

# The Enforcement of the 1941 Smoke-Control Ordinance and Italian Americans in Pittsburgh

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Italian Americans in Pittsburgh generally opposed the efforts of the city administration to abate coal-induced air pollution in the 1940s. But they also strongly supported David L. Lawrence, Democratic mayor from 1946 to 1959, who was responsible for anti-pollution programs that cost them dearly. Loyalty to a political machine that provided jobs and association of Democrats with the New Deal overcame opposition to this most hotly contested issue of post-war Pittsburgh when Italian Americans cast their ballots.

Heavy smoke was long Pittsburgh's notorious feature. Even nineteenth-century English novelist Charles Dickens, who knew the devastating pollution of industrial cities in his mother country, saw Pittsburgh as "hell with the lid lifted." Likewise, Willard Glazier wrote in his widely-read 1886 outline of the main characteristics of American cities that "Pittsburgh is a smoky, dismal city, at her best. At her worst, nothing darker, dingier or more dispiriting can be imagined [. . .] the smoke from her dwellings, stores, factories, foundries and steamboats, uniting, settles in a cloud over the narrow valley in which she is built, until the very sun looks coppery through the sooty haze." Muckraker Lincoln Steffens retained similar recollections of his visit to Pittsburgh in 1903: "It looked like hell, literally [. . .] I walked out aimlessly into the smoky gloom of its deep-dug streets [. . .] The blast ovens opened periodically and threw their volcanic light upon the cloud of mist and smoke above the town."<sup>1</sup>

Despite its unsavory reputation for smoke, Pittsburgh failed to curb air pollution effectively for decades. Anti-smoke ordinances had been passed since the late 1860s, but they had been either invalidated by the courts or not enforced. In addition, since iron and steel plants were pivotal to the economy of the city, smoke became the symbol of industrial activity and, therefore, of Pittsburgh's prosperity. For this reason, no attempt was made to abate smoke throughout the Depression of the 1930s, as clear skies equaled shut-downs and unemployment in the eyes of both the working-class population and city officials. In 1939, the City Council even dissolved the Bureau of Smoke Regulation, which had been established twenty-eight years earlier with the fruitless purpose of implementing Pittsburgh's few anti-smog measures.<sup>2</sup>

Pittsburgh took a new step towards smoke control only with the return of full employment following the development of defense industries after the outbreak of World War II. In early July 1941, on request of Democratic Mayor Cornelius D. Scully, the City Council passed an ordinance, based on similar regulations adopted in St. Louis, which mandated the use of smokeless fuels as

well as the utilization of smokeless burning equipment. Consequently, high volatile bituminous coal, which abounded in the soft fields around Pittsburgh, could legally be employed only if it was burned smokelessly. The ordinance was scheduled to become effective for commercial establishments as well as for railroads and industries in three to fifteen months and for domestic users in two years.<sup>3</sup>

Nonetheless, problems involving fuel shortages and military production needs after the United States had entered World War II in December, 1941, once again caused the postponement of the implementation of Pittsburgh's plans to reduce air pollution. In the following years, while local politicians, city officials, and representatives of different interest groups were discussing how long to defer the enforcement of the 1941 ordinance, it seemed that Pittsburgh had missed another historic opportunity to control its smoke and fumes. Yet, in April, 1946, Mayor Lawrence, whose election campaign platform of the previous year had included a pledge to implement the 1941 anti-pollution regulations, managed to have the City Council make the smoke ordinance definitely effective beginning October 1, 1946, for commercial users and one year later for domestic consumers.<sup>4</sup>

Since the 1940s, attempts to stem decay in metropolitan areas through forms of urban revitalization, including the improvement of the environment, had characterized a number of United States cities in the face of the exodus of middle and upper-middle class residents, and of businesses from the downtowns to the suburbs. The enforcement of smoke control in Pittsburgh was eventually achieved within a broader program to rejuvenate the city, commonly known as the Pittsburgh Renaissance, which aimed to keep business in town and possibly attract new investment in the post-war years. The abatement of air pollution—along with flood control and the creation of Point Park—became part of a long-term project to prevent the flight of corporations like Westinghouse, Alcoa, or US Steel from Pittsburgh. The advocates of the Pittsburgh Renaissance conceived of decreased pollution as a means of assisting the transition of the city from a heavy-industry to a service economy by improving, modernizing, and reconstructing its central business district. As Mayor Lawrence himself recalled a few years later, "smoke was one of the chief obstacles to Pittsburgh's progress. Young people needed by industries would not want to come there, large corporations were ready to leave." Actually, companies like the Equitable Life Assurance Society—which would eventually finance the redevelopment of the Gateway Center business area next to Point Park—made it clear that investments in the downtown Golden Triangle were contingent on the elaboration of an effective policy to curb air pollution on the part of the municipal government.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, in the opinion of Lawrence's aides, the support for environmental and urban changes was to become the blueprint of the city admin-

istration in order to consolidate the Democratic majority in local elections in the post-war years. As John P. Robin—Lawrence's executive secretary during his four terms as mayor of Pittsburgh—remembered: "in 1945 the old issues of the New Deal by which we had brought the Democratic Party to power in Pittsburgh were probably at the end of their basic values as contributions to the political process and something new had to be contributed." As Lawrence was told, "You're not going to run on the New Deal. That's over with. The war's over. So run on what you can do for Pittsburgh."<sup>6</sup>

However, while workers had been the backbone of the Democratic Party during the 1930s and early 1940s, Lawrence's new goals helped him to gain the favor of upper- and middle-class civic groups. Indeed, the abatement of air pollution was key to the environmental betterment which was necessary for the revitalization of Pittsburgh according to the strategy of the Allegheny Conference on Community Development (ACCD), a civic association established in 1943 with the purpose of promoting the rehabilitation of the city after the end of the war. Noticeably enough, in 1945 the ACCD absorbed the United Smoke Council, the leading group that advocated the elimination of air pollution in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County. Richard King Mellon—the heir to the Mellon banking, coal, and oil holdings—and other corporate tycoons and executives like, for example, banker Arthur E. Braun, Edgar J. Kaufmann of Kaufmann's department store, Joseph Dillworth of Westinghouse, and J. Steele Gow of the Falk Foundation were the originators of the ACCD. Lawrence's commitment to smoke control, therefore, not only ensured the enforcement of the 1941 ordinance but also strengthened the relationship between the mayor and the local business community.<sup>7</sup>

Patrick T. Fagan, the president of District 5 of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA), was a member of the Commission for the Elimination of Smoke, which had been appointed by Mayor Schully to draft the 1941 ordinance. John P. Busarello, another UMWA official, signed the final report of the Commission, which recommended the burning of smokeless fuels only. Yet, despite the support of labor union leaders like Fagan and Busarello, the anti-smoke campaign enjoyed little favor among working-class Pittsburghers. Indeed, the implementation of the 1941 ordinance placed a heavy burden on ordinary people. While bituminous coal could be bought for \$3.50 a ton, the cost of a ton of both coke and disco (a low volatile carbonization product) ranged from \$6.50 to \$7.50, and anthracite sold for \$9.00 a ton. Moreover, as David H. Kurtzman—then director for research of the Pennsylvania Economy League, a think tank funded by the state's business community to provide research reports for the government sector—remembered, "people were exposed to an additional expense to acquire equipment and some of them hadn't acquired them and they were being hauled into court all the time." Actually, whereas a smoke-burning stove was available for as little as \$25, a smokeless stove retailed for about \$49 and a gas stove sold for between \$89 and \$135.<sup>8</sup>

It also turned out that the City Council had chosen an untimely deadline for domestic consumers to meet the requirement of the 1941 ordinance. During the extraordinarily cold winter that followed October 1, 1947 and climaxed in several days of sub-zero temperature in early February, 1948, supplies of natural gas almost ran out in Pittsburgh and the price of smokeless coal increased by about 25 percent over the cost of bituminous coal. As Robin acknowledged a few years later, "undoubtedly some very real difficulties were imposed on many people and perhaps if we had waited a year, it could have been done smoothly and with less inconvenience and cost and hardship to some people."<sup>9</sup>

The income-level breakdown of a public opinion survey taken in June, 1947, revealed the opposition of lower-class Pittsburghers to the city's smoke-abatement regulations. Ketchum, MacLeod, and Grove, a local market research agency, reported that 85.3 percent of the home owners with an income of \$5,000 or more a year were in favor of the anti-pollution ordinance. Conversely, the percentage of the supporters of smoke control was as low as 35.7 percent among the residents with an annual income below \$2,000.<sup>10</sup>

Democratic Councilman Edward J. Leonard, who had cast the only vote against the 1941 ordinance in Pittsburgh's nine-member council and vainly tried to obtain a six months' postponement in law compliance for low-income residents in 1947 as well as a suspension of the anti-pollution measures during the winter of 1948-49, endeavored to cash in on the ordinary people's resentment toward Lawrence. He challenged the incumbent mayor in the Democratic primaries in 1949, when Lawrence ran for the nomination of his own party for a second term. Leonard presented himself as the champion of the working class—or "Little Joe" as he collectively called his own prospective voters—against the anti-smoke regulations and campaigned almost exclusively on this single issue.<sup>11</sup>

Lawrence—who ran with the support of the CIO but not with the backing of the AFL-affiliated Central Labor Union that endorsed his opponent—defeated Leonard with 58.7 percent of the vote, as opposed to the 68.9 percent he had obtained in the Democratic primaries four years earlier. In addition, as Lawrence himself acknowledged, "Leonard carried many of the predominantly labor wards" where ethnic minorities bulked large. In the Italian-American community, however, Lawrence received 65.9 percent of the vote.<sup>12</sup>

In the 1940s, Italian Americans were the largest ethnic minority in Pittsburgh. They also ranked among the lowest cohorts of the city's population in terms of socioeconomic status. By then, although the first Italian immigrants had arrived in Pittsburgh as early as the mid-nineteenth century, the local Italian-American community had not yet developed a sizable middle class. In 1950, in the two largest Italian-American settlements in town, located in the Bloomfield and East Liberty districts, unskilled workers made up 50.8 per-

cent and 25.0 percent of the workforce, while white collars were only 7.6 percent and 16.9 percent, respectively.<sup>13</sup>

Most Italian Americans were, therefore, among the low-income groups that had been deeply affected by the delayed enforcement of the 1941 ordinance. Consequently, it can hardly be suggested that Lawrence's plurality in their ethnic community resulted from a vote of confidence in the mayor's stand on smoke control. Indeed, there is little evidence of the development of an environmental consciousness on the part of the great bulk of Italian Americans in Pittsburgh during the war and early post-war years, when the abatement of smoke-induced air pollution became a top issue in the political debate at the municipal level.

Contrary to the organizations of other ethnic minorities in Pittsburgh like the local chapter of B'nai B'rith, the oldest and largest Jewish service society, no Italian-American association had joined the 1941 anti-smoke campaign. In particular, none of the numerous Italian-American clubs supported the Mayor's Commission for the Elimination of Smoke established that year. Furthermore, no Italian-American organization volunteered the services of any of its officials to serve on the Mayor's Commission or even passed any resolution backing its work.<sup>14</sup>

*Unione* - the city's only Italian-language newspaper and the organ of the Order Italian Sons and Daughters of America, the largest and most influential Italian-American association in Pittsburgh—devoted only a small proportion of its columns to the issues concerning pollution throughout the early 1940s and failed to publish news of the passing of the 1941 ordinance. *Unione* could have dealt with smoke control, for it did focus on the appropriations of the City Council for public works and on the economic recovery of Pittsburgh following the growth of orders for defense industries. Even in those years, however, to the advocates of clean air, *Unione* retorted that dust, fumes, and smoke were inevitable in an industrial city that relied on coal as fuel.<sup>15</sup>

In addition, when it finally devoted specific articles to the topic of smoke-induced pollution after the end of World War II, *Unione* was glad to voice the call for a further postponement of the implementation of the 1941 ordinance for domestic consumers on the ground that they needed additional time to purchase smokeless burning equipment. *Unione* also commended Leonard on his campaign to curb the cost of living for ordinary Pittsburghers and lashed out at the City Council because it had failed to back him up. Moreover, only pro-Leonard appeals were published in *Unione's* pre-primary election issue that came out in September, 1949. Yet, when the Allegheny County Smoke Abatement Advisory Committee was appointed in 1947 to help draft a smoke-control countrywide ordinance, *Unione* seemed interested more in the number of its members of Italian ancestry than in what regulations the committee would propose. Three out of the sixteen members of the committee were of

Italian descent: John P. Busarello, president of district 5 of the UMWA, Irma D'Ascenzo of the board of managers of Gumbert School for Girls, and Louis J. Gizzi, president of local 341 of the teamsters' union. Their presence marked some achievement for the Italian-American community as a whole and, therefore, captured the attention of *Unione* more than the program of the committee itself.<sup>16</sup>

The recollections of a few Pittsburghers of Italian descent in 1991 confirm that the progress of *Unione's* attitude on smoke control from unconcerned to hostile generally represented the position of Pittsburgh's Italian-American community. According to an interviewee, "we [Italian Americans] realized we had a smoke problem when they [the Lawrence administration] forced us to spend our money on smokeless coal and other devices." A more manifest reproof for Lawrence's staunch anti-smoke policy appear in the words of an elderly Italian-American woman: "we lived in smoke for years but survived . . . Lawrence gave us clean skies but we busted." Another Italian American was even cynical about the impact of Lawrence's commitment to the abatement of air pollution: "once my pocketbook was empty, then I could breathe more freely."<sup>17</sup>

Criticism of the mayor's stance, however, was acknowledged not only in hindsight. Ordinary Italian-American Pittsburghers like Louis P. Falvo came out publicly against Lawrence while the debate on the measures to curb air pollution was taking place. As Falvo put it in a letter to the editor of the *Pittsburgh Press* over a year before the 1949 Democratic primaries, "the high cost of this stuff called smokeless coal [. . .] is highway robbery. Why doesn't the mayor do something about it? Well, I know the answer. We made our mistake when we didn't back our councilman Leonard. Are we going to let the mayor bluff us?"<sup>18</sup>

Actually, rather than opposing smoke abatement in itself, Italian Americans were primarily concerned with the impact of the enforcement of the 1941 ordinance on their cost of living. The year 1946 witnessed the beginning of a period of growing inflation in the United States. In Pittsburgh, it lasted for eight years during which prices rose by about 39 percent. The shift from bituminous to smokeless coal and the installation of smokeless burning equipment cut the purchasing power of working-class Italian-American families. Therefore, this burden explains why several members of the Italian-American community retained their memory of the smoke controversy some decades after it had taken place. After all, while 81.5 percent of the households in the sample of Pittsburgh's Italian-American electorate had switched to fuels other than coal by 1950, only 58.1 percent of their dwelling units could afford to have also a private bath and running water. As Frank Ambrose—an Italian-American Democratic activist and a close aide to Mayor Lawrence—recalled, the 1949 primary campaign was characterized by rumors of ordinary

people "spending two or three thousand [dollars] for furnaces and paying five [dollars] a ton for coal and that kind of stuff."<sup>19</sup>

Even Irma D'Ascenzo, one of the three Italian-American members of the Allegheny County Smoke Abatement Advisory Committee and a political protégé of Mayor Lawrence, called for the postponement of the implementation of any countywide clean-air regulations for several years until cheaper smokeless fuels were made available. In February, 1948, while all the other members of the Smoke Abatement Committee were unanimously pushing for the prompt passing of an anti-smoke ordinance similar to Pittsburgh's for Allegheny County as a whole, D'Ascenzo was the only dissenting voice. She argued that the retail prices of smokeless fuels had to go down before any county legislation concerning coal-induced pollution was drawn up. In her opinion, "the temper of the people isn't receptive to smoke control" due to the high cost of smokeless fuels.<sup>20</sup>

Pittsburgh's Italian Americans, however, also were worried about the effect of smoke control on employment levels in the bituminous coal mining industry which provided occupation for a significant number of their relatives and fellow ethnics in Allegheny and adjoining counties. Indeed, a leader of their community maintained that "Lawrence was taking bread out of the miners' mouths."<sup>21</sup>

Coal production actually went down in Pennsylvania's bituminous fields after the end of World War II, causing shutdowns and lay-offs in the mines near Pittsburgh. Yet the specific contribution of environmental-protection regulations limiting use of bituminous coal can hardly be evaluated even now. But the words of the Italian-American interviewee quoted above indicate the perception of the drawbacks of Lawrence's staunch anti-smoke policy by Italian Americans. Actually, until UMW local leader Busarello was assured that the anti-smoke measures would not hurt the mining industry of the soft fields in Allegheny and adjacent counties (since bituminous coal could continue to be used for smokeless burning equipment), he denounced the existence of a conspiracy "to reduce the market for Pittsburgh coal district" and "to get the people of Allegheny County to buy their coal outside of the county." Similarly, in April, 1947, it was another prominent Italian American, State Representative John Mazza, who vainly introduced an amendment that would have postponed the selection of any date for the enforcement of smoke control in Allegheny County until smokeless fuels and equipment were available in adequate quantities. The purpose of this further delay was to protect the jobs of the coal miners of the Pittsburgh bituminous region as long as possible.<sup>22</sup>

Even a few decades later, some Italian Americans failed to realize the long-term environmental advantages of Lawrence's anti-pollution fight in favor of its short-term drawbacks. In 1991, referring to the commitment of Pittsburgh's corporate leadership to pollution abatement, one Italian Ameri-

can complained that "we paid for a cosmetic operation that benefited the millionaires." Discussing Richard King Mellon's interest in smoke control, another added that "Lawrence charged Mellon's toy to the poor. We paid for what they enjoyed while, at the same time, they were dodging the law they had devised and wanted us to observe."<sup>23</sup>

These criticisms reflected the fact that environmental improvement in Pittsburgh was "elite-initiated," as Roy Lubove has pointed out, while fuel costs made up a larger percentage of the household budget for a working-class family than for higher income groups. Such complaints, however, also resulted from the perception that the corporate-governmental symbiosis which characterized Lawrence's four terms as mayor of Pittsburgh caused some inequality, at least in the field of the enforcement of the clean-air policies. The Lawrence administration had been successful in having the sale and delivery of illegal high volatile coal discontinued by the winter of 1947-48 by firmly fining the owners of coal distribution yards, fuel dealers, and truck drivers violating the 1941 ordinance. These businesses could more easily be controlled by city officials than the single residents. While some cheap high volatile fuels were thus made unavailable to domestic consumers relatively early, the advancement of air-pollution control was slower and the enforcement of the limitations was lax in the case of industrial users. As Joseph M. Barr, Lawrence's successor as mayor in 1959, admitted before a subcommittee of the United States Senate as late as 1963, "we will not be completed in the steel industry in the city of Pittsburgh, Allegheny County, and our environment until 1970. We just cannot go and ask these big corporations who have been so cooperative that 'you have to do it tomorrow.' They have to think of their stockholders; they have to think of their competition." Indeed, as early as 1941, *Unione* made a point of reporting that the level of smoke emissions from the University of Pittsburgh violated the regulations concerning the control of pollution that the very members of its faculty advocated.<sup>24</sup>

Pittsburgh's anti-smoke campaign won great acclaim nationwide. It provided Lawrence not only with the foundation of a public-private partnership but also with the basis of a bipartisan political coalition with local Republican moguls like Richard King Mellon. It also contributed to keep the Democratic Party in power at the local level while the municipal administration promoted its plans for the redevelopment of the city. As it has colorfully been remarked, when Mellon publicly praised Lawrence for the Pittsburgh Renaissance projects at the ground-breaking ceremony of Mellon Square in 1953, "the Republican pulse in Allegheny County, long faint, became almost imperceptible."<sup>25</sup>

However, the assumptions of Lawrence's aides that the legacy of the New Deal would be unable to revitalize the Democratic majority in local elections in the post-war years were wrong. They thought that Democratic candidates for municipal offices needed some new campaign planks, like the environ-



mental betterment of the city and urban renewal. Yet, while such programs did not appeal to Italian Americans, neither did they undermine their staunch allegiance to the party of Franklin D. Roosevelt. In November, 1949, when Lawrence won reelection against his Republican opponent, he obtained 79.0 percent of the Italian-American vote, as opposed to the 61.7 percent he received in the city as a whole. Commenting on the outcome of the elections, *Unione* pointed out that the people's memory of the economic crisis of the 1930s still accounted for the Democratic victory in the mayoral contest of a decade later. Oral narratives reveal that, as late as 1991, several children of the turn-of-the-century Italian immigrants who had suffered through the Depression were still grateful to President Roosevelt and to his party for the New Deal programs. In particular, a few linked their Democratic affiliation in the early 1990s to family political traditions which had resulted from the appreciation of the labor and social legislation enacted by the federal government during the 1930s.<sup>26</sup>

Although Councilman Leonard's "Little Joe" could hardly bear any similarity with President Roosevelt's "forgotten man at the bottom of the economic pyramid," Leonard's stand on smoke control potentially addressed many concerns of Pittsburgh's Italian Americans about the economic consequences of the anti-pollution measures. Nonetheless, the attitude of Lawrence's challenger toward the policies of the Pittsburgh administration to abate air pollution failed to serve as a major determinant of voting behavior for most Italian Americans when they cast their ballots in the 1949 Democratic primaries. Lawrence's hold over Italian-American voters, rather than their approval of smoke control, can more reasonably account for the incumbent mayor's success in the Italian-American community against all odds resulting from the leading issue debated during the primary election campaign.

A Republican stronghold before the economic crisis of the 1930s, Pittsburgh began to turn into a Democratic bailiwick on the occasion of Roosevelt's election to the White House in 1932. In the following years, while he was serving as chairperson of both the Allegheny County and the State Democratic Committees, Lawrence exploited the federal patronage as well as the Democratic control of the city and county administrations to establish a powerful political organization that placed local constituents on the public payroll in exchange for their votes. Pittsburgh's Democratic machine survived World War II and played a leading role in Lawrence's successful bids for mayor of the city and for governor of Pennsylvania in the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>27</sup>

Italian Americans had extensively profited from the political spoils of the Democratic organization since the mid-1930s. After Lawrence's acolytes and allies took over the city and the county government in 1934 and 1936, respectively, Italian-American clerical workers progressively gained access to positions in such departments as Public Health, Law, and Public Works, as

well as in the offices of the City Treasurer, City Assessor, City Clerk, and District Attorney, from which they had been excluded. Previous Republican administrations had confined public employees of Italian ancestry primarily to jobs as unskilled and semi-skilled laborers. A large number of Pittsburghers of Italian descent resorted to Lawrence's patronage to make ends meet not only during the Depression but also in the post-war years. As a result, for instance, while Italian immigrants made up 1.7 percent of the population of Allegheny County according to the 1950 Census and the total percentage of Italian Americans could reasonably be estimated as less than five times larger, 15.3 percent of the personnel on the county payroll was of Italian descent in 1947.<sup>28</sup>

The disproportionate number of Italian Americans on the public payroll can reasonably explain the support of their community for Lawrence in the 1949 Democratic primaries in terms of the quid-pro-quo requirements of the spoils system. Upon taking office as mayor after his 1945 election, Lawrence dismissed the few remaining Italian-American Republican holdovers in the city administration or forced them to resign. Four years later, in the final days of the primary campaign, he warned the Democrats who filled the city and county public offices against the consequences of political disloyalty. As Lawrence put it:

We have had our wreckers. We drove them off. We have had our political pirates, who climbed aboard for loot and booty. We gave them short shrift. We have had our leechers and our barnacles. We scraped them off the ship. It is a continuous process. And it is going on right now.<sup>29</sup>

That the Italian-American vote for Lawrence was highest in the districts where the population was poorest further shows that machine politics was more influential than smoke-related issues in the 1949 Democratic mayoral primary among Italian Americans. Running against Leonard, for instance, Lawrence received 66.8 percent of the Italian-American vote in the precincts included in census tract 12-D, where 20.7 percent of the families earned less than \$1,000 per year, but 64.9 percent in the precincts comprised within census tract 12-E, where 13.5 percent of the households had an annual income below \$1,000.<sup>30</sup> Of course, even though complying with the clean-air regulations was financially more burdensome for the destitute than for others, economic hardships also made it easier for Lawrence's machine to exploit its own political patronage in order to entice Italian-American voters.

Actually, elaborating on the reasons for his own defeat, Leonard complained that, unlike the mayor, "the council itself don't [*sic*] handle patronage." Similarly, Al Conway, a Democratic ward chairman, recalled that "[Leonard] came within an inch of winning [. . .] [but] Lawrence put all his

political chips in and bought that campaign." Even Lawrence himself acknowledged that he would have been defeated by Leonard in 1949 if his own machine "had not worked at its best." Indeed, as an Italian-American political jobholder remembered in 1991, "when I needed a job after the war, my father, who had never voted, registered Democrat and went to talk to our committeeman. So I got a job with the county and always voted for Lawrence to keep it." These latter recollections also show that the Italian-American support for Lawrence in the 1949 Democratic primary was part of the routine of machine politics and did not imply approval of the mayor's smoke-control policy.<sup>31</sup>

On September 1, 1949, Labor Day, Lawrence arranged for President Harry S Truman to endorse his candidacy before a crowd of more than 100,000 people at the Allegheny County Fair. Yet Lawrence hardly needed the President's coattails to secure a majority of the Italian-American vote. Indeed, as he carried the Italian-American community against Republican Tice V. Ryan the following November, Lawrence added 5 percentage points to the 74.1 percent that Truman had gained among Pittsburgh's Italian Americans one year earlier. Similarly, when Lawrence ran for a third term in 1953, he won 73.9 percent of the Italian-American vote as opposed to the 67.2 percent of Adlai Stevenson in 1952. That Lawrence twice received a larger percentage of the Italian-American vote than the Democratic presidential candidate had obtained the previous year further highlights his control over the Italian-American electorate.<sup>32</sup>

Outlining the contribution of the Democratic Party to the Pittsburgh Renaissance, Lawrence's Executive Secretary John P. Robin pointed out that:

The Democratic party's role was to act as a bridge of communication and mutual support with the elitist or the establishment views of the city progress to give them the broad base of popular support they could in no way have achieved through the efforts of the minority of the population, powerful as it may have been in its degree of wealth or ability [ . . . ] to influence public opinion.<sup>33</sup>

However, in the case of the attitude of Italian Americans toward air-pollution abatement, Lawrence did not win by encouraging the development of an environmental consciousness but through machine politics. The findings of this article are hardly surprising. On the one hand, the survival of machine politics in the post-war years usually has been related to the persisting presence of reservoirs of lower-class potential recipients of political patronage in dire need of jobs and access to welfare programs which could be obtained in exchange for votes on Election Day. That was certainly the case of the Italian-American community in Pittsburgh. In 1950, for instance, the two main areas of Italian-American settlement—Bloomfield and East Liberty—

had an average unemployment rate of 18.2 percent, the highest in the city except for the African-American neighborhoods in the Lower Hill district. On the other hand, while the elitism of urban renewal in the United States often failed to inspire the minority groups that usually bore its cost disproportionately, the emergence of environmental values—including concerns over the impact of pollution—after the World War II characterized primarily those cohorts of the population that enjoyed a higher standard of living following the return of prosperity.<sup>34</sup>

In 1949, Pittsburgh's Democratic organization successfully exploited its patronage to line up the primarily working-class Italian-American community behind Lawrence and to give the incumbent mayor a mandate for his environmental-improvement and urban-renewal programs. This article, therefore, raises several points about machine politics. It provides an example of its persistence into the early post-war years, emphasizes its working-class support resulting from the spoils system, and points to its role in pushing urban reform, though with the main purpose of maintaining its power and control over the city's affairs.<sup>35</sup>

## Notes

1. Dickens as quoted in Herbert Kubly, "Pittsburgh," *Holiday*, 25 (Mar. 1959): 80; Willard Glazier, *Peculiarities of American Cities* (Philadelphia: Hubbard Brothers, 1886), 334; Lincoln Steffens, *The Autobiography of Lincoln Steffens* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1931), 401.
2. John O'Connor, Jr. "The History of Smoke Nuisance and Smoke Abatement in Pittsburgh," *Industrial World*, 47 (Mar. 24, 1913): 352-55; Robert Dale Grindler, "From Insurgency to Efficiency: The Smoke Abatement Campaign in Pittsburgh Before World War I," *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*, 61 (July 1978): 187-202; Roy Lubove, *Twentieth Century Pittsburgh: Government, Business, and Environmental Change* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), 46-50; Franklin Toker, *Pittsburgh: An Urban Portrait* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1986), 1.
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4. Charles O. Jones, *Clean Air: The Politics and Policies of Pollution Control* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1975), 23-25, 43-46; Tarr and Lampere, "Changing Fuel Use Behavior," 570-73; *Pittsburgh Press*, Oct. 24, 1945; Apr. 23, 1946.
5. Jon C. Teaford, *The Rough Road to Renaissance: Urban Revitalization in America, 1940-1985* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990); Roland M. Smith, "The Politics of Pittsburgh Flood Control, 1936-1960" *Pennsylvania History*, 44 (Jan. 1977): 3-24; Robert C. Alberts, *The Shaping of the Point: Pittsburgh's Renaissance Park* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1980), 43-56; Joel A. Tarr, "Infrastructure and City-Building in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," in *City at the Point: Essays on the Social History of Pittsburgh*, ed. Samuel P. Hays (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989), 249-51; David L. Lawrence, "Rebirth," in Stefan Lorant, *Pittsburgh: The Story of an American City* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), 386; *Pittsburgh Press*, Feb. 7, 1949; transcript of an interview with Park H. Martin by Stefan Lorant, June 14, 1955, p. 15, in Michael P. Weber Oral History Collection (hereafter MPWOHC), Archives of Industrial Society, Hillman Library, University of Pittsburgh (hereafter AIS).
6. Transcripts of interviews with John P. Robin by Robert Pease, Sept. 20, 1972, p. 17, in Stanton Balfour Oral History Collection (hereafter SBOHC), AIS, and by Michael P. Weber, Mar. 26, 1983, p. 22, in MPWOHC.
7. Park H. Martin, "Narratives of the Allegheny Conference on Community Development and the Pittsburgh Renaissance," in Park H. Martin Papers, box 1, folder 1, AIS; Shelby Stewman and Joel A. Tarr, "Public-Private Partnership in Pittsburgh: An Approach to Governance," in *Pittsburgh-Sheffield: Sister Cities*, ed. Joel A. Tarr (Pittsburgh: Carnegie-Mellon University, 1986), 146-48; Paul Kleppner, "Government, Parties, and Voters in Pittsburgh," in *City at the Point*, 172-74.
8. "Report of the Mayor's Commission for the Elimination of Smoke," 1941, in Papers of the Civic Club of Allegheny County, box 11, folder 182, AIS; transcript of an interview with David H. Kurtzman by Nancy Mason, Nov. 10, 1971, p. 3, in SBOHC; Robert J. Thomas, "Market Survey of Allegheny County for a Coal Burning Smokeless Stove," Feb. 1948, in Abraham L. Wolk Papers, box 2, folder 26, AIS.
9. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, Feb. 9, 1948; transcript of an interview with Robin, pp. 21-22, in SBOHC.
10. *Pittsburgh Press*, June 22, 1947. According to another survey taken by the same agency fourteen months later, while 82 percent of the informants with an annual income over \$5,000 thought that "Pittsburgh should continue smoke control," that percentage fell to 62 percent in the case of individuals who made less than \$2,500 per year (*Pittsburgh Press*, Aug. 29, 1948). In the opinion of Tarr and Lampere ("Changing Fuel Use Behavior," 575), this second set of data also demonstrates a significant increase in the approval rate of smoke control among the low income groups. Yet the 1947 and the 1948 survey can hardly be compared because the breakdown selected to iden-

tify the lowest income group in the former poll (\$2,000) was different from the bracket in the latter (\$2,500).

11. *Pittsburgh Press*, July 7, 1941; Feb. 4, 1949; *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, May 21, 1947; Feb. 4, 1949; Jeanne R. Lowe, "Rebuilding Cities—and Politics," *Nation*, 186 (Feb. 1958): 119; Thomas J. Donaghy, *Keystone Democrat: David Lawrence Remembered* (New York: Vantage Press, 1986), 32-34; Michael P. Weber, *Don't Call Me Boss: David L. Lawrence, Pittsburgh's Renaissance Mayor* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1988), 246-52.

12. *Pittsburgh Press*, Sept. 2, 11, 15, 1949; Lawrence, "Rebirth," 399. Voting records for Pittsburgh include no ethnic breakdown. A sample of the local Italian-American electorate has been made assuming that the returns of the precincts in which at least 52 percent of the registered voters were of Italian descent are representative of the vote of the Italian-American community. The ethnic concentration of the precincts has been identified through a name-check of both the incomplete collection of the *Street Lists of Voters*, held at AIS, and *Polk's Pittsburgh City Directories* (Pittsburgh: R. L. Polk & Co., 1945 and 1949). The new votes by precinct have been obtained from the unpublished tabulation sheets of the votes cast for the candidates for mayor in the 1945 and 1949 Democratic primary elections, in Voting Records of the Allegheny County Department of Elections, AIS. Such row votes have been converted into the percentages that appear in the text.

13. Maxine Steinitz, "An Outline for a Study of the Ethnic Communities of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County" (Master thesis, University of Pittsburgh, 1944), 8, 30-31; Catherine Cerrone, "An Aura of Toughness, Too': Italian Immigration to Pittsburgh and Vicinity," *Pennsylvania Folklife*, 45 (Autumn 1995): 37-42; William Simons, Samuel Patti, and George Herrmann, "Bloomfield: An Italian Working-Class Neighborhood," *Italian Americana*, 7 (Fall-Winter 1981): 103-15; John Bodnar, Roger Simon, and Michael P. Weber, *Lives of Their Own: Blacks, Italians, and Poles in Pittsburgh, 1900-1960* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 226.

14. "Report of the Mayor's Commission for

the Elimination of Smoke," 23-30; "List of Organizations Co-Operating on Smoke Elimination," in Papers of the Civic Club of Allegheny County, box 11, folder 182.

15. *Unione*, Jan. 17, Feb. 14, Apr. 25, 1941. For the Order Italian Sons and Daughters of America, see Ruggero J. Aldisert, "The Birth of the Order," unidentified article in the still unorganized records of the Order of Italian Sons and Daughters of America, AIS; "Purpose and Programs of the Order Italian Sons and Daughters of America," in Papers of the Order Italian Sons and Daughters of America, Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies, Philadelphia, PA.

16. *Unione*, Apr. 19, 1946; Sept. 26, Oct. 10, 1947; Sept. 9, 1949.

17. Interviews with Anthony L., Sandra F., and Thomas M. by the author, Nov. 1, 6, Oct. 30, 1991.

18. *Pittsburgh Press*, Feb. 3, 1948.

19. Sally O. Shames, "David L. Lawrence, Mayor of Pittsburgh: Development of a Political Leader" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1958), 212; US Bureau of the Census, *1950 Population Census Report: Census Tract Statistics: Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Adjacent Area* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1952), 97; transcript of an interview with Frank Ambrose by Thomas J. Donaghy, n.d. Apr. 1974, p. 14, in MPWOHC.

20. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, Feb. 11, 1948.

21. Interview with James L. by the author, Oct. 29, 1991.

22. John N. Hoffman, "Pennsylvania's Bituminous Coal Industry," *Pennsylvania History*, 45 (October 1978): 358; *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph*, Dec. 21, 1945; *Pittsburgh Press*, Apr. 10, 1947.

23. Interviews with Virginia P. and Julian D. by the author, Nov. 1, 7, 1991.

24. Roy Lubove, "Renaissance: Introduction," in *Pittsburgh*, ed. Lubove (New York: New Viewpoints, 1976), 177; Tarr and Lamperes, "Changing Fuel Use," 574; "Statement of Joseph M. Barr," in US Senate, 88th Congress, 1st Session, *Air Pollution Control: Hearings before a Special Subcommittee on Air and Water Pollution of the Committee on Public Works* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing

- Office, 1963), 127; *Unione*, Mar. 7, 1941.
25. "Pittsburgh Comes Out of the Smog," *Newsweek*, 34 (Sept. 26, 1949): 25-29; F. E. Schuchman, "Pittsburgh—'Smokeless City,'" *National Municipal Review*, 39 (Nov. 1950): 489-93, 506; Herrick Chapman, "Pittsburgh and Europe's Metallurgical Cities: A Comparison," in *City at the Point*, 427; Frank Hawkins, "Lawrence of Pittsburgh: Boss of the Mellon Patch," *Harper's Magazine*, 213 (Aug. 1956): 57.
26. *Unione*, Nov. 11, 1949; interviews with Terry N., Robert D., and Lawrence M. by the author, Nov. 5, 6, 9, 1991. The row votes are from the unpublished tabulation sheets in Voting Records of the Allegheny County Department of Elections.
27. Bruce M. Stave, *The New Deal and the Last Hurrah: Pittsburgh Machine Politics* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1970); Weber, *Don't Call Me Boss*, 65-85.
28. *Councilmanic Hand Book of Pittsburgh* (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh Printing Company, 1932-1946); US Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population, 1950: Characteristics of the Population* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1952), 2:201; employee card file, in Records of the Controller of Allegheny County, AIS. It has been assumed that the employees with Italian-sounding names listed in these sources were of Italian descent. For leads about how to infer the total number of the foreign-stock individuals of a nationality group from data about its foreign-born members, see Frederick W. Williams, "Recent Voting Behavior of Some Nationality Groups," *American Political Science Review*, 60 (June 1946): 528.
29. *Unione*, Jan. 18, 1946; *Pittsburgh Press*, Sept. 8, 1949.
30. US Bureau of the Census, *1950 Population Census Report: Census Tract Statistics*, 12.
31. Transcripts of interviews with Edward J. Leonard and Al Conway by Michael P. Weber, June 19, 1981 and Aug. 20, 1982, p. 11 and p. 24, in MPWOHC; interview with John F. by the author, Nov. 4, 1991; Lawrence, "Rebirth," 399.
32. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, Sept. 2, 1949. The row votes are from the unpublished tabulation sheets in Voting Records of the Allegheny County Department of Elections for the 1953 mayoral contest and from *The Pennsylvania Manual* (Harrisburg, PA: Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 1949 and 1953) for the 1948 and 1952 presidential elections.
33. Transcript of an interview with Robin, pp. 7-8, in SBOHC.
34. James C. Scott, "Corruption, Machine Politics, and Political Change," *American Political Science Review*, 63 (Dec. 1969): 1150, 1156-57; Raymond E. Wolfinger, "Why Political Machines Have Not Withered Away and Other Revisionist Thoughts," *Journal of Politics*, 34 (May 1972): 386-87, 395-96; Steven P. Erie, *Rainbow's End: Irish-Americans and the Dilemmas of Urban Machine Politics, 1840-1985* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 151, 166-69; Bodnar, Simon, and Weber, *Lives of Their Own*, 226; Bernard J. Frieden and Lynne B. Sagalyn, *Downtown, Inc.: How America Rebuilds Cities* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989); Samuel P. Hays with Barbara D. Hays, *Beauty, Health, and Permanence: Environmental Politics in the United States, 1955-1985* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).