TOM JOHNSON AND HIS CONGRESSIONAL YEARS

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INTRODUCTION

This work began as a minor paper in an early course in historical research at Ohio State University. For this I am indebted to my advisor, Dr. Francis P. Weisenburger, for it was he who awakened my interest in the intriguing story of Tom L. Johnson.

As time passed, however, I found myself more and more engrossed in the background of what made Johnson the man that he was. I now feel that nearly all of the policies which he used as mayor of Cleveland, as well as his political techniques, were formed in the background period of his congressional tenure and campaigns. I hope that the material unearthed in this research helps to shed new light on this little-known, formative period of his life.

In addition to my advisor, whose patience and help have been invaluable in this work, I should also like to extend my appreciation to the following:

Tom Terrel, of the Cuyahoga County Democratic Organization, whose knowledge of landmarks and events of that era helped me to understand the environment in which Johnson lived; John T. Bilinski, Democratic Councilman from the 7th Ward, whose membership in one of the original Tom Johnson clubs on the West Side gave me a more detailed knowledge of the area through which Johnson's original street railway ran, and an area generally considered to be the Tom Johnson
"heartland"; the Honorable William E. Minshall, Republican Congress- 
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TOM JOHNSON AND HIS CONGRESSIONAL YEARS

Chapter One

THE FORMATIVE YEARS

Most of the attitudes and institutions that we know today began in the period that followed the Civil War. It was an era when farmlands expanded to feed a growing America, while an expanding frontier disappeared and immigration reached its floodtide. Big business in the form of the modern corporation appeared, and big labor started organizing to oppose it. During this period the new transcontinental railroads reached out with bonds of steel and bound together the diverse corners of a mature nation, and steel itself became plentiful enough to provide the structural backbone the country needed. Tom Johnson was the product of these times.

But first let us go back into history and see what it was that produced this man whom Lincoln Steffans was later to call "the best mayor of the best governed city in the United States". What was his heritage? What was the environment that formed him? What were the conditions that shaped a monopolist, a politician, and a reformer in the personage of one man?

The Johnson family was one of the oldest and most influential in Kentucky. Among its members there have been pioneer Indian fighters, delegates to the two Kentucky State Constitutional Conventions, members of the Kentucky state legislature, and state Supreme
Court justices, as well as Presidential electors, Congressmen, and Senators. One of the family, Richard Mentor Johnson, served as Vice-President and was nicknamed "Tecumseh" after being credited with killing the Indian chief in the battle of the Thames. The Johnson clan, moreover, was not confined within the borders of Kentucky, for the family has originally come from Wales by way of Virginia and in each of these places they had left relatives of some repute. Then too, as the middle of the 19th century approached, they had overflowed into Arkansas, being represented in the State legislature there, and had also migrated into some Northern states. This latter current was accentuated after the war between the states and was one in which Tom L. Johnson himself was involved.

The recorded family American genealogy goes back to 1714 when William Johnson settled in Orange County, Virginia. Here he married Elizabeth, the daughter of Benjamin Cave whose ancestors had been among the very earliest settlers of the colony. The eldest of their nine children was Robert Adams Johnson, or Robin, as he was commonly called. After Robin's marriage to Jemina Suggett, which grafted another old and established Virginia name on to the Johnson line, he joined his younger brother Cave in the migration to Kentucky. Here they settled near Boonesborough, and Cave achieved

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2The Virginia Johnsons had various individuals represented in the House of Burgesses. A later associate, Arthur J. Moxham of Wales, was also remotely related to Tom L. Johnson by marriage.
some fame as an Indian fighter while Robin received the distinction of serving in the two Kentucky Constitutional Conventions.

In Kentucky the transplanted Johnsons took root quickly. Robin and Jemina also had nine children, three of whom are of interest to us. James, the eldest, was Tom L. Johnson's great-grandfather while Henry, the youngest, was the grandfather of Tom's wife, Maggie J. Johnson. A third child was Richard Mentor, the hero of the War of 1812 and the one time Vice-President of the United States. Incidentally, James achieved the rank of Lt. Colonel for his service in the mounted Kentuckian regiment that Richard had organized.

Lt. Col. James Johnson married a cousin named Nancy Payne, and the second son born to this union secured an appointment to West Point through the influence of his famous uncle, "Tecumseh". This son achieved the rank of General but for some reason he never advertised it. He also achieved notoriety by being married four times. The second of these marriages was to Ann H. Payne. Among the three sons and three daughters born to them were Jillson, the eldest, and Tom's father, Albert W., the next.

Albert met his future wife, Helen Loftin, while he was attending military school. The person who introduced them and encouraged the romance was one destined for eminence, James G. Blaine. Blaine, it seems, was a friend of Albert's and also had romantic intentions, for he was courting Miss Stanwood, a teacher at a girls' finishing school nearby. Helen evidently was brought in to round out the foursome.
Tom, the eldest child of this new Johnson marriage, was born at Blue Springs, in Scott County, Kentucky, on July 18, 1854. The two other offspring of this marriage were Albert Jr. and Will. Tom in his turn married Maggie J. Johnson, a fourth cousin descended, as we have seen, from Henry Johnson, the youngest son of Robin. The first of Tom and Maggie's three children died. The other two were named Loftin Edwards and Elizabeth Flourney.

Louis F. Post, the Editor of The Public, appraises the ancestry of Tom L. Johnson with this summary:

Among these kinsmen of his are all the Kentucky Johnsons, some of the Johnstons, the Paynes and the Flourneys, the Bufords, the Coleman's, the Popes and the Clays, as well as the Standefords and the Breckinridges.3

In the above publication Post further asserts that a family genealogy shows Tom Johnson to be "related by blood or connected by marriage with so many Kentuckians that almost anyone who is descended from the old Virginian families of Kentucky may fairly claim him as a cousin".4

On the eve of the Civil War, Albert Johnson, Tom's father, was dividing his time between Blue Springs and his Arkansas cotton plantation. Summer was generally spent in Kentucky while winter was devoted to supervising approximately a hundred slaves at his plantation near Beaver Bayou, Arkansas. Tom's family was at the latter residence when

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4The material on the genealogy of Tom L. Johnson is drawn largely from three sources, the above mentioned article in The Public, from Leland W. Meyer op. cit., and from Eugene C. Murdock, "The Life of Tom L. Johnson" (doctoral dissertation) Columbia University, 1951, (Microfilm copy in Western Reserve University Library).
the Civil War broke out. Due to their residence at this location Albert Johnson cast his lot with the Confederacy although he always retained an inherent admiration for Lincoln.

With the outbreak of war Albert organized a company at Helena, Arkansas. Here he resumed his rank of Colonel and became a brigade commander under General Hindeman. One of his first assignments in Hindeman's command was to supervise the burning of all cotton to prevent its confiscation by Union troops. This he did using the destruction of his own as an example of the policy to be followed.\(^5\)

A later order of Hindeman's, however, caused a direct clash between the two men. Several young soldiers had gone AWOL to visit their homes nearby. When they were apprehended, Hindeman ordered them court-martialed. Rather than carry out this order Col. Johnson left Hindeman's command.

After leaving Hindeman's command Johnson moved his family to Georgia where he served under Gen. Breckinridge. After a year in Georgia the Johnsons followed the fortunes of the South and retreated north stopping at Coyner Springs, Wytheville, and in the vicinity of Natural Bridge, Virginia. The family eventually found itself at Staunton, Virginia, in April, 1865, when Lee surrendered at Appomattox.

At Staunton, Virginia, the aristocratic Johnsons were completely destitute at the end of the war. They lacked even the means of getting back to their home in Kentucky. But these circumstances provided

\(^5\)In addition to the story often repeated by Tom Johnson of the impression made on him of their slaves crying at the sight of the cotton they had worked so hard to grow being destroyed, it also seems that Tom's mother tried to hide cotton in a cane-brake, but it was discovered and destroyed.
11-year-old Tom with his first lessons concerning the postwar world and the dawning age of American Industrialization.

Tom L. Johnson considered these conditions to be productive of the "monopolist" he later claimed to be. Perhaps they were, but even more important than this was the fact that these conditions thrust Tom into a position which removed any advantage which his social breeding might have given him. They placed a premium on classless self-reliance. In this environment the individual was forced to prove his worth in daily competition with all comers.

Soon after the war ended, a friendly conductor on the only railroad entering Staunton offered Tom the concession of selling the newspapers on the train. In a sense it was a monopoly, for the conductor allowed no other hawkers to sell. Due to this special privilege Tom proceeded to "charge what the public would bear". His price was 15 cents for the daily papers and 25 cents for the larger illustrated edition and a news-hungry post-war society paid the price. It was by these methods that Tom accumulated $88.00 by the end of the summer, and this sum enabled the Johnsons to return to their home at Blue Springs, Kentucky.

Back in Kentucky the family again took up residence at their farm eighteen miles south of Louisville. They were very poor, but Colonel Johnson did make one attempt to recover his fortune. When

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6 Colonel Albert Johnson borrowed money and tried to reopen his Arkansas cotton plantation. He failed, however, as all others did who tried to raise cotton with the unadjusted "free labor" of those times. Tom L. Johnson *My Story*, edited by Elizabeth J. Hauser (New York, 1911) p.3.
this effort failed, the result seemed to have been a further debilitat­
ing effect upon his spirit as well as his finances.

After this fiasco the Johnsons moved north to Evansville, Indiana, in search of work. Here Tom had one complete year of formal schooling before his family again returned to Kentucky. Due to good inherent ability and the good tutoring he had had, however, he was able to cover three years' work in one. This meant that he had the equivalent of an elementary school education when he again returned to Louisville. Tom's mother deserves most of the credit for his training, for earlier education as well as much in his personality was acquired from her.

Tom's mother, Helen Loftin, was unusual as a representative of Southern aristocracy. Originally she came from Jackson, Tennessee, and seemingly had the superior education and wide cultural interests of her class. It was these qualities that she passed on to her sons. Unlike many of her class, however, she often exercised independent judgement and liberal, unconventional views that were not typical of her background. One example of this is the often-told story about her attempt to hide cotton from her husband when he as a Confederate officer was in charge of cotton destruction.

Since Tom Johnson had already proven his ability to earn an income and supplement the family's small resources, it was now decided that a job should be found for the fifteen-year-old boy. Therefore, in 1869 his mother walked eighteen miles from their Blue Springs farm and secured a job for Tom in a rolling mill. A few months later the
DuPont brothers7 bought the "Fourth and Walnut street line" horse car railway and invited young Tom to work for them. He accepted the position eagerly and began his apprenticeship in the traction business in this way.

The new job that Tom held was an office position of little importance. Within a short time, however, Tom was making himself useful in a number of ways. He began by sweeping the office. Then he turned to counting and wrapping coins to help the drivers make change, and finally by additional effort he mastered the intricacies of cost accounting without which no enterprising businessman ever rises far. With this added knowledge he then advanced from bookkeeper to cashier, and eventually became secretary of the DuPont lines. Finally on the eve of his own financial ventures, he rose to the position of superintendent.

An event which probably accelerated the speed of his promotion, however, was his own invention and patenting of a new street railway, glass fare box. This patent found immediate adoption on the DuPont lines and was soon in big demand throughout the country. The returns on this device provided the surplus capital which made possible his plunge into the field of finance and investment. In all, Johnson had spent about seven years under the tutelage of the DuPonds while learning the street railway business. During this time he had also married a fourth cousin named Maggie J. Johnson.

7The DuPont brothers, Alfred V. and Bidermann, were grandsons of Pierre Samuel DuPont, the French Physiocrat economist. He was one of the founders of the E. I. DuPont de Nemours Powder Company who came to America as a refugee from the French reign of terror. The DuPont brothers were also friends of the Johnsons distantly related by marriage.
After the invention of the fare box Johnson began spending more time traveling in order to promote the sale and use of the device. It was on one of these trips that his investment interests found expression. While on one of these promotional trips in 1876 Johnson missed his usual train to St. Louis and took an alternative one to Indianapolis in order to promote fare box sales there.

At Indianapolis, Johnson met William H. English⁸ who was seeking a new investor to buy out his other partners. Tom Johnson, a cheerful youth of 23 with $30,000 and fair credit possibilities, seemed to be the ideal person to fit into English's financial plans. The results were that instead of selling rights for the use of his fare box invention, Tom ended up by buying stock in the Citizens Street Railway Company of that city.

Actually the financial transaction itself required that Tom L. Johnson acquire majority stock in the Concern by making a 10% down payment and giving notes for the rest. These notes were then to be paid off over a 10 year period. However, the $30,000 Tom had made on his fare box patents was not sufficient to cover this down payment. An additional sum of the same amount was advanced by Tom's old friend and employer, Bidermann DuPont. Bidermann made the loan with no security other than what he called Tom's "health", and evidently an unlimited confidence in Tom's future ability.

The confidence which Bidermann had in him met its first test when the true intentions of English began to come to light. The newly acquired traction company was failing fast; it was closely connected

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⁸William H. English was also the Democratic candidate for Vice-President in the 1880 election (Garfield-Arthur vs. Hancock-English).
with the many other English political commitments in Indianapolis; and English had evidently only brought Johnson in to restore the solvency of the line and remove the former partners with whom English was in conflict. No doubt it was the hope of the senior partner that Johnson would be unable to make good his purchase and the entire property would then revert to himself without encumbrances.

The policies and machinations of English certainly contributed to the unstable condition of the traction company. No auditing of the senior partner's records was allowed at purchase. Insurance payments flowed into his pockets, and one of the main purposes of the line seemed to be to get tenants for the English rental housing interests. But these were merely some of the more conspicuous examples of the confused, disorganized, and downright dishonest ways in which the street railway was being run. Johnson then deduced that unless administrative procedures were clarified and the ulterior political motives of English divorced from management the line would never be profitable. Tom also suspected that perhaps the real intention was to force him out and then foreclose on the assets he had invested.

These conclusions then resulted in a struggle in which Johnson with the help of a banker named F. M. Churchman\(^9\) was enabled to remove English. This victory was not a mere financial coup, for it also had the effect of clarifying a bad managerial situation and allowing

\(^9\)The alliance with F. M. Churchman, an old enemy of English, made it possible to repurchase the notes given for Johnson's majority stock purchase at 14 cents on the dollar, and then go on to buy out the minority stock holdings of English also.
for the introduction of the necessary business reforms and more efficient methods. This made profitable operation possible.

The lessons Johnson learned in Indianapolis were invaluable, for the situation prevalent there was quite typical of the way that finance, politics, and public utilities were everywhere interrelated at this period. Here is a view of the national picture as seen by one authority on the age of the rise of big business:

It is hardly an exaggeration to say that in the most active period, that from 1880 to 1905, the powers that developed city railway and lighting companies in American cities were identically the same owners that had most to do with city government. In the minds of these men politics was necessarily as much a part of their business as trolley poles and steel rails. This type of capitalist existed only on public franchises - the right to occupy the public streets with their trolley cars, gas mains, and electric light conduits; they could obtain these privileges only from complaisant city governments, and the simplest way to obtain them was to control these governments themselves.10

With the resolution of this inner conflict and the introduction of sound business practices, the Citizens Street Railway again returned to a solvent condition. When this took place, Johnson began to seek other opportunities for financial expansion. After considerable study he came to the conclusion that Cleveland offered one of the best areas for future traction development. His reason was that Cleveland then had eight different concerns providing transportation on Cleveland streets but not one was operated by a street railway specialist. Tom concluded that his street-railway know-how should give him a sufficient margin of superiority to insure success over his unskilled competitors.

Technical know-how was probably one of the factors which aided business success. Another factor which the entrepreneur of the age had not yet fully realized was the importance of consolidation. Perhaps the following description of traction companies in the 70's will give us a clearer picture of the possibilities that were soon to come:

New York City had thirty different companies with independent systems. Philadelphia, Chicago, St. Louis and San Francisco were equally haphazard. The idea of combining street railways into one comprehensive system occurred to no one. The passengers in their peregrinations through the city had frequently to pay three or four fares. Competition was thus the universal rule.\textsuperscript{11}

Tom's first attempt to enter the Cleveland Traction field, however, was abortive. He did not understand the local legal technicalities and assumed that by simply underbidding Mark Hanna's rate of 5 cents per fare he would secure the contract. After the bids were in, he found that he had lost out to the Hanna-Simms interests. The latter won the contract as an "extension" of their lines, a legal technicality that Johnson had overlooked. Tom seems to have accepted this defeat philosophically. He pocketed the experience and proceeded to buy up the rusty old Brooklyn Street railway. This was to be the basis for his future "extensions". One Cleveland historian describes this purchase in these words:

Young Tom L. Johnson came to Cleveland from Indianapolis and rescued the unfortunate Brooklyn Street Railroad from financial straits...Equipment consisted of four small cars, thirty mules, and a barn with two and a half miles of rusty rails. Johnson ran a double track on

\textsuperscript{11}Hendrick, op. cit. 119-20
Pearl Street to Lorain Avenue, as far as he could go in the direction of the square.\textsuperscript{12}

Using this line as a basis for future expansion, Johnson again repeated the Indianapolis story. Once again reorganization, new methods, and some improved equipment saved an insolvent line from bankruptcy. But even more important as far as Cleveland was concerned was the fact that here was a person who was proving his ability to survive in the face of competition from Hanna. This was actually the beginning of a long drawn-out conflict which amounted to a continual war of attrition. "First one won, then the other", is the way The Public described it, "But Tom Johnson grew the fastest".\textsuperscript{13}

After renovating the Pearl Street line Tom next acquired the control of the Jennings Avenue\textsuperscript{14} line and eventually forced the granting to him of the right-of-way for use of the viaduct and access to the Public Square. This made possible expansion to the east side and the "through line" which Johnson had been promising for so long.

By 1893 the original eight lines had consolidated into two major concerns. The Andrews-Stanley Broadway lines and the lines owned by Everett had merged with the Johnson lines to form the so-called "Big Consolidated"\textsuperscript{15} This merger then controlled 60% of the

\textsuperscript{12}William G. Rose, Cleveland, The Making of a City (Cleveland and New York, 1950), p. 422.

\textsuperscript{13}Louis F. Post, The Public, (Jan. 6, 1906) p. 650 c.

\textsuperscript{14}Pearl Street is now known as West 25th Street, although further out it is still known as Pearl Road today. Jennings Avenue is now West 14th Street. Even today, however, the termination of 14th Street West is still called Jennings Road

\textsuperscript{15}"Big Consolidated" was officially the Cleveland Electric Railway Company.
traction business in Cleveland. To offset the effect of this, Hanna united the cable car companies with his own traction interests and formed the Cleveland Railway Company or "Little Consolidated". Eventually Johnson sold out and the two rival concerns merged into the "Concon" that became so notorious during the mayoralty tenure of Tom L. Johnson.

The sale of Johnson's interests in "Big Consolidated" was not as unusual as one might think. It was actually a familiar Johnson method to sell when a rejuvenated company had high stock value. He had used this same method in the sale of his Indianapolis stock in 1887. Johnson had long encouraged the story that he sold because he desired to convert to electricity while his partners still desired to continue the old horse-drawn line. It is more probable, however, that this was one of the first applications of what Tom's friend, Frederic Howe, frankly describes in this way:

Tom Johnson bought broken down property, reorganized it, built it up, over-capitalized it, sold out for more than it was worth. He did this in Brooklyn, Detroit, and Cleveland.

Even if this appraisal of Johnson's methods is true, the procedure certainly was not an unusual departure from the common business ethics of the day. A good example of this is shown in the blunt way in which Charles T. Yerkes, the Chicago traction ozar, phrased his technique, "The secret of success in my business", he stated, "is

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16 This story is told in the official biography of Tom Johnson, My Story, edited by Elizabeth J. Hauser (New York, 1911) p. 31.

17 Frederic C. Howe, The Confessions of a Reformer (New York, 1926) p. 87. Howe was one of the bright younger men who was closely associated with, and served in, the administration of Mayor Tom Johnson.
to buy old junk, fix it up a little, and unload it upon the other fellows." This was the same method that was also used by Widener and Elkins in Philadelphia, Whitney and Ryan in New York, and others in various corners of the nation.

During this period of expanding investments Tom still found time for some relaxation. The recreational activities that interested him were horseback riding, billiards, baseball, bicycling, and swimming. It also seems that he found time to devote a considerable amount of his attention to his hobby of mechanical experimentation, an avocation which resulted in many practical results which added further impetus to his business success.

While Johnson was operating his Indianapolis and Cleveland street railways, he invented a new "girder groove rail" for use on his line. The device proved so practical that a big demand developed for it by other traction companies. To satisfy this increasing market it was necessary to find some concern to produce and roll it. This then led to a renewed affiliation with his old friend, Arthur J. Moxham, and to the eventual signing of a contract with the Cambria Iron Company. 19

The next Johnson venture was the establishment of a plant to make curves, frogs, and switches out of the rails being supplied by Cambria. Then, as the demand continued to mount, it became advisable to establish the Johnson Company at Johnstown where they did their

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18 Hendrick, op. cit., p. 126.

19 Although Tom Johnson developed the patent on the "girder groove rail" it was Arthur J. Moxham who had the patents on the method of rolling it, and Cambria was one of the few places that could roll it in steel.
own rolling of steel rails. The new plant was established in cooperation with his old associates, A. J. Moxham and A. V. DuPont, and was located on a high plateau in a newly formed suburb called Moxham.

The new tendency of Johnson to expand by taking in his own suppliers and processors then required the building of new blast furnaces to roll the steel that was now needed in such large quantities. The new plant was located in the area near the Black River of Lorain, Ohio. It was called the Lorain Steel Company, and was credited by economists and steel experts with one of the most favorable locations in the industry. The Panic of 1893 forced a hard-pressed Johnson to dispose of it before its full profitability was realized. Later, this plant became an integral part of United States Steel.

Perhaps we can now see some of the factors that were beginning to make Tom L. Johnson the unique personality he proved to be in history. He drew upon a rich hereditary background. When the war between the States occurred, this rich ancestral heritage had settled into the Southern aristocratic class feelings of the times.

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20 Johnson completed this plant in 1889 just before the famous Johnstown flood destroyed so many lives and property in the low-lying city proper. The high location saved Johnson's interests from destruction.

21 Incidentally, Johnson also purchased the surrounding area when he built his new plant. He thus profited by the speculative increase in land value which he was soon to decry.

22 Johnson, op. cit., appendix, p. 315.
Fortunately the war and the "Staunton, Virginia Experience" diverted the young Johnson into the mainstream of American life.

The time at which his life was shunted into a new channel actually occurred at an opportune moment, for this was the period in which the course of American life itself began flowing in the new direction of industrialization. As a youth Tom was launched upon this current at the precise point where the flow was swiftest. It is doubtful if the social ease of a plantation owner could have supplied this. The Civil War and the "Staunton experience" did prepare him for the give-and-take of an increasingly competitive American society.23

In Louisville, Johnson learned the traction business from the ground up, thus acquiring an important asset for a managerial specialist. Even more important to Johnson, however, was the fact that he learned the "game" by being introduced to good "cost accounting" methods first. Without this no financier ever goes far. In a sense this colored Johnson's view with a kind of dollars-and-cents vision. And by putting all issues and decisions in this perspective he seldom made a poor business judgement.

In addition to these practical aspects of Johnson's personality, there was also the detached attitude similar to that of a true scientist. Johnson often worked at experimentation and discovery with little expectation of immediate practical rewards but seemingly for the sheer love of unlocking nature's secrets. This seems paradoxical

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23Perhaps, the "Staunton experience" also taught Johnson to seek "special privileges" or favors from someone in authority but this is probably secondary to the above effect and too often exaggerated by his biographers and other writers.
in view of what we have said about his dollars-and-cents vision, but when Tom was occupied with his "hobby" it seemed that his practical vision went blind. At these times he poured time and money unstintingly into the effort to find the secrets he sought. But, it did have its practical aspects. He did get results, and when this happened his dollars-and-cents vision reasserted itself. Thus even his experimentation contributed to his expanding financial empire.

As these underlying traits of Tom Johnson's personality contributed to his success in the street railway business, it seems that he also "picked-up" useful knowledge along the way. Certainly Johnson traveled a great deal during these early days of his growing enterprises. The effect of travel is usually to expand one's mental horizons, to store up knowledge about new ways of doing things, and then, after the incubation of these new facts and information, to make possible the germination of this knowledge in new ideas, formations, and applications.

The effect of travel upon Tom Johnson was to make him quickly aware of new ideas in the street railway business. Thus, he became aware of the advantages of through-line service and of methods of obtaining franchises and rights-of-way, and of making extensions. He also became aware of the use of transfers, the heating of coaches, consolidation, electrification of lines, and other traction developments, as well as mechanical improvements such as his own new steel

\[24^\text{In 1887 Frank J. Sprague proved the practicability of electricity as street railway motive power. Two years later Johnson and A. V. DuPont investigated this operation and returned a favorable report.}\]
rails and glass entry-fare boxes. All these could add to the improved service he was always trying to give, and each could be useful in giving him a possible edge on competition. Factors like these, though useful in themselves, made it possible for men like Johnson to take failing lines and by some reorganization and the outward application of some of these exhibitionistic devices to give the appearance of a revitalized business. Then, after the introduction of considerable water to the stock, a line would be sold at inflated prices and a good profit.

One of the most valuable lessons that Johnson learned was that of the interaction of politics and the traction business. He learned this in Indianapolis when he was precipitated into the struggle with English. Later he saw its more complex facets in the contest with the Hanna-Simms interests in Cleveland. It is no understatement to say that regardless of the superiority of the lines and services controlled by a newcomer, unless he could influence or control municipal political forces he had little chance of success.

Later admirers credit Johnson with superior administration and fine technical knowledge as a basis for his eminence in the street railway business. Others attribute his success to his original thought and inventive talents which contributed to his achievements. In a broader view, however, the primary force in Johnson's life seems to have been the impact of Georgist idealism and thought upon him. This force apparently diverted him from the field of successful business administration to that of politics, the area in which he achieved his national reputation. Yet, it is unlikely, as many assume, that the
political gifts of this Olympian hero sprang forth full grown when he received his "call" on a Sandusky Island. It is more likely that the political talents that found fruition in Tom Johnson's congressional career and his later municipal administration came from a long background of participation in, and attempts to control local politics. Such was learned in the duel with English in Indianapolis; it was practiced in Detroit, Brooklyn, and St. Louis; and it was polished to a fine art in the contest with Mark Hanna in Cleveland.
Chapter Two

MONOPOLIST WITH A MISSION

While Johnson was developing his scattered commercial enterprises, a revolution occurred in his thinking that was to have a profound effect on the course of his life. The force that caused this change was the impact of Georgist tax theories upon him. Tom Johnson, and his later biographers, give the following account of the way that he was introduced to these ideas.

In 1883 Tom L. Johnson was making one of his many business trips between Indianapolis and Cleveland. Like so many travellers he became bored with the trip and asked a train peddler for something to read. In answer to this request he was offered a book by Henry George entitled Social Problems. He accepted this after the conductor intervened to recommend strongly the volume. It was this incident that awakened his interest in economic theory and made a single-tax devotee of him within two years.

Social Problems, the book that awakened Johnson's interest, was the second book by Henry George, the first being a 48-page pamphlet on California entitled Our Land and Land Policy. Social Problems is 245 pages long and not only covers the basic Georgist thesis of taxation but also includes most of the serious social and economic problems of the day. These run the gamut from the impact which Herbert Spencer's Social Darwinism was making on contemporary
thought to the current awareness of economic thinkers as to the dangers of the concentration of wealth and the inequalities of its distribution. It also scanned a wide range of 19th century problems including "the Malthusian idea of an expanding uncontrolled population," "the westward shift of population", and "the culture lag between technology and its political and social control". This does not mean that George had forsaken his original thesis of land-value taxation; it does mean that the first 18 chapters are spent covering the spectrum of problems then plaguing the world and showing George's comprehensive grasp of the situation. His clarion call to thinkers which no doubt attracted Johnson's immediate interest at the outset of the book is this:

There come moments in our lives that summon all our powers. When we feel that...we must decide and act with the utmost intelligence and energy...We seem to have entered one of those periods. Over and again have nations and civilizations been confronted with problems which, like the riddle of the Sphinx, not to answer was to be destroyed.¹

In the latter part of the book, however, he does revert to his usual theme. This is probably summed up best in his theory of the law of rent, or "social value" as it is now often called. He states it thus:

This is the law of rent; As individuals come together in communities and society grows...there arises over and above the value which individuals can create for themselves, a value which is created by the community as a whole, and which attached to land, becomes tangible,

definite and capable of computation, and appropriation. As society grows so grows this value...\(^2\)

This is the Georgist idea of the real value of land. It implies that land itself is almost valueless, since it is mainly the presence of other people that gives it value. It also implies that land is a natural right like air or sunlight and is therefore clothed with a public interest. There is the further implication that, since property gets its value from public patronage, no man or group of men has the right to monopolize it, hold it for speculation, or give it away by gifts, legacies, or inheritances. George believed that government itself is only a public agency to safeguard the public interest in this their common property. Its duty is that of an arbiter dispensing justice to all citizens by protecting and securing the right of all to this common commodity in the most equitable manner possible.

To the casual observer it would seem that George is challenging one of the basic concepts of free society, that of the ownership of land, but it is not that simple, for although George considered exclusive private ownership for speculative purposes wrong he considered private occupancy of it both beneficial and desirable. To attain this in the fairest manner possible he advocated the division of the land into parcels to be rented annually to the highest bidder. These rents, or "groundrents"\(^3\) in reality become the

\(^2\)Ibid., p. 217.

\(^3\)By "Groundrent" George not only meant rent on land but also rents on mining rights, timber stumpage rights, water rights, and other rights pertaining to location.
equivalent of annual taxes which George anticipated would absorb the entire "unearned increment"$^4$ and cause it to revert to society as a whole or the government thereof, there to be used for the benefit of the people composing it.

Henry George estimated that the revenue from this equitable and just tax would be sufficiently large that all other forms of taxation, which he felt to be often indirect and unfair, could be eliminated. The worst offender among these indirect taxes, he felt was the tariff, for the tax is one of the most easily shifted, is compounded by markups along the way, and falls with double weight on consumption where it hurts most those who are most in need.

One of the primary purposes of George's tax on land values was to remove the tax from improvements. His reason for this was that improvements are due to the expenditure of labor on land which gives it its only real value. Taxing such improvements tends to discourage improvements or the incentive to improve. Thus, the expenditure of labor on a lot in contemporary tax systems actually increased the taxes one had to pay upon it and also made it impossible to buy an unimproved lot nearby if one so desires. Henry George believed that if society taxed the land-value only, one would either make it productive by his labor or be forced to relinquish it to someone who would. In essence George's theory of taxation was that all taxes should be concentrated on "ground-rents". Only in

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$^4$By "unearned increment" is meant that value increase of land which is due to the confluence of society and not due to the expenditure of labor upon it.
this way, he contended, could revenue be received from what rightly
belongs to all mankind in the first place. How basic he considered
this reform to be and how much he felt could be accomplished by it is
seen in these words:

Practically, then, the greatest, the most fundamental
of all reforms, the reform which will make all other
reforms easier, and without which no other reform will
avail, is to be reached by concentrating all taxation
into a tax upon the value of land...and making that
heavy enough to take as near as may be the whole ground
rent for common purposes...5

One of the best ways to appraise the worth of a tax is to
be found in Chapter III of Book VIII in George's classic Progress
and Poverty. In this chapter he postulated four principles which
good tax policies should meet. He then proceeded to show how
land-value taxation would meet these standards best. These then be-
came his "canons of taxation" and his explanation as to how the single-
tax best would meet the requirements.

First, a good tax should bear as lightly as possible upon the
original sources of production. It should not remove the incentives
of production, for this, he stated, is the basis of national wealth
from which all taxes eventually must come. In his work George listed
numerous instances where taxes have destroyed this base. One such
instance was an Egyptian tax on date trees which simply caused the
Egyptians to cut down all date trees, thus destroying the tax base.
A tax on land-values, however, cannot destroy this base as long as
the land exists. The case is summed up in this way:

5Henry George, Social Problems, p. 209.
Taxes on the value of land not only do not check production as do most other taxes, but they tend to increase production by destroying speculative rent.  

The second canon which George laid down was the principle that taxes should be cheaply and easily collected and should fall as close as possible to the ultimate payer. His appraisal of the value of land-value taxation in this respect is found in these words:

With, perhaps the exception of certain licenses and stamp duties...which can be relied upon for only a trivial amount of revenue, a tax upon land values can of all taxes, be most easily and cheaply collected. For land cannot be hidden or carried off; its value can be readily ascertained, and the assessment once made, nothing but a receiver is required for collection—...thus in all respects, a tax upon land values is the cheapest tax by which a large revenue can be raised.  

The third criterion by which he evaluated a tax is that of its "certainty". To what extent does it encourage evasion, perjury and bribery on the part of the public and graft, corruption and tyranny on the part of the officials administering it? Both factors cause a general deterioration of public morals. With respect to this George says:

Were all taxes placed upon land values irrespective of improvements, the scheme of taxation would be so simple and clear, and public attention would be so directed to it, that the valuation of taxation could and would be made with the same certainty that a real estate agent can determine the price a seller can get for a lot.

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7 Henry George, Progress and Poverty, p. 414-16.
8 Ibid., p. 418.
The final law he prescribed for good taxation method is the requirement of "equality". To explain this he quoted an old Adam Smith canon saying that "subjects of every state ought to contribute to the support of the government as nearly as possible in proportion to their respective abilities, that is in proportion to the revenue which they respectively enjoy under the protection of the state." George concludes that the single-tax meets this requirement also.

The tax upon land values, is, therefore, the most just and equal of all taxes. It falls only upon those who receive from society a peculiar and valuable benefit, and upon them in proportion to the benefit they receive. It is the taking by the community, for the use of the community, of the value which is the creation of the community. It is the application of the common property to the common uses.

A subsidiary position taken by the followers of George, in addition to the demand for land-value taxation, is to be found in an opposition to all tariffs. Henry George considered this to be the direct antipode of the single tax, but in essence the opposition of the Georgists to tariffs is implied in their opposition to all indirect taxation, that which can be shifted away from those upon whom it was assessed. This objection, together with the difficulty of collection associated with frequent efforts to circumvent it, were two of the usual charges leveled against the tariff. The crux of the attack, however, is found in these words:

9 Henry George, Progress and Poverty, pp. 418-19.
10 Ibid. p. 421.
11 Although the term "single-tax" was not introduced by George himself it is being used here for convenience since it is commonly understood in that sense today.
A still more important objection to indirect taxation is that when imposed on articles of general use...it bears with far greater weight on the poor than on the rich. Since such taxation falls on people not according to what they have, but according to what they consume, it is heaviest on those whose consumption is largest in proportion to their means.12

George then proceeded a step further and stated that not only indirect taxes, such as the tariff, are bad but also direct taxes which fall on the products of labor and tend to destroy initiative. He also insisted that taxes should not fall upon "the production, accumulation, or possession of wealth". He then takes the ultimate step in stating...

...there are thus left only the taxes by which in accordance with the free-trade principles revenue can be raised; these two classes: 1-Taxes on ostenta-...
...2-Taxes on the value of land.13

Thus we see that free-trade is intimately bound up with the central thesis of all George's economic theory, that land-value taxation is the only just and logical solution to the problem.

The intensive study of these doctrines next led to a meeting between Henry George and his new disciple.14 This meeting occurred on one of Johnson's business trips to New York in 1885. The account of the event by George's daughter, Anna, is probably the most penetrating and descriptive:

One day late in May while George was busy with the publication of Protection and Free Trade a stranger a Kentuckian, called upon him. He was Tom Loftin

12 Henry George, Protection and Free Trade (New York, 1889, p. 71.
13 Henry George, Protection and Free Trade, p. 287.
14 Henry George was 15 years older than Tom Johnson.
Johnson, 31 years old and of average height but so heavy as to be termed "fat", but his face was so beautiful and his smile so beguiling that it charmed even his enemies.15

The various accounts of this encounter indicate that the event was charged with much of the reverence of a convert making a pilgrimage to the shrine of a saint. Yet, some practical understandings resulted. Johnson offered to help the movement in any way that he could and suggested that this might well be financially. George of course gladly accepted this offer, but, with a deeper insight into human character, observed that the qualities which make for business success often also lend themselves to success at speaking, writing, or other modes of expression. He also made the comment that one never knew what he could do until he tried. The later blossoming of the political career of Tom L. Johnson was to prove how correct this appraisal of the potentialities of his protege was to be.

From this time on Johnson was intimately connected with the Georgist movement in numerous ways. Johnson was one of the group of seven which met at Dr. Hanna’s house in August 1886 to form a committee to propagate land value taxation ideas.16 Johnson also participated financially and actively in George’s first New York mayoralty campaign which was launched concurrently with the above meeting. In fact, during the latter eighties he had graduated from an academic study of the theories of Henry George and was starting to defend and explain them.

15 Anna George de Mille, Henry George, Citizen of the World (Chapel Hill, N. C. 1950), p. 139.

16 Present were Henry George, Tom Johnson, Dr. Hanna, Father McGlynn, William McCabe, Louis F. Post, and Daniel DeLeon.
By 1888 George had begun using Tom in rebuttals and question-and-answer periods of mass meetings. This served to sharpen his impromptu speaking technique and further grounded him in taxation repartee, for as Hubbard states, "No one really knows a subject until he had explained it to someone else".

We can now see the importance of Georgist theory and training as preparation for the congressional career and political life that Tom Johnson was soon to be starting. In these pursuits the "single tax" and "free trade" were the two standards by which all political issues and social problems were to be tested and explained. Johnson was living proof that he had learned this catechism well. He proved what George had stated in *Protection and Free Trade*:

He who follows the principle of free trade to its logical conclusion (the single tax) can strike at the very root of protection; can answer every question and meet every objection, and appeal to the surest of instincts and the strongest of emotions.17

From this time on Tom L. Johnson never lacked answers. The single tax had become the underlying philosophy of his life, and for it he was ready to give his all—his wealth, his talents, his career, even his life. He had found the truth, and it became the motivating force of all that he did. It became a guide to be followed as confidently as a compass or the North Star, and by it he would always maintain his sense of direction. In other words Tom Johnson was no longer merely a monopolist, for he had now become a "Monopolist with a Mission".

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Chapter Three
EARLY POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS

Probably the seed planted by Henry George was germinating in the mind of Johnson during the next few years. It grew in the soil of Johnson's political and public utility experiences. It was nourished by the inspiring purpose of Georgist philosophy, and it began to sprout from the simple observation of George at that first meeting that "one never knew if he could be a success at something besides business unless he tried."

When the first Henry George mayoralty campaign got under way, it was Johnson who shouldered the burden of being the campaign manager. This was his opportunity to express a personal appraisal of himself as "financial angel" to single tax causes. With the passage of time, however, Johnson found himself getting more and more involved in the functional details of the campaign. Soon George was calling upon him to handle the question-and-answer sessions and give short impromptu speeches. All these experiences gave him background training for his own coming campaigns.

In the congressional campaign of 1888, Democrats from the Ohio 21st congressional district were extremely pessimistic. Martin A. Foran, the congressman from the 21st district was retiring after six years of service and the party seemingly had no one to replace
him. Then, too, this was a presidential year, and the issues, especially the tariff, were deemed to be those that could not possibly exert a beneficial influence in the manufacturing area of Cleveland. For these and other reasons the Plain Dealer believed that the Democrats in the 21st congressional district had a Republican majority of 3,000 staring them in the face.1

Due to this depressed outlook there were no applicants for the candidacy from the district. It was for this reason that the convention decided to extend the invitation to Tom L. Johnson. He had already become fairly well known because of his fight for 3 cents trolley car fares, for transfers and extensions of lines. He was also a business man who still retained the respect of labor because of the high wages and good working conditions he had provided for his own workmen. The public was sensitive to his name, and it had a favorable connotation.

Actually Johnson had been informed a week before that some friends were planning to enter his name. At that time Johnson tried to discourage them, but when the convention turned to him in unanimity and enthusiasm, as well as in desperation he determined to make the race. The call reached him while he was on a fishing trip to Sandusky. The following day2 he issued a letter of acceptance making this statement:

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1 Plain Dealer, November 7, 1888.
2 The nominations took place Monday October 1, 1888, and the following day he issued his letter of acceptance.
Believing that if by accepting this nomination I can help the cause of the reduction of taxes on the necessities and comforts of life, which is the sole question now at issue, I am called upon to make whatever personal sacrifice shall be involved in it...and believing that unnecessary taxation is unjust taxation and this reduction is the first step in the direction of tax reform that must be taken before the ultimate objects of real freedom can be reached; I can heartily approve and support the administration.

I am as you all know, in personal belief a free trader and advocate making, as soon as it can lawfully be done a radical change in the present system of taxation by which change the burden shall be shifted from the products of labor, where it now bears heaviest, on to the monopoly of natural opportunities to labor. This, I am well aware, is for the future and not a present issue...

...I will do everything in my power to bring about a discussion that will demonstrate to the people that in freedom and not in restriction rests the true solution of the great problem of social justice to all in bearing common burdens and special privileges to none at the expense of any others. I accept the nomination.3

Herein we see the true intentions of Johnson in accepting a nomination which was considered a forlorn hope by all others. To him it was a chance to "bring about a discussion" as he stated in his acceptance. This was the precise effect that it had, and this educational purpose was by no means a negligible factor contributing to his later victory.

A factor that may surprise anyone schooled in the lore of Tom Johnson is the naivete displayed by him during the first few weeks of this campaign. At Stocke's hall he told a group of workingmen that "men who are candidates should receive little attention save as to the ideas they represent."4 This was a worthy, self-effacing statement but hardly a representative statement of the

3Plain Dealer, October 3, 1888.
4Plain Dealer, October 11, 1888.
dynamic personality who seemed to love the spotlight as his later career revealed. Another early statement that seems so superficial and simple as to appear almost foolish is the following made the same day in the 17th ward:

I am glad to be in this campaign—a campaign of thought, this great debating society (here he discusses the tariff very superficially) I might go into statistics but they are generally wearisome things.5

These, however, are only examples of the early political ineptitude of Tom Johnson. As one proceeds through the campaign with him, one sees a week by week maturing of the Johnson habit of always discussing the issues. One sees also Johnson's acquiring ease and grace in a group or crowd, of that particular style, length, and type of speech that always characterized his addresses, and of that distinct political finesse which Moley considers still without parallel.6

There are other observations that one can make concerning the campaign. One is that during this particular campaign a disproportionate part of his support seemed to be coming from labor groups. Apparently one reason for this was that these groups were among the few that felt that they had some vital interests involved in this particular campaign. During his tenure on the city council Theodore Burton had opposed the workingmen in their campaign for an 8 hour day, and his possible promotion to Congress seemed to jeopardize their interests even more. In contrast with this, one labor leader named David Rankin summarized Johnson's labor record as follows:

5Ibid., Oct. 11, 1888.
6Raymond Moley, Twenty-Seven Masters of Politics, p. 7.
We have on the other ticket a gentleman who is known to be an advocate of the 8 hour day and who had already set the example by reducing the hours of labor of his own employees. When Mr. Johnson came to Cleveland he found a disgraceful condition of affairs existing on the street railroads here. The employees were working sixteen and seventeen hours a day and were poorly paid at that. He reduced the hours of his own men and increased their pay, and by so doing compelled the other roads to follow his example to a certain extent.

By the 17th of October, Johnson seemed to have been attaining his stride. He was making hard-hitting speeches and sticking to the issues; he was concise in his presentations, as his oratorical style gave indication of settling into the standard ten-minute type that was to become so typical of his next campaigns.

Apart from these observations, however, one had the feeling that throughout the election year of 1888 the congressional campaigns were strictly side shows. In this year Grover Cleveland was trying to win a second term and was pitted against the little known Benjamin Harrison. In the background we see James G. Blaine as the real power in the Republican party and one recognized by even his opponents as such. Another factor that added to the somewhat lethargic tone of the campaign was that the several years of prosperity preceding it hardly contributed to the bringing out of many indignant voters. Still, even with a lack of popular vital issues, the Democrats in many areas were running fairly strong, and it probably was the "slush fund" of four million dollars raised and spent in questionable ways by which the Republicans tipped the scales their way.  

7Plain Dealer, October 16, 1888.
So we see the position of Johnson in a campaign of such a nature was that of an "also ran", and like Cleveland who headed the ticket, Johnson suffered defeat. The final tally was Theodore E. Burton 20,086, Tom L. Johnson 19,470, or a plurality of 616 for Burton. But this was hardly the 3,000 majority which the Democrats saw staring them in the face at the campaign's outset.

The campaign proved valuable to Johnson in a number of ways. Not only did he gain experience and polish and improve his campaigning techniques, but he also built up a formidable machine for future use in the form of the "Johnson" or "Thurman and Johnson" Clubs organised in the various city wards. This organisation was to prove extremely efficient in the next campaign.

The most important effect of the campaign from Johnson's point of view was the educational effect that it had. The type of campaign which he was waging in the latter part was actually changing the climate of opinion to one in which he could henceforth operate with success. Johnson talked tariff and taxation, and on these issues the people were better informed than ever before. The Plain Dealer appraised this effect in these words:

And now about the tariff reform issue. This is essentially a manufacturing district and an iron manufacturing district at that; consequently...it might justifiably be expected to be extremely sensitive on the question of localised protection. The merits of high and low tariff

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10Judge Thurman the Democratic candidate for Vice-President on ticket with Cleveland was a native of Ohio.
and absolute free trade have been faithfully discussed ...until every intelligent man had had a fair opportunity to weigh the argument on both sides - in fact he could not very well avoid informing himself...

While in Congress, Burton seems to have followed the old adage that a new Congressman like a child should be "seen and not heard". Therefore, critical papers were later able to point out that he was never heard from in Congress itself and had a record on the committee for the District of Columbia (upon which he served) of docile complaisance despite the committee's attempt to put through bad legislation. He seems to have distinguished himself, at least in the eyes of Ohio Democrats, primarily by voting for the notorious McKinley Tariff, by supporting the equally hated "Reed's Rules", and by staying at the sumptuous Hotel Arno while in Washington.

In the intervening time in Ohio, however, Governor Foraker had been replaced by a Democrat, James E. Campbell, in the year following Burton's election. At the same time the control of the legislature was such that Ohio's Congressional districts had another overhauling, and one of those altered in the Democrat's favor was the twenty-first.

In 1888, the 21st district included all but six wards in Cleveland proper and eight townships, including Parma and Brecksville. Johnson had made a surprisingly good showing in this district and even carried the city wards by a 300 majority, despite the fact that the presidential candidate of the opposition party carried the same area by 1,000. Now, however, redistricting was to remove all townships from the district as well as the four east end wards that had

November 8, 1888.
given Burton his tenuous majority. In addition, five other city
wards were to be added which had proven their Democratic sympathy by
giving Cleveland a majority of 757 votes. The Plain Dealer then
claimed that, if the Burton-Johnson votes in 1888 were recalculated
according to the changes caused by redistricting, the Democratic
candidate would have a margin of 2,000.12

Because of this favorable situation, there was no shortage of
candidates in 1890. The strongest of these rival candidates was
Major William Armstrong, the editor of the Plain Dealer, and a twenty
year veteran in Democratic politics. But Johnson himself was not a
passive candidate this time. He avowed his candidacy from the begin­
ning, activated the Johnson clubs formed during the campaign of 1888,
and appointed Charles P. Salen his manager. As he thus showed his
determination to get the nomination, the workingmen and younger element
in the party closed ranks behind him. The result was that when the
primaries were held Johnson carried every ward but the 11th, and this
was lost by very few votes.13 Of the 8,253 votes cast Johnson del­
egates got 6,548 of them. The result was a Johnson avalanche.

The primaries, however, were but one of the hurdles that a can­
didate had to overcome at this time. Delegates elected here next
appeared at a convention for the district prescribed and then chose
their candidate. Since Johnson delegates had won representation through
the primaries, however, the choice was a forgone conclusion. Then

12October 4, 1890.

13Tom Johnson resided in the 5th ward at 653 Superior Avenue. He
carried his ward early.
the convention was held Saturday, October 4, at the Armory. Charles P. Salen, Johnson's campaign manager, nominated and secured the election of Squire F. H. Biermann as chairman. Then, with the convention completely under the control of Johnson men, Mr. S. D. Dodge made a short but highly moving nominating speech telling how Johnson in the previous campaign had led the party when all considered it a hopeless cause and would again lead them to victory. After this had been seconded by Tom Fitsimmons, Major Armstrong withdrew, promising his complete support. Tom L. Johnson then received the unanimous nomination of the convention. "Never was the party more united" said the Plain Dealer, and never had an organization operated more smoothly.

Judge Hutchins, an ardent supporter of Johnson, had commented that in no other campaign were the issues so clearly defined as in 1890. This undoubtedly was true, for the recently passed McKinley Tariff had thrown all other issues into the background. The tariff imposed the highest duties ever sanctioned up to that time, and the issue called into sharp focus the timeliness of the candidacy of Tom L. Johnson. No individual was more qualified to throw the problem into sharp relief than this "free trader".

Another distinct feature of this campaign which further turned attention to Johnson was the fact that this time there was no presidential race complicating the plot. The only supporting actors in

14Plain Dealer, October 5, 1890.
15Ibid., November 1, 1890.
the drama were those involved in the contest in Ohio's 16th district where John G. Warwick opposed the arch advocate of protection, William McKinley. Of course Johnson's constituents had no chance to make a choice in that race, but they did realize that in principle a vote for Johnson was a vote against the tariff's author. Thus, the issues were clear.

This does not mean that no one ever brought up other issues, for such were continually tossed about. Workingmen still remembered Burton's opposition to the eight hour work day as well as the unfriendly way in which he had received their delegation in Washington. The Plain Dealer reiterated that in Congress Burton was an anemic "bench-warmer" with little in his record even to indicate his presence. It also made certain that Burton's endorsement by the racial purist element typified by the Anglo-American League was well publicised for the benefit of Cleveland's heterogeneous nationalities. From his own standpoint Burton often complained that the recent Democratic redistricting was "gerrymandering" which placed him at a distinct disadvantage. Despite this, however, the spotlight kept coming back to focus upon the McKinley Tariff.

The Plain Dealer, the organ of the Democrats did much to arouse and sustain public indignation after this issue. Not only did they carry on an educational campaign which included printing in detail all material remotely connected with the tariff controversy, but they also publicised every detailed price increase which had occurred in recent months that might be attributed to the tariff. Carpets, coffins, cheese, tin dinner pails, macaroni and hosiery were only a few of the items,
the prices of which had been raised. Such comments served as political background, while Tom Johnson was explaining the issues in more spectacular ways.

As the campaign developed, it became a real debate. It dealt with such involved problems as "whether a high protective tariff raises the wages in a protective country", and it was at this point that Otis Steel, followed by Malleble Iron and others, chose to make a 30 per cent reduction in wages.

Burton issued his formal challenge to a debate on October 8, almost a week after Johnson's nomination. Why did he do it at this time? He had issued a challenge to Johnson once before during the 1888 campaign, but after it had been accepted he had withdrawn. Why did he go through with it this time?

It is unlikely that Burton withdrew his challenge during the 1888 campaign because he feared Johnson. It is more likely that he had every confidence that his legal experience would be more than a match for the inexperienced businessman. Burton, however, was not a gambler. In 1888 it seems that he had been reading the papers, too, and everyone said that his party would win by as much as 3,000 votes. Apparently a cool second thought had reminded him that there was no sense in taking chances when he seemed to be assured of victory anyway.

It was different, however, in 1890. In this election Burton realised from the beginning that he was the underdog. Again he probably assumed that he had an oratorical advantage, and this seemed to

16 Ibid., October 28, 1888.
him to be a chance to recover lost ground. His challenge was dated October 8. On the 10th he received Johnson's reply of acceptance but with the qualification that the talks be of ten minute length and alternating. Burton gave his final acceptance to these terms the next day. The official announcement by the central committees of the two parties was made in a joint letter issued on the 15th. This called for a series of four debates to be held between the 21st and the 30th in various sections of the city. In each debate each speaker alternating with the opponent was to make five speeches, each of ten minute length.

Before the debates actually took place the campaign had progressed for several weeks with individual speeches. Toward the end of this period while Johnson's frequent speeches were drawing capacity audiences it was apparent to all that Burton's race was beginning to lag. The large meeting which he had arranged to hold at the Music Hall on October 18 featured Congressman Dalzell of Pennsylvania and a brass band. The brass band was told to take one intermission before the meeting began in the hope that more persons would appear. The Plain Dealer reported that "the auditors were not more in numbers than the flowers in the bouquet that was on the speaker's platform".17 Another comment about Burton's Wigwam18 talk on the following Monday was in this vein:

17The Wigwam was a Republican club located on Willson Avenue (now 55th Street) near Euclid Avenue.
18October 19, 1890.
his style was not popular and his discourse was punctuated by men in ones, twos, threes, and fours, leaving the hall which they did simply because the speaker was wearying...
Burton did his level best to say something, but somehow or other he could not get there and when he quit his audience was not half in numbers what it was when he began.19

The first debate was held at the Red Cross Rink20 Tuesday, October 21, 1890. The subject was "The Tariff Question as Bearing upon the Interests of the City of Cleveland", and Johnson had the opening talk. In the course of this debate Johnson emphasized that high prices caused by a protective tariff do not necessarily mean that workers will get high wages. In fact he emphasized that the McKinley Bill actually made for less purchasing power. He claimed that actually the McKinley Bill was "the price the Republican Party paid the manufacturers for having the fat fried out of them". Johnson also attacked the argument that protection causes diversified industry by pointing out that if businesses are expensive and inefficient the country is not benefited and the consumer suffers. "Bananas could be raised on icebergs too", he said, but it certainly wouldn't be profitable. "The protective tariff offers inducements to raise manufactories that don't pay".21

The second debate had two different topics to be discussed. These were taken up in turn in various talks of the debate. They were "The Rules Recently Adopted by the United States House of

19 Ibid., October 21, 1890.
20 The Red Cross Rink was located at the northwest corner of what is now Detroit Avenue and West 28th Street. Capacity was about 3500.
21 Plain Dealer, October 22, 1890.
Representatives" and "The Home Market". The debate was held on Thursday, October 23, at the Haltnorth Hall.22

Burton evidently lost the audience in his opening talk by an involved discussion on filibustering. It was Tom's chairman, William Heisley, who brought them back and laid the groundwork for Johnson's persuasion by the droll introduction "This is Tom Johnson; he is of age and will speak for himself."23 This entire issue was one that favored Burton, for Burton had good and valid reasons for the existence of "Reed's Rules". Therefore, on this Burton-slanted argument Johnson never categorically contradicted him. Johnson contented himself with showing the insincerity of the Republican speaker by quoting Reed's statement of a few years back "in opposition to the arbitrary conduct of presiding officers". He also intimated that in the next Congress a Democratic majority might well have a chance to use "Reed's Rules" on a Republican minority, but he steadfastly refused to take a position of opposing the rules themselves. Burton's hopes for victory were lost due to the lack of opposition from Johnson who held his fire until the debate shifted back to "The Home Market". He preferred to remain on familiar ground.

The third debate was held at a smaller hall on the south side of Cleveland. It was called Franklin Hall and was located at 83 Willey Street. The debate held on Tuesday, October 28, was concerned

22 Haltnorth Hall, also called Haltnorth Gardens, was located at what is now the northeast corner of Woodland and East 55th Street.

23 Plain Dealer, October 22, 1890. According to the rules agreed on each party had their own chairmen to introduce their speakers.
with the subject, "The Effect of the Protective Tariff in the United States upon Wages in the United States". In this debate Johnson repeated an argument he had mentioned the previous week. It was that the tariff can provide industry with high prices and a protected market but labor, in a period of open immigration, operated in a free market in which competition for jobs kept wages down. He also contended that a protective tariff actually fostered trusts. He used carpets as a case of a protected industry which could afford to close down 40 per cent of its capacity in order to keep its monopoly price high. "Labor and capital are not enemies, but labor and monopoly are", said Johnson. He continued, "We object to the protective tariff because by it for every dollar that goes into the treasury six dollars comes from our pockets...Protection takes from all for the benefit of the few".24

The final debate of the series was held at the Music Hall25 on Thursday, October 30, only five days before the election itself. The topic was "The Comparative Merits of Protection and Free Trade as a Revenue Policy for the United States".

In this last debate it was apparent that the audience was as openly sympathetic with Johnson as it had been at all previous debates. In his second talk of the evening Johnson even reprimanded the audience for a former outburst against his opponent. An important point

24Ibid., October 29, 1890.
25Ibid., October 31, 1890. The Music Hall of Johnson's day was located between 6th and 9th on what is now Vincent Avenue. The area is now occupied by parking areas of the Hotel Hollender.
of issue was brought out by Burton, however, when he emphasized that Johnson's teacher, Henry George, had said that "the only justification of a protective tariff was that it protects and that a revenue tariff has no case at all".

This was conceived to be an important argument, for by it Burton was trying to show that the greatest authority for Johnson's own arguments was saying that there was no support for the Democratic Party platform position to which Johnson gave loyalty. Johnson defended himself against the charge of Burton and The Leader that he was "no Democrat" by saying that until other methods are found to raise revenue such as "taxes on franchises" the revenue produced was needed and justified. The revenue tariff, moreover, was of negligible damage when compared with a protective tariff. He, however, did not apologize for his "free trade" theories as indicating his ultimate goal. Actually his arguments were those of a "gradualist" and illustrated his typical, practical approach to all problems. He phrased it thus:

I am shoulder to shoulder with the Democratic party in its platform. I also said that in the same direction and further ahead in the future, I see something better. There is no way of bettering this social situation than by forging ahead step by step...Political parties are not made up of the things in which men disagree but of the things on which they are unified. The Democratic party is anti-protection...My position with reference to the Democratic party is that I am shoulder to shoulder in this most important step. If I am bound with you to Chicago what does it matter that I go with you as far as Berea.

26 The Leader was the organ of the Republican party in the campaigns and Burton's personal instrument, for he was related to the editor.
But if I am with you to Chicago I cannot go a step in your direction if I take the eastbound train. 27

The debates were actually the high point of the campaign. Probably Burton had hoped to redeem his falling political stock through them, but the effect was just the opposite. These erudite arguments, 28 the introduction of much material which was read, and the voice and mannerisms hardly endeared him to the average person. All reacted against him, but Johnson always seemed to have the audience's sympathy and often got spontaneous applause:

The effect of the series of discussions has clearly been to the benefit of the Democratic candidate. Mr. Burton does not appear to good advantage in such gladitorial contests. He had comned (sic) his lesson and delivered it as learned, but he had not the readiness of Mr. Johnson to meet new arguments as soon as presented...

He (Burton) lacks the personal magnetism that tells so strongly in Mr. Johnson's favor and whilst the audience give him careful attention it was clearly evident that their sympathies were not with him. Mr. Johnson has won votes and Mr. Burton lost them as a result of the joint discussions now ended. 29

The debates had been one of Burton's last hopes to rebuild his diminishing prestige. With this possibility gone the Republican organization sent a desperate call to Blaine to come to Cleveland and bolster the shattered forces of their candidate. But, whether it was because of hereditary friendship for the Johnson family 30 or doubt about the wisdom of intervening when faced by so

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27 Plain Dealer, October 31, 1890.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid., October 31, 1890.

30 Supra, p. 4.
adept an antagonist, Blaine declined to appear. So, with the end of the debates and a few last talks on Saturday night, it was all over but the counting of the ballots. When these came in the following Tuesday, November 4, the count was: Johnson 17,646, Burton 14,256. Johnson's plurality was 3,390 votes, a thousand more than the bookmakers would have given him.

What was the cause of Burton's defeat? Reapportionment certainly gave his opponents a nest egg of 1,000 votes to begin with. This might well have caused any candidate to lose heart, but Burton continued to make a brave uphill fight in spite of the odds. Yet, the size of the victory indicates that Johnson would have won even without the redistricting.

The truth is that the time, the character of the opponent, and the breaks simply were all against Burton. The McKinley tariff was too fresh in the voter's mind; his opponent was too well schooled on this one issue; and there were no other good issues to which emphasis might be shifted. The magnetic personality of Tom Johnson together with his skill (and Burton's own disadvantage at the abbreviated speeches used in the debate) were, moreover, highly important. The high degree of unity, efficiency, and enthusiasm generated by the Johnson machine, which was functioning smoothly in every ward even before the campaign began, and an active newspaper that was keeping the public sensitive to every price rise and wage cut that might remotely be related to the tariff worked decisively.

31 Annual Report of the Secretary of the State of Ohio, 1890. p. 251.
against Burton. And on this point the wage cuts by Otis Steel, Mallable Iron and other employers just prior to election made Burton's poor protests that a protective tariff raised wages appear ridiculous. Even Blaine would not intervene to save his forlorn cause. In the 16th congressional district, William McKinley went down to defeat, but many votes were cast against his policies in the 21st Congressional district by the popular endorsement of Tom L. Johnson.
Chapter Four

THE FIFTY-SECOND CONGRESS

Prior to the passage of the twentieth, or "Lame Duck" Amendment, a newly elected Congressman did not take office until after March 4 of the next year, and the beginning of the session was often about a year away. Such was the situation at the time of Johnson's election. Consequently, although he was elected November 4, 1890, it was December 8, 1891 before he was sworn in.

The second item of business was the election of Speaker. This usually follows a strict party line division in which the majority party elects its leader and then proceeds with the organization of the House. In this case the vote broke on the usual lines; Charles F. Crisp of Georgia received the 228 votes of the Democrats; former Speaker, also called "Czar", Thomas B. Reed of Maine got the 83 votes of the Republicans; and Thomas E. Watson also of Georgia received the token eight votes of the Independents and Farm Alliance men. In this vote Johnson voted with the majority, although he and his compatriot single-tax representative, John Dewitt Warner of New York, made an abortive attempt to get the nomination for Roger Q. Mills of Texas.¹

The House recessed after the selection of a Speaker, and it was not until December 23 that it reconvened. During this period the Committee on Committees was arranging the membership of the various standing committees. In this Johnson drew an assignment to the relatively unimportant Committee on the District of Columbia, the same one that his predecessor, Thomas E. Burton, had served upon. This body was composed of eleven members and was presided over by Representative Hemphill of Connecticut as chairman.

On his assigned committee Johnson quickly made the acquaintance of the other committee members and the Commissioners for the District. He then utilized his Georgist tax training and his insight into business and financial problems to contribute one workable idea after another to the committee's functioning. These suggestions included items about assessors' duties, improved ways of making tax assessments, and procedures in tax sales.²

Another area where he soon proved his usefulness was in making reports to Congress itself. Here, he was often given the duty of presenting the resolution or bill on behalf of the committee and then defending it before the House interrogation which followed. One example of this procedure was the presentation of H. R. 5978. This was a bill to unify the semi-annual payment period for taxes to the single payment date of May 1. It also gave the Board of Equalization the authority to raise or lower its earlier preliminary estimates and correct any errors that might have occurred. After introducing the

²House Miscellaneous Reports, 52nd Congress, 1st Session, Report 516, 517, 518; also see Congressional Record, XXIII, 1684.
bill Hemphill relinquished the floor to Johnson and allowed him to
defend the report and answer the questions. These cases were minor,
however, and received the quick concurrence of Congress with little
or no opposition.

As Johnson's knowledge of Washington tax problems increased,
however, he discovered that major discrepancies existed which were
not to be solved by these minor reforms. Specifically he found that
assessors were just completing their current assessments and were
about to make an estimate of the city's tax base that was only 25
per cent higher than the former one. Since the old one was about
76 million dollars, whereas Tom estimated that it should equal 300
million dollars, he therefore deduced that the method of making
assessment should be examined.

The result was that Tom Johnson had a resolution introduced
and adopted which called for the formation of a Select Committee
on Tax Assessment in the District of Columbia.3 This resolution
explained that undervaluation and inequality of valuation were sus-
pected, and that an examination was needed. The fact that business
property was assessed at 14 per cent of value, small residential pro-
perty at 70 to 80 per cent of value, and speculative, unimproved land
at an average rate of less than 10 per cent of value seemed to indicate
this. Since the facts on which the resolution was based had been
presented at a public hearing of the Commissioners, who had stated
that it was carefully and conservatively prepared, it also received

3 The resolution setting up the Select Committee was introduced and
adopted April 13, 1892.
the concurrence of the House.

The appointments to the new committee made by the Speaker were Joseph E. Washington of Tennessee, J. W. Wadsworth of New York, and Tom L. Johnson who served as chairman. Its duties as prescribed in the formative resolution were to investigate and report on the methods of ascertaining land values used by the board of assessors and to record any inequalities or discrimination found existent. The Select Committee was to have power to subpoena persons and papers, examine witnesses under oath, and employ a stenographer and clerk to record evidence and help prepare the report and recommendation. This report was to be made back to the House before the appropriation bill came up. It was to be used to decide how much in the way of federal assistance was needed as the government's half of the District budget. Eight days after the formation of the committee Johnson secured approval for the Select Committee to hold hearings during the regular session of the House. As a result, these three congressmen, unhampered by congressional responsibilities, were able to devote their main efforts to the affairs of the committee during the next month.

The Select Committee meetings began April 18 at 11 o'clock in the meeting room of the Committee for the Territories and followed the usual procedure of congressional investigations. Witnesses were sworn in; the committee members then directed questions at them, and

4Under the Reorganization Act of 1946 the Committee for the Territories became the subcommittee on Territorial and Insular Affairs of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs.
the witnesses, being under oath were obliged to answer them truthful-
ly. These questions and answers were then stenographically recorded
for further examination and study.

Following this method each witness provided information, and
this often suggested questions for the calling of new witnesses.
The procedure resulted in the three assistant assessors for the
District being called first and information being obtained on "How
the assessments of property was made".\(^5\) The answer to this was that
their assessments were based on nearly pure guesswork. The three
assessors visited the property as a unit; they then made individual
"guesses" as to the value of the property, and this was recorded
in their fieldbooks. Later a consultation was held and a compromise
made among their divergent guesses. Individual owners were seldom
consulted. Sometimes, however, information as to occasional sales
of nearby property was used as a crosscheck on their accuracy.

The questioning of the assistant assessors early in the hear-
ings served another purpose, too. It gave the congressmen valuable
insight into the Washington tax system itself. This system was
based upon 1,300 so-called "lots" which covered all the squares of
property throughout Washington and Georgetown. Once this technical
detail was grasped, it became a simple process to begin subpoenaing

\(^5\)The District Board of Assessors was composed of the one principal
assessor, Mr. Trimble, and three assistant assessors. These were
Frederick L. Moore, George F. Dawson, and John F. Cook. The assistant
assessors conducted the regular real estate assessments. The group
constituted itself a Board of Equalization by the addition of the
chief assessor, Mr. Trimble.
and questioning real estate men having intimate knowledge of the value of the "lots" in their immediate area. This gave the investigators a much closer appraisal of the value of property than even the assessors had. In this way, sworn testimony was extracted from such real estate men as Weller, Young, Deeble, Holzman, Swarm-stect, and Armes providing detailed knowledge of valuations in various parts of Washington.

Soon after the hearings began, Brainerd H. Warner, the President of the Washington Loan and Trust Company, requested permission to attend the meetings. It seems probable that his appearance was at the instigation of the real estate lobby itself. Regardless of the reason, however, Johnson welcomed his appearance. He accepted Warner as an ex officio counsel for the real estate interests and offered to utilize the subpoenaing power of the committee to bring in any witnesses the new counsel desired. Although Warner did not realize it at the time, these were precisely the technical witnesses that the investigators were trying to reach. Regardless of the original purpose of Warner in calling them, by sworn testimony and cross examination the committee could get the technical information about tax values in certain areas that it desired. It was at Warner's request that the testimony of Cragin, Duvall, Truevell, and Samuel Phillips was added to the dossier of the committee. Later in the hearings, it appears that Warner, himself, became convinced of the beneficial intent of the committee and began cooperating more willingly. At the same time, however, other big real estate interests
began to see the folly of being overly cooperative or curious about the probings of the committee.

Another valuable source of information was the testimony of informants who for some reason felt aggrieved at the existing authorities or vested interests. The testimony of Fish and Hemmingway furnishes good examples of that provided by this category of witnesses.

Rosewell A. Fish was a real estate broker who had been an assistant assessor during 1889. According to his statement he was dismissed when he attempted to carry out the requirement of the 1883 law with respect to equal assessments. Mr. Fish antagonized the rest of the board by interpreting the term "true value" (a term used as the basis of appraisals of property) as "what these properties would bring if sold on the open market under typical conditions and at current prices". A later interpretation of this clause by the Board attorney defined "true value" as "what the property would bring under adverse circumstances if sold on the market at forced sale". After this dispute with his superiors, Fish also began agitating for equal assessments in public, and when this began getting into the newspapers, the Commissioners decided to discharge him.

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6United States Statutes at Large, 47th Congress, CXXII, pp. 569-50. Sec. 6 of the 1883 law states "that each assessor shall in all cases from actual view and from the best sources of information in his reach determine, as nearly as practicable the true value of each separate tract of lot of real property in his district in lawful money..." The italics are those of the present author.

7Mr. Fish also submitted a report prepared in 1888 itemizing the defects in the District tax valuation and assessment system and recommending certain specific changes. House Report, 52nd Cong., #1469, p. 103.
Another would-be reformer was C. B. Hemmingway, a Washington real estate agent, who discovered discrepancies in the assessment of taxes. He was first aroused when property he had bought on the open market at $800 was assessed at $1,356 while nearby commercial property valued at $11,000 was assessed at $4,000. As a result of this inequality he began examining the books for other cases like his and filing appeals regarding them. In all, fifteen appeals of this type were filed, but due to the lack of machinery for the Board to process such appeals, all were simply ignored.8

Samuel Phillips, a highly respected retired lawyer, subpoenaed at the request of Warner, was one of the first to submit such a recommendation. His proposal was even more radical than he himself realized but because of his prestige it was even presented with the approval of Warner. Here are some excerpts from the letter accompanying his proposal:

Real estate is worth nothing except in its capacity to produce rent...and the amount of this rent marks its value...

The first and paramount consideration in taxation should be equality of burden...and this burden will always be unequal if assessors simply walk or drive along the public streets, look at the front walls of houses and on that determine values...But if the rental value of land be taken as the guide, then there is no uncertainty as to its being well improved real estate.9

8Ibid., pp. 120-30. Hemmingway also presented his own suggested bill. This provided for the taxation of rents at "full value". He also provided the investigators with a useful rule-of-thumb to estimate the market value of property. By his system one simply multiplied the annual rental value of property by twenty, since rental property is expected to pay for itself in twenty years.

9Ibid., pp. 96-99.
As can be imagined, Johnson here found a bill that was strangely compatible with his own Georgist concept of taxing rents. In fact, much in the Phillips letter and proposal became the basis of the recommendations of the Select Committee itself. The Phillips plan provided workable details for assessing tax values based upon the taxing of the rental value of a property. It provided for obtaining sworn testimony from landlord and tenant as an accurate method of ascertaining values and cross-checking them. Phillips also stated that a 12 per cent tax on this rental value of property would be equivalent to the then prevailing assessment of the District and would be completely fair. It is interesting to note, however, that Phillips seemed completely naive about the tax theories of Henry George and resisted vigorously any attempt to attach the stigma of such an association to his plan.

Toward the end of the hearings one finds that the testimony and questioning were turning increasingly to the problem of the taxation of improvements. Johnson realized that if this tax were removed, and taxes were kept fairly high on the rental value of land, the tax would approximate his desired single-tax. On this point Johnson could find considerable support from small home owners as well as from single-tax and liberal elements. At this stage of the hearings the change in background of the witnesses became increasingly obvious. Instead of only bankers and real estate men being represented there were also farmers, small home owners, members of the Knights of Labor, lawyers, doctors, and officers of cooperatives. Due to the similarity in attitude of these persons it does not seem improbable
that there may have been a coordinated lobbying attempt by some local single-tax organization.

When the hearings concluded on May 18, the only difference between Johnson and the other committee members was the taxation of improvements. On his final report Johnson had recommended that "improvements on real estate be excluded from taxation". On this point, however, Wadsworth and Washington overrode the chairman, and the point was deleted.

In reappraising the content of this report Brand Whitlock said that it was "a classic document on the subject of taxation". It contained fourteen tables showing details of the changes that had taken place in valuation. It showed values of areas by lot numbers and the relationship of improvements to land value and of assessments to sworn value. The 156 page report included maps and verbatim sworn testimony of twenty-nine witnesses including the Assistant Attorney of the Board, the three assistant assessors, and many of the most successful real estate men of that day in Washington.

The authorising resolution which formed the Select Committee called for the committee to "report" on the taxing methods in practice and make "recommendations". In complying with these two different purposes, the committee, therefore, submitted the major part of Report 1469 on May 24. This, however, was incomplete in that some material was not yet added and the "recommendations" were not included. These

10Ibid., p. 150.
"recommendations" took form in bill H. R. 9371, a "bill to create a permanent board of equalization for the District of Columbia" which was introduced June 28 and placed on the Calendar.

The essential idea of the report can be understood by reading several key passages from the conclusions of the report. One of these tells "how the assessments have been made". It states:

They hold their sessions in secret, without any systematized method of ascertaining facts, have the assistance of no one representing general interests, and are practically subject to no representations save those of such larger taxpayers as have sufficient time and incentive to go before them, and whose concern is to get as much as possible of the tax burden off their own shoulders. ... The results of such a system cannot reasonably be expected to be other than those our investigation disclosed... What amounts to the distribution among individuals of three million dollars a year, without check or publicity, is by the present system placed in the hands of three gentlemen whose inducement to assume this duty is the ability it gives them to serve their friends, and who have been permitted and encouraged to act as though the matter were one with which the general public had no concern and in which they were entirely independent of any law or regulation.

Another passage entitled "the facts shown" sums up in these words many of the essential ideas incorporated in the conclusions:

The testimony shows that the facts recited in the resolution are substantially true... more than half the value of land in the District escapes taxation; that there is much inequality and discrimination; that land values are increasing at an enormous rate - on a conservative estimate to the amount of $40,000,000 annually, enough to pay the entire bonded debt of the District in six months; that the assessment of buildings and the under-

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12The method of appeal and the constitution of the Board of Equalisation are found on page 54 herein (footnote). Note that only one man was added. Consequently, the two who originally favored a certain course of action could now block adverse action.

13Report, 1469, pp. 2-3.
assessment of land is operating to discourage greatly the growth and improvement of the capital; that the assessment had been made in violation of the law, without proper publicity or inquiry, and in a careless and reckless manner; and that on a fair assessment on land alone it would be easy to obtain at a tax rate less than one-half of the present all the revenue required for the needs of the District. This would make the tax rate of the city of Washington 60 cents on the $100, a lower rate than that of any city in the country.\textsuperscript{14}

It must be admitted, however, that the report does contain some pages in its conclusions that draw heavily on single-tax theory.\textsuperscript{15} This material deals with the reasons why taxation should be concentrated on land values exclusive of improvements and explanations as to why poor and unjust taxation causes honest people to lose conscience and seek methods of evasion. Some of these sections were no doubt added prior to the completion of the report at which time the other members overruled recommendations of the exclusive land-value taxation principle.

H. R. 9371, or the "recommendation" part of the report came up for debate July 11. The essential idea of the bill was to abolish the existing haphazard system and form a new "Board of Equalization" which would be constituted like a court of claims. It was to have a "President" acting as judge who would hear all sides and then decide the amount at which a disputed piece of property was to be assessed. This assessment was to be specified in "lawful money at sale under favorable circumstances on assumed terms of one third cash and the balance in one or two years". The President was also

\textsuperscript{14}Report, 1469, pp. 1-2.
\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., pp. 5-10.
to give notice to owners of cases under consideration and explain
the manner of appeal. He was likewise to take sworn reports about
value, hold open meetings, subpoena papers and examine witnesses under
oath.

A second member of the board was to be the "Prosecutor". He
was to act in a manner similar to a district attorney. His duty
was to represent the interest of the government by seeking out
cases valued too low and bringing them to the attention of the
president. The taxpayer, or his counsel, would likewise have ade-
quate opportunity to present their side of the case at that time.

Another condition specified that a Journal was to be kept and
made accessible to the public in which the current total valuation
was to regularly appear. It required that entries in this Journal
were to cease forty days prior to November 1 and May 1. At that
time the Commissioners were to affix the tax rate and turn this
information over to the assessors and collectors to make up the tax
duplicate for that six month period.

H. R. 9371 also required the keeping of two sets of maps. One
was to show the footage and land value of property while the other
was to show ownership, land value, and value per foot. Paralleling
this, Section 7 required that the Board of Equalization prepare an
estimate of land values in the area exclusive of improvements.
This would serve Phillip's purpose of cross-checking the assessments
obtained in other ways.

When H. R. 9371 came up for debate, Monday July 11, opposition
was a foregone conclusion. The bill was read and the House resolved
itself into a committee-of-the-whole for deliberations upon it; Johnson assumed the job of explaining and defending it. At this point, however, Johnson's parliamentary inexperience began to tell heavily against him.

The opposition was headed by Mr. Atkinson, a seasoned politician, who was well qualified to teach the novice a great deal about practical parliamentary maneuvering to add to his already superior knowledge of tax policy. Atkinson did this by first attempting delay. He asked for a complete reading of the report. Then, finding that the report covered 156 pages and would be too long to read, he paused and allowed Johnson to use up his allotted time. Atkinson then followed a policy of "farming out" his opposition time for a series of petty but unanswered criticisms. In this way, short and shallow rebuttals were made by Bergin, Grant, Blount, Ray and Hopkins. The effect of these running attacks made it appear that the bill was being inundated by an avalanche of opposition. None of the denunciation was incisive, and little showed any real grasp of tax problems, but it did have the effect of discrediting the bill. Seeing this, Representative Hemphill prevented a vote from being taken, which would have been unfavorable. He moved that Congress "arise".16 H. R. 9371 was not heard of thereafter.

On July 26, only two weeks after Johnson's bill to reorganize the District Board of Equalization had been permanently shelved,

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16 The term "arise" is a congressional term meaning to terminate discussion by a committee-of-the-whole. It also sometimes refers to a member leaving a discussion in the committee-of-the-whole.
the Sundry Appropriation Bill made its appearance. This bill came from the conference committee and had the support of the Senate. There, the real estate forces were even better intrenched than in the House. When the question of the District budget came up, Johnson attempted to have the newly completed assessment of $300,000,000 substituted for the $149,000,000 valuation of 1889. This attempt also failed, however.

Johnson was only thirty-eight at this time. He was still a young man and a newly converted Georgist reformer. He had worked hard over the past several months on these proposals to revise the outmoded tax policies of Washington D. C. Now it seemed that shallow politicians and special privilege, in the form of the real estate interests, were blocking the humanitarian ends of the bill he proposed. Here for one of the few times in his life he became indignant in his language and immoderate in his attack. He displayed the imprudence of an embittered reformer who defeats his own ends by the intemperance of his attack. He used these words:

It is simply the work of the real estate despotism here that controls things. They control the city government, and they have the ear of the Senate, and they propose to perpetrate this steal, which is against the interests of the small property owners, and in the interests of the men who own valuable property. 17

Although Johnson's work on the Select Committee allowed him to miss many sessions of Congress, he still found time to appear for some important votes. He voted for an eight hour day for government employees and against all bills for the free coinage of

17Congressional Record, XXIII; 6812.
silver. Many stories are told of his personal friendship with Thomas Reed of Maine. Because of this friendship and his own sincere beliefs in the matter he often stated his sympathy with the infamous "Reed's Rules". Although the House was now Democratic and similar rules were being used against the Republicans, it still was not considered good Democratic politics to openly favor the rules.

Even before Johnson received the attention of the House by his work on the Select Committee, he had already made a reputation of sorts by another "stunt". Only three months after being sworn in, the new Congressman had gained enough experience about Congressional procedure to be aware of the privileges which Congressmen took in having "extensions" of their remarks printed in the Record. This was printed matter which, though never stated in Congress itself, the Congressman had "intended to say" and consequently was allowed to finish in the Appendix. In this way, articles by Gladstone, Mills, Carlisle, McKinley, the North American Review, and thirty-five pages from Blaine's book Twenty Years in Congress were grafted onto the Congressional Record. Even more expensive was the quoting in the Record of long statistical tables which were five times as costly as normal print, and so far it had been the Republicans who were the worst offenders in this way.

Whether in this case it was intentional or not, the discovery and use of the weapons of "special privilege" were an old habit of Johnson's. In this case his quick mind soon saw the way in which

18Cleveland Plain Dealer, April 15, 1892, p. 6.
he could utilize the special privilege of Congressmen for his own ends.

About the first of March, Johnson got the idea of printing the most effective free trade document he knew of as an extension of Congressional remarks. The plan called for six different Congressmen to have certain assigned chapters of Henry George's *Protection and Free Trade* issued in the Appendix as extensions of their speeches. Still, this presented a problem. Many Congressmen liked Johnson, and some were even mildly sympathetic with his theories. Most, however, were reluctant to be a part of such a bizarre idea. It took several days to find willing House members and put the plan into effect. The book appeared piecemeal between March 11 and April 8 as extensions of debate on H. R. 6007 providing for the placing of wool on the free list. Tom Johnson, Fithian of Illinois, Washington of Tennessee, Bowman of Iowa, Stone of Kentucky, and Simpson of Kansas were the House members who joined in the project. This was the so-called "St. George Edition" of *Protection and Free Trade*. 19

The discovery was made as the last chapters were coming out, and on April 14 the discussion of it took place on the floor of Congress. Johnson was accused of "license". A request was made that the Rules Committee investigate; and a motion was made that the alien matter be stricken from the Record. When a vote was taken, however, Burrows and his Republican opposition could muster only 121 votes.

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19 The "St. George Edition" is so named after the author, Henry George. It refers to the various editions issued through the *Congressional Record*. Detailed material on these issues is explained in a letter by Johnson in the *Congressional Record*, XXIV, Appendix p. 46.
Even though most Democrats were not particularly favorable to Johnson's ideas, they revealed in the discomfort of the opposition. They voted "no" or simply refused to vote causing the reprimand to fail for want of a majority.

Since the Republicans were unable to prevent the publication, or to get revenge on Johnson, they contented themselves by having their own book issued. The book was by George Gunton and was intended to counter the propaganda effect of Johnson's issuance by showing the beneficial effect of monopolies. The circulation of this new work was very limited, however.

In the previous campaign the Plain Dealer had been highly critical of Burton because of his colorless record in Congress. Such could not be said of Johnson. The entire affair received nationwide publicity. Still, with restrained good sense Johnson's organ realized the danger of making "a circulating library" out of the Congressional Record. For this reason it stated in an editorial on April 16 that it hoped that Johnson's "prank" might force Congress to legislate reforms. Its comment is this:

Our own particular Johnson of the three Johnsons in the House is a good deal of a reformer...There is some faint hope that his little joke at the expense of the Congressional Record may lead to the correction of what has grown to be a crying abuse in connection with the printing of speeches in that untruthful record.20

The "joke", however, did have extremely practical and utilitarian effects from a single-tax and free trade viewpoint. The "St. George Edition" immediately sold out its original 200,000 copies and had to

20Cleveland Plain Dealer, April 16, 1892.
be re-issued. Hand-to-hand clubs sprang up in various areas to insure distribution, and the free "franking" privileges of Congressmen were used to send out copies. Eventually the publicity itself caused a number of newspapers to print the book in serial form. In the eight years to follow two million copies were to be sent out.

A Congressman's time is never completely accounted for without mentioning the never-ending stream of petitions, bills, and requests. Since the Dependent Pension bill had just been passed by the previous Congress,\textsuperscript{21} Johnson's first term was inundated by an extra heavy flood of such missiles. The usual procedure in handling these is quite simple, however. It is to refer claims and petitions to the Committee on Claims for final disposal. Petitions and Papers were likewise assigned to the Committee having jurisdiction over that particular problem. There it was studied and sometimes incorporated into Congressional Bills but more likely condemned to oblivion. That Johnson referred these bills, petitions and papers to Congress is no indication of his own position in regard to them. For instance: Johnson received three petitions for opening the World's Fair on Sunday, and four against it. He received a bill from the Turnvereine favoring immigration, and one from a Cleveland trade union against it. Since these are directly contradictory it is evident that they could not reflect his own attitude.

\textsuperscript{21}Newspapers of the period often refer to the Fifty-first Congress as the "billion dollar Congress" because of the many expensive money bills passed.
Another event that interrupted the first session of the Fifty-second Congress was the 1892 Democratic Convention. This was held in Chicago on June 21, 22, and 23. The convention met concurrently with the sessions of Congress but delegates were excused from attendance at the latter. As a convention delegate from an Ohio district, Johnson was instrumental in causing another of those "coupes" for which he was rapidly becoming notorious. At this time he, Watterson of Kentucky, and Cable of Illinois induced Lawrence T. Neal, an Ohio delegate on the Resolutions Committee, to bring out a minority report written largely by Tom Johnson. The new statement to be included in the old anti-McKinley Bill tariff plank read as follows:

Section 3 - We denounce the Republican policy of protection as a fraud on the labor of the great majority of the American people for the benefit of the few. We declare it to be a fundamental principle of the Democratic party that the federal government has no constitutional power to impose and collect tariff duties except for the purpose of revenue only, and we demand that the collection of such taxes shall be limited to the necessities of the government when honestly and economically administered. 22

This was hardly the "fool free trade plank" that Cleveland's campaign manager 23 called it, for it was a forthright statement of a revenue tariff. The fact that the minority resolution carried by a vote of 564 to 342 showed that a more unequivocal statement was desired by most delegates.


23 Johnson, My Story, p. 73. William C. Whitney was the personal representative of Cleveland at the Convention.
Such, then were the more spectacular episodes of Johnson's career in the first session of the fifty-second Congress. The story is not complete, however, unless one takes into account the unseen, unrecorded impact that his zeal must have exercised. Believing as he did in the truth of his single-tax free-trade principles, he also preached it in the cloakrooms, the corridors and the committee chambers. In these areas his words are not recorded in sworn testimony nor in the Journal of the day. When he did make speeches on the floor of the House, however, his singleness of purpose was frankly admitted and clearly stated in words for which he never apologised and about which he never tried to rationalize later.

On August 5 this hectic first session came to a close. Until this time he had resided at 926 Fifteenth Street Northwest in Washington, but it is probable that he lost little time after Congress adjourned in returning to Cleveland. Perhaps he had a month's vacation. It could hardly have been more, for even though only the first session of Congress was over he was already a candidate in the fall campaign which would begin in earnest in October.

Aside from the spectacular achievements, like the book extension episode and his ability to invigil a frankly low tariff report from a generally hostile Democratic party Resolutions Committee, Johnson's greatest experience was his work on the Select Committee. Although his attempt to secure legislation to change the unjust methods in use ended in failure, the knowledge gained in investigating and compiling the 156 page report was later to find partial use in his tax school and in Cleveland tax policies. It was through his work on
this committee that Johnson learned the technical details of taxation that were to prove so invaluable when added to his academic Georgist theory. Tom Johnson himself stated, "My congressional experience was a good school, and I felt that in a way it took the place of college in my life."24

The 1892 Congressional campaign was tinged with Republican defeatism, despite the fact that their own redistricting had given the Twenty-first district the potential of a 2,000 Republican majority. Although Tom Johnson was nominated by acclamation, the Republicans spent several months searching for a candidate. Even Theodore Burton, Johnson's traditional opponent, declined to make this race. Late in the period the opposition finally settled on Orlando J. Hodge and induced him to accept the nomination.

Colonel Orlando J. Hodge, the former Speaker of the Ohio Senate, was much older than Johnson. He was a good-humored old party veteran, and he always seemed to have a ready story to tell but seldom took a stand on anything. In contrasting the two candidates, the Plain Dealer said "Hodge's position on any subject is as uncertain as that of the traditional flea...Mr. Johnson's position (however) is never in doubt...He is frank to indiscretion".25 Under these circumstances one can hardly blame Hodge for declining when Johnson invited him to debate the issues. In this refusal, however, as well as in

24Johnson, My Story, p. 63.
25Cleveland Plain Dealer, October 3, 1892.
his later "regrets" he was so obvious that the entire contest took on the appearance of a hunt in which the quarry was always in hiding.

The Republican organisation anticipated that a challenge to debate would be issued as soon as Johnson was nominated. Therefore, it decided to meet this by challenging Johnson first, but the debate they challenged him to was a debate with a steel puddler named David Armstrong. Johnson, of course, refused to be distracted by this subterfuge and again demanded that the contest be between the candidates. He did, however, offer to provide Mr. Armstrong with a Democratic workingman well qualified to discuss the issues.

There was one occasion when a discussion of sorts did take place. After a series of party meetings on his own, Tom finally accepted a long standing invitation of the 18th ward Republican Club to meet at their "wigwam" and discuss the issues. This meeting took place October 11, on Norwood Avenue with Hodge present. Since Hodge still refused to appear on the same platform with Johnson, it was necessary to have two substitutes take his place. This is the

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26Johnson issued challenges almost daily during the campaign. Hodge was so inept at parrying these that he was giving such excuses as, "My health won't permit it, I'm twice as old as Johnson", and "Democratic audiences don't know how to treat a speaker right". In the latter case Johnson offered to let Hodge give out the tickets to insure the kind of audience he wanted. Hodge still refused.

27As the campaign wore on, however, and Johnson still was unable to secure a debate with Hodge, he finally relented and accepted Armstrong's challenge. Now, however, it was Armstrong who was not heard from thereafter.

28Col. Winship and Milan Gallagher.
incident when Hodge complained about having his audience "stolen". Another event similar to this was the case where the Republican organization stopped a meeting when Johnson walked in and Johnson was promptly requested to leave. In this case two-thirds of the audience also left in sympathy with that unwanted spectator.29

Another unique event that occurred in this campaign was the use of a tent in Johnson's political meetings. This was later to become one of his trademarks. The first recorded use of this was on Friday, October 21, and the tent was pitched on Dunham Avenue. A week later it was also used in a meeting at the corner of Woodland and Jackson streets.30

One of the other features that made up the finished political style of Tom Johnson was his ability at the give-and-take or rough-and-tumble audience participation type of meeting. The question periods and the heckling at these meetings made for a rapport between audience and speaker that could not be found elsewhere. One of the best of these occurred at a workingmen's meeting held November 2 at the armory.31 Here Johnson declared that he favored an amendment for

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29 Since Republican interest was low and attendance was small, due to these methods, Charles Dick of the Cuyahoga Republican Committee later tried to recover lost ground by the use of a special fund. This was needed, he said, since "in the absence of large meetings there is a possibility of a small (Republican) vote. Plain Dealer, October 28, 1892.

30 Ibid., October 22 and 28.

31 Ibid., November 3, 1892, This is also the first recorded meeting between Tom Johnson and Peter Witt, a future member of Johnson's municipal administration. Peter Witt was evidently chairman of this meeting, and read the "regrets" of Republican candidates at being unable to attend.
the election of President, Vice-president, and Senators by a direct vote of the people. He also answered a Populist query about his position on government ownership of the railroads with his own concept that the government should own the roadbeds and roads but the vehicles and rolling stock should still be retained by private individuals. He thus conceived of a situation for the railroads analogous to public ownership of highways.32

At this particular meeting there was another episode that is a good example of the frank and open approach that Johnson used so consistently. In this case a proponent of the free coinage of silver asked him, "Why did you dodge the silver bill?" Tom answered this belligerent question in this way:

I didn't dodge the silver bill, I voted against it five times and would have a sixth but my wife was sick and I had to stay with her.33

This was hardly the answer the questioner wanted, or expected, but it was completely typical of Johnson's forthright sincerity.

The campaign reached a climax on Saturday, November 4. On this day the Democrats staged their last parade and mass meeting prior to the election. Democratic crowds and marching societies from all over Cleveland converged on the square, and in a nearby hall Roger

32 Though the idea sounds bizarre Johnson probably had in mind that the government would own the roads, roadbeds, and right-of-way as they owned the public highways, but would rent or lease them to private individuals. In this case the fees paid for the franchise to use the property would meet the requirements of his own well-integrated single-tax theories.

33 Plain Dealer, November 3, 1892.
Q. Mills, the Democratic tax specialist from Texas, delivered an inspiring keynote address.

One of the things that was most noticeable to an observer of the campaign of 1892 was the lack of gripping issues. Even the Tariff, though frequently mentioned, did not seem to have the sense of urgency that it had in the campaign of 1890. In many of the speeches given by the candidates so little attention was given to basic issues that even the content was not reported. Johnson himself seemed to feel this superficiality of the campaign. He considered it due to the tendency of Cleveland to make the tariff subordinate to the money issue.\(^{34}\)

Despite the lack of gripping issues, and the fact that Johnson shared the spotlight with the presidential candidates, the results in the twenty-first district were a foregone conclusion. The day after the election the Plain Dealer carried the headlines "Cuyahoga Republican Party Wiped Out", and "Hamison badly defeated".\(^{35}\) This may be an overstatement, but it does indicate the immensity of the Democratic victory, at least in the city areas. Cleveland got 277 out of 444 electoral votes; Johnson beat Hodge by a plurality of 3,224 votes,\(^{36}\) and the Republican margin of victory in the nearby,

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\(^{34}\)Johnson also felt that the decision to make Tariff subordinate to the money and other issues was wasting much of the educational effect of his two years of intensive "free trade" indoctrination.

\(^{35}\)Plain Dealer, November 9, 1892. Election day was the day before.

recently gerrymandered twentieth district was a scant 2,000 votes. Johnson, however, again ran far ahead of his party, 1,924 ahead of Cleveland and 1,697 ahead of Judge Hutchins.

In retrospect, one also notices that a surprisingly small amount of animosity was generated during the campaign. Perhaps this was due to the fact that the results were expected from the beginning. At any rate Hodge visited Johnson the day after the election and personally congratulated him. Years later he summed up his detached candid observations of the campaign in these statements: "When Tom wants a thing bad, he goes after it himself", and "Cleveland never had a shrewder politician than Tom Johnson".

Due to the election procedures prior to the passage of the Twentieth Amendment, Johnson went back to finish the second session of the fifty-second Congress one month after his election to the fifty-third. The purpose, however, seems to have been to mark time, for Democrats knew that with the seating of the next Congress their party would also assume control of the upper house and the presidency. The tariff reform that they had been promising their constituents for so long seemed to have the real possibility of fulfillment within the foreseeable future. The sense of frustration that these liberal

37 Orlando P. Hodge, Reminiscences, (The Imperial Press, Cleveland, 1902) p. 146, p. 209.

38 The Republican redistricting had removed Johnson's heartland (the old west side wards) from the twenty-first district. These were the areas that gave Capt. Ellen, the Democratic candidate, startling 2,707 plurality. It was only White's combined Township, Medina County and Lake County vote that off-set this.
Democrats in the fifty-second Congress felt might be understood from these words of *The Nation*:

"...no great reform measure adopted by the Democratic House could have passed the Republican Senate, or if it had, would have been accepted by the President."

The Second session actually got under way, Monday December 5, 1992. One item of interest occurred when Congress reconvened after the Christmas recess. This involved a new attempt to defend Washington small taxpayers against the aggressive landed interests. On January 7, a new regular appropriation bill was proceeding through Congress, and one of the items called for an appropriation of $22,500 for the support of fifteen persons retained by a new District Board of Revision. When this came up, Johnson offered an amendment asking that this current board be abolished, that the board of Assessors return to the assessment of 1892, and that all the recent reductions in assessments put into effect during the Congressional recess be voided.

There were sound reasons for the amendment that Tom Johnson presented. The basic one was that the assessors had raised the assessments when the Select Committee investigations were on, in order to make discrepancies appear less. As a result the values computed during this period were much higher and much closer the truth than ever before. The assessors realized, however, that if this assessment was continued...

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40 *Congressional Record*, XXIV, January 7, 1893, p. 412. The assessments of May and December 1892 were the ones that were made during the Select Committee investigation of tax assessments.
during normal periods the revenue collected would be so high that the national government might renege on paying its half of the District expenses. For this reason it was imperative to them to reduce the high assessment.

The reductions they tried to put into effect, however, were not only unfair to the national government, but they were also unjust to the small taxpayers of the District. Johnson explained that the reductions contemplated did not reduce the rate equally nor the valuations of all. Instead, they were selective in that they reduced the assessments on certain expensive property only. As a result, this so-called "revision" was even more unfair than before, and some were now taxed at a rate ten times what others were paying. By using this unfair method of "equalization", Tom estimated that they had taken $40,000,000 off the tax duplicate.

In this instance Johnson presented the case well, and there seemed to be little adverse criticism. When the vote was taken, however, the amendment was resoundingly defeated, as a similar issue had met defeat in the previous session of Congress.

During the last few days of this session Johnson had a novel and thought-provoking report placed in the Appendix to the Congressional Record.41 The idea was a variation on the usual single-tax concepts and was entered as an extension of his remarks of February 15, based on a report by Henry Robinson, a commissioner of the Michigan Labor Bureau. The proposal was that taxes on "timber

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41 Congressional Record, XXIV, pp. 50-51. Appendix.
stumpage" and mining "royalties"\textsuperscript{42} might well be used as an alternative to the tariff as a source of revenue.

In this report Commissioner Robinson produced facts from the 1890 census showing that these "stumpage fees and royalties" amounted to about $451,000,000. These were fees the owner received simply because he had a monopoly of the land and the resources which nature herself had produced. Next, Robinson proceeded to show that these "fees" amounted to 46 per cent of timber costs, 13 per cent of coal costs, and 25 per cent of iron-ore costs. He then concluded, as did Tom Johnson, that this entire amount could be taxed along with other royalty fees such as those on lead, copper, gold, zinc and others.

The report then concluded by stating that current costs of all forms of government amounted to about a billion dollars a year. A tax on the full amount of these "stumpage and royalty fees" would supply $451,000,000 of 40 to 45 per cent of all the taxes needed. Johnson then stated further that taxes on all this natural wealth plus the wealth created by the community could easily supply all the revenue the government needed without recourse to such indirect taxes as the tariff. He then summarized the idea in these words:

> It is these valuable privileges- monopolies of mineral wealth and city land that should bear the burden of taxation, instead of being laid, as now, mainly on the wealth producing classes, farmers, and city laborers.\textsuperscript{43}

\textsuperscript{42}These two terms are defined in this way: "Timber stumpage" is the fee the mill operators pay for the privilege of cutting the timber on an owner's land. "Royalties" are those fees that a mining operator pays for the same kind of privilege.

\textsuperscript{43}Congressional Record, XXIV, 52 Appendix.
In this final session of the Fifty-second Congress Johnson also made one attempt to amalgamate his own currency ideas with what he knew to be the sound-money policy of Cleveland. On February 27, he introduced a bill (H. R. 10614) to "reduce the interest on the public debt, provide for a flexible currency and stop the purchase of silver." The fate of this bill, however, was the same as that of many bills which he had presented in behalf of his constituents. When last heard from it was being referred to the Ways and Means Committee. There it remained when Congress adjourned.44

In Johnson's own book, My Story, he makes the statement, "My Congressional experience was a good school, and I felt that in a way it took the place of college in my life".45 A casual reader is likely to take this statement lightly. It is probable, however, that the remark implies more rather than less than it says.

Johnson's education ended with the eighth grade, and it is unlikely that a business career in this self-centered age contributed much to one's broader understanding of literature, oratory, philosophy, the social sciences, or of the humanities in general. Even one's knowledge of current affairs was often limited to its practical application by way of securing franchises from local administrations. This was the age of the newly rich with their tastes and love of ostentation, a way of life in contrast with the culture and broadness of view of a scholar.

44Congress adjourned March 3, 1893, one day before the legal deadline when the President takes office and new national officers are installed.

45Tom L. Johnson, My Story, p. 63.
Yet Johnson learned a great deal in Congress and most of it during these first sessions. His work on the Select committee developed his methods of research, imbued him with a more scientific attitude when searching for facts, and forced him to organize these in a readable whole through the compilation of his report. Concomitant with these mechanical details, however, was the impact that it had on his thinking. The result was that it forced him to rethink his Georgist theory in the light of the facts and methods he learned from taxpayers, assessors and real estate men, in this way complementing the knowledge he already had. As a result he now became a tax specialist as well as a Georgist tax theorist.

These, then were some of the inner changes that were taking place in Tom Johnson at this time. The changes that are more easily observable were his growing finesse in debate, his added experience at parliamentary maneuvering, and a statesmanlike sophistication that allowed him to accept adversity and still maintain his poise. It was this serenity that was so important in Johnson's later bitter municipal struggles. In this way he learned to take defeat like a fighter rolling with a punch. He neither accepted the inevitability of failure nor sacrificed the effort to attain his ultimate goal. In this respect the Congressional training of Tom Johnson might be summed up in the observation that he became a more polished politician who still retained a purpose.
Chapter Five

THE FIFTY-THIRD CONGRESS

The new administration of Grover Cleveland formally took office on March 4, 1893. At this time the country was facing two grave problems. One was the so-called "Panic of 1893", a panic that matured into a full five-year depression. The second problem, however, was the only one that Cleveland considered as his responsibility. It was the problem of how to preserve the solvency of the country by stopping the dangerous depleting of the gold reserves.

This problem seemed to be caused by a clause in the 1890 Sherman Silver Purchase Act that required the government to purchase 4,500,000 ounces of silver each month. Since to make this purchase, the government always issued notes that were redeemable in either silver or gold, a continual withdrawal of gold, the more commercially valuable metal, resulted. Cleveland made various attempts to stabilize this condition but eventually found the reserves so low that he decided to call Congress to repeal the act itself.

The call was issued on June 30, 1893. It proclaimed that the "extraordinary occasion...requires the convening of Congress...on the 7th day of August next at 12 o'clock...that the people may be relieved through legislation from present and impending danger."1

1Congressional Record, XXV, p. 119.
Congress, therefore, met on August 7, as prescribed. Within four days it had completed its organization and had begun debate on the requested change in the Sherman Silver Purchase Act. This proposed change (Bill H. R. 1) was introduced by Wilson of West Virginia, the Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, and provided for the repeal of that portion of the 1890 bill that directed the Secretary of the Treasury to buy 4,500,000 ounces of silver per month.

Over the next several weeks, debate was primarily on this one paramount issue. Nearly all the congressmen desired to be heard, and Tom L. Johnson of Ohio was no exception. His turn came on August 24, 1893.

In this speech Johnson declared that he would vote for the repeal of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act "just as he would vote for the abolition of all protective duty, or better still, for (the abolition of) all taxes on production or consumption of whatever kind". Tom Johnson, however, had no delusions that this would solve the problems of business paralysis that Cleveland inferred might be due the currency crisis. This Johnson contradicted by saying that "the bottom cause lies in that monopolization of the materials of nature which goes on all around us." In this way he argued that money is a mere medium of exchange, a tool to aid in the transfer

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2 Ibid., XXV, pp. 123-6. An indication of the party breakdown in the new Congress was the vote for Speaker. It was Crisp (Democrat) 213, Reed (Republican) 121, and Simpson (Populist) 7.

3 Ibid., XXV p. 824.

4 Ibid., XXV p. 823.
of values and that the root of the existing depression was to be
found in the underlying injustices of taxation.

This did not mean, however, that he was unwilling to take a
stand on the silver issue. He recognized that this was of immediate
importance and required some definite decisions. Therefore he stated
his position in these words:

I am opposed to the storing up of silver by the govern-
ment, as I would be opposed to the storing up of wheat,
or wool, or whisky, and just as I am opposed to the sub-
treasury proposal of the Populists, so I am opposed to
this subtreasury act of the silver producers. It is the
taxing of the many for the benefit of the few. 5

This perhaps was the crux of his position on the problem of the
purchase of silver. The speech, however, also indicated Johnson's
grasp of the underlying issues of the entire currency problem of
the day. Some of the concepts he expressed are worthy of considera-
tion.

Tom Johnson explained that every nation develops a monetary
system measured in some commodity. Regardless of which one is chosen
as the standard, he reasoned, it becomes the responsibility of the
government to maintain that commodity at as constant a value as
possible. Only in this way could other countries have respect for
the soundness of a nation's currency and solicit its trade. Arbitrary
changes in the medium of exchange or of its value tends to shake this
confidence and undermine commerce. He attacked any contemplated change
in these words:

5Ibid., XXV, p. 825.
Whatever of error or injustice comes from natural changes... is excusable, but a wanton change from one unit to another that will thus affect the relations of debtor and creditor can not be justified on any ethical grounds, nor... ground of expediency.\(^6\)

Johnson next progressed in his discussion to assert that not only was a change in the basic commodity inadvisable, but that the maintenance of a dual commodity system was impossible. The reason he found, in the fact for this, that the value of the commercially more valuable commodity—metal was constantly changing in relation to another, and any attempt to keep a ratio between the two resulted in one being overvalued and the other undervalued, and the public circulating the least valued item and hoarding the more precious one.

This problem of dual mediums of exchange was not the basic problem facing the country in the silver controversy at that time, he reassured his colleagues. That, he said, was a problem of real bimetallism, and the Sherman Act was not bimetallism, but rather an "attempt to keep up the value of silver... by buying it up and storing it away, issuing against it certificates which in reality are obligations to pay gold."\(^7\)

In these words Johnson placed the discussion in its proper perspective. He also displayed his comprehension of the relationship of paper currency to silver and made penetrating predictions about the use of paper which today seem surprisingly accurate. He expressed it thus:

\(^6\)Ibid., XXV, p. 826.
\(^7\)Ibid., XXV, p. 825.
The paper currency nominally issued on the basis of our hoarded silver is not in reality issued upon it at all. It is issued upon the credit of the nation...

Just as copper, which was at first the unit of value among the Romans and other nations, gave way in time to silver, so now it seems that silver is giving way to gold and gold at least as a medium of exchange is giving way to paper.8

In one part of this speech he dealt with the position of those in opposition to the silver purchase repeal. However, instead of vilifying them as many of the protagonists did, he perceived that the demand for the free coinage of silver stemmed largely from the popular discontent of farmers and wage earners. These people, he admitted, sincerely believed that this was a method of deliverance from their difficulties. He then stated that if he too felt that this measure would help, then he would support it, but this it would not do. The reason was that it was not the failure to buy more silver that caused hard times but "because we have allowed the gifts of God to be monopolized...because we...manacle trade with restrictions...Here is the reason why rings control our cities and tramps infest our roads."9

The speech reached a climax in its last paragraph, where Johnson showed impatience at the way Congress was so preoccupied with subsidiary issues like silver, when the real difficulty involved the tariff and taxation. In this way he returned to his universal

8 Ibid., XX, p. 825.
9 Ibid., XX, p. 824.
panacea as the cure for society's ills and the explanation of its complexities. He expresses it thus:

I am deeply anxious to get this money question out of the way, that we may turn our attention to far more vital things...to the abolition of the protective features of the tariff...to strike off the shackles...upon production and trade...to strike down the trusts and monopolies... (this) would do more to open factories and give relief and create a demand...than any amount of tinkering with the finances. And for that permanent relief which would do away with industrial depressions, which will end strife between labor and capital, which will secure to all men their full share in the opportunities offered by nature and the improvements of an advancing civilization, we can only look to a measure to which the advance of free trade leads, and which is its final culmination - that great measure popularly called the single tax.10

Three days after Johnson delivered this declamation the bill came up for a vote. On August 28 the House convened at 12 o'clock and in rapid order defeated the six amendments designed to cripple the bill. When the bill itself came up the vote stood at 239 to 108 for repeal of the purchase provisions of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act. Johnson, of course, had also voted for repeal.

After this decision by the House, debate then shifted to the Senate where it dragged on for an additional two months. During this time the House seemed simply to be trying to occupy its time. Wilson began hearings on the tariff reform so long promised, but he brought nothing to the floor. Recesses grew longer and absenteeism increased. There is some indication that Johnson, himself, began taking longer vacations during this time. George's daughter, Anna George deMille, reports that Johnson spent a great deal of time

10 Ibid., XXV, p. 826.
during these periods visiting Henry George at his new home overlooking the Narrows at Fort Hamilton, New York.\textsuperscript{11} It seems that when Johnson needed a respite from his Congressional duties he found this rest, recreation and relaxation in this congenial environment.\textsuperscript{12}

Early in November the Senate completed its work, and a conference committee of the two Houses reported out a compromise amendment. The final House "motion to concur" came up November 1 and again passed by large majority. In this case, however, many Congressmen simply refused to vote, attitudes which possibly indicated a growing apathy toward the subject.

Congress adjourned, and this special session came to a close November 3, 1893. There still had been no action on the tariff on which issue the Democrats had campaigned two and a half years before. Now, however, the unlikelihood of getting any tariff measure had increased, for in giving priority to currency-reform, Cleveland had alienated enough silver Democrats to make it improbable that he could get the support needed. Democratic factionalism was thus the black cloud on the horizon that was already seriously threatening serious revision of the tariff.


\textsuperscript{12}Tom's father, brother, and other single-taxers had also located in this area, making a small colony of sympathisers.
The regular session of the Fifty-third Congress convened on Monday, December 4, 1893. For the previous three years Tom Johnson and most Democrats had been awaiting this session, for this was to be their chance, their last chance, to make good their promises and revise the tariff. This time they also had real hope of attaining their objective because now their party controlled not only the House, but the Senate and the Presidency as well.

Wilson, the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, had started hearings on the tariff bill during the dull days of waiting at the recent "Silver" session. As a result, House copies of a draft tariff bill were circulating before this session really began.

The draft bill itself was not a pure revenue bill. It did, however, promise drastic reductions in nearly all items and sought to place wool, iron ore, lumber, coal and many other items on the free list. It also called for a tax of 2 per cent to be levied on incomes over $4,000 to make up for the deficiency in revenue they confidently expected as a result of lowered duties. These were the essentials of the bill reported out December 19, 1893.¹³

Immediately after the introduction of these draft bills, the lobbies of special interest groups began to converge on Washington in order to alter them, and, despite his advertised free-trade beliefs, Tom Johnson received his share of the pressure exerted. One of the commonly mentioned examples of this was the letter he

¹³A minority report was filed two days later, on December 21. Christmas vacation also began on this day and lasted until January 3.
received from Cleveland, purporting to come from employees of wool
manufacturing concerns there. Actually, however, it had been
prepared by local politicians and newspaper men in order to embarass
Johnson with his constituents. These local interests confidently
expected to be able to capitalize on any answer he made. Johnson's
answer was filed December 28. It had been prepared in cooperation
with Henry George and not only repeated a forthright belief in free
trade but also delivered a lecture on tariff and taxation economy
that they hardly wanted to see circulated. This letter explained
why the duty on wool that they requested would make shoddy coats
common and the cost of good clothing prohibitive.14 The logic
of this letter was so sound that it never did receive an answer,
neither was it ever used for political purposes.

 Debate on the bill actually began on January 8, and at this
time Congress resolved itself into a Committee of the Whole.
Wilson, as the author of the bill, made his opening speech.
Johnson's long awaited turn came only two days later.15 It present-
ed an extremist stand demanding quick action to implement the prom-
ises of the Democratic platform to eliminate the protective features
of the existing tariff.

 In this hard-hitting speech Johnson called attention to the
plight of the average man suffering in the depression of the time.
He blamed Cleveland for not making the call for a special session

14Johnson, My Story, pp. 79–81.
15January 10, 1894.
on March 4, to revise the tariff instead of to "tinker" with the currency. He condemned the Democrats for a patronage scramble that seemed to take priority over any of the interests of the public. In addition, he criticized the Ways and Means Committee itself for now returning a bill so tainted with protectionism that one might think it had been foisted upon them by the Republican minority. "The hands are Esau's", quipped Johnson, "but the voice is Jacob's".16 And finally, he taunted the body of his Democratic colleagues with, "It is not merely that we have yet done nothing. It is that we have done nothing where we promised much."16

From this point on, Tom Johnson delivered a forthright free-trade speech while demanding that the party leaders present the revenue tariff called for by the Chicago Democratic platform as the immediate preliminary step. Concerning tariffs in general and the protective tariff in particular, he said, "Of all the methods of raising revenue, the worst is the tariff, and of all tariffs, the worst is a protective tariff."17 Then he suggested a simple blueprint for altering the situation. This is how he phrased it:

The Republican way of making a tariff is simple. It is to impose on the people whatever tax is asked...The true Democratic way of amending a Republican tariff is equally simple. It is to abolish every tax any private interests want to maintain.18

16 Congressional Record, XXVI, p. 639.
17 Ibid., XXVI, p. 644.
18 Ibid. XXVI, p. 642.
"That you can injure industry or hurt labor", remarked Johnson, "by abolishing tariff taxes too quickly and too completely, I deny". Such action, instead of injuring labor and industry, as the opposition claimed it would, Johnson reassured them, was what was actually needed to spur production and employment.

If you put steel rails on the free list... You will not shut up mills; on the contrary, you will open them; for the steel pool can then no longer, out of the extra profits the tariff gives it, afford to pay for keeping mills idle. There will be greater activity and an even greater demand for labor in the making of rails.19

It was at this stage of the discussions that he began using his own plants as a case in point. The current duty, he explained, was about 50 per cent, amounting to $13.44 per ton. No revenue would be gained by reducing this duty to 26 per cent (or $6.22 per ton) because rates were equally prohibitive to foreign producers.20

Since Johnson had volunteered information on his own business as relevant to the discussion, interrogation on this point was now taken up by others. The most prominent of these questioners, of course, was John Dalzell of Pennsylvania, the primary Congressional spokesman for the Iron and Steel Association. At first the

19Ibid., XXVI, p. 642.

20Using his own plants as an example, Johnson explained that the "bloom:" (or raw material that rails are made from) actually cost only 17 dollars a ton, and finishing costs added only two dollars to this. However, instead of costing 19 dollars as one might expect, steel rails then cost 24 dollars. This, he said, was due to the fact that the "pool" had set prices as high as the tariff would allow without fear of foreign competition.
questions put by him were pertinent and concerned the formation of the steel pool which Johnson had mentioned. Before long, however, he diverted the line of questioning into a personal channel that had nothing to do with the problem being discussed. This discussion proceeded to a point where Dalzell denied the existence of any steel pool. At this juncture Johnson introduced a contract filed in a Baltimore court which was incontrovertible evidence of a pool's existence. Dalzell's embarrassment at this disclosure is thought to have been the cause of his malicious attack on Johnson several weeks later.

Another matter discussed by Johnson when he resumed uninterrupted discourse was the danger of compromise and the futility of trying to placate the special interests by partial reductions in the tariff. He expressed the uselessness of this course of action in this way:

> It will not satisfy protectionists, for your protectionist is as bitterly opposed to you if you cut down his protection as if you cut it out altogether.\(^2\)

Thus, Johnson contended that those who desire protection carry just as much enmity toward those who tamper with their vested interests as toward those who try to eliminate their favors altogether; and in the vain attempt to seek favor with these antagonistic groups, one loses the respect of the consumer and of labor who are the very groups supporting change in the first place. It was at this point

\(^2\)Congressional Record, XXVI, p. 640.
that Johnson introduced a sample free trade bill\textsuperscript{22} so that his colleagues could see what the ultimate in tariff reform would look like.

As a matter of procedure in handling the tariff bill, Congress assigned different places on the calendar to the discussion of the different schedules. Among these, sugar and wool received considerable attention. The Wilson bill (H. R. 4864) called for placing wool on the free list and caused little disagreement in Congress. There was considerable discussion, however, as to when this duty-free condition was to take effect.\textsuperscript{23} As usual, Johnson assumed the uncompromising stand that it should go into effect as soon as the bill passed. He also succeeded in getting an amendment to this effect passed by Congress despite the opposition of Wilson.

Sugar was already on the free list, and, due to the recent notoriety that some members of the sugar trust had received, it seemed likely to remain so. An issue which concerned sugar that did arise in the House, however, was the so-called McRae amendment. This clause also called for the removal of the bounty that sugar producers were getting under the McKinley bill. Johnson joined forces with the proponents of this measure to secure passage of it. Later, he also joined with the same forces to remove reciprocity from the McKinley bill. These issues were examples of the way that single-tax extremists, free traders, Populists, and liberal Democrats in

\textsuperscript{22}Ibid., XXVI, p. 643.

\textsuperscript{23}See Supra., p. 89, for more discussion of the wool proposals.
the Fifty-third Congress constantly forced Wilson to make the tariff bill a more progressive measure than it would otherwise have been.

The phase of the Wilson bill in which Johnson made his most important contributions was undoubtedly in his participation in the debate on the steel schedules. These first came up during floor discussions on January 18. At this time Johnson took a surprising stand by introducing an amendment that would have placed steel rails on the free lists.

Since Johnson, himself, was a producer of this item, his stand had dual significance. It not only cast him in the role of the free-trade reformer in which he was commonly known, but it also allowed him to speak from the position of a specialist in this field. Here, he was on familiar ground in which he not only displayed ideas and philosophy to give background to his discourse, but he also had the detailed facts and information of a technician. The combination of the two made him virtually invincible in floor debate and repartee. Here he spoke as an expert as well as a theorist. It was for these reasons that Johnson's amendment to put "railway bars...(T) rails, girder rails, and punched iron or steel flat rails"24 on the free list carried the added sanction of authority.

The following dialogue from the Congressional Record captures the surprise, disbelief, and good humor of Congress at this discovery:

MR. SPRINGER (of Illinois) I understand that you stated some time ago on the floor of the House that you were engaged in the manufacturing of steel rails.

24Congressional Record, XXVI, p. 1015.
MR. JOHNSON (of Ohio) I am.

MR. SPRINGER Will you state whether in the place in which you are now located you can make these rails without the protection proposed in this bill?

MR. JOHNSON We can. We will make the rails, but we will probably not make so much money.

MR. BOUTELLE (of Maine) Is that the reason you want to put them on the free lists?

MR. JOHNSON No, but I am not here to vote money into the pockets of our stockholders.

(approval from the Democratic side)

MR. BOUTELLE I am glad to have seen one Robber Baron at least, who pretends to be a patriot.

(general laughter now broke out)25

This section is one example of a House session in which the Congressmen were in a thoroughly good humor and generally enjoying the repartee. This lighter mood was soon broken, however, by another bitter attack on Johnson by the previously mentioned spokesman for the Iron and Steel Association. In the course of this harangue Dalzell made serious allegations.

According to the "gentleman from Pennsylvania" Johnson could well afford to promote free trade for others, since he himself was a monopolist whose firm was the only one making rails of that particular type. A cushion that insulated the Johnson firm from additional competition was the fact that this company had 102 patents26 keeping other business from duplicating the methods it used. Despite this monopolistic position, Dalzell asserted, the company was in such dire straits that they had been forced to pay their employees two-thirds in script. As he finished these demur-

25 Congressional Record, XXVI, p. 1015.

26 At this point Johnson interrupted to state that Dalzell was in error, for the actual number was probably closer to 200.
ciations, "time" was called by the Speaker, and Johnson himself made a motion requesting (and receiving) the "unanimous consent of the House" so that his vilifier could finish his incriminations.

With little appreciation for any favors done for him, Dalzell then resumed his address at the "script issuance" charge and accused Johnson of lying when he earlier told the House that this script was being redeemed at a premium. He also made the added imputation that Johnson had even altered the stenographer's notes concerning this to suit his own purposes.

A further charge made against Johnson was that he had so little respect for Americans and American products that he employed a foreigner as president of his "Johnson Company" and condoned the actions of that man in purchasing expensive machinery abroad rather than patronize the American market and encourage the employment of additional American workers. Arthur J. Moxham, the foreigner referred to was then denounced by Dalzell as English born, an English citizen, an English sympathizer, and worst of all a free trader.

In passing, Dalzell also denied the commonly accepted idea that the Johnson Company paid better wages than such surrounding plants as Cambria. He then reached the climax of his indictment against Johnson by reading certain quotations from the Johnstown Tribune. This article, which Dalzell then proceeded to elaborate on, compared the so-called "Robber Baron", Andrew Carnegie, who gave

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27 Congressional Record, XXVI, 1048. Johnson interrupted his discourse at this point to ask how Dalzell explained the fact that the Johnson Company paid common labor $1.50 a day but Cambria paid only 85 cents. Dalzell's retort was that jobs could not be compared that simply.
$50,000 to aid the unemployed of Pittsburgh with the "free trade demagogue", Tom Johnson, who gave advice.

To anyone perusing the story of this debate in the Congressional Record, the charges against the millionaire Congressman seem completely damning. It must have appeared so to his Democratic colleagues also, for they were careful to insure that he had adequate time to defend himself the next day. Consequently, all awaited his coming rebuttal in the hope that he could extricate himself from the burden of these imputations.

Perhaps, of all his speeches in Congress, Johnson's defense of January 19, 1894, is the one most representative of the Johnson who is remembered today. By the use of good logic, detailed explanations of important facts, poise and good taste, and an inspiring oratory that never becomes sarcastic or bitter, despite the abuse that had been heaped upon him, Johnson made a brilliant defense.

He began this address by first focusing the attention of his listeners on the real issues involved in the debate. This contest began as a discussion of the steel schedules which he had emphasized. This issue, he insisted, had to be decided on its own merits, rather than on a question of personalities. Then, after insuring that his colleagues were aware of the underlying theme of the discussion, he offered to answer the recriminations made against him purely for the record.28

28 Congressional Record, XXVI, pp. 1015-55. This covers the entire debate on the steel rail amendment and the byplay being discussed.)
Dalzell, he reminded them, first called him a monopolist. With feigned humility Johnson pleaded guilty to this charge. In fact anyone who understood Johnson knew that he probably reveled in the title, for he had been calling himself the same thing for years.

The second charge was that he maintained his monopoly with the help of 102 patents which protected him from competition. Here, Johnson explained that most of the patents which he and Moxham held were actually on the appendages and switches and consequently of no real protective value. Nearly all of the ones remaining likewise served little purpose except to buttress the two or three essential patents on which the firm relied. These key patents, however, had recently been broken by a lawsuit. Therefore, Johnson admitted, his firm had been compelled to face all domestic competition, and if his colleagues would now join him in passing the amendment he had just proposed, it would also expose him to foreign competition as well.

In answering the script payment charge, Johnson delved into a complicated financial discussion. This presented the details of bonds issued in payment of two-thirds of the wages during the current depression.29 This action had been taken, he explained, after the employees themselves in closed session had sanctioned the plan rather than close the plant as so many of the rival concerns were

29Henry George, who was frequently with Tom Johnson during his Congressional tenure, devised this financial move as an alternative to closing down the plant.
then doing. This script, however, had been redeemed at "par", he explained. Truly this was not the "premium" he had earlier expected and forecasted, but neither was it the "discount" that Dalzell had recently described.

The error in the matter as previously reported for the Congressional Record was corrected as soon as the transaction had taken place and the discrepancy between Johnson's promise and the outcome was found. This method, Johnson reminded the Congressmen, was common Congressional procedure. Dalzell, however, knew about this transaction and was able to talk about it so glibly on the floor of the House because he had also been personally informed of the outcome. He still had intentionally ignored the rest of the story when he made his indictments the day before. It was at this point that the Record indicates that Dalzell "arose".30

It was the complaint about the hiring of Moxham that gave Johnson the opening for delivering his most inspiring remarks of the day. In countering this accusation Johnson not only admitted that he had hired him, but he went a step further and proceeded to introduce his colleagues to other aspects of the man's character. Truly this man was English born, an English citizen, and possibly an English sympathizer and free trader, but he was also a humanitarian whose virtues transcended nationality. This was also the man who had led the rehabilitation efforts of the community during the

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30"Arose" is a congressional term which means to leave the Committee of the Whole, or to end discussion as a Committee of the Whole. In this case it indicates Dalzell's departure.
recent Johnstown flood. This was the man whom the community held in such high esteem that it had given him virtual dictatorial powers to organize relief efforts after the holocaust. At this point in Johnson's speech it was recorded that the address was interrupted by frequent cheers and waves of applause, for Johnson had succeeded in enlogizing the man whom Dalzell had slandered.

Concerning the machinery purchased abroad Johnson explained that this was highly specialized machinery, the early delivery of which was imperative. English concerns had promised delivery three months before any American firm could make it. In fact, the Johnson Company had paid bonuses for each day by which the concern had beaten the deadline. In this way they had been able to begin operations sooner and to pay American wages three months earlier.

Since the final abuses of the previous day had been borrowed from the columns of the Johnstown Tribune, Johnson then proceeded to show the protectionistic nature of the paper. The editor, explained Johnson, was Tom Swanck, the brother of Jim Swanck, who was currently the manager of the Iron and Steel Association and chief spokesman for the steel trust. "I don't know who owns the paper", said Tom Johnson, "but I do know who owns Tom Swanck".31

After completing his explanations concerning these personal indictments made against him, Johnson again reminded them that the central issue involved in these debates was whether the 25 per cent duty on rails would collect any revenue. This, he reminded them,

31 Congressional Record, XXVI, p. 1050.
was to be the sole purpose of the tariff, according to the platform formulated at Chicago.

There is no doubt that Congress enjoyed the contest between the two protagonists immensely and were equally moved by the eloquence that Johnson displayed on the occasion, but his amendment was still doomed to failure. Wilson, the sponsor of the bill and the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, had already committed the party to support the moderate 25 per cent duty, and most Democrats were influenced by party regularity and voted accordingly. Still the brilliance of Johnson's January 19th speech must have swayed many, for a scant twenty-one votes more would have placed rails on the free list.32

A proposition that was injected into the regular debate on the various schedules was the question of the income tax. This took the form of an amendment calling for a 2 per cent tax on all incomes over $4,000. The earlier support for such a move came largely from the Populists, but Democrats later added it to their bill in an over-optimistic frame of mind when they assumed that they would reduce the tariff so much that maintaining the nation's revenue would be a serious problem. The position of Tom Johnson on this issue was that of a realist making a choice between relative evils. His stand and his reservations about it are found in these words:

32 In line with Johnson's policy of trying to get all the reductions he could, he then offered amendments asking for a 5 per cent, 10 per cent, and 15 per cent duty in place of the 25 per cent duty agreed to. Each of these was defeated by large majorities, however.
I am willing to support this income tax bill... But in itself, and for itself, and by itself. I am opposed to any income tax... because all income taxes, even the best of them, are wrong and undemocratic in principle, because they involve another horde of official tax eaters and require inquisitorial methods. It is better to tax men on what they have than on what they need, but in itself it is wrong to tax men on what they have. The true principle is to tax men, not on what they have, but on what they have that belongs to all.33

Another interesting amendment came up the following day in the form of the Maguire "Single-tax" amendment. This clause, which was introduced by "Judge" James G. Maguire of California, would have ended the tariff, "by striking out sections 1 through 18 inclusive", and by substituting the stipulation that "a direct tax of $41,311,125" would be laid on all land values (except for those held by the state, local, and national governments) exclusive of improvements, and at a rate assessed at full market value.34

Other Congressmen knew that this was mainly a publicity stunt and did nothing to deprive the martyrs of the pleasure of "standing up and being counted." When this came up, there was no debate. McMillin, of Tennessee, called for an immediate vote, and the amendment was rejected by 180 to 6. Johnson then stood and read into the record the names of these public spirited individuals who had the "patriotism and foresight" to vote for the measure which, he believed, posterity would recognize as highly important. These individuals were Johnson, James G. Maguire of California, Charles Tracey of New York, John DeWitt Warner of New York, Jerry Simpson

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33Congressional Record, XXVI (January 30, 1894), pp. 1652-53.
34Ibid., XXVI (January 31, 1894), p. 1739.
of Kansas, and Michael D. Harter of Ohio.

It was Thursday, February 1, when the House took the final vote on the Wilson Tariff bill and sent it on to the Senate. The vote at that time was 204 for it, and 140 against, with 8 not voting. In comparison with anything that had gone before, it was a good bill. Johnson, himself, probably realized this, for, despite his efforts to make it even lower, he did support it when it came up for this final House vote. Actually, Wilson, as floor manager for the passage of the bill, was really hard pressed to keep it from becoming any more radical than it already was and from becoming even more unacceptable to the Senate.

During the next several months, as the tariff bill was making its tortuous trip through the Senate, one event occurred to which students of history give prominence as indicative of the difficulties of that year. On May 1, during the depth of the "Panic of 1893" Jacob S. Coxey, of Massillon, Ohio led an "army" of unemployed workers to Washington.35 It was a peaceable group, and their only objective seemed to be to read a petition stating their desires from the Capitol steps. This petition was a request that the national government supply work to unemployed workers by the building of national highways which would be paid for by the issuance of more greenback currency. Before such could be read, however, Coxey and others

had been arrested, the band had been disbanded, and some had been injured by a vicious attack on them by the capitol police.

The following day Tom Johnson introduced a motion asking that the Committee on Buildings and Grounds investigate the police brutality. It is probable that Johnson was just trying to go on record as being opposed to this unjustified violence, for when the resolution did finally reach that committee it was permanently "pigeon-holed". However, Tom Johnson did succeed in expressing his opinions in the Record in these words:

...that the representatives of this nation should have no better reception for a peaceable body of poor unemployed men...that to meet them with the upraised clubs of police, is, in my opinion a disgrace. It is politically a blunder and morally a crime.36

In the Senate the tariff bill found an even more unfavorable climate for reductions than in the House. After one month in the Finance Committee, it was taken away and 400 additional amendments were added from the floor. Here, in the Senate, the full force of the vested interests and their lobbies was usually felt. In all, 600 amendments were included in the Gorman Tariff bill, and it was in this form that the tariff went back to the House Ways and Means Committee for presentation to the House of Representatives.

On July 6, the compromise bill made its appearance in the House. The next day the House gave it the first vote of "nonconcurrence", and a conference committee was formed to try to arrange a more workable compromise with the Senate. This committee reported

36Congressional Record, XXVI (May 2, 1894), p. 4335.
back on July 19, but again the House "non-concurred" with the Senate amendments, and again it was sent back to the conference committee.

Not until August 13, was the deadlock between the two Houses of Congress broken. At that time Wilson worked out an agreement that in return for Senate acceptance of the income tax provisions of the House bill (a point soon to be voided by the Supreme Court), the House would accept the Senate amendments. This completely altered the complexion of the bill. At this time Wilson moved that the House conference committee be discharged and that the House "recede from its disagreement with the Senate Amendments". A final vote to concur was then taken, and the Wilson-Gorman Tariff bill passed, 176 to 97. This time Johnson voted in the minority.

At this moment the disillusionment of tariff reformers must have been complete. All together 634 amendments had completely altered the character of the bill. General reductions may have averaged a scant 15 per cent over the McKinley bill rates, but even iron ore, coal and sugar had been removed from the free list. At this time Johnson was purported to have made what has been called "his greatest speech". It was supposed to have been delivered August 13, 1893, on the floor of Congress and is called "The Democratic Surrender". This speech, however, is not mentioned in the Congressional Record nor carried in Johnson's home town organ. Still, since quotations from it are quoted in The Public and since it is

37The Public, VIII (January 6, 1906) p. 652. Louis F. Post was editor. He was a single-taxer and a personal friend of Johnson so perhaps he had sources of information not available to others.
mentioned by Lorenz, it is probable that Johnson's words were recorded somewhere on that occasion. There is no doubt that these recorded words are typical of Johnson's style and representative of his attitude at this time toward the Wilson-Gorman Tariff:

If the McKinley Bill cannot be modified without sacrifice to the dignity of the House of Representatives, without sacrifice to the honor of the Democratic party, then let the McKinley Bill continue. The McKinley Bill is bad, but there are some things worse...And the price that is proposed by a Democratic caucus that we should pay for the repeal of the McKinley Bill is one of them.

In general a more relaxed environment prevailed in Congress during the next two weeks prior to adjournment. During this time sundry pension bills and other routine matters were taken care of, and Johnson got a three day leave of absence. The delay before adjournment, however, was due primarily to the fact that President Cleveland refused to sign the bill, and it was necessary to allow the ten day waiting period expire before it became law. As a result, it was August 28th before Congress finally adjourned.

Democratic legislators must have returned home completely dejected. A new election was only two months away, and they had to face an electorate and try to explain why they had been unable to

38Carl Lorenz, Tom L. Johnson, Mayor of Cleveland, (A. S. Barnes Company, New York) 1911, p. 16.
39Many Congressmen wanted to express themselves at the time of the passage of the bill, but the time was short. Tom Johnson probably had a speech ready but never got a chance to deliver it on the floor of Congress. The discrepancy in the article from The Public, however, is that it states that he did make the speech on the floor of Congress.
keep campaign promises which they had made for the previous four years. At this time Johnson openly predicted that inevitable defeat awaited them. But, it awaited him also, for there were few Democrats in the Congressional campaigns of 1894 that could breast the tide of retribution that swelled against them.
Do not let us lower ourselves from the high place we occupy to the level of the United States Senate. If we do, we will not have to wait long to feel the indignant repudiation of the people.\(^1\)

With these words and others in the same tone, Tom Johnson predicted that the acceptance of the Wilson-Gorman tariff was sealing the doom of the Democratic party in the 1894 Congressional elections.

This prediction proved shockingly accurate, for in 1894 a majority of 219 Democrats to 124 Republicans was changed to a minority of 104 Democrats to 244 Republicans in the House of Representatives. Tom Johnson, himself, was one of those who fell in the popular indignation against the incumbent politicians.

But, this is not the whole story of the campaign of 1894. Actually there was an undercurrent of an awakened political sophistication that seemed to foretell a vast new outpouring of reform some time in the future. So let us analyze the campaign in more detail.

To begin with, Cleveland, along with most of the rest of the country, was hard hit by the depression commonly called the "Panic

\(^1\)The Public, VIII (January 6, 1906) p. 652.  

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of 1893”. This election fell during the depths of it, when it is estimated that four million people were out of work. It is true that Johnson had been conducting four years of economic and tariff education among the public, but he now found it difficult to answer the charge of his opponent that “Working-men were making $1.25 a day in Republican times. In Democratic times they’re getting only 85 cents”.

Then, too, the opponent was no longer a second-rater who was afraid to stand up and discuss the issues. It was Theodore E. Burton, the perennial rival of Johnson, who now decided that the time was ripe to wipe out the humiliation of his defeat four years before. Burton, moreover, was not one to let experience go to waste. He knew that one of the factors that had counted heavily against him was the fact that Johnson was so adept at the ten-minute debater-type speech. Consequently, when the incumbent, Johnson, issued the challenge in 1894, it was Burton who specified the terms.2

Burton’s terms were that the participants were to alternate in starting the discussions and that the speeches were to be 50 minutes long for the opener and one hour long for the defender. These terms were more to his liking, and even the Populist candidate tried to get into the debating merry-go-round.3

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2It is an interesting observation that Johnson still made a very creditable showing. Evidently his growing political experience was beginning to become obvious. He frequently had the predominant sympathy of the crowd.

3Tom Johnson did hold several debates with George A. Groot, the Populist candidate. One of these was in a tent erected on the Public Square on October 25, 1894.
Other factors that may have worked to Johnson's disadvantage were the diversity of the issues, the lack of one in which he was well schooled and could use to his advantage, and the general undertone of despair as a result of hard times. Burton could use nearly everything for his purposes, for it was Johnson who had a record to defend. Johnson had voted against the free coinage of silver, and had located his new steel plant in Lorrain rather than Cleveland.

"Colonization", hard times, the Wilson-Gorman tariff, the "single-tax", but most of all "hard times" were other factors unfavorable to Johnson.

Burton, however, was not the only opposition that Johnson had to face this time. The rising strength of the Populists threatened to take away some Democratic support, and the Plain Dealer, the only Democratic journal in the area, had turned virulently against him. This agency had formerly served as his unofficial spokesman, but now it endorsed all other Democratic candidates except Johnson. The barrage of name-calling, half-truths, caricatures, and epithets must have been revolting to Democratic subscribers who for four years had been exposed to the Johnson educational system of endeavoring to stick to the facts. Indeed, reading the pages of this journal gives

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4 "Colonization" was the term politicians used in accusing the opposition of bringing "floaters" or non-residents in to vote.

5 The relatively small Cleveland Press was induced to support Johnson, but its circulation and influence were small at that time.

6 Plain Dealer cartoons always pictured Tom Johnson with a "single-tax" wheel sticking out of his head.
one the idea that all the ills of the Democratic party were summed up in the single word, "Tomjohnsonism". But perhaps the acid tone of these editorials is best understood by presenting a few lines of the columns themselves.

Here is a Plain Dealer comment on Tom Johnson's recently purchased and much used circus tent which had just been pitched on the Public Square:

We are glad the park commissioners have given Mr. Johnson permission to pitch his tent in the Public Square... We are in favor of this... because we want Mr. Johnson to talk his single tax and free trade to a finish. We want people to know how perfectly visionary these schemes are... for the greatest calamity that could happen to the United States would be to have Tomjohnsonism rule the roost.  

The following day another article appeared drawing a parallel between "Tomjohnsonism" and Populism. It read as follows:

It is for this Populist Party that Mr. George goes to Chicago. When he comes to Cleveland he will expound the same doctrines in the interest of the alleged candidate of the Democracy... Allegiance to Johnson means allegiance to the single-tax, which is Communism, or it is nothing.

In order to explain what caused such a radical change in the editorial policy of the Plain Dealer one must remember that the owner, Mr. Liberty Emery Holden, was a silver producer and an ardent advocate of bimetallism. Although he had owned the paper for some years, it was probably only Tom Johnson's vote against the Sherman Silver Purchase Act in 1893 that caused him to turn against Johnson. At any rate in 1893 he brought in Charles E. Kennedy as general manager, and since Kennedy seemed to reflect his views completely, a drastic change in policy occurred at that time.

Plain Dealer, October 12, 1894.

Plain Dealer, October 13, 1894.
So we see that in the campaign of 1894, Tom Johnson was in a situation analogous to Burton's plight of four years before; the times (hard times), the candidate, and the issues all conspired against him. In fact, the situation in Johnson's case might even be considered more desperate for, with the exception of the unfluential Cleveland Press, all the newspapers were against him.

But the results were not as catastrophic as one might expect. Although Burton polled 17,968 votes to Johnson's 13,260\textsuperscript{10} (or a plurality of 4,708 votes), the other factors involved make it appear that this was hardly a repudiation of Johnsonism.

To begin with, the district had been so gerry-mandered two years before that it had a "natural" 2,000 Republican majority. Undoubtedly, some of the huge 6,000 vote margin of the State Republican candidates in this district only the previous year had been due to this factor. Then too, even the Democratic vote had been larger during that year. In 1894, the Democrats in the area received 18,170 votes, while the previous year they had netted 20,755, thus showing a stay-at-home vote of 2,246 which might well have been Democratic. Such was an indication of the indifference that many Democrats felt. All things considered, it was a tribute to the appeal of Tom Johnson that the Republican margin was not half again so large as it was.

So, by pure statistics we find that Tom Johnson ran very well, despite the opposition that he had, and most certainly far

\textsuperscript{10}Annual Report of the Secretary of State to the Governor of Ohio 1894, p. 263.
ahead of other Democrats in this Republican year. Still, a careful observer following the campaign closely could see another factor which, like a groundswell of some unseen force, seemed to indicate that perhaps the story had not yet ended and there yet would be more to tell.

Four years before, the same analyst of political campaigns might easily have predicted the outcome by the lack of interest and the diminishing size of the Burton audiences, when two weeks before the campaign was over Burton's backing had almost evaporated. However, no such trend could be seen in the 1894 congressional campaign of Tom Johnson when the Johnson circus tent was everywhere and often attracted enthusiastic crowds numbered in the thousands. One almost suspected that this inner loyal nucleus was getting stronger as the confused, the despondent, the lukewarm, and the shallow fell away, and the end approached. Perhaps the educational efforts that Johnson had directed at the people were not in vain, for a new political climate seemed to be emerging which presaged something better for the future. It was almost as if Tomjohnsonism had not really been beaten in this election, for people seemed to have caught a vision of an era when taxes would be equal and just, when work would be plentiful and wages high and goods cheap and abundant. Yes, it was as if the public which he had sought to educate was already
looking ahead to "the city on a hill". It was as if the story had not been finished but only a chapter had ended. At any rate, he had demonstrated that ability which caused a later commentator to remark:

...It is as a teacher that Johnson deserves to be remembered. He believed that a political leader can go only by measured steps in reform and the limit of his progress is the capacity of the public to understand, accept and learn to live with reform. Therefore, he conceived the educational function of his job to be paramount.

11 Tom Johnson did serve in the "Lame Duck" session of Congress starting December 3, 1895 and ending March 2, 1895. However, the only event of importance was a speech delivered January 8 on the currency problem. He had been serving on the House Banking and Currency Committee while in the fifty-third Congress and had developed a fairly good grasp of fiscal matters. He had even introduced his own currency bill (H. R. 8408) but this was buried in committee.

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APPENDIX

Genealogy of Tom L. Johnson

WILLIAM JOHNSON   ELIZABETH CAVE

There were seven other children

Jemina Suggett

ROBERT ADAMS (Robin) CAVE

nine children in all

Nancy Payne

JAMES

RICHARD MENTOR (Tecumseh)

HENRY - Flourney Family of Mississippi

(General)

WILLIAM - Ann H. Payne (2nd marriage)

married 4 times

JILLISON P.

ALBERT W. - Helen Loftin

Maggie J. - TOM LOFTIN JOHNSON - WILL

ALBERT (Jr.)

(disceased) LOFTIN EDWARDS

ELIZABETH FLOURNEY

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