

THE BURDENS OF URBAN HISTORY:
THE THEORY OF THE STATE IN
RECENT AMERICAN SOCIAL HISTORY

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AMERICAN SOCIAL HISTORY**

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Introduction: The Burdens of Urban History

Louis Hartz summed up the mission of his historical generation when he wrote, as part of the rationale for The Liberal Tradition in 1955, that "the way to fully refute a man is to ignore him...and the only way you can do this is to substitute new fundamental categories for his own, so that you are simply pursuing a different path." Hartz was referring to the influence of Charles Beard and what Hartz called the "frustration that the persistence of the Progressive analysis of America has inspired." He was arguing that his generation had to stop honoring the progressives by contending with them; the key to destroying their interpretation of American history was the reinvention of American history by means of new conceptual tools. (1)

The so-called "progressive" analysis of America which so frustrated Hartz was one that held that conflict--economic, social, regional--was the key to understanding its past. Although none of the versions of this view was exactly like another, Richard Hofstadter felt that the overall thrust of this interpretation of American history--predominant during the years 1910 to 1950--was best summarized in a passage written by Vernon Louis Parrington: "From the first we have been divided into two main parties. ...On one side has been the party of the current aristocracy--of church, of gentry, of merchant, of slave holder, or manufacturer--and on the other the party of the commonalty--of farmer, villager, small tradesman, mechanic, proletariat. The one has persistently sought to check and limit the popular power, to keep the control of the government in the hands of the few in order to serve special interests, whereas the other has sought to augment the popular power, to make government more responsive to the will of the majority, to further the democratic rather than the republican ideal--let one discover this and new light is shed on our cultural tendencies." (2)

Hofstadter's quotation of this view was part of an obituary for the progressive interpretation of American history that he wrote less than 15 years after Hartz's book appeared. According to Hofstadter, the "tide began to run out" on the progressive interpretation during the nineteen fifties when "conflict as a vitalizing idea began to be contested by the notion of a

pervasive American consensus." What had "toppled" the Progressive interpretation--perhaps better, allowed his generation to topple it--were new concepts and methods that facilitated replacement of the "simple-minded" dualism of the Progressives with a new appreciation for the complexity of the American past. Among these new theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches, he wrote in 1968, were freudianism, the sociology of knowledge, functionalism--especially as presented in the works of Robert Merton--and quantification. Together these permitted the introduction of "the entire sociological penumbra of political life" into historical writing. (3)

Although Hartz and Hofstadter were undoubtedly among the most brilliant and wide-ranging of the generation of so-called "consensus" historians, they were by no means the only ones who recognized that the supplanting of one historiographical tradition by another requires battles at the theoretical and methodological as well as the substantive fronts. In fact, perhaps the most important accomplishment of their generation was the borrowing from the social sciences of new ways of constructing their interpretation of the American past. Some of the most important historiographical "products" of the postwar period were based upon middle range social scientific concepts such as latent functions and reference groups from sociology, pluralism from political science, status anxiety from social psychology, information and transaction costs from economics, etc. Moreover, as Ian Tyrell has recently pointed out, it was this postwar turn to the social sciences that, in function if not intent, both rescued American history from "more reactionary forms of empiricism" and inoculated it for some time against more radical types of analysis such as marxism. (4)

Historians, however, did not "invent" consensus, as historiographers so often propose. Consensus history was merely the historian's moment of a more general transformation of the social sciences which began before World War Two and was consolidated soon after it. Beginning in the nineteen thirties political science and sociology, too, began a shift from an institutionally based and reform-oriented social science to one that was focused more on culture and concerned more with stability than reform. While historians shifted from conflict to consensus as a central

theme in American history, sociologists and political scientists shifted focus from the ways in which American society was problematic to the ways in which it was normative. Moreover, the simultaneity of these shifts across the social sciences and their attachment to the development of a prestigious empirical social science gave these views of American society past and present enormous legitimacy and staying power.

For the most part, however, historians have failed to think very carefully about how these theoretical frameworks have shaped and limited their ability to apprehend and interpret American history. This failure originates in the tendency of many historiographers to write about transformations in historical interpretations in relative isolation from parallel transformations in the social sciences. The problem has persisted because, until relatively recently, most historians have been notoriously reluctant to engage in explicit theoretical debate, and, therefore, sometimes simply unaware of the intellectual legacy of their middle-range concepts, or, in the worst cases, committed to what David Hackett Fisher has called the "baconian" fallacy, which is the belief that they deal only in the "facts," without the need for organizing theoretical frameworks. (5)

One might have expected that the rise of historically oriented social science would have brought these issues to the fore, but, for the most part, it has not. Although historically oriented sociologists and political scientists have begun to work with historical data, they have not, on the whole, been especially concerned either with the histories of their own disciplines or the historiography of the secondary historical sources on which they base their accounts. In fact, historical social scientists have tended, ironically, to commit their own version of the error of historians by appropriating what they think are "facts" from the works of historians without examining the frameworks within which those alleged "facts" are embedded.

Together, then, historians' relative lack of interest in theory and social scientists' relative lack of interest in historiography have set up an unproductive intellectual exchange in which historians have "borrowed" middle-range theory from the social sciences and used it to structure their "facts." But then political scientists and sociologists have "borrowed" these "facts" to construct the historical accounts on the basis of which they hope to theorize.

This would be a point of purely epistemological interest were it not for the role of such a set of exchanges in the construction of the current conception of the relationship between class and politics in the American city. Because it was the cockpit of important social, economic, and political change and also the location of the most active of the branches of the state in American history before the New Deal, the American city is rightly perceived as one important locus for the attempt to "bring the state back in" or put "politics" back into social history. However, after two decades of the "new" social history--most of it urban community studies--that has reintroduced the vocabulary of class, conflict, and ideology into American history, the conception of urban politics remains one of ethnicity, patronage, and non-ideological machines, a view constructed in the nineteen fifties. Moreover, this view of urban politics is characteristic of newer work not just in history, but also political science and sociology, and it plays a role in recently developed theories of both class formation and statebuilding.

The intellectual history of the construction and appropriation of this view of urban politics is a case study of the process outlined above, of the power of the theoretical frameworks of one generation to structure the discourse of another. Both by ignoring politics and failing to examine critically the theoretical frameworks within which they have perceived it, members of a new generation of historical social science have so far failed in their task of "substituting" new fundamental categories for those of their predecessors. What some have called the "neo-progressive" view of American society continues to carry the burden of a remarkably consensual view of American politics.

The Exceptionable History of American Exceptionalism

Symptoms of a lack of fit between the "social" and "political" history of the last two decades are apparent in a recent series of essays on the process of class and state formation by historians and historically oriented political scientists and sociologists. These essays, undertaken for the most part within a framework of a revived interest in American "exceptionalism," reveal that the work of the so-called "new" social history has, for the most part, undermined the social

and ideological bases of traditional claims of exceptionalism but, to a great extent, has retained those parts having to do with politics.

For historically-oriented social scientists writing in the era of Hartz and Hofstadter the relationship between class and politics in America was relatively unproblematic. For a variety of reasons, including the absence of feudalism, economic abundance, rapid social mobility, or essential ideological consensus, there was no consciousness of class in America. Compared to other countries, then, America was "exceptional" because there, as Seymour Martin Lipset has argued for almost thirty years now, "the development of working class political consciousness ... required an act of intellectual imagination." (6)

Armed with both new analyses of American social history and a more supple theory of ideology, the "new" social and labor historians have argued, in contrast, that in both structure and ideology the United States and Europe have not been as different as exceptionalists might have thought. These studies suggest that structural opportunities for occupational mobility in the United States were neither as great, nor agreement on fundamentals as widespread as the old exceptionalists argued. Most Americans lived and died in the class of their birth, economic dislocation and inequality were at least as obvious as the promise of abundance, and, as a result of these social and economic facts, an implicitly anti-capitalist "producer" ideology of "equal rights" was both fairly widespread and fairly well institutionalized. Moreover, this ideology was prominent in conflicts both at the point of production and in the political arena. (7)

These arguments have essentially shifted the terrain from social to political exceptionalism. A new generation of commentators on this issue has formulated a rough consensus on class formation in America in which, as Sean Wilentz, has put it "politics mattered a great deal." Taken together the contributors to this view, including, among others, Wilentz, Eric Foner, Jerome Karabel, Ira Katznelson, Amy Bridges, and Martin Shefter contend that in contrast to Europe where economic inequality was joined with a long struggle for political equality, in the United States, as Foner has put it (following Alan Dawley) the messages of the economic and political sectors were contradictory. Here economic inequality was accompanied by political

equality; what Perlman called the "free gift" of the suffrage antedated the emergence of capitalist economic institutions. (8)

More important than the possession of this free gift, of course, was the way that it was organized. Here, too, a surprising unanimity has emerged in this literature around the argument that the ballot box was "the coffin" of class consciousness in America because of the apparent openness and equality of the political system, the organization of politics on the basis of ethnicity, territoriality, and patronage, and the institutionalization of politics in political machines which rewarded ethnic particularism with divisible material incentives.

For example, the decline of artisanally based class consciousness is now thought to have been brought about in large part by the appearance of ethnic political machines, which, as part of a non-ideological party system exploited locality based ethnic divisions "more than anything else" and thus produced a split between radical politics at the work place and the politics of ethnic bargaining and accommodation in the neighborhood. The maintenance and manipulation of this split throughout the nineteenth century was one of the factors in the post Civil War disruption of what David Montgomery has called the "sense of moral universality among 'the producers'" that provided the language of militancy for the nineteenth century working class. (9)

What is striking about the new political consensus, however, is the disjunction between its conception of class and its conception of politics. Both in their essays on exceptionalism and their own substantive writings these authors and others consider class to be not a category, but a process, class consciousness not an attribute, but a project, and class formation in general, to be complex, contingent, and historical. This supple understanding of class contrasts with an ascriptive and functionalist understanding of politics in these same essays. In the work of the labor historians, in particular, while class is a project ethnicity seems primordial, while class formation is a complicated process, party formation is almost automatic, while labor leadership is courageous, far sighted, and self-conscious, political leadership is craven, manipulative, and non-ideological. The construction of class consciousness is rooted in the mutuality of the everyday realities of work and neighborhood; this same mutuality--apparently--disappears in the voting

booth where non-ideological particularism takes over and the favor, the city permit, the patronage job prevail.

In the works of the historically oriented political scientists, the political aspects of the relationship between class and politics are handled more deftly. In particular, these authors underline the challenges of party building at both the institutional and ideological level. Bridges, for example, has emphasized both the necessity of party leaders to mobilize majorities and the need of workers to pursue political goals through the parties in her account of the way class and politics intersected in the antebellum period. Shefter has included both the decentralized nature of the American state and the relative accessibility of its local branch in his explanation of the way in which both trade unions and political machines organized working class life in the later nineteenth century. (10)

In the end, however, for both it was the political machines that played the key role. For Bridges "the institutions of machine politics coordinated an accommodation between the working classes and their social betters." For Shefter, "at least in the major cities...machines consolidated their position as the most important vehicle through which the working class participated in politics." (11)

This interpretation now also plays an important role in considerations of the "exceptionalism" of the American state. Building on the accounts of Katznelson and Shefter, for example, Theda Skocpol has emphasized the "crucial consequences" for public policymaking of the subordination of government functions to the patronage needs of the political parties. According to Skocpol, a factor in the relatively late development of the American welfare state was the role of "patronage democracy" including the "urban political machines based on the ever-renewed streams of immigrants flowing into the American industrial working class." Because of patronage democracy, politics served primarily "symbolic-expressive and entertainment functions" and was not a matter of using parties to articulate demands for policies in the collective interest of wage-earners as a class. Instead nineteenth century politics involved "getting out the vote" within "the

various ethnically and religiously based local residence communities that formed the remarkably stable building blocks of grassroots support for the major party organizations." (12)

Somewhat surprisingly, these understandings of the role of ethnicity, patronage, and machines are almost identical to those of the so-called "consensus" historians. For them, for example, the patronage based politics of the urban political machine were the perfect response to both the functional needs of urban society and the non ideological character of American politics. For the generation of the fifties, political machines extended social exceptionalism into politics; for current commentators the political machines blocked the transmission of radicalism from society into politics. In both cases the conception of politics is society-centered, non-ideological, and functionalist. For reasons having to do primarily with its "middle range" theories, much of the "new" history has simply "rediscovered" the political propositions of the "old."

The Liberal Matrix for Political Analysis

Most current interpretations of urban and community politics in American history have been deeply influenced by middle-range theoretical propositions from sociology and political science that emerged out of what David Ricci has called the "liberal matrix" of political analysis that was constructed in the years immediately following World War Two. To understand the contingency--and contestability--of these frameworks, it is necessary to begin with a brief look at the intellectual history of this era and the elements of this matrix. (13)

For the first three or four decades of the twentieth century a reform-oriented "progressive" social science paralleled--indeed included some of the same persons as--progressive history. As Edward Purcell has written, these political scientists and sociologists believed in the ultimately rational nature of the universe and thought that science could lead men to a full understanding of the social process and "an intelligent reordering of American institutions in a spirit of social harmony." Somewhat ironically, both their own work and the events of the nineteen thirties and forties began to undermine these views, however, as empirical studies began to reveal "irrational" aspects of personality and behavior within the United States and the rise of fascism and the onset

of war seemed to confirm these findings outside of it. By the late nineteen thirties and through the war years, both intellectuals at large and social scientists within their disciplines turned toward a more "realistic" evaluation of both the possibilities of and need for "reform" in America. (14)

In his recent book The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age Richard Pells has described aspects of the process by which liberal intellectuals writing in the nineteen fifties consolidated this new view of American politics and society. Convinced that it was necessary to chasten the naivete, simplistic dualism, and rationalism of their predecessors, these intellectuals--including, of course, those like Hartz and Hofstadter, but also many others--attempted to invent a new liberalism that was based on a more realistic view of human nature in general and American society in particular, and that was, therefore, less likely to unleash the moralistic urge to fanaticism and more likely to recognize the remarkable degree of real social and political progress in the United States. (15)

Finding less conflict and more complexity in American society these intellectuals argued that it was both the reality and the glory of American history that politics was based upon the voluntary group, rather than the card-carrying party; ad hoc, cross class, group political alliances, rather than class alliances; and the pragmatic search for specific individual or group economic gains from politics rather than the moralistic call for the reconstruction of society itself. In this new liberal view of American politics, candidates were properly "brokers," parties agencies of mediation, and the system as a whole incremental rather than totalistic; inefficient, but less likely to destroy itself in pursuit of messianic goals.

Like most of those who have written about the intellectual history of the postwar generation, Pells has abstracted these thinkers from currents in the disciplines within which many of them worked and he has ignored the theoretical contributions of enormously influential social scientists who do not fit his definition of "intellectual." Therefore, the way that the social sciences "operationalized" these ideas is not altogether clear in his account.

Fortunately, Ricci's thoughtful book, The Tragedy of Political Science provides a case study of this process in that discipline. His analysis is important because it emphasizes that the change in political science occurred not just in terms of its propositions about American politics, but also in terms of its ways of defining social "science," theory, and method. The components of what he calls the "matrix" of liberal discourse were the redefinition of politics--both as practiced and as analyzed--from a matter of results to a matter of "method," the redefinition of "theory" from "Grand" to "behavioral" (or "middle range"), and the refocusing of political analysis from what "should be" to what "is." (16)

Like their representatives in the "intellectual" stream political scientists in the postwar period were also worried about the extravagant claims of their prewar "liberal" predecessors. Whereas pre-war political scientists believed that men could be the best judges of their own interests and, therefore, that responsible mass democratic government was both desirable and possible, postwar scholars developed the theory of "elitist" democracy on the basis of precisely the opposite propositions. World-wide depression, fascism, and war underlined the "truth" that men were not necessarily the best judges of their interest, that only better trained and politically disciplined elites should participate in politics, and that politics should involve narrow and non-ideological conflict. At its most ideological edge, this change of view shifted the agenda of political science from from the question "how can American institutions be changed to facilitate democracy" to "how do American institutions facilitate democracy."

Among the discoveries of such analyses were those contending that every apparently non-democratic aspect of American politics was functional for democracy. Thus, in these years, inequality, apathy, declining voter participation, and the absence of political ideology were all argued to be positive aspects of American politics: elites were more likely to support democracy, thus inequality was good; the ignorant were less likely to vote, thus declining participation was good; agreement on the "rules of the game" was less likely to produce fanaticism than argument over first political principles, thus the absence of such discussion was a plus, etc. In the writings

of some political scientists, in short, everything that seemed manifestly dysfunctional to democracy to their predecessors was now determined to be "latently" functional for democracy.

The Rehabilitation of the Political Machine

The changing status of the political machine in the literature of social science was a bellweather of this broader change. From the publication of Bryce's American Commonwealth in 1888 the machine had been the scourge of American politics and the reason that municipal government was the infamous "one conspicuous failure of the United States." For Bryce--who was president of the American Political Science Association in 1908--the master conflict in urban politics was between the rich, well educated, and the good on the one side, and the corrupt and ignorant on the other. In The American Commonwealth the machine linked together the venal and the pliable. The boss "sat like a spider, hidden in the midst of his web," with the power to dispense places, reward the loyal, and punish the mutinous because he was the best among the "knot" of political operators that "pulled the wires for the whole city," and thereby riveted their "yoke" upon it. (17)

This view of the political machine--which focused on its power and corruption in order to speed its removal--was characteristic of most writing on it by political scientists until its rehabilitation in E. Pendleton Herring's enormously influential 1940 book The Politics of Democracy. Herring's book was essentially a paean to American political institutions and an antidote to what he called "the application of critical standards too high for human attainment" that tended to produce a sense of frustration and cynicism about American political institutions. (18)

Viewed against the threatening rise of totalitarianism, it was the reformer, not the "politician"--Herring minimized the use of the term "boss"--that was the problem. Reformers failed to understand the truth that men were not rational, but rather passionate and greedy. Because they were, a political "adjuster" was needed to stand for "relativity in the struggle of absolute values." Machine politicians performed the vital function of assuring continuity and

cohesion in an ethnically and economically divided community both by providing services and maintaining a political moderation that avoided "the barricades of intransigence." Rather than deserving moral opprobrium, they deserved more credit than they received. In his review of Herring's book, E. E. Schattschneider noted that "confronted with the prospect of losing our institutions, we look at them with new eyes." The transformation of the boss from moral scourge to human relations expert was certainly symptomatic of this attitude. (19)

A similar transformation was going on in sociology, where, as Robert Friedrichs has pointed out, a pre-war reformed oriented focus on social institutions was replaced by a post-war focus on the functional necessities of the "social system." Again the changing status of the political machine reflects this transformation. For the "social engineers" of the of the early decades of the century the machine was part of a vicious circle that could be broken by an informed electorate, for their critics in the fifties, its "latent functions" were critical to the urban "system." (20)

The reform view of the machine predominated when, in 1935, the distinguished sociologist F. Stuart Chapin undertook to systematize the institutional approach in sociology in his Contemporary American Institutions: A Sociological Analysis. For Chapin a sophisticated institutional approach to local government required consideration of not only the "legalistic" pattern of government reflected in law and charter, but also the pattern of the less obvious "quasi-legal" world of the boss and the political party and the "extra-legal" world of patronage, bribe, and corruption. In his view, the need of political parties for funds, business for privileges, and criminals for protection led to a sinister link between these worlds. Understanding of the interlock between these institutions could lead to the breakage of this "vicious circle" by means of increased voter participation and the expansion and professionalization of public services. (21)

Robert K. Merton took precisely this set of institutional linkages, but reversed their moral charge in his classic analysis of the "latent functions" of the political machine which first appeared in 1949. The successive editions of Social Theory and Social Structure (in 1949, 1957, and 1968) played an enormous role in the redefinition of the social sciences in terms both of "theory" and

research agenda. Merton, as is well known, invented the term "middle-range" theory to apply to that category of theory that lay between "working hypotheses" on the one hand, and "unified systems theories" on the other--in essence the same thing as "behavioral theory" in political science. Moreover, he made major contributions to such theory, popularizing the concepts of latent functions, "reference" groups, and locals and cosmopolitans, to mention only those that were to play an important role in the reconstruction of American political history. (22)

Merton offered his famous distinction between "manifest" and "latent" functions in an attempt both to codify and exemplify functionalist thought and to extol its advantages to the other social sciences. Such a distinction, he said, clarified the analysis of seemingly irrational social patterns and directed attention to theoretically fruitful fields of inquiry. It also precluded "the substitution of naive moral judgments for sociological analysis," and in this way the distinction also tied him tightly to the overall intellectual and political mission of generation which was, as we have seen, the replacement of "naive" reformism with "realistic" science. (23)

Indeed, as Alan Ryan has pointed out, like other members of his intellectual generation, Merton was "impressed with the unlooked for goodness of the consequences of much social life in America." According to Ryan, the only reason for using the term "latent function" was to emphasize that "the good results he is looking at are not those which gratify the actors, but those that gratify other people." But this equation of "function" with "good consequence" had a deleterious effect on the sociology of this period, when "articles on such topics as 'Some Social Functions of Ignorance' turn out to be articles on 'Some Unthought of Good Effects that Ignorance Produces for almost Everyone.'" (24)

In this spirit Merton opened his analysis of the functions of the political machine with a critique of the moralistic approaches to it of his predecessors which did not, in fact, explain its vitality so much as hope for its extinction. According to Merton, the recognition that, in spite of its apparently manifest corruption, the machine was satisfying basic latent functions was the beginning of a scientific analysis of the phenomenon.

In fact, Merton argued, the machine historically had fulfilled such functions, including the organization of power in an atmosphere in which political authority was legally fragmented, the humanizing and personalizing of assistance to what Merton called the "deprived classes," the provision of a route of social mobility for those with limited opportunities elsewhere, and the provision of political privileges to business which stabilized the economic situation. Failure to recognize such functions led reformers to indulge in "social ritual rather than social engineering."
(25)

Imports and Exports

For a generation of historians who were, as Richard Hofstadter was to write in 1955 "far more conscious of those things they would like to preserve than they are of those things they would like to change," Merton's apparently scientific assault on the moralism of pre-war reform was a useful tool in the construction of a "usable" past for New Deal style liberalism. Therefore, the classic accounts of urban politics in Oscar Handlin's 1951 book The Uprooted and Richard Hofstadter's 1955 book The Age of Reform imported these conceptions into history. It was these conceptions that were exported into political science to bolster the opinions of Herring which underlay the accounts of machine politics written in the early nineteen sixties by Theodore Lowi and Edward C. Banfield and James Q. Wilson. (26)

For Handlin the urban machines were the crucial link in the immigrants' political acculturation. The boss had usually arisen from among the immigrants and "remained one with them," championing the little man against the big and seeing to the ward and neighborhood issues, such as housing, employment, etc. that affected the immigrants' day-to-day existence. For Hofstadter, who based his account of machine politics entirely on Handlin, the easygoing and pragmatic boss understood the immigrant's desire for concrete personal gains from political participation because he worked within a political ethos which sprang from the urgent needs [of the immigrants] that so often grew out of their migration." For both historians, the focus of reformers on the alleged corruption and fiscal extravagance of the bosses was misplaced

"moralism." More important was the fact that through the functions they fulfilled, the bosses placed human needs above "inherited notions and inhibitions," and in so doing, according to Handlin, they prevented socialism and radicalism from taking root among the immigrants. (27)

It was no coincidence, of course, that these bosses looked a lot like FDR. Merton himself had exemplified the way the machine "humanized and personalized" aid to the needy with a footnote referring to a story about Harry Hopkins' work under Roosevelt. Handlin argued that it was the machine that "opened to the immigrants the prospect that the state might be the means through which the beginnings of security could come," although it was not until the New Deal that immigrants were no longer "divided by the necessity of choosing between their own machines and reform," because by then reform had changed so that it could "swallow up their machines, bosses and all." Hofstadter's admiration of the boss's "pragmatic talents," and the machine's essential humanity," was paralleled in his praise of FDR's opportunistic virtuosity and the ability of the New Deal to put human needs above "inherited notions." Like the machines the New Deal avoided moralism and simply went about the business of dealing pragmatically with politics and society as it found them. Meanwhile, the opponents of the New Deal shared with the opponents of the political machine an inability to accept the changes in their status brought about by industrialization, immigration, and urbanization, and their political movements were, in fact, "moralistic binges." (28)

The description of machine and reform "political style" presented by Theodore Lowi in his 1964 book At the Pleasure of the Mayor was based entirely on the categories of Handlin and Hofstadter, as was that in City Politics, published by Edward C. Banfield and James Q. Wilson in 1965. Banfield and Wilson turned the "political ethos" argument on its head by approving of the "middle class" ethos that Hofstadter and Handlin scorned. They did not follow this with a condemnation of the machine, however, because of their concern for the machine's centralization of urban authority. Whatever its ethical faults, they argued, the machine was apparently able to overcome the decentralization of urban political authority which blocked the undertaking of public projects. For this reason, it was never to be compared to "ideal" alternatives, and, in some

instances, it was preferable to any alternative likely to appear on the urban political scene. Lowi argued somewhat similarly that an "honest" machine that centralized authority for the public good might be the solution to the crisis of urban government. (29)

Social Science History and The Revival of Ethnicity

For the first generation of postwar brokers between history and the social sciences like Handlin and Hofstadter the social sciences were a grab bag into which historians could reach for ideas without necessarily transforming the discipline itself. Although both were open to the instruction of the social sciences, they were not convinced that history should become one. Moreover, both were more deeply involved in the reconstruction of American history along the lines of the "new" liberalism than in the reconstitution of history as a social science.

For the first generation of their more social scientific successors, however, like Lee Benson and Samuel P. Hays, the goal was to use the social sciences to transform history itself, to develop a "social scientific" history which focused on the structure of social and political behavior and avoided the focus on "episode and ideology" in the naive political narratives of their predecessors. For the most part, these historians were oblivious to the politics of either "empirical social science" itself or the specific middle range frameworks they borrowed. Benson turned to Merton's theory of "reference groups" as a way of understanding how there could be any meaningful political conflict in an economically consensual society; Hays inserted Merton's conception of "locals and cosmopolitans" into a modernization framework as a way of explaining the change in consciousness brought about by the modernizing thrust of American social development.

For Benson and Hays the work of the generation of Handlin and Hofstadter was both insufficiently "scientific" and, for Hays at least, too closely tied to the "liberal" interpretation of American politics. Both argued that political history was episodic and too little concerned with the "structure" of political behavior over time or across space. Both also felt that this focus on "episode and ideology" turned American history into what Benson referred to as a "Hobbesian" world in which every historian worked for himself and there was little hope for the development of

a properly "professional" (read scientific) community which could produce cumulative empirical results. Their turn to the "empirical" social sciences for a model of professional reorganization was, therefore, predictable, and, on the whole beneficial, if somewhat naive. But both their historiographical indebtedness to their predecessors and their selection of models and ideas from the social sciences kept their revolution from being more than "halfway." (30)

Benson, for example, predicated his well known work The Concept of Jacksonian Democracy on the search for the bases of political conflict in a society lacking fundamental economic conflict. This work, which is rightly perceived as one of the founding texts of the "ethnocultural" interpretation of American political history is often wrongly remembered as a "test" of the relative ability of class and ethnicity to explain political behavior. In fact, Benson defined the former out of his inquiry, declaring this work to be an extension of "the complementary theses" of consensus presented by Hartz and Hofstadter. According to Benson, Hofstadter had "enlarged and sharpened our vision" with the insight that no significant group had challenged the legitimacy of a capitalist system of political economy in the United States and Hartz had revealed the same about political theory. (31)

In spite of this agreement on some fundamentals, Benson argued, conflict could and did occur in the series of stages best illuminated by Merton's theory of reference groups: ethnocultural "issues" like temperance or sabbatarianism created groups, groups became reference points (either positive or negative), reference points became continuing political roles. This view, according to Benson was superior to that which held that disagreements arose from "the simultaneous existence of different stages of society" or "clashing economic interests." As he was later to explain, "cultural attributes have much greater potential than economic attributes to function as the basis of social groups...(because they) tend strongly to function as the primary reference groups that men 'naturally' turn to when they engage in the myriad types of conflict endemic in the capitalist epoch." (32)

However, this argument, too, was influenced to a great extent by the theoretical framework within which it was framed. Benson's turn to Merton was a turn, as others have

noted, to an essentially voluntaristic theory of action, a non-structural theory of "group" formation, and a system in which the role of power was relatively underdeveloped. Merton's theory of reference groups was based upon the theory of relative deprivation, and contended that attitudes and action were more influenced by the groups with which one identified--positively or negatively--than by one's social structural situation. As Piotr Sztompka has pointed out, what is important in this theory is "clearly the idea of reference (i.e. relativisation), and not the idea of group." In fact, it is not completely clear in Merton's account what a "group" is or from where groups come. Merton's theory was well matched with Benson's assumption that there were no fundamental economic structural differences in American society. But this framework did not, could not, permit a "test" of the relative political salience of class and ethnicity. (33)

Reflecting his interest in social history, Hays' work was more social "structural" than that of Benson. Moreover, Hays blasted the work of Hofstadter for its emphasis on the role of the "middle class" in urban reform and its reliance on the analysis of middle class "ideology" in its theory of progressivism. Structurally generated struggles for power were the centerpiece of the works of Hays and the reason for his popularity among those who attacked consensus history. (34)

As I have written elsewhere, however, the cutting edge of Hays work was dulled by its definition of "structure" in essentially structural-functional terms. In a 1965 essay on the "social analysis" of American political history Hays called for attention to the "systematizing and organizing processes inherent in industrialism as the dynamic force in social change in modern life" and the structure of relationships--between "locals and cosmopolitans"--which those processes generated. More than just these terms were borrowed from Merton, however, so also was Merton's explanation of the "relative proportions" of locals and cosmopolitans in different communities as resulting from "characteristic forms of environing social structure with their distinctive functional requirements." (35)

By 1974 in an essay on the political structure of the American city this structuring process had blossomed into a "constant tension between forces making for decentralization and forces

making for centralization in human relations and institutions," and a political system "shaped and reshaped" according to the "inner dynamic" of the changing economic and social order. If in Benson politics was detached from structure, in Hays politics was overwhelmed by it; "structures" and "processes" generated reified worldviews which took the place of conflicting political actors.

(36)

The successors to Benson and Hays in the "new" political history, including most prominently Paul Kleppner and Richard Jensen, extended both the historical claims and empirical reach of ethnocultural political history, arguing flatly that "partisan affiliations were not rooted in economic class distinction," and "religion was the fundamental source of political conflict in the midwest." But as Jensen himself has written, the theoretical framework within which these authors worked was essentially a functionalist one. Their question was what were the functions of politics in nineteenth century America. Assuming, like the founders of the field, that it was not to advance economic interests, they argued that it was to solidify those that were "cultural." (37)

Moreover, within this framework even apparently "economic" issues--e.g. the tariff--were viewed as really only culturally symbolic; flags, as it were, so that voters motivated primarily by local ethnocultural issues knew for which party to vote. The reinterpretation of "economic" issues as "cultural" was important to this framework because, as Richard L. McCormick has pointed out, only a tiny fraction of public policy in the nineteenth century involved distinctively ethnocultural issues; the majority of public policymaking involved clearly economic issues. (38)

The possibility that these issues have been wrongly interpreted as cultural is raised by a series of penetrating essays on the methodology of these--and other--works in the ethnocultural political school by J. Morgan Kousser and Allan J. Lichtman which have undermined their quantitative infrastructure. In essence, these authors contend that the ethnocultural historians either have not conducted the multivariate tests of ethnicity and class that they claim to have done or have not conducted them properly. Historians who have seen these critiques as so much "hair-splitting" among quantitative historians--for whom they feel little sympathy in any event--

not only misunderstand the gravity of the criticism but belie their own commitment to historical "facts," as well as the ethnocultural historians' often repeated claim to social scientific status. (39)

The Persistence of Pluralism in the "New" Social History

The construction of a "social" analysis of politics by Benson and Hays was contemporaneously accompanied by a broader turn to social history by the so-called "new" urban historians beginning with Stephan Thernstrom. These analysts focused primarily on "society"--actually social mobility--rather than politics, and employed the community study as both object and method. The implicit and explicit theory of these studies was pluralist; pluralism both rationalized their separation of politics and society and explained the--usually poorly examined--links between social and political mobility.

Because of its role in the community power debates of the nineteen sixties, pluralist theory is often thought of as primarily a set of statements about "who governs" in contemporary America. In the work of Robert Dahl it was this, of course, but also much more. It was a dynamic and historical theory of politics which attempted to explain the relationship between political ideology and institutions, economic development and political development, individual mobility and political consciousness, and, ultimately, "society" and the "state." (40)

In his Preface to Democratic Theory, published in 1956, Dahl laid down a fundamental principle of his work--and his generation--in the argument that institutions like the constitution were less important guarantors of American democracy than the widespread "consensus" that underlay them. "Prior to politics, beneath it, enveloping it, restricting it, conditioning it, is the underlying consensus on policy that usually exists in the society among a predominant portion of the politically active members." Acting on this belief, Dahl embarked upon the construction of what today would be regarded as a "society-centered" theory of politics to explain the role and reproduction of this consensus in his more widely read 1961 book, Who Governs. (41)

The famous "Book I. From Oligarchy to Pluralism" in Dahl's Who Governs presented a sophisticated, apparently empirical, resolutely behavioral, and easily generalizable theory of the

development of American local politics that was to have an enormous impact on historians. At a high level of generality, Dahl argued that in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries New Haven--and by invited extension, American communities everywhere--had been ruled by interlocked socioeconomic, political, and at times religious elites. However the effects of large-scale social changes like industrialization, immigration, and population growth were to destroy the socioeconomic basis of this elite by creating new sources of economic power, generating greater social complexity and permitting population growth. All of these changes multiplied the bases of political power and, thereby, the number of political elites. As society became a mosaic of groups, the rational approach to politics was one rooted in political conflict among self-interest groups--or their leaders--whose goals were short-term, pragmatic, negotiable, and capable of being fulfilled within the existing framework of social and political institutions of American society. Agreement on these conditions formed a consensus on the rules of the game, and competition among the many groups maintained a rough political equilibrium. (42)

This socioeconomically driven shift from "cumulative" to "dispersed" inequality in American society was facilitated by the expansion of the state produced by a linkage between political integration and social mobility. In New Haven, new socioeconomic groups--especially ethnic groups--entered society at the bottom and experienced an initial period when their "proletarian" status prevented them from engaging in political activity. However, as members of the group began to achieve lower middle class economic status and therefore had the leisure to work in politics, they began to experience political mobility as well; as more members of the group became active the public sector grew in response to their needs through a patronage-based process similar to the "latent" functions described by Merton.

This was not, however, the only similarity to Merton's analysis. Equally important was a theory of psychological mobility very similar to that espoused by Merton. For Dahl, to begin with, there was "no distinctive working class outlook that could be formed into an ideology and program different from that already expressed in middle class ideals." This was because of the social mobility process, in which "each generation of workers was enormously more prosperous than its

parents in a seemingly endless expansion of gains." Even if there had been such an outlook, of course, the process of ethnic mobility outlined above would have undercut it. Ethnics entered as "proletarians,"--thereby fragmenting class--but soon moved up the class ladder in his three stage explanation of political assimilation which ended when the ethnics "have middle class ideas, adopt a middle class style of life, ... and look to others in the middling strata for friends, associates, marriage partners." Or, in other words, both workers as workers and workers as ethnics had "middle class" reference groups. (43)

In Stephan Thernstrom's classic 1964 book, Poverty and Progress: Social Mobility in a Nineteenth Century City, the relationship between politics and social structure was mediated so explicitly by Dahl's theory that the book made a powerful political statement almost in spite of its location in the "new" social history. Ostensibly an analysis of the life chances of immigrant laborers in nineteenth century Newburyport Massachusetts, Thernstrom's book was also a test of the "rags to riches" thesis in American history. Its argument that the range of occupational mobility was distinctly narrower than the conventional framework suggested was delivered as a criticism of the "consensus" assumption of ever increasing abundance. However, its claim that a "mobility ideology" was widespread in American society and its linkage of social mobility and political integration--a linkage taken directly from Dahl--turned it into the social historical equivalent of Dahl himself. (44)

It cannot be said that without Dahl there would have been no Thernstrom because the book was deeply influenced by the work of Handlin, who was Thernstrom's advisor. Handlin was obsessed with the impact of mobility on social integration and, as Ian Tyrell has pointed out, his books were organized around the question of how society can be reintegrated after it is decomposed by mobility or rapid social change. The fact that the narrative structure of Thernstrom's book, therefore, goes from an integrated "Federalist" Newburyport, disruption through industrialization, population growth and immigration, to a final stage of social and political reintegration is attributable, in part, to Handlin's influence. (45)

However, this framework not only recapitulated that of Dahl's from a New Haven ruled by the "Patricians" to one ruled by the "Ex-plebes"--as Thernstrom fully acknowledges in his footnotes--but also made a very similar connection between social and political mobility. Following Hofstadter and Hartz explicitly Thernstrom argued that in Newburyport--as in Dahl's New Haven--party politics were consensus politics to begin with because of the relative absence of conflict over social and economic policy. As in New Haven, the interlocking elite of Federalist Newburyport was smashed by industrialization and immigration and replaced with a variety of overlapping voluntary groups. As in New Haven, the local political arena was "open to ambitious [immigrant] men of talent" and the Irish-born who rose in politics were "precisely those who had risen dramatically in the occupational and property spheres"--the "entrepreneurs" in Dahl's scheme. As importantly, Thernstrom believed he had found the "social roots of consensus politics" in what he called the "mobility ideology." Even at the bottom of the class ladder there were abundant opportunities for modest self-advancement and, therefore "Horatio Alger was a primary symbol of the American political tradition." Consensus politics in Newburyport were based on the genuine absence of "the desperate economic grievances and the rigid social barriers which fed the class-based parties...of the old world." (46)

Thernstrom thought he had discovered the social correlate of Dahl's "democratic creed" in his notion of the "mobility ideology." In fact the process was the opposite; Thernstrom worked from Dahl's conception of consensus as articulated in Who Governs in 1961 to construct both the social function and political implications of the mobility ideology in 1964.

Pluralist Neo-Marxists

Under the influence of the British marxist labor historians like E. P. Thompson American social historians after Thernstrom transformed the study of "mobility" into the study of "class formation," and in so doing demonstrated that the "mobility ideology" was an inadequate description of the ideology of the American working class just as the process of "mobility" in no way captured the entire experience of capitalist industrialization. (47)

In effect, in response to the pluralist separation of economy and polity the historians of the working class rejoined these spheres by politicizing production, arguing effectively that the "economic" is "political" in the sense that the relations of production produce with them certain relations of domination and ideological justifications for that domination. Their careful reconstructions of the patterns of work and their detailed exegesis of a wide variety of sources for understanding working class "culture," revealed the interweaving of economics, politics, and ideology in the sphere of production. Similar attention was not, however, lavished on the workings of politics; in many of these studies, in fact, politics was a crucial but residual category explained in recognizably pluralist terms.

This pattern was set in one of the first direct responses to the work of Thernstrom, Alan Dawley's Class and Community: The Industrial Revolution in Lynn, which was published in 1976. By means of the techniques above, Dawley successfully challenged the understanding of class, mobility, and ideology characteristic of the social historical "mobility" studies since Thernstrom. In his brief analysis of politics, however, which lacked entirely the care and subtlety of his analysis of production, he "discovered" what he called the "same process" in Lynn as Dahl had described in New Haven. In Lynn "local politics provided a convincing demonstration to wage earners that men from their own ranks could rise to the highest position in honor in their community," and this reinforced the ideological legitimacy of the political system while, at the same time, "pork-barrel temptations" lured most working class voters away from a workingmen's party and back to the two regular parties. In his view, contrary to Thernstrom, Horatio Alger was out: "every mass action, every collective expression of opinion identifies Horatio Alger as an outcast in the minds of Lynn workers. Electoral politics, not faith in occupational success or property ownership was the main safety valve of working class discontent." Ironically, however, the ballot box was, in Dawley's now famous phrase, "the coffin of class consciousness" because Robert Dahl had said it was. (48)

This "new" framework for the understanding of class and politics was to be repeated in many studies influenced by Dawley's. For example, Daniel Walkowitz's Worker City, Company

Town found that "the dominant liberal social and political ideology of progress undermined labor's class consciousness, while social mobility and the political process both provided experiences that confirmed that ideology." In Troy, New York, class and ethnicity reinforced one another among the Irish in the 1850s and 1860s, but by the 1880s an Irish bourgeoisie and political machine emerged. Irish politicians--still an important symbol of immigrant mobility, success, and power--"circumscribed class politics." In Susan Hirsch's study of antebellum Newark, Roots of the American Working Class, the first generation of workers used politics as an arena for cultural conflict and thereafter, increased immigration blocked the development of class politics by extending the hold of ethnic politics. "The urban political machine organized immigrant working class voters into ethnic blocks, socializing them to an American politics that gave them symbolic achievements...as well as personal aid." (49)

These neo-marxist community studies--and others like them--ended with pluralist understanding of politics for reasons having to do both with marxian theory and their own historical practice. As, among others, Erik Wright has pointed out, the understanding of "the political" in marxian theory was not one of its most fruitful formulations. Politics entered marxist analysis primarily in two ways, in the moment at which and process by which a class shifted from its purely economic existence "in itself" to its political existence "for itself," and in the political institution that was essential for reproducing the structure of capitalist economic relations. In crude hands the process of class formation was completely teleological, the pattern of state action, wholly instrumental, and as late as 1977 Ralph Miliband complained about both of these problems in the Marxian theory of democratic politics. (50)

This theoretical problem was compounded by both the amount and the type of attention these studies devoted to politics. Because the focus of all of them was on class formation not political formation, politics was invariably considered in a seemingly obligatory, but always brief and inadequate single chapter. Moreover, the analytical style of these chapters was remarkable different from those dealing with class. While the former were usually structural, quantitative, and detailed the "analysis" of politics resorted to the "old" political history with a vengeance: a

narration of personalities, intrigue, and manipulation with barely a nod to systematic analysis of the behavior of the electorate or the polity itself. This tendency has been carried to an extreme in Sean Wilentz's widely praised new book on the formation of the New York City working class. There the politics of the Workingmen's Parties of the eighteen thirties are rendered in loving detail while the representatives of the "regular" parties lurk in the background only as shadowy opportunists and manipulators. (51)

Ironically, in all of these studies this barely analyzed, essentially residual, and traditionally related, category then becomes the most compelling reason for the failure of class consciousness to move from the shop floor to the ballot box or beyond. Lacking a well-developed alternative, the connection between economy and polity is, as we have seen, made by means of a jury-rigged version of Dahl's framework. Dahl's theory was, after all, "base" driven--the shift from cumulative to dispersed inequalities was brought about in large part by socioeconomic change--and it maintained that political interests were generated outside the political arena then brought into it where they were disciplined, perhaps combined, and adjudicated. The simple addition of an instrumental theory of the state and a hegemonic interpretation of "consensus" allowed its transformation. (52)

Taking Politics Seriously

Among others, Theda Skocpol has noted the important ways in which pluralist, functionalist, and marxist theories parallel one another in their "society-centeredness." In each of these frameworks--which of course overlap and interact--politics and the state are constituted by rather than constitutive of society. At one level, therefore, the construction of a conception of American politics emphasizing ethnicity, patronage, and machines represents only this tendency toward the subsumption of the state by society in the social sciences since World War Two. Recognition that states are "weighty actors" with their "own" histories may in due course correct this problem. (53)

This essay has tried to point out, however, that the problem is more complicated than that. Across the social sciences the effort to use historical and institutional means to "bring the state back in" is contaminated by the conceptual residues of a particular moment in American history when the identities of and connections among social science, history, liberalism, and the state were redefined. It is said that hegemony is accomplished when the views of one class become the "common sense" of another. Few would deny that it is just "common sense" that American urban politics involves ethnicity, patronage, and machines.

Of course, no one would argue that ethnicity or patronage were irrelevant to nineteenth century American politics, nor would anyone claim that there were no political machines. The question is whether or not these foci enrich or impoverish the conception of the state at the subnational level. A brief review of the contributions and limitations of the literatures we have considered here demonstrates the ways in which they interact to narrow the consideration of the state.

The contribution of the ethnocultural political literature has been the rediscovery of the breadth and significance of political participation in nineteenth century America. The problem of this work has been its failure to connect participation and policy formation; its reduction of politics to cultural symbolism has produced a state which does not act to produce an authoritative allocation of resources or play an active role in the economic constitution or transformation of society. (54)

The contribution of the neo-marxist community studies has been the reintroduction into American history of class and conflict as social and political realities. Moreover, this work suggests that political economic issues--from the control of police to the maintenance of common lands--were of great importance. However, acceptance of a view of the state as primarily an arena of symbolism, ideological manipulation, or pure and simple "pork-barrelism" has led this literature to a sort of imperialistic economism in which the process of production has been the only or at least the most important location for the production of political ideology. This has led these

historians either to ignore or trivialize the power of political ideology to shape social and economic ideologies.

The contribution of the historically oriented political scientists like Katznelson, Shefter, and Bridges has been a shift from the "social" to the "political" roles of machine politics; from machines as uncritical respondents to "needs" of the urban masses to political organizations with their own imperatives. The problem of this literature is the centrality and inevitability of machine politics itself; assumption that the machines are the key to American political development.

Taken together, these approaches "shrink" the state. Taking politics seriously requires its expansion; the recognition of the manifold ways in which politics helped to constitute nineteenth century American society. The legislative and judicial branches of the state and local levels of the American state were fundamentally and continuously involved in the definition and redefinition of "public" and "private" in terms of property, interests, and realms of action, and those activities were continuously salient politically.

In its everyday actions the state was continuously conferring privileges and creating--or extracting--resources and thereby constituting conflicting political actors and their ideological representations of their actions. Both these actions and the role of the state itself were enormously controversial. By doing some damage to subtleties of their thought, one can range nineteenth century state ideology on a continuum from Federalists, Whigs, and Mugwump Republicans on the one hand, to the Jeffersonian Republicans, and Jacksonian and "Bourbon" Democrats on the other. For the former, an active state was a guarantor of stability, economic development, and, ultimately, social harmony. For the latter, it presaged corruption and the disruption of a "natural" social harmony as well as the domination of those favored by political-economic privileges over those without those privileges. Ironically, whatever other socioeconomic changes were to transpire in nineteenth century America, these ideological poles in the debate over the role of the state would persist. (55)

Furthermore, positions on the state and political democracy were linked unpredictably. Throughout the nineteenth century, those who professed to place their faith in "the People"

objected to the expanding state while those who tended toward political elitism lauded such expansion. Whigs before the Civil War and Mugwumps afterward favored an expanding state but limited suffrage; pre-Civil War Jacksonian Democrats and post-Civil War Bourbon Democrats favored mass political mobilization and a small state. Those, therefore, whom one might have expected to expand the state purely for patronage reasons did not necessarily do so on ideological grounds, while those who favored expanding the state objected to political patronage beyond a certain level.

In the course of these battles, the "agrarians" and "aristocrats," "producers" and "drones," "people" and "monopolists" were groups whose material reality and ideological status were created in and by the state. Only by ignoring political ideology can labor historians contend that the "producer" ideology emerged at the point of production to become the language of class in America. In fact this ideology emerged out of political combat and was appropriated by working class organizations. It is this, origin, of course, which explains its ability simultaneously to facilitate and obstruct radical action. Moreover, it is in part for this reason that labor historians have avoided detailed comparisons of "labor" and "party" ideology: they contain many of the same ideas. (56)

Against this background of contentious state action, the battle over the so-called ethnocultural issues--e.g. the enforcement of temperance, sabbatarianism, etc.--was also a battle over the extension--or retention--of state authority over society. Moreover, the political alignments on these issues were similar to those on others; Whigs and Republicans favored state action on ethnocultural issues and in other areas; Democrats opposed the former and campaigned actively for retrenchment at both local and state levels. Ethnocultural political alignments were not necessarily, therefore, just symbolically expressive, but also linked to prior positions on economically related activities of the state.

In fact the post civil war political era at the state and local levels opened not with ethnocultural issues but with assaults on the activities of the pre-war and wartime state in the public debt limitation campaigns conducted in state after state following the War. When the 1880

census surveyed these limitations on the state and local public sector for the first time, it found that 15 of the 38 states had added debt restriction provisions to their constitutions, while three others had authorized legislatures to do so. Twenty four of the thirty eight states had restricted the right of cities to invest in railways, twenty five barred them from investing in private corporations. All but three of the constitutional debt ceilings were adopted before 1877, indicating that they were not just responses to the "panic" of the mid-1870s, but had to do with more deep seated reactions to state economic and fiscal activities. Historians have, for the most part, ignored these movements, in spite of their rich potential for revealing the "sense" of the state in these years. (57)

In addition to creating resources, of course, the state extracted them; state activity was controversial in part because it was costly. Statistics on property ownership and geographical mobility suggest that it is probable that the highly mobilized post-Civil War electorate was constituted both as voters and as "taxpayers" especially in the urban areas, but, again, the latter identity has been almost ignored. Nationwide the level of non-farm homeownership--and thus eligibility for property taxation--was about 37 percent in 1890. Moreover, this homeownership spread remarkably deeply down the class structure, as it was not unusual for immigrants to own homes at a higher rate than the native born and for as much as 40 percent of skilled workers to own homes. It is also the case in mobility studies that those who accumulated property were those most likely to stay in one place and that homeownership was age specific--those who aged in one place were very likely to own homes. (58)

Because the most important qualification for suffrage in the late nineteenth century was residence and those most likely to stay in one place were also likely to accumulate real property and thus pay property tax, it is very likely that the relationship between spreading tax liability and increasing political participation was not coincidental. For example, throughout the nineteenth century the most highly mobilized ethnic group was the Irish, who were also the ethnic group with the highest rate of homeownership in many cities. However, as Stephan Thernstrom has pointed out, this property accumulation was achieved by means of what he calls "ruthless

underconsumption," and the hold of immigrants on their property was tenuous at best. This new work suggests that groups which have been thought to be proponents of the expansion of government had more interest in stopping that expansion since the only guaranteed result of such expansion was an increased tax bill. (59)

The question of resources and costs brings us back to the literature on the political machine which has been blissfully unaware of these issues. The functional model of the political machine provided a license for historically oriented social scientists to "discover" machines in city after city by ripping urban politics out of its institutional, ideological, and fiscal contexts. More recent historical and comparative work has produced abundant evidence that the all-powerful urban boss rarely, if ever, existed. In fact, urban politics was simply too contested, urban policymaking too complicated, and urban policymakers--believe it or not--too responsible to support the image of the all-powerful urban boss. There were, of course, politicians at precinct, ward, and city levels who were called "bosses," and some of these men headed political and other organizations that could dispense "patronage" of widely varying amounts and types and could at times "deliver" some votes. But there were remarkably few "machines" that controlled city-wide political offices for long periods of time, there is remarkably little evidence that political organizations either wanted or had the resources to meet the needs of the urban masses, and there is no evidence that the presence of "machines" fundamentally affected patterns of political mobilization. (60)

All of these problems and more are revealed, for example, by reading back to back the accounts of New York City politics written by Wilentz, Bridges, Shefter and David Hammack, in which there is almost no agreement on when the "machine" became the "machine," or exactly what difference that made. The variety in these accounts, however, testifies to the ability of these authors to discover the complexity of politics in New York city; the problem is the attempt to jam that complexity into the "machine" straight-jacket. (61)

Considering the various ways that the sub-national state helped to constitute society by acting or refusing to act, the various issues around which political mobilization occurred or failed

to occur and the various ideologies that these actions generated, the most damning thing that can be said about the view of politics from ethnicity, patronage, and machines is simply that it is an extraordinarily narrow way of viewing the relationship between state and society in America. This narrowness is not surprising given the circumstances out of which this view emerged; its persistence is, however, given the wealth of tasks entailed in "bringing the state back in" to American history.

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15. Pells, Liberal Mind, 117-182.

16. David M. Ricci, The Tragedy of Political Science: Politics, Scholarship, and Democracy (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 99-208. Another powerful and important analysis of the postwar transformation of theories of politics is Michael P. Rogin's The Intellectuals and McCarthy: The Radical Specter (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1969).

17. James Bryce, The American Commonwealth (London: MacMillan and Co., 1888), II, 75-76. For useful studies of this generation of political science see also Bernard Crick, The American Science of Politics: Its Origins and Conditions (Berkeley: University of California Press), 73-118, and Raymond Seidelman and Edward J. Harpham, Disenchanted Realists: Political Science and the American Crisis, 1884-1984 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), 60-158. David Hammack discusses the thought of this generation of urban analysts in "Problems in the Historical Study of Power in the Cities and Towns of the United States: 1860-1960," American Historical Review, 83 (1978), 323-349.

18. E. Pendleton Herring, The Politics of Democracy: American Parties in Action (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1940), x.
19. Ibid., 136; for brief accounts of the impact of this book see Purcell, Crisis, 190 and Ricci, Tragedy, 110-111. Schattschneider's review is quoted in Purcell.
20. Robert W. Friedrichs, A Sociology of Sociology (New York: The Free Press, 1972), 11-56; For another discussion of this change, see Richard J. Bernstein, The Restructuring of Social and Political Theory (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1976).
21. F. Stuart Chapin, Contemporary American Institutions: A Sociological Analysis (New York: Harper Brothers, 1935), 27-48.
22. In spite of--perhaps because of?--his influence in the construction of recent American social science, Merton's work has been very little evaluated. Cf. Robert Bierstadt, American Sociological Theory: A Critical History (New York, 1981), 443-489; and Piotr Sztompka, Robert K. Merton: An Intellectual Profile (London: MacMillan, 1986). Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure: Toward the Codification of Theory and Research (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1949).
23. Ibid., 61-81.
24. Alan Ryan, The Philosophy of the Social Sciences (London: MacMillan, 1970), 189-190.
25. Merton, Social Theory, 73. Merton noted there that he took his understanding of these functions from Chapin. I have discussed Merton's theory of latent functions and its effects on American urban political history in more detail in Terrence J. McDonald, "The Problem of the Political in Recent American Urban History: Liberal Pluralism and the Rise of Functionalism," Social History, 10 (1985), 323-345.
26. Richard Hofstadter, The Age of Reform: From Bryan to FDR (New York: Vintage, 1955), 14; Oscar Handlin, The Uprooted (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1951).

27. Handlin, Uprooted, 210-213, 226; Hofstadter, The Age, 185, 316, 319. Cf. McDonald, "The Problem of the Political," 331-333.
28. Merton, Social Theory, 372 n97; Handlin, Uprooted, 226; Hofstadter, Age, 5-22.
29. Theodore Lowi, At the Pleasure of the Mayor: Patronage and Power in New York City, 1898-1958 (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1964), 179-180; Edward C. Banfield and James Q. Wilson, City Politics (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 126. The influence of these authors on the conception of urban politics among political scientists has been powerful. One prominent political scientist who has resisted the machine framework is Paul E. Peterson. See Peterson, The Politics of School Reform, 1870-1940 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).
30. Their programmatic statements--essays written in the period from the late fifties through the sixties, for the most part--are collected in Benson, Toward the Scientific Study of History (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972) and Hays, American Political History as Social Analysis (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1980). Benson's social scientific mentor was Paul Lazarsfeld; Hays reports he was most influenced by Merton. Both Lazarsfeld and Merton were at the famous department of sociology at Columbia in these years.
31. Lee Benson, The Concept of Jacksonian Democracy: New York as a Test Case (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 272-273.
32. Ibid., 276, 281; Benson, "Marx's General and Middle Range Theories of Social Conflict," in Robert K. Merton, et al., eds., Qualitative and Quantitative Social Research: Papers in Honor of Paul F. Lazarsfeld (New York, 1979), 189-209. Merton's essays on reference groups were included in the 1957 edition of Social Theory and Social Structure, 225-387.
33. Sztompka, Merton, 230; Bierstadt, Theory, 443-489.
34. Hays' criticism of Hofstadter is in "The Politics of Reform in Municipal Government in the Progressive Era," Pacific Northwest Quarterly, 55 (1964), 157-169.

35. Hays, "The Social Analysis of American Political History, 1180-1920," Political Science Quarterly, 80 (1965), 373-394. Merton's essay on local and cosmopolitan influentials was also included in the 1957 edition of Social Theory and Social Structure. I have considered Hays' use of these categories in more detail in McDonald, "The Problem of the Political," 339-342.
36. Hays, "The Changing Political Structure of the City in Industrial America," Journal of Urban History, 1 (1974), 1-32.
37. Richard Jensen, The Winning of the Midwest: Social and Political Conflict, 1888-1896 (Chicago, 1971), 58; Paul Kleppner, The Cross of Culture: A Social Analysis of Midwestern Politics, 1850-1900 (New York, 1970), 35. Richard J. Jensen, "Historiography of American Political History," in Jack P. Greene, ed., Encyclopedia of American Political History (New York: Scribners, 1984), I, 1-25.
38. Richard L. McCormick has made this point in a thoughtful review of this literature "Ethnocultural Interpretations of Nineteenth-Century American Voting Behavior," in McCormick, The Party Period and Public Policy: American Politics from the Age of Jackson to the Progressive Era (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 29-63.
39. These critiques include J. Morgan Kousser, "The 'New Political History': A Methodological Critique," Reviews in American History, 4 (1976), 1-14; Kousser and Allan J. Lichtman, "'New Political History': Some Statistical Questions Answered," Social Science History, 7 (1983), 321-344; Lichtman, "Political Realignment and 'Ethnocultural' Voting in Late Nineteenth Century America," Journal of Social History, 16 (1983), 55-82; Kousser, "Voters Absent and Present," Social Science History, 9 (1985), 215-227.
40. Again, volumes have been written about pluralism, but much less on Dahl, himself, who was, arguably, the political scientist most read by historians of this generation. Edward Purcell considers him to be "perhaps the most influential and persuasive advocate of a more realistic democratic theory," Purcell, Crisis, 260.

41. Robert A. Dahl, A Preface to Democratic Theory (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), 132.
42. Robert A. Dahl, Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961). These arguments are not original with Dahl or restricted to his work. But they were presented in a way that had particular appeal for historians because it was both historical and, apparently, empirical.
43. Ibid., 30, 35.
44. Stephan Thernstrom, Poverty and Progress: Social Mobility in a Nineteenth Century City (Cambridge, 1964). This analysis of the political framework of Thernstrom's book helps clarify a point on which there has been much confusion among historians: how a work of avowedly "history from the bottom up" could have such consensual implications.
45. Tyrell, The Absent Marx, 102-103.
46. Thernstrom, Poverty and Progress, 181-182; 271 n41.
47. E. P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (New York: Vintage, 1966).
48. Alan Dawley, Class and Community: The Industrial Revolution in Lynn (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), 219. For Dawley's use of Dahl, see 293 n6.
49. Daniel Walkowitz, Worker City, Company Town: Iron and Cotton Worker Protest in Troy and Cohoes, New York, 1855-84 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978), 253-255; Susan Hirsch, Roots of the American Working Class: The Industrialization of Crafts in Newark, 1800-1860 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978), 109-131.
50. Erik O. Wright, "The Status of the Political in the Concept of Class Structure," Politics and Society, 11 (1982), 321-341; Ralph Miliband, Marxism and Politics (New York, 1977).

51. Sean Wilentz, Chants Democratic: New York and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).
52. For a useful consideration of the problems of such conflation of theories, see Robert R. Alford and Roger Friedland, Powers of Theory: Capitalism, the State, and Democracy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).
53. Skocpol has made these point in various places, see "Political Response to Capitalist Crisis: Neo-Marxist Theories of the State and the Case of the New Deal," Politics and Society, 10 (1980), 199-200; and Skocpol, "Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research," in Bringing, 4-6.
54. McCormick, Party Period, 55-63.
55. For general surveys of these issues, see, among others, M. J. Heale, The Making of American Politics 1750-1850 (London: Longgman, 1977), and Morton Keller, Affairs of State: Public Life in Late Nineteenth Century America (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977).
56. Studies emphasizing party ideology include, among others, John Ashworth, 'Agrarians' and 'Aristocrats': Party Political Ideology in the United States, 1837-1846 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Eric Foner, Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republic Party Before the Civil War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970).
57. For background to these conflicts, see C. K. Yearley, The Money Machines: The Breakdown and Reform of Governmental and Party Finance in the North, 1860-1920 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1970); J. Mills Thornton, "Fiscal Policy and the Failure of Reconstruction in the Lower South," in J. Morgan Kousser and James M. McPherson, eds., Region, Race, and Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of C. Vann Woodward (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 349-394; Eric Monkkonen, America Becomes Urban: The Development of U.S. Cities, 1780-1980, forthcoming (Berkeley: University of California Press).

58. I have discussed the issue of urban fiscal politics more extensively in other places, including Terrence J. McDonald and Sally K. Ward, eds., The Politics of Urban Fiscal Policy (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1984); McDonald, The Parameters of Urban Fiscal Policy: Socioeconomic Change and Political Culture in San Francisco, 1860-1906 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); McDonald, "The History of Urban Fiscal Politics in America, 1830-1930: What Was Supposed to Be Versus What Was and the Difference it Makes," forthcoming, International Journal of Public Administration. Cf. Monkkonen, America Becomes Urban.

59. For discussions of the rates and implications of homeownership see Thernstrom, Poverty and Progress; Olivier Zunz, The Changing Face of Inequality: Urbanization, Industrial Development, and Immigrants in Detroit, 1880-1920 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); McDonald, Parameters.

60. Examples of this new work in urban political history would include Jon C. Teaford, The Unheralded Triumph: City Government in America, 1870-1900 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984); Teaford, "Finis for Tweed and Steffens: Rewriting the History of Urban Rule," Reviews in American History, 10 (1982); 143-153; M. Craig Brown and Charles N. Halaby, "Bosses, Reform, and the Socioeconomic Bases of Urban Expenditure, 1880-1940," in McDonald and Ward, eds., The Politics of Urban Fiscal Policy, 69-100; McDonald, The Parameters of Urban Fiscal Policy. For another call for a more general restoration of political history, see J. Morgan Kousser, "Toward 'Total Political History'," Social Science Working Paper #581, Division of the Humanities and Social Sciences, California Institute of Technology.

61. David C. Hammack, Power and Society: Greater New York at the Turn of the Century (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1982).