmed by the results of the May primary, counseled voters to beware of demagogues who would divide the community. In return, the News and the Record Herald heated up their attacks on Ruhl and other members of the Medford establishment. In June, Banks focused his column on the "Coddington-Tribune Syndicate" that was trying to silence the News by biasing a grand jury investigation of Banks's finances. Banks claimed that Ruhl hoped to benefit from the silencing of its competitor, and thereby was heavily involved in the plot. During the summer, the lively weekly Jacksonville Miner and even the staid daily Ashland Tidings, both of which took an anti-"Banks-Fehl" stand, were drawn into the county's 1932 newspaper war. The Portland and Salem papers began to bring southern Oregon's developing situation to statewide attention.7

The summer of 1932 was exceedingly hot and dry in the Rogue River Valley. During an August heatwave, as drought forced the the cut-off of irrigation to orchards, a number of volunteers began circulating petitions for the recall of circuit court judge Harold D. Norton. Norton was a Josephine County Democrat who had defeated incumbent Charles Thomas for the position in 1930. He moved to Medford's

7 MMT, May-Aug. 1932, passim.; "The Coddington-Tribune Syndicate," News, 2 June 1932, 1. The phrase "Banks-Fehl," a fortuitous, unintentional pun on the American banking system during this period, was not commonly used until after the 1932-33 Jackson County episode; I employ it here to describe their political movement before the formal founding of the Good Government Congress in January 1933.
Oakdale Avenue, where neighbor Earl Fehl built the judge a large new home. Norton would be presiding at the Banks and Fehl libel trials. Despite the two men's pre-trial motions for dismissal, Norton refused; the recall petitions appeared immediately afterward. Both Banks and Fehl denied instigating the recall move but they emphatically supported it in their editorials. The effort to oust Norton was the county's first recall campaign since 1922. The county bar association, Democratic warhorse E. E. Kelly (formerly Fehl's and Banks's attorney), and other prominent political leaders denounced the recall. Robert Ruhl, who had supported Norton's Republican opponent in the 1930 election, was out of state when word of the recall attempt became public. He had left the Tribune's day-to-day editorial writing in the hands of assistant editor E. C. Ferguson, with occasional help from fellow Harvard alumnus, orchardist Leonard Carpenter. When Ferguson contacted Ruhl with news of the recall, he fired back an indignant column for the paper's Sunday edition:

Sanctioning [the recall] movement by signing the petition will not only place an added and needless expense upon the taxpayer but will throw the entire county into discord...So, squash this recall...and avoid having Jackson County heralded throughout the state as a hotbed of dissension and strife.  

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8"Prejudice...Charged," MMT, 8 Aug. 1932, 1 and 5; "Demos...Recall," MMT, 11 Aug. 1932, 1; Atwood, Blossoms and Branches, 55 and 225; G. Latham interview.

9"Editorial Correspondence," MMT, 14 Aug. 1932, 4.
Although Ruhl feared Jackson County would gain unneeded publicity as the state's disgruntled "recall capital," the petitioners continued to circulate in the county's outlying districts into the fall, gathering signatures and causing discord between neighbors in some communities.

Robert Ruhl lived in a much different world from most of the county's rural residents. Robert and Mabel Ruhl owned a comfortable home close to the Rogue Valley Country Club, where the publisher frequently played golf. The Ruhls often travelled for pleasure, touring different parts of the United States each summer by automobile or train. Along the way, the editor visited with college classmates or other acquaintances and wrote regular travelogue pieces back to the *Tribune*.10

The Depression certainly strapped Ruhl's finances; in mid-1932, he complained of being "short of cash to the point of tears."11 Initially Ruhl was reluctant to engage in all-out battle against the Banks-Fehl political movement, and this fact would later earn him gentle scolding from some of his friends.12 His hesitancy may have been due in part to

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10Ruhl typically did not arrive at the *Tribune* office until late mornings, particularly during the summer, when he played golf in the cool of the early hours.


the prospect of losing even more subscribers. Many rural readers, feeling that the Tribune "just didn't tell the truth," stopped taking the paper in 1932. The Tribune's circulation manager, Gerald Latham, drove through the rural Applegate Valley and upper Rogue River areas to contact potential subscribers and met a very hostile reception from several ranchers. Upon learning that he represented the Tribune, they cursed Latham and ordered him off their property. Although D. H. Ferry, the anti-Banks dredge manager from the town of Rogue River, volunteered to distribute free copies of the Tribune among "some of the country people" in his district, the paper suffered severely from the informal boycott.

The 1932 general election, from the presidential race to the local contests, offered Jackson County voters clear choices. Anti-Hoover and anti-Prohibition sentiments were now especially strong in southern Oregon. Robert Ruhl, gamely sticking by the Republican candidate, assured his readers that the worst of the Depression was over. Ruhl's editorial praise of Hoover was quite restrained, however,

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13E. Zimmerlee interview; J. Hollenbeak, in: Recollections, 52.

14G. Latham interview.

15D. H. F[erry], letter to R. W. Ruhl, 18 Sept. [1932], Ruhl Papers. According to Ruhl, the Tribune's circulation declined during the 1932-33 unrest from over 4,700 to well under 4,000 subscribers; see: R. W. Ruhl, letter to Ralph Norman (Journalism Dept., Indiana University), 1 Nov. 1933, Ruhl Papers.
and the editor would soon become a strong and consistent supporter of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal. Ruhl saved his strongest rhetoric during the 1932 campaign for the three most important county contests: judge, district attorney, and sheriff. Ruhl appealed for rationality, for harmony. He attempted to dissuade gullible newcomers from voting for Fehl, explaining the man's long political career as the result of "thwarted ego." Ruhl hinted that the spate of last-minute election filings by "independents" for numerous other county positions--from school superintendent to county clerk--were part of a well orchestrated political campaign by Banks-Fehl forces.16

For his part, Earl Fehl continued his forceful stump speeches throughout the county, including one before a "large rally" at the Medford armory. The Record Herald reported pointedly that "a large number of ladies were present" at the armory, and that their applause of Fehl was frequent.17 When speaking, he waved pages of county budget documents which he claimed proved the corruption of certain members of the "Gang." Fehl also promised to "clean up" the county's relief fund situation. By the closing days of the campaign, amidst "wild charges...especially in the rural districts," Ruhl admitted that Fehl appeared certain to win.

16"For Newcomers," MMT, 7 Nov. 1932, 6; "The Last Word," MMT, 7 Nov. 1932, 1.

17"Large Crowd...Earl Fehl," PRH, 15 Sept. 1932, 1.
Nevertheless, the Tribune parodied the News-backed ticket as "The Three Musketeers": Earl Fehl for county judge; M. O. Wilkins (recent arrival in Jackson County and currently one of Banks's lawyers), Independent candidate for district attorney; and Lowell Zundell (a Medford automobile salesman and long-time Banks supporter), Independent candidate for sheriff.\textsuperscript{18}

Jackson County's 1932 general election took on a particularly Byzantine quality. Wilkins, not wanting to alienate his colleagues in the bar association, confused the district attorney's race with his temporizing on the Norton recall. Banks promptly disowned him publicly until the candidate meekly re-pledged himself to the on-going recall effort shortly before election day. The Tribune supported Fehl's opponent, latecomer county-judge candidate "Pop" Gates, the former Medford mayor whom Ruhl had criticized for his opportunistic pro-Klan stand a decade before. Ford dealer Gates enjoyed wide familiarity which might tip the balance against Fehl; a coalition of the county's anti-Banks-Fehl residents had persuaded him to run. Dividing the establishment's base of support, however, was the entry of another former Medford mayor, A. W. Pipes, into the race. William Phipps, one-time Populist and Klan supporter, was also a contestant for county judge, running as a Democrat. The aging Phipps, ever on the alert and sensing possible

\textsuperscript{18}"The Three Musketeers," \textit{MMT}, 7 Nov. 1932, 4.
advantage from the crowded field, was making his last try
for elective office.

Zundell had entered the crowded sheriff's race in order
to draw votes away from incumbent Sheriff Ralph Jennings,
who had filed as a write-in candidate with the backing of
the county's embattled "dry" forces. Although he had lost
the Democratic primary to the News-backed Gordon
Schermerhorn, Jennings refused to surrender his office
without a fight.

On Tuesday afternoon, November 8, the Mail Tribune
reported that a record number of people, particularly voters
in the "country districts," were coming to the county's
polling places. Their votes resulted in a county landslide
for Franklin D. Roosevelt—who received over fifty-five
percent of the votes to Hoover's forty percent. Two
important state ballot initiatives were repeal of Oregon's
Prohibition amendment and a referendum on the "Zorn-
MacPherson Bill," a drastic statewide austerity measure for
higher education which among other actions would have turned
Ashland's four-year Southern Oregon Normal School into a
two-year junior college. The county voted overwhelmingly in
favor of Prohibition repeal, and it defeated the Zorn bill
by a huge margin.¹⁹

¹⁹Socialist party presidential candidate Norman Thomas
accounted for most of the remaining five percent.
Although M. O. Wilkins, Banks' undependable ally, lost badly to incumbent district attorney Coddington, Zundell made a respectable showing. Most importantly, both Gordon Schermerhorn and Earl Fehl won office. Except for the affluent neighborhoods of East Medford and Oakdale that had always opposed him, Fehl did well throughout the county. Hinterland communities such as Applegate, Butte Falls, Eagle Point, Evans Creek, Sam's Valley, and Trail gave Fehl huge margins of victory. He received similar support in the small-town/orchard zone communities of Central Point, Gold Hill, Phoenix, and Talent. Even normally conservative Ashland gave Fehl a majority, although the result was evidently due in part to anti-Medford pique at the opposing candidate, Gates. Had they not divided the anti-Fehl vote, Phipps's and Pipes's combined total might have given victory to Gates. Schermerhorn barely led the write-in vote for Jennings, whose support came from Medford, Ashland, and his hometown of Jacksonville. Sheriff Jennings immediately called for a recount. To Llewellyn Banks and Earl Fehl, on the other hand, it seemed clear that the county had delivered a mandate to end "Gang rule" and return political control to the people.²⁰

²⁰"Last Minute Anti-Medford Appeal," MMT, 7 Nov. 1932.
Robert Ruhl saw at least one silver lining in the stormy election results: It appeared that District Attorney Codding had been vindicated and the Dahack case, as a divisive issue, had been laid to rest. Ruhl, accepting the inevitable entry of Earl Fehl into the halls of the new courthouse, again called for harmony. "With the battle of the ballots over," Ruhl urged citizens to unite toward achievement of the "bright destiny, which our high type of citizenship and the extent of our resources justify."

Other editors were less optimistic. In neighboring Josephine County, the Grants Pass Daily Courier noted that "Medford...of late has fallen from her high estate...Now the place has achieved statewide reputation for being all muscle-bound by warring factions." Comparing southern Oregon to a "Balkan powder keg" from the vantage point of Portland, the Oregonian voiced hope "that Jackson County doesn't have its Sarajevo." Other Oregon newspapers made similar comments. The Ashland Tidings simply wished the "internal strife which is making Jackson County the butt of many jokes throughout the state, to cease." Word of the area's turmoil was becoming known beyond the state; one

21"...Codding Vindicated," MMT, 10 Nov. 1932, 4.

British Columbia resident wrote a bemused letter to a Jackson County friend:

From what we read the whole valley is ruled by gangsters and outlaws and neither life nor property is safe. And worse still, the papers say that the Cossacks ride about shooting people down just for fun...the children are quite angry at you for not telling them about the terrible jungles and the savage Tribune tribesmen that inhabit them.

The county's political situation may have seemed ludicrous to outsiders, but the winter of 1932-33 brought few smiles to the principals involved. Long-time holders of political power would relinquish control of county administration and law enforcement to the Banks-Fehl insurgents on January 1. The sheriff's election recount, although stymied by Schermerhorn's attorney with every possible obstacle, offered the establishment a ray of hope. Banks and Fehl, caught in the closing ring of financial disaster, could be held back from dangerous power if the recount gave victory to Jennings. This appeared very possible due to the probable miscount of the write-in ballots from rural precincts.

Due to the Dahack case libel judgment in 1932, which dispossessed Fehl of his printing plant, the Record Herald was now published from Banks's Daily News operation on Main Street. Banks's financial troubles during 1932 were such that some of the News staff went nine months without

receiving wages. Banks occasionally arranged for businesses that advertised in the News to pay his employees in the form of clothing and groceries; exasperated ex-employees sued Banks for back wages, eventually receiving fifty percent of what was due them in an out-of-court settlement. Banks succeeded in postponing the looming receivership decision on the News until March 1933, at which time the court—assuming Judge Norton was removed from office by that time—might be far more favorably disposed. But Banks was increasingly beset by journalistic opposition. Not only the Mail Tribune, with its judicious pronouncements by Ruhl, but the daily Ashland Tidings, the Central Point American (a weekly edited by a former News employee who had quit over Banks' failure to pay him), and the new Jacksonville Miner aimed steady criticism at the impending "Banks regime." The weekly Miner was edited in gadfly style by 30-year-old Leonard Hall, a scrappy newcomer who jumped right into the feud. Hall, who had acquired newspaper experience in Los Angeles, parodied Banks mercilessly with his front-page "Once Too Often" column and political cartoons. His irreverence outraged some Jacksonville and nearby Applegate Valley residents who boycotted the Miner. After the young editor was assaulted by an elderly Banks supporter on the streets of Jacksonville and received anonymous threats, Hall
received permission to carry a handgun.\(^\text{24}\)

The threat of violence became palpable after the election, as Banks, making reference to "the hangman's noose," proposed use of a citizens' "vigilance committee" to remove Codding and Norton from office.\(^\text{25}\) Local posts of the American Legion organized to provide nighttime guards at the homes of these and other county officials. The son of county commissioner Ralph Billings later recalled coming home from college study at Corvallis during the 1932 Christmas break, largely unaware of how tense feelings had become; he arrived at his Ashland home to find armed men stationed in the yard.\(^\text{26}\) Robert Ruhl, receiving threats that the Tribune's presses would be sabotaged, maintained "an armed guard [of off-duty printers] at the plant day and

\(^{24}\)A. Schoeni, telephone interview with the author, 24 April 1992; "Through the Kindness...of L. A. Banks," PRH, 17 Mar. 1932, 1 (L. A. Banks later emphasized that the jury which found against Fehl included persons employed by the California-Oregon Power Company and the "milk trust," two targets of Fehl's anti-corruption crusades); "News Receiver...," MMT, 17 Nov. 1932, 1; "Action on News...," MMT, 18 Nov. 1932, 1; Jacksonville Miner (hereinafter cited as Miner), 1 Jan. 1933-17 Mar. 1933, passim. Harlan Clark (former Jacksonville resident), personal interview with author (Eugene), 3 June 1991. Mr. Clark, a personal friend of Leonard Hall's, recalls that Hall received secret refuge at Clark's home one evening when the threats seemed especially serious.

\(^{25}\)"M. O. Wilkins statement/Codding file," DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 1/3], JCA.

night during the height of the turmoil." The Ruhls felt concern for the safety of their youngest daughter, a student at Medford's Catholic academy, and they instructed the nuns that she was to be kept after school and then driven home only by her parents.27

Llewellyn Banks claimed that his newspaper had been marked for "destruction and extermination." With Fehl's weekly coming off the same press, the News' plant entered a state of siege in late 1932. Located a block from and within sight of the Tribune's offices, Banks's building also had a full-time force of armed guards. Led by members of the self-styled "Greensprings Mountain Boys" from the foothills southeast of Ashland, the group consisted largely of unemployed young men from Medford and outlying communities. They operated in para-military fashion, with a chain of command and orders to "shoot anybody that came through the door" during a break-in. Medford residents nervously joked that "every time a car backfired at night, they crawled under the bed." After Banks began to fear for his personal safety, the group functioned as his personal bodyguard. Few of the men received any pay for the duty, but Fehl promised that they would find ample food at the

county relief commissary after he was sworn in as judge.  

During the closing days of 1932, outgoing county officials struggled to maintain control of the government. Sheriff Jennings's recount suit was slowed when Gordon Schermerhorn, in an attempt to avoid being served legal papers which would postpone his assumption of office, went into hiding. Only after being secretly sworn in as sheriff in the early morning hours of January 1 did Schermerhorn reappear in public. Outgoing county judge Charles Lamkin, working with fellow lame-duck commissioner Victor Bursell, persuaded elderly holdover commissioner John Barneburg to resign and immediately replaced him on New Year's Eve with younger, more aggressive R. Emmett Nealon. (Nealon, son of the old Populist representative Stephen Nealon, could claim some hinterland allegiance; however, Nealon's potential rural support may well have been counterbalanced by the fact that his sister Eva was a reporter for the Tribune.) Fehl and Banks cried foul, and upon assuming office of the following day, Fehl swore out a warrant for Lamkin's and Bursell's arrest on charges of "mutilation of county

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records," which new Sheriff Schermerhorn dutifully served. ²⁹

For the first week of January, as the Oregon attorney
general's office investigated the legal tangle, two separate
"county commissions" met at the courthouse: one in the
formal court chambers and the other in Judge Fehl's new
quarters down the hall. Hundreds of Fehl's supporters, most
of them "from the rural sections" noted the Tidings, milled
in the corridors and on the courthouse lawn. When the
attorney general ruled in favor of Nealon's midnight
appointment, Fehl-backer Lowell Zundell threatened to lead
3,000 citizens in a protest march on the courthouse. A
number of Fehl supporters arrived one night outside Nealon's
Central Point home, demanding his resignation. Medford's
American Legion post, in turn, decried the "mob spirit" of
Fehl's adherents and pledged to assist law officers in
quelling any disturbance. Fehl, assuming a mantle of
statesmanship, issued a widely publicized policy statement.
In it Fehl emphasized the need for "law and order" and rule
by duly elected representatives of the people; Fehl
indicated he would grudgingly accept the state's legal
decision. Just as importantly, Judge Fehl's policy

²⁹ "Schermerhorn Yet Missing," AT, 29 Dec. 1932, 1;
"Barneburg Resigns," News, 1 Jan. 1933, 1; "Ex-Judge...." AT, 5 Jan. 1933, 1. Although Fehl castigated the "midnight"
appointment of Nealon, the commissioners' record indicate
that his appointment took place at one o'clock p.m.; see:
Jackson County Commissioners' Journal, vol. 23, p. 207, JCA.
reorganized unemployment relief fund disbursements and tax delinquency collection under his direct control.\textsuperscript{30}

During the 1932 campaign, Judge Fehl allegedly had promised some unemployed rural voters county jobs, "at no less than fifty cents an hour."\textsuperscript{31} He had assured others of increased largesse from the county relief commissary. In office, Fehl began delivering on many of these promises. Some supporters found jobs at the county jail, at the commissary, on road crews, and elsewhere. Others congregated at the relief commissary and became, to the disgust of an anti-Fehl observer, "frequent and heavy feeders at this public trough."\textsuperscript{32} At one large meeting of backers in early January, Fehl declared that he was, by executive order, opening the commissary to all present. When his fellow commissioners Billings and Nealon objected, Fehl used the occasion to warn publicly that "a couple of commissioners...are going...to keep the old gang in power from the head man down."\textsuperscript{33} Some people in the crowd


\textsuperscript{31}"The Jackson County War' [16 page typescript by O. H. Goss]," DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 5/27], JCA; "S. P. MacDonald statement/ Codding file," DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 1/3], JCA.


\textsuperscript{33}"Notes of E. H. Fehl speech/'G.G.C., etc. file'," DA/RG8/#79A40 [box 7/14], JCA.
reportedly shouted "hang them...throw them in the river" in reference to Nealon, Norton, and other officials. The "gun guards of the Medford Daily News" allegedly enjoyed "wide open" privileges at the commissary, prompting an anti-Banks-Fehl petition to Governor Meier that demanded investigation of the abuses of the relief situation in Jackson County.34

Embattled Llewellyn Banks, facing more than thirty lawsuits--ranging from libel to collection of debts--saw in the crowd of Banks-Fehl supporters at the courthouse a formal political movement in the making. Arrayed against Banks was a battery of prominent local lawyers, including his former attorneys E. E. Kelly and Gus Newbury, who either now represented his opponents or who themselves took action to obtain payment for past legal services. Banks exclaimed that during a grand jury hearing in early 1933 nine attorneys sat at his adversaries' table: "Nine attorneys! I alone was trying to defend myself." By January 1933, the News was all but bankrupt. Nevertheless, Banks printed every day. One affluent supporter in Ashland offered to send Banks each day, by special evening courier, clippings of "fresh" syndicated news articles from the afternoon issue of the Tidings, which Banks could then incorporate into the pages of his morning paper.35 When the News' creditors

34"1500 Gather...," Miner, 20 Jan. 1933, 1; "O.H. Goss, 'Jackson County War'," DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 5/27], JCA.

35"A.L. Coggins, letter to L.A. Banks (9 Feb. 1933)/'Coddling file'," DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 1/3], JCA.
confiscated Banks's rolls of newsprint, the publisher obtained another supply from Earl Fehl's wife, Electa (to whom Fehl previously had signed over ownership of many Record Herald assets), and transferred its ownership to several loyal employees. Banks's employees distributed copies of the News free to people at the courthouse; some of the recipients in turn carried the paper to other readers throughout the county. The political stand-off could not endure much longer; the sheriff's recount still loomed and the anti-Banks-Fehl forces had begun to organize throughout the county.

**Move and Countermove: The "Good Government Congress"**

Organized opposition to the Banks-Fehl insurgency, aside from the Tribune's regular anti-extremist pleas, did not develop until after the election. Sheriff Jennings's "dry" backers, calling themselves the "League of 7,000," had formed in late October to push his write-in bid. But the league's main purpose seems to have been to rally the county's last-ditch Prohibitionist supporters, particularly in Ashland and Medford. Although the vote of well under

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4,000 for Jennings belied the group's hopeful name, league organizers kept up the pressure for a recount.37

By January, the county's (and particularly Medford's) commercial/professional elite mounted a direct counter-attack on the "radical" forces of Banks and Fehl. Led by men such as E. E. Kelly and fellow attorney Porter J. Neff, Medford's establishment sought and found anti-insurgent support among less prominent residents of towns and countryside throughout Jackson County. Some hinterland residents, such as the rancher and part-time county road supervisor from near Eagle Point who was reluctant "to go down to Medford" because of unruly crowds, shared the anti-Banks-Fehl attitudes of establishment figures.38 One middle-class citizen of Medford, who cited his National Guard service in violence-wracked Butte, Montana, shortly before World War One, worried in early 1933 that "the lives of several honorable men and even of the judge [Norton] of our court are in danger, needing only a 'spark' to start the fireworks."39

The forces of order coalesced by mid-January when the American Legion and the county bar association sponsored a

37"League of 7,000...," MMT, 26 Oct. 1932, 1; "D. H. Ferry, letter to Ralph Moody, 29 July 1933, in: 'State v. Fehl' file," DA/RG8/#79A40 [box 7/14], JCA.


39"A. R. Hoelting to Gov. Meier," JCA.
"mass meeting" at the Medford armory. The valley's sole radio station, KMED (owned in substantial part by the Mail Tribune), informed citizens of the January 19 evening event, drawing a crowd of between 1,200 and 1,500. Colonel E. E. Kelly, one of several speakers, warned that Banks's "propaganda" would soon cause "some poor fool [to go] haywire and become violent." He reviewed the tangled threads of Banks's legal problems, explaining the publisher's attacks as cynical and driven by financial desperation. The meeting's participants, "by an almost unanimous vote," endorsed county officers such as George Codding and expressed confidence in their integrity. Out of the Armory meeting came the "Committee of One-Hundred," an ad hoc anti-Banks-Fehl association of prominent businessmen from throughout Jackson County.

Banks and Fehl in turn countered their rapidly organizing opponents by forming the "Good Government Congress." The idea for the Good Government Congress (which soon became commonly known as the "G.G.C.") had been first publicly discussed following Banks's and Fehl's January 12 courthouse rally, which demanded the resignations of Nealon and Norton. A few days previously, in a column titled "The Declaration of Independence," Banks had called for citizens to "institute a new government...founded on the principles

40"1500 Gather...," Miner, 20 Jan. 1933, 1; L. A. Banks testimony, 687-688, "State v. Banks," SOA.
of our great Democracy." A number of Banks supporters met at the publisher's home that evening, where he outlined his thoughts for a formal organization. Among his listeners were C. Jean Connor and Donald Tryor, unemployed men who soon obtained positions on the News guard force. After sleeping that night in the sandpile at Ashland's railroad yard, they continued out into the farming areas south of town to contact other prospective organizers. Similar efforts were undertaken by supporters in other areas of the county. The News, in a feature titled "How To Do It," provided detailed instructions for organizing community "Good Government Clubs." The clubs soon spread as rapidly through the hinterland as had the Alliances and People's Party Clubs forty years before. In his column, Banks cautioned organizers to "remember that enemies of the Good Government Congress are not asleep," that "wolves in sheep's clothing" would endeavor to "work themselves in as loyal supporters."

The first G.G.C. organizers' meeting, attended by about fifty persons, took place at the courthouse auditorium on the evening before the anti-Banks-Fehl force's armory rally. A second organizational meeting followed on January 23,

"The Declaration...," News, 8 Jan. 1933, 1.

"C.J. Connor affidavit/'Invest. Material: B-F Affair'," DA/RG8/#79A40 [box 8/14], JCA.

whereat, Banks claimed, a cadre of over 250 charter members "from every section of the county" jammed the auditorium. Although Judge Fehl provided the facility for these meetings, he maintained a discreet distance; Llewellyn Banks, in contrast, was involved centrally in both of them. Although some persons objected to Banks's designation as an "honorary president" with ultimate decision-making power, the meetings followed the publisher's will on most substantive matters. The Good Government Congress announced unrestricted membership for any Jackson County voter who would pay the fifty-cents monthly dues and uphold the Congress's "principles of democratic government." The organization soon claimed more than 6,000 members and twenty chapters throughout the county.

The first "general assembly" of the Good Government Congress met at the Medford armory on February 4, Saturday morning. The Ashland Tidings estimated the crowd at about 1,500; other anti-G.G.C. sources put the number attending above 2,000. G.G.C. executive president Henrietta Martin introduced Llewellyn Banks as the man of the hour. Banks held his audience with visions of a Jackson County "rehabilitated" through renewed mining, establishment of a

huge cannery, and state-run banks providing credit for hard-strapped farms and businesses.45

Earl Fehl followed Banks to the podium. Excerpts of his speech, transcribed by a district attorney's stenographer in attendance, indicate that Fehl's old theme of overturning "Gang rule" received loud and repeated applause:

I have been asked today to come...and speak to the people on behalf of better government in Jackson County....I am glad today to stand before this audience assembled in this armory....I was warned not to come to this meeting today by a former friend of mine. He wanted me to stay away, but I am a lone man in Jackson County and I go alone. I am your Judge...and I am here to represent all the people, not any faction...."Good government," ladies and gentlemen, means representative government....The word "congress" means representation of all the people, not of any one faction....I have put in five hard weeks in trying to bring about a reformation in your government. Here's what's been accomplished in five weeks: Nothing. Absolutely nothing. And it will go on that way, until you people begin to rise up and demand a government that is representative of the people.46

Fehl went on to praise "my friend L. A. Banks" as the "one man [who] came to my rescue" when the Pacific Herald's plant was seized by circuit-court order. He ended with a promise to "work for...nothing, to clean this place up." The Good Government Congress later issued, on county court stationery, its resolution of confidence in "faithful and

45"Large Crowd...," AT, 4 Feb. 1933, 1; "Goss, 'J.C. War'," 15, JCA.

46"E. Fehl speech excerpts/'G.G.C., etc.' file," JCA.
untiring" Judge Fehl and in "Mr. Llewellyn A. Banks, courageous champion of freedom of the press and able exponent and defender of the principles of democracy."\(^{47}\)
The assembly concluded with passage of several resolutions: demands for appointment of a special prosecutor, investigation of alleged fraud connected with the county's "liquor fund," indictment and prosecution of the "murderer" of Everett Dahack, and the removal from office of District Attorney George Coddin.\(^{48}\)

On the afternoon of the general assembly meeting, a crowd of 1,000 G.G.C. members and supporters congregated outside city hall on Ashland's downtown plaza; they massed in support of Banks, then inside the civic courtroom facing charges of libel.\(^{49}\) The Good Government Congress held weekly Monday meetings in Medford thereafter, most of them at the courthouse auditorium. Chapter meetings were held at rural meeting places such as the Lake Creek school. At one Medford meeting, Banks's former attorney M. O. Wilkins, after being roughly handled by armed G.G.C. guards when trying to defend himself against Banks's charges of "extortion," stated that "I shook away from them and bade

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\(^{47}\)Ibid.; "Resolution, 'G.G.C., etc.' file," DA/RG8/#79A40 [box 7/14], JCA.

\(^{48}\)"Resolutions,' 4 Feb. 1933/ 'G.G.C., etc.' files," DA/RG8/#79A40 [box 7/14], JCA.

\(^{49}\)"Crowds...Keep Calm," AT, 4 Feb. 1933, 1.
them let me alone and stand back--I shook away from
them...and backed off" outside the courthouse auditorium. 50

After anti-G.G.C. citizens obtained an injunction
against such meetings inside the courthouse, the Good
Government Congress would hold much bigger rallies on the
courthouse steps. Such was the case of the second Saturday
morning "general assembly" on February 18, scheduled--like
the first--for a time when many hinterland residents were in
Medford to buy groceries at the city's popular
"Grocerteria." District attorney George Codding, who had
been promised an "escort of honor" and a cordial hearing by
G.G.C. president Henrietta Martin, declined to attend. At
the assembly, another large audience heard Earl Fehl, who
made sarcastic reference to "Mr. Robert Ruhl," declare that
southern Oregon's "greatest curse [was] a newspaper that
refuses to tell the truth." He also condemned the "eleven
or twelve men...down on a street corner" who had caused the
closure of the courthouse to the Congress. 51 In his "Once
In A While" column, Banks congratulated the organization on
its valiant efforts and predicted that the "Good Government
Congress will extend to all part of the State." 52

50 "M.O. Wilkins statement/'Codding file'," DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 1/3], JCA.

51 "H. B. Martin, letter to G. A. Codding (14 Feb.
1933)," DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 4/27], JCA; "Transcript of Fehl
speech/'G.G.C., etc.' file," DA/RG8/#79A40 [box 7/13], JCA.

1933, 1.
Among the crowds that listened approvingly to Banks and Fehl were a few people who, within a short time, would commit felonies with the intention of consolidating the power of the Good Government Congress. Many other G.G.C. supporters would vigorously applaud these actions. Before proceeding to the events of February and March, it is important to examine the composition of the Good Government Congress membership, the people that G.G.C. opponents labeled as ignorant "hillbillies." Their backgrounds were more diverse and, for some, their motivations more shrewd than that smug dismissal would imply.
CHAPTER VI

MEN AND WOMEN OF THE "GOOD GOVERNMENT CONGRESS"

Many people who joined the Good Government Congress carried the G.G.C. membership card, which gave the holder's name and address above the organization's motto: "Justice Our Aim, Truth Our Weapon, Public Exposure Our Penalty."
The Congress's preamble, printed on the reverse side of the card, stated the reasons for the organization's existence:

We, the citizens, property owners, and taxpayers of Jackson County, Oregon, are faced with economic conditions which under the existing order of things have passed beyond individual control.1

The statement continued with a list of the many crises facing the United States and southern Oregon:

With all industries operating at a loss or...closed; with the product of our soil being sold at unprecedented losses...; with tax levies ever on the increase and beyond the earning power of our...properties to pay; with half our population destitute and out of employment; with...eviction from our homes being imposed under the law; with foreclosures for delinquent taxes [a]ffecting a large section of our people.

And it concluded this description with the rationale that, "with conditions unprecedent and of abnormal nature," it was  

1G.G.C. membership card [Defense Ex. 4], "State v. Banks," SOA.
necessary to "form ourselves into an organization for the protection of our lives, our homes and our properties."

Placing the organization squarely within the historical mainstream of American politics, the preamble also stressed the members' faith in "the fundamental principles of Democracy" and their subscription "to the spirit and phraseology" of the Declaration of Independence. It ended with an oath of allegiance to the Constitution and particularly to "ALL JUST LAWS" governing society.

The ideas and style of the G.G.C. preamble owe much to the nation's venerable republican rhetoric and virtually nothing to the language of "radical socialism," fascism, "technocracy," or other political alternatives then gaining favor among some Americans. The Good Government Congress clearly presented itself as a patriotic upholder of "the people's rights" in the Jeffersonian-Jacksonian tradition. The very term "good government," used in Alexander Hamilton's opening letter of The Federalist Papers, evoked the key political goal of the earliest days of the Republic.² Thus, although its use in Jackson County doubtless was inspired by like-named Progressive-era civic improvement leagues of Western cities, the phrase "good government congress" also resonated with the sound of even older American struggles for representative government.

"A Bunch of Bolsheviks and Hillbillies": The Opposition's View and the Reality

Llewellyn Banks compared the farmers who joined the Good Government Congress to the Concord "minutemen" of his forebears' Massachusetts. Jackson County's threatened establishment leaders scoffed at this analogy. They dismissed G.G.C. members as ignorant rabble. Medford's Post No. 15 of the American Legion characterized the Good Government Congress as "largely made up of extreme radicals and weak minded people."3 Another veteran, who claimed to have "carefully observed each [G.G.C.] meeting for a month," was more charitable. He described the membership as drawn from "mostly among the small rural farmers and the laboring class," virtually all of whom were "white, American citizens of good and sincere intent" but who were "swayed constantly to fever heat."4

Power company attorney Evan Reames denounced Banks's News as "Russian propaganda"; George Codding's office notes labeled a number of individual G.G.C. members or supporters with terms such as "agitator," "radical," "anarchist," and "Bolshie." Codding's Ashland informant described one pro-G.G.C. farmer south of town as a "Bolshevik of that group in the Neil Creek district...temperamentally stubborn and

3"Amer. Legion Post No. 15, letter to Gov. C. H. Martin (18 July 1935)," DA/RG8/#79A40 [box 4/14], JCA.

4"Hoelting to Gov. Meier (15 Feb. 1933)," DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 5/27], JCA.
congenitally dull, associations rural."\(^5\) Red-baiting was a game both sides could play however. G.G.C. president Henrietta Martin denounced Leonard Hall's anti-G.G.C. *Miner* as a "pink sheet" and proudly stated that the only people excluded from the Good Government Congress were "Communists or [those with] Communistic ideas."\(^6\) Claiming that bar association members had met with men "known to be allied with the Communistic movement," Banks warned that the county's "'special privilege' class, exposed and defeated at every turn in the road, is now appealing to the Communists, to the radicals," to defeat the Good Government Congress.\(^7\)

The "Red" accusations of both sides ring hollow upon considering the county's past political history, including the elite's evident success in preventing significant "Wobblie" contamination of the local work force during the previous two decades. The epithet "radical" carries weight

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\(^6\)"Transcript of G.G.C. speeches, 6 Mar. 1933/'Invest. Material/Banks-Fehl Affair,'" DA/RG8/#79A40 [box 8/14], JCA. "Pink sheet" was probably a double-entendre; Hall occasionally published the *Miner* on pink or green newsprint as a publicity gimmick.

\(^7\)"Democracy Versus Communism," *News*, 31 Jan. 1933, 1. The "Communists" Banks referred to probably included O. H. Goss, leader of the county's Unemployed Council who broke with Banks over the G.G.C.'s "dictatorial" direction; there is no evidence that Goss was anything more "sinister" than an aggressive spokesman for the rights of the area's jobless.
only if one considers old Populist, Socialist, or
Progressive party voters as meeting that definition.

The more objective Oregonian pointed out to readers
elsewhere in the state that the Jackson County movement was
composed of "crusaders not communists." It described G.G.C.
members as people "of modest means...for the most part
sincere men and women who have lived in Jackson County for
many years--out on the fringes of the rural sections."8 The
local elite likewise emphasized the movement's agrarian
background, although sometimes doing so with a contempt
similar to that expressed by town elites toward the
"hayseed" Populists in the 1890s. The term "hillbillies"
was used often, as in the following report on three G.G.C.
members by a district attorney's office investigator: "All
were Hill Billies; man short, very long beard, large black
felt hat; one old woman, thin; the other fat and middle
aged."9 Robert Ruhl privately referred to swaggering young
"Good Governments, [with] their calfskin vests and sawed off
shotguns."10 County commissioner Ralph Billings's son
characterized the Banks-Fehl supporters as "moonshiners from
Evans Creek, Trail, Butte Falls, and so forth...from way off
the main runway...when they came to town, they were a pretty

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8"Medford's Strife...," Oreg., 6 Mar. 1933, 1.
9"Transcript of overheard conversations of E. Fehl (May
1933)'/Cuffel file',' DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 4/27], JCA.
Papers.
rough looking bunch." The little town of Butte Falls accounted for sixty-eight signers of an anti-Nealon petition.

To George Codding and his assistants, Evans Creek Valley, near the Josephine County line, was one of the most notorious G.G.C. hotbeds. The town of Rogue River, at the mouth of Evans Creek, lay on the railroad and the Pacific Highway; it therefore attracted numerous transients who added their support to the pro-G.G.C. sentiments of longtime Evans Creek Valley residents. The little town's "Bonney's Grill" served as a meeting place for men such as one Henderson, who "preach[ed] sedition and syndicalism," and Antonsen "a rabid G.G.C. [who] lives 'way back in the sticks up Evans Creek." One of Banks' more affluent backers, a lumberman from Ashland, agreed that the bulk of G.G.C. supporters were "not Medford people, neither are they Ashland people." He wrote to Banks:

They are the rank and file of the common country folk of the out-country....They are all good citizens...and they have suffered an Inferiority Complex so long at the hands of the Medford Gang

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11 J. Billings interview.

12 Jackson County Commissioners' Journal, Vol. 23, p.232, JCA.

13 "Ted Dole, letter to district attorney (8 Apr. 1933)'/Copies of statements' file," DA/RG8/79A40 [box 7/14], JCA; "D.H. F[erry], letter to Ass't A.G Ralph Moody (17 July 1933)/'State v. Fehl' file," DA/RG8/79A40 [box 7/14], JCA.
and of the Ashland Gang, because remember there is an Ashland Gang too.¹⁴

The picture of "typical G.G.C. members" that emerges from such descriptions is reminiscent of stereotypical "hillfolk" of the Ozarks or southern Appalachians. Lending credence to this group portrait are the memoirs of regional writer Wallace Ohrt, who lived on the upper Rogue River, near Trail, during the Depression years. He recalled finding the ways of some of his neighbors "shockingly primitive.":

Not infrequently, girls married at thirteen or fourteen and were toothless grandmothers at thirty. From the road we sometimes saw babies and toddlers running naked through the woods. The boys picked their noses, seldom wore underwear... Moonshining was so common that it [was] estimated that some five hundred stills may have operated... between Medford and Prospect.¹⁵

All this picturesque local color about Jackson County's hinterland, however, may reveal more about the city-bred attitudes of the commentators, writing or growing up during a period when America's popular, urbanized culture held some definite expectations of what "mountain people" were like. Accounts such as Ohrt's no doubt reflect some of the reality of that time and place--particularly those few but vivid youthful impressions that remain forever in one's memory. But they neglect to mention the far more commonplace

¹⁴"A.L. Coggins, letter to L.A. Banks (9 Feb. 1933)/'Coddin file'," DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 1/3], JCA.

probability that most southern Oregon hinterland youth in the 1920s-30s attended high school, did not marry until about the same age as their city cousins, and were rarely toothless by the age of thirty. The "rustic" stereotype of the G.G.C. created by the elite likewise contains some truth, but it also distorts. Support for the Good Government Congress, as discussed below, was more diverse than such remarks would indicate. And in the hinterland, many residents refused to support the movement and even spoke out against it. Prominent among these was Emmett Nealon. His family's Populist background, plus its tradition of daughters who worked as rural schoolteachers during the early twentieth century, may have given him some influence with older and long-established residents in the northern part of the county.\textsuperscript{16}

Llewellyn Banks claimed a G.G.C. membership of over 6,000 (Jackson County's population in 1932-3, including persons of all ages, was a little over 30,000). Some anti-G.G.C. accounts of "mass meetings" attempted to minimize the organization's numbers by describing "only a few" or "a handful" of supporters in attendance, but photographs and testimony from numerous eye-witnesses (including persons

\textsuperscript{16}J. Hollenbeak, in: Recollections, 52; "D.H. F[erry] to Ralph Moody (17 July 1933)/ 'State v. Fehl'," DA/RG8/#79A40 [box 7/14], JCA; Peter Sage, telephone interview with the author, February 3, 1993.
with anti-G.G.C. associations) indicate that such events were very well attended. Banks's 6,000 figure may have been inflated, but the 1932 vote for county judge—which was as clear a public poll of G.G.C. support as any—gave Earl Fehl over 5,600 votes to the 4,300 votes for his nearest opponent, establishment-backed candidate Gates. As described in the previous chapter, Fehl's strongest support came from rural and small-town areas throughout the county, as well as from Medford's lower income neighborhoods.

Unfortunately, no formal G.G.C. membership list remains available for study. Instead, a list of 300 Good Government Congress "members" (which includes leaders, acknowledged members, open sympathizers, and confidential supporters) has been compiled from correspondence, newspaper accounts, trial transcripts, and especially from district attorney jury-selection rosters and other investigatory files. This list provides a sample of "G.G.C. men and women" that permits some analysis of the organization's membership in regards to geographic residence, occupation/class, and gender.

Briefly, in terms of residential zone, of the 280 persons whose addresses could be ascertained, approximately

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17The district attorney's G.G.C. investigatory files, held in the county archives, contains one file folder titled "List of Some Members of the Good [Government] Congress," but the folder was empty at the time of the author's examination of the county D.A. files in 1992 (DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 5/27], JCA); its contents evidently have either been mislaid or purposely purged.
43 percent lived in the hinterland. Another 31 percent resided in the small-town/orchard "intermediate" zone of the main valley (exclusive of the Ashland city-limits). Nearly one quarter (23 percent) lived within Medford and, of those whose street addresses are known, virtually none of them had homes within the city's affluent neighborhoods. Ashland city residents account for 4 percent of the total, but a sizable portion of the intermediate zone total lived in rural settings very close to that town.

Occupational status was determined for 146 persons. Of these, by far the largest portion—31 percent—were in the undifferentiated "farmer/rancher" category (and most of these people lived in the hinterland zone). Orchardists (all of them living in the intermediate zone) accounted for 10 percent of the total. Other occupational groups represented included: small-business owners (barber, service station owner, auto-court owner, etc.; all of whom lived in Medford or the intermediate zone) at 5 percent; presumably self-employed artisans (carpenter, blacksmith, mason, etc.) at almost the same percentage; wage-paid service/industrial workers (taxi driver, mail carrier, nurse, telephone operator, laundress, feed store employee, millhands, and so on) at 11 percent; housewives at 17 percent; and outdoor workers (laborers, miners, loggers, and orchard employees) at 15 percent. Professionals and large-business owners (including one physician, one attorney, one banker, and one
lumberman) tallied at 7 percent; seven out of these eleven individuals were identified as "ministers" or "preachers," and their religious duties may have been only of a part-time nature.

The occupational spread shows a clear predominance of rural-oriented workers (over half of the total), whether as landowners or as seasonal employees. However, more urban-oriented endeavors—as small businesses, skilled artisan crafts, and service/industrial work—account for nearly one-quarter of the total. The "high-status" category of large business owners and "professionals" (dominated by ministers) is by far the smallest group. Housewives make up almost a fifth of the G.G.C. members whose occupational status could be determined. This figure is almost certainly unrepresentationally low for the overall membership, given that the unlisted wives of many men on the sample list probably actively supported the movement. Photographs, newspaper accounts, and other evidence of G.G.C. activities demonstrate that women made up a sizeable portion of attendees.

Indeed, women held positions of prominence in the Good Government Congress's leadership. Henrietta Martin, wife of Medford's U. S. Weather Bureau director (a position, due to the agency's "fruit frost forecast" duties, that had strong ties to local orchardists), is the most obvious example. Martin apparently was a housewife; news accounts provide
almost nothing in the way of personal background aside from her husband's occupation. (Additionally, the informants interviewed during this study--most of whom were adolescents or very young adults during the 1932-33 period--recalled no personal details about Henrietta Martin, although most of them clearly remembered hearing of her notorious horsewhipping of Leonard Hall; detailed biographical material on Martin evidently has passed out of reach with the deaths of the principals in the Good Government Congress episode.) Martin actively planned and led G.G.C. meetings, spoke forcefully and articulately before large audiences, and remained an aggressive political player even after the events of March 1933.

Other prominent female G.G.C. members included Central Point orchardist Ariel Pomeroy and Gold Hill resident Adah Deakin, both of whom regularly spoke at G.G.C. meetings and wrote numerous public letters on behalf of the movement and Llewellyn Banks. The district attorney's Rogue River/Gold Hill-area informant stressed the G.G.C.'s popularity among women there, citing in example one particularly active resident who served as secretary of the Wimer "Good Government Club" and who "went all around...Evans Creek soliciting subscriptions on behalf of Earl Fehl." He urged fellow G.G.C. opponent Robert Ruhl to help find "some strong woman" who could present the anti-G.G.C. case to female audiences. Another informant revealed (with self-admitted
astonishment) the fact that one seemingly respectable member of the Medford Business Women's Club was actually a G.G.C. sympathizer who "expressed her views openly."  

Although given particular attention by anti-G.G.C. observers, the importance of women in both the leadership and the rank-and-file of the Good Government Congress was not anomalous. Rather, it reflected the steady emergence of American women, particularly middle- and lower-economic-class women, as full participants in diverse movements across the entire spectrum of national politics during the 1920s-30s. Additionally, local rural women had a heritage of political activity dating from the Grange and Alliance movements of the late nineteenth century.

The motivations of Good Government Congress members varied. Some of them, such as S. P. MacDonald, a part-time night watchman at a Medford fruit-packing plant, apparently joined out of short-term self-interest; MacDonald claimed he had been promised a county job by Earl Fehl in return for his support. R. C. Cummings of Rogue River had joined soon

18"D.H. F[erry] to R. Moody (17 July 1933)/'State v. Fehl'," DA/RG8/#79A40 [box 7/14], JCA; D.H. F[erry], letter to R.W. Ruhl, 17 Aug. 1932, Ruhl Papers; "Prospective juror lists (and informants' notes)/ 'Schermerhorn file'," DA/RG8/#79A49, JCA.

19For an extended discussion of women's political participation during this period, see: Cott, The Grounding of Modern Feminism, especially pages 97-114, 209-211, 224-225, and 277-280.
after Walter Jones, town mayor and Fehl's appointee to road supervisor, gave him a job on the road crew. At the other end of the economic scale, a few elderly and once-politically-prominent Medford residents, such as 1907-08 mayor J. F. "Doc" Reddy and pioneer banker William Gore, may have supported Banks due to antipathy for the current Medford elite or perhaps simply out of resentment at the passing of their power to new hands. Neither they nor wealthy Ashland doctor Francis G. Swedenburg, Banks's physician and his partner in at least one mining venture, were G.G.C. members, but they voiced open support for him and his crusade. Another Ashland resident, Arthur L. Coggins, whose small lumber mill was one of the town's largest employers, was one of Banks' many creditors. Coggins, a leader of the anti-establishment Jackson County Taxpayers League, admitted that he wished for Banks to stay "alive...financially," but he also sympathized with the aims of the G.G.C. movement, stating that its rural members "grasped at the opportunity thru [Banks] to fight

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20"S.P. MacDonald, letter to district attorney (13 June 1933)' Codding file'," DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 1/3], JCA; "R.C. Cummings affidavit (11 Mar. 1933)' Codding file'," DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 1/3], JCA.

21 Their support included appearances as character witnesses at Banks' trial. One of Banks' bodyguards recalled Reddy as saying during the height of the G.G.C. crisis that "he would like to hear of something happening...that he would like to hear of a 'hanging tree'" for Banks's opponents; see: "History of dealings and connection with Banks [Virgil Edington]' L.A. Banks Trial Papers'," DA/RG8/#79A40 [box 8/14], JCA.
the...County Gang which has controlled them for a

generation."  

The Oregonian sent a staff reporter from Portland to
cover the breaking Medford story in early March. The
reporter, who apparently interviewed a number of its
supporters, stressed the G.G.C. as a "Depression-born"
movement and portrayed it with the hues of agrarian revolt.
He wrote of the "hundreds of citizens drawn primarily from
the rural sections...leaving their fields and orchards to
march in huge demonstrations...in front of the courthouse."

What is the matter with Jackson County? Back home
after a week spent as a correspondent "at the
front" in the most intense community war
experienced in this state in recent years, the
writer has been asked this question
repeatedly....Why should a progressive city with
progressive citizens and a rich producing back
country be torn by intense civil strife?....Why
should men be seen on the city streets with guns
strapped to their hips? Reduced to simplicity,
the answer is "hard times."  

In broad interpretive terms, the membership of the Good
Government Congress was clearly dominated by those on the
far periphery of local power--rural residents and working-
class townfolk, people who had seen the political center of
gravity shift steadily to the Medford "urban" core, with its
cosmopolitan elite and outposts of corporate capitalism.

22 A.L. Coggins, letter to L.A. Banks (9 Feb.
1933)/'Coding file',' DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 1/3], JCA; Jackson
County Commissioners' Journal, vol. 23, p. 231, JCA>

1933, 1.
Members and sympathizers of the Good Government Congress had different motives than Banks and Fehl, for whom it was an avenue to financial survival and personal political control. For some grass-roots members, the Good Government Congress represented an opportunity to reassert waning rural power. For others, it probably was seen as a way to pull the bosses down to size. For many, although they may not have stated it in such terms, the movement symbolized a crusade for republican "Virtue" against the traditional villain of "Corruption"—an evil in this case made literal by the alleged corruption of the urban elite. Jennie Thatcher, a G.G.C. supporter from Talent, probably spoke for many less articulate members when she stated:

I think the day is close at hand when we will have to say adieu to our old ideas... and political views and get the rubbish from the machinery of our train, put there by the platform, pulpit, and press... by those who hold selfish motives, greed, graft, etc. paramount to truth... [L]et us hope the "gansters' day" is at an end.²⁴

Like many movements in their early stage, the Good Government Congress at first attracted people of divergent philosophies who saw in it the means to further their particular political aims. O. H. Goss and Miles Randall, representatives of the county's Unemployed Council and considered "radicals" by the Medford elite, had been attracted to the G.G.C. immediately upon its formation in

²⁴"Letterbox," AT, 10 Mar. 1933, 4.
mid-January. When they challenged the "dictatorial" control of Banks, they found themselves unwelcome and branded as "Communists" by the G.G.C. Goss later joined the establishment's anti-G.G.C. forces, pointing out Fehl's alleged cynical abuses at the county relief commissary. Other early supporters of the G.G.C., politically well to the right of Goss, soon abandoned it as too "radical."  

Religion, the Nativist Tinge, and the Klan Connection

By early February, with the initial schisms and apostasies over, personal support for the G.G.C. and personal support for Banks and Fehl apparently had become nearly identical in the minds of most members. The movement coalesced around the two men as its saviours or martyrs. Indeed, over the course of its short existence as a viable organization, the G.G.C. increasingly added the rhetoric of "patriotic Christianity" to its preamble's original republican language. The persistent Biblical allusions in Banks's and Fehl's newspaper editorials laid the foundation for this growing symbolic element. Several local Protestant

25"Goss, 'The J.C. War'," DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 5/27], JCA (Goss's after-the-fact account of his challenge to Banks is no doubt self-serving; however, much of it is substantiated by other accounts); "Janet Guches statement (24 Mar. 1933)/'Copies of Statements' file," DA/RG8/#79A40 [box 7/14], JCA; "M.O. Wilkins statement (7 Mar. 1933)'/Codding file' ," DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 1/3], JCA; "M. Randall affidavit (22 Mar. 1933)/'Codding file',' DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 1/3], JCA.
ministers (evidently none of whom served congregations at established mainline churches) were prominent in the organization; the Reverend Edwin Malkemus opened several G.G.C. assemblies with prayer.26 One of Banks' supporters wrote to him:

If we were following the teachings of Jesus Christ we would have no depressions or crime wave....In my little interview with you at your home, you showed me beyond a doubt that you wanted to do right....I have said most everything on the cause and cure for our present sickness, for this is a sick nation and it will take a miracle of Christ to cure this sickness...I am asking you for the sake of the little children of this great land of ours to study this message well.27

D. H. Ferry, the anti-Banks informant in the Rogue River/Gold Hill area, observed Banks' popularity among the local "old folks, especially religious women," and he urged Ruhl to aim a countervailing editorial appeal at "the churchy people."28 According to witnesses at one of the G.G.C. courthouse auditorium meetings, Banks' personal magnetism apparently combined with religious fervor in a curious action that brought an approving roar from the crowd: After speaking to the assembly, the publisher halted, took his fountain pen and a kitchen match from his coat pocket, and made them into a cross for all to see,

26 "G.G.C. minutes (30 Jan. 1933)/'G.G.C., etc.' file," DA/RG8/#79A40 [box 7/14], JCA.


"which brought a great many people to their feet shouting, and the rest all followed with some kind of noise." Goss forcefully described later G.G.C. meetings as "a constant barrage of prayer, flag waving and pompous phrases...seething with a witches brew of hatred and prejudice." Thomas L. Breechen, an Ashland resident and leading officer of the organization, spoke at length before several large G.G.C. meetings on "the foreign population"; his remarks included a repertoire of jokes about "Irish, Swedish, and Jewish people" and other ethnic groups.

Considering Banks's well-known anti-Semitic views, Breechen's choice of speaking topics, and especially Jackson County's heritage of religious and ethnic prejudice, the apparent existence of a strong nativist sub-element in the Good Government Congress movement is not surprising. Particularly interesting in this respect, however, is the alleged association of several men with Llewellyn Banks and the G.G.C. who also had been prominent in the county's Ku Klux Klan movement. These included (based on mention of several unspecified G.G.C. supporters in the Lowe family of Ashland's rural Valley View district) the 1922 "Klan"

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29"Glen Shelf statement (20 July 1933)/'Coddling file',' DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 1/3], JCA.

30"Goss/’J.C.War’," DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 5/27], JCA.

31Ibid.; "Mason Sexton affidavit (11 Mar. 1933)/'Coddling file',' DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 1/3], JCA.
sheriff candidate D. M. Lowe, who continued to farm in this same area well into the 1950s. Jacksonville orchardists E. A. Fleming and Howard Hill both had close political connections with Banks and the G.G.C.; both of them allegedly also had been very active in the Klan. Hill and the Reverend Jouette P. Bray of Medford, another Banks supporter, were two of the defendants charged in the notorious 1922 "night-riding" incidents. Attorney William Phipps, the local "Klan mouthpiece" in 1922, was not an acknowledged G.G.C. supporter. However, Phipps became one of the very few Medford attorneys whom Banks would later trust with his legal defense; as a former anti-"Gang" crusader himself, Phipps may well have openly sympathized with the Tribune-bashing rhetoric of the Good Government Congress.  

Seemingly confusing the apparent K.K.K./G.G.C. association is the fact that two prominent anti-G.G.C. leaders, George Codding and "Pop" Gates, had been publicly tied to the Klan during the early 1920s. In hindsight, their brief Klan affiliations probably owed far more to political opportunism than to personal commitment. Based on their activities during the 1920s, the few identifiable "K.K.K./G.G.C." individuals may exhibit the orchardist-

dominated intermediate-zone's "populist Klan" tenor more than its moralistic or even its nativist tendencies. Fleming, a small orchardist and unsuccessful 1924 candidate for Jacksonville mayor before becoming a G.G.C. stalwart, certainly showed evidence of this trait. And D. M. Lowe had made anti-elitism the leitmotif of his 1922 election campaign.\textsuperscript{33}

The reappearance of Ku Klux Klan supporters of the small-town/orchard zone within the ranks of the Good Government Congress does not deny the very distinct differences between the public goals of the two organizations. Yet the indirect K.K.K./G.G.C. association (i.e., in terms of individuals who supported both organizations) lends additional weight to the essentially "populist" objectives of many Jackson County klansmen in the 1920s. Given the hindsight on the Klan episode that the G.G.C. episode provides, the local Klan's moralism--as exemplified by its temperance stand--certainly does not appear to have been nearly as important an attraction as was its anti-elitism and nativism. In 1922, the valley's two rural zones had divided politically on the "national Klan" issue of Prohibition enforcement: intermediate-zone residents who supported the Klan on local political matters (including the sub-rosa issue of water rights) had embraced strict Prohibition enforcement as well, while hinterland

\textsuperscript{33}[election results], \textit{MMT}, 8 Nov. 1924, 6.
residents (most of whom lived well above the valley areas affected by large-scale irrigation projects) had probably voted against Klan candidates based on this very issue.

By 1932, the "noble experiment" was in shambles. Only hard-core Jackson County "drys" wished it to continue, and the 1932 election ended the debate forever. Earl Fehl's anti-Prohibition campaign of 1930-32 aimed at alleged official corruption and the "murder" of innocent hinterland citizens, issues which no doubt incensed even many once-dry voters of the intermediate zone. By 1933, with both the Klan and Prohibition dead, liquor no longer divided the county's rural people between those of the small-town/orchard zone and those of the hinterland. Now faced with the Depression and a "corrupt Gang," many of them united under the Good Government Congress in a countywide manner not seen since the early days of the People's party.

Profiles: Ten G.G.C. Loyalists

Each of the ten individuals discussed here was an active member of the Good Government Congress. All but one of them maintained strong allegiance to the organization and its leaders following the county's political crisis of early 1933. These very brief personal profiles of G.G.C. loyalists add substance to the aggregate portrait of the G.G.C. given previously.
L. M. Sweet lived in the area of Sam's Valley where the orchardland fades into the ranches of the hinterland. A contract rural carrier for the U.S. Mail in 1932-33, he had lived in Sam's Valley since before World War One. Sweet personified the continuous thread of anti-elitist, populist sentiments of the county's rural residents from the Klan period through the Depression. In 1922, Sweet may well have been a member of the Ku Klux Klan; he certainly was an open and vociferous supporter of the "Klan ticket" of Walter Pierce, Charles Thomas, and Ralph Cowgill. In 1922, calling himself a "believer in whiteman methods," Sweet scorned the anti-Klan Independent American Voters League. He called the league's leaders "great magicians sitting upon the throne" who waved "their magic wands...bidding the poor illiterates come bow down at their feet and swear allegiance to the Gods that be"; he further alluded to the anti-Klan Tribune as "a filthy bird that besmears a lovely nest." Ten years later, Sweet was a Banks-Fehl loyalist, distributing free copies of the News and Record Herald, and circulating G.G.C. petitions as part of his mail deliveries. Although this activity brought him rebuke from the local postmaster, he continued nevertheless. Sweet organized the Sam's Valley G.G.C. chapter and was in the forefront of calling for resignation of county commissioner R. E. Nealon, the former

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Sam's Valley resident and "illegal" appointee of the "Gang." \(^{35}\)

Walter J. Jones moved to the town of Rogue River in 1923. Born in Crescent City, California, Jones had worked for the Forest Service for sixteen years in northwest California, the Alaska Panhandle, and southern Oregon. During the 1920s he engaged in the orchard business near Rogue River, marketing his crop through Llewellyn Banks's fruit-packing plant. A town councilman in the mid-1920s, Jones became a Banks-Fehl ally during the Depression and won election as mayor of Rogue River in 1932. He was a self-described "charter member" of the G.G.C. and led the courthouse break-in of February 20. \(^{36}\)

O. C. Train lived far up the Evans Creek Valley, where he owned a small, family-operated sawmill. Although very little biographical information is readily available, Train likely had lived in this relatively remote area for over a decade. Train's sawmill served as a gathering place for local G.G.C. members. An anti-G.G.C. informant described him as "a very loyal member" and stated that, after the Medford violence of mid-March, Train held several nighttime "secret G.G.C. meetings" at his mill. \(^{37}\)

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\(^{35}\)"Louis F. Swanson affidavit (22 Mar. 1933)/'Cudding file'" DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 1/3], JCA.

\(^{36}\)W.J. Jones testimony, "State v. Banks," 833-837, SOA.

\(^{37}\)"Daily Reports by G.B. (20 Apr. 1933)/'State v. M.B. Sexton' file," DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 4/27], JCA.
George Obenchain resided on a small farm outside of Central Point during the 1920s-30s. The son of hinterland pioneers in the Little Butte Creek valley, he was born and raised in the county. He had been a small orchardist until the Depression. By 1933 he made his living as a truck gardener. He knew of Banks's high reputation among those of his neighbors who marketed fruit through his operation. Obenchain considered Llewellyn Banks to be "one of the best men that ever come into Jackson County." Obenchain was an unsuccessful "G.G.C. candidate" for sheriff in the post-crisis election of 1934.38

Abner Cox was thirty-two years old in 1933. During the 1920s he had worked at the huge Toledo lumber mill on the central Oregon coast. Coming to Jackson County during the mill's Depression layoff, Cox lived in Medford and worked as a laborer in nearby orchards, pruning branches and spraying fruit on a part-time basis. He, too, was a charter member of the G.G.C. and retained his faith in Llewellyn Banks after the 1933 crisis.39

May Murray had lived in Medford for fourteen years at the time of the G.G.C. episode. A married woman, Murray's husband evidently resided elsewhere during 1932-33; she and her married daughter, Effie Lewis (who was also a G.G.C.


39A. Cox testimony, "State v. Fehl," 924-926, SOA.
member), lived together in the modest-income neighborhood of West Medford. She took in laundry, worked as a part-time cook at a Medford cafe, and did janitorial work at the Episcopal Church. She became a member of the Good Government Congress at its February 4 general assembly at the armory. She proudly stated that she "had attended all G.G.C. meetings" after that. Murray proved to be a solid Banks supporter, apparently providing perjured testimony in his defense during the latter's trial.40

Flora Becknell was another Medford resident. Her husband, who worked for the California-Oregon Power Company, had been either severely disabled or killed in a work accident. Becknell received a small monthly accident benefit from the state, which she supplemented by working in the bakery department of the Grocerteria. An informant described her as remaining "much in favor of G. G. Congress et al." well after the 1933 crisis.41

May Powell was an Irishwoman who had come to the United States soon after the World War and to Jackson County in 1921. Born in Armagh County, Northern Ireland, she had worked as a Red Cross nurse with British forces on the Western Front. She may have met her future husband in Europe before coming to the United States, but this is

40M. Murray testimony, "State v. Banks, 892-909, JCA.

41"Note on Flora Becknell/'State v. M. Sexton'," DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 4/27], JCA.
uncertain. The couple lived briefly in the Applegate Valley and then in Talent, where he worked as an auto mechanic at the "Highway Exchange" on the Pacific Highway. Mrs. Powell worked occasionally as a nurse and became very active in the Good Government Congress. She had known Banks personally since 1930; Powell visited Banks' home in mid-March 1933 to warn the publisher about threats to his life, and she later testified on his behalf.42

Ariel Burton Pomeroy owned a twenty-five-acre orchard near Central Point. She had first come to the valley in 1915. Apparently preferring to be addressed as Mrs. Ariel Pomeroy, her husband evidently was deceased or otherwise absent in 1932-33. She first became personally acquainted with Banks in 1931 but she proudly claimed to have "followed his editorials since the beginning." A charter member of the G.G.C., Pomeroy spoke on patriotic themes at a number of its meetings. She continued as a Banks loyalist long after the G.G.C. movement had crumbled, circulating petitions for his release from prison and writing numerous letters on his behalf to the governor.43

42M. Powell testimony, "State v. Banks," 863-873, SOA. Several handwritten notes in the DA's G.G.C. investigatory files allude to a romantic liaison between Mrs. Powell and L. A. Banks, but there is nothing else to corroborate this.

43A. Pomeroy testimony, "State v. Banks," 997-998, SOA; see also copies of Pomeroy letters in Ruhl Papers and in various files: DA/RG8,#79A40, JCA.
Twenty-six-year-old Virgil Edington was one of Llewellyn Banks's bodyguards, and he pulled numerous late-night watches at the News. Edington became one of the so-called "Greensprings Mountain Boys," several of whom came from the Greensprings Summit vicinity southeast of Ashland. (The group likely was christened by Banks so as to draw a parallel with Ethan Allen's Vermonter "Green Mountain Boys" of the Revolutionary War.) A native of Jackson County, Edington had worked for seven years after finishing grade school in order to help support his family. He graduated from high school in 1932 and was drawn into the G.G.C. movement as a rural distributer of the News. Edington later remarked on the "power...manifested [by Banks] in meetings"; he joined the G.G.C. "believing it was fighting for a just cause." After his arrest for criminal syndicalism, Edington cooperated with the State Police in their anti-G.G.C. investigations.44

Those most publicly associated with the fight against the Good Government Congress included "Liberty Building attorneys" such as Codding, Kelly, Reames, and Newbury, as well as editors Ruhl and Hall. Legionnaires, merchants, and others joined the anti-G.G.C. forces after these leaders had forged a counter-movement. Few anti-G.G.C. residents of the

44"Virgil Edington statement and 'History of [V. Edington's] dealings with Banks'/'L.A. Banks Trial papers',' DA/RG8/#79A40 [box 8/14], JCA.
hinterland participated openly, but their support was welcomed. Outside of official law-enforcement agencies, the most formalized component of the anti-G.G.C. movement was the "Committee of One-Hundred," an ad hoc group that countered G.G.C. "propaganda" with letters and statements published in the Tribune. Informally, its members became an influential network of anti-G.G.C. organizers. Dominated by the Medford elite, its ranks included men such as former mayor O. O. Alenderfer, who had crossed swords with Earl Fehl during past political battles. Alenderfer had long associations with the California-Oregon Power Company; in 1933 he owned the "People's Electric Store," a large electrical appliance dealership located next door to COPCO's Main Street offices. The Committee also included some of the valley's more prosperous orchardists, men who had been challenged by Llewellyn Banks for leadership of the Fruit Growers League. Among these members were Henry Van Hoevenberg and O. C. Boggs. Van Hoevenberg owned extensive orchardland between Table Rock and Gold Hill. A 1902 graduate of Columbia University who had played end on the school's first football team, Van Hoevenberg apparently enjoyed close personal ties to several influential officials in Salem.\footnote{H. Van Hoevenberg testimony, "State v. Banks," 1155-1159, SOA; Atwood, Blossoms and Branches, 55.} Oliver C. Boggs, graduate of the University of

\footnote{O. Allenderfer testimony, "State v. Banks," 1147-1151, SOA.}
Illinois law school and a Republican, owned more than one-hundred acres of well irrigated, productive orchardland northeast of town. In 1933, Boggs, a major owner of the Jackson County Bank, became the leading force of the Committee of One-Hundred.\(^\text{47}\)

In February and March 1933, members of the Good Government Congress undertook "direct action" to eliminate the threat by opponents. These events instead led to the organization's defeat and the denouement of the Jackson County Rebellion.

\(^{47}\)R. Seaman testimony, "State v. Banks," 1094-1100, SOA.
CHAPTER VII

"I WILL TAKE THE FIELD IN REVOLUTION": THE EVENTS OF FEBRUARY AND MARCH, 1933

Coming before the crowd at the armory—the second "general assembly" of the Good Government Congress—on February 18, Judge Fehl acknowledged the approaching noon hour and his listeners' need for lunch. He spoke for about ten minutes. In addition to his scathing comments about the "conspiracy" of Robert Ruhl, George Coddington, and Harry Norton to silence Jackson County's free press, Fehl stressed the threat to free assembly. The impending closure of the courthouse auditorium to the Good Government Congress by court order represented "the breakdown of the constitution" in southern Oregon. Using the new building to symbolize the crisis in local government, Fehl swore that "we are opening the courthouse to the people. That courthouse belongs to you absolutely":

I don't care if all the lawyers in the state of Oregon comes along in front of my court and demands that that auditorium be closed—it will not be closed. Here's why it won't be! [holding up the courthouse key]...I speak with authority. In my hand, and will be as long as I am county judge of Jackson County, is a key to the
courthouse. When you elected me, you put it in my hands, and I will open [the courthouse with it].

The public struggle over the reins of government served to solidify forces on both sides of the battleline during January and early February. On the Good Government Congress side, early January's call for appointment of a special prosecutor to expose the Gang conspiracy were replaced by February's threats of the "hangman's rope." At first suggested by Llewellyn Banks in private meetings, unnamed members of G.G.C. crowds openly demanded vigilante violence at February rallies. Heightening the outrage of G.G.C. members were speakers such as Adah Deakin, who read to one February rally her bitter "Legal Ten Commandments," among them:

"Thou shalt worship the legal trust, for in it is all power over life, liberty and property....Thou shalt praise the legal trust and the lawyers that separate you from your salary....Thou shalt respect and honor an officer with a gun, that leaves the provider of your family dead in your dooryard."

The embattled duo, Banks and Fehl, maintained a highly public loyalty to each other that probably helped cement the

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1"E. Fehl speech transcript [by D.A. stenographer Walter Looker]'/G.G.C., etc.'," DA/RG8/#79A40 [box 7/14], JCA.


3"Legal 10 Commandments as Read by Mrs. Deacon [sic]'/G.G.C., etc.'," DA/RG8/#79A40 [box 7/14], JCA.
loyalty of followers. Banks praised Judge Fehl as "an iron man." Fehl praised Banks for his loyalty and courage. 4

G.G.C. members in turn rallied to the persons of the two men, guarding their homes and forming protective escorts for their public appearances. Banks described his supporters as coming to his home prior to G.G.C. meetings with several automobiles:

"[The escorts] placed me in the rear seat between two people, took me to the meeting, walked to the door wherever the meeting was held, and guarded me in and out. When I went to the Good Government Congress meetings where we had fifteen hundred or two thousand, when I entered the platform the applause was deafening because they knew I came there at the risk of my life...I was taken to the first general assembly with a guard in a car preceding me, a guard in a car in back of me, and they guarded me to the entrance. 5

At rallies, Banks spoke without notes and in a loud voice that could be heard from several hundred feet away. An anti-G.G.C. listener remarked that Banks "knew how to work the crowd...he'd get the tempo going, get them to nod their heads...he could get them to do anything." At one meeting, Banks stated that a friend had warned him that morning to "raise [his] foot off the peddle." He asked the assemblage "should I raise my foot or put it down harder?" According to an anti-G.G.C. witness, the crowd resoundingly

4"[V. Edington] History of Dealings/'L.A. Banks trial papers',' DA/RG8/#79A40 [box 8/14], JCA; "Transcript of E. Fehl's speech, 4 Feb. 1933/'G.G.C., etc. file',' DA/RG8/#79A40 [box 7/14], JCA.

answered with its support of Banks' determination to fight the Gang, to "give them hell." 6

Titling his February 3 column "Wholesale Bloodshed," Banks warned of massive violence if the authorities attempted to deprive mortgage-ridden citizens of their property. His fight to retain the Daily News symbolized to G.G.C. members their fight to hold on to farms, businesses, jobs, and homes. The Banks-Fehl alliance held strong throughout the next six weeks. Judge Fehl received credit in the News for newly elected state senator Edward C. Kelly's success in obtaining legislative approval to transfer $50,000 of state road moneys to the county's general fund. Fehl allocated the funds to expand the county's relief commissary and to hire G.G.C. members onto county road crews. 7 When Medford constable George Prescott and other officers seized Banks's supply of newsprint by court order, the publisher fired off a column about "Bandits on the public payroll"; he rebuked the "bandits under the badge of authority of the law...[who] are in open violation of the laws of this State." Some G.G.C. members, hearing Banks's thinly veiled calls for direct action, saw

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6"M.O. Wilkins statement/'Codding file'," DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 1/3], JCA; G. Latham interview; "S.P. MacDonald statement/'Codding file'," DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 1/3], JCA.

extralegal measures as necessary to protect the people's rights from further insult.\footnote{"Banditry," \textit{News}, 9 Feb. 1933, 1.}

In particular, the answer to the question of legal authority--of who would enforce the law in Jackson County--loomed with the impending sheriff's election recount. After numerous delays from Sheriff Schermerhorn, visiting circuit court judge George Skipworth of Lane County (assigned to the case because of the Norton recall effort and other prejudicial matters), ruled on the afternoon of February 20 that the recount must proceed.

\textbf{"Burglary Not in a Dwelling": The Ballot Theft Detected}

The Good Government Congress previously had scheduled a mass meeting at the courthouse auditorium for the evening of the twentieth. Judge Skipworth's ballot recount ruling that day gave many G.G.C. members an increased sense of urgency, and the hall was filled to capacity. President Henrietta Martin opened the meeting at 8:00 p.m. and Earl Fehl spoke first. His topic was the sheriff's recount, scheduled for the following morning. According to several witnesses, Fehl shouted to his audience, "Do you people want a recount?," and was met with an emphatic "No!" from the crowd; he asked "What are you going to do about it?," and, receiving a variety of shouted answers, Fehl urged his listeners to
stand by him in the days ahead. Llewellyn Banks came to the podium twice that evening, warning of "secret service men" (plainclothes state police officers) planted in the audience; his speeches brought further noisy approval from the crowd. Thomas Breechan spoke at great length on a variety of subjects, ranging from humorous "homespun" anecdotes to his alleged personal friendship with Franklin D. Roosevelt. Twenty-two-year-old Jean Conners, vice-president of the G.G.C., spoke on America's problems with "the foreign population." The meeting ended at around 11:30 p.m.

Miner editor Leonard Hall, Tribune writer Art Perry, and a few other anti-G.G.C. observers listened to the speeches from the auditorium vestibule or from the opened ground-floor windows along the courthouse's south side. During the meeting, Hall and others had noted the "comings and goings" of a number of G.G.C. leaders, members, and News employees near the southwest corner of the courthouse; evidently these people were entering and exiting from the rear entrance of the courthouse. Hall surmised, "from the

9"G. Shelf statement/'Codding file',' DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 1/3], JCA; "A.R. Hoelting, letter to G. Codding (n.d.)/'Codding file',' DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 1/3], JCA.

10"G. Shelf statement/'Codding file',' DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 1/3], JCA; "E.A. Fleming statement/'Codding file',' DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 1/3], JCA; "M.B. Sexton affidavit/'Codding file',' DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 1/3], JCA. (Connor's talk may have dealt with the Filipino and Mexican immigrants who were then the subject of much negative publicity in central California's farming areas.)
amount of trips made back and forth," that there must have been "a [liquor] jug around someplace." Anti-G.G.C. observer A. R. Hoelting merely thought the activity was "rather peculiar," and walked home without giving it further thought.\textsuperscript{11}

On the following morning, deputy county clerk Nydah Neil prepared to enter the ground-floor records vault, where she had placed the ballots the previous day, preparatory to the recount. Accompanied by Judge Skipworth, attorneys, and other officials involved in the recount, she and the others stepped outside the rear of the building at the request of one official visitor in order to examine some construction details. While outside they noticed the vault's broken window, then quickly entered the room and immediately realized the room had been burglarized. They found that thirty-six of the ballot pouches had been stolen; the burglars had obtained entry to the vault (which was merely a large room with a sturdy, combination-locked door) through the window. (Many construction details remained unfinished in the new courthouse; the vault window's steel bars had not yet been installed.) When informed of the theft, Fehl expressed outrage and attempted to cast suspicion on Ralph

\footnote{\textsuperscript{11}\textit{L. Hall statement/unnamed file," DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 4/27], JCA; "A.R. Hoelting, letter to G. Codding (n.d.)/'Codding file'," DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 1/3], JCA.}
Jennings' son, Paul. Sheriff Schermerhorn pledged a full investigation.  

Numerous corroborative accounts by participants, given during the Oregon State Police investigations of the ballot theft case, permit a detailed narrative of the episode.  

Earl Fehl and other G.G.C. leaders had decided, as early as the November 1932 election, to take any necessary action to ensure that Ralph Jennings did not displace Schermerhorn as Jackson County sheriff. During December and January, Fehl and others had surreptitiously "picked at" some of the ballot pouches on several occasions in an effort to show evidence of tampering and thereby avoid the recount. When the Skipworth ruling seemed inevitable, G.G.C. leaders began active planning for removal and destruction of the contested

12"Ballot Boxes Gone...," AT, 21 Feb. 1933, 1 and 4. The records vault, which was meant to store trial evidence, ballots, and other important materials, had thick concrete walls imbedded with steel bars; if the room had been fitted with steel bars over the windows, the burglary would have been impossible.

13Unless otherwise cited, the ballot-theft narrative draws on the following sources in various sub-files of the District Attorney records, RG8, #79A40 and #79A49, JCA: "Mason Burl Sexton affidavit"; "Milton Sexton statements" (2); "John Brock statement"; "E.A. Fleming statement"; "Sam Carey statement"; R.C. Cummings statement"; "C.J. Connor affidavit"; "Wesley McKitrick statement"; "Virgil Edington statements" (2); "Phil Lowd statement"; as well as transcriptions of conversations in Medford City Jail overheard by D.A. stenographers Looker and Cuffel/"Cuffel file," DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 4/27], JCA.
The February 20 Good Government Congress meeting at the courthouse, with its large number of people in attendance, provided a fortuitous cover for the ballot theft.

Mason Burl Sexton and Wilbur Sexton, aged twenty and seventeen respectively, had been released from the county jail in mid-January after the grand jury returned a "no true bill" on charges of disorderly conduct. Hangers-on with the G.G.C., the brothers were invited by Sheriff Schermerhorn and County Jailer John Glenn to room in the new courthouse's "penthouse" (a small storage area next to the jail, on the uppermost stairway landing) in return for performing daily janitorial chores. The Sexton brothers, shortly before the start of the G.G.C. meeting on February 20, met in the ground-floor corridor with Judge Fehl, Rogue River Mayor Walter Jones, county shops foreman Chuck Davis (a Fehl appointee), and several other G.G.C. leaders, who asked the two if they had been able to learn the combination to the courthouse vault's door from deputy clerk Neil. Replying in the negative, the Sextons remained behind with the others as Judge Fehl left for the G.G.C. meeting with the parting words, "Now I would hate to see you boys have to break a window to get those ballots out of the vault."

"M.O. Wilkins statement/'Codding file',' DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 1/3], JCA; "H.R. Brower, letter to Deputy A.G. R. Moody (18 July 1933)/'Codding file',' DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 1/3], JCA."
Jailer John Glenn, telling the brothers that Sheriff Schermerhorn had confidence in them, persuaded the young men to try to force open the vault's outside window. When that effort failed, Mason Sexton obtained a fire-axe. At about 9:30 p.m., while Banks was speaking to the G.G.C. crowd, Mayor Jones arranged for R. C. Cummings, at Jones's hand signal, to race the engine of a nearby parked Ford coupe simultaneous to loud applause from the courthouse auditorium. During the noise, Sexton broke the vault's frosted-glass-and-wire-mesh window with the axe and then crawled inside. More than fifteen men participated in removing three dozen ballot pouches from the courthouse to waiting automobiles. Among the lookouts was Sheriff Schermerhorn, who stood discreetly on a nearby corner with a view of the courthouse's south and west faces, ready to signal with a flashlight of possible danger.

The Sextons and R. C. Cummings loaded four pouches into Cummings' Ford and drove out Oakdale and Stewart avenues to the Pacific Highway and Table Rock Road, which they followed north to the Rogue River. Crossing the river on the Bybee Bridge, the men slit open the containers, put rocks in them, and tossed the pouches over the railing of the bridge. Returning to the courthouse within an hour, the Sextons were directed to load more pouches into a delivery truck owned by E. A. Fleming. The elderly Banks supporter had stumbled upon the burglary in progress; when told that the men were
"hauling away those damn ballots so they can't be counted," he volunteered to help dispose of some of them. He and three other men took several pouches to the brushy hills between Phoenix and Jacksonville, where they spent several hours burning the ballots in a hastily built bonfire.

Banks's circulation manager, Arthur LaDieu, and another group of G.G.C. men drove a third load of ballots to the Rogue River home of News guard Wesley McKitrick, where McKitrick's mother permitted them to be burned in her woodstove; Mayor Jones had provided some "pitchy pine" firewood especially for the purpose. The men then threw the weighted ballot pouches into the Rogue River near the mouth of nearby Gall's Creek.

With the G.G.C. rally close to ending, the Sexton brothers took a final fifteen to twenty pouches down to the courthouse boiler room and burned them in the furnace before retiring to the "penthouse" for the night.

While Earl Fehl continued to insinuate that anti-G.G.C. individuals were responsible, the campaign of G.G.C. opponents gathered momentum and attracted attention outside of southern Oregon. Portland's conservative Republican newspaper editor, C. C. Chapman, acidly wrote in his Oregon Voter that "Banks is vermin." Reginald Parsons, a

15"O.O. Clancy statement and Joe Daniels statement/'Coding file','" DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 1/3], JCA.
prominent Rogue River Valley orchardist then living in Seattle, compared Jackson County's danger to the time when he had lived in Colorado during the violence-ridden "old days of the Western Federation of Miners and the Haywood and Moyer regime"; he wrote urging "the leading men of the valley" to organize quickly in support of law and order. The pleas of A. R. Hoelting and others to Governor Meier for mobilization of the National Guard had some effect; a small contingent of local Guardsmen went on "alert," ready to report to the Medford Armory in case of an "uprising."16

Of more immediate use than the National Guard was Meier's dispatch of additional State Police officers to help with the investigation. State Police Captain Lee Bown, assisted by Medford Chief of Police Clatous McCredie, headed the team. Some of the ballots had been found floating in an eddy of the Rogue River just below Bybee Bridge; careful sifting also had revealed ballot-pouch fragments among the ashes in the courthouse boiler room. A fragment of fabric had been found on the broken window frame; observing the crowds at the courthouse, McCredie noted Mason Sexton wearing torn trousers of the same material. The Sexton brothers, quickly and quietly arrested out of sight of other G.G.C. supporters, were taken to the city jail and held without bail or benefit of counsel. After waiting four days

without any word of support from his G.G.C. allies, Mason Sexton confessed to his part in the theft and implicated numerous others. The brothers agreed to assist the police further.17

On February 27, Judge Fehl, Sheriff Schermerhorn, Mayor Jones, Jailer Glenn, Davis, Breechen, Conners, McKitrick, Edington, and a number of other G.G.C. members were arrested on charges ranging from "burglary, not in a dwelling" to "criminal syndicalism." Fehl posted bond almost immediately, but many suspects remained in custody for much of the day.18 Held in the city jail, the state police arranged to hold each suspect separately.

As yet unaware of the Sextons' confession and their cooperation with the police, each suspect was placed temporarily in the women's ward with the two brothers during the course of the day. There Mason Sexton, casually assuring each new arrival that they could not be overheard by the police, engaged each cellmate in conversation about the theft. In an adjacent locked restroom, able to hear all that was being said, were State Police Sergeant James O'Brien, Deputy District Attorney George W. Neilson, and court stenographer Walter Looker. Schermerhorn and Breechen both feared entrapment and refused to incriminate

17"M. Sexton affidavit/'Codding file',' DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 1/3], JCA.

18"Judge Fehl Arrested," AT, 27 Feb. 1933, 1 and 3.
themselves. Schermerhorn mentioned to Mason Sexton the likelihood of "dictaphones" and Breechen warned that "the walls have ears." Others were less discrete.  

County shop foreman Chuck Davis, at first attempting to be stoical, obscenely denied his involvement. Within a few minutes, however, an angry Davis, who also had been appointed a special deputy by Schermerhorn, talked openly of the theft, adding that after he was released "these prosecuting attorneys [had better] make themselves scarce." He threatened to "go and get the Luger and start gunning for some of those sons of bitches...to do something to put me in for." Davis admitted that the county seemed headed for military rule. He speculated about making "enough bombs to blow up the whole town."  

That evening, reported the Ashland Tidings, a crowd of G.G.C. members gathered near the courthouse, threatening to march on the jail and free their friends. As a result of this latest turmoil, members of the local National Guard unit reported to the armory, and State Police officers, armed with sub-machine guns and "gas bombs," stationed

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19 All jail conversation transcripts in DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 7/14 or 1/3], JCA.
20 "Transcript of Davis/Sexton conversation/'Codding file'," DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 1/3], JCA.
21 Ibid. During his jailcell conversation with the Sextons, Davis even proposed forcing "Heinie" Fluhrer, proprietor of Medford's largest bakery and owner of an airplane, to fly over the town while Davis tossed out sticks of dynamite.
themselves visibly at the jail. No confrontation ensued. Elsewhere in Medford, Leonard Hall, having satirized G.G.C. president Henrietta Martin in the pages of the Miner, was accosted by Congress members on Main Street; they pinioned the editor's arms behind his back while Martin lashed him several times across the face with a horsewhip.²²

Good Government Congress members provided the bond for Fehl's freedom. With George Codding attempting to re-jail him and declare the judgeship vacant, Fehl desperately attempted to hold on to political power. He issued habeas corpus writs for release of the jailed ballot-theft suspects as well as an arrest warrant for Chief McCredie. He and Banks ordered Schermerhorn, out on bail but still holding office, to appoint "50 deputies" to counter the State Police and keep up "the struggle for justice." The sheriff, evidently sensing futility in further resistance, temporized and then refused. In an apparent attempt to heighten panic during the national banking crisis, Fehl's Record Herald published an unsubstantiated story on March 3 claiming that Medford's Fruit Growers' Bank secretly had removed its deposits. Llewellyn Banks—who now discussed expanding the Good Government Congress into a state and even national movement—wrote a letter on March 7 seeking personal

intervention in the Jackson County situation by his heroic counterpart on the national stage, Senator Huey Long.23

The day before, on Monday, March 6, Banks had addressed a mass meeting of the Good Government Congress. The rally—which, unknown at the time, would be the last such gathering—attracted approximately 2,000 people to the east lawn of the courthouse. Good Government Congress speakers gathered on the top steps of the main entrance, which gave them a good view of the crowd. Directly across Oakdale Avenue from the courthouse steps, standing among the oak trees near the Medford Library, were several staff members of the Tribune and anti-G.G.C. observers. Henrietta Martin sarcastically drew her audience's attention to the onlookers, saying "There, that is some of that 'brave one hundred'," before she went on to speak of Franklin Roosevelt's inauguration two days before. She dwelt particularly on the mid-February assassination attempt in Miami that had taken the life of Roosevelt's visitor,

Chicago Mayor Anton Cermak, stating that the assassin was part of a much larger conspiracy.  

Earl Fehl likewise used Roosevelt's inaugural as a theme, paraphrasing the new president's words about the "people's mandate for direct vigorous action."

Gesticulating forcefully, Fehl also heaped scorn upon the "Committee of One Hundred" and the "display of the State Police."  

Llewellyn Banks spoke last. The News was about to be repossessed and Banks reminded his listeners that "you were told...that if they could close the Daily News that you would have peace in Jackson County":

You were told that Llewellyn A. Banks was a "disturber of the peace." (Voice from the audience: "A riotous man!") Yes, a "riotous man."

Now my friends, the Medford Daily News was stolen...deliberately stolen into the hands of thieves....I see some of the criminals in this crowd.

In concluding his brief speech, Banks turned a defiant gaze over the heads of the G.G.C. supporters toward his enemies across the street and stated, "unless we can have justice, I

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24 "Report of G.G.C. Speeches (6 Mar. 1933)/'Invest. Material, B-F affair'," DA/RG8/#79A40 [box 8/14], JCA; G. Latham interview (Latham recalls watching this rally from near the library).

25 Ibid. (See also: newsreel film footage of the March 6 G.G.C. courthouse rally, taken by COPCO cameraman Horace Bromley [in possession of Southern Oregon Historical Society]).

26 Ibid.
will take the field in revolution against you people--now make the most of it."  

The "Tiger" at Bay

Robert Ruhl characterized Llewellyn Banks as "cunning...and dangerous as a...tiger." By mid-March, Banks faced capture and destruction at the hands of his pursuers. At first not among those indicted for the ballot-theft conspiracy, Banks confronted many creditors who closed in with civil suits. By court order, the Daily News was transferred to its creditors on March 15. The sale took place in the News' Main Street building. Although G.G.C. members and other sympathizers packed the lobby, plainclothes policemen kept order during the proceeding. Banks's orchards and packing house likewise were seized. He reacted to such defeats with accusations that "Gang" members plotted his death. Sometimes hiding for extended periods at the homes of supporters such as Dr. Swedenburg during February, Banks remained in his West Main Street house throughout the second week of March, unwilling to venture out without an armed guard. A G.G.C. member/barber came to Banks' home to give him a haircut; other supporters came to

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27Ibid.

the publisher with additional warnings of possible assassination.29

Banks also responded with counter-threat. In February, he and Fehl had urged Schermerhorn to arrest George Codding and other unfriendly officials. Initially their plan simply involved holding the men incommunicado somewhere near the county line until the G.G.C. had asserted control over county government. Soon, the scheme allegedly evolved into holding Codding for ransom or, if "necessary," hanging him. When Schermerhorn balked, Banks met with hard-core G.G.C. supporters from the Evans Creek Valley to organize a "secret group of fighting men." Guns were to be cached at two abandoned mines and at a special "log-house" redoubt in the hills; Banks told the men that he "meant business...if anyone did not want to go through, this was the time to drop out."30

At about 8:30 a.m. on March 16, sixty-three-year-old Medford constable George Prescott joined young Detective-  


30"J. Guches statement (24 Mar. 1933)/'Copies of Statements' file," DA/RG8/#79A40 [box 7/14], JCA; "P. Lowd statement/"G.G.C., etc. file'," DA/RG8/#79A40 [box 7/14], JCA; "V. Edington statements/ 'L.A. Banks Trial Papers'," DA/RG8/#79A40 [box 8/14], JCA; "R. E. Pritchett statement, re: Joe Croft/" Invest. Material: B-F Affair'," DA/RG8/#79A40 [box 8/14], JCA; "Miles Randall affidavit/'Codding file','" DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 1/3], JCA.
Sergeant James O'Brien of the Oregon State Police at City Hall. The State Police contingent operated from a temporary command post at the building. Prescott and O'Brien had worked together for several weeks, serving arrest warrants on the ballot-theft suspects and other tasks related to the recent turmoil. On this day, they were to go to the home of Llewellyn Banks and arrest him for "burglary, not in a dwelling"; the on-going investigation recently had provided sufficient evidence to implicate Banks in the courthouse break-in.

Sheriff Schermerhorn's arresting authority had been revoked by the circuit court, as had that of his deputies; Prescott had been delegated the responsibility within the city limits. Prescott, a former traffic officer who was nearing retirement, was a familiar figure on the streets of Medford. Called a "bandit" by Banks for his part in the confiscation of the newsprint, Prescott was known to friends as a quiet, married man who shouldered his duties during the excitement of 1932-33 without complaint. Some G.G.C. supporters later accused him of calling them "anarchists" and even of threatening to kill Llewellyn Banks, but there is no credible evidence to substantiate the latter claim. Undoubtedly, however, Prescott shared some of the anti-Banks sentiments of the Medford legal establishment.31

31 Warrant for arrest of L.A. Banks, "State v. Banks," SOA (this blood-stained warrant served as a State's exhibit; the form's usual arresting authority, granted to "any
Prescott expressed to O'Brien his misgivings about the impending Banks arrest; Banks had publicly threatened to shoot any officer that attempted to enter his home. According to O'Brien's written statement later that day, the two joked a bit about the subject. O'Brien said, "George, you never want to get nervous until it is all over with--then...you'll eliminate a lot of nerve trouble." Laughing at O'Brien's assertion that "only the mean die young," the elderly Prescott responded that "Yes...and there's another thing that is certain, and that is, the old never die young." The two men, after retrieving O'Brien's large-caliber service revolver and arranging for two other State Police officers to cover the rear entrance of the residence, left for the Banks home at about 10:00 a.m.\textsuperscript{32}

That morning Llewellyn Banks had determined to elude arrest--as well as, he believed, possible assassination--by fleeing to the mountains. With the \textit{News} gone and having received word that a new arrest warrant would be served on Earl Fehl that day, Banks's position indeed seemed desperate. (Unknown to Banks at the time, Fehl escaped immediate arrest by hiding at Medford's Holland Hotel for two days.) A few days before, Banks had arranged for

\textsuperscript{32}"Sgt. J. O'Brien statement/'Invest. Material: B-F Affair'," DA/RG8/#79A40 [box 8/14], JCA.
refuge; an elderly miner and G.G.C. member named Geiger invited Banks to hide at his remote log cabin on Forest Creek, in the hills west of Jacksonville. Preparing to leave for Geiger's cabin later in the day, Banks had packed a valise of "mountain clothing" and dressed in his "golf suit" of plus-four knickers and heavy sweater. In the foyer, Banks set out a holstered .44 Smith and Wesson revolver and his 30.06 Newton hunting rifle, a "hard shooting gun" he had purchased years before for cougar hunting in the southern Sierras.33

Early in the morning, Banks had dictated a letter to his secretary Janet Guches, returning the quit-claim deed for a small orchard to G.G.C. supporter Reverend L. F. Belknap; Banks's hope was to raise additional funds for any forthcoming bond. Edith Banks, out meeting with another G.G.C. leader, previously had left a note for her husband. Addressed to "Daddy Dear," it pleaded for Banks not to issue a written "bulletin...to the gunmen" for assistance during any imminent "fight"; she counseled him to use "word of mouth" instead and thereby possibly avoid arrest for syndicalism. Mrs. Banks returned home around 9:30; shortly afterwards Guches left to deliver the Belknap note. Banks also penned two brief notes, one to the Medford police chief

and another to the head of the State Police, informing them that he would refuse to submit to arrest. Banks loyalist E. A. Fleming arrived unannounced around 9:45 to discuss G.G.C. plans to raise bond money for some of the ballot-theft defendants, delaying Banks's departure for Forest Creek.  

Officers Prescott and O'Brien arrived at the Banks residence around 10:15. They parked the Nash police sedan on West Main Street, directly in front of the home. O'Brien, carrying his small pistol in his coat pocket, left the large revolver in the car. Officers C. A. Warren and A. K. Lumsden turned off on Peach Street and drove up the alley to the rear of Banks' house. After some reassuring words outside the car about Banks "just making a lot of noise," Prescott and O'Brien mounted the steps to the front porch where Prescott used the heavy iron door-knocker to announce their presence.

The officers were visible plainly through the door's paneled window. Edith Banks opened the door with the burglar-chain latched and tossed her husband's two notes out onto the porch, saying, "Here's two letters for you." Prescott responded, "I am sorry, Mrs. Banks, but I have a bench warrant for your husband." Before she could attempt

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to shut the door, Prescott placed his foot in the threshold to keep it ajar, and said, "Just a minute, I will give you that warrant and let you read it." As Prescott reached into his overcoat pocket for the papers, the woman stepped back and Llewellyn Banks appeared with his hunting rifle leveled at Prescott, pointed it at the slightly opened doorway, and fired. Shot in the chest, Prescott fell back into O'Brien's arms and both men toppled to the floor; Prescott died almost immediately. Banks quickly shut the door and O'Brien retreated from the porch.\(^{35}\)

E. A. Fleming, who had unexpectedly witnessed the shooting from Banks's living room, fled out the back door and was arrested by Warren and Lumsden. O'Brien, fearing that he might be shot before he could speak to fellow officers, scrawled a note: "10:20--Officer Prescott killed...Banks shot with rifle from [doorway]." O'Brien ran to the car, where he strapped on his service revolver and put a teargas bomb into his coat pocket; he then went to a nearby apartment house and telephoned his superiors to report the shooting and request reinforcements. Within minutes the sirens of police cars brought a crowd of onlookers to West Main Street. O'Brien and other officers had cleared the street of bystanders and prepared for a

teargas assault of the house when Edith Banks telephoned police headquarters, stating that her husband would peacefully submit to arrest by Deputy Sheriff Phil Lowd. When State Police Captain Lee Bown and former Banks supporter Lowd entered the front door to make the arrest, Banks shook the captain's hand and explained that Prescott had tried to force his way into the house, that Banks had shot him "just the same as any burglar."

Bown and Lowd escorted Banks out to a waiting police car. Concluding that incarceration of Banks within Jackson County held too a high risk of further violence, they instead took him to the Josephine County jail in Grants Pass. Banks sat between Bown and Lowd in the rear seat of the car. During the trip down the Rogue River stretch of the Pacific Highway, Banks talked about guns, mentioning in particular how he always had wanted to shoot a mountain lion with the Newton. He expressed regret at the death of George Prescott but reflected that the constable, as "an old timer," had acted stubbornly and simply did not "know when to leave well enough alone." Before arriving in Grants Pass, Banks asked Bown for one favor: "I am used to having

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things clean, and I would like you to put me in a clean cell. I was never used to dirt."  

The day before the shooting, Captain Bown, fearing an insurrection by Good Government Congress members, had sent an emergency request to Salem for thirty more officers. One State Police car, speeding south to Jackson County, collided with another automobile; the motorist, a Portland realtor, died of his injuries. Immediately after the shooting, uniformed officers appeared in force on the streets of Medford, armed with tear gas and sawed-off shotguns. Arrest warrants for an additional twenty-three suspects in the ballot theft were issued that afternoon. "Wholesale arrests" of Good Government Congress members soon followed. Sergeant O'Brien stated that "agitators were quickly clamped in jail without warrant, warning or ceremony; we were determined to clean it out to the very core."  

Two days later, Governor Meier instructed Oregon Attorney General I. H. Van Winkle to conduct a special

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37"P. Lowd statement (16 Mar. 1933)/ 'Invest. Material: B-F Affair'," DA/RG8/#79A40 [box 8/14], JCA.


39Det.-Sgt. James O'Brien, "The Man Who Tried to be Hitler in the U.S.," True Detective Mysteries (Feb. 1940), 100 (this article was most likely ghost-written; however, virtually all of its statements are verified by other accounts in the District Attorney's investigatory files).
investigation of the Jackson County affair and to prosecute all those charged with criminal syndicalism or other related crimes. He also sent by airplane a special order to the southern Oregon circuit court for Sheriff Schermerhorn's removal from office. Robert Ruhl wrote immediately to Meier with his thanks, particularly for the "incalculable assistance" of the State Police, whose "aloof[ness] from local dissensions" allowed them to keep order when "an actual reign of terror threatened."  

The violent turn in southern Oregon received wide press coverage, with the wire story appearing in papers from San Francisco to New York City. As a result of the news, executives of a Massachusetts bonding insurance company, worried about conditions in Jackson County, sent a telegram to its Oregon representatives revoking the surety bond for Gordon Schermerhorn. The Oregonian in particular gave the shooting and related events much front-section and editorial attention over the next few weeks.  

Many Good Government Congress members apparently had drifted back to their homes and farms by the time of the March 19 Prescott funeral. According to the Portland press,

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41"Bates, Lively, and Pearson, letter to T.L. Breechen/ 'Copies of Statements'," DA/RG8/#79A40 [box 7/14], JCA; for example, see: "Drive in Jackson County Continues," Oreg., 18 Mar. 1933, 8.
more than 3,000 people, headed by the Elks Club band and the American Legion, filed down Main Street to the Presbyterian Church to pay their last respects to the slain officer.\footnote{Prescott Funeral Held At Medford," Oreg., 20 Mar. 1933, 3.}

After two weeks in Grants Pass, Llewellyn Banks was transferred to a cell in the Jackson County jail, on the upper floor of the courthouse. Banks kept his cell in meticulous order throughout his stay. New county jailer Fred Kelly (twin brother of E. E. Kelly) kept daily notes of Banks's demeanor, which he consistently recorded as "calm," "cheerful," or "remorseless." G.G.C. admirers visited Banks often, bringing him candy, cakes, as well as the cigarettes he smoked constantly. Banks's attorney William Phipps also made regular visits, earning Kelly's ire as a "bull artist...coarse as a wood rasp." Although admitting that Banks was the "most rational, intelligent, and least troublesome" of his inmates, Kelly at one point opined that Banks, so "vain of appearance and cold-blooded," was "hardly human."\footnote{F. Kelly: Daily Charts on L.A. Banks Mental Condition/unnamed file," DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 5/27], JCA.}

While imprisoned in the Jackson County jail, Banks received a brief written reply from Senator Huey Long. Long stated that he had found Banks's early March letter "quite interesting." But, while admitting that he, too, had
experienced a "stormy career," the senator declined to inject himself into the Jackson County situation."

CHAPTER VIII

REBELLION CRUSHED

In terms of its wider impact, the killing of George Prescott certainly was not a "shot heard round the world." Nevertheless, the climax of Jackson County's turmoil did emphasize the dangerous level of social unrest elsewhere in the Pacific Northwest and the nation.

During April, Oregon newspapers brought word of violent protests to the north and far to the east. In Seattle a crowd of unemployed men, demonstrating against the eviction of a family, rioted and injured the King County sheriff and eight deputies. In Iowa the governor declared martial law in the town of Le Mars after a crowd of angry farmers dragged a foreclosure judge from his courtroom and threatened to hang him. Possibly inspired by the actions of both the Iowa farmers and the Good Government Congress, the People's Protective League of Vancouver, Washington, attempted to block farm foreclosure sales by marching on the Clark County courthouse. Probably with an eye toward these events outside of Jackson County, the editor of the
Oregonian blamed Llewellyn Banks for inciting anger and violence among deluded followers.¹

Fragmentation and Collapse

In Jackson County, the shooting dramatically vindicated those community leaders who had warned of violent outcome from Bank's demagoguery. Titling his March 16 editorial "Too Late!," Robert Ruhl wrote that "the tragedy that the Mail Tribune has feared—that it has fought with everything in its power for months—has at last happened."

Thus ends the dastardly campaign of inflammatory agitation, the contemptible circulation of lies...which has been going on in this community for so long, with just one purpose in view—to destroy the community, to allow one man to dominate it...by armed forces, threats and blackguardism.²

More importantly, the tragedy split the ranks of the Good Government Congress into apostates and hard-core loyalists. Appalled by the shooting and frightened for their personal reputations, many G.G.C. people renounced their memberships. Others rallied behind Banks and Fehl as the true martyrs.


²"Too Late!," MMT, 16 Mar. 1933 4.
According to a page-one article in the *Mail Tribune* published on the afternoon of the shooting, a "virtual stampede of Good Government Congress members to get out of the lawless organization" began that day. Clearly the death of George Prescott caused many G.G.C. sympathizers to abandon the organization within hours of the news. Immediately after the shooting, for example, L. E. Fitch, a prominent G.G.C. supporter, met another G.G.C. member on Medford's Main Street. A brawl ensued when Fitch voiced loyalty to Banks and accused the other man, who had decried the shooting, of being a "stool pigeon"; Fitch received a pistol-whipping that required hospitalization for head injuries. The courthouse staff took telephone memoranda shortly after the shooting from a number of G.G.C. members who called the district attorney, urgently attempting to distance themselves from the organization. When Codding and private attorneys advised such people to announce publicly their withdrawl, the editorial pages of the *Tribune*, beginning the afternoon of the shooting, filled with letters from Banks's former supporters.

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3"Home of Banks Was An Arsenal...," *MMT*, 16 Mar. 1933, 1.

4"Banks Follower's Head Cracked By Irate Citizen," *MMT*, 16 Mar. 1933, 1.

5"Telephone memos/'Cuffel file',' DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 4/27], JCA.

6"Banks Home...," *MMT*, 16 Mar. 1933, 1.
Dave Gould of Medford, complaining to Ruhl that G.G.C. officials refused to return his membership card, wrote on March 16 to announce his "absolute withdrawal, to take effect at once." The following day, the Tribune carried similar renunciations from over twenty G.G.C. members. A group of ranching families from the Applegate Valley stated that "whereas, by reason of misrepresentation made...as to the grievances to be remedied and the purpose and scope of the so-called Good Government Congress" they originally had become unwitting members, they now publicly resigned from such organization and pledged their support "to the upholding of law." Other writers continued to uphold the stated principles of the G.G.C. even as they denounced the violent actions of its leaders.\footnote{Communications: They Are Out Also,} \footnote{They Renounce G.G.C.} \footnote{S.A. Hopkins et al., letter to C. L. Brown [G.G.C. sec'y] (14 Mar. 1933)'/Copies of Statements',} A group of eight G.G.C. members from Talent provided Coddington with a copy of their letter to the organization's secretary, demanding return of their cards due to "the agitation of the Good Gov't Congress Leaders." (This particular note, dated March 14, may be genuine evidence of a tide of abandonment prior to the shooting; alternatively, it may have been back-dated in order to strengthen the signers' anti-G.G.C. appearance.) One Evans Creek family
appealed to Codding to force the return of their G.G.C. cards:

The cards were sent to us by the bus driver of the school and we, like most of our good neighbors, thought it was a nation-wide affair. We live 39 miles from Medford, at the forks of the Creek...and did not have a chance to hear all you people in town knew....Please advise us in regard to these cards for it was all misrepresented to us.9

Codding replied by thanking the family for joining the "large number of good people" who, "misled and unduly influenced by vicious propaganda," had now abandoned the Good Government Congress. He added his hope that "all the substantial and reliable citizens" who had been so duped would now become thoroughly informed about the organization's real purposes.10

Some signers of G.G.C. petitions, who evidently had never joined the organization, urged Codding that their names be struck from the documents. Several prominent G.G.C. members such as Orlen R. Kring and Edwin H. Malkemus, both Protestant ministers closely associated with Banks, quickly joined the chorus of ex-members. Kring, who claimed to have joined the movement "for the purpose of helping the common class of people and rehabilitation for the working

9"W.L. Stewart et al., letter to G. Codding (15 Mar. 1933)/'Copies of Statements',' DA/RG8/#79A40 [box 7/14], JCA.

10"G.A. Codding, letter to W.L. Stewart (28 Mar. 1933)/'Copies of Statements' file,' DA/RG8/#79A40 [box 7/14], JCA.
man," told Ruhl that he was "for law and order always but not the kind where one person wants full control."11

Other Good Government Congress supporters remained loyal to the cause and to its leaders. A day after the shooting, Mrs. Arthur LaDieu was taken into custody when, claiming that Constable Prescott "got what was coming to him," she threatened that "there will be more of this." Shortly before the shooting, her husband had pledged that, "sink or swim," he would "stay with Mr. Banks."12 Regarding the forthcoming trials of Banks and Fehl, one anonymous G.G.C. supporter warned Ruhl to "change your ways; [p]rosecute all criminals, not upright citizens."13 Within days after the shooting, L. M. Sweet, the adamantly pro-G.G.C. mail carrier of Sam's Valley, distributed petitions demanding Sheriff Schermerhorn' retention in office despite his now-obvious participation in the ballot theft.14

The towns of Rogue River and Gold Hill held a hard-core of active G.G.C. loyalists. One Gold Hill man, according to the district attorney's local informant,

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12"Drive in Jackson County Continues," Oreq., 18 Mar. 1933, 8; "S. Carey statement/'Walter Jones file'," DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 5/27], JCA.

13"Please Take Notice' to R.W. Ruhl/unnamed file," DA/RG9/#79A49 [box 4/27], JCA.

14"L.F. Swanson affidavit (22 Mar. 1933)/'Codding file'," DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 1/3], JCA.
continued to "preach sedition to...boys and young men" and claimed that he could "take 25 men to Medford and clean out the Gang." Another informant stated that, during April and May, one Evans Creek resident welcomed local G.G.C. insurgents to his property for nighttime political discussions around a bonfire. Several Rogue River citizens continued to speak openly of their belief that Banks was "justified in killing officer Prescott"; they emphasized their disgust with law enforcement officers generally and the State Police in particular. In May, Codding's main Rogue River informant reported that some local insurgents, who frequented bootlegger "Corey's new log-cabin dive and G.G.C. headquarters," had met with fellow "[guer]rillas" from Douglas County to discuss "dynamiting...D. H. Ferry's [mining dredge operation] or [the] COPCO [hydroelectric plant]."

Rather than warning of further violence, some of Codding's informants simply desired to settle old scores. One Ashland resident, for example, offered to stand as a

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15All statements from: "Daily Reports of 'G.B.,' 'D.,' or 'B.H.' (April 1933)'/State v. Mason B. Sexton',' DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 4/27], JCA.

16"Report from G.B. (14 May 1933)/Copies of Statements',' DA/RG8/#79A40 [box 7/14], JCA. G.B. may have been Guy Bates (unrelated to miner F. A. Bates), an anti-G.G.C. resident of the Rogue River area; although his information about G.G.C. "guerrillas" and their planned violence may have been based only on rumor or incorrect inferences, the tenor of other local informants' reports certainly lends support to such fears.
character witness against realtor and would-be politico Thomas Breechen, one of the ballot-theft defendants, whom he described with upper-case emphasis as a "crooked Old RATTLE SNAKE."\(^{17}\)

In his March 17 editorial "The Challenge Is Accepted," Ruhl called for peace. Although he attempted to shame some rural areas for their G.G.C. support--admitting that the Tribune had failed "to appreciate the depths of depravity to which certain sections of Jackson County had fallen," Ruhl also appealed to the hinterland for inter-sectional unity:

We call on...AN AROUSED AND MILITANT CITIZENSHIP...that will stand 100 percent behind constituted authority...that won't rest, or pause, until this section of Oregon, from Ashland to Rogue River and from the Applegate to Roxy Anne, is cleaned up and freed of these ballot burners, horsewhippers and murderers--and cleaned up and freed of them FOREVER!\(^{18}\)

With many of their leaders in jail, and with anti-G.G.C. feelings rising, hold-out members of the Good Government Congress faced isolation. Given the change in local sentiment, there could be no more mass rallies on the courthouse steps.

On the very afternoon of Prescott's death, the American Legion announced plans for a suitable memorial to the officer. Contributions poured in, stated the Tribune, from

\(^{17}\)"T. Coleman, letter to G. Codding (26 Feb. 1933)/unnamed file," DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 4/27], JCA.

\(^{18}\)"The Challenge Is Accepted!," MMT, 17 Mar. 1933, 1 and 5 (original emphasis).
Medford residents "who represented many classes of people."
A large granite boulder, quarried from the Siskiyou just
south of Ashland, held a bronze plaque honoring "George J.
Prescott, who gave his life in the discharge of his duty."
The Legion placed the stone in the small city park facing
West Main Street, one block from the county courthouse. At
Ruhl's private urging, the memorial was kept extremely
simple so that most contributions would go into a trust fund
for Prescott's widow. According to Ruhl, the monument--
unveiled a few days after Llewellyn Banks began trial on
charges of first-degree murder--was tribute to one who had
tried to "protect [the people's] privileges under democracy,
whatever the cost."19

Establishment's Triumph: The G.G.C. Trials

Llewellyn and Edith Banks, both incarcerated in the
Jackson County jail by late March, each faced charges of
first-degree murder. Llewellyn Banks occupied an isolated
cell that permitted no communication with his fellow G.G.C.
defendants. Supporters of the Banks couple came regularly
to the courthouse. Most of them seem to have been women,
including May Powell and Henrietta Martin. Ariel Pomeroy in
particular visited the jail often, bringing words of

19"City's Tribute to Prescott," MMT, 16 May 1933, 1;
[n.f.i.] Slater, letter to R.W. Ruhl, 18 Mar. 1933, Ruhl
Papers.
encouragement and, on Good Friday, an Easter lily for Edith Banks. As his trial neared, Banks told Pomeroy of his august detachment from the course of events: "We are bound to... view this drama as though we are not part of it." The former publisher's legal defense campaign indicated that Banks, facing the death penalty, fully intended to struggle for freedom and exoneration. One of his brothers, W. A. Banks, came to Medford from southern California to help arrange the legal defense. Rumored to be wealthy, the Los Angeles resident nevertheless encouraged Pomeroy in her efforts to raise a legal fund for his brother. Joined in Medford by Banks's sister, Evelyn Banks Moran, and her husband, prominent Cleveland businessman George F. Moran, he hired a battery of five attorneys for the Bankses' defense. Providing local knowledge were Thomas J. Enright, the 1932 Banks-Fehl candidate for district attorney, and William Phipps, the aging former Populist. Upstate defense lawyers Frank J. Lonergan, Charles A. Hardy, and Joseph L. Hammersly, were expected to provide the polished courtroom experience needed for the upcoming trial. Hammersly's large

20 "F. Kelly, Daily Charts/unnamed file'," DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 5/27], JCA. During the pre-trial and trial period, daughter Ruth May Banks stayed with family members who came to Medford for that purpose.

21 Ibid.

22 "W. A. Banks, letter to A. Pomeroy (3 Apr. 1933)/unnamed file," DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 5/27], JCA. W. A. Banks lived in Tujunga, California, an affluent residential section in the mountains near Los Angeles.
Llewellyn Banks initially attempted to construct his defense around the existence of a private detective he claimed to have hired in March. This man, whose real name Banks could not recall, purportedly served as the publisher's special bodyguard; Banks alleged that this phantom-like figure actually fired the fatal shot and escaped during the ensuing confusion. At his attorneys' insistence, Banks dropped this line of defense. Admitting that their client had fired the shot, they instead intended to concentrate on a history of persecution and threats by his enemies, including Prescott, and to portray Banks' deed as an act of temporary insanity. Although the defendant strenuously objected to this plan as undignified, he accepted its wisdom by late April.\textsuperscript{24}

The prosecution's team, by order of Governor Meier under the direct supervision of Attorney General I. H. Van Winkle, included Assistant Attorney General (and former state Prohibition director) William S. Levens, aided by Jackson County's Codding and Neilson. Ralph P. Moody, appointed as an assistant attorney general especially for

\textsuperscript{23} "F. Kelly: Daily Charts/unnamed file," DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 5/27], JCA.

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid.; "V. Edington statement/'L.A. Banks Trial papers'," DA/RG8/#79A40 [box 8/14], JCA; "Sgt. E.B. Houston statement (19 Mar. 1933)/'Invest. Material: B-F Affair'," DA/RG8/#79A40 [box 8/14], JCA.
the Banks trial, was a veteran Oregon corporate lawyer and a special assistant U.S. attorney general during the 1920s. Around 1930, he had come to Medford to represent the legal interests of the Southern Pacific Railroad and, on occasion, the California-Oregon Power Company. An experienced courtroom debater, he had assisted Codding during the Good Government Congress turmoil.  

The defense, providing an exhibit of clippings from the Mail Tribune, moved for a change of venue on the grounds that "the inhabitants of [Jackson County] are so biased and prejudiced...that a fair and impartial jury cannot be selected." Judge Skipworth accepted the defense's contention and moved the trial to the state circuit court for Lane County, in Eugene. A jury of six men and six women, most of them of working-class or farming backgrounds, was chosen during late April, and the trial was set to open in the Lane County courthouse on May 3.  

On May 2, during his closing examination of prospective jurors, the 60-year-old Levens complained of chest pains and was aided into Judge Skipworth's chambers. Rushed by state policemen to a

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25Moody's legal expertise led to numerous special appointments; according to the 1942-44 Who's Who for Oregon, Moody coordinated Gov. Charles Martin's anti-"labor racketeering" drive of 1937-39.

26Affidavit by L.A. Banks (15 Apr. 1933), "State v. Banks," SOA.

27"Jury Incomplete...," Oreg., 2 May 1933, 1 and 3; "Here Is The Jury...," Eugene Register-Guard (hereinafter cited as R-G), 3 May 1933, 1.
doctor's office, Levens died of cardiac failure within an hour. Moody took over as head of the prosecution and the trial began on schedule the following day.\(^{28}\)

Because of the trial's sensational nature and the heavy press coverage, the large upstairs courtroom in the ornate, brick courthouse filled to capacity for the opening statements. Moody portrayed Banks and his wife as cold-blooded killers who deserved punishment for "murder in the first degree": "Banks laid in wait for Prescott and took dead aim at him through the partly open door." Defense counsel Hammersly countered that Llewellyn Banks had fired "as a warning to marauders who were trying to force their way in." Edith Banks, stressed the defense, literally had "been in the kitchen" just prior to the shooting; "she was at home where a good wife and a good mother should be." Hammersly, projecting Banks's populist appeal toward the jurors, also underlined the wealth and power of the defendant's enemies.\(^{29}\)

The State's case entailed testimony from more than sixty witnesses and accounted for over two weeks of the three-week-long trial. The old courtroom's acoustics were

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\(^{28}\)"State Attorney Taken By Death," _Oreg._, 3 May 1933, 1; "Prosecutor Flails Banks In Opening," _R-G_, 3 May 1933, 1.

\(^{29}\)"Banks Trial Story," _R-G_, 3 May 1933, 2; Donald Husband (retired Lane County attorney), telephone interview with the author, May 1991; "J. Hammersly: opening statement/'L.A. Banks Trial papers','" DA/RG8/#79A40 [box 8/14], JCA.
poor, and opened windows meant that the noise of traffic and barking dogs regularly forced witnesses to repeat themselves. Still, public attendance remained heavy throughout the trial. Moody's prosecution moved from eyewitnesses of the shooting, Sgt. James O'Brien and a cooperative E. A. Fleming, through the coroner who performed Prescott's autopsy. Moody exploded the defense's opening assertion that Prescott had been holding a gun by demonstrating that the fatal wound, which had passed through Prescott's left hand, only could have been inflicted on the officer as he was reaching into his coat's inside pocket with his right hand while holding the coat open with his left.

The defense called twenty-four witnesses. Several of them were prominent character witnesses such as Dr. Francis Swedenburg and retired banker William Gore; others included physician "alienists" who testified to Banks' "transitory mania," but most witnesses either recounted having heard George Prescott threaten the life of Banks or having seen Prescott mount the front porch with a gun aimed to fire. The prosecution's numerous rebuttal witnesses cast serious doubt on the veracity of this line of Banks's defense; as a result, jurors probably discounted much of the defense's case as perjured testimony.30

30Except where otherwise cited, all material on the Banks trial is from the 1,300-page official transcript, "State v. Banks," SOA.
The defense's star witness was Llewellyn Banks, who spent a full day on the stand under the gentle prodding of attorney Lonergan. The defendant, wearing his customary Norfolk jacket, spoke at great length and with little prompting. One anti-Banks observer had warned the prosecution to beware of the man's ability "to hypnotize [the jury] with twisted half-truths." And Banks--after proudly tracing his genealogy directly back to "John Alden of the Mayflower" and reviewing his formative childhood experiences on the Ohio farm--indeed recited the full litany of injustices he had suffered at the hands of the "Medford Gang." Occasionally shouting and pounding on the arm of his chair in anger, Banks told jurors in detail of the conspiracy that took shape after he first challenged the fruit-packers' Traffic Association. Lonergan then questioned Banks about his "dizzy spells" and "visions." Banks readily admitted to having experienced a number of powerful visionary dreams that later had come true. One of them was young Banks's 1898 vision of a naval battle on Lake Erie, which he took as prophesy of the American victory over Spain at the Battle of Santiago. Lonergan brought the

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31"D.H. Ferry, letter to G.W. Neilson (2 May 1933)/'L.A. Banks Trial papers',' DA/RG8/#79A40 [box 8/14], JCA.

32"Banks In Fear, He Tells Jury," Oreg., 13 May 1933, 1. Banks' pride in his colonial New England lineage earned a sneer from George Codding, who responded in his notes with the comment "Codfish Aristocracy"; "Codding notes/'L.A. Banks Trial papers',' DA/RG8/#79A40 [box 8/14], JCA.
witness to the morning of March 16 with testimony about the defendant's fear for his life. Describing the moments of the shooting, Banks stated that, as the front door was "gradually...opening...I saw what I believed to be a pistol....I believed at that instant that that door would break open." Banks portrayed his wife as struggling to hold the door shut against the intruder and shouting "You shall not come in," as he raised his rifle and shot in desperate self-defense.

The prosecution stunned the courtroom when its long-awaited cross-examination ended after less than five minutes. Moody apparently hoped to impress the jury with his utter contempt for the defendant's story. Although Edith Banks's subsequent testimony repeated the story of Prescott's threatening gun, Moody's thundering closing argument dismissed Llewellyn Banks "as a coward hiding behind a woman's skirt," and accused the couple of acting with premeditation and in concert to take the life of George Prescott. He waved the bloody warrant taken from Prescott's coat pocket and demanded the death penalty for both. Lonergan closed with a plea to the jurors for mercy and understanding of the extraordinary situation in Jackson County.33

The jury deliberated for ten hours and returned its verdict on the afternoon of May 21. Although acquitting his

33"Laid For Officer," Oreg., 19 May 1933, 1.
wife of the charges, the jurors found Llewellyn Banks guilty of "murder in the second degree," which carried a mandatory sentence of life imprisonment. Banks took the verdict without emotion. He issued a brief statement to the press: "I am undismayed. I have implicit faith in the eternal cause of righteousness. I have been persecuted, prosecuted, and convicted by the...special privilege interests."34

Immediately following the trial, the prosecution opened a probe of the alleged perjury by seven of Banks's defense witnesses. The Oregonian's editor reflected that the outcome was "doubtless as just...for this unhappy affair as could be achieved." He reflected that although Banks probably was insane, he deserved "permanent confinement." A first-degree verdict with a life sentence would have been far more appropriate, but the writer admitted that the end-result of the jurors' decision was the same.35

The State held the remaining Good Government Congress trials throughout the summer of 1933. Jackson County was the venue for most of the court proceedings. Although twenty-three individuals had been indicted for the ballot theft, other criminal acts also led to trial. Henrietta Martin and three accomplices in the Main Street assault on Leonard Hall stood accused of "riotous and disorderly

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34"Banks Convicted," Oreg., 22 May 1933, 1 and 2.

conduct"; Martin's horsewhip was the prosecution's main exhibit. Other G.G.C. members, involved in brawls or threats during February and March, faced similar charges. However, the ballot-theft suspects provided the main grist for the legal mill. The succession of trials for burglary and criminal syndicalism, presided over by Judge Skipworth and prosecuted by Moody, lasted into August, with the sentencing of all defendants delayed until the end of the proceedings.

News manager Arthur LaDieu's trial led off the series in early June. Moody's opening statement charged the jury with a patriotic duty, to protect what their "forefathers fought for...the principle of the maintenance of popular government." Testimony from the Sexton brothers, Virgil Edington, and other participants convicted LaDieu as one of the main leaders in the theft. The trial of Mayor Walter Jones followed in mid-month; considering the same testimony that had been presented in LaDieu's trial, the jury quickly found Jones guilty. The third trial, that of former county jailer John Glenn, came to a temporary halt when one juror was found to have stated that Banks was "justified in killing Prescott"; Skipworth dismissed the entire jury.

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36 "A True Bill" (24 Mar. 1933) and exhibit tag: 'Whip taken from Henrietta Martin'/'State v. H.B. Martin et al.'," DA/RG8/#79A40 [box 3/14], JCA.

With the original venire all but exhausted, an entirely new list of potential jurors was assembled. The prosecution proved even less selective with the second jury, which found Glenn, a Spanish-American War veteran, innocent. The district attorney's staff, describing the largely rural group as "a poison-oak jury...[composed of] wood choppers," noted that it contained at least three G.G.C. sympathizers.38

Gordon Schermerhorn's trial began after the July 4 holiday. Schermerhorn, who had been replaced at Governor Meier's order by Acting Sheriff Walter Olmscheid, continued the struggle to regain office during his trial. When Olmscheid's emergency appointment expired on July 10, Schermerhorn unsuccessfully demanded to resume duty as county sheriff. After testimony from fifty prosecution witnesses that implicated the former sheriff in the theft as well as in suppressing evidence during the investigation, the jury found Schermerhorn guilty. The proceeding's length, combined with Medford's summer heat, may have increased the trial's rancorous atmosphere. At one point, an angry Moody had startled the court when he shouted "You

38"Ballot Case..." Oreg., 7 June 1933, 5; "Ballot Theft Case," Oreg., 23 June 1933, 1; "Ballot Case Jury Vacated...," Oreg., 27 June 1933, 3; "Jeopardy Plea...," Oreg., 28 June 1933, 3; "Glenn Trial," Oreg., 2 July 1933, 3; "DA staff note:'Argumentative Reasons...for Acquittal, John Glenn/'John Glenn file',' DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 5/27], JCA.
are lying!" at one pro-G.G.C. defense witness, Harley Hall of Jacksonville.  

The looming trial of Judge Earl Fehl promised to be the capstone of the prosecution's campaign. By mid-July, most of the other defendants had either pled guilty or, having played very minor roles in the theft, would likely have their cases dismissed. Fehl's attorneys requested a change of venue due to widespread prejudice against their client, and Judge Skipworth admitted that it was "getting to be a battle of wits to select a jury in this county." Adding to the charged atmosphere, Medford radio station KMED asked permission to broadcast the Fehl trial. Denying the station's request, Skipworth agreed to move the trial to Klamath Falls. (Located east of the Cascades at a significantly higher elevation than the Rogue River Valley, the Klamath County city's cooler summer temperatures probably contributed to its selection.) During the break between the Schermerhorn and Fehl trials, Moody flew to Portland to marry Regina Johnson, a newspaper reporter who had been covering the G.G.C. trials.  

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Earl Fehl's trial lasted just under two weeks. As in the previous trials, the State paraded numerous witnesses who placed the defendant at the crime scene just prior to the break-in. The Reverend Orlen Kring testified to incriminating statements made by Fehl prior to the theft. Although Fehl actually had not removed any of the 10,000 ballots stolen that night, Moody convincingly portrayed him as "the mastermind" of the theft. Although Fehl spent more than eight hours on the stand, denying his involvement and explaining the conspiracy against him, the Klamath County jurors took only twenty minutes to find him guilty. Upon Fehl's conviction, Governor Meier immediately appointed Republican state legislator Earl B. Day as new county judge.41

Judge Skipworth sentenced the ballot-theft defendants in early August. Fehl received the maximum penalty of four years in the state penitentiary, as did LaDieu and Jones. Schermerhorn was sentenced to three years, and Breechen received an eighteen-month sentence. Skipworth gave several

other participants penalties ranging up to a year. G.G.C. secretary and "Greensprings Mountain Boy" C. Jean Conners received a suspended three-year sentence, contingent that he "stay out of Jackson County for at least one year." Moody, stating that he did not want to carry on the prosecution "to the degree that it will become persecution," recommended leniency for the remaining ballot thieves; Skipworth either dismissed their cases or granted them immediate parole.

Fehl immediately proclaimed his innocence from the Klamath County jail. His lengthy letter, printed in the Klamath Falls Evening Herald, contained familiar themes. Fehl, who previously had compared his tribulations to the crucifixion of Christ, stoically accepted his fate: "The cross that I am called upon to bear must be borne alone. The jury has spoken." Still, Fehl urged his friends "to take steps to protect life, liberty and property" by calling public attention to the "awfulness of the grasp of a conspiracy." Such sentiments probably spurred G.G.C. supporter Joseph B. "Budd" Johnston when he accosted Chuck Davis, the Fehl-appointed county employee who had testified

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45"Fehl Proclaims Innocence," KFH, 8 Aug. 1933, 1 and 8.
against the judge in Klamath Falls. The 62-year-old Johnston confronted Davis on a Medford street the day after Fehl's conviction and hurled insults at the turncoat. During the brief fistfight which followed, Davis, a former professional boxer, struck the older man and knocked him to the pavement. His head hitting the concrete curb, Johnston lost consciousness and died of a fractured skull within a few minutes. The Oregonian, commenting that "tragedy again stalks at Medford as a result of hatred engendered by the Banks case," put the blame for Johnston's death squarely on the shoulders of the former publisher:

Never has there been in the life of Oregon another man who has done such widespread harm as Banks. His megalomania, his obsession of persecution, his violent hatred of all who crossed his purposes, his terrifically perverted leadership, have spread untold harm. Now he sits smugly in a cell, boasting of his comforts...The Johnston tragedy must be counted another to be laid on the doorstep of Banks.

Johnston's widow took a different view. In a letter alluding to her husband's allegedly prominent family members back in his home state of Pennsylvania, she claimed that they could not understand "why Davis alone, who should have been taking his medicine with the rest [of the ballot thieves], was permitted by the State...to roam the streets

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4"One Dead In Fight," Oreg., 6 Aug. 1933, 1 and 2; "Davis Admits Attack," Oreg., 7 Aug. 1933, 4. The grand jury, accepting Davis's contention that he was defending himself, refused to indict him; see: R.W. Ruhl, letter to A.B. Pomeroy, 10 Oct. 1933, Ruhl Papers.

freely." The Johnston family, who had read "Eastern newspaper accounts of the [county's] political fracas," had been dumbfounded by the events.\textsuperscript{48}

The dramatic events of February and March gained southern Oregon brief nationwide notoriety. Regionally, members of the establishment, on the offensive since mid-March, seized the opportunity offered by the G.G.C. trials to declare triumph and to rally the forces of order. Shortly after the shooting, Ruhl told Governor Meier that the "vast majority of the people" in southern Oregon, "including the deluded members of the Good Government Congress, at last see the light clearly." Ruhl was sure "the victory has been won--the mopping up process alone remains to be done."\textsuperscript{49} The anti-sedition mood became widespread. During the Banks trial, Moody claimed to have received many supportive letters "from all portions of the State."\textsuperscript{50} The establishment's momentum was real enough. However, the public confidence of establishment members such as Ruhl and Moody masked the urgency of the legal and

\textsuperscript{48}"Mrs. J.B. Johnston, letter to Judge Coleman (16 Aug. 1933)/unnamed file," DA\textbackslash RG8\#79A40 [box 4/14], JCA.

\textsuperscript{49}R.W. Ruhl, letter to Gov. J. Meier, 19 Mar. 1933, Ruhl Papers.

\textsuperscript{50}R.E. Moody, letter to R.W. Ruhl, 10 May 1933, Ruhl Papers.
extralegal campaign waged against the Good Government Congress throughout the spring and summer of 1933.

George Codding led the unpublicized effort to repress the insurgent threat once and for all. Codding's notes and correspondence during 1933 indicate that the district attorney's office coordinated the anti-G.G.C. activities of law enforcement officials and encouraged influential private individuals to undertake similar but informal efforts.

Codding and his assistants compiled what they called the "Jackson County Black List," which held the names of all known G.G.C. members and sympathizers (the latter drawn largely from the Norton recall petition). The district attorney's office scanned the venire lists of potential jurors for such persons, and eliminated them through challenge. Codding worked with his counterparts in Lane and Klamath counties to ensure acceptable juries for the Banks and Fehl trials. Although, as in the case of the John Glenn jury, the district attorney's effort did not always succeed, the legal establishment put forth a sustained and widespread effort to cleanse the juries of any "radical" taint. A network of local informants provided individual assessments of potential jurors. In addition, some of them cautioned against accepting any jurors from certain communities. One informant recommended that "absolutely no person from Rogue River or Wimer be accepted on ballot theft juries, except
possibly Victor Birdseye." Another urged Coddington to "lookout for all Owen-Oregon [Lumber Company] employees and for any residents of Butte Falls." A Miss Johnson of Ashland assessed potential jurors from the county's southern section. Eliminating one man from consideration as a "Bolshevik," she encouraged selection of another Ashlander, a carpenter, as "a splendid, substantial middle-class type...utterly remote from either the G.G.C. or the 'Committee of 100'." Johnson found a third venireman to be "acceptable...because of his natural temperament," but also "sufficiently silent" about his anti-G.G.C. feelings to be unobjectionable to the defense. She concluded that the wife of a railroad employee, "one of the Daughter of the Nile Queens...[who sought] vainly to lead in society," would prove to be "righteously fair." Johnson described one of Ashland's more prominent businessmen, a Kiwanis leader, as "an old maid type...who plays golf religiously," but felt that he "would have the right sort of attitude toward ballot stealing." The effort of the district attorney and the state police to collect unwitting confessions from ballot-theft

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51 "Summary of jury lists/'State v. Mason B. Sexton'," DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 4/27], JCA.

52 "Jury panel comments/'Art LaDieu file'," DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 5/27], JCA.

53 "Johnson notes/'Jury List for 1933'," DA/RG9/#79A49 [box 1/3], JCA.
suspects involved well-planned eavesdropping and transcription of jail-cell conversations. Self-incriminating statements obtained in this manner served as evidence in some of the trials. The district attorney's office continued its tactic of audio surveillance throughout the summer, listening to daily client/attorney conversations that took place at the courthouse (where Earl Fehl, out on bail, still maintained an office). Court stenographers Looker and Cuffel evidently utilized microphones hidden in the new courthouse's system of heating ducts to overhear and record in shorthand the intimate legal discussions of Fehl, Jones, Enright, and others. Telephone conversations were similarly subject to eavesdropping. Some clandestinely recorded conversations yielded little more than blustering dialogue that may have owed much to contemporary gangster films. For example, Fehl's defense attorney Enright, who repeatedly called Codding's assistant a "dirty rat" and "lowdown skunk," was overheard threatening to "beat up" Neilson at the first opportunity. Although the courthouse conversations did not appear as evidence in the trials, the prosecution no doubt used such privileged information to design its own courtroom strategy. Codding's office also obtained copies of confidential telegrams and personal letters sent to Banks and other defendants while incarcerated; it is possible that the district attorney
received word about the content of other telegrams that were not subject to the jailer's inspection.\textsuperscript{54}

The district attorney's efforts were not confined to those actually charged with the crimes of February and March. Upon learning during the Fehl trial that one young Jacksonville man continued to spout publicly the anti-Gang line of the Good Government Congress, Codding suggested to his assistant "that a jolt might do this boy good."\textsuperscript{55}

Although the state's behind-the-scenes legal and extralegal campaign against the G.G.C. certainly was no "white terror" of repression, it reflected little credit on the professional integrity of the participants. No doubt Codding felt that extraordinary times demanded extraordinary measures. In using such measures, however, he gave at least some, albeit after-the-fact, substance to the G.G.C.'s charges of a conspiracy by the county's legal officers.

The question of conspiracy brings up Banks's and Fehl's broader indictment of "The Gang" as a clique of powerful and corrupt officeholders, attorneys, and business executives.

\textsuperscript{54}The typed jail-cell conversation transcripts are held in the "Codding file"/DA/RG8/#79A449 [box 1/3], and the "Copies of Statements file," DA/RG8/#79A40 [box 7/14], JCA. Most of the courthouse conversations, transcribed verbatim in shorthand or longhand, and then by typewriter, are held in the "Cuffel file" and the "Perjury Cases file"/DARG8/#79A449 [boxes 4 and 5/27], JCA; see especially the lengthy transcript labeled "Notes of County Court and Misc. Notes."

\textsuperscript{55}G. Codding, memo to G.W. Neilson (7 Aug. 1933)'/State v. Fehl'," DA/RG8/#79A40 [box 7/14], JCA.
Jackson County undeniably possessed an influential "establishment," a professional and commercial elite based in Medford. Like countless local establishments elsewhere in the nation during the early twentieth century, this group was relatively fluid, not formalized, and it contained numerous competing sub-groups. Nevertheless, by means of fruit-packing associations, private utility companies, and other institutions, the local establishment worked as a unit to incorporate southern Oregon into the system of big-business capitalism that had reigned triumphant in America since the late nineteenth century. Medford was a small but important regional outpost in this national system. Elite members obviously benefitted personally, in terms of economic status and social prestige, from this process of incorporation. Members of the county's professional and commercial establishment, although often bitterly divided

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56 For the seminal statement of this concept of national "incorporation", see: Alan Trachtenberg, The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982). For a more geographically focused interpretation that uses the concept of incorporation, see: Richard Maxwell Brown, "Western Violence: Structure, Values, Myth," Western Historical Quarterly XXIV (February 1993), 5-20. Brown's treatment of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Western history explains many of the region's separate episodes of popular violence within the unifying concept of a prolonged "Western Civil War of Incorporation." It was a bitter and widespread war between the combined forces of incorporation--financial, political, extra-legal--which were controlled by industrialists, railroad magnates, large landowners, and conservative businessmen of the West on the one side versus the numerous small producers (farmers, wage-workers, etc.) who resented and resisted the loss of individual control that incorporation brought.
into factions, shared a consensus that ensured the continued dominance of this modernization process over the region's older, more rural-based politics.

Members of the establishment not only formed a "community of interests," they interacted socially, regularly sharing comfortable middle-class pleasures such as golf and bridge. Such personal connections strengthened the web of their associations in business and politics. Concomitantly, some members of the elite probably felt considerable social distance from, if not disdain for, hinterland and working-class residents of the region.

However, Jackson County's establishment was neither a monolithic conspiracy nor was it a "corrupt Gang." It is likely that some members did indulge in unethical or illegal practices to advance personal interests. Medford accountant A.R. Hoelting, the anti-G.G.C. establishment loyalist, admitted as much in his letter to Governor Meier: "There is much rottenness, no doubt, in any community to stir up a stink over."57 But, aside from the repeated allegations of Banks and Fehl, there is nothing to suggest frequent, let alone systemic, corruption as a group endeavor. Regarding conspiracy, what, to Banks, seemed the Traffic Association's monstrous collusion was simply the packers' defensive reaction to an audacious newcomer's challenge. Most of

57"A.R. Hoelting, letter to Gov. Meier (13 Feb 1933)/unnamed file," DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 5/27], JCA.
Banks' financial woes originated with the Depression's financial collapse. The local elite, although shedding few tears over his predicament, probably did little, in terms of premeditated actions, to create it. The pejorative term "Gang" resonated among people who viewed the local establishment from the outside looking in. To members of the establishment, who long had enjoyed the view from inside, the term was both insulting and laughable. Their own political goals, although rarely without self-interest, were seen by them as fundamentally beneficial to the community at large.

To supporters of the Good Government Congress, Robert Ruhl seemed the quintessential establishment figure. Originally reluctant to engage in open editorial combat with a competitor whom he privately despised, Ruhl proved a vocal and implacable foe of Llewellyn Banks after the Prescott shooting. He spearheaded the opposition to subsequent attempts to obtain pardon or parole for Banks. Ruhl, who had been made the lightning rod of anti-establishment anger during the height of the turmoil, emerged from the fight with enhanced prestige and with his newspaper intact. Although the fortunate result was hardly something over which Ruhl had any personal control, the Mail Tribune found itself, in the words of the United Press Association's Pacific division manager, "in sole possession of the field."

Preparing to reestablish his company's interrupted franchise
in southern Oregon with the Tribune, the wire-service man congratulated Ruhl: "the fight is over at Medford; the wrecking crew has departed....your situation is better than it has been in some years."\textsuperscript{58}

\section*{The Pulitzer Prize—and History's Verdict}

In New York City on the evening of May 7, 1934, Columbia University president Nicholas Murray Butler announced the recipients of the Pulitzer Prizes for 1933. Speaking to the annual banquet gathered at the faculty club, Butler told the group that the Medford Mail Tribune had been awarded the Pulitzer's meritorious public service prize in journalism, "for stemming a rising tide of public insurrection which was the growth of a bitter political fight." The Mail Tribune, under Robert Ruhl, "took the leadership in pleading for straight-thinking and peace." The New York Times described how the Tribune, "under armed guard day and night, and in the face of constant threats of violence," conducted a vigorous editorial campaign against a rising "dictatorship in Southern Oregon."\textsuperscript{59}

The Pulitzer story received a banner headline in the Mail Tribune. Ruhl, in his column the day after the award,

\textsuperscript{58}F.H. Bartholomew, letter to R.W. Ruhl, 28 Apr. 1933, Ruhl Papers.

\textsuperscript{59}"Pulitzer Awards Made for 1933," \textit{New York Times}, 8 May 1934, 1 and 20 (see also sidebar article: "Newspaper Fought Rise of 'Dictator'," on page 20).
expressed surprise and deep pleasure that "this 'small town' daily" had been honored. He acknowledged his fellow journalists, particularly Leonard Hall, who had fought the Good Government Congress fight, and thanked all those in the community who had helped the Tribune through the difficult time of 1932-33.60

When Ruhl had forwarded a scrapbook of Tribune articles and editorials for consideration by the Pulitzer committee in September 1933, he had titled the Good Government Congress episode as the "Jackson County Rebellion." Ruhl wrote to Dean Carl W. Ackerman of Columbia University's School of Journalism that his main purpose in submitting the material was, like any good journalist, to "get the story out," particularly to fellow newspaper editors outside of Oregon:

I would certainly not claim [the "most distinguished service"] distinction for the Mail Tribune. On the other hand the local situation was so unusual--so incredible in fact--and the [Tribune] was for so long on such a hot spot, that I am sure the details...would be interesting to any newspaperman, if not to the country at large.61

Although Ruhl openly doubted that the Pulitzer award would go "to a small newspaper like this," especially for such a tumultuous news year as 1933, Dean Ackerman replied that, on

60"Tribune Winner Pulitzer Prize," MMT, 8 May 1934, 1; "The Pulitzer Award," MMT, 8 May 1934, 6.

61R.W. Ruhl, letter to Dean C.W. Ackerman, 26 Sept. 1933, Ruhl Papers.
the contrary, the Pulitzer jury regarded such papers with "sympathetic interest." Ackerman's assurance was well-founded. Since its establishment in 1917, the Pulitzer Prize "meritorious public service" had often gone to small-town dailies for editorial crusades against local corruption and political extremism.62

When given advance notice of the prize, Ruhl begged off on Ackerman's invitation to attend the awards ceremony. The editor would have had to travel to New York by airplane, and Ruhl hated flying; a more central reason was his self-admitted lifelong aversion to public speaking. Ruhl closed his letter of thanks with some general thoughts on "the small-town newspaper...as a force for good":

[Although their] field is so limited, opportunities so few...these papers, plugging along from day to day, do, as a whole, render a real service to their communities and to their country--and it is well to recognize the fact--good for the profession and good for the country."63

Ruhl's fellow Oregon editors offered more laurels to their colleague. Commenting on the Mail Tribune's Pulitzer, the Oregonian praised its "editorial courage and judgement


63R.W. Ruhl, letter to C.W. Ackerman, 3 May 1934, Ruhl Papers.
of a high order," and the Albany Democrat-Herald found
Ruhl's "courage...and honesty" in keeping with "the best
newspaper tradition." The Eugene Register-Guard,
condemning the "fanatic Llewellyn Banks," noted that:

For a long time, Mr. Ruhl displayed great
tolerance toward this strange opponent...[making]
all possible effort to treat him with the courtesy
which the unwritten law of newspaperdom requires
one to show a competitor....The Pulitzer award to
the Mail Tribune is a warning to demagogues in and
out of the business that quackery has become a
tiresome fashion.65

Local reaction to the prize varied from pride to
resentment. The county establishment saw the award as
national recognition of its righteousness in the fight for
law and order. On a more personal level, Ruhl's friend and
former partner, Sumpter Smith, dismissed those who had
criticized the Tribune's initial reluctance to do battle;
Smith felt that Ruhl's "conservative...line of attack
[during] the unpleasantness in Jackson County was correct,
and [it] won."66 Despite Ruhl's repeated acknowledgement of
Leonard Hall's journalistic courage during the events of
early 1933, however, some Jacksonville residents felt

64 Undated clippings, Ruhl Papers.
65 Ibid.
localistic pique that the often inflammatory Miner did not share the Pulitzer award.\textsuperscript{67}

Other resentments went far deeper. Adah Deakin, a G.G.C. stalwart, wrote with bitterness to Ruhl about continued miscarriage of justice in a county where "cold-blooded murderers [i.e., Prohibition officers involved in the Dahack shooting]...have not yet been brought to trial." Referring to Prescott's memorial, Deakin sarcastically suggested that Ruhl, whom she called "old Prize Truth-twister," go on to "rear a few monuments...to the honor of our protected murderers."\textsuperscript{68} Henrietta Martin, angered by her treatment in the anti-G.G.C. press, admonished the editor that the Tribune's masthead, alongside its prideful mention of the Pulitzer Prize, would do well to include the words of the Golden Rule.\textsuperscript{69} After the trials, Ariel

\textsuperscript{67}H. Clark interview. In addition to his Pulitzer editorial, see Ruhl's mention of Hall in his letter to Ralph Norman, 1 Nov. 1935, Ruhl Papers.

\textsuperscript{68}A. Deakin, postcard to R.W. Ruhl, 26 July 1935, Ruhl Papers.

\textsuperscript{69}H.B. Martin, letter to R.W. Ruhl, 4 June 1935, Ruhl Papers. Some anti-G.G.C. spokesmen opportunistically seized on the fact that one of the insurgent organization's leaders was a woman. Leonard Hall in particular employed misogynous stereotypes, ridiculing Henrietta Martin as a hysterical, meddling female. Evan Reames dismissed her as "an excitable woman...who would readily lead a mob." (E. Reames, letter to R.W. Ruhl, 7 Feb. 1933, Ruhl Papers.) Ruhl did not express scornful sentiments toward Henrietta Martin as a woman, but he did address her treatment in the public arena. Responding to Ariel Pomeroy's call for "chivalry" toward Martin, Ruhl reminded her that "When a woman enters practical politics, as Mrs. Martin did, charges public officials with all sorts of...crimes, she can't expect--and
Pomeroy, the most active Banks/Fehl loyalist, continued to barrage the Tribune with lengthy letters and articles on various issues, demanding that they all be printed in their entirety. Ruhl rarely did so. Two days after the Pulitzer announcement, she complained to Ruhl about his refusal to print several of her articles on the proposed sales tax. Signing her letter "Yours for good government," Pomeroy pointed out that, as a Pulitzer Prize winner, Ruhl had "a great responsibility to live up to," and she indicated that the Tribune's unwillingness to print her letters made a mockery of the free press. If Ruhl still declined to publish her pieces, Pomeroy threatened to inform the "Pulitzer Prize award jury and...other authorities" of his refusal. Ruhl, pointing out the excessive length of her communications, courteously informed Pomeroy that she was welcome to refer his "refusal to print...to any committee of reputable newspapermen."

The Pulitzer Prize became an imprimatur for the local establishment's interpretation of the Jackson County

should not expect--to hide behind her sex when those who are fought...fight back. She can't have her cake and eat it. She can't hope to give and never take. Women should not ask the protection of chivalry...when they enter a game in which chivalry never has and I fear never will have a place." (R.W. Ruhl, letter to A.B. Pomeroy, 10 Oct. 1933, Ruhl Papers.)

Ruhl chastised his counterparts at the *Oregonian* for suggesting that the Good Government Congress tumult sprang largely from the Depression's economic distress. For Ruhl, the episode clearly originated from the amazing personal magnetism of Llewellyn Banks, a man whom Ruhl considered to be not only "thoroughly dangerous and sinister" but also "one of the cleverest and most resourceful" he had ever known. As this emphasis on personalism—on Banks as a Svengali—replaced more complicated and thoughtful assessments of its causes, Ruhl's very term "Jackson County Rebellion" (along with similar phrases such as "Jackson County War," and "Revolution") soon faded. The establishment's original fear of mobs of "Bolsheviks" and radical farmers soon was supplanted by its cautionary tale of one-man rule. Moody warned the jurors of one G.G.C. trial that Banks, with his henchmen, had attempted to subvert the will of the people to the will of "a Mussolini...a dictator."
The dictator interpretation of southern Oregon's turmoil continued to hold sway. Some years later, the national radio drama series "Pulitzer Prize Playhouse" (featuring James Dunn as Banks and Everett Sloane as Ruhl) portrayed the "political machinations of Llewellyn A. Banks," whose cynical hold over "disgruntled citizens" permitted him to take power. By the late 1950s, Pulitzer administrator John Hohenberg's heroic version of the tale had transformed Ruhl, who was over fifty years old in 1933, into an "energetic young editor" who had "alone opposed....the overthrow of a town's free, democratic government by a corrupt, totalitarian regime."³⁵

³⁴ "Newspaper Expose To Be Dramatized in Pulitzer Playhouse" (undated/unattributed newspaper clipping), Ruhl Papers.

CHAPTER IX

THE NEW DEAL AND AFTER: JACKSON COUNTY'S LEGACY OF REBELLION

The Good Government Congress trials left many Jackson County citizens emotionally exhausted. In addition, expenses directly associated with the various legal proceedings drained an already impoverished county treasury of more than $68,000. The room-and-board bill for Banks' Eugene trial alone cost nearly $8,000.¹

The Roosevelt Administration's relief and recovery programs began to arrive in southern Oregon by the late summer of 1933. The Civilian Conservation Corps's first Forest Service camp in the Pacific Northwest sprang up on the banks of the Applegate River that August. Many other camps soon followed, housing hundreds of young enrollees from throughout the nation who worked in the forests of southern Oregon. Medford became C.C.C. headquarters of a vast section of Oregon and northern California. The contingent of regular Army officers that set up the camps occupied space at city hall recently vacated by the state

¹"Closing argument/'Earl Fehl Insanity hearing' file," DA/RG8/#79A40 [box 7/14] and "L.A. Banks expenses sheet/'Invest. Material:B-F Affair'," DA/RG/#79A40 [box 8/14], JCA.
police; soon the Corps built its own large administrative complex on the south edge of town. One major project of the Civilian Conservation Corps was Medford's new George Prescott Park, an extensive development of equestrian trails and picnic areas on the oak-covered slopes of Roxy Anne Butte.²

Many older men found jobs on New Deal-funded highway construction projects in the county. Private industry also offered increased opportunities for employment. Medford Corporation, inheritor of the bankrupt Owen-Oregon sawmill, subscribed to the National Recovery Administration's "Lumber Code," which involved self-imposed restraints on production and commitment to the concept of sustained-yield forestry. The Medco operation began to make slow, steady gains, even re-opening an evening shift before the end of 1934. In Ashland, the much smaller Moon Lumber Company began to receive sufficient orders to re-start sawmill operations that spring. N.R.A.-sponsored price-controls for Pacific Northwest fruit likewise encouraged the Rogue River Valley orchard industry toward recovery from its previous devastation. In early 1934, Democratic attorney Porter Neff, one of Banks' legal nemeses, went to Washington, D. C.

and secured government loans for the county's hard-strapped irrigation districts. Although the mid-1930s in southern Oregon certainly brought no boom, by 1934 the desperation of the previous few years had passed.  

Robert Ruhl abandoned what he called the "moth-eaten pachyderm" of Republicanism and emerged as a committed New Dealer. He supported Franklin Roosevelt's economic reforms, not merely because they benefitted the West but because Ruhl increasingly detested what he saw as the smug, narrow agenda of hide-bound elements in the old G.O.P. Although maintaining a warm relationship with progressive Republican Senator Charles McNary (whom he addressed in personal correspondence as "My Dear Charlie"), Ruhl vigorously endorsed a Democrat, former Army general Charles H. Martin, in the 1934 gubernatorial election. 

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3LaLande, Medford Corporation: A History, 81-83; "Ashland Sawmill Will Open Soon," MMT, 4 Apr. 1934, 1; "Trade Code Planned By Fruit Industry," Oreg., 9 July 1933, 2; "Neff Pleased...," MMT, 26 Feb. 1934, 8. As documented in recent research by Jay Mullen, "Communist agitators" who attempted to organize the Rogue River Valley's pear pickers during the 1934 harvest were summarily arrested on charges of criminal syndicalism. The mid-1930s witnessed a tremendous upsurge in aggressive labor union recruitment throughout the nation and the Pacific Northwest; even though Jackson County was not immune to such efforts, the local establishment effectively inoculated the region from the more radical unionization drives. See: Jay Mullen, "Oregon's Sacco and Vanzetti Case: State v. Boloff," (Paper presented at the Forty-sixth Annual Pacific Northwest History Conference, Eugene, 1993).  

appointed Ruhl to the State Board of Higher Education soon after the election.⁵

In an ongoing exchange of letters, Ruhl privately debated the merits of the New Deal with Kansas newspaper publisher William Allen White. Like Ruhl, the nationally renowned "Sage of Emporia" was a small-town editor and a progressive; he and Ruhl's older brother had been college friends. Both men supported much of Roosevelt's reform program, but White distrusted the President's alleged pandering to the downtrodden for votes while Ruhl defended his Harvard classmate's political instincts.⁶

The happier days of the mid-1930s notwithstanding, Ruhl and other members of the establishment still faced the dogged efforts of Good Government Congress loyalists to revive their organization and free their imprisoned champions. The obstinate refusal of Banks, Fehl, and their hardcore supporters to accept the new order of things, although never seriously threatening the county with renewed rebellion, sounded a protracted echo of the turmoil.


First as Tragedy, And Then as Farce

The spring primary of 1934 brought hope of renewal to remnants of the Good Government Congress. With her husband in the state penitentiary, Electa Fehl attempted to restore his rule by proxy. She filed as a candidate for county judge, pledging to "carry out the sacred promises of...Earl Fehl to the electorate of Jackson County." Even Henrietta Martin, noting Electa Fehl's incompetence for the position, criticized her mud-slinging as counterproductive; the brief Fehl campaign sputtered to a close with the primary election. Former G.G.C. secretary (and father of Henrietta Martin) C. H. Brown petitioned for appointment as Medford postmaster; George Obenchain, a prominent Banks loyalist, filed as a candidate for sheriff in 1934. Both lost their bids for office.

Hoping to revitalize the organization, Martin, Brown, and several associates filed articles of incorporation for the Good Government Congress in April 1934. The first meeting was scheduled for a Friday morning, April 13, at the Medford Armory. Other than attracting a few diehard

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7"Fehl's Wife Files As Candidate," MMT, 19 Feb. 1934, 1.
members, Henrietta Martin's rally was a disappointment. The organization evidently disbanded by the end of the year, although Martin continued her unsuccessful attempt to gain local office as late as 1936.\textsuperscript{10}

Llewellyn Banks's tangled financial dealings left the remnants of his Jackson County properties in the control of federal bankruptcy court. William Phipps, the orchardist's former defense counsel, represented his creditors in the proceedings. Banks's once-extensive holdings passed into the hands of others while he served the first two years of his sentence in Salem.\textsuperscript{11}

Banks's first few months in prison were quiet ones. He worked in the facility's laundry; later he was transferred to the prison library. During 1933 he completed a book of essays, Weighed in the Balance: A Famine Foreseen. Privately published (probably with funds furnished by his siblings), the anti-modernist jeremiad, sprinkled with Scriptural verse, followed some of the main themes of his "Once In A While" columns. He saw a formerly Christian America declining rapidly into "Pagan Dictatorship."

Whereas Herbert Hoover had borne the brunt of Banks' attack before 1932, now Franklin Roosevelt stood forth as the nation's dictatorial traitor. Incensed at New Deal

\textsuperscript{10}"G.G.C. Files For Recognition,"\textit{MMT}, 4 Apr. 1934, 1; R.W. Ruhl, letter to H. Martin, 12 Apr. 1936, Ruhl Papers.

\textsuperscript{11}"Banks Referee Removal...,"\textit{MMT}, 30 Mar. 1934, 1.
agricultural policies, Banks asked his readers, "Did not we Pagans demonstrate that millions...starved beneath the bursting granaries?":

Did not we pagans burn our grain? Did not we feed it to swine? Did not we lay snares to trap and discourage the planter of cotton. Ah-ha, did not our agencies disseminate the herds of cattle and remove them from the plains, from the hills and from the Valleys? Have not we proven our power over those shepherds, those hillbillies, those gleaners of the herbs of the earth? We Pagans, in our majesty...[g]old and silver shall be our lot. We have decreed it.  

In addition to proclaiming the producerist ideology of old-style agrarian populism, Banks warned of military takeover: "Those uniforms, THOSE ENDLESS UNIFORMS. The uniformed State Police, armed to the teeth, the uniforms of our State Militias." In particular, Banks saw the Army-run Civilian Conservation Corps camps then springing up across the West, with their "military trucks passing, repassing," as the prelude to military rule. Banks castigated the Jews, that "usurer class which lives on the virtue of the labor of the Gentiles," as the real power behind the New Deal, and he propounded a variety of anti-Semitism that denied the Old Testament Israelites (and, by implication, Jesus of Nazareth) were Jews. He saved particular

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13 Ibid., 44-45.

14 Ibid., 63.
vilification for "Ye Dishonorable Lawyers," assuring these "profiters on the tribulations of [their] brother" that a special place awaited them after the day of judgment.\(^{15}\)

Banks ended the book with some of his personal "visions." In one dream, "walking alone on a trail" high in the mountains, Banks faced a "huge lion, ferocious in appearance, rushing toward [him] with tremendous speed." Banks stood his ground, "without fear regardless of the outcome," and thus the beast rushed past without harming him.\(^{16}\) Although the \textit{Oregonian}'s editor scorned the "orotund, ponderous" essays of \textit{Weighed In The Balance} as those of a "poor fatuous scribbler," Banks soon set about compiling an autobiography.\(^{17}\)

During late 1934, with Julius Meier soon to leave office, Banks's brother-in-law George Moran undertook an intensive lobbying effort with the outgoing governor. Evidently pointing out the imprisoned man's potential to arouse still further social, religious, and ethnic division, Moran persuaded Portland's Roman Catholic archbishop, prominent Jewish representatives, a former U. S. Senator, and many other influential Oregon citizens to plead for Banks's pardon on the condition that he leave the state.

\(^{15}\)Ibid., 65.

\(^{16}\)Ibid., 68-69.

\(^{17}\)"Mr. Banks Writes A Book," \textit{Oreg.}, 6 Aug. 1933, 10; "Banks Detailed...," \textit{MMT}, 13 Apr. 1934, 1.
forever. Meier indicated some receptivity to the idea until Ruhl and others launched a counter-effort from southern Oregon. During the Christmas season, Moran wrote directly to Ruhl, importuning him to support the pardon. He warned the editor that "as long as [Banks] is in Oregon there will be a controversy"; Moran influenced two Cleveland attorneys, Ruhl's friends from student days, to write similar letters on Banks's behalf. Ruhl refused to entertain the requests. He wrote to Judge Skipworth that the "idea of even considering a pardon or parole for a killer like Banks, with only 15 months of his life term served" impressed him as "incredible." To Governor Meier, he insisted that "every right thinking citizen of Jackson County...[was] opposed to any such action"; this included not only the business people of Medford, but "prominent people throughout the country districts." The initial campaign for Banks' pardon ended on Christmas Day, with Moran's death in Ohio from a heart attack. Oregon's new governor, Charles Martin, was not
inclined toward clemency, but Ruhl surmised that the effort
was merely stalled "until the time appears opportune for it
to break out again."21

Ariel Pomeroy renewed the struggle for Banks's release
in July 1935. Claiming that Banks's life was endangered by
hired assassins within the walls of the penitentiary, she
petitioned Governor Martin to place Banks in special
protective custody while considering his pardon. The
tireless Pomeroy travelled the state, meeting with many
persons of influence in an effort to build momentum for a
special investigation. Demanding an investigation, she
wrote to Martin that Banks' "vast estate" in southern Oregon
was being looted by those who had destroyed him. Pomeroy
returned to Medford from Eugene with word that the dean of
the University of Oregon Law School had agreed to join her
cause. When apprised of the claim, the school's dean (later
U.S. Senator) Wayne L. Morse promptly took pains to inform
Martin, Ruhl, E. E. Kelly, and others that he had never
indicated any such support and that he was not in favor of a
pardon for Banks.22

21R.W. Ruhl, letter to C.C. Chapman, 11 Dec. 1934; F.D.
Kellogg, letter to R.W. Ruhl, 7 Jan. 1935; Ruhl Papers.

22A.B. Pomeroy, letter/petition to Gov. Martin, 24 July
1935, Ruhl Papers; A.B. Pomeroy, letter/compendium to Gov,
Martin, 8 Aug. 1935, Ruhl Papers; Dean W.L. Morse, letter to
R.W. Ruhl, 24 July 1935, Ruhl Papers; W.L. Morse, letter to
E.E. Kelly, 19 July 1935, Ruhl Papers; W.L. Morse, letter to
Gov. Martin, 16 July 1935, Ruhl Papers; W.L. Morse, letter
to A.B. Pomeroy, 19 July 1935, Ruhl Papers.
Pomeroy's pardon effort evidently had better success with another future senator, young Richard L. Neuberger. Neuberger, then just beginning his career as a liberal journalist, supported her call for a "sincere and exhaustive investigation" of Banks' prejudicial trial and signed the petition. On the Jackson County District Attorney's copy of the petition, Codding scrawled next to Neuberger's name: "U[iversity] of O[regon] journalism student, very radical." Pomeroy apparently also enlisted the support of Portland's maverick Republican leader Rufus B. Holman; like Neuberger, Holman's motive may have been more to embarrass Governor Martin than to secure "justice" for Banks.²³

In addition to several other prominent upstaters, the petition garnered the signatures of ninety local people, most of them residents of Medford, Rogue River, and Gold Hill.²⁴ Pomeroy and other Banks loyalists kept up the pardon crusade across the state. Editorial support came from small "country weekly" newspapers as distant as the

²³"Petition to Hon. Charles H. Martin (1 June 1935) and T.A. Schollenberg statement (25 July 1935) /'Coddling file'," DA/RG8/#79A49, JCA. According to the Eugene Register-Guard (as quoted in "Upstate Paper...," AT, 19 July 1935, 1), the signature of Neuberger and other Democratic liberals on the Banks petition was actually simply one part of their larger attempt to embarrass the increasingly conservative Governor Martin. For background on Holman, see: E. Kimbark MacColl, The Growth of a City: Power and Politics in Portland, Oregon 1915 to 1950 (Portland: The Georgian Press, 1979), passim.

²⁴Ibid.
Jackson County's establishment geared up once again to keep Banks behind bars. Medford's American Legion post protested the pardon endeavor to the governor, as did separate petitions from Medford schoolchildren and Jackson County voters. County and city law officers took a lead in circulating the petitions, and Moody presented them to Martin.

Banks' pardon campaign unravelled dramatically during the August hearing in Salem, when Assistant Attorney General Moody pointed his finger at former state parole officer Dan Kellaher and accused the man of having entered into an illegal contract with the Banks family. Shouting at the "pale and silent" Kellaher and holding up a copy of the secret document for a hushed court to see, Moody charged him with accepting promises of $50,000 in return for "prostituting his oath of office" to gain Banks's release. Kellaher was arrested on bribery charges within the week.

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During 1935, Banks attracted further publicity when he alleged that several attempts had been made on his life while in prison. Additionally, he claimed that prosecutor William Levens's 1933 death during the Eugene trial actually had been arranged by Ralph Moody. One late December 1934 incident in particular, a supposed poisoning attempt, became the centerpiece of Banks's campaign for release, or at least for transfer, from the penitentiary. As prisoner #12697, Banks occupied cell 430 in block C. Bowing to Banks's forceful persuasion, prison officials allowed him to wear a custom-tailored, white outfit. Earl Fehl, prisoner #12698, served as an inmate trustee for that block, and on the evening in question, as he had customarily done each evening before, Fehl stopped at Banks's cell to chat and to bring a pot of boiling water for Banks's nightly cup of hot chocolate. The two men talked as Banks added sugar from his personal supply to the mixture. Noticing that the "sugar" created an unusual appearance in the beverage, Banks allegedly tasted the mixture and became nauseated. Analysis of the sugar by prison authorities confirmed the presence of lethal amounts of bichloride of mercury crystals. Banks and Fehl both provided statements that pointed to attempted poisoning by an unknown third party. Governor Martin's special secretary conducted an investigation of the affair, which instead indicated "Banks himself as being the person who crumbled the...tablets into his own sugar." Prison
officials theorized that Banks had done so either due to his severe depression following Moran's failure to secure his pardon or more likely as a staged "assassination" attempt.\footnote{W.L. Gosslin, 31 July 1935 memo to State Board of Control/'Paper on some of suits Fehl brought...', DA/RG8/#79A40 [box 7/14], JCA; "E. Fehl affidavit/'Paper on some suits Fehl brought...',' DA/RG8/#79A40 [box 7/14], JCA; "L.A. Banks statement/'Codding file',' DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 1/3], JCA.}

According to prison medical reports, Banks had become extremely depressed during December. Dr. R. E. Lee Steiner, superintendent of the state hospital for the insane, later examined Banks and agreed as to the inmate's temporary melancholia. However, Steiner argued against his transfer to the state hospital. He reported to Governor Martin that Banks was a dangerous man, a "psychopathic personality with strong paranoid trends" who might again take human life. Steiner added that during his interview Banks had spoken of his "duty to be out...running the State on military lines and...a lot of other foolishness."\footnote{Dr. R. Steiner, letter to Gov. Martin (11 April 1935).'/Copies of Statements',' DA/RG8/#79A40 [box 7/14], JCA.}

Adding to Banks' sense of isolation and hopelessness was the apparent departure of his wife and daughter from Salem. Edith Banks had spent over two years in Salem, renting a small apartment and visiting her husband on a regular basis. Sometime in late 1935, her visits became much less frequent, eventually ending entirely. Ariel
Pomeroy remained Banks' steadfast link to the outside until her "disturbing influence" on the prisoner caused the warden to end her visits "for the mental good of Banks." Pomeroy shared Banks' visionary belief in divine retribution. In a letter titled "The Feast of Belshazzar," she described a formal dinner given for Governor Martin in Medford on April 25, 1935, the evening that the Oregon State Capitol burned to the ground. Pomeroy's allegory indicated that the destruction of the state house "represented the judgement of God [on the people of Oregon] for their attitude toward Llewellyn Banks." Her letter read:

> Even then, the prophet of his time and place was gazing through prison bars at the flaming dome of the Capitol—the Capitol of the State for which he had sacrificed all earthly possessions, even liberty itself. As he gazed, the great dome crashed inward to its base. The treasures of his people consumed, destroyed before his very eyes."

Some of the Good Government Congressmen incarcerated for ballot theft began to be released during 1934. The terms of Thomas Breechan's eighteen-month sentence allowed him to be paroled in July. The state parole board recommended conditional release of the contrite former sheriff Gordon Schermerhorn the following summer. Ruhl, 30

30"W.L. Gosslin 31 July 1935 memo to State Board of Control (Pomeroy's letter quoted in part and attached to original memo as Ex. H)/'Paper on some of suits Fehl brought...',' DA/RG8/#79A40 [box 7/14], JCA. It is possible, even likely, that Banks himself composed this letter."
asked for his opinion by Governor Martin, indicated that Schermerhorn had been led astray by Banks and Fehl, and he thoroughly approved of the parole board's decision. Walter Jones, ex-mayor of Rogue River, gained his freedom in April 1936. Jones's good behavior in the penitentiary lessened his term by eighteen months.\(^\text{31}\)

Governor Martin, acting at the strenuous urging of Ruhl and others, rejected Earl Fehl's 1935 pardon request. Like the Banks's pardon campaign, the Fehl effort was promoted by Ariel Pomeroy. Stiff-necked Fehl, referring to himself with sardonic pride as "County Judge and Convict No. 12698," had refused to admit to any wrongdoing, insisting that the "Gang" had cunningly engineered his imprisonment. Through his wife and other representatives, Fehl fought successfully to save some of his real estate holdings from mortgage foreclosure.\(^\text{32}\) In early 1934, a few months after his imprisonment, Fehl and his wife had printed several thousand copies of a handbill titled "Black Political Plot Exposed: Who Stole The Ballots?" Distributed throughout Jackson County and in the capital, the sheet accused the district


attorney's office of forcing perjured testimony in order to convict Fehl. Codding had Electa Fehl and other Medford handbill distributors indicted and arrested for libel. Behind Codding, according to Fehl's broadside, "lurk[ed] the REAL CONSPIRATORS--namely: The Invisible Government; the Power Company, the Gang and the SUBSIDIZED PRESS, who for years have fattened on public money."\(^3\)

Fehl's subsequent good behavior made him eligible for parole in early 1936. Codding pleaded with state authorities not to release Fehl, claiming he was "fundamentally a criminal and according to his own statements intends to return [to Jackson County] and avenge what his twisted brain considers injustices."\(^3\) George Putnam, Salem newspaper editor and former owner of the Medford Tribune, warned Ruhl that Fehl--whose case benefitted from constant backing by Republican public-power proponent and State Treasurer Rufus Holman--was "as crazy as Banks": "He's done nothing but brood and plan revenge against his 'persecutors' since in prison."\(^3\) Governor Martin attempted a compromise by paroling Fehl on condition that he remain out of Jackson County. Fehl adamantly

\(^3\)"'Black Political Plot' broadside/"Codding file'," DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 1/3], JCA.

\(^3\)"G.A. Codding, letter to state parole officer E.M. Duffy (2 Apr. 1936)/'Perjury Cases file'," DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 5/27], JCA.

refused these terms and brought suit against the governor's action. Fehl's legal action delayed parole for a number of other inmates as well, thus provoking a prison riot in which one prisoner died.36

Fehl accepted a conditional parole to Multnomah County in late 1936. He and Electa, forced to "live in their car" for the first several weeks in Portland, evidently obtained low-paying, part-time jobs and received some financial support from family members. While in Portland, Fehl initiated another suit against Governor Martin as a "conspirator" in preventing Fehl's return to southern Oregon.37 According to the parole's conditions, Fehl was eligible to return to Jackson County on August 16, 1937. He arrived in Medford early that morning. Fehl, who assured authorities that he had returned "unarmed," demanded the sheriff's protection from would-be assailants and immediately filed suit to regain official recognition as county judge.38 Fehl circulated in the hinterland districts, renewing old ties with G.G.C. supporters. He

36"Fehl...," AT, 19 Jan. 1937, 1; "Re: Earl Fehl/'Earl Fehl Insanity Hearing file'," Da/RG8/#79A40 [box 7/14], JCA.

37See various letters, notes, and other items, Fehl Papers; "Judge E. Fehl v. Chas. H. Martin/'Papers on some suits brought by Fehl...','" DA/RG8/#79A40 [box 7/14], JCA. Fehl also brought suits against Jackson County almost immediately upon his release; see: E.H. Fehl, letter to Mr. and Mrs. J.H. Young, 11 Apr. 1937, Fehl Papers.

38"Earl Fehl Back...", MMT, 16 Aug. 1937, 1 and 5; "Earl Fehl Files Demand...," MMT, 7 Sept. 1937, 1 and 8.
wrote to his parole officer in Salem that Governor Martin's conditional parole, forbidding Fehl's return to southern Oregon, had been an illegal document "sealed in 'BLOOD OF REVENGE' to the EVERLASTING DISGRACE of a Great State, Oregon----Oregon is now paying the price." Within two months, Fehl had initiated a flurry of lawsuits against various private parties and government officials, including a third proceeding against Governor Martin that asked $548,000 in damages. The Fehls printed more inflammatory broadsides, including one that alleged that a trio of county officers, George Codding, George Neilson, and Clerk George Carter--"the three Georges," had illegally conspired to have him declared insane. Indeed, the county filed a notice of insanity for Fehl in November. Neilson's brief presented medical evidence of Fehl's "paranoia and litigious dementia." It also referred to Fehl's attempt to purchase a high-powered rifle from a second-hand store, as well as his "meetings in the outlying hill districts...in a second attempt to arouse the rabble of the county in his support."  

40 "Fehl Files Suit...," MMT, 5 Oct. 1937, 1.  
41 "'Why?' (broadside by 'Citizen's Committee for Civil Liberties of Jackson County')/'G.G.C., etc. file'," DA/RG8/79A40 [box 7/14], JCA; "In the Matter of...E. Fehl, charged as insane/'Earl Fehl Insanity Hearing'," DA/RG8/79A40 [box 7/14], JCA; "Respondent's Brief (Oct. 1937)>'Earl Fehl Insanity hearing',' DA/RG8/79A49 [box
In late December 1937, after a lengthy and acrimonious trial, Circuit Court Judge H. D. Norton adjudged Fehl insane. Shortly after Christmas, authorities returned Fehl to Salem, where he entered the Oregon State Hospital.\footnote{Fehl Committed..., MMT, 20 Dec. 1937, 1.} Ariel Pomeroy wrote to the Salem Capitol Journal that there was "no place more effective than an insane asylum in which to place a politically inconvenient person, not unless the grave itself be employed." She warned of possible "civil war" if Fehl were placed "with the insane for an indefinite period of political cold storage."\footnote{A.B. Pomeroy, letter to the editor (24 Nov. 1937)/'Earl fehl Insanity Hearing', DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 7/14], JCA.}

Pomeroy's predicted uprising did not occur. Fehl probably appeared as an isolated and bizarre personality to all but a dwindling number of committed loyalists. He remained in the Salem hospital until late in 1941. Upon release, Fehl returned again to his Oakdale Avenue home in Medford, where he initiated another round of suits to recover the back salary he felt was due him as county judge. By 1942, with Jackson County now hosting a huge Army training base east of Medford, news of Fehl's ongoing and
consistently unsuccessful legal proceedings faded from the pages of the press."

Legacy of Rebellion

By the mid-1930s, the Mail Tribune had recovered sufficient financial ground for Ruhl to put it "in the black." He and his wife spent much of their time away from Medford on extended trips, particularly to southern California. Ruhl also made regular visits to Eugene as a member of the state board of higher education. In 1937, the search for a new president of the University of Oregon entailed Ruhl's ongoing participation. Evaluating one applicant as "too nice for a tough job," he expressed particular interest in another candidate, "Dr. Erb from Stanford," who, although "young and inexperienced," impressed Ruhl "from the first." Erb got the job. 


R.W. Ruhl, letter to Mabel Ruhl, 7 Nov. 1937, Ruhl Papers. Donald M. Erb served as president of the University from 1938 until his untimely death from pneumonia in 1943. Although his tenure at Eugene was brief, Erb compiled a solid record. He brought the sciences back to the campus, after budget-cutting and political pressure had moved them to rival Oregon State University in Corvallis, and he aggressively prepared the university for the expected postwar expansion in enrollment and programs (Keith Richards, University of Oregon Archivist, personal communication.)
Ruhl's willingness to focus more of his attention beyond the Rogue River Valley may have stemmed in part from his stated belief that "locally, peace and quiet...reigned ever since" the end of the Good Government Congress.\(^4\) An influx of impoverished Dust Bowl migrants during 1935 caused some resentment on the part of local people, but economic improvement, along with federal and state resettlement programs, lessened the social burden caused by these newcomers.\(^4\) Nevertheless, although Jackson County's affairs lost their intense rancor of 1932-33 during subsequent New Deal years, the local proclivity for populist politics did not disappear. Upton Sinclair, the muckraking journalist whose 1934 Golden State gubernatorial campaign ran on a socialist platform of "End Poverty In California," had some EPIC sympathizers in Jackson County. Jane Smack of Rogue River, for example, wrote Ruhl of her admiration for Sinclair's "fearlessness and hatred of hypocrisy" and, by inference, of her disappointment in his defeated campaign.\(^4\)

Of more political significance was the rising tide of


\(^7\)J. Billings interview. Mr. Billings worked for one of the migrant resettlement programs, traveling between Jackson County and Coos County on the coast; he recalled in particular one family whose solution to broken plumbing was "to chop a hole in the bedroom floor for a privy." Overall, conflicts between local residents and "Okie" immigrants seems to have been minor.

\(^8\)J. Smack, letter to R.W. Ruhl, 6 Dec. 1934, Ruhl Papers.
anger among many of the region's elderly citizens. Southern California physician Francis E. Townsend had begun promoting his concept of an "Old Age Revolving Pension Fund" plan in 1933; "Townsend Plan" clubs proliferated throughout the Far West the next two years. During 1935, the Townsend Club movement took on important political strength in Oregon, where its evangelistic, "quasi-religious" fervor held strong appeal among the elderly in rural areas. Over 15,000 supporters met in Portland's Jantzen Beach Park for an August rally, featuring the quiet but forceful sixty-eight-year-old Dr. Townsend. Another major speaker at the three-day rally was Townsend Plan boardmember Judge John A. Jeffrey, the former Jackson County Populist and Klan attorney, who spoke to the throng in still vigorous stump-speech style.

Ruhl received numerous letters advocating or condemning the Townsend Plan. The "Upper Rogue" Townsend Club, one of many such organizations in southern Oregon, built a "Townsend Hall" near Prospect, where the group held regular meetings and other community events.

Townsendites' political muscle in southern Oregon became


such that the district's Republican congressman James Mott served as "Townsend Bloc" floor leader in the House of Representatives.\textsuperscript{52}

In the presidential election of 1936, followers of Dr. Townsend, as well as those of the late Senator Huey Long and Father Charles Coughlin, formed a potential bloc of dissatisfied voters who could challenge the New Deal. Townsend, Coughlin, and others founded the Union Party and urged their followers to vote for its presidential candidate, Congressman William Lemke, a veteran of agrarian protest movements in North Dakota. The Lemke candidacy, which faltered badly during the national campaign, received slightly more than five percent of the Oregon vote. Southern Oregon, however, proved a relative stronghold for the Union Party. Josephine County and Jackson County, with their active Townsendites, gave Lemke eighteen percent and over ten percent of their vote respectively. Although Franklin Roosevelt received a commanding lead in almost all of Jackson County, it was the same rural, "G.G.C. hotbed" precincts of the 1932 election that gave Lemke his largest margin of support. Out of 300 votes cast in the perpetually disgruntled little town of Rogue River, for example, Lemke

\textsuperscript{52}Holtzman, \textit{The Townsend Movement}, 90-94.
missed beating Roosevelt by only three votes; Republican candidate Alf Landon trailed, a distant third.\(^{53}\)

In the 1936 senatorial campaign, McNary ran against a comparatively unknown maverick Democrat from southern Oregon, Willis E. Mahoney. Mahoney, a young attorney from Washington State who came to Klamath County in the 1920s, had astounded the city of Klamath Falls when he won the crowded 1932 mayoral race as a write-in candidate, having been previously ruled off the ballot on legal technicalities.\(^{54}\) A Townsend Plan advocate and a professed enemy of private utilities, Mahoney was later described by one political observer as a "Huey Long-type" demagogue.\(^{55}\) The veteran McNary squeaked to a narrow victory over the aggressive newcomer in both the state and Jackson County returns. As with the Lemke vote, Mahoney's strongest support came from hinterland communities such as Rogue River, Gold Hill, Butte Falls, and Eagle Point.

Southern Oregon's Townsendites, although they could be fierce and unforgiving of opposition, were benign in

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\(^{53}\) Holtzman stresses Townsendite support in Lemke's Oregon showing. Brief overviews of the Union Party debacle are given in: Schlesinger, The Politics of Upheaval; Leuchtenburg, Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal; and Brinkley, Voices of Protest.

\(^{54}\) "Re-Check Boosts Write-In Ballots," KFH, 10 Nov. 1932, 1; "Here's Mayor Elect," KFH, 15 Nov. 1932, 1.

comparison to the adherents of some other Depression-era political movements in the Pacific Northwest. In portions of western Washington State, for example, scattered lower-middle class, small-town residents (some of them former Klansmen) became active in William Dudley Pelley's fascist, anti-Semitic "Silver Shirt Legion" during the late 1930s.\(^5\)

The Silver Shirts were active in Oregon as well, but they do not appear to have had a significant organized presence in Jackson County, where traditional, economically focused anti-Semitism had doubtless been part of many rural citizens' outlook since the heyday of the early Grange movement. Some residents shared Pelley's particularly virulent anti-Jewish sentiments, however. Protestant minister Edwin Deacon of Talent combined anti-Semitic conspiracy theory with anti-New Deal rhetoric in his letters to Ruhl. The Mail Tribune's editor erroneously assumed, Deacon wrote, "that we oppose the New Deal because we fear the personal ambition of F.D.R. to become a dictator." Deacon called Ruhl's attention "somewhat farther afield" to "the same concealed devil-fish that already has Mongolia, Mexico and France quite safely within its tentacles." He pointed out that Spain was "now struggling like Laocoon to

\(^5\)Eckard V. Toy, Jr., "Silver Shirts in the Northwest: Politics, Prophecies, and Personalities in the 1930s," Pacific Northwest Quarterly 80 (October 1989): 139-146. Pelley's Silver Shirt Legion was a nationwide movement.
free herself from its deadly coils" and that Italy had been
saved "only by the rise of Mussolini and a determined show
of force." In Germany, after the War, "it was amazing how
quickly the positions of influence and power fell into the
hands of Jews."

That country was almost completely in the grasp of
those same tentacles, but just then Hitler stepped
forward with his "shock [sic] troops" and said
"This country shall be German, not Jewish," and
with one terrific blow severed that
tentacle....But what of the United States?....In
F.D.R. they found the material they needed....No,
please don't assume that your anti-new deal
readers are so dense that we see nothing more
sinister in the present situation than the
personal ambition of Roosevelt. We are looking
past the tool at the hand that wields it. Looking
past the speech and message at the minds that
dictate them. Looking....at the hidden empire.57

After the end of Llewellyn Banks' charismatic
leadership four years previously, inflamed conspiracy-theory
politics lost ground in southern Oregon. The Reverend
Deacon, who may or may not have been a Banks supporter,
evidently persuaded relatively few people to share his
beliefs. Although ethnic and religious tolerance did not
blossom in the Rogue River Valley during the late 1930s,
steady improvement, after the 1937 slump, in agricultural and lumber markets deflected attention from traditional political scapegoats such as Jews or Catholics.

By 1940-41, with military spending increasing, the region's natural resource-based economy began to hum. The Army's 67-square-mile Camp White training cantonment took shape on the "Agate Desert" near Medford in 1941. The same year, Jackson County boosters joined with colleagues in sister counties of Oregon's southwestern corner and those in northernmost California to form the State of Jefferson movement. At the heart of this "secessionist" campaign was resentment of perceived ongoing reluctance of Salem and Sacramento politicians to address the area's economic development needs. Intended to spur increased infrastructure spending in these contiguous "forgotten corners" of the two states, the State of Jefferson movement--complete with a "state seal" and a governor--was a brief-lived publicity gimmick of local establishments, not a serious political insurgency. However, the movement stemmed in part from--and helped to reinforce--the region's populist, sectional self-image as a place abused by distant elites.


59The State of Jefferson formally "seceeded" from Oregon and California late in 1941. The effort initially generated much publicity, but was quickly abandoned after December 7.
CHAPTER X

"IT CAN'T HAPPEN HERE"...BUT DID IT?

By 1940, portrayal of the Good Government Congress episode as an authoritarian movement--and of Llewellyn Banks as its dictator--was embedded in the local establishment's interpretation of the event. This explanation doubtless received encouragement from the national success of Sinclair Lewis's *It Can't Happen Here*. The novel--which traces the rise of an All-American duce, Buzz Windrip, from out of the small-town West--appeared simultaneous with Jackson County leaders' victory over the campaign to pardon Banks and Fehl.¹

The book's object lesson, as well as the emerging liberal interpretation of mass politics of which it soon became a part, warned of populist demagogues and their ability to

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¹Sinclair Lewis, *It Can't Happen Here* (New York: P.F. Collier, 1935), 33-34. Made into a theater production, the story enjoyed wide national popularity in 1936. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's planned film production halted that year, however, evidently due largely to the studio's fear that the German and Italian governments would ban the showing of all M-G-M productions in reprisal. The stage version continued its run through the end of the decade. See: Schorer, *Sinclair Lewis*, 614-625.
lead the nation down the fascist road during times of economic upheaval.²

Writing to Harvard classmates in 1938, Ruhl mentioned the Pulitzer award for his newspaper's part in defeating "a gang of would-be Fascists."³ Over the course of the 1930s, as German fascism came to dominate the fears of many American commentators, Banks's original role as a native-born "Mussolini" changed. In 1940, state policeman O'Brien's first-person (albeit probably ghost-written) account of the Jackson County turmoil appeared under the title, "The Man Who Tried to be Hitler in the U.S." The article cast Banks as a fascist demagogue who made his "bid for power by molding a solid organization from the masses."⁴

²Regarding the fundamental question of "what is a demagogue?," historian Reinhard H. Luthin uses a standard dictionary definition: a political leader "skilled in oratory and flattery and invective; appealing to the passions rather than to the reason of the public; and arousing racial, religious, [or] class prejudices." See: Luthin, American Demagogues: Twentieth Century (Boston: Beacon Press, 1954), 3.


⁴O'Brien, "The Man Who Tried to be Hitler," 45. O.H. Goss's ca. 1934 personal account, "The Jackson County War" (pp.1-2) hinted at a brownshirt-type insurrection, portraying the G.G.C. "gunmen" who "stalked the streets openly" as "swaggering, vindictive, misanthropes, who would have killed at a word." The view of the G.G.C. as fascistic evidently remained part of the lore of the Mail Tribune's staff long after Ruhl's departure. Jack Arends, a student-intern with the Mail Tribune, probably reflected the continuing "It Can't Happen Here" authoritarian
The core concept underlying the catch phrase "it can't happen here" of course was that "it"—a fascist takeover—indeed could (would?) happen in America. Thus, Lewis's intentional irony in choosing an anxious statement of American exceptionalism for the book's title served to amplify the sound of his tocsin. The desperate 1932-33 period in particular had generated widespread calls for an American man on horseback; by 1935, rising dissatisfaction with the New Deal again threatened to unite populist and reactionary elements into what people like Lewis viewed as an incipient fascism. Lewis's protagonist, small-town newspaper editor Doremus Jessup, voiced that warning to neighbors when one of them claimed that "it couldn't possibly happen here in America":

The answer to that...is 'the hell it can't!' Why there's no country in the world that can get more hysterical—yes, or more obsequious!—than America. Look how Huey Long became absolute monarch over Louisiana...and Father Coughlin on the radio--divine oracle to millions....Could Hitler's bunch, or Windrip's, be worse? Remember the Ku Klux Klan? Remember our war hysteria?....Why, where in all history has there

interpretation of local journalists in a 1979 research paper. This paper opens with a bit of hyperbole about "men marching] through the streets with guns...a mob [breaking] into a courthouse," and then proceeds to emphasize that the "town was not an alpine village in... early Nazi Germany...not a city in fascist Italy, nor was it a Russian village enduring a Stalinst purge. The town was Medford, Oregon, U.S.A."

For two prominent liberal historians' echoing of this theme, see: Leuchtenburg, Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, 38-39 and Chapter 5, especially 96-103; and Schlesinger, The Politics of Upheaval, Chapter 2, passim.
ever been a people so ripe for a dictatorship as ours?⁶

But was Jackson County's Good Government Congress really a proto-fascist movement? Despite Banks's alleged personal intention to expand it from the local to state and national levels, was the G.G.C. truly aiming toward an authoritarian solution to economic chaos?⁷ Or, alternatively, was the establishment's Lewis-like interpretation of the Jackson County Rebellion actually an overblown reaction more akin to what one historian of the 1930s has recently termed the "Brown Scare."⁸

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⁶Lewis, It Can't Happen Here, 21-22. (As mentioned in Chapter I, it is possible that the novel's characterization of Dormus Jessup owes at least something to the Jackson County Rebellion. Lewis's initial villain, Windrip, is aided and then usurped by fascist newspaperman Lee Sarasohn, who may contain a bit of Llewellyn Banks.)

⁷Banks' intention for the G.G.C. to expand geographically was mentioned by former Banks supporter Virgil Edington and by Officer James O'Brien (see sources cited in Chapter VII, footnote 23.

⁸See: Leo P. Ribuffo, The Old Christian Right: The Protestant Far Right from the Great Depression to the Cold War (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), passim. Ribuffo draws a parallel between the previous Red Scare and the use of a fascist bogeyman in the 1930s-40s. His revisionist concept of a "Brown Scare" points to liberal commentators' tendency to portray as "foreign" and fascist those movements which in reality were endemic, traditional "right-wing 'populism'" that merely re-surfaced dramatically during the 1930s. Although not critical of their campaign to combat such forces, Ribuffo points out that the "extremist interpretation" of American liberals was not without self-interest and hypocrisy.
For many holders of the "it can't happen here"-view of American mass politics during the Depression, the threat of an American fascism was personified in the popularity of two men: Senator Huey Long and Father Charles Coughlin. Despite the plethora of other demagogic leaders during the Depression, these two figures were seen as the most potent political messiahs.

Undeniably Jackson County's Good Government Congress, like the movements founded by Long and Coughlin, developed in large part out of the economic conditions of the Great Depression. Can one then consider Llewellyn Banks as a southern Oregon Huey Long?, or the Good Government Congress as a Pacific Northwest version of Coughlin's National Union for Social Justice? Allowing that certain of the Good Government Congress's broader complaints of unfairness, but certainly not its irresponsible accusations of conspiracy and its methods of intimidation, may have had some legitimacy, the movement certainly can be characterized accurately as the result of Depression-era demagogy. Created by two leaders who constantly agitated the political discontent of their followers, the Good Government Congress thrived on deep-seated populist sentiments. Banks and Fehl accomplished their movement-building through a newspaper campaign that appealed to local resentments and that focused
blame on readily identifiable local targets. Upon achieving political power, the two leaders attempted to formalize their movement in order to consolidate control and to deflect the efforts of political enemies.

The Good Government Congress exhibited certain symptoms similar to those of contemporary European fascism. These ranged from the nativist, anti-Semitic appeals and the religious, ultra-nationalist, anti-Communist rhetoric of its leaders to the putsch-like, almost "March on Rome" quality of the February days of 1933. Seen in this light, Earl Fehl's blaming of the ballot theft on his opponents even gives that crime the character of a Reichstag fire. The "cult of personality" that centered on Banks as the movement's charismatic champion and martyr underscores another fascistic aspect of the Good Government Congress; Banks's alleged spellbinding persona was ready-made for his opponents' portrayal of him as an American fuhrer.

However, the Good Government Congress's supposed fascist traits were surface phenomena, and the fascist analogy unravels upon deeper examination of the movement. For that matter, so too does the traditional liberal imputation of fascist tendencies to the better-known contemporary political movements led by Huey Long and Father Coughlin. Historian Alan Brinkley clearly differentiates between the basic nature of the Long and Coughlin demagogies and those of European fascist leaders (as well as from
contemporary American figures, such as William Dudley Pelley, who indeed were fascists).  

In stark contrast to the collectivist and statist goals of fascism, Long's and Coughlin's "voices of protest" appealed directly to traditional American personal independence and "opposition to centralized authority," as well as to age-old national belief in conspiracies of wicked elites. According to Brinkley, Long's and Coughlin's lower-middle class populism had its strongest ideological roots deep in the 1890s Populist Revolt and in previous American agrarian insurgencies. Long and Coughlin were "manifestations of one of the most powerful impulses" of their time: "the urge to defend the autonomy of the individual and the independence of the community against encroachments from the modern industrial state."  

Although they castigated its excesses, especially concentration of wealth in the hands of a few, Long and Coughlin held a firm

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9Brinkley, *Voices of Protest*, passim. (see especially ix-xii, 143-168, 261-262, and 268-283).

10Ibid., 160-162. Brinkley and other post-liberal revisionists are certainly not the first historians to stress the distinction between Long's and Coughlin's movements on the one hand and fascism on the other. Louis Hartz, in his seminal, liberal "consensus" interpretation of American history, emphasized that Long and Coughlin--with their non-hierarchical approach and "hardy pragmatism"--were not fascists but "Americanists to the hilt." See: Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought Since the Revolution* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich; 1955), 276.

11Brinkley, *Voices of Protest*, xi.
belief—as did their Populist and earlier predecessors—in the American free enterprise system. Their followers yearned not for submersion in a corporatist state but for survival of rural and small-town, individualistic capitalism.¹²

This same objective guided most members of the Good Government Congress. The G.G.C. preamble stressed that the organization had formed to confront an emergency situation wherein "the existing order of things have passed beyond individual control." Its stated aim was to wrest power from a selfish, corrupt elite and thereby restore political control to the common people. Llewellyn Banks, the intellectual leader of the Good Government Congress, personified this traditional American populist goal. His unremitting fight—dating from a childhood vow—against the fruit-consignment firms, as well as against large cooperatives such as the California Fruit Growers Exchange, against the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1929, and against other forms of centralized control over farm production, stemmed from Banks's intense individualism.¹³ He spoke,

¹²Ibid., 144-146. Brinkley (p. 282) acknowledges that European fascism and American demagogic populism of the 1930s "shared...certain anxieties, ideas, and images and drew from similar political traditions," but he denies that Long and Coughlin were "fascists in any meaningful sense of the term."

¹³For discussion of Herbert Hoover's 1929 Agricultural Marketing Act as an enlightened and benign effort toward "syndicalist/corporate-capitalist" control, see: William Appleman Williams, The Contours of American History
like an old People's party man, of Medford's packing houses 
(many of them controlled by out-of-state investors) as 
"foreign-owned" and of the Traffic Association as holding 
"chattel mortgages" on small orchards. Banks's defense 
attorney told the jurors that "Mr. Banks's ideas...[were 
that] the man that was entitled to the fruits of his toil 
was the man who took from the earth," and that this man "was 
the grower, not the banker and other big interests who 
happened to sit in their offices."\(^{14}\) Hardly one to 
promote a formally fascist solution for America's social and 
economic problems, Banks actually railed from prison against 
the dark, foreign-tainted plot inherent in the newly minted 
"Mercury" dime, with its fasces symbol on the reverse face. 
Banks's prison essays instead were a mixture of nostalgia 
for an idealized American agrarian past and anti-modernist 
anger at the present situation: "If our sons have 
widespreading fields, look to see them despoiled; the most 
despised creature...the American farmer's son."\(^{15}\) In terms 
of Banks's traditionalist, Populist-like ideology, one of 
his severest critics essentially was correct in claiming 
that "L. A. Banks...lived mentally in an age long gone."\(^{16}\)

\(^{14}\) "J. Hammersly opening statement/'L.A. Banks Trial 
Papers'," DA/RG8/#79A40 [box 8/14], JCA.

\(^{15}\) Banks, Weighed In The Balance, 44.

\(^{16}\) "O. Goss/"The Jackson County War' (p. 15)," 
DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 5/27], JCA.
In addition to his individualism, Banks's focus on conspiracy and corruption lay deep within the American political tradition. Stoking outrage against the elite, Banks possessed superb talents as a demagogue. However, neither this trait nor his undeniable personal magnetism and messianic appeal made Banks into an authoritarian duce. American political insurgencies, from colonial times through the twentieth century, typically have been led by dynamic figures who mobilized the masses with anti-elitist oratory that repeatedly expressed a few, key ideas.\(^{17}\)

In his speeches, according to one observer, Banks often compared the Jackson County Rebellion to the Boston Tea Party.\(^{18}\) His allusions to this and similar historic events, his portrayal of G.G.C. members as the spiritual descendants of Revolutionary War "minutemen," were not cynical rhetorical flourishes used to legitimize violence and

\(^{17}\)Richard Hofstadter, in his highly influential interpretation of the movement, took pains to caution his readers that "Populism, for all its zany fringes, was not an unambiguous forerunner of modern authoritarian movements"; Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform*, 22. Regarding the appearance of leaders similar to Llewellyn Banks throughout America's long history of popular insurrections, Howard Mumford Jones points out that mobs and rebels were often "amenable to cunning leadership, sometimes disguised, sometimes demagogic": Jones, *O Strange New World: American Culture, The Formative Years* (New York: Viking Press, 1952). All this belabor what should be an obvious point: Accurate accusations of demagogic leadership have at times been linked with significantly less reliable accusations of fascistic intentions.

\(^{18}\)"O. Goss/'The Jackson County War' (p.14)," DA/RG8/#79A49 [box 5/27], JCA.
intimidation. Banks sincerely envisioned himself in the role of a Patriot general fighting a distant imperialist force—as well as its local Tory lackeys.¹⁹

In contrast to accusations of its fascistic nature, then, Banks saw the actions of himself and his followers as part of a long-standing American tradition of popular uprisings. Given the Jackson County movement's causes and circumstances, Banks' perspective on the Good Government Congress has greater historical validity than does that of some of its critics. Historian John Shover, tracing the development of another militant insurgency of the early 1930s, the Farmers' Holiday Association, depicts western Iowa's "Cornbelt Rebellion" as a final chapter in an American story that begins with Shays' Rebellion and ends with the farmers' unrest of the Great Depression.²⁰ Southern Oregon's Good Government Congress episode should also be examined in the light of this legacy of agrarian, backcountry rebellion.

¹⁹Banks' public hatred of Herbert Hoover as "that Englishman in the White House" and a tool of the Bank of England gives Banks's Revolutionary War-era sentiments more than a metaphorical reality. Allusions to the Revolutionary War as a means to legitimize popular violence has been characteristic of many protest movements throughout subsequent American history; see: Richard Maxwell Brown, Strain of Violence: Historical Studies of American Violence and Vigilantism (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 33 and 63.

²⁰Shover, Cornbelt Rebellion, 2.
Americans' penchant for armed rebellion against authority, of course, began long before the followers of Daniel Shays marched on the arsenal at Springfield, Massachusetts, in 1787. Groups of colonial Americans, taking to the streets and to the backroads as "the People out-of-doors," had developed a tradition of direct action, "action that more often than not [took] the form of mob violence and crowd disturbance." Both urban riots and rural rebellions punctuated the colonial years, particularly after 1700. Historians such as Clarence Ver Steeg and Howard Mumford Jones have pointed to the numerous backcountry revolts in particular as symptomatic of the colonies' social and political instability during the eighteenth century. Many of these disorders—from minor


22 Although urban riots, many of them ethnically or religiously based, actually increased during the early nineteenth century, the long-accepted practice in Atlantic Seaboard cities of occasional "mobbing" began to be systematically suppressed by threatened elites soon after 1800; see: Paul A. Gilje "The Baltimore Riots of 1812 and the Breakdown of the Anglo-American Mob Tradition," Journal of Social History 13 (Summer 1980):547-564. Rural rebellions, which persisted in a traditional form much longer than traditional American urban riots, also antedated the city mob. Bacon's Rebellion, which convulsed seventeenth-century Chesapeake Bay society, was in some respects the original American backcountry rebellion. Although other factors (such as Virginia Governor Berkeley's
disturbances in places such as Dedham, Massachusetts during the 1720s to the larger North Carolina "Regulation" movement of 1766-1771—were rural, professedly democratic responses to the perceived selfishness or corruption of not-so-distant elites. In this sense, the War for Independence can be seen as America's backcountry rebellion "writ large."\textsuperscript{23}


Rebellion was a movement of western Massachusetts farmers against the seaboard's commercial establishment, of debtors against creditors, of rural "common people" against an "arrogant, urban" elite. Subsequent episodes, from western Pennsylvania's Whiskey Rebellion of the 1790s and the Maine frontier's "White Indian"/Liberty Men uprisings of the 1790s-1810s to upstate New York's Antirent War of the 1830s-40s, possessed similar attributes.24 Although each sprang from different specific causes, these insurrections continued the tradition of rural uprisings. Responding to the nation's massive economic and social transformation after the Civil War, the old pattern of local, direct action by angry farmers evolved into more widespread, yet centralized and acceptable forms of agrarian protest. Even so, the farmer-dominated, third-party movements of the Gilded Age, which culminated in the People's party of the 1890s, retained much of the essential sound and fury of earlier backcountry rebellions. Although not characterized by personal violence, the Populist Revolt's embattled

defense of local community and self-determination against the rising threat of Wall Street monopoly echoed protests voiced by earlier rural insurgencies.  

A strong thread of agrarian discontent, dyed in the tradition of backcountry rebellion, runs through southern Oregon history from the 1890s through the Great Depression. The Good Government Congress featured many of the same themes and patterns that had characterized Jackson County's Populist movement as well as the area's intervening political affairs, including its particular manifestation of the Ku Klux Klan. This continuity permits use of the concept of a long-term "Jackson County Insurgency" in reference to the entire forty-one-year period from 1892 to 1933. Undeniably, major differences also marked the three main episodes in this long-term Jackson County Insurgency. For example, the local People's party and Ku Klux Klan were part of national organizations, and their local character was determined in significant part by national policies and goals. This fact not only differentiates both of them from the locally derived Good Government Congress; it also made for some deep ideological distinctions between them. The People's party, primarily a political reform movement, had a

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relatively minor nativist component (one which owed less to the party's formal program than to innate prejudices of its members); the Klan was primarily and overtly nativist in its goals, but featured aspects of moral and political reform as well. One could list numerous other ways in which the three episodes were dissimilar. However, in terms of broader themes and patterns in local politics, their similarities are more important than their disparities.

The Jackson County Insurgency—as a southern Oregon tradition that lasted four decades—displays persistence in dominant themes and in specific patterns of political action. The three major outbreaks of insurgency—in the 1890s, early 1920s, and early 1930s—coincided with periods of deep economic distress. Anxiety stoked resentments that regularly were expressed in several interrelated themes of focused conflict: agrarian/rural versus commercial/urban interests, "producers" versus "managers/distributors," lower-middle class/working class versus middle class/upper class, extremely localist versus generally cosmopolitan interests, and culturally "populist" versus culturally "elitist" outlooks.

Each of the outbreaks additionally had similar patterns of development. The insurgency's overall pattern, although each factor varied in relative importance during the different episodes, consisted of the following key factors: a solid base of support among economically threatened rural
citizens, a powerful anti-elite sentiment expressed in the form of corruption/conspiracy theory, a crucial organizational and propagandizing role played by local newspapers (including crusades against opposing newspapers as the voice of the elite), the early appearance of opportunistic and demagogic leaders, and the rhetorical use of both religious/ethnic nativism and moralistic reform to foster movement solidarity. The steadily growing importance of women as public participants in the insurgency is another significant factor. Additional parts of the insurgency's pattern throughout the four decades are the continuing dominance of particular hinterland communities as centers of revolt and the ongoing presence of certain individuals, either as leaders or as active members, during the different episodes.

The local People's party of the 1890s was quintessentially a movement of disgruntled farmers throughout Jackson County, angered at economic and political conditions. Jackson County's Ku Klux Klan held particular appeal for Rogue River Valley orchardists who were deeply frustrated by the post-boom decline, anxious over the effects of the postwar agricultural depression, and especially worried about the cost and supply of irrigation water. The Good Government Congress united many rural people throughout the county in the same fashion and with
the same general intentions as the People's party had during a previous national depression.

Anger at putative corruption by the local establishment—as well as its members' alleged political intrigues that in effect disfranchised the popular will—marked all three major phases of the rebellion. From the "Jacksonville Ring" through the "Medford Gang," the county's commercial and professional elite remained the central target of the insurgents' ire. A lively and pugnacious press effectively carried the insurgents' message to all corners of the county throughout the decades; dissident-oriented newspapers, building upon an existing local heritage of gloves-off editorial writing, extended from the Populists' regional reform journals and local weeklies through the Medford Clarion, the Pacific Record Herald, and culminated in the daily inflammatory sensationalism of the Medford News.

Political opportunists, skilled in oratorical or journalistic demagogy, eagerly joined during the early phases of each episode, and essentially they made the insurgency their own. Although both men believed in the Good Government Congress cause, Earl Fehl and Llewellyn Banks, who so thoroughly mixed their own political and financial affairs with the broader cause, clearly operated as opportunistic demagogues. The same might be said for John A. Jeffrey, who cannily hitched his own political wagon
to the Populist crusade. William Phipps, although less successful in politics following his Populist involvement, helped fan the anti-elitist sentiments of the Klan episode into a temporary financial bonanza for his newspaper.

Nativism, fueled in differing degrees by leaders such as Jeffrey, Phipps, and Banks, remained a potent force in southern Oregon throughout the period. Local Populists, both leaders and supporters, subscribed to the anti-Catholic program of the American Protective Association. Although the A.P.A. did not dominate the local People's party, it evidently proved an important sub-rosa force by the mid-1890s. Religious and ethnic bigotry, which continued to surface as a strong political force in southern Oregon during the first two decades of the twentieth century, found its loudest public expression with the Klan. Phipps's references to "opulent Jews" and to the bejeweled ring-finger of a rich, "corrupt" Pope transformed nativist prejudice into populist wrath. Although the anti-Semitic theories of Banks and the xenophobic themes of other G.G.C. speakers did not dominate the Good Government Congress, such sentiments probably gave the movement greater cohesion and additional support.

Moralistic reform rhetoric, although not dominant in either episode, definitely was present in both the People's party and the Good Government Congress. The Populist leaders' appeal, like that of the Grangers, for farmers to
improve both their fields and their minds—in short, to
"wake up" and unite into an intelligent and righteous force—
was echoed by the Good Government Congress's clarion call
of moral outrage at the "Gang's" devious and corrupt
actions. Moralistic alarm, of course, dominated much of the
Klan's rhetoric, and moralism proved far more specific,
central, and pervasive in the Klan movement than in the
insurgency's previous or later phases. The Klan's national
organization provided the major push for the emphasis on
personal morality, the condemnation of licentiousness and
drinking. Although many Jackson County klansmen doubtless
approved of this moralistic emphasis, the local Klan's
populist appeal probably held at least equal or greater
importance for most supporters in the main valley. Indeed,
its emphasis on Prohibition enforcement proved to be the
Klan's Achilles' heel as a rural-based insurgency in Jackson
County. The deep anti-Prohibition sentiments of many
hinterland residents significantly reduced the Klan's
overall attraction in many outlying communities. Embarking
on a far less divisive moral crusade, the Good Government
Congress focused on purportedly corrupt and murderous
aspects of Prohibition enforcement; it thereby succeeded in
uniting residents from all rural sections.

Over the course of the Jackson County Insurgency, women
steadily gained an increasingly public role as important
participants. Southern Oregon's Alliance chapters and
People's party clubs, building upon a foundation put in place by the Grange, encouraged public activity by farm women. Although the issue of suffrage was secondary to the goals of most local Populists, women evidently acted as important, if not full, partners in organizing conventions, rallies, and other public affairs. Women rarely gained mention in the local press as overt Klan supporters during the early 1920s, but the still-powerful Women's Christian Temperance Union prominently pushed much of the Klan agenda among the county's townfolk. Given the significant, if behind-the-scenes, activities of female Klan members in other parts of the country, Jackson County's Ladies of the Invisible Empire doubtless increased the local Klan's political and economic power through similar campaigns of boycott and personal acrimony. During the insurgency's final episode, women not only formed a significant portion (probably over one-third) of the Good Government Congress's membership, some of them held positions of leadership in the organization. Henrietta Martin's very public role as the Congress's president demonstrated the political maturity of women during the last phase of the rebellion. In outlying communities, female organizers proved key in forming local chapters, and women remained among Banks' most vocal and loyal supporters after the rebellion was crushed.

During the 1890s, the entire county outside of the towns of Jacksonville and Ashland formed a hinterland, one
that went solidly with the People's party. During the pear boom of 1905-1912, the rural area split into two zones; the main valley became densely settled and increasingly dependent on large-scale irrigation, while the outlying zone retained the old hinterland pattern of individualistic agriculture. This split accounts in part for the very different levels of support that the two zones gave to the Klan. The Great Depression brought serious economic distress to both zones, and it united them both during the Good Government Congress phase. However, one section of the hinterland participated wholeheartedly in all three phases of the insurgency. The neighboring communities of Rogue River (Woodville/Evans Creek Valley), Gold Hill, and Sam's Valley—all located on the north side of the river at some distance from the valley's main towns—formed the most heavily and persistently insurgent region of Jackson County. Residents of the county's disgruntled northwestern quarter remained Populist through 1898, delivered Socialist presidential candidate Debs his strongest regional showing in 1912, supported the Klan's slate and the compulsory school bill in 1922, voted in large numbers for LaFollette in 1924, and gave enthusiastic support to the Good Government Congress. Although other hinterland communities strongly supported various phases of the rebellion, citizens living on the north side of the river appear to have been in a state of near-permanent political discontent. Although
spanned by a few bridges between the mouth of Evans Creek and Sam's Valley by the 1890s, the turbulent Rogue River may have served as a psychological barrier long after it had ceased being a physical one, isolating northside residents from the rest of the county. Located on or relatively close to the railroad, yet distant from the county's commercially powerful urban core, the communities north of the river felt left out of political decision-making. The town of Rogue River, located only a few miles from the Josephine County seat of Grants Pass, seems to have perceived itself as especially neglected by Jackson County's elite.

Finally, the Jackson County Insurgency also had continuity in terms of certain individuals involved in the three main episodes. As discussed in Chapter VI, a number of vocal Ku Klux Klan sympathizers went on to become committed supporters of the Good Government Congress ten years later. Little information is available which would help answer the parallel question of a possible twenty-five-year continuity between the rank-and-file of the People's party and that of the Klan, however. Nevertheless, two prominent Populist politicians, Jeffrey and Phipps, later became closely identified with the

26The loss of the 1890 U. S. Census data, as well as the secret nature of Klan membership, would be among the main hurdles to this study. In addition, the tremendous demographic change experienced by Jackson County between the two episodes would make the tracing of such connections problematic.
Invisible Empire. Jeffrey left Jackson County before the 1920s, but the one-time A.P.A. supporter served as a Klan attorney for the night-rider defendants. Remaining an insurgent at heart, the aging Jeffrey became one of Oregon's leading proponents of the Townsend Plan. Phipps stayed in southern Oregon. Of all the personalities who were prominent in the rebellion, he appears to have been among the most cynical and opportunistic. The one-time Populist candidate, former Klan mouthpiece, and legal counsel to the G.G.C.'s leader was an intelligent and articulate man. But Phipps, who spent most of his public career on the lookout for the main chance, seems to have been one who continually wet his finger and held it out to gauge which direction the next political breeze would blow. For a time, he marched near the head of the rebellion, if mainly to gain office or subscribers, but later Phipps kept well to the rear, apparently seeking only to gather some of the spoils after the battle had been fought.

As described above, the forty-year pattern of local politics here termed the Jackson County Insurgency owes much to the American tradition of rural revolt. Occuring in the Far West during that region's transformation from frontier status to political maturity, the insurgency also must be seen as an especially Western phenomenon. Focusing on conflict in the Kansas cattle-drive towns of the 1870s for
example, historian Robert Dykstra goes beyond those communities' notorious annual invasions by brawling cowboys. He emphasizes that the cattle-towns' pattern of internecine conflict owed more to local feuds between competing elite factions, between farmers and Main Street, and between "old-timers" and newcomers.27 The West of the 1890s-1930s retained a legacy of political instability from the westward trek. Historian Paul Kleppner explains that, compared to political patterns of other parts of the country, Western politics of the period show the effects of increased mobility (including reduced partisan discipline and a resultant emphasis on voting for the person, not the party), greater volatility from one election to the next, as well as a persistent tendency to view the region as an exploited, subservient colony of Eastern capital and its local representatives. Western voters as a whole had a higher susceptibility than those of other areas to short-term political issues and a consequent predilection for panaceas.28


28 For detailed discussions of the West's dominant political traits from the Populist Revolt through the Depression, see: Paul Kleppner, "Politics Without Parties: The Western State, 1900-1984" and William D. Rowley, "The West as Laboratory and Mirror of Reform," in: Nash and Etulain (eds.), The Twentieth Century West: Historical Interpretations, 339-357. See also: White, "It's Your Misfortune And None of My Own", 353-387.
The West's culture of Eden-seeking and boosterism also added to the region's proclivity for political cure-alls. Southern Oregon, Jackson County in particular, had been heavily boomed by promoters from the 1890s through the 1910s. The excessively high expectations of some long-time residents and newcomers probably added a potent emotional component--dashed hopes and an embittered search for scapegoats--to their political discontent during periods of economic difficulty.

In addition, Jackson County's weak, faction-ridden party system, so typical of the West in the early twentieth century, provided an environment conducive to dramatic episodes of political instability. Kleppner stresses how the West's non-partisan, often "anti-party," politics contributed to its distinctive volatility. He notes that local party organizations in the West, more so than in other regions of the country (which had stronger partisan allegiances across the full spectrum of economic classes), tended to reflect the narrow interests of local elites and to neglect the interests of voters of lower economic and educational levels. Lower income groups, because political parties in the West tended not to penetrate nearly as far down into the grass-roots level as in the East, "had no way to play a role in defining...problems, let alone in developing solutions to them." In periods of severe economic stress, such as occurred during the main episodes
of the Jackson County Insurgency, this exclusionary situation evidently built up to such a degree that not only third-party but "extra-party," anti-establishment movements took hold. Although the tumultuous political developments during the 1890s, 1920s, and 1930s were certainly caused in part by external social and economic forces, they also resulted in large measure from political conditions endemic to the West.29

The forty-year-long Jackson County Insurgency came out of the nation's tradition of backcountry rebellion, and it expressed that tradition with some distinctively Western traits. Begun in the 1890s with a relatively benign episode of grass-roots reform, the insurgency became increasingly rancorous and violent. When the local establishment suppressed the final phase of revolt in the 1930s, it did so using traditional terms employed by other besieged elites to dismiss the complaints of insurgents: it called the rebels "radicals" and appealed to "law and order."30

Returning now to the narrower term of the Jackson County Rebellion, referring to the Good Government Congress of the 1930s, it is clear that the episode itself was part of a lengthy local tradition. And, like Shover's


30Sternsher (in: introduction, Hitting Home, 14) points out that this overall pattern characterized many other repressions of lower-class protest during the Depression.
interpretation of the contemporary Farmers' Holiday Association, the Jackson County turmoil was part of the final chapter in a much longer tradition of backcountry uprisings. This fact does not deny that the Good Government Congress owed its existence to the unsettled conditions of the Great Depression. The economic collapse and rising demagogic politics specific to that period were essential ingredients to the peculiar manifestation of the Jackson County movement. It is a perilous if understandable temptation for the historian to interpret his or her subject as somehow epitomizing a much larger historical theme. Yet, in certain respects, Jackson County during the early years of the Depression did in fact fulfill the role of a microcosm of the nation at large. A superficially booming 1920s decade gave way to pervasive economic distress. Financial speculators suffered major reversals in fortune. Production by a once-healthy industrial sector ground to a near-halt, and the ranks of the jobless grew. Farmers' discontent grew as prices fell and foreclosures spread through the rural districts. And demagogues, who pointed at an elitist conspiracy to quash rightful populist democracy, inflamed antagonisms between social classes, economic interests, and even geographic sections.

After the rebellion had been subdued, emphasis on the movement's supposedly fascistic demagogy tended to slight its deep historical roots and its economic causes. However,
the authoritarian theme should not be dismissed. Llewellyn Banks, far more so than Earl Fehl, added a crucial dimension to the rebellion that otherwise would have been absent. Articulate and apparently wealthy, Banks was a champion who could combat the "Gang" on its own ground. His personal charisma and persuasiveness channeled mass discontent in a particular direction. Without him, the events of 1932-33 doubtless would have been far different in character and result.

Writing in the late 1930s, almost fifteen years before gaining a seat in the U. S. Senate, Oregon journalist Richard Neuberger commented that the Pacific Northwest's recent political history had been "almost without the individuals who occasionally make politics so ominous in other sections." Neuberger claimed that the "vast domain...[had] escaped the Huey Longs" and other authoritarian demagogues who usurped responsible government elsewhere in the nation during the Depression.31 Perhaps his inclusion of the qualifier "almost without" was Neuberger's nod to Llewellyn Banks. Although the

31Richard L. Neuberger, Our Promised Land (New York: Macmillan, 1938), 313. Neuberger, who would have possessed detailed knowledge of the Jackson County episode, may have been either sincere or somewhat disingenuous in his omission of Llewellyn Banks's recent role in Oregon politics. As a youthful signer of the 1935 Banks pardon petition, he may have wished to put that act behind him; alternatively, Neuberger might have seen the Good Government Congress as too brief and "local" to merit mention in a book addressed to a national audience.
interpretation of the Good Government Congress as a
fascistic movement is wide of the mark, its emphasis on
Banks's power to command intense loyalty and audacious
action on the part of his followers is well-placed. In
those terms then, it is clear that in Jackson County,
Oregon, at least, "it did happen here."
EPILOGUE

Following the defeat of his 1935 pardon campaign and the departure of Ariel Pomeroy from southern Oregon, news of Llewellyn Banks rapidly faded from the pages of the local press. Banks's wife and daughter evidently left Salem in the mid-1930s; available records reveal nothing more about them. About the same time, his Ohio family members apparently abandoned the effort to have him freed. Banks spent the rest of his life in the Oregon penitentiary, where he continued to work in the prison library for some years. In ill health during the summer of 1945, the seventy-five-year-old Banks was taken to the state hospital in Salem, where he died on September 21. The Tribune's obituary article marked the death as the final close in the "most violent period of Jackson County history."  

Earl Fehl remained in Jackson County after his return from the state hospital. His final years were relatively quiet ones. The Fehl Building on Sixth and Ivy Streets, last remnant of his once extensive real estate holdings, served as the site of numerous rummage sales during the

1"L.A. Banks Dies In Prison Ward," MMT, 23 Sept. 1945, 1; "Death of L.A. Banks Recalls Hectic Time In Jackson County," MMT, 24 Sept. 1945, 2 The Tribune stated that officials attributed Banks' death to cancer.
1950s. However, Judge Fehl continued his litigious battle to the end. In a final victory a few months before his death, Fehl obtained an injunction against the city regarding the fate of a large tree next to his Ivy Street commercial building. Fehl died, aged seventy-seven, at his Oakdale Avenue home on January 29, 1962. The Reverend Jouette Bray, the night-rider defendant of the 1920s and Good Government Congress stalwart of the 1930s, officiated at the funeral. Among the pallbearers were several old friends from the hinterland foothills east of Medford. Fehl sustained his crusade against the "Gang" even from the grave; his estate endowed a portion of the "Electa H. Fehl Memorial Trust" as a legal fund established for Jackson County defendants "wrongfully accused" of crimes or otherwise involved in severe legal conflict with local government.²

Robert Ruhl, who had begun his career with the Medford Mail Tribune in 1911, remained its editor for twenty years after the Good Government Congress episode. In the early 1950s, Ruhl was one of the first mainstream journalists in the West to criticize the methods and motives of Senator Joseph McCarthy. The Pultizer Prize remained the public capstone to Ruhl's reputation. A former county

commissioner, who had been one of the targets of the Good Government Congress, later wrote to Ruhl, with a gratitude typical of many other residents, that "it would have been impossible to have hung on without your support in those days."³ Although gratified at having received the Pulitzer, Ruhl wrote later in his life that the Ku Klux Klan fight of the 1920s had required "more courage and sacrifice" on his part; it remained the episode in his career of which he felt most proud.⁴ Ruhl retired from the Tribune in the mid-1950s and lived for several years in San Francisco for health reasons. Ruhl returned to Medford, where he died, aged eighty-seven, on August 21, 1967.⁵


World War II and the nation's postwar boom changed forever the economic and social complexion of southern Oregon. The huge Army training base at Camp White had infused Jackson County with cash, and numerous mills sprang up after the war to supply the American housing industry's growing appetite for lumber and plywood. Medford continued its dominance, and population throughout the main valley
soared during the 1950s-70s. Fruit-raising remained important in the Rogue River Valley, but the number of small orchardists steadily declined as a few large operations came to dominate the scene. Residential subdivisions replaced many of the valley's small orchards and farms. The county's hinterland also transformed during the postwar years. Its old families were submerged by the influx of newcomers. Due to improved transportation, the decline of small-scale agriculture, as well as the availability of jobs in the wood products industry--both in the forests and in the main valley's mills--the area was no longer a remote backwater. The outer fringes of the county participated directly in the region's population surge and economic growth.

Still, echoes of Jackson County's old populist voice, although distorted by postwar social and political change, continued to be heard--as when the county gave 1968 third-party presidential candidate George Wallace higher than statewide average returns. Jackson County politics also retained its traditional flavor of internal conflict during recent decades. Bitter recall campaigns have targeted a

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Between 1930 and the 1970s, the number of orchardists declined from over 400 to about 100 while the acreage remained relatively constant; see: Cordy, "History of...Fruit Industry," 28.

seven

Jackson County gave Wallace over 7 percent, compared to the state average of 6 percent; American-Independent John G. Schmitz received 7 percent of the county's 1972 vote to the state's average 4.9 percent. In 1992, Jackson County's 24 percent vote for independent presidential candidate H. Ross Perot was the same as the state's percentage.
variety of officials, from schoolboard members to county commissioners, and have again drawn the attention of upstaters to the belligerent tenor of Jackson County's politics.

Far-right "citizens" organizations (such as the Citizens for the Right to Bear Arms, the Posse Comitatus, and extremist tax-protest groups) have found strong adherents among some local residents since the 1960s. The public ideology of these particular organizations contains strong components of anti-Jewish/anti-Papist conspiracy theory, racism, and threats of "patriotic" violence; however, representatives of county, state, and federal government often have been the main target of these groups' verbal attack.\footnote{Cecile Baril, Dept. of Sociology, Southern Oregon State College, personal communication, 1993; see also: Christopher Phelps, "The Posse Rides Again: Nazi Skinheads Make Headlines, but Christian Patriots may be a Greater Racist Threat to Oregon," \textit{The Portland Alliance} 10 (September 1990): 1,6-8.} Far more significant than such vocal fringe groups during the 1980s-90s, in terms of the number of local supporters, has been the Oregon Citizens' Alliance and other groups tied to what is currently termed the Religious Right. Beginning in the early 1990s, the O.C.A. began to combine its traditionalist, moralistic objectives with southern Oregon's current rural/populist issues, such as local antipathy to state land-use planning directives over rural lands and outrage over federal environmental restrictions on
timber harvest. Based on election results, the overall appeal of the "populist New Right" appears proportionally strongest in Jackson County's outlying areas, where hopes to subdivide rural property and concern for timber-dependent jobs have translated into major political issues. This trend of mixing such diverse issues evokes the region's past intersection of moralism with economic populism; it is a pattern that has continued to play particularly well among many of the region's rural and working-class citizens.

Admittedly, in its recent fights over such questions as natural resource management or moralistic constitutional amendments, Jackson County's experience really has not been significantly different from that of many other places in the West, or, for that matter, in the increasingly pluralistic nation at large. However, Jackson County's own legacy of insurgency and turmoil gives its continuing political battles a unique resonance. It is a resonance that echoes with the passions and prejudices of the Jackson County Rebellion, with the sound of now faintly-remembered shouts from angry people massed on the courthouse lawn.

Elderly residents of Jackson County who recall the turmoil of 1932-33 still hold deeply divided opinions on Llewellyn Banks and his movement. One person, an

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9See, for example: "OCA Seeks Change In Land Use Issues," **AT**, 24 February 1993, 2.
orchardist's son interviewed in 1990, remembered Banks as an honest, courageous figure; he concluded that, "I think they done him wrong, myself." Another man, a long-time urban resident, paused a moment when asked about the Good Government Congress and then remarked, "It was just all so stupid, so very foolish."  

One can surmise that, in his final years, Banks's own opinion on the episode remained unchanged from his "Vision of the Mountains," the final dream recounted in his 1933 prison memoirs. This enigmatic scene doubtless is Banks's allegory for the Jackson County Rebellion, with its steely-eyed leader and his loyal troops of the mountainous hinterland ready to meet their oncoming opponents in battle:

One night in the year 1932 as I slept, I dreamed I was walking up from the valley into the mountains. As I entered the forest I came upon what appeared in the dream as an army of men, marvelous men they appeared to me. The Commander...stood looking off toward the valley below....It seemed like thousands of men were marching from the valley toward the mountain. I dreamed no more.

When I awakened I pondered over this dream. There was one outstanding point to the dream. The commander of the mountain hosts was viewing with PERFECT COMPOSURE the approach of the marchers from the valley.

I know not when this vision will come to pass. But I cannot doubt its fulfillment.

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10 G. Higinbotham interview; Elton Petri, personal communication, 1992.

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