



Why Political Machines Have Not Withered Away and Other Revisionist Thoughts

Author(s): Raymond E. Wolfinger

Source: *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (May, 1972), pp. 365-398

Published by: The University of Chicago Press on behalf of the Southern Political Science Association

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2129360>

Accessed: 06-03-2017 20:57 UTC

REFERENCES

Linked references are available on JSTOR for this article:

http://www.jstor.org/stable/2129360?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference#references_tab_contents

You may need to log in to JSTOR to access the linked references.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at

<http://about.jstor.org/terms>



Southern Political Science Association, The University of Chicago Press are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Journal of Politics*

***Why Political Machines
Have Not
Withered Away
and
Other Revisionist
Thoughts***

RAYMOND E. WOLFINGER

Machine politics is always said to be on the point of disappearing, but nevertheless seems to endure. Scholarly analyses of machines usually explain why they have dwindled almost to the vanishing point. Since machine politics is still alive and well in many places, this conventional wisdom starts from a false premise. More im-

*I am grateful to Ann Sale Barber, Lawrence M. Friedman, Fred I. Greenstein, Herbert Kaufman, Charles E. Lindblom, Nelson W. Polsby, Adelle R. Rosenzweig, Frank J. Sorauf, and my wife, Barbara Kaye Wolfinger, for their attempts to improve the factual, logical, and stylistic qualities of this article. At the same time, I do not wish to suggest that all of them are in complete agreement with what I have written. A more detailed description of machine politics in New Haven and discussion of other aspects of this general subject may be found in my *The Politics of Progress* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1972).

portant, it has several logical and definitional confusions that impede clear understanding of American local politics. This article shows that machine politics still flourishes, presents a clarified definition of "machine politics" as part of a typology of incentives for political participation, and argues that the familiar explanations both for the existence of machine politics and for its putative decline are inadequate.

THE PERSISTENCE OF MACHINE POLITICS

My first-hand experience with machine politics is limited to the city of New Haven.¹ Both parties there had what journalists like to call "old fashioned machines," of the type whose disappearance has been heralded for most of the twentieth century. Some people in New Haven were moved to participation in local election campaigns by such civic-minded concerns as public spirit, ideological enthusiasm, or a desire to influence governmental policy on a particular issue. For hundreds of the city's residents, however, politics was not a matter of issues or civic duty, but of bread and butter. There were (and are) a variety of material rewards for political activity. Service to the party or influential connections were prerequisites to appointment to hundreds of municipal jobs, and the placement of government contracts was often affected by political considerations. Thus the stimuli for political participation in local politics were, for most activists, wholly external.

A new administration taking over New Haven's city hall had at its immediate disposal about 75 politically-appointed policy-making positions, about 300 lower-level patronage jobs, and about the same number of appointments to boards and commissions. Summer employment provided around 150 additional patronage jobs. In the winter, snow removal required the immediate attention of hundreds of men and dozens of pieces of equipment.

A hundred or more jobs in field offices of the state government

¹Data on New Haven are from an intensive study of that city's politics conducted primarily by Robert A. Dahl, William H. Flanigan, Nelson W. Polsby, and me. Our research is described most fully in Dahl's *Who Governs?* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), 330-340.

were filled with the advice of the party's local leaders. The City Court, appointed by the governor with the advice of the local dispensers of his patronage, had room for two or three dozen deserving people. The New Haven Probate Court had a considerable payroll, but its real political significance was the Judge of Probate's power to appoint appraisers and trustees of estates. Except in difficult cases, little technical knowledge was necessary for appraising, for which the fee was \$1 per \$1,000 of appraised worth.

A great deal of the city's business was done with men active in organization politics, particularly in such "political" businesses as printing, building, and playground supplies, construction, and insurance. Competitive bidding did not seriously increase the uncertainty of the outcome if the administration wanted a certain bidder to win.² As in many places, it was commonplace for city or party officials to "advise" a prime contractor about which local subcontractors, suppliers, and insurance agencies to patronize. Many government purchases were exempt from competitive bidding for one reason or another. The prices of some things, like insurance, are fixed. Thus the city's insurance business could be (and was) given to politically deserving agencies. Other kinds of services, particularly those supplied by professional men, are inherently unsuited to competitive bidding. Architects, for instance, are not chosen by cost. Indeed, some professional societies forbid price competition by their members.

The income that some party leaders received directly from the public treasury was dwarfed by trade from people who hoped to do business with the city or wanted friendly treatment at city hall, or in the courts, or at the state capitol, and thus sought to ingratiate themselves with party leaders. For example, a contractor hoping to build a school would be likely to buy his performance bonds from the bond and insurance agency headed by the Democratic National Committeeman. Similar considerations applied to "po-

²The most important source of my information about New Haven politics was a year of participant-observation in city hall. Some years after my stay there Mayor Richard C. Lee denied that political considerations affected the placement of government contracts. That is not consistent with information we gathered during our study, or with the large campaign contributions made by these contractors.

litical" attorneys with part-time public jobs. Their real rewards came from clients who wanted to maximize their chances of favorable consideration in the courts or by public agencies.

Control of city and state government, then, provided either local party with a formidable array of resources that, by law, custom, and public acceptance, could be exploited for money and labor. Holders of the 75 policy-making jobs were assessed five percent of their annual salaries in municipal election years and three percent in other years. At the lower patronage levels, employees and board members gave from \$25 to \$100 and up. Politically-appointed employees were also expected to contribute their time during campaigns and were threatened with dismissal if they did not do enough electioneering.

Business and professional men who sold to the city, or who might want favors from it, were another important source of funds. Both sides in any public contractual relation usually assumed that a contribution would be forthcoming, but firms doing business with the city were often approached directly and bluntly. During one mayoralty campaign a party official asked a reluctant businessman, "Look, you son of a bitch, do you want a snow-removal contract or don't you?" In the 1957 mayoralty election the biggest individual contributor, who gave \$1,500 to the ruling Democratic party, was a partner in the architectural firm that designed two new high schools. A contractor closely associated with a top-ranking Democratic politician gave \$1,000. A partner in the firm that built the new high schools and an apartment house in a redevelopment project gave \$900. Dozens of city, court, and party officials were listed as contributors of sums ranging from \$250 to \$1,000.³

In addition to jobs and politically influenced selection of contractors, the third sign of machine politics is "favors": for parents of school children, owners of houses with code violations, people wanting zoning changes, taxpayers wanting lower assessments, and so on. In these and numerous other categories of citizen relations with government, machine politicians were prepared to be obligingly flexible about the laws, but a *quid pro quo* was implicit in such requests.

³The Democratic report on campaign expenses and contributions was summarized in the *New Haven Journal-Courier*, December 4, 1957.

Political spoils in New Haven came from several jurisdictions, chiefly the municipal government, the probate court, and the state government. The more numerous the sources of patronage, the lower the probability that all would be held by the same party, and hence the easier it was for both parties to maintain their organizations through hard times. When one party was triumphant everywhere in the state, as the Democrats were in the 1960s, there was considerable potential for intraparty disunity because the availability of more than one source of rewards for political activity made it difficult to establish wholly unified local party organizations. Inevitably state leaders would deal with one or more local figures in dispensing state patronage. This local representative need not be the same man who controlled probate or municipal patronage. Although the mayor had the power to give out city patronage, either directly or by telling his appointees what to do, he found it prudent to exercise this power in concert with those leaders who could control campaign organizations in New Haven through their access to state and probate patronage. In good measure because of the diverse sources of patronage, the loyalties of Democratic party workers went to different leaders. All this was true also of the Republican party. Thus neither local party organization was monolithic. The Republicans were badly split for much of the post-war generation. The Democrats maintained a working coalition, but not without a good deal of competition and constant vigilance on the part of the mayor and the two principal party leaders. Multiple sources of patronage are commonplace with machine politics and have important consequences, which will be explored in the next section.

A second typical feature of machine politics was that the elections most important to organization politicians were obscure primaries held on the ward level. Issue-oriented "amateurs" seldom could muster sufficient strength in these elections. The amateurs seemed to be interested chiefly in national and international affairs, and thus were most active and successful in presidential primaries and elections, where their policy concerns were salient. While the stakes in presidential contests may be global, they seldom include the topic of prime interest to machine politicians—control of patronage—and hence the regulars exert less than their maximum ef-

fort in them. Conveniently for both amateurs and regulars, the two sorts of elections are held at different times and usually in different years. When the amateurs' enthusiasm is at its peak, the professionals will be less interested; when the machine's spoils are at stake, the amateurs are less involved.

Participation in election campaigns is not the only form of political action. It is important to distinguish between electioneering and other types of political activity. In New Haven there was a major divergence between campaign and non-campaign activities. The likelihood that richer people would engage in non-campaign activity was far greater than the corresponding probability for campaigns.⁴ This divergence reflected the probability that participation in a campaign is less autonomously motivated, for in New Haven the discipline of patronage compels campaign work. There are no such external inducements for most non-campaign political action. Indeed, because such activity usually consists of trying to exert pressure on public officials, it is likely to be viewed with apprehension or disfavor by those machine politicians who dispense patronage. A sense of political efficacy, education, a white-collar job, and higher income—all are thought to be associated with those personal qualities that lead people to try to influence the outcome of government decisions. In many parts of the country, these traits are also associated with electioneering. Some people participate in New Haven elections—particularly for national office—from such motives, but most activists, including party regulars, do not. The essentially involuntary character of much political participation in cities dominated by machine politics has received scant attention from students of participation, who customarily treat the phenomenon they study as the product of solely internal stimuli.

How typical is New Haven? Systematic trend data about the

⁴The tendency for the better-off to participate less in campaigns than in other arenas is discussed at length in Dahl, *Who Governs?* 284-293. Dahl attributes it to the plebeian dominance of the city's political parties, and says that the affluent can influence city officials through channels other than the parties. This assumes that political participation reflects primarily a desire to influence public policy, a proposition I consider insufficient for New Haven and cities like it.

persistence of machine politics are scarce. Ideally, one would develop various measures of the incidence of machine politics and then compare these indicators, both over time and from city to city. One such index might be the proportion of city employees covered by civil-service regulations, a figure that is reported annually for all cities in *The Municipal Year Book*.⁵ As this source reveals, formal civil-service coverage is fairly widespread in cities of over 50,000 population. The states of Iowa, New York, and Ohio require their cities to use merit systems, and in Massachusetts local employees come under the jurisdiction of the state civil-service commission. In 1963, 51 percent of cities in the other states had complete civil-service coverage for their employees, 6 percent covered all but manual workers, 27 percent covered only policemen and firemen, and 16 percent (mostly in the South) did not have merit systems.⁶ One might assume that in places where formal civil-service coverage is low, patronage is more abundant. The reverse probably is true also, but only in a very general way, for there are many cities where political realities or administrative loopholes weaken the effect of the regulations. Cities in New York, for example, can keep jobs from being covered by civil service by classifying them as "provisional," i.e., temporary, or "noncompetitive," which means that satisfactory tests cannot be devised. In Chicago all municipal workers except those in public utilities are "covered" by civil service, but as a matter of political reality, a great many city jobs can be used for patronage purposes with little difficulty.

Information on other kinds of patronage is also elusive. Two students of the subject in New York report that judicial patronage (receiverships, refereeships, and the like) is "almost impossible even to research," and for this reason "its value as political gifts is unquestionably priceless."⁷ Because of the moral and legal deli-

⁵Published in Chicago by the International City Managers' Association.

⁶Raymond E. Wolfinger and John Osgood Field, "Political Ethos and the Structure of City Government," *American Political Science Review*, 60 (June 1966), 314-315.

⁷Martin and Susan Tolchin, "How Judgeships Get Bought," *New York Magazine*, March 15, 1971, 34.

cacy of the subject, systematic and realistic data on machine politics are elusive, and thus comparisons are difficult. Nevertheless, some journalists and scholars have turned up useful information.

A *New York Times* survey of city and state government in New York concluded that "patronage has vastly expanded in the last several decades because of the tremendous growth of government, spiraling government spending, and the expansion of government's discretionary powers to regulate, control, and supervise private industry."⁸ The same story reported that the annual payroll in city jobs exempt from civil-service regulations, which had been \$10 million in the Wagner administration, soared to \$32.8 million under Mayor Lindsay in poverty-program jobs alone. During the first three years of Mayor Lindsay's regime the number of "provisional" employees increased from 1,500 to 12,800. Under Mayor Wagner the City of New York also had 50,000 "noncompetitive" jobs; 24,000 more "noncompetitive" positions were added after Lindsay took office.⁹ In the last year of the Wagner administration the city let \$8 million in consulting contracts without competitive bidding. By 1969, the city's annual expenditure for outside consultants had risen to \$75 million, with many indications that Lindsay was using these contracts as a form of patronage.¹⁰ In addition to the jobs and contracts at his disposal, the Mayor of New York also can wield tremendous patronage power through his control of the municipal agencies that grant zoning variances. Lindsay has made good use of this power for political purposes.¹¹

⁸*New York Times*, June 17, 1968, 1, 30.

⁹Martin and Susan Tolchin, "How Lindsay Learned the Patronage Lesson," *New York Magazine*, March 29, 1971, 48.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 47-48.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 43-46. Lindsay's expansion of patronage is in dramatic contrast to his image as a reformer, and to the widespread interpretation that his election was yet another sign of the decline of machine politics. Since the 19th century genuine and bogus reformers have been elected Mayor of New York over the opposition of various political organizations, to the accompaniment of public death rites for Tammany Hall and the less celebrated but more potent machines in the other boroughs. Yet just as regularly those mayors have been succeeded by organization politicians. Indeed, often the incumbent himself is recast in this role, so that his departure from city hall as well as his entry can be hailed as a symptom of the demise of the machine. Thus when Mayor

The patronage resources of the New York mayor's office are not much greater than those of the Manhattan Surrogates' Court, which does about \$1 billion worth of estate work each year, appointing attorneys to administer estates. These appointments, which are often both undemanding and lucrative, generally are made on the basis of political considerations.¹² Other courts in New York City name referees, trustees, guardians, and receivers in a variety of situations. These appointments also are both rewarding and politically determined.¹³ Trustees, in turn, decide where to bank the funds for which they are responsible, and their power in this respect constitutes another form of patronage if decisions are made politically—as they seem to be.

Cities other than New Haven and New York have political systems in which patronage plays a crucial part. Mayor Richard Daley of Chicago is also chairman of the Cook County Democratic Committee. These two positions together give him control of about 35,000 patronage jobs.¹⁴ It is reported that Daley personally scrutinizes each job application. Since there are 3,412 voting precincts

Robert Wagner won renomination in 1961 by defeating the "organization candidate," this signalled "the machine's" decline. The same interpretation was offered four years later when Wagner, reading the portents as unfavorable to his reelection, withdrew and was succeeded by Lindsay. It appears that one of the reasons why we know Tammany is dead is that it has been killed so many times.

¹²*New York Times*, June 17, 1968, 30; and Wallace S. Sayre and Herbert Kaufman, *Governing New York City* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1960), 540-541.

¹³Tolchin and Tolchin, "How Judgeships Get Bought," 33. Presumably because of the very large amounts of money involved in numerous cases where judges appoint referees, trustees, guardians, etc., and the custom of making these appointments politically, judgeships of all sorts in New York are highly prized. Although most judges are elected rather than appointed, the parties effectively control the selection process. A man who wants to be a judge usually must have connections in one party or the other, and must also make a sizable payment to the appropriate party leader. Sayre and Kaufman estimated that a minimum payment for the lowest level court was \$20,000 (542). Tolchin and Tolchin suggest that the payments usually are higher than this ("How Judgeships Get Bought," 29, 31).

¹⁴*Newsweek*, April 5, 1971, 82.

in Chicago, the Democratic organization can deploy an average of ten workers to each precinct just on the basis of job patronage.

Over 8,000 state employees in Indiana owe their jobs to patronage and are assessed two percent of their salaries for the coffers of the ruling party's state committee.¹⁵ "Macing" public employees is not uncommon in some locales, including New Haven, but the Indiana method of issuing automobile and drivers licenses and automobile titles is unique. These matters are handled by a franchise system, rather like service stations or Kentucky Fried Chicken outlets. Local "license branches" are "awarded to the county chairman of the Governor's party, or the persons they designate."¹⁶ The branch pays the state party committee four cents for each license sold; otherwise, it retains all fees up to \$10,000. Above that figure, half the take must be returned to the state Bureau of Motor Vehicles.

This brief survey shows that formidable patronage resources are available as rewards for political participation in various cities, and thus that New Haven's political practices are not an anachronistic freak. To put it another way, the dependent variable—machine politics—is still a common phenomenon. In the next section I will explore some of the definitional problems that have impeded clear understanding of machine politics, before turning directly to examination of the independent variables said to be associated with its rise and fall.

MACHINE POLITICS DEFINED

The terms "machine politics" and "political machine" are commonly used so as to confuse two quite different phenomena. "Machine politics" is the manipulation of certain *incentives* to partisan political participation: favoritism based on political criteria in personnel decisions, contracting, and administration of the laws. A "political machine" is an organization that practices machine poli-

¹⁵Robert J. McNeill, *Democratic Campaign Financing in Indiana, 1964* (Bloomington, Ind. and Princeton, N. J.: Institute of Public Administration, Indiana University and Citizens' Research Foundation, 1966), 15-16.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 19.

tics, i.e., that attracts and directs its members primarily by means of these incentives. Unfortunately, the term "machine" is also used in a quite different and less useful sense to refer to the *centralization* of power in a party in a major political jurisdiction: a "machine" is a united and hierarchical party organization in a state, city, or county. Now there is no necessary relation between the two dimensions of incentives and centralization: machine politics (patronage incentives) need not produce centralized organization *at the city level or higher*.

The availability of patronage probably makes it easier to centralize influence in a cohesive party organization, since these resources can be distributed so as to discipline and reward the organization's workers. Quite often, however, all patronage is not controlled by the same people. There may be competing organizations or factions within each party in the same area, for where patronage is plentiful, it usually is available from more than one jurisdiction. In New Haven the municipal government had no monopoly on the spoils of government, which were also dispensed by the probate court and the state government. Thus the existence of a cohesive local organization in either party did not follow from the use of patronage to motivate party workers.

This distinction between machine politics and centralized local machines is far from academic, for the former is found many places where the latter is not. Chicago presently exhibits both machine politics and a very strong Democratic machine. Forty years ago it had the former but not the latter.¹⁷ In Boston and New York there are the same kinds of incentives to political activity as in Chicago, but no cohesive citywide organizations. Instead, these cities have several contending party factions. In New York "the party" includes reform clubs with considerable influence as well as a variety of "regular" organizations. The frequently celebrated "decline" of Tammany Hall was not so much the subjugation of the regulars by the reformers, nor the disappearance of patronage and corruption

¹⁷See, e.g., Donald S. Bradley and Mayer N. Zald, "From Commercial Elite to Political Administrator: The Recruitment of the Mayors of Chicago," in *The Structure of Community Power*, ed. by Michael Aiken and Paul E. Mott (New York: Random House, Inc., 1970), 53-60.

(neither has happened yet), as the decentralization of the city's old-line Democratic organization. As Sayre and Kaufman describe the situation, "Party organizations in New York City are not monolithic in character. Each Assembly District is virtually an independent principality. . . . The parties are aggregations of segments rather than organic entities. They are decentralized and fragmented and undisciplined, but they achieve sufficient unity of purpose and action and leadership to identify them as organizations."¹⁸

Multiple sources of patronage are one of the factors maintaining this organizational fragmentation. In the 1930s, when hostile organizations controlled city, state, and federal government, Tammany Hall was sustained by patronage from the Manhattan Surrogates' Court, which is thought to have about as much patronage as the Mayor of New York.¹⁹

While the distinction between *incentives* and *centralization* is useful for accurate description and definitional clarity, it also has important theoretical ramifications. Robert K. Merton's influential explanation of the persistence of machine politics (patronage) points to the presumed coordinating function of centralized political machines:

The key structural function of the Boss is to organize, centralize and maintain in good working condition the "scattered fragments of power" which are at present dispersed through our political organization. By the centralized organization of political power, the Boss and his apparatus can satisfy the needs of diverse sub groups in a larger community which are not politically satisfied by legally devised and culturally approved social structures.²⁰

Yet machine politics exists many places where, as in New York, the party "organization" is a congeries of competing factions.²¹ In

¹⁸Sayre and Kaufman, *Governing New York City*, 140, 141.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 541 n; Tolchin and Tolchin, "How Judgeships Get Bought," 32.

²⁰Robert K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (revised edition; Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1957), 73. This view of the "functions of the machine" has been expressed by a number of writers.

²¹For a description of a city with decentralized governmental institutions, fragmented party organizations, ample patronage, and major corruption, see John A. Gardiner, *The Politics of Corruption* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1970).

fact, cohesive organizations like Chicago's may be fairly uncommon, while pervasive favoritism and patronage—machine politics—are much less so. Hence Merton explained the persistence of the incentive system by referring to functions allegedly performed by an institution (a centralized, city-wide party organization) that may or may not be found where machine politics flourishes.

The rewards that create the incentives in machine politics are not only tangible but divisible, that is, they are "allocated by dividing the benefits piecemeal and allocating various pieces to specific individuals."²² Moreover, they typically result from the routine operation of government, not from particular substantive policy outcomes. Any regime in a courthouse or city hall will hire roughly the same number of people, contract for roughly the same amounts of goods and services, and enforce (or fail to enforce) the same laws, irrespective of the differences in policies advocated by one party or the other. The measures adopted by an activist, enterprising administration will generate a higher level of public employment and contracting than the output of a caretaker government. Yet the differences are not enough to change the generalization that the rewards of machine politics are essentially issue-free in that they will flow regardless of what policies are followed. This excepts, of course, reform of personnel and contracting practices.

One can thus distinguish two kinds of tangible incentives to political participation. The incentives that fuel machine politics are inevitable concomitants of government activity, available irrespective of the policies chosen by a particular regime. A second kind of tangible incentive results from a desire to influence the outcome of particular policy decisions. This second type includes those considerations that induce political participation by interest groups that do not want patronage, but do want the government to follow a particular line of action in a substantive policy area: lower tax rates, anti-discrimination legislation, minimum-wage laws, conservation of natural resources, and the like. A particularly pure example of a political organization animated by substantive incentives would be a taxpayers' group that acted as a political party—naming candidates, getting out the vote, etc.—in order to capture

²²Dahl, *Who Governs?* 52.

city hall for the purpose of enacting a policy of minimal expenditure. As an ideal type, such a group would not care *who* was hired or awarded contracts, so long as a policy of economy was followed.

Incentives to political activity can be classified along two dimensions: tangible/intangible and routine/substantive. The matrix in Figure 1 shows the possible combinations, and examples of organizations in which each incentive system predominates. These categories are ideal types, of course; in any city people will be drawn to party activity by each kind of incentive, and therefore few cities will display only one incentive system. But cities do vary enormously in the prevailing type of incentive system, which is determined by the resources available, the stakes of electoral outcomes, and the attitudes of the citizens. A kind of Gresham's Law also applies here: in cities with ample patronage resources, ideologically motivated people tend not to participate as actively in local elections, except perhaps in enclaves where they are numerous.

FIGURE 1
INCENTIVES TO POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

	Routine	Substantive
Tangible	<p>I Patronage</p> <p>—</p> <p>Machine Politics</p>	<p>II Favorable Policy</p> <p>—</p> <p>"Main Street"</p>
Intangible	<p>III Sociability Intrinsic Enjoyment of Politics Loyalty to a Leader</p> <p>—</p> <p>Any Kind of Organization</p>	<p>IV Ideology</p> <p>—</p> <p>"Amateur"</p>

A word should be said about Category III, routine intangible incentives. This category includes several different motivations, all of which have in common certain negative characteristics: they do not involve material rewards for political action nor do they depend on the anticipation of preferred policy outcomes. Among these are "solidary" rewards for party work: personal gratification from membership in an organization or from social contact with other party workers. In principle, there is no reason why such pleasures could not be enjoyed by members of any sort of party organization. In practice, it may be that patronage-based organizations are more likely than other kinds to provide solidary rewards.

This has led some observers to suggest that at present machines are sustained as much by these nonmaterial returns as by monetary considerations.²³ It is more plausible, however, that the solidary gratifications are essentially a by-product of a material incentive system that produces more stable and frequent interactions than is the case with amateur politics. One would expect that these interactions would not be wholly instrumental in character, that they would have emotional and social dimensions, and that these would provide a framework of relations that could be satisfying to many of the participants. Since these politically-based social relations seldom exclude the "right kind of people," i.e., people who are not reformers, one might also expect that political clubhouses would offer social pleasures to people who were not at the patronage trough. Some of these people may work for the machine. It would, however, be a serious error to confuse this incidental *effect* with the tangible rewards that *cause* the machine to exist. Consider an analogy: many people get important emotional sustenance from the social relations at their jobs. These rewards, as "morale," may contribute to efficiency, easy recruitment, and low employee turnover. It does not appear useful, however, to argue that the firm exists because of the social benefits that may be a by-product of work.

Substantive policy issues are not normally among the incentives animating machine politics. They are irrelevant to this political style and more an irritant than anything else to its practitioners.

²³Edward C. Banfield and James Q. Wilson, *City Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press and the MIT Press, 1963), 120.

One student of Chicago politics said that for the Democratic organization there, "Issues are obstacles to be overcome, not opportunities to be sought."²⁴ Daniel Patrick Moynihan observed that in New York, "In the regular party, conferences on issues are regarded as women's work."²⁵ In California, on the other hand, conferences and resolutions about issues are meat and drink to the earnest middle-class activists who man both political parties. By the same token, local campaigns feature debate about issues in inverse ratio to the prevalence of machine politics, as James Q. Wilson noted: "In Chicago, issues in city elections are conspicuous by their rarity. In New York, they are somewhat more common. In Detroit and Los Angeles, candidates often must go to considerable lengths to *generate* issues in order to attract interest to their campaigns for public office."²⁶

In New Haven, also, the party organizations did not play an important role in developing alternative courses of municipal governmental action. Indeed, since machine politicians drew their resources from the routine operations of government, they did not concern themselves with policy formulation. The party's two top leaders were seldom present at meetings where decisions about municipal policy were made, nor did they play an active part in those matters. On strictly party topics like nominations they formed, with Mayor Lee, a triumvirate. Appointments, contracts, and the like were negotiated among the three.²⁷ But substantive city affairs were another matter; here the organization leaders were neither interested nor consulted on the outlines of policy. They were not excluded against their will; they were largely indifferent. This does not seem to be an unusual situation. In New York, for example, Sayre and Kaufman report that "the most distinctive characteristic of the party leaders as participants in the city's political

²⁴James Q. Wilson, *Negro Politics* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1960), 117.

²⁵Daniel P. Moynihan, "'Bosses' and 'Reformers': A Profile of the New York Democrats," *Commentary*, June 1961, 464.

²⁶Wilson, *Negro Politics*, 37 (emphasis in original).

²⁷Most appointments in urban renewal and related fields were made by Lee without accommodating the Democratic organization's interests.

process is their relative neutrality toward the content of public policy."²⁸

The concerns of machine politicians are not irrelevant to substantive policy formation, for while the politicians are neutral "toward the content of public policy," they are very interested indeed in the details of its execution; and in many policy areas the aggregate of their influence on all the details can be important. In Newark the politicians were not concerned about general policy in the city's urban renewal program, but they did scrutinize "with great care all actions of the staff involving hiring, classification, and compensation of [Newark Housing] Authority personnel, the appraisal and acquisition of properties, the awarding of contracts, the maintenance of NHA-owned property, the selection of public housing tenants . . ."²⁹

Sayre and Kaufman explain the considerations that lead to party interest in the execution of policy: "The interest of party leaders in public policy seems to vary directly with its possible effect upon their role in choosing officials. In fact, this perception of their relation to public policy impels party leaders to be most concerned with discrete aspects of policy and its application rather than its range and content."³⁰

There are two interesting aspects of this tendency for machine politicians to be interested in the details of public policy rather than its basic outlines. One implication concerns Dahl's portrait of the ideal type politician, whom he called "*homo politicus*." In Dahl's view, "Political man . . . deliberately allocates a very sizable share of his resources to the process of gaining and maintaining control over the policies of government."³¹ This may be an accurate characterization of many political leaders, but it is not suitable for machine politicians, who are relatively indifferent to public policy, do not consider issue appeals important or desirable elements of electoral strategies, and are primarily interested in control over the

²⁸Sayre and Kaufman, *Governing New York City*, 474.

²⁹Harold Kaplan, *Urban Renewal Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 47-48.

³⁰Sayre and Kaufman, *Governing New York City*, 452.

³¹Dahl, *Who Governs?* 225.

sources of patronage. Thus a political taxonomist could identify two subspecies of *homo politicus*. One of these fits Dahl's description and might be called *h. politicus substantus*. The other, the machine politician, is *h. politicus boodelus*. Forerunners of this classification can be found in the literature. In his autobiography, the late "Boss" Flynn, the famous Democratic leader in the Bronx, persistently distinguished between "Democrats," whom he admired, and "New Dealers," whom he scorned as impractical, rigid meddlers.³²

A second implication of this tendency for machine politics to slight issues concerns theorizing and research on relations between the level of interparty competition and the character of public policy. The classic position on this topic, generally associated with the work of V. O. Key, was that policies beneficial to the lower classes were more likely with evenly matched parties, while one-party domination tended to benefit the rich.³³ Early quantitative research showed that competition and per-capita spending for various welfare measures were very weakly related at the state level, and thus seemed to disconfirm the old belief about the policy consequences of party competition.³⁴ Both the original proposition and the subsequent research assumed that electoral competition would be "programmatic," i.e., based on alternative policy platforms. But where machine politicians regard issues as "women's work" and "obstacles to be overcome," campaign appeals are likely to include far less issue content. Thus a fair test of Key's proposition would separate "policy competition" from "patronage competition."³⁵

³²Edward J. Flynn, *You're the Boss* (New York: The Viking Press, 1947).

³³See especially V.O. Key, Jr., *Southern Politics* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1949), ch. 14.

³⁴Research of this kind was published by economists as early as 1952, but the first such study that attracted much attention from political scientists was Richard E. Dawson and James A. Robinson, "Inter-Party Competition, Economic Variables and Welfare Policies in the American States," *Journal of Politics*, 25 (May 1963), 265-289. For a review and critique of the ensuing literature, more sophisticated measures, and different findings, see Brian R. Fry and Richard F. Winters, "The Politics of Redistribution," *American Political Science Review*, 64 (June 1970), 508-522.

³⁵For one example of such a distinction, see John H. Fenton, *Midwest Politics* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966).

WHY POLITICAL MACHINES HAVE NOT WITHERED AWAY

The conventional wisdom in American social science interprets machine politics as a product of the social needs and political techniques of a bygone era. Advocates of this position attempt to explain both the past existence of machines and their supposed current demise in terms of the functions that the machines performed.³⁶ In analyzing the functions—now supposedly obsolete—that machine politics served, it is useful to consider four questions:

- (1) Did political machines actually perform these functions in the past?
- (2) Do machines still perform them?
- (3) Has the need for the functions diminished?
- (4) Is machine politics found wherever these needs exist?

It is commonly argued that various historical trends have crucially diminished the natural constituencies of machines—people who provided votes or other political support in return for the machine's services. The essential machine constituency is thought to have been the poor in general and immigrants in particular. The decline of machine politics then is due to rising prosperity and education, which have reduced the number of people to whom the rewards of machine politics are attractive or necessary. These trends have also, as Thomas R. Dye puts it, spread "middle class values about honesty, efficiency, and good government, which inhibit party organizations in purchases, contracts, and vote-buying, and other cruder forms of municipal corruption. The more successful machine [sic] today, like Daley's in Chicago, have had to reform themselves in order to maintain a good public image."³⁷

One function that machines performed was furnishing needy people with food, clothing, and other *direct material assistance*—

³⁶For a cautious, qualified synthesis of the orthodox position, see Fred I. Greenstein, "The Changing Pattern of Urban Party Politics," *The Annals*, 353 (May 1964), 2-13. Another presentation of the conventional wisdom, with fewer caveats, may be found in Thomas R. Dye, *Politics in States and Communities* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969), 256-272.

³⁷Dye, *Politics*, 276.

those legendary Christmas turkeys, buckets of coal, summer outings, and so on. There is no way of knowing just how much of this kind of help machines gave, but it seems to have been an important means of gleaning votes. From the time of the New Deal, government has assumed the burden of providing for the minimal physical needs of the poor, thus supposedly preempting a major source of the machines' appeal. The growth of the welfare state undeniably has limited politicians' opportunities to use charity as a means of incurring obligations that could be discharged by political support. Some political clubs still carry on the old traditions, however, including the distribution of free turkeys to needy families at Christmas time.³⁸

Machines supposedly provided other tangible rewards, and the need for these has not been met by alternative institutions. The most obvious of these benefits is employment. The welfare state does not guarantee everyone a job and so the power to hire is still an important power resource. It has been argued, most ably by Frank J. Sorauf, that patronage jobs, mainly at the bottom of the pay scale, are not very attractive to most people.³⁹ But these positions are attractive to enough people to maintain an ample demand for them, and thus they still are a useful incentive.

A second major constituent service supplied by machine politics was *helping poor and unacculturated people deal with the bureaucratic demands of urban government*. Describing this function, some writers emphasized its affective dimension. Robert K. Merton put it this way: "the precinct captain is ever a friend in need. In our increasingly impersonal society, the machine, through

³⁸Tolchin and Tolchin, "Honest Graft—Playing the Patronage Game," *New York Magazine*, March 22, 1971, 42.

³⁹See especially his "Patronage and Party," *Midwest Journal of Political Science*, 3 (May 1959), 115-126. In this and other articles Sorauf has argued not only that patronage is unattractive, but that it is inefficiently exploited by party leaders. His direct observations are limited to his study of the consequences of the 1954 Democratic gubernatorial victory for the highway maintenance crew in one rural county in Pennsylvania. Sorauf is more persuasive about the ineffectuality of Democratic leaders in Centre County than about the generalizability of his findings. He concludes, moreover, that "the parties need the strength of patronage, however minor and irregular it may be . . ." (*ibid.*, 126).

its local agents, performs the important social *function of humanizing and personalizing all manner of assistance* to those in need.”⁴⁰ In Dye’s view, the machine “personalized government. With keen social intuition, the machine recognized the voter as a man, generally living in a neighborhood, who had specific personal problems and wants.”⁴¹ William F. Whyte saw a more cognitive element in politicians’ services to the common man: “the uninitiated do not understand the complex organization of government and do not know how to find the channels through which they can obtain action.”⁴² Whyte’s view of the relation between the citizen and his “friend in need” the precinct captain is a great deal less innocent than Merton’s: “Everyone recognizes that when a politician does a favor for a constituent, the constituent becomes obligated to the politician.”⁴³

If machine politics were a response to “our increasingly impersonal society,” it would seem to follow that continuing growth in the scope, complexity, and impersonality of institutional life would produce *greater* need for politicians to mediate between individuals and their government. The growth of the welfare state therefore has not diminished this need but increased it and presumably offers the machine politician new opportunities for helping citizens get what they want from the government. Describing the advent of New Deal social services in a poor Boston neighborhood, Whyte made it clear that the new welfare policies did not so much subvert machine politics as rearrange the channels of access while presenting some politicians with a new opportunity to accumulate obligations. Whyte quotes the wife of a state senator: “If you’re qualified, you can get on [WPA] without going to a politician. But it will be four weeks before you get certified, and I can push things through so that you get on in a week. And I can see that you get a better job . . .”⁴⁴

As far as local politicians are concerned, new public services

⁴⁰Merton, *Social Theory*, 74 (emphasis in original).

⁴¹Dye, *Politics*, 257.

⁴²William F. Whyte, *Street Corner Society* (enlarged edition; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), 241.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 240.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 197.

may be new prizes that covetous or needy citizens can more easily obtain with political help. Writing a generation after Whyte, Harold Kaplan reported that in Newark "a public housing tenant, therefore, may find it easier to secure a public housing unit, prevent eviction from a project, secure a unit in a better project, or have NHA [Newark Housing Authority] reconsider his rent, if he has the right sponsor at City Hall."⁴⁵ There is no necessary connection, then, between expanded public services and a decline in the advantages of political help or in the number of people who want to use it. While the expansion and institutionalization of welfare may have ended "the party's monopoly of welfare services,"⁴⁶ they have vastly expanded the need for information, guidance, and emotional support in relations between citizens and government officials, and thus there is no shortage of services that machines can provide the poor and unassimilated, who are still with us.⁴⁷

There is no doubt that in the past 50 years income levels have risen and the flow of foreign immigrants has dwindled considerably. But there are plenty of poor people in the cities, the middle classes have been moving to the suburbs for the past two generations, and the European immigrants have been succeeded by blacks, Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, and poor rural whites.⁴⁸ Moreover, about two and a half million people came to this country as immigrants in the decade from 1950 to 1960. The argument that affluence and assimilation have choked machine politics at the roots, one familiar to scholars for decades, may now look a bit more threadbare. Yet the recent rediscovery of poverty and cultural deprivation has not had a major effect on thinking about trends in the viability of machine politics.

⁴⁵Kaplan, *Urban Renewal*, 42-43.

⁴⁶Dye, *Politics*, 271.

⁴⁷Some contemporary political organizations do give advice and legal aid, mediate disputes, and serve as clearinghouses for information. See James Q. Wilson, *The Amateur Democrat* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 176; and Tolchin and Tolchin, "Honest Graft," 42.

⁴⁸As many writers are now beginning to realize, the acculturation and assimilation of the European immigrants is far from complete. See my "The Development and Persistence of Ethnic Voting," *American Political Science Review*, 59 (December 1965), 896-908; and *The Politics of Progress*, chap. 3.

Along with the new interest in the urban poor has come a realization that existing institutions do not meet their needs. Among these inadequate institutions is the political machine, which, in the traditional view, should be expected to do for today's blacks, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, and poor whites just what it is supposed to have done for yesterday's immigrants. But even in cities with flourishing machine politics there has been a tremendous development of all kinds of community action groups for advice, information exchange, and the representation of individual and neighborhood interests—precisely the functions that the machines are said to have performed. The gap between the disoriented poor and the public institutions serving them seems to be present equally in cities like Chicago, generally thought to be political anachronisms, and in places like Los Angeles that have never experienced machine politics. This leads to an important point: most American cities have had the social conditions that are said to give rise to machine politics, but many of these cities have not had machine politics for a generation or more.

This fact and the evident failure of existing machines to perform their functions cast doubt on the conventional ways of explaining both the functions of machines in their supposed heyday and the causes of their "decline." One conclusion is that the decline is real, but that the principal causes of the decline do not lie in affluence and assimilation. A second possibility is that the machines persist, but have abandoned the beneficent functions they used to perform. A third is that they are still "humanizing and personalizing all manner of assistance to those in need," but cannot cope with a massive increase in the needs of their clienteles. And a fourth alternative is that the extent to which they ever performed these functions has been exaggerated.

It does seem that a whole generation of scholarship has been adversely affected by overreaction to the older judgmental style of describing machine politics. Until a decade or two ago most work on machines was moralistic and pejorative, dwelling on the seamy side of the subject and concerning itself largely with exposure and denunciation.⁴⁹ More contemporary social scientists have diverged

⁴⁹For a description of trends in the study of city politics see Wallace S.

from this tradition in two respects. One, apparently a reaction to the highly normative style of the old reformers, is a tendency to gloss over the very real evils they described. The other, addressed to the major problem of explaining the durability of machine politics, is the search for "functions": acculturating immigrants and giving them a channel of social mobility, providing a link between citizen and city hall, and coordinating formally fragmented government agencies. Some writers suggest that urban political organizations were a rudimentary form of the welfare state. While the tone of these later works has been realistic, some of them leaned toward idealizing their subject, perhaps in reaction to the earlier moralism or because functionalism has not been accompanied by an inclination to confront the sordid details. Thus the development of a more dispassionate social science has produced, on the descriptive level, a retreat from realism. The functionalists seem to have been somewhat overcredulous: "the precinct captain is ever a friend in need."

This innocence may explain the popularity in recent textbooks of a pious declaration by a celebrated and unsavory ward boss in Boston: "I think," said Martin Lomasny [sic], 'that there's got to be in every ward somebody that any bloke can come to—no matter what he's done—and get help. Help, you understand; none of your law and your justice, but help.'"⁵⁰ The kind of "help" that could be expected is suggested by the remarks of another local leader in Boston that convey, I think, a more realistic sense of the priorities in machine politics:

When people wanted help from the organization, they would come right up here to the office [of the political club]. Matt [the boss] would be in here every morning from nine to eleven, and if you couldn't see him then, you could find him in the ward almost any other time. If a man came in to ask Matt for a job, Matt would listen to him and then tell him he'd see what he could do; he should come back in a couple of days. That would give Matt time to get

Sayre and Nelson W. Polsby, "American Political Science and the Study of Urbanization," in *The Study of Urbanization*, ed. by Philip M. Hauser and Leo F. Schnore (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1965), 115-156.

⁵⁰Originally quoted in *The Autobiography of Lincoln Steffens* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1931), 618.

in touch with the precinct captain and find out all about the man. If he didn't vote in the last election, he was out. Matt wouldn't do anything for him—that is, unless he could show that he was so sick he couldn't get to the polls.⁵¹

“Helping” citizens deal with government is, in this context, usually thought to be a matter of advice about where to go, whom to see, and what to say. The poor undeniably need this service more than people whose schooling and experience equip them to cope with bureaucratic institutions and procedures. But in some local political cultures advice to citizens is often accompanied by pressure on officials. The machine politician's goal is to incur the maximum obligation from his constituents, and merely providing information is not as big a favor as helping bring about the desired outcome. Thus “*help*” shades into “*pull*.”

Now there is no reason why the advantages of political influence appeal only to the poor. In places where the political culture supports expectations that official discretion will be exercised in accordance with political considerations, the constituency for machine politics extends across the socio-economic spectrum. People whose interests are affected by governmental decisions can include those who want to sell to the government, as well as those whose economic or social activities may be subject to public regulation.

Favoritism animates machine politics, favoritism not just in filling pick-and-shovel jobs, but in a vast array of public decisions. The welfare state has little to do with the potential demand for favoritism, except to expand opportunities for its exercise. The New Deal did not abolish the contractor's natural desire to minimize the risks of competitive bidding, or the landlord's equally natural desire to avoid the burdens of the housing code. It is all very well to talk about “middle-class values of efficiency and honesty,” but the thousands of lawyers whose political connections enable them to benefit from the billion-dollar-a-year case load of the Manhattan Surrogates' Court are surely not members of the working class.

While “help” in dealing with the government may be primarily

⁵¹Quoted in Whyte, *Street Corner Society*, 194.

appealing to people baffled by the complexities of modern society and too poor to hire lawyers, "pull" is useful in proportion to the size of one's dealings with government. Certain kinds of business and professional men are *more* likely to have interests requiring repeated and complicated relations with public agencies, and thus are potentially a *stronger* constituency for machine politics than the working classes. The conventional wisdom that the middle classes are hostile to machine politics rests on several types of evidence: (1) The undeniable fact that reform candidates almost always run better in well-to-do neighborhoods. (2) The equally undeniable fact that machine politics provides, in patronage and petty favors, a kind of reward for political participation that is not available in other incentive systems. (3) The less validated proposition that middle-class people think that governments should be run with impartial, impersonal honesty in accordance with abstract principles, while the working classes are more sympathetic to favoritism and particularistic criteria. These characterizations may be true in the aggregate for two diverse such categories as "the middle class" and "the working class" (although that has not yet been established), but even if these generalizations are true, they would still leave room for the existence of a sizable subcategory of the middle class who, in some political cultures, benefits from and endorses machine politics.

Textbook interpretations recognize these middle-class interests in machine politics, but generally relegate them to an hypothesized earlier stage in urban history. This was the era when America changed from a rural to an urban society, a shift that created a vast need in the new cities for municipal facilities and services: streetcars, electricity, paved streets, and so on. These needs were met by businessmen who corrupted officials wholesale in their eagerness to get franchises. Since the businessmen wanted action, they profited from political machines that could organize power to get things done by centralizing the formally fragmented agencies of government. Thus machine politics served the needs not just of poor immigrants, but also of the generation of businessmen who exploited the foundation of urban America. But after the first great rush of city building, the essential facilities and utilities had been supplied and business interest in local government declined. Ma-

chine politics no longer performed a coordinating function for the franchise seekers and hence lost an important constituency.

While this may be an accurate description of relations between business greed and governmental corruption in the Gilded Age, it has a number of deficiencies as an explanation of the rise and fall of machine politics. Three of these flaws have already been discussed in other contexts: (1) Like poverty, urban growth is not a bygone phenomenon, but continues to this day. (2) Machine politics does not occur wherever cities have experienced sudden and massive needs for municipal services. (3) This explanation confuses patronage and centralization of party organizations at the city level, two phenomena that may not be found together.

There are other difficulties with this line of thought. First, uncoordinated public agencies and jurisdictions continue to proliferate. If machine politics were a response to the formal decentralization of government, one would think that it, too, would increase, and that party organizations would grow stronger rather than weaker. It may be that one or more unstated intermediary conditions are preventing these latter trends from occurring; if so, no writer has, to my knowledge, shown what this interactive relation is.

If it were true that "the key structural function of the Boss is to organize, centralize, and maintain in good working condition the 'scattered fragments of power' typical of American local government, one would expect to find a positive relation between the prevalence of machine politics and municipal institutions that maximize fragmentation. "Strong-mayor" cities should be least ridden by patronage, and commission and council-manager cities should have the most. There is no systematic evidence available about these relations, but what data there are do not support the propositions. (They are also not supported by another piece of conventional wisdom, which associates city managers with reformism.) Machine politics seems to be far more common on the East Coast than in the West, but so are cities with elected mayors. Cities with mayors and cities with managers are equally likely to have merit systems for their employees, which could be considered an index of the weakness of machine politics.⁵²

⁵²Wolfinger and Field, "Political Ethos," 314-316.

Finally, political centralization may not be conducive to the interests of businessmen who want prompt and affirmative action from local government. Whether centralized power is preferable depends on what the businessman wants. If he wants a license or franchise to sell goods or services, or to buy something belonging to the government, it may be in his interests to deal with an autonomous official or agency, not with a government-wide hierarchy. John A. Gardiner's study of the notoriously corrupt city of "Wincanton" provides evidence for the proposition that decentralized political systems are *more* corruptible, because the potential corrupter needs to influence only a segment of the government, and because in a fragmented system there are fewer centralized forces and agencies to enforce honesty. The "Wincanton" political system is formally and informally fragmented; neither parties nor interest groups (including the criminal syndicate) exercise overall coordination. The ample patronage and outright graft in "Wincanton" are not used as a means of centralization.⁵³ Indeed, governmental coordination clearly would not be in the interests of the private citizens there who benefit from corruption, or of the officials who take bribes. Attempts by reformers to stop graft or patronage often founder on the city's commission form of government, which is both the apotheosis of local governmental fragmentation and an hospitable environment for machine politics.

The conventional wisdom also holds that the machines' electioneering techniques are as obsolete as the social functions they used to perform. According to this interpretation, "the old politics" based its campaigns on divisible promises and interpersonal persuasion, and these methods have been outdated by the mass media—particularly television, the growing importance of candidates' personalities, and the electorate's craving for ideological or at least programmatic promises.⁵⁴

Like the other explanations of the machines' demise, this argu-

⁵³Gardiner, *The Politics of Corruption*, 8-12.

⁵⁴Interviewing a number of party officials in New Jersey, Richard T. Frost found that "old-fashioned" techniques like door-to-door canvassing were considered more effective, and used more frequently, than newer methods like television advertising. See his "Stability and Change in Local Party Politics," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 25 (Summer 1961), 221-235.

ment has serious factual and logical deficiencies. As we have seen, machine politics is an effective way of raising money for political purposes. There is no reason why the money "maced" from public employees or extracted from government contractors cannot be spent on motivational research, advertising copywriters, television spots, and all the other manifestations of mass media campaigns.

Similarly, there is no inconsistency between machine politics and outstanding candidates. Just as machine politicians can spend their money on public relations, so can they bestow their support on inspirational leaders who exude integrity and vitality. Many of the most famous "idealistic" politicians in American history owe their success to the sponsorship of machine politicians. Woodrow Wilson made his first venture into electoral politics as the gubernatorial candidate of an unsavory Democratic organization in New Jersey. (Once elected governor, Wilson promptly betrayed his sponsors.) In more recent times, such exemplars of dedicated public spirit as the elder Adlai Stevenson, Paul H. Douglas, and Chester Bowles were nominated for office as the candidates of the patronage-based party organizations in their several states.⁵⁵

⁵⁵Bowles is sometimes depicted as a high-minded victim of crasser and smaller men in the Connecticut Democratic party. The principal event presented as evidence for this viewpoint is his defeat by Thomas J. Dodd for the senatorial nomination at the 1958 state Democratic convention. Dodd had long been an opponent of the regular Democratic organization headed by then-Governor Abraham A. Ribicoff and state chairman John Bailey. Bowles, on the other hand, had been the organization's winning gubernatorial candidate in 1950. After his defeat for the senatorial nomination in 1958, he accepted the organization's offer of a congressional nomination and was elected to Congress in the fall. Ribicoff and Bailey thought that Bowles's popularity would help win the seat, then held by a Republican, and brushed aside the claims of the announced candidates for the Democratic nomination, who "voluntarily" withdrew their names from consideration by the convention.

One of the seconding speeches in support of Bowles's unsuccessful try for the senatorial nomination was by Arthur T. Barbieri, the New Haven town chairman (and later a close ally of Dodd's). It was devoted to praising Bowles's willingness, when governor, to accede to the party's wishes in matters involving patronage. The disciplined New Haven delegation voted unanimously for Bowles, a Yankee patrician. Dodd, an Irish Catholic, was the sentimental favorite of many delegates, but almost all of them were city employees or otherwise financially dependent on city hall.

Sayre and Kaufman explain this organization willingness to support blue-ribbon candidates: "They [machine politicians] have also learned the lesson of what retailers call the loss leader—that is, the item that may lose money for the storekeeper but which lures customers in and thereby leads to increases in purchases of profitable merchandise."⁵⁶ Generally, party regulars turn to blue-ribbon "loss leaders" when they think that their popularity is necessary to carry the ticket to victory. Otherwise, machine politicians eschew candidates with independent popular appeal, since popularity is an important bargaining resource in intraparty negotiating. Without it, an elected official is more dependent on organization politicians.

"The new politics" is an ambiguous term. It is used to describe increasing campaign emphasis on the mass media and professional public relations, and also is applied to popular participation in party affairs and direct contact with the voters by campaign workers. In the 1968 election "the new politics" was associated with peace advocates and the young enthusiasts who gave so much tone to Eugene McCarthy's presidential bid. Except for the age of the activists, there was little to distinguish this aspect of McCarthy's campaign from the idealistic appeal of such previous and diverse presidential candidates as Adlai Stevenson and Barry Goldwater, both of whom projected to some people an image of altruism and reform that attracted legions of dedicated workers. "The new politics" seems to be one of those recurring features of American politics that political writers are always rediscovering. The trademark of "the new politics" is intense precinct work, one-to-one conversations with citizens, the same interpersonal style that machines have relied on for generations. As a Democratic organization politician in New York observed: "If the new politics teaches anything, it's that the old politics was pretty good. The McCarthy kids in New Hampshire rang doorbells, made the telephone calls, made the personal contact that people associate with the old-style machine."⁵⁷

Both kinds of "new politics" have at least one thing in common: they tend to be found in elections that draw a great deal of attention and arouse strong emotions. State and local elections and

⁵⁶Sayre and Kaufman, *Governing New York City*, 155.

⁵⁷Quoted in the *New York Times*, June 1, 1970, 27.

party primaries (except presidential ones) rarely attain much visibility. Candidates for the city council, the state legislature, or the city or state under-ticket seldom attract much public attention. Even paid media advertising in such elections is not feasible because the voting jurisdiction for a single candidacy generally includes only a fraction of the reading or viewing audience of the most widely used media. An occasional mayoral or gubernatorial race may get a good deal of media space and arouse popular enthusiasm, but otherwise these elections do not present a high profile in most voters' perspectives. This is particularly true for local elections, which generally are not concurrent with national campaigns, as well as for party primaries and campaigns for any state office except the governorship. These low-salience contests are particularly amenable to the resources typical of machine politics. A New York state senator explained this point bluntly: "My best captains, in the primary, are the ones who are on the payroll. You can't get the average voter excited about who's going to be an Assemblyman or State Senator. I've got two dozen people who are going to work so much harder, because if I lose, they lose."⁵⁸ It is in elections of this type, where neither the mass media nor idealistic amateurs are likely to participate, that most of the spoils of machine politics are at stake. Since precinct work is effective in inverse relation to the salience of the election,⁵⁹ "old fashioned machines" do not seem very seriously threatened by either form of "the new politics."

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

To sum up my argument: Since an increasing proportion of urban populations is poor and uneducated, it is not persuasive to argue that growing prosperity and education are diminishing the constituency for machine politics. While governments now as-

⁵⁸Quoted in the *New York Times*, June 17, 1968, 30.

⁵⁹Raymond E. Wolfinger, "The Influence of Precinct Work on Voting Behavior," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 27 (Fall 1963), 387-398. Turnout in the primary to select the Democratic candidate for the Manhattan Surrogates' Court rarely reaches 100,000 voters and thus the outcome is more easily influenced by party organizations.

sume responsibility for a minimal level of welfare, other contemporary trends are not so inhospitable to machine politics. Various kinds of patronage still seem to be in reasonable supply, and are as attractive as ever to those people—by no means all poor—who benefit from them. The proliferation of government programs provides more opportunities for the exercise of favoritism. The continuing bureaucratization of modern government gives more scope for the machine's putative function of serving as a link between the citizen and the state.

These trends would seem to have expanded the need for the services the machines supposedly performed for the poor. Yet surviving machines apparently are not performing these functions, and machine politics has not flourished in many cities where the alleged need for these functions is just as great.

The potential constituency for political favoritism is not limited to the poor; many kinds of business and professional men can benefit from machine politics. They do in some cities but not in others. Again, it appears that the hypothesized conditions for machine politics are found in many places where machines are enfeebled or absent.

Real and imaginary changes in campaign techniques are not inconsistent with machines' capacities. In short, machines have not withered away because the conditions that supposedly gave rise to them are still present. The problem with this answer is that the conditions are found in many places where machine politics does not exist.

Attempts to explain the growth and alleged decline of machine politics usually emphasize the importance of immigrants as a constituency for machines.⁶⁰ Yet many cities with large immigrant populations have never been dominated by machine politics, or were freed of this dominance generations ago.⁶¹ Machine politics

⁶⁰For a good statement of this position see Elmer E. Cornwell, Jr., "Bosses, Machines, and Ethnic Groups," *The Annals*, 353 (May 1964), 27-39.

⁶¹This is most obviously true of the large cities of the West Coast: San Francisco (44 percent foreign stock in 1960), Los Angeles (33 percent), and Seattle (31 percent). These cities are equally or more ethnic than eastern and midwestern cities characterized by machine politics, e.g., Chicago (36 percent), Philadelphia (29 percent), and St. Louis (14 percent).

continues to flourish in some states like Indiana, where foreign-stock voters are relatively scarce. In other states, like Pennsylvania and Connecticut, machines seem to have been as successful with old stock American constituents as with immigrants.⁶²

Far more interesting than differences in ethnicity or social class are regional or subregional variations in the practices of machine politics and in attitudes toward them.⁶³ Public acceptance of patronage, for example, appears to vary a good deal from place to place in patterns that are not explained by differences in population characteristics such as education, occupation, and ethnicity. Although systematic data on this subject are not available, it does seem that voters in parts of the East, the Ohio Valley, and the South are tolerant of practices that would scandalize most people in, say, the Pacific Coast states or the Upper Midwest. The residents of Indiana, for example, seem to accept calmly the remarkable mingling of public business and party profits in that state. One researcher notes that these practices have "not been an issue in recent campaigns."⁶⁴ Another student of midwestern politics reports that "Indiana is the only state studied where the governor and other important state officials described quite frankly and in detail the sources of the campaign funds. They were disarmingly frank because they saw nothing wrong in the techniques employed to raise funds, and neither did the opposing political party nor the press nor, presumably, the citizenry."⁶⁵

⁶²See the works by Frank J. Sorauf cited in notes 39 and 65 and Duane Lockard, *New England State Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), 245-251.

⁶³Several studies show major regional or subregional variations in political preferences that cannot be accounted for by varying demographic characteristics. See, e.g., Irving Crespi, "The Structural Basis for Right-Wing Conservatism: The Goldwater Case," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 29 (Winter 1965), 523-543; James W. Prothro and Charles M. Grigg, "Fundamental Principles of Democracy: Bases of Agreement and Disagreement," *Journal of Politics*, 22 (Spring 1960), 276-294; and Raymond E. Wolfinger and Fred I. Greenstein, "Comparing Political Regions: The Case of California," *American Political Science Review*, 63 (March 1969), 74-86.

⁶⁴McNeill, *Democratic Campaign Financing*, 39.

⁶⁵Fenton, *Midwest Politics*, 7. For an account of public acceptance of patronage in bucolic, native-stock Centre County, Pennsylvania, see Frank J.

California provides a particularly useful contrast to the East Coast states and Indiana. While California has a cosmopolitan population and an urban, industrial economy, it also displays virtually no signs of machine politics. The Governor has about as many patronage jobs at his disposal as the Mayor of New Haven. Californians who worked in John F. Kennedy's presidential campaign report the bemusement of Kennedy organizers from the East who came to the state with thoughts of building their campaign organization around public employees. These and other practices that are widely accepted in the East are abhorred on the West Coast. Paying precinct workers is commonplace in eastern cities. But when Jess Unruh, a prominent California Democratic leader, hired some canvassers in the 1962 election, he was roundly denounced from all points of the political spectrum for importing such a sordid practice. The president of the California Democratic Council said that Unruh's action "smacked of ward politics" ("ward politics" is a common pejorative in California) and sternly announced, "I am firmly convinced that the expansion and development of the use of paid workers is unhealthy for the Democratic party in California."⁶⁶

The reasons for these marked geographical variations in political style are not easily found, but looking for them is a more promising approach to explaining the incidence of machine politics than the search for functions supposedly rooted in the socio-economic composition of urban populations.⁶⁷

Sorauf, "Chairman and Superintendent," in *Cases in State and Local Government*, ed. by Richard T. Frost (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1961), 109-119.

⁶⁶*San Francisco Chronicle*, December 17, 1962, 10; and *CDC Newsletter*, December 1962.

⁶⁷The study of regional variations in American political perspectives is still in its infancy. For a general discussion and survey of the literature see Samuel C. Patterson, "The Political Cultures of the American States," *Journal of Politics*, 30 (February 1968), 187-209.

For an interesting typology of three American political value systems that encompasses the regional differences concerning machine politics discussed here see Daniel J. Elazar, *American Federalism: A View from the States* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1966).