1889–1919
Growing Up: An Education in Politics

Powerful economic and social divisions gripped Pittsburgh during the last decade of the nineteenth century. Industrialization and the development of modern capitalism, technological change and the depersonalization of the worker contributed to growing labor-management conflicts. Social class separation and ethnic rivalries further divided the population, while Catholic-Protestant hostilities were never far from the surface. Anti-Catholic, antilabor, and nativist sentiments dominated the nation that preached freedom for all. Caught in the midst of these struggles, David Leo Lawrence, an Irish-Catholic son of an unskilled laborer, received lasting lessons in American social organization. Religion, ethnicity, the labor movement, and a sharp awareness of social class all became a pervasive part of his youth and later political career.

Between 1885 and 1914, Pittsburgh's industrial production led the American transition into a modern society. Andrew Carnegie, George Westinghouse, B. F. Jones, and a score of others, harnessing new industrial technology, made the city America's center of capital goods manufacturing. Railroad cars, air brakes, river barges, glass products, and iron and steel goods of all kinds poured from their factories. By 1900 the area produced more than half of the nation's coking coal, open-hearth ingots and castings, crucible and structural steel as well as substantial amounts of window glass and steel rails.[1]

Waste materials from these factories, at the same time, polluted the air, poisoned the streams, and destroyed much of the land. "Pittsburgh is not a beautiful city," one foreign visitor observed.

> She is substantially and compactly built, and contains some handsome edifices; but she lacks the architectural magnificence

> of some of her sister cities; while her suburbs present all that is unsightly and forbidding in appearance, the original beauties in nature having been ruthlessly sacrificed to utility. . . .
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> The hills . . . have been leveled down, cut into, sliced off and ruthlessly marred and mutilated. . . . Great black coal cars crawl up and down their sides, and plunge into unsuspected and mysterious openings. . . . Railroad tracks gridiron the ground everywhere, debris of all sorts lies in heaps, and is scattered over the earth, and huts and hovels are perched here and there, in every available spot. There is no verdure—nothing but mud and coal, the one yellow, the other black. And on the edge of the city are the unpicturesque outlines of factories and foundries, their tall chimneys belching forth columns of inky blackness, which roll and whirl in fantastic shapes, and finally lose themselves in the general murkiness above.[2]

The prosperity of the factories and the dynamic quality of the city prompted thousands of laborers to ignore the horrible environmental conditions. They flocked to the mill towns along the rivers and into the central city, where below-subsistence wages, long hours, and appallingly dangerous working conditions prevailed. Cost-cutting manufacturers replaced highly skilled workers with unskilled labor as quickly as technological advances permitted, and wages fell still further. To counteract the growing power of the corporations and the loss of their status, skilled craftsmen formed labor unions, which promised to defend and assert workers' rights. Labor and management joined in an intense struggle for control of the mills. Between 1877 and 1894, Pittsburgh ranked behind only New York and Chicago in the number of labor disturbances. Companies retaliated by locking workers out, giving the city the dubious distinction of leading the nation in the number of lockouts and in wage losses due to lockouts and strikes.[3] The labor movement failed to end the exploitation of workers, and its near collapse after the 1892 Homestead steel strike gave a clear indication of the subservient position of labor in the Steel City. Sharp class divisions continued to be an important factor for the next forty years.

The development of class-segregated neighborhoods widened the gulf between rich and poor and between labor and management. The masters of industry amassed great fortunes and formed a powerful new social class. They built magnificent homes in the city's suburbs or, like Andrew Carnegie and Henry Clay Frick, abandoned the region altogether. Middle- and upper-class communities such as Shady-

side, Oakland, Squirrel Hill, Fox Chapel, and Sewickley developed along the periphery of the city, while formerly heterogeneous neighborhoods were rapidly changing into mixed industrial, warehouse, and blue-collar residential areas.

The Point district, located at the juncture of the Allegheny, Monongahela, and Ohio rivers, was just such an area. "Good honest people . . . live there, but they are, generally speaking, not of the most cultured class. Balls and receptions are seldom held in First Ward residences. The houses themselves are plain, but in many cases substantial, although it must be admitted quite a few are of the ancient time-stained character. . . . Some are half a century or more in age and are unsightly, rickety tenements."[4]

Once a middle-income neighborhood, the Point became a settling ground for Irish immigrants fleeing the Potato Famine of 1845–50. Unlike the other Irish neighborhoods in Pittsburgh, which attracted immigrants from a wide variety of regions, the "Point Irish," as they came to be known, came from the barren moors and rugged mountain villages of Galway. Possessing neither skills nor education, the vast majority became common laborers in the small factories located near the Point. The remainder tended bar in the district grogshops, drove teams hauling goods throughout the business district, or loaded and unloaded barges along the Monongahela wharf. Subject to an unstable Pittsburgh economy, harsh working conditions, and low wages, many engaged in a continuous struggle for survival. A contemporary source described the settlement at the Point as "the filthiest and most disagreeable locality within the city . . . almost entirely composed of the poorer classes, living in many cases in extreme poverty, and occupying the merest apologies for houses."[5]

Separated by class, culture, and language, residents of the Point, not surprisingly, remained isolated from the rest of Pittsburgh through much of the latter half of the nineteenth century. Even into the 1880s, "nearly all spoke Irish [Gaelic] so much that men who had worked more than twelve years could hardly make themselves understood in English."[6] Parents continued to teach their children the ancient language, and most retained close contact with their kin in Ireland.

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The families of Isaac Lawrence and Charles Conwell, unlike most of their compatriots at the Point, emigrated from Belfast sometime after 1847. They settled within three blocks of each other. Both families were apparently somewhat better off than their less fortunate neighbors. Lawrence, a stonemason in Ireland, began work as a laborer

at the Duquesne Freight House of the Pennsylvania Railroad. Eventually he managed to save enough money to open a small shoe repair shop on Penn Avenue. The Lawrence home occupied the second floor of the shop. Charles Conwell, a stonecutter in Ireland, held a similar job in Pittsburgh until his involvement in politics enabled him to secure a job as a ward assessor in 1866.

Charles B. Lawrence, the second son of Isaac, married Catherine Conwell, the third of nine girls, at St. Mary of Mercy Catholic Church in 1880. The union produced four children: Isaac, Charles, Mary, and David, who was born on 18 June 1889.[7] The young couple rented a home in the Irish neighborhood, two blocks from their parents. Located on the corner of Greentree Alley and Penn Avenue, they coexisted with warehouses, railroad yards, small factories, and several houses of gambling and occasional prostitution.

David lived the first ten years of his life in this area rich with opportunities to satisfy a young boy's curiosity. The Lawrence home, a modest two-story frame structure, was bounded on the north by the Haugh and Keenan storage warehouse and on the west by a planing mill and the Chautauqua Eureka Ice Company. The presence of a boiler works just across the street, two additional planing mills, an iron works, and several machine shops in the immediate vicinity must have produced a constant din in the Lawrence household. The St. Mary of Mercy Convent and Elementary School were directly across Penn Avenue, and the historic Fort Pitt Blockhouse, the only remaining remnant of the eighteenth-century British occupation of the city, lay just two blocks to the east. Railroad tracks carrying Jay Gould's Wabash Line cars intersected the area, bringing additional smoke and dirt to Greentree Alley.

The city's rivers, an easy two-minute walk to the west, were centers of constant activity. Exposition, Mechanics, and Symphony halls, located on the banks of the Allegheny, hosted frequent exhibitions, musicals, and even an occasional circus. A twenty-five-cent fee provided admission to displays depicting the Johnstown flood, the San Francisco earthquake, and the Battle of the Monitor and the Merrimac. Exposition Hall's permanent outdoor balcony for strollers and a roller skating rink made the area a favorite recreation spot. Young boys such as David Lawrence and his friends were no doubt captivated by the Ferris wheel, roller coaster, merry-go-round, and other amusement rides located there. The Monongahela River bank, more commercial than the Allegheny, was usually filled to capacity with barges and stern-wheeler boats loading and unloading goods. Horse-pulled wagons jammed the streets to and from the river

banks, carrying products to the warehouses that lined Front Street. Horse auctions were held twice weekly during the summer on Front Street.[8]

Charles Lawrence, a small, mild-mannered man, worked at a number of mostly unskilled jobs including hauler and warehouseman. Known as a hard worker, Charles, like many other blue-collar first- and second-generation immigrants, looked to the saloon for relaxation and social interaction. He spent many evenings at a local pub discussing politics, the labor movement, and working conditions in America. His ability to speak clear English and his somewhat better social class origin as the son of a shopkeeper gave him a slightly elevated status in the neighborhood and recognition as a spokesman for Irish causes in the First Ward. He eventually became involved in both the labor movement and Democratic politics and was named ward committeeman in 1897. His activities, however, were minor, as neither organization exercised any power in late nineteenth-century Pittsburgh.

Undaunted by the apparent futility of his causes, he loved to discuss both, and he could become almost eloquent on the evils perpetrated by the corporate giants of Pittsburgh. His monologues carried into the home, educating the Lawrence boys on the virtues of organized labor and Democratic politics. It was the only vivid memory of his father that David Lawrence would carry into later life. "As just a bit of a kid in my home they would always discuss politics. My father was in it in a minor way in the ward . . . and my grandfather on my mother's side was in it in a minor way . . . he was the ward assessor and did things of that kind. So as long as I can remember hearing anything, it would be about politics."[9]

Charles Lawrence spent little time at home with his young sons, but the passion with which he argued his causes left a lasting impression on his offspring. The eldest son, Isaac, after initially pursuing a career as a professional baseball player, turned to carpentering and occasionally held office in his union's local. He later received a patronage position as superintendent of maintenance for Allegheny County. His appointment, of course, required active, though minor involvement in political affairs. The second son, Charles, became a lifelong champion of organized labor, eventually holding the position of president of the Pittsburgh plumbers' union local. David turned his effort toward politics, and the seeds of much of his later political philosophy were his father's attitudes toward the prevailing turn-of-the-century social conditions. In particular, his views regarding the responsibility of government and big business to correct persisting

social ills and to help adjust social class differences became hallmarks of his political career.

It is Catherine Lawrence, however, who emerges as the dominant parent in David's life. A devout Catholic, she ran the Lawrence household with a strong hand. Daily Mass was a regular part of her routine throughout her life, and she expected her young children to participate in this normal way of beginning one's day.[10] A member of the altar society of St. Mary's Church, she washed and ironed the altar garments and spent time almost daily and always on Saturday mornings attending to the routine maintenance of the altar. David frequently accompanied her. Later, when the family moved to the Hill district, Mrs. Lawrence worked as a volunteer for the Catholic Rosalia Foundling Home and Maternity Hospital. Perhaps because he was the youngest and as a result of their constant association, he grew exceptionally close to his mother and remained so until her death in 1939. Stubborn and outspoken, Catherine maintained discipline with an iron hand. "Fighting among the boys was never permitted. We were always expected to reach a compromise on the disputed issue."[11] Compromise was always preferable to confrontation throughout Lawrence's political career.

Mrs. Lawrence's outspokenness, in contrast to her husband's discourses on political and labor causes, was almost always confined to private and family matters. Even in later years she never attempted to offer political advice to her famous son, but she never hesitated to remind him that one had a duty to help the less fortunate. For Lawrence she was the model mother, interested in affairs of the family and the Church. She wished her children well but never drove them to succeed, for her own goals in life remained modest. In common with the Irish community in which she lived, she emphasized employment for her children over education and expected them to lead hard-working, moral, blue-collar lives. The drive to be first, present in so many twentieth-century political leaders, was never a part of the Lawrence upbringing.

Lawrence's parents, like many blue-collar adults in industrial Pittsburgh, struggled to support their offspring, but the children were seldom aware of any serious financial difficulties. David wore hand-me-downs, but they were always kept in excellent repair. Catherine even managed to save enough money to purchase a second-hand piano, and she taught each child in turn. David, like most young boys of his age, preferred to play ball rather than practice the piano. He became what he later described as a "piano thumper." As young boys the Lawrence

children worked sporadically but were not required to turn their meager earnings over to their parents.

David, despite poor eyesight, which bothered him for life, played sandlot baseball, fished, and swam in the waters at the Point. He and his companions particularly enjoyed swimming out to meet passing stern-wheelers to "ride the wake" back in toward shore. Unlike his older brother Isaac, he never excelled at sports, but he was remembered as a fierce competitor. He developed an intense love for sports of all kinds and later, during the 1920s, sponsored and managed semi-professional football, baseball, and basketball teams and a stable of professional boxers, including three who gained some local renown: Kid Dugan, Patsy Scanlon, and Pete Connors, who once earned a purse of $350 fighting in Pittsburgh's Duquesne Gardens.[12] As a youth Lawrence especially enjoyed exploring the industrial sites and railroad yards near his home, and the historic blockhouse was a favorite place for him and his friends. "We kids used to play in there and around there. I remember one time an old lady named Powers moved in there and squatted, opened up a candy store and lived there."[13] Lawrence in later years frequently recalled with fondness his early days at the Point, and its redevelopment became a particular source of pride.

David's formal education consisted of primary schooling at Duquesne Public Elementary School and a two-year commercial course at St. Mary's. He later cited insufficient funds as the reason for terminating his education at this point, but this appears to have been only one factor. Few children in working-class Pittsburgh attended school beyond the tenth grade. Young David was different from most in that his education enabled him to secure a white-collar job upon graduation.

His limited education, however, was a source of concern, even embarrassment, throughout his life. "I was no boy wonder in education," he recalled half a century later. "It was always a struggle for me."[14] In his early years he remained attached to one of his former teachers, Sister Casimir, who possessed many of the qualities he admired in his mother—a strong will, outspokenness, and a belief in rigid discipline. She frequently sent him material to read in later years and never hesitated to write him expressing her opinions of his political actions.[15] Later in his career, Lawrence would attribute strong, almost unnatural powers to formal education, driving himself continuously as if to overcome this self-determined deficiency. His political appointments were nearly always highly educated men and

women, and he particularly preferred candidates with Ivy League backgrounds.

At the age of nine, Lawrence began his education in the art of practical politics when his father secured a part-time job for him as a helper for Steve Toole, First Ward alderman. For five years David ran errands, set up chairs for political rallies, passed out leaflets at election time, and drove Toole's wagon to help get out the vote. On a number of occasions he was permitted to sit in on party caucuses or other political meetings. Nothing is known of Lawrence's reaction to his association with Toole, but he must have received mixed messages. Toole, an Irish-Catholic Democrat, maintained his strength in the ward by working in collaboration with the Republican Flinn-Magee machine. "He is a Democrat as far as national or state elections are concerned but is for his friends always in local affairs and many of these happen to be ring Republicans. . . . It is a cardinal point of his politics to support a friend. This, he believes, is a debt all politicians owe and favors should be repaid by gratitude at least.[16] In cooperating with the ruling machine, Toole was simply following the common Pittsburgh practice of operating the Democratic party as a branch of the Republican organization. Democrats willing to go along with the ruling duo of Flinn and Magee could expect appropriate rewards. At the height of their power, nearly one-fourth of all city and county jobs were reserved for cooperative Democrats.[17] Toole received a city job and support for his periodic aldermanic elections. In Pittsburgh, one either joined the dominant party, followed their bidding, or withdrew from politics. Lawrence learned this basic fact of political survival well.

Young Lawrence, ironically, also worked inadvertently for the Republican Flinn-Magee machine when he took a part-time job as water boy for the Booth-Flinn Construction Company, which, by virtue of a city-granted franchise, was installing trolley tracks on the city's North Side.

David's association with politics, casual though it was, had already begun. He had seen his maternal grandfather and his father benefit from their political activities, and Steve Toole was clearly the first or second most important person in the First Ward. In addition, David had observed old-fashioned ward politics in operation. The victorious elections attributable to the smoothly operating Republican machine had taught a great deal, but it was the occasional defeat that produced lasting memories. Nearly fifty years later, shortly after his election as governor of Pennsylvania, he vividly recalled: "I've never forgotten watching the men who'd been beaten in elections. Just a

few days before, everybody had been rushing up to shake their hand. But when it was over and they'd been defeated, nobody bothered much to speak to them. And that they didn't know how to take. I was just a kid, but it taught me a lot."[18]

The specter of defeat was to remain with Lawrence. More than once he declined to run for office when he concluded that defeat was likely. Moreover, as nearly every associate interviewed for this work revealed, in every election, regardless of the size of his majority, he "ran scared." Associates were counseled to run for office as if defeat were imminent. Finally, perhaps as a guard against the possibility of defeat that would remove him from politics, Lawrence retained his insurance business all his life.

Lawrence's association with his most influential mentor, William J. Brennen, began immediately upon completion of the two-year course at St. Mary's. Brennen, an Irish-Catholic son of an unskilled ironworker, gave Lawrence the male role model his own father could never provide. Born in midcentury, Brennen went to work for the American Iron Works (later Jones and Laughlin) at age eleven. He eventually became a skilled machinist while continuing his education through night school, and he later studied law under James K. Duff. He began his own law practice in 1883, quickly becoming known for his espousal of liberal causes and his support of organized labor, and in 1893 was counsel to the steelworkers in the infamous Homestead steel strike. He later played a major role in the state legislature's enactment of the Commonwealth's first workingmen's compensation law.

Brennen began to dabble in Democratic politics during his ironworker years and served in a number of official capacities including alderman, ward chairman, and Allegheny County Democratic treasurer. In 1876, at age twenty, he became the nation's youngest delegate to the Democratic National Convention. In 1901 he became the chairman of the Democratic party in Allegheny County, a post he retained for seventeen years.

In 1903, fourteen-year-old David Lawrence applied for a job as clerk-stenographer in the Brennen law office in the Hill District. Brennen, acquainted with both Charles Lawrence and his son through their political activities, was attracted by the younger Lawrence's enthusiasm and his devotion to the Democratic cause. He hired David, beginning a political association that was to last until Brennen's death.

Wealthy, educated, and urbane, Brennen nevertheless had much in common with his young protégé. Religion, ethnic and class origin, and training by the strong-willed Sisters of Mercy all drew the two men together. They also shared strong sympathies with the labor

movement and, of course, Democratic politics. They even shared a physical ailment, a lifelong vision disability. Brennen worked Lawrence hard—ten hours per day, six days per week—in his law office, and according to Lawrence, "he never broke his bank book by paying us good salaries." As a bonus, however, Brennen began to teach Lawrence the art of politics as he knew it, and the two held long discussions that often lasted until late at night.[19] Unfortunately, little is known about these discussions, although Lawrence later acknowledged their importance in his political development. What does seem clear is that from this relationship, combined with his earlier experiences, Lawrence formed a number of important views.

Both held ambivalent attitudes toward working-class, blue-collar life. It was a life from which they had escaped, and they were always slightly uncomfortable in blue-collar surroundings in later life. Brennen, for example, although known as Pittsburgh's labor lawyer, enjoyed his affluence. He was known to dress in the height of fashion, loved fast cars, and lived in a fashionable home at 2327 Fifth Avenue.[20] He migrated further east into Oakland when the Fifth Avenue district became less desirable because of the influx of Southern and Eastern European immigrants. While he retained his interest in sporting activities, he also cultivated an interest in the theater—a taste Lawrence later acquired—and in other arts. Most important, nearly all of his friends, many of whom visited the Brennen office regularly, were wealthy Republicans. His unusual ability to deal successfully with affluent, Protestant, Republicans while at the same time acting as the spokesman for organized labor was a skill Lawrence also later perfected.

Brennen, perhaps to cover up his blue-collar background, developed a formal style and manner in his relationships with others. Lawrence adopted a similar style. Individuals were addressed by their formal titles. Except in the most private of moments or with a few close friends, a coat and tie were the expected form of dress in Brennen's and later Lawrence's offices. One longtime aide recalled, "You couldn't come into his [Lawrence's] office, or the Democratic headquarters, with short sleeves or no white shirt or tie. 'God damn it, you're a gentleman. This is an office.' he would say. And he really would get mad. . . . Even at political picnics with free beer, sandwiches and games Lawrence would have on his white shirt and tie. He might take off the coat but never the tie." Later his formality extended to his co-workers in the Democratic party. During one campaign he happened to run into two Democratic candidates—one running for county treasurer, the other for a local judgeship. The two, dressed in open-

collared, short-sleeved shirts and slacks reported that they were going to a United Mine Workers picnic in Indiana Township. Lawrence exploded. "Listen," he commanded, "when you speak to the miners or visit with them, look like a public official, not like one of them. They expect you to look like a public official."[21]

His formality even extended into his home life, according to his daughter. "I never saw him sit in my house without a shirt and tie and coat on. Once in a while on a hot summer day, he might sit on the front porch or in the back yard without his coat on but he had his tie on. As far as sports shirts were concerned, he might have owned two."[22] In later life Lawrence retained a close relationship with several blue-collar political cronies and continued to enjoy the activities of his youth—baseball, football, and boxing—but the style was strictly formal.

Both teacher and pupil strove to transcend their blue-collar backgrounds, but each struggled in different ways to improve working-class conditions. Legal counsel and legislative action were Brennen's vehicles for redressing the ills of the industrial system. Politics for him was an enjoyable pastime, but, perhaps because of the Republican domination of western Pennsylvania, he never viewed it as an effective method of reform. Lawrence, who "grew up in a law office but never had the chance to study law . . . came up on the political side instead of the legal side."[23] Thus, while he held deep sympathies for the labor movement throughout his life, he could and frequently did oppose organized labor or labor leaders if it seemed politically wise. He viewed political action as the best means to improve working-class lives.

Lawrence's propensity for hard work, no doubt instilled in him by his mother, was certainly reinforced by Brennen. "The hours were terrible. That's where I learned to work. We never left the office."[24] A bachelor with no family responsibilities, Brennen would work alongside his associates from 7:00 A.M. to 6:30 P.M., then remain in the office to greet political workers in an attempt to breathe life into an all but dead Democratic organization. "Lawrence aped Brennan's Beau Brummell style, and until he was thirty-two heeded Brennen's admonition that a man could not 'wive and thrive' in the same year."[25] It may be coincidental, but Lawrence married only after Brennen's death.

The Brennen-Lawrence association lasted for nearly two decades, developing into a father-son type of relationship. Contemporaries of Lawrence often referred to him as Dave "Brennen" Lawrence.[26] He later named his first son Brennen and kept a portrait of his old men-

tor in his office throughout his career. Lawrence frequently acknowledged his debt to his predecessor, but their long relationship did not result in a strengthened Democratic party.

Brennen treated his own involvement in politics in an almost ad hoc, gentleman-statesman manner. It was a pragmatic, cooperative approach to politics that Lawrence learned to emulate. From the time he became Democratic county chairman in 1901, Brennen, realizing that he stood no chance of upsetting the Republican machine, followed a policy of cooperation with its leaders. He seldom challenged the Republican majority, apparently content with the minority positions legally available to his party. One member of the inner circle, who later became a U.S. senator, explained: "our organization was strictly a bi-partisan affair. All the Democratic factions, and a large number of the Republican leaders . . . wanted to be in on the Federal patronage. In those days, and in fact as long as the Democratic party was in the minority, there were always Democratic leaders more interested in picking up patronage crumbs from the Republican table than they were in winning elections."[27] The Democrats, for example, ran no candidate for mayor in 1902, 1913, or 1917. Only when they could mount a "fusion ticket" such as reformer George Guthrie in 1905 did Brennen's party conduct an aggressive political campaign. To the dismay of some, particularly during the 1920s, Lawrence adopted Brennen's pragmatic brand of politics, with similar results.

It is difficult to overestimate the Brennen's influence on Lawrence's political career. He provided important training, instilled elements of a political philosophy, and taught his protégé a practical approach to the political world. Other factors during Lawrence's formative years, however, also provided important lessons that were apparent in his later actions. The first three decades of the twentieth century were particularly volatile in Pittsburgh politics. Republican boss Christopher Magee's death in 1901 initiated a period of intraparty fighting that raged from Pittsburgh to Harrisburg and continued for nearly a third of a century. Mayors were "ripped" from office by a rival machine headed by state boss Matthew Quay. A local reform administration, supported by the Citizens' League and other independent groups, won election in 1906, and a series of sweeping municipal reforms pushed through both houses of the Pennsylvania General Assembly by a coalition of upper-class businessmen and professionals was initiated in 1911.[28] Meanwhile Republican bosses, including Edward Bigelow, William Magee, and later James Coyne, William L. Mellon, and Charles Kline, all vied for control of the city until the collapse of the Republican machine in 1933.

It is unclear exactly how these dynamic events influenced David Lawrence, but in a young man developing an intense interest in politics they must have generated great excitement. Both the power of a well-organized machine and the disaster of intraparty fighting, regularly reported in the city's press, no doubt, became obvious to him. The Republican organization, in spite of numerous well-publicized charges of corruption and feuds within the party, remained, with the exception of the 1906-9 period, entrenched in power. Regardless of scandals—such as those of 1911, which saw nearly 150 indictments for graft brought against the entire Republican city council, and Mayor William Magee charged with embezzling funds from the city treasury—the well-honed Republican organization brought home winner after winner in both the city and the county.

It became obvious to the young Lawrence that the lack of a well-structured organization in his own party was a major factor in its defeat at the polls. Almost immediately upon assuming the county Democratic chairmanship in 1920, he experimented with the party structure, reorganizing it to create a more responsive ward-level operation. He initiated other reforms following election defeats in 1925 and 1929. Workers were recruited to fill every possible position, and by 1933 clear lines of command existed from ward committeemen through ward chairmen to party chairman.[29]

Less obvious, although certainly apparent, were the long-term debilitating effects of continuous internecine warfare on the Republican machine. The Republicans, whether it was Magee and Flinn battling Quay and Edward Bigelow in the first decade of the century or Edward Kline challenging William Mellon and Coyne in the 1920s, fought their battles in public. They continued to win elections, but the lack of harmony and the rampant corruption became well known. Defections from the party occurred as early as 1909. At first disgruntled Republicans looked to reform groups such as the Civic Club and the Voters' League to correct the abuses within the system.[30] Later they turned to the Democratic party as the best hope for reform.

The lessons Lawrence learned from the Republican intraparty warfare and from several battles within his own party early in his career burned an indelible mark on his approach to party politics. For nearly fifty years at the local, state, and national levels, he struggled to avoid confrontations within the Democratic organization. He always viewed compromise and occasionally even capitulation as preferable to conflict.

Attempts at political reform during the young Lawrence's formative years probably also shaped his development. In 1906, Democrat

George W. Guthrie broke the Republican lock on city hall, defeating his Republican candidate by almost 3,000 votes. Guthrie, whose father and grandfather had held the same office before the years of the Magee-Flinn domination of the city, ran on a reform ticket supported by several independent groups as well as by the Democratic party. Reform strength, however, proved insufficient to gain control of any seats on the city council or of any of the bureaucratic row offices (elected administrative offices such as city treasurer, controller, etc.) held by the Republican organization. Not surprisingly, Guthrie's administration was generally ineffective, for the entrenched machine blocked most of his efforts at reform. Republican William Magee, nephew of the former boss, Christopher Magee, replaced Guthrie in 1909, and all hopes of reform through the existing political apparatus were dead. It is not clear how these event influenced the thinking of David Lawrence, but local newspaper editorials at the time made clear the futility of Guthrie's single-handed attempts at reform. Lawrence, always an avid newspaper reader, could hardly fail to understand the message. In any event, it was a mistake he always avoided. He never undertook political or legislative action without a prior assessment of support, and he often deferred action if he perceived support to be weak or absent. Lawrence seldom ventured out on a limb.

The influence of the success of the 1911 Pittsburgh municipal reform movement on Lawrence, however, is much more difficult to discern, and the analysis that follows is admittedly more speculative. Nevertheless, his reliance on the upper class to carry out the redevelopment of the city in the 1940s and 1950s may have its roots in his observation of the success of that same class in decentralizing the city's political and educational systems. Led by Leo Weil of the Voters' League, nearly 750 members of the city's business, industrial, and professional elites pushed a bill through the state legislature requiring the at-large election of the city council and judicial appointment of the city school board. The bill, ostensibly designed to reduce the power of the political ward system, was supported by, among others, "the presidents of fourteen large banks and officials of Westinghouse, Pittsburgh Plate Glass, U.S. Steel and its component parts, . . . Jones and Laughlin . . . the H. J. Heinz Company and the Pittsburgh Coal Company, as well as officials of the Pennsylvania Railroad and the Pittsburgh and Lake Erie."[31] Lawrence, no doubt, failed to appreciate the significance of their role in this political reform, for its extent has only recently been documented. Several of the presidents, however, were mentioned prominently in the newspapers, and interested readers such as Lawrence could not fail to know that they were

involved. Their success, particularly following so closely on the heels of the disappointment of the Guthrie administration and in the face of strong opposition from the entrenched regime, must have impressed him. Thus, when viewed in the light of his early experiences, Lawrence's willingness to embrace Pittsburgh's Republican, Protestant elite to bring about the redevelopment of the city seems much less surprising. It is certainly more than coincidence that the same corporate offices that effected the 1911 reform were also prominent in the post-World War II redevelopment of the city. What changed was that in the latter period they worked closely with the administration in power.

Finally, the Progressive era, during which Lawrence grew up, clearly shaped his later urban liberalism. American historians disagree over which social class provided the impetus for the reforms of the Progressive era, but they generally agree that it established precedents for the later reforms of the New Deal and New Frontier. Lawrence, who straddled two social classes, exhibited some of the traits generally attributed to each, but his blue-collar background proved to be the driving force.

During his early years he was attracted to the Social Gospelers and social scientists who appealed to so many middle-class reformers. At one point he joined the Henry George Club but soon became disillusioned with the single tax as a solution to urban problems. He retained, however, the view that, given economic incentives to do so, private enterprise would develop rather than exploit the resources of the city. He also developed a reliance on experts to examine and provide solutions to the problems plaguing the city. The urban redevelopment known as the Pittsburgh Renaissance owes much of its success to professionals, employed by both public and private agencies, upon whom Lawrence relied.

But he really did not require experts to help him identify the ills of society. Lawrence, to be sure, never experienced the poverty of many of Pittsburgh's working-class families, but he certainly viewed its effects from close range. He knew firsthand the problems of urban life: inadequate housing and health services, unemployment, and a generally unhealthy environment.[32] As a result, he seldom viewed issues on a grand or comprehensive scale but attacked them singly, as they appeared. He offered the comment, "We are practical people, not ideologists," again and again not as an apology but as a sign of strength—a pragmatic politics for a practical people. He viewed government as the vehicle through which one could examine the problem and find a way to solve it. One did not restructure society; one

corrected it where necessary. It is possible to see his support of the social reforms from the New Deal through the Great Society, his role in Pennsylvania's Little New Deal, and much of the legislation enacted during his administrative terms as the result of a broad and well-formulated liberal philosophy. However, such does not appear to be the case. His early experience taught him that ills existed in American society, and, as he gained power, he attempted to correct those that became most pressing. The issues he chose to champion—workingmen's compensation, health care, labor legislation, and others—found their origin in his working-class background. He even saw the Pittsburgh Renaissance as a means of providing workers of all classes with a decent living and working environment.

Admittedly, Lawrence did not exhibit many of these beliefs as a young, would-be politician. Like his father and Billy Brennen, he supported the causes of labor and those issues currently popular with the Democratic party. His most intense interest, however, was in seeing a Democrat in office—almost any office or any Democrat would do. Brennen, aware of the competitive nature of his protégé, a competitiveness he did not share, encouraged Lawrence to expand his involvement. In 1912, twenty-three-year-old David accompanied Brennen to the Democratic National Convention as a page. It was, up to that moment, the crowning achievement in the young politician's career. "The proceedings were completely fascinating to a lad of my age and I became devoted to politics even though my favorite candidate, Champ Clark, lost to Governor [Woodrow] Wilson. I later became a major advocate of Wilson."[33]

While at the convention, Lawrence met another rising young politician from south of Pittsburgh, Joseph Guffey, a wealthy Pennsylvania delegate from Westmoreland County. Guffey, a young man of striking appearance, had attended Princeton during the years of Wilson's presidency there and campaigned for his election as governor of New Jersey in 1910. One of the few members of the Pennsylvania delegation who actually knew Wilson, Guffey argued vociferously in his support. When that proved futile, he broke from the delegation to give Wilson his vote for the nomination. Guffey's support of Wilson on each of the forty-six ballots necessary to nominate him, together with his generous financial contributions, earned Wilson's lasting gratitude.[34] More importantly for Guffey, it made him one of the leading Democrats in Pennsylvania.

Lawrence approached Guffey during his convention fight, and the two had several dinners together. They struck up a friendship that, although stormy at times, was mutually beneficial. They met

frequently in Pittsburgh during the years immediately following the convention, and Guffey even invited Lawrence to join him for a weekend of deer hunting on the family property. Lawrence decided that he hated hunting, but the experience proved useful, strengthening their relationship.[35]

Lawrence was the first to benefit directly from the Guffey-Lawrence liaison. Wilson rewarded Guffey for his support at the 1912 convention by naming him patronage chief for all of western Pennsylvania, and in 1914 Guffey named his friend to his first official political position: minority commissioner on the Voter Registration Commission for the city of Pittsburgh. The appointment provided Lawrence with his first salaried position, at $4,000 per year, freeing him for the first time from serious financial concern.[36] The position also enabled both men to observe firsthand the lack of organization in the Democratic party as well as the seedier side of Pittsburgh politics. Voters in Pittsburgh were required to register for each election by showing a tax receipt for current paid-up taxes. Those not owning property paid a fifty-cent poll tax. Joseph Guffey was surprised when he discovered the abuses to which such a system could be put.

> I learned early in my first campaign in Pittsburgh, that politics was not entirely a debate over the great issues, as we had so earnestly viewed in our undergraduate discussions at Princeton. I came down to earth with a bump, at half past nine one morning just before a Pittsburgh mayoralty election.
>
> I reached the office quite early. The [Democratic] headquarters rarely opened before noon, but I was eager, and I had things to do. As I approached I saw shadows through the headquarters window. They were dancing up and down in a most peculiar manner. I watched from the outside and finally identified the dancing figures as Dennis Fox and Joe Kraus, both officers of the Allegheny County Democratic Committee. Mustering my courage, I opened the door. My sudden appearance startled them until they recognized me.
>
> "Oh, it's you, is it?" one of them said, with real relief. "Yes," I said, still puzzled, "What are you doing?"
>
> They looked at each other. "Aging tax receipts."
>
> And that in fact was what they were doing. In those days it was necessary, in case your right to vote was challenged, to have a tax receipt either for normal taxes or for payment of the poll tax. Many potential voters had neither and it was ex-

> pensive as well as illegal for political committees to pay a voter's tax.
>
> To meet this situation both sides had obtained a quantity of tax receipt blanks. . . . State Senator William Flinn, a Republican leader, had eight unnumbered books. The Democrats had somehow obtained two unnumbered books from a nearby county. These receipts were given out to ward leaders and political committeemen for distribution to voters. But they couldn't be too clear or too new. That would have aroused suspicion when they were presented to the election board. So Dennis Fox and Joe Kraus were aging them.[37]

In spite of many attempts at reform, the system lent itself to various methods of vote fraud. Voter registration was normally controlled within the wards by paid registrars selected by the ward chairmen. The machine, usually through the registrar, provided tax receipts and/or poll tax fees to individuals who voted under their own and often several other names. Deceased voters, phantom voters, and repeaters were a common occurrence in Pittsburgh during the first third of the twentieth century.[38] The Voter Registration Commission, created in one attempt to deal with such fraud, was charged with investigating and ruling on the validity of all voter registrations. However, its members who were appointed precisely because of their loyalty to their party, were reluctant to disturb the system. An analysis of the commission minutes during the ten years Lawrence served indicates that he was a cooperative member. He seldom spoke, and when he did, his comments, like those of other members, were nearly always in agreement with those of the commission chairman, Republican Charles "Buck" McGovern. Fewer than 10 percent of the voter registration questions that came before the board during Lawrence's membership were rejected as fraudulent.[39] Lawrence, it appears, used his position to hone his skills at working with the Republican majority and to supplement his income. (By the time of his resignation in 1924, he was earning $6,000 per year as commission secretary.) He also secured an appointment for his own political protégé and aide James P. Kirk as clerk and later full commission member.

It is not clear whether the practice of accepting bogus tax receipts as documentation of voter registration bothered Lawrence. If so, he never attempted to act on the concerns of his conscience. But his work on the commission made him aware of the weakness of his own party, and he took steps to strengthen it. Democrats, for example, failed to register at all in four wards in 1915 and 1916 because they

could not find people willing to serve as ward registrar. Shortly thereafter, Lawrence supported a commission ruling permitting ward chairmen to serve simultaneously as registrars in their own wards. The funds they received for assisting in voter registration would presumably proved financial incentive to reluctant Democratic party workers. His strongest influence in the commission during the following years was in preventing repeal of the ward chairman ruling.[40] He also waged a mild fight against annual registration, which he correctly viewed as benefiting the large, well-organized Republican operation. Later, as secretary of the Commonwealth, he was instrumental in the enactment of permanent registration.

By 1917 Lawrence was ready to launch his own political career. At Brennen's suggestion, he formed the David Leo Lawrence Political Club and by the summer of that year had nearly fifty followers. The group met monthly to discuss political issues and candidates, and it campaigned in the fall election for Billy Brennen for city council. As usual the mayoralty—for which the Democrats did not run a candidate—and all five available council seats were won by Republicans. Brennen ran a "respectable" seventh.

Lawrence's fledgling organization had barely a chance to get its political feet wet when its activities were interrupted by World War I. Initially turned down for active duty because of his eyes, he enlisted on 17 September 1918 and served in the adjutant general's office for just over a year. Military service in Washington, D.C., in spite of a promotion to second lieutenant, did not prove satisfying, and years later he refused to wear his American Legion pin, reasoning that his efforts did not aid in ending the war.[41] At war's end Lawrence, aged twenty-nine, returned to Pittsburgh to begin the adult phase of his career in politics.