ica's wines, has praised Norton's potential in his three editions of *The Wines of America*. And Lucie Norton, in her quirky yet excellent *Winegrowing in Eastern America* (Ithaca, 1985), says that in Norton blends rest the "best potential for cellar-aged wines made from pure native American grapes."

But what to blend with it?

Nineteenth century winemakers had only one complaint with Norton, and Wagner noted it in 1937: "The fact is its wine has excellent color, bouquet, plenty of tannin and acidity, and good alcoholic content. Its only defect, as a matter of fact, is that when made pure it is apt to have all of these characteristics in too much abundance...." The Germans of the Missouri River Valley had found their good grape with obvious defects, just as the Italians had Sangiovese and the Spanish had Tempranillo. And what did these Germans use for blending with Norton, to make it a better wine than it could be in its pure form? Water. No reliable hybrids existed for this purpose, although by the 1870s at least one Missouri producer had developed a hybrid called Montefiore in his internationally acclaimed Norton blend. Today, I don't think any popular hybrids can

match Norton's flavor quality, but for various reasons, none of them seem right for blending either.

One reason Chancellor, Cham- bourcin, and Foch are more popular than Norton is that they are easier to grow over a wider part of middle and eastern America. (Experiments in the last century showed Norton does not grow well on the West Coast.) Like most premium red grapes, Norton requires a long, warm growing season, generally south of a line drawn east from Kansas City. Yet, I still wonder if the grape has been given a modern chance in many places. Few mid-Atlantic growers, for instance, seem to know about it, yet its adaptiveness is quietly legendary. Stone Hill revived its Norton wine after finding 80-year-old vines growing untended on its property. I know one grower who bulldozed several acres near Hermann before he saw the pattern of a vineyard in the underbrush and realized that what he thought were trees were actually giant Norton vines, in their 120th year on the hillside. They had survived all diseases and were cheerfully producing fruit. That vineyard is being cultivated again.

Modern hybrids were developed to create wine industries where grapes weren't normally cultivated. Many of them are like those orangish things they call tomatoes in the winter, or to stretch the point a bit further, like aluminum siding: their development has more to do with market demands, high yields, and low maintenance than with good taste. That's fine, but passing off ordinary wines at fancy prices will, in the end, benefit no one, although many wineries are too entranced by the short-term gains to see this. Wines that aren't unique should hold their fans through reasonable prices; high prices drive away everyday consumers, and perpetuate wine snobbery that is no good for anyone.

This is where enlightened federal policy on wine could square with what historically has been among our government's principal goals: to make it easier for business to do business, and to promote economic development by increasing demand for certain products. President Bush proposed increasing federal taxes on wine from 3 cents to 76 cents on a standard 750 milli-liter bottle, calling it a "luxury tax." (Congress settled on a 21 cent tax per bottle.) I won't argue against the luxury label for wines with $15, $20, or $100 price tags. But substantially lower taxes for domestically produced everyday wines might push the industry to place more emphasis on them, and stimulate consumer demand for them. More demand for fairly priced regional wines could help many economically depressed rural regions where the grapes are grown.

All this would require a few politicians who want to invigorate the wine industry instead of choosing the easier predatory approach that plays to neo-Prohibitionist sentiment and narrow-mindedness about alcohol use. In this dream world more people could appreciate wine, its history, and moderation in general. It would take a few years, and the idea is not compatible with TV at dinner or short-term political and financial gain. It would probably take a Jefferson, and that is probably why it won't happen.

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**The Politics of Plant Closings**

By John Portz

Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 1990. Pp. 214. $29.95, $12.95 paperback

THIS book examines the response of local governments to three plant closings: the Brown & Williamson cigarette plant in Louisville, Kentucky; the Rath meat packing plant in Waterloo, Iowa; and U.S. Steel's Dorothy 6 blast furnace in Duquesne, Pennsylvania. The author ranges beyond these three case studies with crisp vignettes of many other plant closings, like those of Youngstown, Ohio steel mills. Throughout, the book's project is to define the policy options available to local governments.

The political science terminology in which the analysis is cast may be opaque for some readers. However, veterans of the campaign to save Dorothy 6 will find the narrative, which is based on interviews with more than 30 protagonists as well as published sources, to be both balanced and accurate. This
reviewer is reduced to pointing out a few details like the fact that the Steel Valley Authority was formed in 1986, not (as stated on page 105) in 1987, that a cited article by SVA counsel Joseph Hornack and myself was published in the *New York University Review of Law & Social Change*, although the citation has it as existing only in manuscript form, and such minutiae. As far as facts are concerned, this is probably the best published account of the Dorothy 6 struggle and the formation of the SVA.

For Pittsburgh area residents the fascination of *The Politics of Plant Closings* will lie in the author's assessment of what he calls the “populist” strategy of the SVA and its creator, the Tri-State Conference on Steel. Professor Portz finds the SVA/Tri-State approach to plant closings to be more activist, and potentially more significant than the comparatively passive and conventional response of the city governments in Louisville and Waterloo. His assessment provides those who have struggled with Mon Valley mill and plant closings since the late 1970s with some perspective, and therefore an opportunity to consider the strengths and weaknesses of their approach.

One main point of the analysis is that Tri-State failed to reopen Dorothy 6 because the consultant hired by the United Steelworkers of America, the Wall Street firm of Lazard Freres and Company, found that the project would not attract private capital investment in the short-run. Unlike the Youngstown mills that also failed to reopen, the U.S. Steel facility in Duquesne had a basic oxygen furnace for making steel. And, unlike the Weirton mill that did reopen successfully (under the guidance of Lazard Freres), the Duquesne mill did not have a continuous caster. Thus, the prospect for profitability at Duquesne fell somewhere between Youngstown on the one hand, and Weirton on the other. Much would depend on the level or rate of profitability required by investors, and whether those profits had to materialize in the short-run. Portz quotes the conclusion of the Lazard Freres feasibility study, released in January 1986:

*We conclude, reluctantly but necessarily, that Dorothy 6 cannot be reopened unless the demand and price for steel improves substantially. Under current circumstances financing for the rehabilitation of Dorothy 6 will not be forthcoming from the private capital markets.*

*Emphasis added.*

Yet it is generally agreed that if Dorothy 6 actually had been reopened, the improving market for steel slabs during the years that followed would have made the mill profitable. Lazard Freres may have been right about the prospects for private investment in 1986, but this is not the Dorothy 6 was unprofitable but that the private capital markets do not judge long-run profitability well. In the pithy words of Monsignor Charles Owen Rice, also quoted by Portz: “Capital is too powerful to be left to the care of capitalists and their compulsive search for instant, maximum profit.”

A second SVA/Tri-State campaign to prevent the closing of the American Standard plants in Swissvale and Wilmerding also failed for lack of investment capital. The SVA sought to enjoin the removal of equipment from the plants, pending completion of eminent domain proceedings by local governments. However, the taking of eminent domain requires both a public purpose and the payment of fair market value for the property. The Authority could demonstrate the requisite purpose, but not the likelihood of amassing the necessary capital. The judge accordingly dismissed the action, essentially because “it is uncertain when, ifever, the money will be available.”

Portz also makes the point that despite the lack of the necessary investment capital, SVA/Tri-State redefined debate in the Pittsburgh region as to why heavy industry was shutting down. Both U.S. Steel and American Standard “attempted to direct policy debates to private economic criteria and private-sector solutions.” Tri-State saw things differently.

Rather than view plant closings as single and isolated events at one point in time, Tri-State presented plant closings in the Mon Valley as common victims of corporate disinvestment with consequences for the entire region. For example, the closing at Duquesne was preceded by mill closings in nearby Youngstown and would likely be followed by other closings in the Mon Valley. The closing of Dorothy 6 was not an isolated event.... Deindustrialization was taking place throughout the Mon Valley.

Viewed in this way, plant closings at Duquesne and Swissvale did not call for the usual efforts of local government to bribe some other private corporation to invest. Instead, as Portz remarks, “this definition... pointed to a collective response and community mobilization.” Tri-State activists looked to government for the solutions that private corporations could not provide. In the words of one Tri-State newsletter that Portz quotes: “Our goal has to be a commitment to maintaining a fabric — not a series of independent plant closing fights that accept the current economic chaos as a criterion for operating.” Still more provocatively, and with remarkably broad support:

Tri-State tried to cast the debate in terms of workers and communities controlling their own economic futures. As one supporter argued, many of the mills in the valley should actually have been considered community property. Citing federal dollars that went into the Homestead and Duquesne mills during World War II, and the low discount price that U.S. Steel paid for the return of the mills after the war, this supporter concluded that “as far as we’re concerned, U.S. Steel

(continued on page 43)
is merely the groundskeeper. It's just as much our steelworks as theirs.

The question then becomes why the SVA/Tri-State program has failed thus far. Since The Politics of Plant Closings was published, a third campaign attempted to reopen the Southside electric furnaces, in the former Jones & Laughlin mill that had been closed by the new owner, LTV Steel; the effort appears to have reached about the same point reached by the Dorothy 6 and American Standard efforts, and like them, has come to a halt. (See for example, Steel venture's chances of success dim with time," Pittsburgh Press, Aug. 19, 1990.) The recurrent impasse is immensely frustrating to the persistent group of organizers (among whom I include myself) who have given a substantial chunk of their lives over the period of a decade to trying to find a new way out of the plant closing crisis. What should they — should we — have learned from the repetitive pattern of failure on the brink of success, narrated by Professor Portz?

Although Portz does not quite say it, the answer seems implicit in his concluding chapters. He rightly says that in the United States economic accumulation

...is achieved through a capitalist economy characterized by the private ownership and control of economic resources. A private economy is the fundamental setting that shapes American urban communities and provides the broadest parameters within which organizations and individuals pursue their many goals.

Hence:

Even in periods of economic decline, policy discussions tend to be cast in language compatible with a private economy ....[T]he presumption is that the private control of investment and other economic resources is a nonnegotiable, fundamental element that limits other policy options.

The populist strategy of the Steel Valley Authority and Tri-State Conference on Steel requires capital investment that has not been forthcoming, and predictably will not be forthcoming from private sources. In both the Dorothy 6 and Southside furnace campaigns, private capital that seemed to be available proved skittish as short-run economic conditions changed. Particularly in an industry like steel, which because of its huge investment in fixed capital yields a relatively low rate of profit in every country in the world, private capital is not going to provide the long-run, community-minded investment required to rebuild the Mon Valley.

But local, and even state government cannot provide it either. The plant closings to which the SVA/Tri-State strategy seeks to respond also devastate the tax base of local communities, and thus doom the strategy so long as it is limited to a local or regional sphere of action. The investment required to make the SVA/Tri-State strategy succeed can only come from the national government. To put it another way, populism can only come to fruition when it loses its fear of being socialist. True enough, socialism in one steel mill, or one valley is an impossibility. But socialism in the sense of massive national funding for an industrial reconstruction administered by democratic local authorities like the SVA is not only possible, it is necessary.

Staughton Lynd
Niles, Ohio

Lake Erie Fishermen: Work Tradition and Identity
by Timothy C. Lloyd and Patrick B. Mullen

Lake Erie Fishermen is, as its subtitle tells us, a study of the work lives, tradition and identity of commercial fishermen in the western waters of the U.S. portion of Lake Erie. Through an edited series of interviews, the words of these lake men (they are all male) are used to discuss some aspects of their work lives. The result is a partial portrait of an always-small group of toilers, who are now facing occupational extinction.

Lloyd and Mullen are folklorists based in Columbus, Ohio. Operating under grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and Ohio State University, they conducted 35 interviews in the western Lake Erie area during 1983-85; they also took many photographs of various aspects of Lake Erie fishing. The authors tell us that Lake Erie Fishermen began as a quest for folklore; that proving somewhat sparse, and with their interests expanding, the authors broadened their subject matter to that of the subtitle.

The heart of the book consists of selected transcriptions from these interviews, grouped together by theme. The authors tell us that they strove for a representative sample by age and occupation. Their biggest self-admitted problem is that they had no interviews with the Portuguese gill netters who had comprised a good chunk of the workforce, and who, due to changes in the law governing fishing techniques and catch, left the area during the interviewing period. The study is limited to a small group of about 100 commercial fishermen and fish house workers.

This tiny occupation is beset with problems. Faced with growing regulations (advocated by environmentalists and recreational fishing interests), a declining catch due to pollution of all kinds, and, at least in the past, over-fishing, the fishing season each year since 1950 has gotten shorter, the catch smaller and the trade less profitable. The authors feel strong sympathy for the commercial fishermen and state flatly that they "see this book as an opportunity for them to tell their (the fishermen's) side of the story."

Lloyd and Mullen give us a very brief history of commercial fishing in the lake, indicating that in the early twentieth century, several thousand persons were employed, despite the fact that the fish popula-