HANDOUT C

Farmers Alliance platform, Texas (1886)

Background: By the 1880s, farmers’ economic situation grew worse and they looked for more concrete solutions to their problems than had resulted from Granger efforts. Delegates attending the 1886 Grand State Farmers’ Alliance of Texas meeting in Cleburne expressed farmers’ discontent in the first major document of the farmers’ revolt against the two-party system.

Cleburne Demands, August, 1886

We, the delegates to the Grand State Farmers’ Alliance of Texas, in convention assembled at Cleburne, Johnson County, Texas, A.D. 1886, do hereby recommend and demand of our State and National governments, ... such legislation as shall secure to our people freedom from the onerous and shameful abuses that the industrial classes are now suffering at the hands of arrogant capitalists and powerful corporations. We demand:

4. That measures be taken to prevent aliens from acquiring title to land in the United States of America, and to force titles already acquired by aliens to be relinquished by sale to actual settlers and citizens of the United States.

6. All lands forfeited by railroads or other corporations, immediately revert to the government and be declared open for purchase by actual settlers, on the same terms as other public or school lands.

9. That railroad property shall be assessed at the full nominal value of the stock on which the railroad seeks to declare a dividend.

10. We demand the rapid extinguishment of the public debt of the United States, by operating the mints to their fullest capacity in coining silver and gold, and the tendering of the same without discrimination to the public creditors of the Nation, according to contract.

12. We demand the establishment of a National bureau of labor statistic, that we may arrive at a correct knowledge of the educational, moral, and financial condition of the laboring masses of our citizens; and further that the commissioner of the bureau be a cabinet officer of the United States.

14. We demand the passage of an interstate commerce law, that shall secure the same rates of freight to all persons for the same kind of commodities, according to distance of haul, without regard to amount of shipment; to prevent the granting of rebates; to prevent pooling freights to shut off competition, and to secure to the people the benefit of railroad transportation at reasonable cost.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Summarize the demands of the Texas Farmers Alliance in 1886.

2. In what ways are constitutional principles and essential virtues demonstrated? In what aspects of the events are they decidedly absent?