A Tale of Two Cities: Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, and the Elusive Quest for a New Deal Majority in the Keystone State

The Needs of the Many . . .

IN RETROSPECT, the formation of a Democratic electoral majority in the 1930s—one that ruled American politics for two generations—seems almost to have been inevitable. The Great Depression, and then a world war, enabled Franklin D. Roosevelt to lay the foundations of the modern welfare state, drive much of the public policy debate, and unite Americans in war—and to some extent in peace. But a careful study of the national scene, as well as sensitivity to the nuances of community and state politics in Pennsylvania, paints a different picture.

The New Deal coalition was comprised of various interests with little in common beyond shared poverty and a profound admiration for President Roosevelt. Segregationist white southerners, northern blacks, Jews, Catholics, and unskilled workers who enlisted in the affiliates of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) maintained a tenuous alliance brokered by Roosevelt. On more than a few occasions, the New Deal coalition faltered, leading to both local and national Republican victories. Due to effective organization, cultural preferences, and political habit, among other factors, Republicans remained viable, and even strong, in states such as Pennsylvania.

Essential to Democratic victory were the children of southern and eastern European Roman Catholic and Jewish immigrants who clustered in the urban industrial centers of the North. With the advent of federal immigration-restriction legislation in 1921 (and again in 1924), ethnic urban wards largely ceased to be centers of transient male workers who had little desire to follow the moral exhortations of clergy, join labor

unions, and become voting citizens. Although nativist sentiment contributed to the passage of immigration-restriction laws, Catholics and Jews reaped unintended benefits. Improved neighborhood stability and the acquisition of English-language skills resulted from immigration restriction, since immigrants, if they chose not to return to Europe, learned to care about their surroundings while their children attended public or parochial schools. These developments in turn helped raise attendance at church and temple and made it possible to organize ethnically diverse workers who were generally speaking the same language by the 1930s.

In addition, high birthrates in ethnic neighborhoods contributed to the expansion of the American electorate. Between 1920 and 1936, the number of voters in the United States increased 40 percent. This electoral expansion was largely a northern urban phenomenon. For example, by 1940, 51 percent of New York's voters and 45 percent of Illinois's electorate were in New York City and Chicago, respectively. If there was any hope of Democrats winning Pennsylvania, they had to rack up large margins in Allegheny County (Pittsburgh) and Philadelphia County.[1]

Joining the immigrants were tens of thousands of southern blacks who had migrated north during and after World War I. As a result of black migration and Catholic and Jewish immigration, urban America became a political player with which to reckon. In 1950, for instance, Wayne County (Detroit) accounted for two-thirds of Michigan's Democratic voters and four hundred thousand of seven hundred thousand state CIO members. As political scientist Steven Erie has calculated, without the twelve largest cities powering their states to the Democratic column, Roosevelt's 449 Electoral College votes in 1940 would have been reduced to 237—29 short of reelection. Throughout the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, national and Keystone Democrats ardently courted Pittsburgh and Philadelphia voters.[2]

Contrary to popular perceptions of national unity, the American electorate of the 1930s and 1940s was one of the most polarized in history—particularly so in Pennsylvania. How much income one earned, whether

[1] Steven P. Erie, *Rainbow's End: Irish-Americans and the Dilemmas of Urban Machine Politics, 1840–1985* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA, 1988), 137; Kristi Andersen, *The Creation of a Democratic Majority, 1928–1936* (Chicago, 1979), 29.
[2] Erie, R*ainbow's End*, 137; Fay Calkins, *The CIO and the Democratic Party* (Chicago, 1952), 137; Samuel J. Eldersveld, "The Influence of Metropolitan Party Pluralities in Presidential Elections since 1920: A Study of Twelve Key Cities," *American Political Science Review* 43 (1949): 1189–206.

one had a job in a steel mill or law office, which church one attended, what part of the United States or Europe one's parents hailed from, and whether a person resided in a small town or major city all shaped political loyalties. When looking at Depression-era voting through the lens of religion, for example, it becomes apparent that Catholics represented one-quarter of all Democratic votes by 1940. Jews, though a smaller cohort, were the most loyal Roosevelt voters and CIO members. At the same time, Protestants, who far outnumbered Catholics and Jews, remained predominantly Republican—usually in the range of 60 percent outside Dixie. Nearly all Protestant Democrats were southern whites and northern blacks—as unlikely a duo as one could find in the twentieth century.[3]

State and local politics reveal even greater electoral instability. Pennsylvania, as a manufacturing state hit hard by the Great Depression, as well as a spawning ground of the CIO and home to two major cities and hundreds of thousands of blacks, Catholics, and Jews, should have been a New Deal bastion. The truth is far more complicated. Pennsylvania narrowly embraced Herbert Hoover in 1932, voted decisively for Roosevelt in 1936, and turned against Democrats in the 1938 midterm elections.

In contrast, the economically and demographically similar urban industrial states of Illinois, Michigan, and Ohio went Democratic in 1932. Although the 1938 midterm elections were also disappointing to Illinois, Michigan, and Ohio Democrats, the Roosevelt coalition remained more reliably victorious in those states than in Pennsylvania. Between 1932 and 1952, Democrats won presidential elections five times in Illinois and four times each in Michigan and Ohio. Pennsylvania went Democratic in three out of the six presidential elections. However, this is not to say that the Democratic margin of victory in Illinois, Michigan, and Ohio was typically spectacular. Rather, the salient point is that Republicans came up short more often in those states than in Pennsylvania.[4]

[3] Andersen, *Creation of a Democratic Majority*, 30, 41–42; Liston Pope, "Religion and the Class Structure," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 256 (1948): 84–91; Lawrence H. Fuchs, "American Jews and the Presidential Vote," in *American Ethnic Politics*, ed. Lawrence H. Fuchs (New York, 1968), 50–76; Nancy J. Weiss, *Farewell to the Party of Lincoln: Black Politics in the Age of FDR* (Princeton, NJ, 1983), 294.

[4] "Presidential Elections, 1789–2000," National Atlas of the United States, http://www.nationalatlas.gov.

The Keystone State remained more politically competitive than most of the industrial heartland between 1932 and 1952—due in part to the difficulty of breaking Philadelphia away from the Republican Party. At the same time, Pittsburgh moved firmly into the Democratic column. To understand the political dynamics shaping, and reshaping, Pennsylvania's political landscape, and to appreciate the tenuousness and contingency of party loyalty, this essay focuses largely on Pittsburgh and Philadelphia.[5]

The Best of Times: Pennsylvania before the Great Depression

Pennsylvania was an economic dynamo at the dawn of the twentieth century. Pennsylvania produced 60 percent of America's steel and employed three out of every five coal miners in the United States. Six million tons of iron ore and three million tons of coal came through Pittsburgh every year. Westinghouse, Mellon National Bank & Trust, U.S. Steel, Jones & Laughlin, ALCOA, H. J. Heinz, and Gulf Oil employed tens of thousands in the Iron City. Across the Keystone State in Philadelphia, the Pennsylvania Railroad helped create a transportation network that was the envy of the world. The "City of Brotherly Love" also housed numerous textile firms, which employed one-third of Philadelphia's workforce, and numerous metal-working, sugar-refining, and other industries that made it "the workshop of the world."[6]

In the years immediately preceding World War I, nearly a million immigrants, as well as thousands of southern black migrants, poured into Pennsylvania seeking employment. Two-thirds of Pittsburgh's residents were either immigrants or the children of immigrants. By 1920, Pittsburgh had the third largest Polish-immigrant "colony" in the nation and the distinction of being the largest Croatian city outside Europe. Of the 530,000 Slovaks who came to America prior to 1920, 100,000 settled in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County. A high percentage of the Iron City's immigrants were Roman Catholic, and the Diocese of Pittsburgh established a new parish every month for the first two decades of the twentieth

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[5] Edward F. Cooke, "Patterns of Voting in Pennsylvania Counties, 1944–1958," *Pennsylvania History* 27 (1960): 69–87; Eldersveld, "Influence of Metropolitan Party Pluralities in Presidential Elections," 1189–206.

[6] Paul B. Beers, P*ennsylvania Politics Today and Yesterday: The Tolerable Accommodation* (University Park, PA, 1980), 16–17; Caroline Golab, "The Immigrant and the City: Poles, Italians, and Jews in Philadelphia, 1870–1920," in *The Peoples of Philadelphia: A History of Ethnic Groups and Lower-Class Life, 1790–1940*, ed. Allen F. Davis and Mark H. Haller (Philadelphia, 1973), 212.

century. By 1930, Pittsburgh had a population of 670,000.[7]

Philadelphia attracted fewer Slavic Catholics than Pittsburgh, but it drew in far more Italian Catholics, eastern European Jews, and African Americans. In 1920, Philadelphia had 120,000 eastern European Jews—representing the second greatest concentration outside New York City as well as accounting for 70 percent of Pennsylvania's Jewish population. (The remaining 30 percent could be found largely in Pittsburgh.) Philadelphia's African American population in 1920 stood at 134,000, compared to Pittsburgh's 38,000. The black population of Philadelphia in 1920 surpassed that of Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, and Detroit.[8]

Pittsburgh was a patchwork quilt of African Americans, Croatians, Irish, Italians, Jews, Poles, Slovaks, Slovenians, and Ukrainians—with no group predominating. Philadelphia's 1.9 million residents in 1930 looked much different. At this end of the Keystone State there was an ethnic "Big Four"—African Americans, Irish, Italians, and Jews—as well as a smaller, yet significant, white Protestant population. Pittsburgh's white Protestants, in contrast, had mostly fled to the suburbs by the 1920s, or clustered in the East End neighborhoods of Point Breeze and Shadyside—some distance from the "Hunkietowns" of the South Side and Polish Hill.[9]

The steady influx of immigrants and southern black migrants in the early twentieth century made Pennsylvania one of the nation's most populous states. Of Pennsylvania's 6.3 million citizens in 1900, 28 percent were concentrated in the urban centers at either end of the state. Philadelphia ranked as the nation's third largest city while Pittsburgh held seventh place. By virtue of its population, Pennsylvania claimed the third greatest number of Electoral College votes at the end of the 1920s. Presidential candidates had to court the Keystone electorate and ensure that loyalists were mobilized in Allegheny and Philadelphia counties to win the state.[10]

As far as political allegiances went, Pennsylvania had not warmed to a

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[7] Kenneth J. Heineman, *A Catholic New Deal: Religion and Reform in Depression Pittsburgh* (University Park, PA, 1999), 83, 86–88.

[8] Golab, "Immigrant and the City," 204–6, 209, 211.

[9] Bruce M. Stave, *The New Deal and the Last Hurrah: Pittsburgh Machine Politics* (Pittsburgh, 1970), 42–43; James Borchert and Susan Borchert, "Downtown, Uptown, Out of Town: Diverging Patterns of Upper-Class Residential Landscapes in Buffalo, Pittsburgh, and Cleveland, 1885–1935," *Social Science History* 26 (2002): 311–46.

[10] Beers, *Pennsylvania Politics*, 17.

Democratic presidential candidate since 1856. Pennsylvania seldom sent
Democrats to the U.S. Senate—the last one having been selected by the
legislature in the early 1870s. There had not been a Democratic governor
since 1890. By 1930, Republicans led Democrats in voter registration by
a margin of nearly two million—with a large proportion of that majority
being from Philadelphia and Allegheny counties.[11]

More than a few Civil War–era Irish Catholic Democrats in
Philadelphia, most notably Alderman William McMullen, came to power
in alliance with criminal gangs. Philadelphia's Democratic organization
consolidated its power through arson, assassination, extortion, and
patronage. Democrats also stoked Irish hatred of white and black
Protestants. In 1838, a mob of three thousand Irish Catholics burned
Pennsylvania Hall, which served as an abolitionist meeting venue. Irish
rioters directly vented their rage against blacks in 1842 by burning the
Second African Presbyterian Church. During the 1844 "Kensington
Riots," Irish Catholics and native-born Protestants clashed violently,
leading to numerous deaths and injuries. Irish rioters also used a Catholic
church, St. Philip Neri, as a sniper's nest and weapons cache.[12]

Appalled by the 1871 murder of a black man who was attempting to
register African Americans to vote, Pennsylvania's Republican legislature
took away control of city and county jobs from Philadelphia Democrats.
With the police department under their control, Philadelphia
Republicans broke up the Irish gangs in the 1870s and subsequently
deprived Democrats of their muscle. Philadelphia Republicans also built
an extensive patronage operation and sought the votes of African
Americans, Italians, and Jews. At the state level, the Pennsylvania
Democratic Party all but collapsed. Lacking a strong state party appara-
tus and control of municipal and county jobs, Philadelphia Democrats
became so weak and faction-riven that Republicans paid the rent for their

[11] Richard C. Keller, *Pennsylvania's Little New Deal* (New York, 1982), 6, 129; Erie, *Rainbow's End*, 43; Jack Treadway, *Elections in Pennsylvania: A Century of Partisan Conflict in the Keystone State* (University Park, PA, 2005), 12, 34.

[12] David R. Johnson, "Crime Patterns in Philadelphia, 1840–1870," in *Peoples of Philadelphia*, 89–110; Maxwell Whiteman, "Philadelphia's Jewish Neighborhoods," in *Peoples of Philadelphia*, 237; Russell F. Weigley, "'A Peaceful City': Public Order in Philadelphia from Consolidation through the Civil War," in *Peoples of Philadelphia*, 155–73; Dennis Clark, *The Irish in Philadelphia: Ten Generations of Urban Experience* (Philadelphia, 1973), 106–25; Harry C. Silcox, *Philadelphia Politics from the Bottom Up: The Life of Irishman William McMullen, 1824–1901 (*London, 1989), 15–95; Sam Bass Warner, *The Private City: Philadelphia in Three Periods of Its Growth* (Philadelphia, 1968), 132–43.

party headquarters. Even more embarrassing, Philadelphia Republicans chose many of the candidates to run on the local Democratic ticket.[13]

Philadelphia and Pittsburgh had powerful Republican machines—unlike Democratic Boston and New York—that attracted national scorn. Muckraking journalist Lincoln Steffens castigated Pittsburgh Republicans as thieves governing a city that was "hell with the lid off." From his perch as a retired soldier of New York's corrupt Tammany Hall Democratic machine, George Washington Plunkitt recoiled from the excesses of Philadelphia Republicans. To the wonderment of commentators outside Pennsylvania, state Republican boss Boies Penrose of Philadelphia, a Harvard graduate, maintained power even as he imbibed barrels of bourbon and courted legions of prostitutes.[14]

Some small-town champions of Protestant morality grudgingly accepted that their Republican majority rested upon the likes of Penrose; consequently, they decried urban corruption while enjoying its political benefits. For his part, Republican reformer and Pennsylvania governor Gifford Pinchot spoke harshly of the Philadelphia machine leaders, describing them as "gangsters first and Republicans as a matter of convenience." Pinchot and his followers also had unkind words for such antireform leaders as Joseph Grundy of the Pennsylvania Manufacturers' Association. Pennsylvania's good-government advocates, however, had little choice but to cooperate with the politicians they despised. Pinchot, for instance, publicly attacked Grundy and privately accepted campaign donations from him.[15]

Protestant Republicans reserved special ire for South Philadelphia boss William Vare. According to Pinchot, Vare "represented everything that is bad in Pennsylvania." To the horror of good-government and temperance advocates outside the cities, Vare handed Philadelphia infrastructure projects over to favored contractors and accepted funds from liquor-industry lobbyists seeking to overturn Prohibition. (Outside Philadelphia, the liquor lobby preferred Democrats.) Vare's organization, which relied upon the 385,000 denizens of working-class South

[13] Whiteman, "Philadelphia's Jewish Neighborhoods," 237; Weigley, "'A Peaceful City,'" 155–73; Roger Lane, *Roots of Violence in Black Philadelphia, 1860–1900* (Cambridge, MA, 1986), 45–81.

[14] Beers, *Pennsylvania Politics*, 51–56. See William L. Riordon, *Plunkitt of Tammany Hall* (1905; New York, 1993), and Lincoln Steffens, *The Shame of the Cities* (1904; New York, 1967).

[15] Beers, *Pennsylvania Politics*, 62, 113; John F. Bauman, "Downtown versus Neighborhood: Focusing on Philadelphia in the Metropolitan Era, 1920–1980," *Pennsylvania History* 48 (1981): 3–20.

Philadelphia, was adept at protecting constituents from the enforcement of laws against gambling and the sale of alcohol. He also ensured that patronage funds kept his voters fed and sheltered. Good-government critics charged that Vare's operation wanted ethnic Italians to remain impoverished and, as a consequence, dependent upon the continued power of the Philadelphia Republican machine.[16]

Vare was not concerned with the sensibilities of Republicans in the hinterlands. In Congress in the 1920s, Vare was an advocate of working-class Catholics and Jews. He opposed immigration restriction, denounced religious and racial prejudice, and observed that his Jewish constituents had a better Protestant work ethic than most native-born white Americans.[17]

Few Protestant Republicans outside Philadelphia approved of Vare's advocacy for blacks, Italians, and Jews. At the same time, however, not many Irish Democrats in Philadelphia were interested in helping people outside their ethnic group. The Irish leadership of the Catholic Church in Philadelphia was little more concerned than the Irish Democrats with reaching out to Italian Catholics, let alone blacks and Jews. Dennis Cardinal Dougherty assigned Irish priests to Philadelphia's Italian-dominant parishes. To Dougherty, ministering to South Philadelphia Italians in the 1920s and 1930s was like engaging in "missionary work" to pagans. Then again, there were Irish priests who were not even willing to conduct missionary work and refused to baptize Italian babies. Not surprisingly, South Philadelphians held Dougherty in low esteem, burning him in effigy and taking to the streets to protest his closure of one of "their" churches in the 1930s.[18]

Given the power of the Philadelphia and Pittsburgh machines, the statewide dominance of the Republican Party, and the dynamic Keystone State economy at the end of the 1920s, few Pennsylvanians could have suspected that they were on the cusp of profound change. With the advent of the Great Depression, one Republican urban machine fell,

[16] John M. Allswang, *Bosses, Machines, and Urban Voters* (Baltimore, 1977), 28; Warner, *Private City*, 179–184; B*eers, Pennsylvania Politics*, 65; Treadway, *Elections in Pennsylvania*, 164.

[17] Beers, *Pennsylvania Politics*, 65; Sandra Featherman, "Jewish Politics in Philadelphia, 1920–1940," in *Jewish Life in Philadelphia, 1830–1940*, ed. Murray Friedman (Philadelphia, 1983), 279–80.

[18] Richard A. Varbero, "Philadelphia's South Italians in the 1920s," in *Peoples of Philadelphia*, 268–70; Richard N. Juliani, *Priest, Parish, and People: Saving the Faith in Philadelphia's "Little Italy"* (Notre Dame, IN, 2007), 290–308; James Wolfinger, *Philadelphia Divided: Race and Politics in the City of Brotherly Love* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2007), 18.

another struggled to retain power, and Democrats became competitive—but not dominant—statewide.

The Worst of Times: Pennsylvania and the Great Depression

The expanding American economy of the 1920s had masked its key weaknesses: reckless stock-market speculation, troubled farmers, wages that did not keep pace with rising productivity, and a growing dependence on mass consumption. This dependency was problematic given that 60 percent of the country lived at or below the subsistence level. By 1929, Wall Street was overdue for a market correction and demand for housing, automobiles, and other durables had been saturated—in spite of the introduction of minimal down payments and buying on time. With plunging sales, manufacturing took heavy blows. The national unemployment rate rose to 25 percent by 1933, marking the nadir of the Great Depression.[19]

States with large urban industrial centers keenly felt the economic downturn. Pennsylvania's unemployment rate reached 37 percent (1.5 million people) by 1932. That figure meant that Pennsylvania's proportion of idled workers stood well above the national average. There were an additional eight hundred thousand Pennsylvanians working part time who were not considered unemployed; they accounted for 21 percent of the state's labor force. Due to layoffs and the rising number of Pennsylvania coal miners and steel and textile workers who were employed on part-time status, industrial wages declined an average of 23 percent between 1929 and 1931. The decline in wages was well above average among the most important Pennsylvania employers. Between 1929 and 1932, for example, Westinghouse slashed wages 32 percent and U.S. Steel reduced compensation by 60 percent.[20]

Pittsburgh and Philadelphia were the faltering engines that drove Pennsylvania's dismal economic statistics. In the Iron City, real estate values plummeted 21 percent from 1936 to 1946. During the Depression

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[19] For insightful discussions of the economics underlying the advent of the Great Depression, see Anthony J. Badger, *The New Deal: The Depression Years, 1933–1940* (New York, 1989), and, William E. Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, 1932–1940* (New York, 1963).

[20] Beers, *Pennsylvania Politics*, 96; Heineman, *Catholic New Deal,* 5; James Olson, "Gifford Pinchot and the Politics of Hunger, 1932–1933," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 96 (1972): 508–20.

decade, industrial production fell 59 percent from its 1929 average. For the first time in 80 years, Allegheny's population grew in single digits—3 percent. The number of manufacturing workers in Pittsburgh decreased 20 percent between 1930 and 1940.[21]

Even in more prosperous times, Pittsburgh had the highest typhoid death rate in the United States—largely the result of polluted water. Indeed, there were so many toxins at the confluence of the Allegheny, Monongahela, and Ohio rivers that the Pennsylvania Railroad would not draw water there for fear that its locomotive boilers would corrode. Meanwhile, the smoke from steel mills and coking facilities forced the city to turn on the streetlights at noon. As the 1932 presidential election neared, Pittsburgh's skies and water were cleaner, but its residents had little to celebrate.[22]

Governor Pinchot and the Republican legislature tried, but failed, to assist Pennsylvania's struggling citizens. Pinchot expressed fear that a massive state expenditure on public-works programs would foster corruption if relief programs were left in the hands of local politicians. Republican legislators, when not advocating reduced state expenditures, wanted relief efforts to be controlled by patronage-hungry county-level allies. In any event, even if Pinchot ultimately accepted the trade-off between local control of public-works jobs and corruption, he wanted the federal government to bear relief costs, not Pennsylvania. Republican president Herbert Hoover, however, did not deliver the funds Pinchot sought. Meanwhile, the legislature proved unwilling to close the state revenue gap with corporate and income taxes; thus, it championed the levying of higher sales taxes. Such taxes would have placed great hardship on cash-strapped middle- and working-class Pennsylvanians, compelling them to pay more for fuel.[23]

At the national level, President Hoover attempted, through the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC), to direct federal funds

[21] Gregory J. Cowley, T*he Politics of Place: Contentious Urban Redevelopment in Pittsburgh* (Pittsburgh, 2005), 32–34; John Bodnar, Roger Simon, and Michael P. Weber, *Lives of Their Own: Blacks, Italians, and Poles in Pittsburgh, 1900–1960* (Urbana, IL, 1983), 185–86; Barbara Ferman, *Challenging the Growth Machine: Neighborhood Politics in Chicago and Pittsburgh* (Lawrence, KS, 1996), 46.

[22] Roy Lubove, *Twentieth-Century Pittsburgh: Government, Business, and Environmental Change* (New York, 1969), 13; Heineman, *Catholic New Deal*, 36.

[23] Olson, "Gifford Pinchot and the Politics of Hunger," 508–20; James Henwood, "Politics and Unemployment Relief, Pennsylvania, 1931–1939" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1975), 5, 6, 14.

toward the relief of banks. He hoped bankers would provide greater credit to industrial firms, which would then increase production and rehire workers. Although the RFC idea had merit, its benefits to ordinary people were slow to come, and it did little to resolve the fundamental problem of unemployment.[24]

In light of apparent Republican ineptitude at the federal and state levels, as well as the open disaffection of Pinchot's good-government followers, Franklin Roosevelt should have swept Pennsylvania. After all, in the comparable industrial states of Illinois, Michigan, and Ohio, Hoover's share of the popular vote was 42 percent, 44 percent, and 47 percent, respectively. Moreover, breaking with past practice, Democrats outspent Republicans in Pennsylvania. But despite the trends that favored Democrats, Pennsylvania was one of the six states Hoover carried in 1932—albeit by 51 percent compared to 65 percent in 1928.[25]

Philadelphia played a strong supporting role in Hoover's Keystone State win. In Hoover's 157,000 popular-vote margin of victory in Pennsylvania, Philadelphia accounted for 45 percent. Just over half of Philadelphia's Jewish voters went Republican in 1932. Nationally, 82 percent of Jewish voters chose Roosevelt. Ethnic Italians in Philadelphia voted Republican by a margin of 52.5 percent. In cities such as Boston and New York, in 1932, Italian Americans went Democratic at rates at, or greater than, 80 percent. Meanwhile, 73 percent of Philadelphia's black voters supported Hoover. This figure, however, was not out of line with the black Republican vote in Chicago (75 percent), Detroit (67 percent), and most northern urban centers.[26]

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[24] Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal*, 13–16, 71–72.

[25] E. Jeffrey Ludwig, "Pennsylvania: The National Election of 1932," *Pennsylvania History* 31 (1964): 334–51; Treadway, *Elections in Pennsylvania*, 111, 113; Keller, *Pennsylvania's Little New Deal*, 129. Percentages for various Pennsylvania elections are drawn from the total recorded vote for all candidates, including those from third parties. Some works prefer to calculate election percentages using just Democrats and Republicans and apportioning the results between the two. In this essay, I opted to use the figures reported for total turnout as drawn from the Wilkes University Election Statistics Project, Pennsylvania Election Statistics: 1682–2006, http://staffweb.wilkes.edu/harold.cox/gov/index.html.

[26] Ludwig, "Pennsylvania: The National Election of 1932," 334–51; John L. Shover, "The Emergence of a Two-Party System in Republican Philadelphia, 1924–1936," *Journal of American History* 60 (1974): 985–1002; John L. Shover, "Ethnicity and Religion in Philadelphia Politics, 1924–1940," *American Quarterly* 25 (1973): 499–515; Weiss, *Farewell to the Party of Lincoln*, 206; Stefano Luconi, "Machine Politics and the Consolidation of the Roosevelt Majority: The Case of Italian Americans in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 15 (1996): 32–59; Wolfinger, *Philadelphia Divided*, 31.

Keystone Republicans maintained the loyalties of Pennsylvania's rural white Protestants and largely tamped down ethnic and racial defections in Philadelphia. E. Washington Rhodes, the publisher of the *Philadelphia Tribune*, an African American newspaper, urged blacks to vote Republican since the Democrats were the party of southern segregation and disenfranchisement. Not having the advantage of knowing Roosevelt as a progressive governor—unlike the 51 percent of New York City black voters who went Democratic in 1932—Philadelphia's African American electorate chose Hoover.[27]

As far as Philadelphia's Jews and Italians were concerned, there were several likely reasons they voted for Hoover. First, the Republican machine, although declining in power as William Vare's health worsened, remained a force in white ethnic neighborhoods like South Philadelphia. With twenty-five thousand city jobs in its political arsenal, ethnic Italians, Jews, and blacks had incentive to vote Republican—especially in a time of mounting unemployment in the private sector. Democrats also alleged that the Republicans distributed cash at the polls. Bribing voters would have been in keeping with the machine's ethos, so the allegations cannot easily be dismissed. Finally, the city's disorganized Democrats—who were mainly Irish Catholics—made little effort to reach out to Italians and Jews. The one saving grace for Democrats was that while the relationship among Philadelphia's Irish, Italians, and Jews had been strained, it had never attained the level of violence recorded between the Irish and African Americans.[28]

In the western end of Pennsylvania, 1932 marked the fall of the Pittsburgh Republican machine. Democratic boss David Lawrence, a Pittsburgh native of modest Irish Catholic origins, recognized that his party could not afford the ethnic, racial, and religious divisions that plagued Philadelphia—and, especially, Boston and New York. The Democratic machine Lawrence wanted to build in Allegheny County would be open to all. Emerging figures in organized labor, notably United Mine Workers' (UMW) vice president Philip Murray, concurred with Lawrence. (When Murray came to lead the Steel Workers' Organizing Committee—or SWOC—he championed an inclusive labor movement

[27] Wolfinger, *Philadelphia Divided*, 32; Weiss, *Farewell to the Party of Lincoln*, 206; Shover, "Ethnicity and Religion in Philadelphia Politics," 499–515.

[28] Ludwig, "Pennsylvania: The National Election of 1932," 334–51; Shover, "Emergence of a Two-Party System in Republican Philadelphia," 985–1002; Luconi, "Machine Politics and the Consolidation of the Roosevelt Majority," 32–59; Wolfinger, *Philadelphia Divided*, 26, 29.

and embraced Roosevelt.) Bishop Hugh Boyle of Pittsburgh, whose nephew and namesake worked for Lawrence, championed the cause of organized labor and made common cause with blacks and Jews. Lawrence, Murray, and Boyle were more aggressive in their outreach efforts than their Irish counterparts in Philadelphia and most other east coast cities.[29]

Thanks to Lawrence, Murray, and Boyle, Allegheny County went Democratic. Working-class Pittsburgh neighborhoods voted for Roosevelt, with Republican strength isolated in a handful of upper-income Protestant wards. Pittsburgh Italians, unlike their Philadelphia kin, voted for Roosevelt by 62 percent, as opposed to 47.5 percent. Iron City Jews, as was true in Boston, Chicago, and New York, but not Philadelphia, turned out decisively for Roosevelt.[30]

Among the first Jewish Democrats elected to Congress from western Pennsylvania were graduates of Duquesne University—the city's chief Catholic institution of higher education. Samuel Weiss, whose constituents were overwhelmingly of Slavic Catholic ancestry, had been a star Duquesne football player. Before his election to Congress, Duquesne law school graduate Henry Ellenbogen served as Lawrence's legal advisor and political legman. (Philadelphia's Catholic colleges did not provide such ecumenical political glue during the 1920s and 1930s.) Tellingly, it became a tradition in Pittsburgh for Jewish bakeries to make clover-green bagels every St. Patrick's Day. Even in Boston and New York, where Irish Catholics and Jews championed Roosevelt, cultural tensions hamstrung full political cooperation and rendered "Green Bagel Democrats" an improbable phenomenon.[31]

Unlike the overwhelming majority of black voters in Philadelphia and most other northern cities, Pittsburgh's African American electorate moved toward Roosevelt in 1932. There were at least three factors that pointed Pittsburgh's black voters toward the Democrats four years ahead of their northern cousins. First, Robert Vann, the publisher of the nation-

[29] For extensive discussions of the rise of Pittsburgh's Democratic machine, see Heineman, *Catholic New Deal*; Stave, *New Deal and the Last Hurrah*; Ferman, *Challenging the Growth Machine*; and Erie, *Rainbow's End*.

[30] Luconi, "Machine Politics and the Consolidation of the Roosevelt Majority," 32–59; Stave, *New Deal and the Last Hurrah*, 45–49; Fuchs, "American Jews and the Presidential Vote," 50–76.

[31] Heineman, *Catholic New Deal*, 18, 104. For eastern seaboard Irish-Jewish tensions in the 1930s, see Erie, R*ainbow's End*; Gerald H. Gamm, *The Making of New Deal Democrats: Voting Behavior and Realignment in Boston, 1920–1940* (Chicago, 1989); and Ronald H. Bayor, *Neighbors in Conflict: The Irish, Germans, Jews, and Italians of New York City, 1929–1941* (Baltimore, 1978).

ally prominent black newspaper the *Pittsburgh Courier*, argued that the time had come for African Americans to turn "the picture of Lincoln to the wall" and give Democrats a chance. In light of Vann's longstanding crusade against southern Democratic racial discrimination and disenfranchisement, his endorsement of Roosevelt was no small gesture to Pittsburgh's black voters.[32]

Second, Pittsburgh's history of race relations was, and continued to be, far more harmonious than was the case for Philadelphia. In Pittsburgh, there was not one single contiguous black ghetto. Rather, Pittsburgh had several scattered black neighborhoods, some poor and others working and middle class. Although these black neighborhoods stood apart from white neighborhoods, it was also true that residents of Polish Hill did not rent or sell homes to anyone from Little Italy. There seemed to be less friction in a city where ethnic neighborhoods were often separated by rivers, ravines, and steep hills. Flatter cities such as Cleveland, Detroit, and Philadelphia frequently had less well-marked ethnic and racial borders and, perhaps subsequently, more ethnic and racial collisions. Pittsburgh's slogan might have been Good Ravines Make Good Neighbors—and Cooperative New Deal Democrats.[33]

The third and final point is perhaps the most significant. Lawrence had a reputation for fairness before the Great Depression, a reputation that grew greater during the crisis of the 1930s. He groomed Paul Jones, an African American and Duquesne graduate, for election to the Pennsylvania house and then to the Pittsburgh city council in the 1940s and 1950s. As Pittsburgh mayor and as Pennsylvania governor, Lawrence fought discrimination in hiring and public accommodations. Students of politics came to regard the Pittsburgh Democratic machine as a model of civility and effectiveness that outshone even the legendary Chicago organization.[34]

[32] Heineman, *Catholic New Deal*, 30–32. The definitive treatment of Vann is Andrew Buni, *Robert L. Vann of the* Pittsburgh Courier: *Politics and Black Journalism* (Pittsburgh, 1974).

[33] Bodnar, Simon, and Weber, *Lives of Their Own*, 206, 209, 231; Laurence Glasco, "Double Burden: The Black Experience in Pittsburgh," in *City at the Point: Essays on the Social History of Pittsburgh*, ed. Samuel P. Hays (Pittsburgh, 1989), 79–80; Ferman, *Challenging the Growth Machine*, 22.

[34] Erie, *Rainbow's End*, 116–17, 165; Ferman, *Challenging the Growth Machine*, 42–43; Heineman, *Catholic New Deal*, 105–6; Ida Cohen Selavan, *My Voice Was Heard* (New York, 1981), 217–20.

*Madame Defarge, Meet Joe Grundy: Pennsylvania's Democratic
Revolution, 1933–36*

Lawrence wasted no time building on his Pittsburgh machine's 1932 victory. Increasing Democratic voter registration was vital to securing Pittsburgh and Allegheny County. While nationally the electorate expanded 40 percent between 1920 and 1936, in Allegheny County the number of voters rose 180 percent. Significantly, where 69 percent of Allegheny County voters went Republican in 1920, 66 percent opted for Democrats by 1936. Such numbers meant that Republicans disappeared from both Pittsburgh's mayoral office and the city council.[35]

The elimination of Republicans from the Pittsburgh city council was all the easier thanks, ironically, to its earlier efforts to blackball Democrats. During the Progressive Era, the Republican legislature had assisted reformers in shifting Pittsburgh from ward-based to at-large city council elections. Lacking the funds, name recognition, and the voters to mount citywide council races, Democratic saloonkeepers gave way to Republican lawyers. By the 1930s, Lawrence mobilized a legion of Democrats who had been in diapers when the Republicans had staged their coup. In 1939, Republicans lost their remaining council representative. It was ironic that the Republican establishment's at-large election initiative in the Progressive Era doomed its heirs once Democrats gained overwhelming numbers and became fully mobilized. Pittsburgh's Democratic machine became the new establishment. Catholic churches in the Pittsburgh diocese were on board for the Lawrence revolution and offered their parish halls to union and Democratic Party organizers.[36]

Lawrence's objective at the state level in 1934 was to elect Democrats to the U.S. Senate and the governor's office while gaining control of Pennsylvania's U.S. House delegation. Since Pennsylvania Democrats had been out of power so long, Lawrence lacked a "bench" upon which to draw. This state of affairs led Lawrence to emphasize Roosevelt's outstanding qualities and to say as little as possible about the Democrats' lackluster statewide candidates.

Democratic gubernatorial candidate George Earle was one such character. Lawrence believed that Earle brought little to the table other than

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[35] Treadway, *Elections in Pennsylvania*, 219.

[36] Samuel P. Hays, *American Political History as Social Analysis: Essays* (Knoxville, TN, 1980), 207–13.

being an heir to the Pennsylvania Sugar Company fortune. While Earle could fund much of his campaign—and contribute to other Democratic candidates—Lawrence saw him as lacking energy and intellect. As the election unfolded, the Philadelphia Republican machine managed to keep Earle just below the 50 percent mark, leaving it to Allegheny County to provide his entire 66,239 vote margin of victory.[37]

The 1934 U.S. Senate race proved easier for Pennsylvania Democrats. Joseph Guffey, a national Democratic committeeman, had more political experience than Earle. Guffey also had sufficient wealth—from oil speculation—to finance his campaign. Most importantly, Republican incumbent David Reed of Pittsburgh was a wounded opponent. In the 1920s, Reed had been active in legislative efforts to restrict Catholic and Jewish immigration. As an attorney, Reed associated with industrialists whose response to workers' pleas for better wages was to deride them as communists. Guffey triumphed over Reed by 127,124 votes—with 68 percent of his margin of victory coming from Allegheny County. Although Philadelphia County went to Reed, he won there by just 3,012 votes—underscoring the deteriorating political environment for Republicans on the state ticket.[38]

Beyond a U.S. Senate seat and the governor's office, Pennsylvania Democrats gained control of their congressional delegation, claiming twenty-three U.S. House seats to eleven for Republicans. Given that there had been only three Pennsylvania Democrats in the U.S. House in 1930 and none in 1928, the 1934 election was a notable turnaround. Democrats also won the state house, the first time in nearly sixty years and an absolute necessity if they were going to enact a "Little New Deal" for Pennsylvania.[39]

Despite Democratic gains in 1934, the Republicans remained viable. The Pennsylvania state senate was a bastion of small-town, Protestant conservatism and could hamstring the Democratic legislative agenda. Pennsylvania Democrats also had to confront a Philadelphia Republican machine that refused to die and that made the attainment of statewide

[37] Beers, *Pennsylvania Politics*, 120, 129; Pennsylvania Election Statistics: 1682–2006, "Pennsylvania Gubernatorial Election Returns 1934."

[38] William J. McKenna, "The Negro Vote in Philadelphia Elections," *Pennsylvania History* 32 (1965): 406–15; Keller, P*ennsylvania's Little New Deal,* 136; Heineman, *Catholic New Deal*, 38, 65; Pennsylvania Election Statistics: 1682–2006, "Pennsylvania Senatorial Election Returns 1934."

[39] Beers, *Pennsylvania Politics*, 122; Philip Jenkins, T*he Cold War at Home: The Red Scare in Pennsylvania, 1945–1960* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1999), 46.

Democratic electoral victories difficult. Illinois and Michigan Democrats, while also contending with conservative rural Protestants, did not have to defend against an urban Republican machine doling out patronage to the party faithful.

Philadelphia's 1935 mayoral race proved instructive to Democrats. Although the Republican machine paid its final respects to Vare in 1934, S. Davis Wilson proved a capable mayoral candidate. Wilson had the ability to embrace both sides of an issue and come off as being sincere. He also knew when to throw national Republican candidates overboard, as Wilson did in 1932 when he campaigned for Roosevelt. Moreover, Wilson was a master of Philadelphia political discourse, calling foes "dirty rats" and "bare-faced liars." On the campaign trail in 1935 Wilson condemned out-of-control federal spending. As mayor in 1936, he helped ensure that forty thousand of his constituents were on the rolls of the Works Progress Administration (WPA).[40]

Having registered 179,000 new voters after the 1932 election, Philadelphia Democrats thought they had found the perfect candidate in millionaire contractor and Olympic gold medalist John Kelly. A foe of discrimination—having been excluded himself from the upper reaches of Philadelphia Protestant society—Kelly made overtures to Italians, Jews, and African Americans. He also found places for a few non-Irish candidates further down the Democratic slate.[41]

Yet, Kelly came up short. Unlike Lawrence in Pittsburgh, Kelly did not have a Catholic bishop, a squad of reform-minded priests, and a score of labor organizers beating the drum for Democrats. As the Philadelphia returns came in, 56 percent of black voters and half of Philadelphia's ethnic Italian electorate supported Wilson. Italians believed that Republican Protestants were more likely to find them patronage jobs and treat them with respect than their own religious brethren. Philadelphia Democrats tried to console themselves by observing that Kelly had given Wilson the tightest mayoral race in decades, keeping the winning

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[40] Margaret B. Tinkcom, "Depression and War, 1929–1946," in *Philadelphia: A 300-Year History*, ed. Russell F. Weigley (New York, 1982), 612–13; John P. Rossi, "Philadelphia's Forgotten Mayor: S. Davis Wilson," *Pennsylvania History* 51 (1984): 154–66.

[41] Rossi, "Philadelphia's Forgotten Mayor," 154–66; John P. Rossi, "The Kelly-Wilson Mayoralty Election of 1935," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 107 (1983): 171–93; Luconi, "Machine Politics and the Consolidation of the Roosevelt Majority," 32–59; Tinkcom, "Depression and War," 621; Featherman, "Jewish Politics in Philadelphia," 279; Wolfinger, *Philadelphia Divided*, 35.

Republican margin to forty-five thousand votes. This was not much con-
solation since Republicans won all twenty-two city council seats. Kelly's
allies also claimed that the Republican machine committed massive vot-
ing fraud, but did not provide evidence that could stand up in a court of
law.[42]

In the run-up to the 1936 presidential campaign, Pennsylvania indus-
trialists stood at the forefront of state and national efforts to defeat
Roosevelt. Joe Grundy of the Pennsylvania Manufacturers' Association, as
well as the Pew family (Sun Oil), broke all previous spending records. In
newspaper stories and campaign flyers, Grundy and the Pews associated
Roosevelt and labor leaders with communism and corruption. For their
efforts, Republicans carried two New England states. Just eighty-eight
Republicans remained in the U.S. House and sixteen in the U.S. Senate.[43]

As was true nationally, a majority of Pennsylvania voters responded
favorably to federal work relief efforts and color-blind hiring practices.
Hundreds of thousands of working-class citizens also appreciated the role
Keystone Democrats played in eliminating the Coal and Iron Police—a
corporate-sponsored anti-union paramilitary force. Demonstrating their
high regard for Roosevelt, 75 percent of Pittsburgh's black voters went
Democratic. A smaller majority of Philadelphia's black electorate (62 per-
cent) voted Democratic for the first time. (Philadelphia Republican leaders
encouraged black voters to follow their hearts at the presidential level but
pleaded with them to reject Democrats for city and county office).[44]

With the defection of Philadelphia Italians to Roosevelt (69 percent),
combined with the support of blacks and Jews (77 percent), the president
won the county by 209,876 votes. Even Mayor Wilson endorsed
Roosevelt. For the first time since 1832, Allegheny and Philadelphia
counties simultaneously went Democratic. Thanks to Roosevelt's coat-
tails, the state senate fell to the Democrats and the congressional delegation
would now have seven Republicans to twenty-seven Democrats.
Pennsylvania voter turnout rose from just over 50 percent in 1932 to 73

[42] Rossi, "Philadelphia's Forgotten Mayor," 154–66; Rossi, "Kelly-Wilson Mayoralty Election of
1935," 171–93; Luconi, "Machine Politics and the Consolidation of the Roosevelt Majority," 32–59;
Tinkcom, "Depression and War," 621; Featherman, "Jewish Politics in Philadelphia," 279; Weiss,
Farewell to the Party of Lincoln, 293.
[43] Heineman, *Catholic New Deal,* 98, 106; Jenkins, *Cold War at Home*, 179.
[44] Heineman, *Catholic New Deal*, 106; Beers, *Pennsylvania Politics*, 122–24; Thomas H. Coode
and John F. Bauman, *People, Poverty, and Politics: Pennsylvanians during the Great Depression*
(Lewisburg, PA, 1981), 237; McKenna, "Negro Vote in Philadelphia Elections," 406–15; Wolfinger,
Philadelphia Divided, 52.

percent in 1936, with the bulk of these additional voters going Democratic. Roosevelt received 57 percent of Pennsylvania's popular vote. In Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, Roosevelt's vote share was 65 percent and 60 percent, respectively. Of Roosevelt's 663,787-vote margin of victory, Pittsburgh and Philadelphia accounted for 60 percent.[45]

In the happy glow of the 1936 landslide, Keystone Democrats miscalculated their future electoral prospects. Republicans in Philadelphia retained a voter registration advantage of eighty-six thousand over Democrats. Further, many Philadelphia blacks and ethnic Italians were still willing to listen to Republican appeals at the state and county level. Keystone Democrats also should have kept in mind that a great deal could change in the two years leading up to the 1938 midterm elections. Republican attacks on unions and Democratic political corruption could gain traction. Moreover, Pennsylvania Democrats would not have Roosevelt's electoral coattails.[46]

Thermidor: The Conservative Reaction, 1937–40

In 1936, organized labor seemed poised to go from victory to victory. The CIO moved into the Philadelphia textile sector, while SWOC president Philip Murray personally assured African American leaders (in 1937) that he believed in racial equality. The CIO also recruited successfully within the corporate behemoth of U.S. Steel and, with John L. Lewis, Murray, and Sidney Hillman in the advance guard, raised hundreds of thousands of dollars from union affiliates to reelect Roosevelt. Moreover, the Democratic Party organizations in Michigan and Pennsylvania were extensions, respectively, of the United Automobile Workers (UAW) and SWOC. (In Illinois, the CIO played a subordinate role to the Cook County Democratic machine, while in Ohio, auto, mine, rubber, and steel affiliates squabbled so viciously that statewide Democratic candidates felt safe in paying them little more than lip service.)[47]

[45] Rossi, "Philadelphia's Forgotten Mayor," 154–66; Shover, "Emergence of a Two-Party System in Republican Philadelphia," 985–1002; Luconi, "Machine Politics and the Consolidation of the Roosevelt Majority," 32–59; Wolfinger, *Philadelphia Divided*, 52, 172; Treadway, *Elections in Pennsylvania*, 39, 114, 219, 268; Jenkins, *Cold War at Home*, 46; Pennsylvania Election Statistics: 1682–2006, "Presidential Election Returns 1936."

[46] Tinkcom, "Depression and War," 623.

[47] Thomas T. Spencer, "'Labor Is with Roosevelt': The Pennsylvania Labor Non-Partisan League and the Election of 1936," *Pennsylvania History* 46 (1979): 3–16; Calkins, *CIO and the Democratic Party*, 29, 3; Wolfinger, *Philadelphia Divided*, 40–41.

Given the heights the CIO had scaled in 1936, its fall from grace in 1937 was precipitous. In the winter of 1936–37, the UAW takeover of General Motors's shops in Flint, Michigan, using the new tactic of the sit-down strike, appeared communistic to thousands of middle-class voters. When Frank Murphy, Michigan's Democratic governor, expressed his support for the increasingly controversial UAW, conservative anger mounted.[48]

In Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Illinois, SWOC went on the offensive. Although U.S. Steel recognized SWOC, smaller mills such as Republic Steel resisted. During the spring of 1937, violence erupted in such communities as Johnston, Pennsylvania, and Massillon, Ohio. Some Ohio SWOC organizers dynamited the homes of those who refused to go on strike, and Republic Steel managers directed the city and county police officers in the company's unofficial employ to shoot picketers. Governor Earle tried to keep Pennsylvania state government neutral, but he succeeded only in angering partisans on both sides. In Ohio, Democratic governor Martin Davey, who had no allegiance to the CIO, denounced strikers as communists and sent the National Guard to arrest SWOC organizers. As happened in Michigan, many Ohioans and Pennsylvanians blamed CIO leaders, rather than corporate executives, for fomenting violence.[49]

Lewis bore a great deal of responsibility for the anti-CIO backlash in Pennsylvania. He pushed SWOC into a strike against the smaller mills without first building local support. Midsized communities such as Johnstown divided bitterly, with white and black Protestant steelworkers opposing SWOC and Catholics joining the strike. Even then, the majority of Johnstown Catholics stood aside, leery of the SWOC organizers, most of whom were UMW outsiders. To Murray's dismay, Lewis also recruited communists who were zealous organizers but unacceptable to rank-and-file Catholic steelworkers. The presence of communist SWOC organizers in Pennsylvania and Ohio assisted antiunion executives in red-baiting strikers and further isolating them from their neighbors.[50]

On the political front, Lewis used his mine-worker operatives at the county level to decide who was hired as WPA pick-and-shovel workers,

    [48] Heineman, *Catholic New Deal*, 116–17.
    [49] Ibid., 120, 124–30.
    [50] Heineman, *Catholic New Deal*, 127–30, 134, 139; Curtis Miner, "United by Right, Divided by Fear: Johnstown and the 1937 Steel Strike," Johnstown Area Heritage Association Documentary, Johnstown, PA, 1993.

placing greater emphasis on applicants' political loyalties than their financial needs. More worrisome, Lewis was determined to elevate Lieutenant Governor Thomas Kennedy to the governor's chair in 1938. Kennedy's chief qualification for higher office was that he had been a UMW subordinate of Lewis's. Lawrence was appalled, fearing that Kennedy and Lewis were going to bring down the Keystone Democrats amid charges of cronyism and corruption.[51]

Senator Guffey, who had allied with Lewis against Lawrence, caused more public relations problems for Democrats in Pennsylvania. To Guffey, Pennsylvania's three hundred thousand WPA jobs, especially the three thousand higher-paid administrative slots, existed to reward loyalists and generate votes—especially in Philadelphia, where his lieutenants targeted blacks and ethnic Italians. Given these political considerations, Guffey wanted only Democrats hired on federal public works projects. The senator also believed that increasing WPA employment weeks before an election was smart politics. Guffey, and Earle for that matter, had few qualms about requiring state workers to kick back a portion of their paychecks to Democratic coffers—a practice in Pennsylvania known as "macing." Government employees understood that those who did not "mace" would have no place.[52]

In 1938, Democratic demoralization and Republican anger, building on a national recession in 1937 that erased much of the economic recovery recorded since 1933, crippled the party of Roosevelt. The fact that Philadelphia's black Democratic vote fell five percentage points from its 1936 tally made a bad political environment for Pennsylvania Democrats a little worse. Republicans reclaimed control of the Pennsylvania congressional delegation, nineteen seats to fifteen. The Keystone GOP also won back the governor's office, as well as the state house and senate. Governor Earle's effort to win a U.S. Senate seat held by Republican James Davis came up short by 403,849 votes. Earle performed poorly in Allegheny and Philadelphia counties, underscoring that Democratic candidates who

[51] Beers, *Pennsylvania Politics*, 134; Alfred L. Morgan, "The Significance of Pennsylvania's 1938 Gubernatorial Election," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 102 (1978): 184–211; Coode and Bauman, *People, Poverty, and Politics*, 171.

[52] Beers, *Pennsylvania Politics*, 130; Coode and Bauman, *People, Poverty, and Politics*, 170; Priscilla Clement, "The Works Progress Administration in Pennsylvania, 1935 to 1940," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 95 (1971): 244–60; Bruce Martin Stave, "The New Deal, the Last Hurrah, and the Building of an Urban Political Machine: Pittsburgh Committeemen, A Case Study," *Pennsylvania History* 33 (1966): 460–83; Henwood, "Politics and Unemployment Relief," 116; Wolfinger, *Philadelphia Divided*, 47–49.

could not rack up decisive margins in Pennsylvania's two most urban counties were destined to lose statewide elections.[53]

Organized labor's prospects in the industrial heartland appeared little brighter than those of Pennsylvania Democrats after the 1938 midterm elections. Governor Murphy, the UAW's invaluable ally in Michigan, would never again hold elective office, while Ohio sent Republican Robert A. Taft to the U.S. Senate, where he became a national leader of antiunion forces. Aside from the important union victories in 1937 against the largest steel and automobile manufacturers—U.S. Steel and General Motors—the CIO lost both organizational and political momentum.

Pennsylvania textile workers were even less sure footed than their counterparts in auto and steel. Although Philadelphia textile workers secured collective bargaining rights in the 1930s, their victory proved hollow. Unlike auto and steel companies which had enormous investment in physical plant, textile manufacturers were not place bound. They accelerated their departure for the nonunion, low-wage South—ultimately leaving the United States.[54]

Many commentators concluded that Lewis's confrontational tactics and abuse of the WPA in 1938 had bloodied Keystone Democrats. With his vocal opposition to Roosevelt's efforts to aid Great Britain against Nazi German aggression in 1940, Lewis further weakened the appeal of the Democratic Party. Fortunately for Democrats, Lewis overplayed his hand by pledging to resign the CIO presidency if voters elected Roosevelt to a third term. The overwhelming majority of CIO members chose Roosevelt, forcing a boxed-in Lewis to surrender leadership of the union to Philip Murray.[55]

Keystone Republicans—with the assistance of Charles Margiotti, a politically ambitious state attorney general who blamed Lawrence when he did not receive the Democratic gubernatorial nomination—were intent upon making the Pittsburgher the final political casualty of the

[53] Treadway, *Elections in Pennsylvania*, 219, 268; Weiss, *Farewell to the Party of Lincoln*, 287, 293; Morgan, "Significance of Pennsylvania's 1938 Gubernatorial Election," 184–211; Jenkins, *Cold War at Home*, 46; Pennsylvania Election Statistics: 1682–2006, "Pennsylvania Senatorial Election Returns 1938."

[54] Tinkcom, "Depression and War," 619. Decades later, Pennsylvania steel mills either followed the lead of the textile firms or went bankrupt.

[55] Irving Bernstein, "John L. Lewis and the Voting Behavior of the C.I.O.," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 5 (1941): 233–49.

1938 backlash. Conservatives accused the Democratic state chair (1934–45) of corruption and brought him to trial twice—in 1939 and 1940. Both times Lawrence was acquitted. Whether or not Republicans believed in the veracity of the charges they leveled against Lawrence was irrelevant. They knew Lawrence was the one leader who could rebuild the Democratic Party in Pennsylvania. If conservatives could distract Lawrence with indictments for a few years, it would be nearly as good as sending him to prison. Still, Keystone Republicans might have reflected that it was one thing to win an election on the basis of criminal allegations; it was another matter to maintain momentum.[56]

Brumaire: The Democratic Coup, 1941–58

The dependency of Keystone Democrats on Roosevelt's electoral coattails was painfully evident in the 1940s. While it was not unusual for the strong top of the national ticket to bring along weaker state-level candidates, Roosevelt provided Keystone Democrats not only his coattails, but his entire wardrobe. Only Roosevelt's position at the top of the ballot in 1940 enabled Democrats to recapture the Pennsylvania state house. Without Roosevelt on the ballot in 1942, Democrats again forfeited that branch of the legislature. They remained sidelined in Harrisburg through the end of the decade. So too, Democrats took back the majority of the Pennsylvania congressional delegation in 1940, then reverted to the minority two years later. After the 1946 midterm election, Republicans outnumbered Democrats twenty-eight to five in Pennsylvania's congressional delegation.[57]

Senator Guffey won reelection in 1940 with just 52 percent of the vote. Allegheny and Philadelphia counties turned out for Roosevelt and pulled Guffey through in the process. In 1944, with Roosevelt standing yet again for reelection, Democrat Francis Myers defeated Republican senatorial incumbent James Davis by less than twenty-four thousand votes. Allegheny and Philadelphia counties went to Roosevelt and thereby made possible the Democratic senatorial victory. Davis came up short in Philadelphia in part because the city's black and Jewish voters recorded their highest tallies to date for Roosevelt—68 percent and 89 percent, respectively. They invariably voted a straight Democratic ticket.

[56] Morgan, "Significance of Pennsylvania's 1938 Gubernatorial Election," 184–211.
[57] Jenkins, *Cold War at Home*, 46; Treadway, *Elections in Pennsylvania*, 166.

Philadelphia's Democratic leaders had made a point of reminding Jewish voters of Davis's earlier unwillingness to assist Great Britain in its war against Nazi Germany.[58]

In spite of the support black Philadelphia gave to Democrats at the national level, local developments kept Republican hopes alive. In 1943, Philadelphia Democrats ran a flawed mayoral candidate, William Bullitt Jr. On the surface, Bullitt had two great strengths. As a millionaire he could self-fund his campaign. Further, the Philadelphia native had served in the Roosevelt administration as an ambassador to the Soviet Union and France.

Bullitt's self-destructive behavior, however, boosted Republican incumbent Bernard Samuel, himself a one-time soldier in William Vare's organization. Bullitt was no stranger to divorce court, having been married three times—one of his wives being the widow of John Reed, a champion of the 1917 communist revolution in Russia. Moreover, his campaign rhetoric was intemperate and off-putting even by Philadelphia standards, as he hurled charges of Nazism, fascism, and racism against political foes.[59]

Many socially conservative, anticommunist Irish and Italian Catholics recoiled from Bullitt, giving him just 45 percent and 34 percent, respectively, of their votes. (Bullitt's performance stood in sharp contrast to 1940 when Roosevelt had rallied the ethnic Irish and Italians in Philadelphia, receiving 58 percent and 60 percent, respectively, of their votes.) Meanwhile, just 46 percent of black voters chose Bullitt. Jews were the only major ethnic group to give a majority to Bullitt (59 percent), but, compared to the 81 percent who had turned out for Roosevelt in 1940, their enthusiasm appeared weak. Ultimately, Samuel won with a margin of sixty-five thousand votes—not a landslide, but a win nonetheless.[60]

During World War II, Philadelphia Democrats also faced challenges and potential fallout from racially tinged labor conflict. Murray's CIO had gone far to promote equal opportunity within its ranks. Philadelphia, however, outside the textile industry, was an American Federation of Labor (AFL) town. AFL locals expected employers to discriminate in

[58] Morgan, "Significance of Pennsylvania's 1938 Gubernatorial Election," 184–211; McKenna, "Negro Vote in Philadelphia Elections," 406–15, Wolfinger, *Philadelphia Divided*, 172; Pennsylvania Election Statistics: 1682–2006, "Pennsylvania Senatorial Election Returns 1940," and "Pennsylvania Senatorial Election Returns 1944."

[59] Wolfinger, *Philadelphia Divided*, 109–11.

[60] Ibid., 110–11, 172.

favor of their largely Irish (and Democratic) members.[61]

In 1944, the AFL and the CIO fought for the allegiance of transportation workers. With the CIO committed to increasing the number of black transport workers, especially in higher-paying job categories, the AFL sent sound trucks through white neighborhoods blasting the message: "A vote for CIO is a vote for Niggers on the Job." The CIO won the March 1944 union election with 55 percent of the vote, but this was largely because black workers in lower-paying positions overwhelmingly rejected the AFL.[62]

When disaffected white transport workers went on strike in the summer of 1944 to protest the promotion of blacks, Mayor Samuel closed liquor stores while the Roosevelt administration more forcefully intervened. U.S. Army troops seized control of Philadelphia's streetcar lines. Then the U.S. Justice Department vowed to prosecute—on the basis of the Smith-Connally War Labor Dispute Act of 1943—anyone striking against a government-operated facility. White strikers went back to work and reluctantly accepted black motormen. Roosevelt's intervention was in part inspired by the fact that Republicans had won a January 1944 special election in Philadelphia's heavily black Second Congressional District. A city embroiled in racial strife heading into the 1944 election would not help Democrats who needed all the black and white ethnic votes they could attract.[63]

With World War II over and with Roosevelt dead, Pennsylvania Democrats suffered electoral reverses. Guffey endured a landslide defeat in 1946. Significantly, both Allegheny and Philadelphia counties went Republican by margins of 55 percent and 57 percent, respectively. Lawrence did not expend much effort on Guffey's behalf in western Pennsylvania. So far as he was concerned, Guffey had outworn his welcome—a sentiment which Pittsburgh and Philadelphia Democrats shared.[64]

The slowly building post–World War II Democratic recovery in

[61] Ibid., 40–41.

[62] Ibid., 138–39.

[63] Allan M. Winkler, "The Philadelphia Transit Strike of 1944," *Journal of American History* 59 (1972): 73–89; Mark L. Levy and Michael S. Kramer, *The Ethnic Factor: How America's Minorities Decide Elections* (New York, 1972), 40–41; Robert H. Zieger, *The CIO, 1935–1955* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1995), 154–55; "Philadelphia Shifts in Special Poll—17th Pennsylvania Is Republican," *New York Times*, Jan. 19, 1944.

[64] Pennsylvania Election Statistics: 1682–2006, "Pennsylvania Senatorial Election Returns 1946."

Pennsylvania may be attributed to several individuals—among them a few improbable allies. To the enduring ire of Keystone Republicans, Lawrence's political resurrection came in part as a result of efforts by Richard King Mellon, nephew and corporate heir of Andrew Mellon. In contrast to the Rockefellers, who made their fortune in Cleveland and then departed for more desirable locales, the Mellons were loyal to Pittsburgh. Mellon feared that the Iron City, though it boomed because of war production, would collapse under the weight of its decaying infrastructure and polluted environment. He was willing to help fund a $1.5 billion urban renewal project but needed a political partner from within the ranks of the locally dominant Democratic Party.[65]

Lawrence, who began his first of three terms as Pittsburgh mayor in 1945, responded enthusiastically to Mellon's overture. He had always worked well with African Americans, Jews, and Slavic Catholics, so Lawrence had little trouble treating Scots-Irish Presbyterian billionaires as just another constituency deserving of a hearing. The Pittsburgh Renaissance not only revived the city, but it made Lawrence a viable gubernatorial candidate in 1958. Some pundits later speculated that if Lawrence had been younger he, rather than John F. Kennedy, might have been America's first Catholic president.[66]

As was true with Lawrence, Philip Murray faced numerous challenges in salvaging the fortunes of the CIO. It took the outbreak of World War II in Europe and American rearmament to erase the losses of 1937–38. The CIO's subsequent success against Ford and Republic Steel, however, resulted from federal threats of withholding defense contracts and possible seizure of facilities. Ideally, the CIO should have been focusing its efforts on persuading workers to organize, rather than relying on government coercion. The reality, though, was that the CIO found it difficult to move beyond its Catholic, Jewish, and northern urban bases to smaller, Protestant-dominated communities. Worse, racial divisions between white and black workers increased. Union membership peaked in the 1950s at one-third of the work force.

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[65] Borchert and Borchert, "Downtown, Uptown, Out of Town," 311–46; Frank Hawkins, "David Lawrence: Boss of the Mellon Patch," in *Pittsburgh*, ed. Roy Lubove (New York, 1976), 197–211; Cowley, *Politics of Place*, 36; Beers, *Pennsylvania Politics*, 240–42; Ferman, *Challenging the Growth Machine*, 45–46.

[66] Park H. Martin, "The Renaissance: A Catalogue of Projects," in *Pittsburgh*, 211–18; Michael P. Weber, *Don't Call Me Boss: David L. Lawrence, Pittsburgh's Renaissance Mayor* (Pittsburgh, 1988), 228–76; Ferman, *Challenging the Growth Machine*, 48; Lubove, *Twentieth-Century Pittsburgh*, 109–19.

If unable to do as much as he desired on the organizational front, Murray possessed a considerable political arsenal that had survived the 1938 midterm elections. The CIO could still influence local elections in a handful of critical states. Just prior to the U.S. entry into World War II, for example, Pennsylvania had five hundred thousand CIO members. Nearly a third of the voters in Allegheny County belonged to the CIO. So long as such union bastions as Pittsburgh and Detroit endured, the CIO would be a player in national Democratic politics.[67]

To deal with anti-CIO conservatives, Murray's political strategy during World War II was simple. He publicly denied conservative allegations of communist influence and corrupt practices within the ranks of organized labor. Behind the scenes and largely out of public view, Murray moved to clean house. Once the war ended, Murray helped found the Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) in order to fight red-baiting conservatives, expel communists and their allies from the CIO and the Democratic Party, advocate the containment of Soviet communism in Europe, and champion civil rights in the South. To advance these objectives, Murray had the support of the Pittsburgh Catholic diocese and Lawrence.[68]

No less remarkable than the political rebound of Murray and Lawrence was the postwar success of Philadelphia Democrats. This last development occurred for a variety of interrelated reasons. First, the African American population of Philadelphia grew by 126,000 during and immediately after World War II. These new black residents associated the Democratic Party with the CIO and Roosevelt, rather than with hidebound AFL locals and southern segregationists. Second, Philadelphia's large bloc of Jewish voters—moved by Roosevelt and shocked by the Holocaust—vigorously embraced civil rights and the ADA. Third, many white Protestants joined the ADA and vowed to end corruption at the local level. Growing numbers of Irish Catholic politicians, notably James Finnegan and William C. Green II, decided to work with the ADA reformers. With blacks, Jews, Irish, and white Anglo-

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[67] Bernstein, "John L. Lewis and the Voting Behavior of the C.I.O.," 233–49.

[68] Kenneth J. Heineman, "Iron City Trinity: The Triumph and the Trials of Catholic Social Activism in Pittsburgh, 1932–1972," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 22 (2004): 121–45; Kenneth J. Heineman, "Reformation: Monsignor Charles Owen Rice and the Fragmentation of the New Deal Electoral Coalition in Pittsburgh, 1960–1972," *Pennsylvania History* 71 (2004): 53–85; Clifton Brock, *Americans for Democratic Action: Its Role in National Politics* (Washington, DC, 1962), 53, 59, 73.

Saxon Protestants (WASPs) united, all they needed to do was persuade Italians to continue their defection from the crumbling Republican machine.[69]

Two ADA organizers led the reformers' takeover of the Philadelphia Democratic Party: Richardson Dilworth and Joseph Clark. Both came from affluent backgrounds and were products of elite universities. Dilworth and Clark had spent the Depression decade advocating political reform in Philadelphia. They also had family funds to finance their political activities and looked good on the campaign stump. Clark also had one attribute that helped him appeal to blue-collar Catholics: he had been a Marine in World War II.[70]

Although Republicans beat Dilworth in his 1947 race for mayor, he polled more votes than previous Democratic candidates. Two years later, Dilworth won election as district attorney while Clark won the city controller race. Philadelphia Republicans waged a red-baiting campaign, attempting to brand the anticommunist ADA as a Soviet front organization. (They were not alone in using that line of attack. In the 1950 gubernatorial election, Michigan Republicans equated the ADA with the Communist Party). Philadelphia Republicans were nervous at the prospect of reformers possessing the authority to examine budgets and investigate criminal activities. They would also have to accept that they had lost African American support as the city's black wards turned out for Dilworth and Clark.[71]

In 1951, Democratic reformers seriously wounded the Republican machine. Clark won the mayor's office by a margin of 122,000 votes, and fourteen of the seventeen city council seats up for election went Democratic. African Americans again delivered for Clark and accounted for over half of the Democratic Party's voters. As Philadelphia mayors,

[69] Matthew Countryman, *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 2006), 14; "Emily Sunstein Remarks," *Proceedings from Philadelphia's Political Reform Movement, 1946–1961* (Philadelphia, 1988), 2–9; James Reichley, *The Art of Government: Reform and Organization Politics in Philadelphia* (New York, 1959), 5–16; Beers, *Pennsylvania Politics,* 200–203.

[70] Brock, *Americans for Democratic Action*, 17, 27; Countryman, *Up South*, 45; Jenkins, *Cold War at Home*, 62; Sally Kalson, "Molly Yard/Feminist Dies at 93," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, Sept. 22, 2005, Post-Gazette NOW, http://www.post-gazette.com; G. Terry Madonna and John Morrison McLarnon III, "Reform in Philadelphia: Joseph S. Clark, Richardson Dilworth, and the Women Who Made Reform Possible, 1947–1949," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 127 (2003): 57–88; Beers, *Pennsylvania Politics,* 180.

[71] Countryman, *Up South*, 45; Jenkins, *Cold War at Home*, 64; Calkins, *CIO and the Democratic Party*, 153.

Clark (1952–56) and Dilworth (1956–62) attempted to emulate the Pittsburgh Renaissance. Both also sought to advance the social and economic status of blacks through antidiscrimination legislation, public-school integration, and greater black representation on the municipal payroll.[72]

The Philadelphia Republican machine limped along after 1951, kept on life support thanks to a reform in the city's charter—one that Clark and Dilworth had embraced—which guaranteed the minority party two seats on the city council. Unlike Pittsburgh, Philadelphia would at least have the faint appearance of a two-party political system at the municipal level.

Philadelphia's postwar ethnic-ADA alliance reshaped the electoral landscape statewide. Without the emasculation of the Philadelphia Republican machine, Clark would have faced great difficulty in winning election to the U.S. Senate in 1956. Likewise, Lawrence's gubernatorial victory in 1958 would have been nearly impossible. As it was, Clark won his Senate seat by just 17,970 votes, and Lawrence became Pennsylvania's first Catholic governor with the votes of 51 percent of the electorate. In both races, Allegheny and Philadelphia counties made Democratic victories possible. A quarter of a century after Roosevelt's first election, Pennsylvania had become politically competitive, but not reliably Democratic.[73]

. . . Outweigh the Needs of the Few

In this electoral tale of two cities there are several points worth underscoring. Although Keystone Democrats could be defeated in statewide contests while winning Allegheny and Philadelphia, the inverse was not true. Rural, Protestant Pennsylvania, which had become increasingly Republican in the early twentieth century, moved decisively into the conservative camp in reaction to the Democratic Party's new urban and union orientation. Between 1930 and 1950, the Pennsylvania Democratic Party relied on two urban counties and whatever votes it could pick up in the coal patches and mill towns to compete in statewide races.

[72] Erie, *Rainbow's End*, 180; McKenna, "Negro Vote in Philadelphia Elections," 406–15; Beers, *Pennsylvania Politics*, 187, 202; Reichley, *Art of Government*, 15; "Leon Shull Remarks," *Proceedings from Philadelphia's Political Reform Movement, 1946–1961*, 9–27.
[73] Pennsylvania Election Statistics: 1682–2006, "Pennsylvania Senatorial Election Returns 1956," and "Pennsylvania Gubernatorial Election Returns 1958."

One could also conclude that, as the truism goes, demography is destiny. The ethnic, religious, and class composition of an electorate at the local level, as well as the history of voters' interactions with each other, shapes the political landscape. Accordingly, Pittsburgh was ripe for a Democratic revolution in 1932 and Philadelphia was not. Until Philadelphia's competitive ethnic groups learned to come to terms with each other, and so long as Republicans had control of patronage, the machine remained in power through the 1930s and 1940s.

Ultimately, there were many reasons why the New Deal Democratic electoral majority that many historians believed Roosevelt forged in the 1930s did not solidify in Pennsylvania. Beyond demography, history, and the challenge of bringing Pittsburgh and Philadelphia together, there was a point too often overlooked: the quality of candidates mattered. Pennsylvania Democrats through the 1930s and early 1940s became overly reliant on Roosevelt's coattails in large part because of the poor quality of their local material. If Lawrence, Clark, and Dilworth had been in dominant positions earlier, Pennsylvania Democrats might have become competitive sooner. The permanent majority they desired, however, has yet to materialize.

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