

Redeemers, Bourbons & Populists: Tennessee, 1870-1896. By Roger L. Hart. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1975. xvi + 290 pp. Maps, chart, tables, appendixes, notes, bibliographical essay, and index. \$12.95.)

Roger L. Hart's clearly written book corrects several of the chief flaws in earlier works on Tennessee and replaces Daniel M. Robison's *Bob Taylor and the Agrarian Revolt in Tennessee* as the best starting place for students of the state's politics in the late-nineteenth century. Thoroughly researched and containing forty-five often ingeniously constructed tables, maps, and charts in the text, and thirty-two more in appendixes, Hart's work offers a full portrait of the shifting factions within the Democratic party from 1870 to 1896, and the various bolters from it—the "low taxers" of 1880, the "sky blues" of 1882, and the Populists of the 1890s.

Hart argues convincingly that Robison's tripartite division of the Democracy into "Bourbon" or states' rights, Whig-industrialist, and small-farmer factions was too simplistic. Too many leaders crossed over into other factions too often; even the rough factional alignment at the élite level was not clearly reflected in voting behavior in elections or Democratic conventions. Robison's hero, Bob Taylor, was, according to Hart, an opportunistic practitioner of "the politics of style" (p. 84) whose policies and friendships aligned him more with the proponents of "New South capitalism" (p. 101) than the rural masses. Far from the leader of an agrarian revolt, "Our Bob," according to Hart, "won votes not by rallying discontent, but by ignoring it" (p. 102).

Yet Hart fails to convince when he asserts that "all significant white groups were racist," "the blacks were almost inarticulate and powerless" (p. xvi), and Tennessee Populism "borrowed its basic attitudes . . . from

Bourbonism" (p. 223). On the first point, although he fails to treat in any depth the powerful Tennessee Republican party, which battled the Democrats on nearly equal terms during this period, he does note that at least one Republican congressman voted for the 1875 Civil Rights Bill, that black Republicans sometimes held significant posts in the state legislature, that the party of Lincoln fought against black disfranchisement in 1889-1890, and that fourteen white Republican state legislators opposed a Jim Crow bill in 1891. If all white groups were racist, they certainly were not equally so. Joseph H. Cartwright's 1973 Vanderbilt doctoral dissertation, which treats Tennessee blacks in the 1880s comprehensively, belies Hart's judgment of black powerlessness. As for the third point, Hart argues, in effect, that because both "Bourbons" and Populists in Tennessee often opposed such "outside oppressors" as Yankee railroads, Populist attitudes on national issues were retrogressive. Yet their national programs differed radically—for example, on the subtresury and nationalization of railroads; and besides, it is an obvious fallacy to argue that "the enemy of my enemy is my friend."

Even more serious, the book suffers from severe methodological errors. The multiple partial correlations, relegated unwisely to an appendix, but underlying many of Hart's conclusions in the text, will not support his key generalization that "Tennessee politics in the late nineteenth century was based largely on status groups" and not on "differences in economic interest" (pp. 233, 227). First, the correlations suffer from the well-known "ecological fallacy." Second, they are based on a linearity assumption which is obviously invalid for Hart's data. Third, Hart tests an economic interpretation of politics only by correlating the Democratic percentage of those voting with the mean value of farmland in each county. But this procedure leaves out of the independent variable the considerable wealth in the numerous towns and especially the four major cities. Moreover, since black Republicans were concentrated in the richest counties, and white Republicans in the poorest, an analysis focusing on a period when blacks could vote would find low correlations between wealth and mass voting behavior even though there was a strong relationship between the variables within the white group. (This reviewer's published analysis, based on a later gubernatorial election, shows a strong relationship between wealth and voting behavior among Tennessee whites.) Fourth, since Hart never tries to measure the influence of "status groups" nor seeks to test whether economic interests could have originally defined divisions which later became traditional, his most provocative hypothesis remains unproven.

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