Bosses, Machines, and Urban Voters

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Charles Francis Murphy, like William Marcy Tweed, was the boss of Tammany Hall; through that position, again like Tweed, he was the boss of the New York Democracy and thus in considerable control of the governments of New York City and the state of New York. Moreover, the similarities between the two men extend beyond the positions they held in common. Tammany Hall and the New York Democracy continued as political movements resting on a base of the lower-class and working-class elements of the city. The *modus operandi* of Tammany Hall continued much the same as before. And its structure persisted also; Tammany continued to function through a system of structured decentralization, wherein each political worker down to the precinct level operated independently and on his own terms so long as he delivered the vote. But the forces of central authority, with the boss at their pinnacle, were constantly vigilant to see that the vote was indeed delivered; few leaders of district, precinct, or any other level were able to contest the powers of the central authority.

But these similarities between Tweed and his situation, and Murphy and his, cannot mask the considerable differences between the men and between the cities they attempted to rule. Indeed, the changed nature of New York City alone was reason for the considerable differences between Tweed's and Murphy's Tammany Halls, and the different ideas and ambitions of the two men added another important dimension.

New York City in 1900 was a very different place physically from what it had been in 1870. In 1897, the Bronx (soon Bronx County), Queens (Queens County), Brooklyn (Kings County), and Richmond (Richmond County—Staten Island) were added to Manhattan (New York County) to
create the five boroughs of the new city of Greater New York. A Manhat-
tan of about 31 square miles in Tweed’s day was now a large metropolis
of about 365 square miles, jumping rivers and other apparently natural
dividers to form a new unity.

Along with this increase in acreage were other physical developments
that served to turn it into a real whole. The Brooklyn Bridge, begun in
Tweed’s day, was finished in 1883. It was complemented, in Murphy’s
day, by the Williamsburg, Manhattan, and Queensboro bridges, and the
beginning of construction of “tubes” under the water as well. Transporta-
tion in Manhattan to about 1890 was in the hands of four private compan-
ies holding perpetual franchises from state government, which together
had about 32 miles of track. More rapid development was taking place at
the same time in the other cities, all of them, like Manhattan, using steam-
powered locomotives to pull their trains. But the 1890s saw the expansion
of the elevated railroads, and 1900 the plans for the first subway. With
conversion to electric power in 1902, the basis for a reasonably clean and
efficient transportation system for this disjointed city had begun. Under
Murphy, both municipal and private construction contributed to the
development of a reasonably complete interborough rapid transit (IRT)
system.

Better transportation made possible a more specialized city, where
residential and industrial/commercial districts could be separate from one
another. The “walking city” was no longer essential. This specialization
was not so thorough in New York as in other cities, partly because it was
less industrial than, for example, Chicago, and also because some of its
most important industries—textiles especially—were decentralized and
tenement-based for a long while. But nonetheless a more distinct neighbor-
hood development and characterization did take place.

The city modernized in other ways. The Tweed era had seen, whatever
the waste, the first development of more active government and
government-centered urban services. Tammany and non-Tammany govern-
ments after Tweed continued this, so that by the turn of the century,
things like city-run street cleaning and refuse collection were general.
Despite the crowding of the tenement areas, New York was a healthier
place in Murphy’s day than it had been in Tweed’s. The death rate, for
example, which had been 35/1,000 in Tweed’s day, was 21/1,000 in 1900
and 13/1,000 in 1920.

But in many respects the most important changes in New York were
neither physical nor economic. They were demographic, and they stemmed
from the tremendous increase in population, and the variety thereof.

The newly integrated New York City had a population of almost 3.5
million in 1900, which increased to 4.75 million in 1910 and over 5.5
million in 1920. Manhattan had a bit less than half of this population, and
Brooklyn a bit more than a third. The Bronx was next largest, then Queens,
and finally Richmond, by far the smallest of the boroughs. Thus, at the
outset, a prospective “boss” of New York politics in the twentieth century
would have far more people to deal with than had Boss Tweed; this alone
required changes in the operation of politics.

But numbers were only one part of the changed population of New
York City. Starting with the 1880s, immigration had begun to increase
more and more. Between 1860 and 1900 alone over 750,000 immigrants
came into New York City, accounting for about a third of its population
growth during that time. (Considering that so much of the rest came from
annexation, the immigrant aspect of this is yet more impressive.) Even
up to 1890, immigrants made up over half of Manhattan’s population
growth. After 1900 the volume of immigration grew ever larger; as New
York continued to be the major port of entry for new immigrants, it
also continued the largest permanent settling point for them. From Ellis
Island, established by the federal government in the 1890s, awesome num-
bers of people moved into New York City proper in the years up to World
War One. By 1920, the foreign born and their children made up 76 per-
cent of the city’s population (78 percent in Manhattan and 81 percent in
the Bronx).

Moreover, the source of this immigration was greatly changed from
the time of Tweed, introducing new cultural and political factors. The
essentially old stock, Irish, and German city of 1870 became, by the
First World War, a major center of settlement for southern and eastern
European nationalities as well. Italians and eastern European Jews began
their immigration in the 1880s and never stopped. Close to a million
foreign-born Jews lived in New York City in 1920, as well as almost
400,000 Italians, plus still-large Irish and German communities. Jews,
native and foreign, made up perhaps as much as a third of the city’s popu-
lation in 1920, making it a leading Jewish center for the world.

Blacks, too, came to New York, as did other Americans looking for the
opportunities provided by the modern metropolis. Black immigration from
the South was steady, but only became large-scale with the employment
opportunities of the First World War, to make a total population of
152,467 in 1920. This was only 3 percent of the city’s population, so that,
in Murphy’s day as in Tweed’s blacks were still essentially unimportant
in the city’s politics.

Along with the rapid increase in number and size of immigrant groups
came increasing residential concentration, or ghettoization. We have seen
that in Tweed’s day, differences in ethnic composition from one district
to another were not very large. In Murphy’s time, however, the picture of
the ethnically ghettoized metropolis that we have come to associate with twentieth-century America was much clearer. For reasons both of choice and necessity, new immigrants did tend to live among themselves, often in extremely high concentrations. In 1920, for example, there were four assembly districts (basic political units, often with populations over 100,000) that were more than two-thirds Jewish (in one of them, on the East Side, Jews made up 85 percent of the population of about 95,000 people).

While other groups were neither so large nor so concentrated as the Jews on the assembly district level, there were nonetheless districts like the Third, which was 51 percent Irish; the Eighteenth, and which was 39 percent Italian; and the Twenty-first, which was 48 percent black. If we had data available for the smaller election districts (precincts), these concentrations would be both higher and more numerous.

In addition to, and partly because of, their residential and sometimes occupational concentration, as well as their lack of institutionalized power, New York’s ethnic groups were much better organized in Murphy’s day than in Tweed’s. And they had the political power that comes from concentration and organization. With ethnicity as the most powerful variable behind group actions, the party or politician that wanted their support would have to meet the needs of the group. It would be much harder in the twentieth century to get around ethnic aspirations and demands; and it would be difficult to please all groups with the same actions. What was called for was an elastic and decentralized politics catering to the largely subsistence needs of poor and unacculturated people. And it is testimony to Tammany and the men who ran it that they were able, much of the time, to do this, and thus to stay in power. Their success was not constant, however, which was the most effective kind of reminder that the voters were fickle and not easily gulled.

The death of the Tweed Ring was a setback but by no means a catastrophe to Tammany Hall. Because of its innate strengths, the Hall proved resilient indeed, and as early as 1874 a Tammany mayor once again graced city hall. Gustavus Myers, an early and hostile historian of the Hall, explained its continuation as due to the fact that “a large part of the thoughtless mass of the Democratic voters were still willing to follow its leadership.” But he had no evidence that such voters were indeed “thoughtless.” Rather, one can argue, these voters were committed either to Tammany or to the Democratic party; and given the fact that no viable long-term opposition arose against Tammany within the party, the answer continued to be “regular” voting. Tammany’s social services, its relative concern for the urban masses, and its rigorously hierarchical organization
continued to function; for these reasons, rather than because of thoughtlessness, it continued to attract a large part of the New York electorate.

An example of this, from the other side—that is, the standpoint of the reformers—can be seen in the mayoral career of Abram S. Hewitt. Hewitt was a millionaire, as independent in his politics as he was financially, who was first elected with Tammany support in 1886, defeating Henry George and Theodore Roosevelt. Both his independence and his ill humor gradually alienated the Tammany leaders, and his insensitivity to the sources of Tammany strength was the last straw. When delegates from several Irish societies came to him in 1888 to ask that he review the annual St. Patrick’s Day parade—something that every mayor of New York had done for thirty-seven years—Hewitt lectured them:

Let us understand each other. I am Mayor of the city and you want me to leave my official duties to review your parade. . . . You started off by a reference to the Irish Democratic vote. . . . We all know that the Irish vote is strong enough to elect any candidate in this city for which it is cast. But for the purpose of getting that vote I shall not consent to review any parade, be it Irish or Dutch or Scotch or German or English.

The delegates told the mayor that “We do not ask this as Irishmen, but as Irish-Americans,” but he was adamant. This was, to Hewitt and perhaps others, high-minded and even very American, but it was bad politics and offended a large part of the Democratic electorate. Tammany refused to support him for reelection that year, and he was defeated.

But Tammany was by no means universally successful in these years. It frequently lost the mayoralty and was rarely able to control enough offices to give it unified control at city, county, and state level. This would change only after the turn of the century, when Charles F. Murphy took control, but even in Murphy’s day Tammany never had the control of New York City that other machines would develop in other parts of the country.

Tweed’s successor in Tammany Hall leadership was “Honest John” Kelly. Kelly had been born in Hester Street in 1822. He came from a poor Irish family and rose to some influence through his reputation as a good fighter and his activity as a volunteer fireman. He served as alderman, had two terms in Congress, and then three terms as sheriff, which made him a wealthy and reasonably powerful man. His career was not without charges of corruption, but on the whole, as leader of Tammany, his reign was scandal-free. Unlike Tweed, Kelly was not a blowhard; rather, he operated quietly, and with as little bombast as possible. In several of these characteristics, he would serve as a model for Charlie Murphy; and he was Tammany’s first Irish Catholic leader.
Kelly was also foresighted in bringing “reformers” into Tammany leadership and campaigns. Samuel Tilden, Horatio Seymour, and August Belmont were all Tammany sachems during his time. And he even nominated for mayor in 1872 one of the Committee of Seventy which had been instrumental in the overthrow of Tweed. The economic crisis of 1873-74 helped him return Tammany to the mayoralty in 1874. From that point on, his success was frequent but not constant for the next ten years. He failed, however, to expand Tammany’s power to the state level, and this impaired the machine from functioning as completely and efficiently as it had in Tweed’s day.

It was under Kelly that rival Democratic organizations made their greatest effort to replace Tammany Hall as the real heart of the New York Democracy. Both the Irving Hall Democracy and the County Democracy operated for some years; but it became soon obvious that, at least within the Democratic party, it was virtually impossible to remove Tammany Hall for any extended period. Thus the unique importance of “fusion” in New York politics.

The mid-1880s witnessed increasing allegations of corruption against Kelly’s machine. This was almost unavoidable, since it was the start of the period of tremendously lucrative street railway franchises, wherein the opportunities for graft were enormous.

When Kelly died in 1886, several factions vied for control from within Tammany. Eventually Richard Croker won out and until about 1901 was the preeminent leader of the New York Democracy. Croker had been born in Ireland, of a blacksmith father. He himself was trained as a machinist but grew more famous as a fist fighter; he even fought in some prizefights, which made him widely known. He became leader of the “Fourth Avenue Tunnel Gang” and a Tammany activist at a young age. He was an alderman under Tweed but then sided with the County Democracy against him. He had also served as coroner, a position for which his main qualifications had been party regularity.

At one point, Croker was indicted for murder in a shooting—a political quarrel—but was eventually acquitted by a jury. His career was marked by accusations of corruption and violence, and he was probably under more long-term scrutiny from state, county, and private groups than any other Tammany leader.

From perhaps the humblest origins of any nineteenth-century leader, Croker rose to greater wealth and perhaps even greater power than Tweed himself. He had a real taste for opulence, again like Tweed, and again dangerously for a mass political leader. Croker became a horseman, having his own stud farm and racing stable, along with a $200,000 house. He traveled extensively, especially to Ireland, where he spent a great deal of time.
By the 1890s Croker was under pressure comparable to that Tweed had been under. Several state investigations—particularly those of Lexow and Mazet—and a good deal of city pressure from "reformers" like the Reverend Charles Parkhurst revealed much honest graft and much dishonest graft, such as payoffs from gambling and vice. The New York Times—hardly sympathetic to Tammany Hall—estimated that gambling payoffs in the year 1900 amounted to $3 million. Croker's own reasonably frank and revealing testimony before the Mazet Committee reinforced middle-class opposition to Tammany Hall, even though he set up his own Committee of Five which "proved" that Tammany had no connection with vice.

But there were reasons for Croker's long leadership of Tammany Hall. He never forgot where the votes came from. He was parochial or practical—depending upon the prejudice with which one viewed him. He was not averse to some real political issues, as in the 1899 mayoral campaign, when Tammany boasted in speeches of the role played by the Democratic party in Albany. Arguing about "What Democracy Has Done for Labor," the Tammany list included the creation of a Bureau of Labor Statistics, the prohibition of cigar making in tenements, maximum hours legislation for women and children, the Saturday half-holiday, and so on—a list of twenty-nine "pro-labor" laws passed by the Democratic state legislature. These were real issues and help explain the mass working-class support that the Democrats received. And on national issues, Croker and Tammany reflected the practical politician's cynicism: thus on free silver, a major issue of the day, Croker argued, "What's the use of discussing what's the best kind of money? I'm in favor of all kinds of money—the more the better." And his view of the imperialism question was equally acceptable to the masses of New York voters: "My idea of Anti-Imperialism is opposition to the fashion of shooting everybody who doesn't speak English." A Harper's Weekly writer commented that "If every man who cannot speak English were to be shot tonight it is doubtful if there would be ten members of Tammany Hall left alive tomorrow." Similarly, the Reverend Mr. Parkhurst commented, after a tour of the dives and flophouses of New York, "Yet from just such sad places at election time comes a host of men to cast their ballots. I feel like revolting against my generation, when I think that from just such lodging houses are built up political careers."

These critics of Tammany politics were not only accurate, they were derogatory, and evinced a parochialism that was no more enlightened than, if different from, that of the Hall itself. The basics of Tammany operations were, at the least, closer to the masses. In the Second Assembly District, for example, Croker's man Patrick Divver was competing with Tom Foley for the district leadership. Their contest had a strong ethnic
tinge: each man attended weddings, funerals, and other Jewish and Italian affairs (the district was 96 percent foreign stock, with Jews composing 58 percent and Italians 24 percent of its population). They competed in the lavishness of their giving, for the rewards in power and/or money were potentially very great. Foley stationed men at the marriage bureau at city hall so that he could be the first to congratulate the parents of the prospective brides and grooms; and he endeavored to discover the nature of Divver's gifts so that he could exceed them in an ostentatious way. And Foley won.

Even the best-intentioned reformers, on the other hand, could hardly help offending New York's ethnic groups, or appearing culturally arrogant. Theodore Roosevelt, who would become one of the most generally attractive politicians of the early twentieth century, had real problems as police commissioner of New York City in the 1890s, since he truly wanted to alleviate the squalor and exploitation of the immigrants, but was forced by his position to enforce Sunday closing laws, antigambling laws, and the like—all of which conflicted with the immigrant's way of life and was offensive to him.

Croker, meanwhile, managed to overcome the great pressure upon him in the late nineties, forcing his own personal choice for the mayoralty, R. C. Van Wyck, upon the party, and to success in 1897. But, while he did not give up his claim on the helm of Tammany Hall, he did begin spending more and more time abroad from then on.

In 1899, Tammany once again swept the city, even to the point of defeating Assemblyman Robert Mazet, Republican chairman of the state investigating committee, in the Nineteenth Assembly District (interestingly, this generally Republican district was only 64 percent foreign stock—low for New York City, and 33 percent old stock—the highest in Manhattan). But the effect of the investigations was seen in general Republican victories throughout the state and in Republican control of the state legislature—which meant that Tammany's power was far from secure.

In 1901, Tammany and Croker suffered a crushing defeat in the success of Seth Low and a whole Fusion ticket in taking over city government. Low, a former president of Columbia University, had lost the mayoral contest to Tammany in 1899. But he won in 1901 due to tremendous middle-class unity against Tammany and Croker—and also to a more intelligent campaign. As in 1871 against Tweed, it seemed that the commercial and other leaders of the city had really decided to defeat "Crokerism" and that the time was ripe for another general housecleaning. Certainly the rather devastating results of the Mazet Committee, linking Tammany and Croker personally to graft and corruption, were very timely. But also important was the fact that Low and his running mates—especially
district attorney candidate William Travers Jerome—carried their arguments to many groups that the reformers had largely ignored before.

There was, for example, a great deal of German-American activity in favor of Fusion. The Germans had always been somewhat marginal in the Democratic party, since Tammany was so rigorously controlled by the Irish. And this was heavily played in 1901, as were appeals to the Germans’ middle-class sensitivities. Low even spoke to newer immigrant groups, like the Bohemians—to whom, as to the Germans, he implied that he would not try too vigorously to enforce Sunday closing. The Jews and Italians were also considered, the stress being on “Crokerism” and its moral turpitude and its ignoring the real needs of the populace. This strategy resulted in some support even from the garment unions.

On the other side, there was the more traditional anti-Tammany support, especially as seen in the city’s Protestant churches. On the Monday before the election, the New York Times devoted most of a page to summaries of the previous day’s sermons on politics. With a single voice, the Protestant ministers condemned Tammany and all it stood for. The preacher at St. Andrew’s Methodist Episcopal Church, for example, complained not only about traditional Tammany immorality but stressed also the “illegally registered” aliens who didn’t even know English and would be voting the Tammany ticket. He also worried about the “floater vote—that great mass of ignorant and unprincipled people” which was also committed to Tammany. Another Protestant minister noted in his sermon that the largest Tammany vote would come from the East Side of Manhattan, where the worst “urban abuses” were common.

This theme was reiterated from sermon to sermon, not only among Protestant ministers, but also by at least one rabbi (of an upper-middle-class, assimilated, Reform congregation) and by Felix Adler, the head of the Ethical Culture Society. The only sermon for Shepard (the Tammany candidate) reported by the Times was that by the priest of the St. Leo’s Roman Catholic Church on Eighth Street, which criticized the Protestant ministers for calumniating him. The cultural divisions of New York City politics were very clear.

The election of Seth Low and the Fusion ticket really ended Croker’s role in New York politics, although he remained theoretically active for a few more years. He did name his own successor in 1901, and a particularly bizarre one at that. Lewis Nixon was an Annapolis graduate and businessman, one of a number of “respectables” whose political interests had led them to activity in Tammany Hall. But Nixon’s avocational interests in politics had ill prepared him for the realities of Tammany leadership, and the demands for patronage and dispensation of power overwhelmed him. After only four months he quit, declaring that “I could not retain the
leadership of Tammany Hall and at the same time retain my self-respect." So much for amateurs.

For another six months a triumvirate ruled Tammany Hall, but this was contrary to tradition and inefficient as well. Thus one of the three, by his ability and with strategic support, rose above the others, and Charles Francis Murphy became the new boss of Tammany Hall.

Charles Francis Murphy was born in 1858 in a tenement in the Gas House district of Manhattan; he continued to live in the general area for the rest of his life. He was the second of nine children of a working-class family and attended public schools until the age of fourteen, when he went to work—none of which was unusual for the time. Like other political leaders, Murphy first attracted attention and popularity by his physical prowess. He was a baseball player and leader of a crew that won a famous boat race. In 1875 he got a job as a horsecar driver, a position which permitted him to greatly expand his circle of acquaintances. From the roots of his baseball team he organized the Sylvan Social Club, which gave him a reliable group of friends upon which to launch both his political career and his business activities in saloon keeping.

Murphy actually followed his brothers into Tammany affairs, and later he would be no hindrance to their careers; one was on the Board of Aldermen, another on the police force, and a third also held several offices. At one point, the local assemblyman, who had been dumped by Tammany, asked the popular young Murphy to run his independent campaign; Murphy did so, and successfully, but that was the only time he ever operated outside the organization.

By the 1890s Murphy owned four prosperous saloons, which provided him a ready-made constituency in the Gas House district. He rose in Tammany affairs and became leader of the Eighteenth Assembly District organization at age 34; one of his saloons became the headquarters of the Anawanda Club, the Tammany district association.

Murphy was an ideal Tammany leader. He worked hard at his job and delivered his votes. For example, records were kept on each voter, and if he hadn't voted by three o'clock on election day, a party functionary arrived at his home or work to remind him. In addition to thoroughness, Murphy stressed accessibility: he was always available. Every night a certain lamppost on Second Avenue was Murphy's station; he did not fail to show up. Likewise he was generous, as a political leader had to be; but unlike many, he gave much anonymously. Nonetheless, he developed a reputation for charity and generosity.

Under Mayor Van Wyck, Murphy was appointed one of the four dock commissioners—his only public position ever. For the rest of his life he
enjoyed being addressed as "Commissioner." It was a lucrative position, both directly and in terms of graft. And Murphy did take money, one way or another. He eventually owned a small estate on Long Island with a nine-hole golf course, and when he died left an estate of about two million dollars—a large sum indeed for a saloon owner of the day. But Murphy seems to have been a true example of the "honest" grafter; he did take advantage of his position, but he appears to have had no connection with rackets of any kind.

Charlie Murphy was, in fact, rather old fashioned and a bit of a prude; his saloons, for example, never admitted women, although it was common to do so at the time. And one suspects that part of his refusal to profit from gambling, prostitution, and other kinds of dishonest graft, was his real moral aversion to such practices. He was also, quite unlike Tweed, famous for his taciturnity. Rarely did he speak out in public. One famous story tells of a Fourth of July celebration where Murphy did not join in the singing of patriotic songs. When a reporter asked a Tammany official why the boss was not singing, he was told, "Perhaps he didn't want to commit himself."

When Murphy came into control of Tammany Hall in 1902, he had some advantages he could count on. He had, after all, a going, successful organization—under a cloud, perhaps, and temporarily out of power, but nonetheless with real resources. Moreover, as General Theodore A. Bingham had written in an anti-Tammany article in *McClure's*, the Tammany leader was powerful because of his relative permanence. Mayors or police commissioners, for example, were fleeting figures on the public scene, but the grand sachem was more or less permanent; it was therefore natural, or at least logical, for the policeman or the businessman to look to him, rather than to more duly constituted figures. And if the Democrats were temporarily in decline in the nation and state, this was surely temporary, and one of Tammany's most potent political weapons continued to be the fact that it was the Democracy for New York City.

Murphy continued his practice of being accessible, although in somewhat altered form. Now, as leader, he divided his public presence into three spheres. First was Tammany Hall itself, where he appeared each morning to conduct organization business and to receive party workers and the interested public. Then, every noon, he lunched at Delmonico's restaurant, where party higher-ups and important nonpoliticians could meet with him. And finally, he maintained close ties in his home neighborhood—to whose more affluent reaches he had moved without ever leaving the Eighteenth District.

It was a one-man leadership: about that there was no doubt. Murphy was ever vigilant about the protection of his position and control. He early
abolished the Tammany Finance Committee and set up a puppet office of treasurer, in fact keeping the purse strings entirely in his own hands. He never forgot that the hierarchy spread from his own single position. But he maintained this authority not via dictatorship but via cooperation. He respected the positions of his district leaders and would never, for example, recommend a man for a public job if the man’s district leader did not approve. Likewise he followed that key aspect of extra-legal political leadership that we saw in Tweed before him: he was famous for being a man of his word.

Murphy was entirely aware of the way in which Tammany Hall actually operated. He did not try to follow every detail of every district’s activities. The bureaucracy was well established, the key forces were in his own hands, and when things moved smoothly he was quite content to let much decision making reside at the district level. But when things went badly, when elections were lost, the structure permitted the removal of the weak cogs in the wheel while the leader continued.

He had many problems as well. Not least of these came from the consolidation of Greater New York. To be sure there were real advantages in having a unified organization that included the Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens, and Richmond as well as Manhattan. But there were also a lot more miles, and people, and leaders to be dealt with. The other boroughs had their own ongoing Democratic organizations at the time of consolidation, and these did not take kindly to incorporation—and thus disappearance—into Tammany Hall. Brooklyn boss Patrick H. McCarren, for example, fought him for six years, saying “The Tiger shall not cross the bridge.” But Murphy went around him, building up his own rival Brooklyn organization; and by 1909 the Tammany Tiger had Brooklyn. Not only did political rivals trouble him here, but now the Hall was liable to blame for malfeasance on the part of any Democrats in the city. John Putroy Mitchel, long a bane to the Hall and later a Fusion mayor, gained his first fame in Murphy’s early days with accusations against the several borough presidents relative to contracts for street work.

Even in Manhattan itself Murphy had to struggle to establish his dominance. Most of the local Democracy accepted his accession to power; one who did not, and who fought him for some time, was William S. Devery. Devery, who was hardly a piker, struggled to maintain his base in the Ninth District with such affairs as an outing for ten thousand women and children on nine boats and barges in 1902. This was followed by barbecues with beer for the men, as well as tremendous largesse—and some fraud. He stayed leader of the Ninth for a while, but never really managed to threaten Murphy’s control of the Hall, although he was ever present in the wings as a powerful opponent.
Withal, Murphy did manage to hold onto the reins of Tammany down to his death in 1924, by means and with effects that will be seen below. Some of the few things he would boast about toward the end of his career were modest but important developments like the removal of the police force from politics and the development and introduction, through Tammany Hall, of some first-rate men for American politics. Whether he was in some way as distinctly "good" a boss as Tweed was a "bad" one is a personal judgment. But he did endure, in a democratic politics, for over twenty years.

In his muckraking history of Tammany Hall, Gustavus Myers felt that he had gone a long way toward exposing "Tammany corruption and inefficiency." It is notable that Myers would couple the expected first factor with the more debatable second one. Indeed, one might argue that Tammany’s long life and frequent success challenge the notion of "inefficiency"; the inefficient rarely flourish. A good answer was provided by Murphy himself, in a statement toward the end of his career cited by his recent biographer: "When Tammany can elect its candidate so often in a city of 6,000,000, in a city of intelligence, in a city dotted all over by the church spire and the school house, it seems silly to use the time-worn campaign cry that there is nothing good but everything corrupt in Tammany." That is a point worth considering, and thus a closer look at the operation of Tammany Hall under Charles Francis Murphy is called for.

We are chiefly concerned with the Hall’s ability to build long-term support among the urban ethnic masses, and we have already noted that those groups were considerably more varied and numerous in Murphy’s day than they had been in Tweed’s. On the whole Tammany was successful, in conjunction with the Democratic party, in attracting considerable immigrant support. This was not, however, as consistent as the Hall would have liked, as we shall see when we get to the election returns themselves. Murphy, like many urban Irish politicians, followed an ethnically sensitive politics because he had concluded, rationally, that it was necessary for victory; but it was always something that had to be done. Only consummately ethnic-oriented people, like Anton Cermak, had a basic belief in the virtue as well as necessity of ethnic recognition and carried the practice to its greatest development.

The best example of the above is seen in nominations for public office. While Tammany tended to respect the ethnicity of an assembly district in terms of its party workers, most Tammany leaders and candidates for public office continued to be either Irish or old stock. Murphy’s recent biographer sees his choices of candidates as being based on their “vision and ability,” but this seems to me to evade the question at best. If, indeed, Murphy’s Tammany Hall wanted only highly qualified candidates for
public office, it was hardly required to confine these choices to so narrow an ethnic spectrum as it did. Rather, regardless of whether or not the desire for quality was real, Murphy and his advisers were reluctant to support those whose loyalty was not as reliable as possible; and for this they tended to turn to those like themselves and to be leery of the newcomers. This is one reason, I think, that the Democrats did not fare better than they in fact did under Murphy; ethnic party identification was weaker than it might have been because recognition of each group by the party was weaker than it might have been.

On the other hand, Tammany did demonstrate continuing concern for the poor as poor, and some ethnic sensitivity, in its treatment of the urban masses. The traditional social services continued—aid to widows and other deprived individuals, food baskets, coal, entertainment, and above all jobs—lots of jobs in city, county, state, and private employment. (Murphy's biographer, Nancy Weiss, differentiates this aid from that of earlier bosses by saying it emanated from "a sincere philanthropic spirit"; in fact, it was precisely the same as earlier and later Tammany activity.)

Almost every weekend, at College Point or another pleasant location—generally on the water to facilitate transportation—Tammany district associations held clambakes and other outings. The local district leader would distribute tickets, and steamboats took the people to the site of the festivities. In addition to free food, and beer for the men, there would generally be gambling, baseball, entertainments, and so on. Often local saloonkeepers, business people, or even gamblers would foot the bill, to cement their relations with the local party organization, and then the district association could even make some money on the affair. Frequently, the day's festivities ended with a torchlight procession through the district to Tammany headquarters and a finale of fireworks. For people who worked fifty, sixty, or more hours a week, for five or ten dollars, and lived in crowded, unpleasant tenement apartments, this was no small thing.

And the Tammany functionary, be he lofty assembly district leader, election district captain, or even lower on the hierarchical ladder than that, worked hard with his constituents. As George Washington Plunkitt had noted, the professional politician put in as long a day as any of his constituents, and the key to work was service. The point is not whether this service was selfishly or unselfishly motivated, but simply that it was done; and moreover that in many cases, had Tammany not provided these services, there was no other agency to fill the role. Thus the actual material aid of jobs, gifts, and charity, plus the cultural or social service of recognizing group legitimacy and particularism, were what endeared Tammany Hall and the Democratic party to immigrant voters.

"Big Tim" Sullivan, a Tammany leader famous for his Christmas dinners
for about five thousand people, was a good example. As state senator, Sullivan paid relatively little attention to legislative business and introduced very few bills. But of the legislation that he did introduce, one bill was for making Columbus Day a legal holiday, and another—the famous Sullivan Law—was to make the carrying of firearms without a license a crime. Both appealed to the voters (the latter was intended to diminish gangster influence) and are examples of practical Tammany legislation.

Another Tammany man, Tim Campbell, gained some fame for his practical approach to running for Congress. He had one speech, which dealt with one national issue, the McKinley tariff bill, which he opposed. The bill was “for protection with nothing free. Do you want everything free or do you want to pay for everything?” Campbell continued:

Having disposed of the national issue I will now devote myself to the local issue, which is the Dago Rinaldo [his opponent]. He is from Italy, I am from Ireland. Are you in favor of Italy or Ireland?

Having thus disposed of the local issue, and thanking you for your attention, I will now retire.

Campbell did not have the makings of a national statesman, but for an Irish immigrant district he expressed a sense of the world that his constituents understood. And his approach to extra-local issues suggests that the immigrant and the poor, concerned with their economic and cultural survival in a new and often hostile environment, really could not afford the luxury of worrying about tariffs, or the Philippines, or even about graft—problems that seemed to have no real relationship to their own lives.

Tammany’s relationship with the immigrants was, to some extent, facilitated by the actions of its opponents. The middle-class groups, the “reformers” who were the crux of the fusion forces against Tammany, generally included very few representatives of recent immigrant groups. Moreover, these people had little sympathy for the problems of the lower class, or, at least, little understanding of what those problems really were. When these people came into power, they enforced the law, which was perhaps proper; but the law included Sunday closing and the removal of unlicensed pushcarts from the streets, to cite only two examples. Thus the cultural practices and economic survival of many immigrants were threatened. Jewish pushcart peddlers, for example—a large and economically very marginal group—learned that they could ignore the annual fifteen-dollar license fee and also be protected from other dangers if their associations pledged and delivered their votes to the local Tammany leader. It was a bargain; why not?

Another example of the reformers’ obtuseness can be seen in reformer-backed Police Commissioner Theodore Bingham’s famous article in the
North American Review in 1908, charging that Jews, making up about 25 percent of the city’s population, contributed about 50 percent of its criminals. Not only was it a politically questionable charge to make if true, it was not true. He included in his statistics on crime things like pushcart peddlers without licenses, and violators of Sunday closing laws (an especially obnoxious law to observant Jews); and he did not mention that, in terms of felonies, Jews had committed only 16 percent of the total in the previous year.

Finally, while Tammany did not really try very hard to get representatives of new immigrant groups into elective office, its opponents went so far in the other direction as to make the Hall look good by comparison. Of the forty-six members of the Board of Education appointed by Seth Low, fully one-third were in the Social Register; and the figure was almost as high—31 percent—under Fusionist John Purroy Mitchel a dozen years later. By contrast, under the Democrats in between (that is, 1903-13) only 15 percent of the appointed members of the board were in the Social Register. And not only were newer immigrant Jews and Italians, and for that matter even the children of earlier German and Irish immigrants, not very likely to be found in that almanac of respectability, one might also argue that the people so honored were a good deal less likely to understand or sympathize with the educational aspirations of newer immigrants than were people who at least lived and worked near them. Had the Board of Education been elected rather than appointed, one can assume that its character would have been somewhat different.

One of the problems of machine politics is its cost. Person-to-person relationships and extensive social services do not come cheaply, nor did they at the turn of the century. Whether one is speaking of a bucket of coal to a voter, a bribe to a judge to let off a juvenile offender, or the various other services described by boss Plunkitt, a great deal of revenue was required. Much of this came from those who received the largesse at Tammany’s disposal. Those who held public office, government jobs, or contracts were expected to repay the hand that fed them with a share of their salaries. As Murphy himself acknowledged, “When I can do it without violating the law, it is perfectly right to give out contracts to organization men. If I can, I will.” Graft played a role also; the honest or even dishonest graft that people like Plunkitt received was not simply for their own personal enrichment. Indeed, one might well conclude, from reading Plunkitt or from watching Murphy, that far more of their gains, however gotten, were plowed right back into their enterprise—just as in other successful businesses. But one can also note that it was a system that made graft almost essential. And thus the Murphy years were hardly immaculate in this regard.
Murphy's biographer argues that he truly opposed dishonest graft and would have nothing to do with vice of any kind. She cites his removal of Eighth District leader Martin Engel because of involvement with gambling and prostitution, as an example of this. And it does seem true that Murphy did not want Tammany associated with vice. But Police Commissioner Bingham was probably closer to the mark, in a 1911 book, when he agreed that it was not so much that Tammany "officially recognizes these fellows [pimps] . . . but if they pay their dues regularly and perform their part willingly at election time, Tammany does not ask questions, and when a faithful henchman runs afoul of the police, Tammany will 'take care' of him." Whatever his own moral scruples, Murphy was not likely to remain leader long if he did not seek votes and support where they could be found.

Moreover, Tammany's decentralization permitted a wide variety of activities over which Murphy had no effective control. If a district leader delivered his district, he was doing his job. Murphy could not practically establish a code of proper conduct. Martin Engel, before his falling out with Murphy, was running a kosher chicken racket in his overwhelmingly Jewish district; this was something that an Irish Catholic leader would not be very likely to anticipate, or even perhaps understand. And "Big Tim" Sullivan is alleged to have philosophized over the idea of running for Congress: "Say, what is the graft over there?" He asked how long it took to get to Washington, and then continued:

Say, those guys that flag the Washington graft get famous and get to be the main squeeze at the White House if their gang is in, don't they? They are the whole cheese in national conventions. That ain't a bad lay. I will think it over. Maybe I will go down there and look the game over. It ain't a pikers game, and maybe I may take a stack and sit in.

Sullivan went to Congress. His role as a national statesman has yet to be chronicled, but when he died in 1913, more or less insane, 25,000 people attended his funeral, many of them congressmen, most of them just people. All of this is an integral part of the history of Tammany Hall in the time of Murphy.

It should be noted, while considering the problem of graft in Tammany Hall, that it all seemed somewhat less significant to many people—and not only new immigrants—than it might have been because of the nature of the times. This was a period of tremendous and rapid economic growth, with little regulation thereof by any public agency. Allegations of bribery, graft, and corruption were very general, and not only against political entities. Early in Murphy's leadership, for example, the state legislature was investigating insurance companies, which had been accused of huge
bribes to both political parties. And the average small businessman was quite accustomed to paying off various people and agencies almost all the time. Thus it might well have appeared to many people that the reformers were making a big deal out of accusing Tammany of doing something that was endemic at the time, a "natural" human activity.

Murphy did a somewhat better job than most Tammany leaders in achieving the elusive aim of broad control—spanning city, county, and state government. This was so small accomplishment, and in return it gave Tammany greater control over the political life of the city than it had previously enjoyed. The control of the Brooklyn Democratic organization was an important first step in this process, because it made possible the control of the state Democratic convention (most of Murphy's era was still in the period before the primary, which gave the party organization greater control). He made deals with potential Democratic rivals like William Randolph Hearst and seems to have been able to find some bases for occasional deals with Republican leaders as well.

This broad base of control was not easy to maintain. First of all, the Democrats had to win enough elections to make it possible. And then there was the question of getting enough of these elected Democrats to defer to his leadership, a problem that was never completely solved. The most famous such case was that of William Sulzer, whose election to the governorship had Murphy's support in 1912, and whose 1913 impeachment and removal from office had Murphy's even more enthusiastic support. The battle against Sulzer left a bad taste in many Democratic mouths and resulted in some pressure for Murphy's removal; but it came to nothing.

A related question is that of Tammany's response to the so-called reform impetus of the Progressive Era. J. Joseph Huthmacher and Nancy Joan Weiss argue that Tammany under Murphy underwent a major change: it became more ideological, less parochial, more concerned with local, state, and national issues, and in fact moved to the left. Weiss sees what she calls a "market basket liberalism" in Murphy's Tammany Hall, and a sense of real social and political responsibility in Murphy's effort to improve the quality of candidates presented to the public.

I have already argued that reform is not a very useful word, and while not denying that Murphy took politics seriously and professionally and tried to make it as good and honest as he could, nonetheless I think that a less normative perspective is more useful. He tried to find candidates who were both "respectable" and competent, because he took his job seriously. Thus, one of his first acts as boss was to nominate the eminently respectable George B. McClellan (son of the Civil War general) for mayor. And he did indeed actively encourage the political careers of young men
like Alfred E. Smith and Robert F. Wagner. This made sense; why run a
candidate likely to be incompetent or dishonest if an honest and compe-
tent one can be found who will also be loyal to the organization? More
than one aim could often be accomplished at the same time. Murphy
urged Wagner to run for the state senate in 1908, and in Wagner’s victory
he broke the hold on the Sixteenth Senate District of “Silent Maurice”
Featherstone, a Tammany leader whose loyalty he questioned. This
benefited Murphy, Wagner, and, one might argue, the public—all at the
same time. And in 1911, when Franklin Delano Roosevelt and others were
leading a revolt in the legislature against him, Murphy chose Smith and
Wagner as Tammany’s candidates to head the House and Senate, respec-
tively. He won, they won, Tammany won, and the legislature was put
under what was generally conceded to be first-rate leadership.

One of Murphy’s cleverest moves came also in the 1903 local elections,
when he successfully ran McClellan for mayor. On the Fusion ticket with
Seth Low when Fusion swept the city in 1901 had been Edward M. Grout
for controller and Charles V. Fornes for president of the Board of Alder-
men. Murphy was able to get both men to see the advantages of Demo-
cratic backing and thus to accept the Tammany endorsement and appear
as the Democratic candidates for reelection. Thus he continued two “re-
formers” in office, undercut his opposition, and helped assure a Democra-
ic victory. Many in the party had opposed this failure to nominate party
regulars, but Tammany’s sweep of the election was Murphy’s strongest
defense.

Certainly Murphy did not oppose help for workers or the poor gen-
erally. Tammany never had. (Weiss is wrong in thinking that this was some-
thing new.) If anything, state support for the working class would result
in private employers or the state itself financing some of the services
which Tammany had traditionally supplied out of its own coffers; that
was not harmful. And Murphy was even willing to learn from his subordi-
nates. When Wagner introduced the famous “Five-cent Fare” bill (for the
subway) in 1907, it was not a Tammany measure. But it was extremely
popular with the masses, and Murphy was willing to go along—even active-
ly supporting it. Murphy could be adamant in insisting on party regularity
from his people; it was made clear to both Smith and Wagner that they
were to support the impeachment of Sulzer, for example. But many things,
like women’s suffrage, direct election of senators, regulation of business,
and so on, he either lent his support to or simply ignored. If it did not
affect Tammany’s position or its narrowly construed interests, it was fine.

Thus the relationship between Tammany and “reform” is best under-
stood if one does away with the term reform and with a normative ap-
proach. It was a political movement primarily geared to the lower- and
working-class urban masses, and was not very likely to oppose their social, economic, or cultural desires. It did not do so. As Murphy modernized and rendered more efficient Tammany’s operation, he came to realize that a broad area of power required more than a great list of “Big Tim” Sullivans. Competent, hard-working, even reasonably independent young men were quite acceptable, so long as they remembered those areas in which the organization brooked no exceptions.

Because the urban masses of New York City had interests and needs very different from those of the upper middle class, their expectations from politics were very different. Middle-class progressive reformers generally had little interest in labor unions, Irish independence, or Sunday beer, and they tended to oppose free immigration and cultural pluralism. The ethnic masses of New York, in return, had very little concern with imperialism, trust-busting (except in the most general, antibusiness way), or the conservation of natural resources, and they were violently opposed to Protestant and old-stock-derived cultural reform. So the point really is not whether or not the working class also participated in progressive reform. And the fact that the Italians perhaps responded positively to arguments for workmen’s compensation does not make them “progressives.” Different groups had different needs, operated in different spheres and via different means. And the primary concerns of what is called the Progressive Era, if they had any unity at all, had a unity to which the urban masses had no sense of relationship.

Let us now look more directly at Tammany’s successes and failures in the age of Murphy, focussing on the scene of the action—elections. Table 3.1 presents data on ethnicity, some socioeconomic indicators, and voting, for the thirty-five assembly districts of Manhattan and the Bronx for selected elections between 1897 and 1913. The inclusion of only Manhattan and the Bronx is dictated both by methodological problems and by convenience; since our central concern here is the relationship between ethnicity and support for Tammany, the data are more than sufficient. Since district lines were greatly revised after 1913, Table 3.2 provides similar data for Manhattan districts in 1920 and for the 1918 elections, permitting a more careful look at two of Murphy’s most famous protégés, Alfred E. Smith and Robert F. Wagner.

It should be remarked at the outset that the tables do not cover all elections, but rather a selection thereof. Those included were chosen for their usefulness in understanding Tammany’s development at this time, showing major defeats, victories, and contests that were significant in other ways. In 1897, for example, the first mayoralty of Greater New York was held, and this was the first time the mayoralty was to be a
four-year term. (This was the result of action by the state legislature, which erroneously anticipated an anti-Tammany victory; when Tammany won anyway, the legislature changed the mayor's term back to two years,

TABLE 3.1
Sociocultural and Voting (Percentage Democratic) Data for New York Assembly Districts during the Time of Murphy

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<th>Assembly District</th>
<th>Percentage stock</th>
<th>Percentage in district rented</th>
<th>Number of families per dwelling</th>
<th>Percentage families in district rented</th>
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Source: Data on foreign stock (immigrants and children of immigrants, percentage attending school, and families per dwelling from the Thirteenth Census, 1910. Data on percentage of homes rented from the Twelfth Census, 1900. The vote is given as the percentage Democratic of the two-party vote, the second party being Republican, with the following exceptions: for 1897, vote given is percentage Democratic of the four-party vote; for 1901 the second party is Fusion rather than Republican; for 1903 the second party is Fusion rather than Republican; for 1909, mayor, the vote given is percentage Democratic of the three-party vote; for the other two offices it is percentage Democratic of the two-party vote, with Fusion being the other party; and for 1913, the second party is Fusion rather than Republican. Voting data from the New York Times, Manhattan consisted of Assembly Districts One through Twenty-nine and part of Thirty; the Bronx consisted of the rest of Thirty and Thirty-one through Thirty-five. The asterisk (*) indicates that these votes were reported as part of combined Manhattan and Bronx; their vote was reported separately only after 1910.

which again backfired when Seth Low defeated Tammany in 1901!) As at other times in New York's history, it was a multipartisan affair, which
redounded to the advantage of Croker’s man, Robert A. Van Wyck. Seth Low was the hope of fusion (called Citizen’s Union that year), but Republican boss Platt would not accept him, and so there was a Republican

TABLE 3.2
Sociocultural and Voting (Percentage Democratic) Data for Manhattan, 1918

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<th>Assembly District</th>
<th>Percentage of foreign stock</th>
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Source: Data on foreign stock (immigrants and children of immigrants), percentage in school, and families per dwelling from the Fourteenth Census, 1920. Vote for governor is Democratic percentage of the two-party vote. Vote for supreme court, where there were three vacancies to be filled and three nominees per party, is derived by adding the vote for Wagner and that for the most successful Republican candidate, then taking Wagner’s percentage of that total. Voting data taken from the New York Times.

candidate as well. Additionally, Henry George was running again, under the label of the Jeffersonian Democrats. George died in the midst of the campaign, to be replaced by his son, Henry, Jr. Even without the four-way split Van Wyck would probably have won, since he carried 48 percent of the total city vote and had a comfortable plurality. Thus Tammany had
control of the newly unified city. Van Wyck did well among the most heavily foreign districts.

Having learned their lesson, at least for a while, the anti-Tammany forces really united in 1901, again behind Seth Low; the addition of William Travers Jerome to the Fusion ticket, for district attorney, was another popular move. In addition to the traditional complaints of Tammany corruption, the Fusion forces also raised the issue of social problems in the immigrant East Side, and such related ills as the forced prostitution of young girls. The combination of scandal and old animosities brought a tremendous cross section of the middle class—from Protestant ministers to Mark Twain—out against Tammany, and this time it was successful. The whole Fusion ticket swept to victory, with very similar levels of support across the board. The Democrats increased their vote from 1897 only in a few districts, particularly the most heavily Jewish and the poorest; but it was a small amount of erosion of support almost everywhere that gave Low his 52 to 48 percent victory over Edward M. Shepard. This campaign marked the end of Croker’s career as the boss of Tammany Hall.

The year 1903, on the other hand, was the inaugural of Charles F. Murphy, and it was a remarkable beginning. Murphy’s choice of George B. McClellan to run against Low was a shrewd one. McClellan, in addition to being the son of the famous general, had served in Congress, had a reputation as a respectable gentleman, and was at the same time a Tammany loyalist. Shrewder yet was Murphy’s coup in getting Low’s controller and president of the Board of Aldermen, Edward M. Grout and Charles B. Fornes, to accept the Democratic nomination. Grout and Fornes expected also to be renominated by Fusion, but were not; but their choice was in the end the proper one.

Low had run a reasonably good administration and had strong support from clergymen and other middle-class interests. But his legally proper enforcement of the blue laws and an increase in the liquor excise tax had alienated many ethnics; and some businessmen found him inflexible and harder to work with than Tammany. As Plunkitt would have it, the reformers did not work hard enough at politics.

Thus Tammany swept all the local offices in 1903, and by very comfortable margins for the time. One can see in Table 3.1 that its vote reached or exceeded 70 percent in some of the most foreign districts (District One, for example, was about 55 percent Italian; District Two was 58 percent Jewish and 24 percent Italian; and District Six was almost 90 percent Jewish.)

In 1905, for which we do not have data on the table, Murphy renominated McClellan, who won again. But that campaign was interesting for the entry of William Randolph Hearst. Hearst, the powerful newspaper
publisher, had previously served as a Democratic congressman but now wanted to operate on a wider stage. Failing to receive the Democratic nomination for mayor, he formed the Municipal Ownership League, which was less interested in municipal ownership than it was in unseating Tammany Hall. McClellan and Murphy were saved by the fact that the Republicans did not join with Hearst, and thus it was a three-way race. McClellan carried 39 percent of the vote, Hearst 38 percent, and the Republican 23 percent; it is not unlikely that Tammany stole the election through fraud. Murphy and Hearst never really had a good word to say about one another, but they must have made some kind of deal, because in 1906 Murphy supported Hearst’s nomination for governor (he lost to Republican Charles Evans Hughes).

Even McClellan grew more independent in his second term, a good example of the fact that, while the machine can put people in office, it cannot necessarily control them after they get there.

The pressure on Tammany continued, and in fact increased with the increasing number of years that the Hall had controlled city affairs. Thus the 1909 elections threatened to return the forces of fusion to power. Once again, Murphy demonstrated why he was the leader of the New York Democracy. He chose as his candidate for mayor William J. Gaynor, a judge from Brooklyn with a reputation for independence and integrity. It was a controversial choice, since there was a fairly large chance that Gaynor would not be very controllable in office; but winning elections was always the first priority, and Murphy knew this. The Fusion candidate in 1909 was one Otto Bannard, and William Randolph Hearst again ran for the office, this time under the banner of Civic Alliance.

Gaynor ran into some trouble with traditional sources of Democratic support because he was a lapsed Catholic. He had been born into an immigrant Irish Catholic family and had even, at age 16, entered a lay teaching order for a few years. But he fell away from the church, and he eventually divorced his first wife and remarried. He tried to downplay his background, but because he was unusually outspoken and quite caustic, a certain anti-ecclesiasticism often came through. It was charged by a Bronx priest that a local archbishop had tried to halt Gaynor’s nomination, but Murphy vehemently denied this. The same priest, the Reverend William J. Dougherty, also preached at pre-election Sunday mass that his parishioners should use their own judgment; personally, he would vote the Democratic ticket, but “cut off the head of that ticket.” How many other New York clergymen preached similarly one cannot tell. Three of the four most heavily Irish districts (Eleven, Thirteen, and Fourteen) voted about fifteen percentage points less Democratic in 1909 than they had in 1903, and all four were less Democratic than they would be in 1913. On the other hand,
the spread in these districts in 1909 between voting for mayor and for the
other offices was very slight, and thus we do not have a clear answer—unless the nomination hurt the entire slate.

Gaynor did carry the city, with 43 percent to 28 percent each for Ban-
nard and Hearst. Gaynor’s strength was in traditionally strong Democratic
areas, among the foreign and the poor. Hearst’s strength varied consid-
erably from borough to borough and district to district, and is worth looking
at more closely. He won in two Manhattan districts (Six and Twenty-six),
both overwhelmingly immigrant and overwhelmingly Jewish, as well as poor. And he ran a strong second in four other Jewish districts (Two,
Four, Eight, and Ten) and one with a relatively high German element
(Twenty-two). But he also did well in several Bronx districts that were
not particularly immigrant, Jewish, or poor. What particular attraction
Hearst had with immigrant Jews at this time probably came from his
paper’s extensive coverage of and strong opposition to czarist pogroms, as
well as his “radical” stance on some urban issues.

While Gaynor won the mayoralty in 1909, Tammany did not really do
well, as Fusion swept the remainder of the races, particularly the borough
presidencies and the important posts of controller and president of the
Board of Aldermen. John Purroy Mitchel won the latter office and con-
tinued a career that would frustrate Murphy frequently. Nonetheless Tam-
many bounced back the very next year as Murphy chalked up one of his
most impressive victories, the Democrats taking control of the executive
and legislative branches of the state government for the first time in nine-
teen years.

The year 1910 was Democratic nationally, and the New York Demo-
crats profited therefrom. But it took more than just that to win both the
state House and Senate as well as the governorship and all county offices
as well. An example of this is the case of Edward B. Whitney, a state
supreme court justice, who was not renominated by Murphy. The Repub-
licans put him on their ticket, and two other parties (including Hearst’s,
this year called the Independence League) also nominated him. Whitney
got a lot of favorable publicity, and he did run better than Henry L. Stim-
son, the Republican candidate for governor against John A. Dix; but
Whitney nonetheless lost, learning a lesson, one supposes, in the power of
party. Hearst, running for lieutenant governor, did very poorly, getting
less than 10 percent in every Manhattan district.

Murphy and Tammany Hall would continue to hold the governorship
of New York for eight of the fourteen years that Murphy still had to live.
But they would not always be easy years, as 1912 proved. In that year,
both the Progressive and Republican parties entered the gubernatorial
race, and Murphy, in what he later characterized as “the greatest mistake
of my life,” nominated William M. Sulzer, a nine-term congressman and
Tammany loyalist, if something of an independent.
Sulzer and Murphy soon had a falling-out over patronage and appointments as well as certain Progressive Era issues that Sulzer pushed and Murphy opposed (a state investigation of corruption and a direct primary law, for example). Murphy decided to have Sulzer impeached, putting all his force on state Democrats to see that it was done. In what started out purely as a power play, the investigation did ultimately turn up some evidence of real impeachable malfeasance—relative to campaign financing—and the governor was impeached and removed from office in 1913.

The whole affair left bitterness in the party and intensified Tammany’s general reputation for ruthlessness and corruption. And in the midst of it, Murphy suffered a defeat in the city which was a real setback.

Gaynor had been a good mayor. He had started out as a rather traditional nineteenth-century reformer, believing in good people and minimal government and taxes. But as time went by he grew increasingly realistic and assertive. Moreover, despite a certain insensitivity and outspokenness, he also developed a good working relationship with immigrant groups. He defended Jewish pushcart peddlers, for example; cooperated with the kehillah, or communal organization, which had been organized in reaction to Bingham’s charges of Jewish criminality; and refused to grant a license to a missionary who wanted to convert the Jews. He appointed Jews and Germans to office and defended both Saturday and recreational sabbaths.

On the other hand, in the midst of a police scandal emanating from the 1912 murder of a minor underworld figure and police inaction thereupon, he tried to excuse the force by noting that, “We have in this city the largest foreign population of any city, and a large number of them are degenerates and criminals.” Some of the same Jewish organizations and leaders who had lauded him for his stand against the missionaries reacted strongly against him now.

Gaynor was a difficult man and, despite a good deal of popular support and respect, many were not distraught when Murphy, fearing his independence, decided not to nominate him for reelection in 1913. Fusion, shortly thereafter, nominated John Purroy Mitchel; and Gaynor, who was not well, finally decided to run on an independent ticket but died before his campaign really got under way.

The Sulzer impeachment, getting headlines during the course of the 1913 mayoral campaign, did not help Tammany. Nor, for that matter, did the passage of time. And Fusion triumphed all across the board. Table 3.1 suggests that the largest Democratic fall-off came in Jewish districts (e.g., Four, Six, Eight, Twenty-six), but there was a general Democratic decline as well; Mitchell won 56 percent of the vote in Manhattan and a whopping 60 percent in New York City as a whole.

The Democrats did bounce back in 1917, through a combination of luck and compromising strategy. Judge John F. Hylan was Hearst’s man for the office, and Murphy decided to compromise and support him,
despite the fact that Al Smith, who was then sheriff, also wanted to run (Murphy persuaded him to run for president of the Board of Aldermen instead, which certainly strengthened the ticket). Additionally, Mitchel found that reformers were not necessarily popular, losing in the primary to William Bennett; he then decided to run as an independent, thus splitting the anti-Tammany vote into two parts. Moreover, he ran a weird, and perhaps nativistic campaign, focusing on international issues and accusing Hylan and Morris Hillquit (the Socialist candidate) of being pro-German. Hylan won, and was reelected in 1921, giving the Democrats eight straight years of local control.

Finally, the results for 1918 are included in Table 3.2 because of several interesting factors. We can see here the political success of two of Murphy’s most famous products, Alfred E. Smith and Robert F. Wagner—who are often cited as personifications of the idea that machine politics and good government are not mutually contradictory. Moreover, their victories in a generally Republican year should illustrate the real hard-core Democratic support. And finally, this was the first statewide election in which women voted—although, as it turned out, this had no appreciable effect on the parties or the issues.

It is perhaps hard to believe that Smith barely won the governorship in the state returns, since he carried New York City with 69 percent and Manhattan with 72 percent. Wagner, running for one of the three places on the supreme court, was ten points behind Smith, but still decisively victorious. Their strengths were very similar, and they had overwhelming support from traditional Democratic voters and tended even to win in districts which were more native and middle-class (e.g., Thirteen, Fifteen, and Twenty-two).

It is interesting to note that the districts where Wagner ran noticeably behind Smith (e.g., Eight, Seventeen, and Eighteen) were Jewish districts, where the Socialist supreme court candidate, Morris Hillquit, was very popular. Smith’s popularity was such, however, that the Socialists did less well against him.

In order to analyze more systematically the relationships between background variables like ethnicity and the results of these elections, and between the various elections themselves, it is necessary to prepare correlation matrices as we did in studying Tweed. Table 3.3 presents such a matrix for our data on the thirty-five assembly districts of Manhattan and the Bronx for 1897-1913; Table 3.4 does the same for the twenty-three assembly districts of Manhattan for 1918.

First, in looking at the four background variables, we can say that the information available is not always the information one would most like to have. The percentage attending school turns out not to be a useful indicator
### TABLE 3.3
Pearson's $r$ Correlations for Variables in Table 3.1

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<tr>
<th>Percentage of foreign stock</th>
<th>Percentage of those age 16-17 in school</th>
<th>Families per dwelling</th>
<th>Mayor, 1897</th>
<th>Mayor, 1901</th>
<th>Mayor, 1903</th>
<th>President, Board of Aldermen, 1903</th>
<th>Mayor, 1909</th>
<th>President, Board of Aldermen, 1909</th>
<th>Governor, 1910</th>
<th>Supreme court, 1910</th>
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Note: Pearson product-moment coefficient ($r$) calculated for the thirty-five assembly districts of Manhattan and the Bronx, for each of fourteen variables against each other variable. To make the table more legible, four of the variables in Table 3.1 were not included, since their correlations with the other variables were virtually identical with the race(s) for that year which were retained. Data is otherwise identical to that in Table 3.1.

### TABLE 3.4
Pearson's $r$ Correlations for Variables in Table 3.2

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<th>Percentage of foreign stock</th>
<th>Percentage of those age 16-17 in school</th>
<th>Families per dwelling</th>
<th>Governor, 1918</th>
<th>Supreme court, 1918</th>
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<td>.588</td>
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<td>.588</td>
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<td>.094</td>
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<td>Supreme court, 1918</td>
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<td>.799</td>
<td>.966</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Pearson product-moment coefficient ($r$) calculated for the twenty-three assembly districts of Manhattan, for each of the five variables against each other variable. Data identical to that in Table 3.2.
of socioeconomic status; at least it has no significant correlation with any other variable. Families per dwelling does have significant correlation with the other two background variables, but not with Democratic voting in any of the studied elections. Apparently, these three variables all have positive relationships to low economic status; but poverty covered such a broad cultural spectrum in the early twentieth century—as we have also seen in Tweed’s day—that the fact that voting was a largely cultural response means that a measure solely associated with poverty is not a very good predictor.

The percentage of the population that was first or second generation, and the percentage of homes that were rented, while they relate to one another in a positive but just less than significant degree, do have significant correlations with Democratic voting. Reading down the first column or across the first row, we can see that Tammany did indeed profit from its activities among the immigrants.

Looking more precisely, one can pinpoint inconsistencies, as in the 1909 mayoralty, where the strength of the relationship drops somewhat. This is probably explained by Hearst’s strong campaign in that year, eating into the traditionally Democratic Jewish immigrant vote. And 1910 is a problem: while Democrat Dix carried the city for governor with an impressive 61 percent, the relationship between his vote and foreign stock—or percentage homes rented—is quite low. We can suggest two possible explanations for this: Dix did so well in the election, even among traditionally non-Democratic voters, that the variation from district to district upon which the calculations are based did not follow its usual pattern. Moreover, the governorship, being a statewide rather than local race, has a somewhat different constituency; people vote at that level who do not vote for local candidates, and vice versa; and party workers at the lowest level are less concerned about a statewide race than a local one. As witness to this one can look at the supreme court race of the same year, which was for a district embracing only Manhattan and the Bronx; here the correlation with foreign stock was much stronger; and, all down the line, its correlations with Democratic voting in other elections were also stronger than those of the voting for governor.

The second obvious area of inconsistency is the election of 1913, where the correlations with foreign stock and with those renting homes are notably lower and are not significant. This cannot be explained by population movement over time, since our demographic data come from the 1910 census. Rather it seems to be related to Tammany’s losses of the whole election. Fusion in 1913 was broader than ever, including not only the Republicans and traditionally anti-Tammany Democrats, but also the National Progressive party, and—for mayor and sheriff—Hearst as well.
Correlation coefficients need not change much from a successful to an unsuccessful campaign, if the sources of Tammany support remain constant; but in 1913 this was not the case. There was a real falloff of ethnic support. On the other hand, voting Democratic for mayor in 1913 does have strong associations with Democratic voting in the various elections closest in time to it, which suggests that this falloff was by no means catastrophic, as was shown by Tammany’s return to power the next time around.

Indeed, as with Tweed, one can see here strong indications of the strength of party, and of the partisan basis for Tammany success as the representative of the Democratic party. All of the mayoral elections, for example, correlate significantly with one another; the strength of these associations does diminish with time, but even between 1897 and 1913 it is a significant .507. The same holds for the other offices studied, although for those the passage of time had a somewhat greater effect.

Turning to the election of 1918, and Table 3.4, we can see that families per dwelling was again not very useful as a variable. But the more precise measure of those still in school among all those aged from 16 to 17 was more useful than the measure in the previous table which included those aged from 6 to 20. The strong negative correlations between this measure and voting for Smith or Wagner, or between it and percentage of foreign stock, suggest that here we do have a viable measure of higher socioeconomic status. Obviously Tammany’s choice of Smith and Wagner not only contributed two of the period’s leading politicians but also was wise in terms of attracting very great support from the poor and the immigrant. The relationship between foreign stock and voting for Smith is higher than any other such relationship for the whole period 1897-1918 (and we shall see later that this immigrant response to Smith was no less in other cities and in national elections).

In sum, Tammany was on the whole not only able to attract the allegiance of the mass of lower-class and immigrant New Yorkers, but was able to hold that allegiance with some constancy over a long period of time. Even in 1913, when it lost, Tammany carried many immigrant districts by large majorities. The fact that Tammany represented the Democratic party was crucial; but it is also true that for many New Yorkers Tammany defined, or was, the Democratic party. And if being Democratic helped Tammany, having Tammany also helped the Democratic party.

There were important differences between William Marcy Tweed and Charles Francis Murphy, and the Tammany Halls which each man led. In the final analysis, however, Murphy was a real professional politician, whose interests were in the obtaining and retention of political power (and also, some would insist, in the productive utilization of that power),
whereas Tweed was an opportunist whose arena just happened to be politics. Doing what he felt he had to do to keep his organization in power, Murphy seems to have been able to please a large enough proportion of the voters—compared with his various opponents—to have won more elections than he lost over more than twenty years.

Motivation is difficult if not impossible to determine, and I do not know precisely what Murphy’s motives were; nor, in understanding the development of modern urban politics, do I think it terribly important to find out. Why Murphy decided to work toward the alleviation of some of the most resented aspects of the lives of New York’s immigrant poor, and why he determined that bright, ambitious, and reasonably independent candidates were often worth supporting, are moot points. But he did these things, and they not only perpetuated his machine, but also affected the nature of the government that was provided the citizens of New York in his day. It was not bad government, compared with what was available in other places at the same time, but it was also not nearly as good as it might have been—in terms of efficiency, economy, or solutions to profound social and economic problems.

But Murphy’s Tammany Hall served the needs of more people better—as they saw it—than any alternatives offered them in New York City in the first quarter of the twentieth century. There is a reason, after all, why Tweed’s machine, and Seth Low’s also, lasted only a few years, whereas Murphy’s lasted a generation.