

From 'Factions' to Attack Ads – A History of American Politics

Class 5

William A. Reader

E-mail: wreader@cox.net

What We Will Cover Today

- The Coming of the Civil War
- The Politics of Reconstruction
- Jim Crow and Black Disenfranchisement
- Gilded Age Politics
 - How Republicans and Democrats differed
 - Major issues of contention
- Political Machines
- The Mechanics of Voting
 - From paper ballots to touchscreen voting

The Coming of the Civil War

- A Stable Democracy requires:
 - The existence of a competitive party system
 - The acceptance of opposition parties as legitimate
- Most southerners, however, did not see the Republican party as legitimate
 - Defeat in 1860 was not perceived as a temporary setback but as a fateful defeat with disastrous consequences
- Result: Secession

The Coming of the Civil War

- In April 1861, both North and South went to war to save democracy as they understood it
 - For the South, at stake was the right of southern whites to control their own destiny and preserve their traditional society and culture
 - For the North, the war was a struggle to uphold the democratic principle of majority rule, as expressed in a free and fair election, and to preserve the Union, which northerners believed was inseparably linked to democracy

Reconstruction

Post-war Issues

- Victory in the Civil War presented the North in general and the Republican Party in particular with several problems and issues
 - The status of the newly-freed Blacks
 - The conditions under which the South would be reconstructed and Southern states readmitted to the Union
 - A South bitter at its defeat and a North angry at the cost of victory
 - The fear among the Republicans that the legislative achievements of the Lincoln years would be negated by a resurgent Democratic Party

Reconstruction - 1

- By early 1866, each former-Confederate state had revised its laws to reflect the abolition of slavery but the resulting Black Codes severely restricted Blacks
 - Barred land ownership by Blacks
 - Limited the ability of Blacks to testify in court against Whites
- Congress in reaction passed the Civil Rights Act of 1866
 - Declared the freedmen to be U.S. citizens with all of the rights pertaining thereto

Reconstruction – 2

- The fear of Southern whites voting en bloc for the Democrats led the Republicans to support suffrage for Blacks and disenfranchisement for those who were leaders of the Confederacy.
 - Hence the 14th and 15th Amendments

Reconstruction – 3

- The 14th Amendment reflected two concerns of the Republican Congress
 - The fear that the Civil Rights Act of 1866 might be declared unconstitutional
 - The fear that the negation of the 3/5th clause due to the abolition of slavery would enhance the political power of the South after the 1870 census reapportionment
 - This would enable the Southern Democrats to regain power and possibly repeal such wartime legislation as the Homestead Act, the Morrill Land-Grant College Act, and the wartime banking, tariff, and currency legislation
 - It would probably make the Republicans a permanent minority party unlikely to either win the Presidency or Congress

Reconstruction - 4

- There was a fundamental dispute between Andrew Johnson and the Congressional Republicans over policy toward the South
 - Republicans wanted to ensure a Republican majority and protect their wartime legislative gains
 - Johnson, except for the abolition of slavery, wanted “the union as it was, the constitution as it is”
- Using its authority under Article 1 Section 5, the Congress refused to recognize the reconstruction governments established by Johnson or to seat Southern Congressmen and Senators
 - The Congress required that former Confederate states ratify the 14th Amendment as a condition of readmission
- The impeachment trial of Andrew Johnson resulted from the policy disputes between Johnson and the Radical Republicans, with the Tenure of Office Act as the rationale for impeachment

Reconstruction – 5

- What the North was trying to accomplish in the South was similar to what the U.S. was trying to accomplish in Iraq and Afghanistan
 - Remake the political culture of the country
- In this endeavor, the North failed due to
 - Southern racism
 - The South's resentment at its defeat
 - The poverty and lawlessness of the post-Civil War South
 - Crucial decisions of the Supreme Court

Reconstruction - 6

- While there were several Black congressmen, 2 Black senators (both from Mississippi), a Lt Governor, and numerous state legislators
 - Most Southern officials were white
 - Most Southern black officials were not former slaves, but part of the 10% of the Black population in 1860 that had been free

Reconstruction - 7

- In the reconstructed states, revenues in an economy devastated by war were insufficient to meet the additional demands imposed by programs of education, public works, and railroad construction
 - This led to the widely-believed charge that Reconstruction governments were notoriously extravagant and corrupt and needed to be “redeemed”

The End of Reconstruction

- The end result:
 - After the disputed election of 1876, Reconstruction was abandoned
 - The Southern “Redeemers” – the old southern elite of plantation owners now supplemented by railroad magnates, merchants, and manufacturers - came to power
 - The Redeemers followed a low-tax ideology and adopted a policy of retrenchment which meant cutting taxes and reducing public services but paying off accumulated bond debt

The New South

- By the end of the 1870s, the South still had not economically recovered from the Civil War
 - In 1880, U.S. per capita wealth was \$1,086 outside the South and only \$376 in the South
 - In 1880, the estimated value of property in the U.S. was \$47.64 billion, of which the South had only \$5.72 billion
- While the South did acquire railroads and industry (especially textiles and pig iron), its economy was still dependent on cotton in an era when prices were declining
 - The result: sharecropping

The Rise of Jim Crow - 1

- Under slavery, slave owners sought to extract labor from their slaves and prevent slave insurrections
 - This made segregation impractical since it made labor extraction and monitoring of Afro-American behavior difficult
 - The fact of slavery made clear the relative social status of the races

The Rise of Jim Crow -2

- Emancipation and the Reconstruction Amendments overturned both slavery and the social status structure of the South
 - The fact that in the eyes of the law, blacks were now equal to whites made the reaffirming white supremacy a pressing psychological problem for many insecure lower-class whites
 - One possible answer to the problem was Jim Crow

The Rise of Jim Crow – 3

- Segregation developed as part of an ongoing struggle between radical racists who hated Blacks and Southern conservatives
 - Both agreed that Blacks were inferior but disagreed over how Whites should respond
 - While the racist radicals had no qualms about tormenting Blacks, conservatives were appalled by the radicals' hatred and propensity toward violence
 - For conservatives, the remedy was segregation. It permitted Whites to avoid contact with Blacks while allowing Blacks some social space

The Rise of Jim Crow – 4

- During the late-1880s and 1890s, several Southern states passed segregation laws
- The first segregation laws pertained mostly to transportation, especially train travel
 - Train travel involved close contact for many hours and often overnight among passengers, a number of whom were women.
 - Trains had multiple cars so that railroad companies could easily segregate passengers

The Rise of Jim Crow – 5

- There were two opponents of Jim Crow laws:
 - Private businesses, such as railroad and streetcar companies, since they saw segregation laws as expensive and difficult to administer
 - Blacks, who saw segregation as degrading.
- The South reacted against Black protest against segregation by disenfranchising Blacks
 - This was done by the use of cumulative poll taxes, literacy tests, and grandfather clauses

The Rise of Jim Crow - 6

- The end results:
 - Virtually all Blacks and a large number of poor whites were disenfranchised
 - In the 1890s, an average of 73% of men voted. Only 30% did so in the 1900s
 - The South became a one-party entity, with the Democratic party exercising unchallenged dominance.
 - The party was dominated by a business-planter elite, committed to low taxes and preservation of the status quo
 - Segregation became institutionalized throughout the South

Politics in the Gilded Age

A Note About Politics

- In the 44 years from 1868 to 1912, the Republicans held the presidency for 36 years and the Democrats for only 8 years
 - The Grant Administration and some of its Gilded Age Republican successors often experienced episodes of corruption
- Thus Democratic presidential campaigns often revolved around “Let’s throw the rascals out”
- Republican political campaigns revolved around “waving the bloody shirt”
- From 1868 to 1900, all Republican presidential nominees except one were Union civil war veterans. Of these, all except McKinley were Civil War generals.
- In contrast, only one Democratic presidential nominee was a Union civil war veteran – Winfield Scott Hancock in 1880

A Note About Politics - 2

- Presidential Elections from 1868 through 1892, except for 1872, were fairly close
 - Whoever won New York won the election
- After the end of Reconstruction, the South became solidly Democratic while most of the North and West was solidly Republican
 - “Bloody shirt” and “Vote as you shot” politics characterized statewide politics in both the North and the South

Democrats

- The Democrats appealed to those who favored limited government, free trade, a soft currency, and white supremacy
 - These people who saw themselves as ‘outsiders’ -- suspicious that an activist government would infringe on their lifestyles
 - The solid White South
 - Catholic immigrants
 - Businessmen whose dependency on exports or on imported raw materials committed them to free trade

Republicans

- The Republicans appealed to those who favored a strong Federal Government, railroad subsidies, high tariffs, a hard currency, and laissez-faire capitalism
 - The Republicans drew their support from:
 - Northern Civil War veterans
 - Farmers and town/city dwellers that had benefitted from railroads
 - Former Whigs and Know-Nothings
 - Northern Native Protestant Middle Class
 - Protestant German and Scandinavian immigrants

Corruption

- Corruption was a major problem in the Gilded Age and it affected both government and business
 - Business corruption stemmed from the combination of a new social invention – the corporation – interlocking directorates, and greed
 - Contributing to this was both a lack of conflict-of-interest laws and a laissez-faire attitude toward government regulation of business

Corruption - 2

- Governmental corruption existed on the national, state, and local political level
- Contributing factors included
 - The lack of conflict-of-interest and ethics laws
 - The spoils system
 - The desire of businesses for favors and subsidies and of politicians and political organizations for money and votes
 - One major source of corruption was the awarding of municipal franchises – gas, water, public transportation, and electricity

Post-Civil War Railroads

Year	1860	1865	1870	1880	1890
Mileage	30,000	35,000	53,000	93,000	164,000

Political Impact of Railroads - 1

- Railroads found it difficult to make a profit due to high capital costs, high operating costs, and competition along major routes
 - This led to price gouging
- Price gouging in turn led to political protest
 - Farmers and railroads would battle over rates
- Protest eventually led to creation of the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC)

Political Impact of Railroads - 2

- As major corporate and economic entities with fixed in-place facilities and high sensitivity to governmental policies
 - Governments could effect railroad profitability via taxation, fare & safety regulation, subsidies (or lack thereof)
 - Governments could also affect profitability by exerting political pressure on railroad route selection
- Railroads became major political players on both the Federal and especially the state level
 - They were major campaign contributors
 - There was a revolving door between railroads and government

Railroads

- In California, the Southern Pacific came to dominate the California legislature
- The RR used its influence to block the completion of a RR line from San Francisco to San Diego (instead stopping in Los Angeles)
- This dominance provoked the rise of Progressivism in California
 - Led to the California recall, referendum, and initiative

Currency

- During the Civil War, the Federal Government had issued
 - Bonds which had been purchased with greenback paper currency which had the nominal value of specie currency but which in reality was worth only 40 cents on the dollar
- The political controversy was whether to pay the bonds off in greenbacks or in gold
- Complicating the issue was the fact of deflation

Down on the Farm

- Wheat production greatly increased
 - 1866 – 152 million bushels
 - 1898 – 675 million bushels
- Labor to produce 15 bushels of wheat
 - 1840: 35 hours
 - 1900: 15 hours
- Wheat exports
 - 1867: 6 million bushels
 - 1900: 102 million bushels

Down on the Farm - 2

- Effects of Large-Scale Production
 - American farmers now in a world economy
 - Farmers went into debt to buy farm machinery and land
 - The combination of lower prices and more onerous debts was Populism
 - Directed at the railroads and grain elevators
 - Expressions of Nativist feelings
 - And in the South, anti-Black feelings

Tariff

- Until the adoption of the income tax in 1913, tariffs provided the major source of Federal Government revenues
 - In 1880, for example, tariffs provided 50.5% of all Federal income
 - In 1890, tariffs provided 57.0% of all Federal income
- In 1900, pensions to 999,446 Civil War veterans, their widows, and children constituted 41% of all Federal expenditures

Political Machines

Political Effects of Immigration

- Led the White Middle- and Working-classes to focus on religious-ethnic and lifestyle differences rather than class differences
 - This made Prohibition a major bone of contention
- Gave rise to the political machine
 - In exchange for a vote, the machine provided needed aid and services in an era where government did little
 - The machine provided both jobs and an avenue of upward mobility

Political Machine

- A political machine is a party organization, headed by a single boss or small group, that commands enough votes to maintain political control of a city, county, or state
 - It recruited its members by the use of tangible incentives – money, political jobs
 - It won votes by providing tangible services and help to the voters (and their families) of the community

Political Machine

- A consequence of both rapid urbanization and massive immigration
 - Newcomers needed help in navigating the urban landscape – Who do I go to get something done? Who do I go to for help?
 - The machine in the form of the precinct captain provided the help and knew how to get things done

Political Machine

- The heyday of the political machine was from the 1850s to the 1930s
 - Most of the urban machines were dominated by the Irish because
 - Until the 1890s, the Irish constituted the largest proportion of poor immigrants
 - They spoke English
 - They knew how democratic governance was supposed to work

Political Machine

- Tammany Hall formed the model for the Democratic machines that arose in other eastern and Midwest cities
 - Democratic political machines turned many formerly Whig or Republican urban strongholds into Democratic ones
- In the 1870s, the Republicans under the leadership of U.S. senators created statewide machines based on federal patronage
 - Republican machines were especially strong in Pennsylvania, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and upstate New York

Political Machine

- Was an alternative to formal government
- Met the needs of three groups
 - To immigrants and urban poor, it offered help, patronage, and a chance for economic improvement
 - To legitimate businesses, it offered contracts
 - To illegitimate businesses and commercial vice establishments, it offered profitable order and de facto toleration

Political Machine

- The political machine was hierarchical with the ward boss and the precinct captains doing the work – getting the voters to the polls and providing the favors and help
 - Ward bosses were key figures in local clubs and often saloon owners
- Saloons provided a stage at the ward and precinct level for politicians and a base for organizing and getting out the vote
 - Saloons also provided an all-male refuge from the world of women and the demands of family where one could socialize with friends and co-workers

Political Machine

- Machine bosses and their underlings expected to be paid for their services
- Such rewards came in the forms of
 - Patronage in the form of government jobs
 - This included Federal government jobs in the local post offices and customhouses
 - Campaign contributions from holders of patronage jobs and government contracts
 - Exploitation of insider knowledge
 - Bribes in exchange for favors

Political Machine

- To understand machine ethics, one needs to understand that machine bosses had certain ethical standards when it came to graft
 - Honest graft – exploiting insider knowledge for economic gain at no expense to the government
 - Simple graft – accepting kickbacks from contractors to whom you have let contracts or franchises
 - Dishonest graft – profiting from crime or vice or embezzling public funds

Political Machine

- While political machines performed valuable social services, they often were guilty of corruption and other offenses
- Political machines aroused the ire of Progressive reformers
 - Saw the machines as having a corrosive influence on urban life
 - Viewed them as obstacles to rational reform

Political Machine

- The Progressives enacted various reforms designed to both weaken the machines and lessen their voting power. These included:
 - Voter registration
 - Australian or secret ballot
 - Literacy tests
 - Civil Service reform
 - Prohibition of electioneering close to the voting booth
 - Initiative, referendum, and recall
 - Primary

Political Machine

- While the political machines fought some Progressive legislation
 - Civil Service reform
 - Replacing nominating by caucus or convention with the direct primary
 - Restrictions on fundraising
- Many of the machines supported socio-economic reform legislation that benefited their working class constituents

Political Machine

- Several factors combined to bring about the demise of the machine
 - Progressive era reforms
 - The New Deal and the rise of the Welfare State
 - Governments now took over the social welfare functions of the machine
 - Social mobility
 - The children of the ethnic immigrant poor became members of the middle class and moved from the city to the suburbs
 - New mass media (radio & TV) took over the political communication function of the machine

Some Notes About the Political Machine - 1

- It existed to secure and perpetuate power in the hands of a known political organization
- That power was primarily used to benefit those who controlled and were members of the machine
- It retained power by controlling votes
- It controlled votes by providing services and favors for voters who in turn gave the machine candidates their votes out of gratitude (and sometimes, hope of a patronage job)

Some Notes About the Political Machine - 2

- Political machines were much more focused on local rather than national issues
- The machines often supported socio-economic reforms desired by their poor and working class constituents
- There were rural as well as urban machines
 - Pennsylvania before the 1930s
 - Several southern states (especially Virginia with the Byrd Machine)

Some Notes About the Political Machine - 3

- What differentiated the rural machines from the urban machines was:
 - The urban boss's political power came from control of the political machine, not from any public office.
 - In fact many noted bosses (Richard Croker & Charles Murphy of Tammany Hall) did not hold public office
 - The rural boss's political power normally resulted from the fact that he had other sources of power
 - Thus rural bosses were often either large landowners, agents for the railroad, bankers, or merchants with local monopolies

Changes in Voting Over Time

Changes in Voting - 1

- Voter in Colonial America
 - Voter is an adult white male who owns property
 - Political leaders are personally known to the voter and members of locally prominent and well-established families
 - Voting done *viva voce* in public

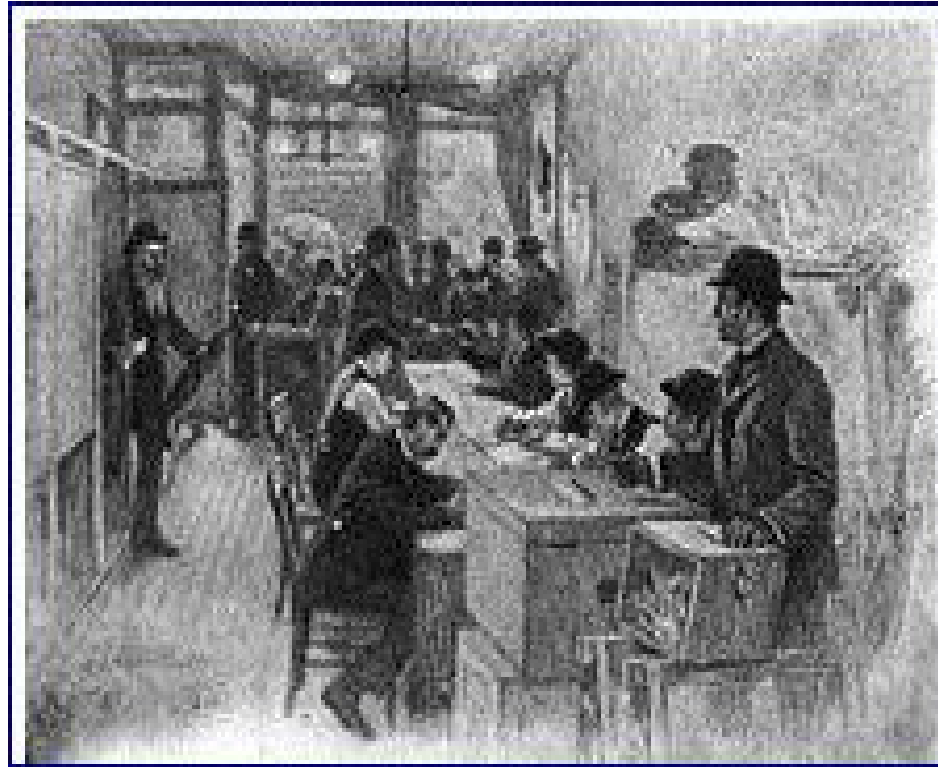
Early *Viva Voce* Voting



Changes in Voting - 2

- Voter in Jacksonian America
 - Voter is an adult white male who owns property
 - Voting done via printed ballots
 - Printing done by the political party or candidate
 - Since each party used different color ballots, a voter's vote was not secret
 - Given the existence of party-printed ballots, straight ticket voting from president to dog catcher was the norm

Australian Ballot Voting



Changes in Voting - 3

- In 1888, Massachusetts introduced the Australian or secret ballot.
- By 1891, all states had adopted it
- Characteristics of the Australian ballot:
 - Official ballot printed at public expense
 - Had the names of all the parties and candidates
 - Distributed only at the polling place
 - Marked by the voter in secret and deposited into a ballot box

Changes in Voting - 4

- Mechanical (or Lever) Voting Machines
 - Invented in 1881 by Anthony Beranek of Chicago
 - 1892 - First used in Lockport NY
 - 1894 – Sylvanus Davis added a straight-party lever and simplified the interlock mechanism
 - In 1899, Alfred Gillespie introduced three major innovations
 - Linked the cast-vote lever to a curtain
 - Introduced the lever by each candidate's name
 - Made the machine programmable so that it could support races in which voters were allowed to vote for more than one candidate in a field.

Lever Voting Machine



Lever Voting Machine Closeup



Punched-Card Voting

- Punched-card voting systems came on the scene after 1965
 - By 1996, they were used by 37.3% of all voters
 - Achieved notoriety in Florida in 2000

Votomatic Punched Card Voting Machine



Direct-recording Electronic Voting System

- An example of this system are the touchscreen voting system used in Northern Virginia
 - Tabulate data in a removable memory component and can produce a printed copy
 - Can also transmit individual ballots or vote totals from the voting precinct to a central location
- These systems were first used in 1996
- By 2004, 28.9% of voters used such a system

Touchscreen Voting Machine

