



Farmers in Rebellion: The Rise and Fall of the Southern Farmers Alliance and People's Party in Texas

Donna A. Barnes

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The years after the Civil War brought struggle to the Southern farmer as the economic mainstay of the South—cotton—steadily dropped in price. Prompted by hard times, farmers in Lampasas County, Texas, gathered in 1877 to discuss what could be done. From these modest origins emerged the National Farmers Alliance and Industrial Union, later known as the Southern Farmers Alliance, a powerful protest movement that played an important role in the formation in 1892 of a new political force, the People's party. In the "solid South," particularly in Texas, large numbers of voters abandoned the Democratic party for the new party. Yet despite this support, the decline of the People's party after 1894 was swift.

Farmers in Rebellion recounts the compelling story of these two crucial and closely related movements. Donna A. Barnes examines their developmental histories, asking such important questions as: Under what conditions do protest movements remain weak? Under what conditions do they prosper, amassing large numbers of supporters? And under what conditions do successful protest movements lose their momentum and die? The author explores these complex questions with deft use of archival data that allows her to reflect on the adequacy of the past sociological answers to these questions.

Farmers in Rebellion is a book rich in detail and scope in its look at a critical juncture in the growth of national populist movements. Of interest to sociologists, historians, and political scientists, it stands as an important contribution to our understanding of a pivotal time in Texas, and national, history.

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